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**Re-Learning to be Human in Global Times:  
Challenges and Opportunities from  
the Perspectives of Contemporary  
Philosophy and Religion**

Edited by  
Brigitte Buchhammer

The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy

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# Foreword

HERTA NAGL-DOCEKAL

It is my pleasure to offer a very warm welcome to you all on behalf of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, which is one of the sponsors of this symposium. Founded in the year 1847, the Academy of Sciences is Austria's most important extra-mural research institution. As a learned society, it has 770 members from all spheres of the humanities as well as the natural sciences. Additionally, its 28 research institutes are the workplaces of 1,450 scholars.

It is worth noting that there exists a special relation between the Academy and philosophy: The first draft for an Austrian Academy was submitted to the emperor by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz during his last and longest stay in Vienna in the years 1712-14. (During this stay Leibniz also wrote his study on the *Principles of Nature and Grace* and the final parts of the *Monadology*.) In commemoration of this historical background, the Academy organizes the annual Leibniz Lectures.

One of the core concerns of the Academy is to promote the employment of innovative research in the public debate on pressing issues of contemporary society. The topic of our symposium clearly meets this objective. The Presidium of the Austrian Academy wishes us all fruitful discussions and much success.



# Preface

KURT APPEL

The Research Platform “Religion and Transformation in Contemporary Society” is based at the University of Vienna under the direction of Kurt Appel (speaker) and Sieglinde Rosenberger (vice speaker). It is an interdisciplinary research community including seven faculties: Faculty of Catholic Theology, of Protestant Theology, of the Social Sciences, of Laws, of Philosophical and Cultural Studies, of Philosophy and Education, and of Historical and Cultural Studies.

The program focuses on the role of religion in the transformational processes in contemporary societies and its impact on social, political, and cultural spheres. Besides the questions concerning mechanisms of “inclusion and exclusion” and the “transgression of borders” that are both closely related to the issue of “religion and migration,” the research platform is also concerned with monotheistic religion’s universal ethical and noetic claims, condensed and expressed in conceptions of God in the context of a multicultural society. The platform considers the hermeneutics of religious texts in so far as hermeneutics is of importance to the self-understanding of religions and functions as a catalyst for conflicts and societal transformation processes. In addition, the juridical aspects of religious and religion-related transformation processes, as well as the paradigmatic changes in constructions of social meaning and value systems, are subjects of analysis.

The future focus will be the question concerning the relation of “Religion and Boundaries” – geographically, politically, legally and symbolically. We will seek to understand how religions on the one hand contribute to the construction of boundaries and on the other hand to their subversive undermining. Under this perspective the research platform dedicates its work especially to four main thematic areas (“clusters”):

1. Contemporary religious movements in Austria in the context of migration and modernity;
2. Aesthetical and normative transformations of religious texts;
3. Religious education in secular societies;
4. Critique of religion and hermeneutics of religious texts.





# Introduction

BRIGITTE BUCHHAMMER

The essays published in this book are the proceedings of the symposium held in Vienna, April 7-8, 2017 entitled *Learning to be Human for Global Times: Challenges and Opportunities from the Perspective of Contemporary Philosophy of Religion*. This book is part of a series, published by the Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, Washington, D.C.

The idea for this conference was born in 2016 in Washington, at the Catholic University of America, when I took part in the fall-seminar of the Council for Research in Values and Philosophy with the title: *Re-Learning to be Human for Global Times: Structure and Role of Compassion*. Dr. Hu Yeping, Executive Director of the Council, encouraged me to organize a symposium with a similar theme in Austria.

What is the idea of this project? The topic of the symposium refers to the XXIV World Congress of Philosophy to be held in Beijing, China: August 13-20, 2018. The familiar theme of the conference will be "Learning to be Human." The philosophers and theologians from five countries address current global issues such as the phenomena of increasing loss of solidarity and violent conflicts, the societal impact of recent research in the sciences (such as neuroscience and techno-science) and the dynamic changes in the socio-economic sphere. In view of these fundamental challenges, the symposium explored new philosophical approaches to the human being and its self-understanding. The scope of topics includes suggestions to re-define the relationship between human beings and extra-human nature, as well as theories focusing on the situation of religion in the context of modernity.

These eighteen papers demonstrate the broad spectrum of approaches to the question: "What does it mean to be human under current conditions?" through different traditions of philosophy and theological perspectives.

The *Council for Research in Values and Philosophy*, Washington D.C., was founded by Professor George Francis McLean (1929-2016), who is unfortunately no longer with us. He was a philosopher in the service of humanity. Dr. Hu says, and I would like to quote her: "McLean was a scholar and teacher, but most importantly he worked to democratize philosophy – promoting the research of philosophers coming from many different cultural traditions, and publishing the academic work of teams of scholars from countries and regions around the globe. (...) He has helped to bring together professors from many countries and regions in order to create opportunities for dialogue, communication, and cooperation, and to assist in building teams which, through their scholarly work, contribute to addressing the vital questions of the day." (Hu Yeping, "George Francis McLean: A Philosopher in the Service of Humanity," in *To the Mountain: Essays in Honour of Professor George F. McLean*, edited by William Sweet and Hu Yeping [Taipei, Taiwan: Fu Jen Catholic University Press, 2004]).

In 1983 Professor McLean founded *The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy*. "The objective of the council is to break through ideologies in order to engage deep human concerns, to bridge traditions and cultures, and to seek new horizons for social transformation. It aims to mobilize research teams to study the nature, interpretation, and development of cultures; to bring their work to bear on the challenges of contemporary change; to publish and distribute the results of these efforts; and to organize both extended seminars for deeper exploration of these issues and regional conferences for the coordination of this work."

As Dr. Hu points out when she characterizes Father McLean: "Kant says that to love is to do good; love also involves an openness to and a respect for others that requires a willingness to listen to them and to hear them on their own terms. (...) Philosophy as an intellectual discipline helps us to look at reality from a critical distance, to provide a rational analysis, and

to express what we see in conceptual terms. But love for others requires us to read between the lines – to see the shift of human awareness from the vertical to the horizontal, from object to subject, from the material to the spiritual, and from the quantitative to the qualitative. This shift provides an opportunity for all people and all cultures to pursue self-realization, self-consciousness and self-perfection actively. If Kant is right in saying that to love is to do good, then McLean has shown a love that complements his intellectual commitments to help philosophers throughout the world to engage in their own philosophical work. (...) McLean has strong philosophical views. Characteristically, however, he lets others speak first – and this reflects the influence of various traditions and cultures on his own work. (...) Someone once asked McLean what his motives were for travelling to places where philosophy was considered by many in the West to be less developed, and where the social and intellectual situation was difficult. McLean's response was that philosophy is not a 'top down' activity; it is not something to be done in isolation or by a single individual. It comes from the grassroots, from people's everyday lives, and from the culture in which they live. Each people has its own way of living and searching for the meaning of life. Yet it also needs a window to let in new light and new air, and to let its unique character be seen by those outside. In the *Republic*, Plato gives us the allegory of the cave. Only those who climb out of the cave – painstakingly, passionately, and consistently – will come to see the light, the truth, and the Absolute. Philosophy, then, is the exercise of freedom."

I would like to quote the following paragraphs to describe the concept for the Council's project "Re-Learning to be Human for Global Times." The following quotation comprises the last written words of Professor McLean, who described the project after consultation with Charles Taylor and Jose Casanova at his residence near Boston in December 2015.

"Humankind is changing paradigms at an unprecedented speed and depth: in science and technology, in the socio-economic and political sphere, in the self-understanding of cultures and societies, in the transformation of major religious entities and the creation of new cultures and modes of being. And yet, we need to ask: What are the constancies or consistencies in human self-understanding needed in order to further the global process of becoming human?"

Moreover, the human race still faces enormous challenges when it comes to solving problems such as the creation of conditions required to affirm the dignity of all members of the human family, particularly in regard to such phenomena as needless hunger and chronic unemployment, violence and terrorism, injustice and exclusion, abuse of children and abandonment of the elderly, illiteracy and ideological manipulation, destruction of human values and of the natural environment in which we are destined to live.

Hence the need to ask: what role should be played by ethics and morality in the advancement of political and economic processes, in science and technology? How to reconfigure the humanizing mission of education and the processes of communication and/or diffusion of knowledge? In what sense must the great religions of the world advance their own self-understanding, their identity and their mission? How to understand the role and the mission of family and school in the process of renewing humanity and so create the conditions of possibility for a future, that can be said to be more truly human and, by the same token, even more divine than before?

This philosophical work will try to further the kind of human self-understanding that is capable of bridging the multiple contributions of East and West, of North and South, of religion and science, of art and technology, of freedom and law, of self-interest and mutual cooperation."

This is just a brief summary of the concept behind our conference and its title.

When I returned from Washington to Vienna last year I consulted Herta Nagl-Docekal, who supported this project from the very first moment and has made a great effort with energy,

commitment and enthusiasm. Without her generous support and effort, the staging of this symposium would not have been possible. I am very grateful to Herta Nagl-Docekal.

As always, financial considerations were a major challenge for organizing this kind of endeavor. However, immediately and instantly Kurt Appel from the research-platform “Religion and Transformation in Contemporary Society” was more than willing to help. I would sincerely like to thank Kurt Appel and the platform so much for their great generosity. Furthermore, I am also indebted to the Austrian Academy of Sciences for their generous support.

I would also express my gratitude to the Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, Washington D.C. for making the publication of this volume possible.



## 1.

# Biblical Traces of the Guest

KURT APPEL

And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.

And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken *it*.

(Isa. 25.6-8)<sup>1</sup>

In this citation, the Prophet Isaiah condenses and articulates a category which permeates the whole Bible and which, although little considered in theology, like few others leads into the very center of biblical speech about God, i.e. the category of the “guest” and the “host” respectively.<sup>2</sup> This paper will examine the traces of these words in respect to their substance – concepts are deliberately not spoken of – in the Bible, as well as in the contemporary philosophical tradition. In this endeavor, it appears meaningful that in the “guest” dwells a crucial potential against an egotistically understood concept of the person (the person as “ego”), as well as a search for identity, which is often encountered nowadays and whose reverse side consists of the exclusion of the “other.”

### Abraham as the Paradigmatic Guest-figure of the Bible

Let us start the biblical search for the guest – whether or not he has already visited us the following considerations will decide – with one of the central salvation-historical figures of the Bible, who overlaps both the European-Occidental and the Muslim tradition: Abraham. His story starts with an exodus from his self, from his intimate identity. It is precisely in this departure that he receives the promise of progeny and land. It can already be noted, that throughout his life Abraham is a guest and respectively a stranger; both Hebrew (*gēr*) and Greek (*xenos*) use the same word for these two terms, although in German there is clearly a differentiated meaning. We should note that Abraham is never the owner or occupant of the land where he resides and in which his descendants will have a stake. If one takes a closer look at the history of Abraham, then that pericope is one of the central points, which in the widespread Catholic *German Ecumenical Bible* translation is rather spiritlessly called, “God is guest of Abraham” (Gen. 18). This is spiritless because history draws its stimulus exactly from the fact that the identifications are treated with restraint – a circumstance that will be decisive in the following reflections. History rather develops a subtle connection between YHWH – those four letters, the “Tetragrammaton,” which stands in the Bible for the unspeakable name of God – and the guest/stranger. When the first sentence of a pericope denotes the following topic, in

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<sup>1</sup> *New American Standard Bible* (La Habra, California: Lockman Foundation, 1971).

<sup>2</sup> The following reflections are crucially inspired by Hans-Dieter Bahr, *Die Sprache des Gastes* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1994). Restrictively it must be added that Bahr does not precisely deduce theological consequences from his reflections, but rather exposes classical metaphysics and implicitly traditional theology to a fundamental critique.

most cases, it means that in this section the appearance of God is dealt with. For this the pericope refers to the visit of three strangers, who are received by Abraham – without asking for either place of origin or names, which shows a distinctive parallel to the Greek world – with overwhelming hospitality, as is characteristic of the Orient in the ancient world.<sup>3</sup> These guests/strangers reveal themselves very gradually to the reader, Abraham and Sara as YHWH and quite concretely promises the birth of their first offspring, who will have to take great care that the exodus into the unknown does not end in expiration, that is with the death of Abraham and his family. One surmises that God's revelation is bound to the hospitality of Abraham and Sara. To put it more succinctly: the gift of the guest, which Abraham and Sara are able to perceive as YHWH's gift, is the gift of life, whose promise is made in answer to their hospitality. The guest will therefore carry the gift of a promise, which is the pledge of life itself, whose guests are Abraham (and Sara), yet without their being able to take this gift into their possession. The degree to which the motive of the guest is central to the passage cited here reveals the progress of the narration: abruptly the scene of the changes and the narration about Abraham's hospitality is linked to the counter-story of denied hospitality, that is the story of Sodom, in which hospitality leads to a most brutal use of force against the guest. Therefore, while Abraham experiences through his hospitality the promise of life and encounters YHWH, Sodom suffers the death of its own inhospitality, which finds its physical embodiment in the salt desert, where no life is permitted (Gen. 19).

A manifold acceptance meets Genesis 18 in Exodus 32.30-34.9. This passage lies formally, as G. Borgonovo has shown,<sup>4</sup> in the center of the Torah and also of the five books of Moses, which show a strict chiasmic structure (A, B, C, ... C', B' A'). It is embedded in a dialogue between Moses and God/YHWH, in which the question is pursued; how far the glory of the name of God can be made visible and where the limit of man's knowledge of God lies. That the passage not only lies stylistically in the center, but rather substantially constitutes the center of the Bible is proven by the fact that the name of God/YHWH – at the pinnacle of the proceedings in Exodus 34.6 – is highlighted by a double notation, "YHWH YHWH." The whole dialogue, including the revelation of God, is focused on the self-explication of YHWH as "compassionate"; a sin-forgiving and healing God. It should be noted that above all the fourth gospel of the Christians, the Gospel according to John, essentially represents a meditation on the name of God, as it is shown in Exodus 32-34. Relevant to the discussion here, it should be noted that Exodus 32-34 provides us with many keywords ("realize," "to find mercy in the eyes of YHWH," "to pass by").<sup>5</sup> This represents the continuation and consolidation of Genesis 18; the definite proof of God as guest. Mercifulness as the key to the Tetragrammaton YHWH originates from an affective and liberating openness of the self in contact with the other, whose origin outlines the hospitable reception.

### The Splendor of the Messianic Palace

Narrations of granted and denied hospitality permeate the Bible in the following sections. Israel is at first a guest in Egypt, only in order to be identified latterly as a stranger and to be

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<sup>3</sup> In the Homeric epics (*Odyssey* and *Iliad*), the guest is also hosted at first before he must reveal himself, as we see not least in the *Odyssey*, which refers to the hospitality granted to Ulysses by the Phaiakians.

<sup>4</sup> Gianantonio Borgonovo, *Torah e Storiografie dell'Antico Testamento* (Torino: Elledici, 2012), pp. 215-392, especially p. 217.

<sup>5</sup> Kurt Appel, "Trinität und Offenheit Gottes," in *Glauben denken – Zur philosophischen Durchdringung der Gottesrede im 21. Jahrhundert*, eds. Klaus Viertbauer and Heinrich Schmidinger (Darmstadt: WBG, 2016), pp. 19-46.

denigrated in turn. Where the guest functions as the slave of one's own expectations and needs, he will be brought to disappear and he mutates into the stranger and un-home-ly enemy.

In the desert, Israel gains the experience of the divine guest/host in the tent of meeting. At the culmination of the Sinai-events, Moses, Aaron (and also Nadab and Abihu) and the seventy eldest representatives of Israel are invited by God/YHWH to a banquet (Ex. 24.9-11). This is referred to in the passage of Isaiah cited in the opening of this paper. As a result, Israel has to realize that the promise of land is tied not least to behavior toward the stranger/guest and that it has not been pledged the land for any egotistical disposal, but that it is Israel's share and promise as guest people (Lev. 25.23) of the promised land to grant universal hospitality to other peoples, wherefrom the Zionistic tradition gives witness, as it is most fully expressed in Isaiah. How greatly the authors of the New Testament grasped Isaiah's intention is shown merely alongside: in the Book of Isaiah it is said that the domicile of the expected Messiah is splendid (Isa. 11.10), this could at first sight be understood to the effect that the arrival of the "Scion Isaiah's" in the stables would be a mockery of the expectation and it would deliver a strong argument for the view that the newborn is not the Messiah. However, with these considerations one would overlook that the splendor of the (not harboring) "harborage" which Joseph and Mary must find lies exactly in the fact that it is open and that means to be a hospitable place for all (peoples), but especially for those whom according to mundane standards, splendid dwellings are usually off limits. Even the shepherd and the homeless have entry to the stable and there is no need for a patronizing "day of the open house," upon which exclusion would inevitably follow.

### God's Being as Guest

Since here is not the appropriate space to demonstrate all the stories about the guest in the Bible in detail, let us discuss only four further testimonials, whose common tenet is that they are posited at the exit of the Bible, respectively the gospels. One of these examples can be found in the last discourse of Jesus, as it is passed down by Matthew; the elucidation of the Last Judgment (Mt. 25.31-46). The Italian philosopher, Massimo Cacciari, cites in a reflection on the paradigms of (the utopian) Europe, as well as on the Greek logos, whose essence is the commandment of self-reflection; Christian behavior towards the stranger. Thereby he sees the following proprium of the Christian tradition:

The second paradigm stems from the biblical tradition. The Greek God protects the stranger. Hospitality is a universal value, acknowledged in Hellenism, a value of Zeus himself. But the stranger with whom the host starts a relationship was, however, considered a foreign figure, of a descent 'abroad'. A stranger/guest could not be the one who grants hospitality and who protects the stranger/guest. In the biblical tradition as well, God protects the stranger/guest conspicuously, he clothes him, he nourishes him and he commands to love him. The biblical tradition knows also that the stranger/guest (*hospes*) potentially always as well a foe (*hostis*), who is ever damned as well. But in this biblical tradition is to be found an expression which is infinitely stronger: and that is that God IS the stranger/guest. Really, God is THE STRANGER/GUEST. HE reveals himself to those who sit on his right side: I was a stranger/guest, I was

revealed to you in the 'person' of the excluded, the expelled – and yet you haven't recognized me.<sup>6</sup>

In these lines Cacciari not only draws attention to the Christian apprehension according to which God reveals himself as the guest/stranger, but he also points out that with this act the boundary between "territorial lord" and the "stranger" is forced open. Because God as guest/stranger is not simply the one whose place is beyond any border, rather he is as guest (the one who receives hospitality) host (the one who gives hospitality) as well. In this way he is – like the guest – as the other of the self the center of the self. It is implied that the sub-jectum, that is the foundation from which we have to understand ourselves, is not one's own introspection or self-reflection, neither is it one's own self-design, the I of the self, but rather the guest, whereby the conduct in relation to him gives the measure for the self-determination of the individual and the total order of society. An etymological relationship between the word *ipse* and *hosp(it)es* as it is given in the Indo-Germanic, perhaps points in that direction.<sup>7</sup> In any case, in Matthew 25 the central concept shines through that no definite gift must be expected from the guest or the stranger – with this one would remain within the logic of exchange – but rather that the guest/stranger is himself the gift, that is, that being the guest is HIS gift, to which Christians have to expose themselves and which represents the cornerstone of Christian existence.

#### **The Guideline (pre-giving) of the Guest as the Last Symbolic Action of Christ**

The second passage, to which I will pay more attention, is the last symbolic act which Jesus performs before his death on the cross and his resurrection, namely the Last Supper with his disciples; the twelve apostles as representatives of the eschatological Israel. In the sacramental-theological discourses of the Roman Catholic Church about the challenge of a faithful *memoria* of this central sacramental action, the question was raised as to whether the character of the feast or the character of the sacrifice stands in the foreground of the celebration of the Eucharist. However, this alternative does not arise in a closer look into the background of the category of the guest. The common meal is situated at the very center of hospitality in ancient cultures and therefore it is no surprise that in his parables and symbolic actions Jesus time and again brings into conjunction "the kingdom of God" with images and realities of the Last Supper (Mk. 2.15; 6.31; Lk. 14.14-24). In the Old Testament the reader learns that God takes dwelling in the praise of his people of Israel, freed from slavery, who meet at Zion for the feast. The meal of Jesus together with the apostles (are they not determined to become messengers of his hospitality?) for the praise of HIM and his memory blends into the horizon of understanding and yet renders a further dimension; because the eschatological table fellowship in which Jesus functions as the host radicalizes the meaning of gift. In bread and wine is present the spiritually elevated creation and with it God's creaturely reality, as it is committed to man in order to be "cultivated" and "guarded" (Gen. 2). Yet the gathered Christian community recognizes in the memory of the sign of Jesus, that the ultimate gift of creation which unites men among themselves and with YHWH is Jesus Christ's giving up of his own life, in whose acceptance Jesus becomes guest (and host) and YHWH's passage (as essence of his divinity) occurs (Gen. 18; Ex. 34). Both in the interpretation of the Eucharistic symbolic action of Jesus as sacrifice and in the

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<sup>6</sup> Massimo Cacciari, "L'invenzione dell'individuo," *Micromega, Almanacco di filosofia* no. 9 (1996), pp. 121-127 (translation by the author).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Bahr, *Die Sprache des Gastes*, pp. 41-42. Bahr cites in this context the Indo-European institutions of Émile Benveniste.



interpretation of a common feast, therefore, the essence is of a pre-giving (as a guideline) of the guest to which all peoples are invited and which costs all or nothing.

### The Non-identifiability of the Guest

In the context of motifs, both the initially discussed Abraham pericope and the eschatological feast to which Jesus invites his disciples, stands also the pericope which gives an account of the loss and the regaining of the dwelling of God, which Christians suffer on the traces of the Son of God; that is the story of the passage from Jerusalem to Emmaus and back (Lk. 24.13-35). Both protagonists, one of whom remains anonymous precisely because any reader might be able to find himself in him, have left and lost the place of salvation, Jerusalem, because this city apparently has not proven to be the place of messianic advent. As with Abraham, a stranger faces them who functions as a carrier of promise. From him they receive an interpretation of the Holy Scripture; more specifically the stranger gives them the hermeneutic key to understand its deepest intention. The reader of today does not immediately experience what the stranger has said, yet the corresponding answer by both is known: exactly like Abraham they extend an invitation and become a guest of their guest. One will by all means be able to say that they have recognized the Lord (*Kyrios*), not only in the breaking of bread, but in the relation of hospitality which the Holy Scripture disclosed to them. Luke points in this passage to a decisive fact: as they recognize Him (that is to say the guest), as their eyes are opened they don't see him any longer (in a physical sense). The guest therefore remains unidentifiable. He will not be confined in one's own noetic and practical disposal and is therefore neither to be located within the one's own boundaries, nor excluded as a stranger. The recognition lies as it were in this "not-more-seeing" which disagrees so much with the contemporary ethos of identification.

### The Heavenly Jerusalem as an Open City

The last narration of hospitality to which I will refer denotes the end and sealing off of the Bible; it deals with the end of John's Book of Revelation. The reader will, as he enters the last book of the Bible, be involved in the great vision of the downfall of the inhospitable powers conjoined with the spectacle of an open city, "the doors of which would not be closed the whole day" (Rev. 21.25) and whose openness designates God's dwelling, which consequently does not call any demarcated temple its own anymore. Those are listed in the guest book who open themselves to the gift of the guest and who do not harden their heart in respect to hospitality. One therefore will not go too far when one interprets the last great letter of the Bible in that the behavior towards the guest (host) opens the seal for the corresponding reading of the scripture (or closes it for good).<sup>8</sup> One must not forget that – in the context of the revelation by John – the addressees of this book are those who have experienced the fundamental vulnerability and exposure which is tied to the status of the guest themselves (and his potential denial). The shelter of the divine guest giver (host) and the openness of the divine Jerusalem are permanently tied to the experience of being exposed.

### Is There a European Heritage of the Guest?

In the following section, I will look briefly for a scene concerned with perceptibility of the guest within the contemporary occidental philosophical tradition. It is often said that Judeo-

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<sup>8</sup> Jürgen Roloff, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 1984).

Christian heritage holds ready Europe's narration of depth and its specific rationality as it is formulated in contemporary philosophy. Therefore, when the narration about the guest had a special weight in the biblical tradition, it should be asked, where would it find itself in its (philosophical) transformations? In the first instance, the guest is still the one who has always been excluded. Europe invented the identity card to classify the guest as a foreigner and where applicable to deport him. Europe covers and surveys the world<sup>9</sup> and alongside the search for areas of hospitable encounters, the search for one's own limitable and controllable fundament crops up. This represents, as it were, the mastery of *knowledge*, which is to be found in the (excluding) definition of the other and it deals less with a *faith*, which tries to live according to a guideline (the pre-given) of the possibility of an *encounter* which will have been occurred.

Before bringing this search for the guest to a close, we should ask once more what amounts to the word that the guest gives: strangely enough there is no conceivable antonym, nor can an adjective be drafted ("hospitable" denominates the host).<sup>10</sup> The word guest strays into the vicinity of the word "God" – in theology the adjective "godly" was thoughtlessly drafted while dismissing the circumstance that in the strictest sense one will never be able to join it with a quality (since from what could godly be demarcated?). This proximity also refers to the fact that the guest is moved to the sphere of the Divine – the ancients expressed this by maintaining that the right to hospitality was the most sacred right – insofar as the violation of the guest like the desecration of a sanctuary would be accompanied by his total disappearance. Perhaps under the consideration of this observance of the proximity of the guest to the non-identifiable and non-definable, to that which is in the center of one's own without ever being in one's possession, one can find traces of a deposit in the great philosophical traditions of the European modern era whose still to be transformed spiritual consequence will only be hinted at here.

### The Perpetuation of Hospitable Thinking: Leibniz, Kant, Hegel

Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz (1646-1716) pointed out that the world has sufficient reason in God,<sup>11</sup> yet in order to add immediately that God cannot be located on the same level; he reasoned, "The sufficient reason or the last reason (God) must therefore lie outside the context of the row of the particular and accidental things (...)."<sup>12</sup> Leibniz does not mean a total context of justification that is a sort of closed justification microstructure, which would not leave any room for freedom and wherein everything were subsumed and had a secure fundament. Rather he initializes the intuition that our world lives from an open guideline (pre-given), without which being would not be conceivable as a meaningful coherence. The world in itself is not sufficient, but rather there is a kind of gap which initially closes and thereby renders it free and meaningful. God, understood in this manner, is a blank space – which corresponds to the blank space of the guest never to be integrated into the own identity – in the midst of being, a place which is neither the other (in the sense of a "beyond"), nor can it be integrated into mundane structure.

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<sup>9</sup> Taking the measurement of the world as Occidental-contemporary heritage and its failure under the surface is hauntingly described in: Thomas Pynchon, *Mason and Dixon* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1997).

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Bahr, *Die Sprache des Gastes*, pp. 25-30, especially p. 28.

<sup>11</sup> "Sufficient reason" does not simply mean any reason for a certain phenomenon, but expresses the fact of why the world is one way and not another. This sufficient reason, which holds together the world and prevents its falling apart into the randomness of isolated incidents, Leibniz locates in the love of God.

<sup>12</sup> Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, "Monadology," § 37.

A similar phenomenon is also encountered in the work of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), whose highest principal of all use of reason (the “synthesis”) is expressed in the tenet, “I think must be able to accompany all my representations.”<sup>13</sup> In the reflections here presented it is of importance that this “companion” (who, as the one who eludes a last identification, neither “is” nor “is not”) must by no means – as Kant shows in the transcendental dialectics – be subjectified as a substantial I, as God in the sense of an *omnitudo realitatis*, or as a world in the sense of a causal structure. Rather he designates the fundamental boundary of the use of reason (and with it our identifying thinking) and the opening of a specific rationality of practical reason. Neither as one’s own nor as the other can the I according to Kant become a definable object of theoretical reason, whereby the space is opened up to understand the sub-jectum as a goal never to be compensated and as a challenge beyond the limit of autonomy (in the sense of a voluntary self-ascription and autopoiesis) and heteronomy.

As the last great witness of the modern philosophical era, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) should be named.<sup>14</sup> In the closing chapters of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), in the “revealed religion” and in “absolute knowledge,”<sup>15</sup> the reader experiences, that all substance must perish in order for the subject to arise; or in other words: that the loss of the (noetic) self-affirmation of the own “I” (the self-affirmative I, that sets itself at the beginning of everything, represents the substantial moment of the modern era) is the fundamental moment of Christianity. Corresponding to this loss of self-affirmation is, as the depth-structure of rationality, the acknowledgement of the Other who is not adaptable to our thinking, but rather whom we have to expose ourselves to in order to be able to perceive him as a subject. Following Hegel, this thought is the true spiritual foundation of an ethical and Christian vision of the Occidental modern era. With the disappearance of the substance, therefore, first and foremost the claim of validity of the I is meant, a claim that leads to the fact that we perceive/form the other within certain representations, by which he is delineated and defined. In this way, it is meant to recognize him, yet not to acknowledge him. Conceived theologically, the demise of substance as substantial abandonment of the I denotes the sacrifice and passing of Jesus, in which YHWH becomes the actual subject of man (Gal. 2.20). Hegel again points out that Christ himself must not be rendered positive, but that he has his *topos* in the spirit as the deepest reason, to enable the acknowledgement of the other. The I is therefore not the center of our existence, and personality can therefore not be understood as the self-positing and acting empowerment of the world, but it lives in answering to a succession of a spiritual event which is prior to it, which remains an uncatchable precept. This thought can possibly be mediated by means of the category of the guest. Man is the guest of a spiritual event, which in Christianity bears the name Jesus – as a transfer of the name YHWH – whereby however the decisive moment would lie in the circumstance to keep this name open as an inviting guideline and not

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<sup>13</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), B 131f.

<sup>14</sup> My thesis which cannot here be expounded would be that Kant basically affirms and systematizes the central ideas of Leibniz, that further quasi any line out of Kant’s critique is assimilated in both major speculative works of Hegel (*Phenomenology of the Spirit* and *Science of Logic*), whose thought is again in striking proximity to Levinas’ insights, above all on what concerns the issue of the “other.” Hegel would therefore not primarily be the thinker of the system, but the one who showed its limit; he would be the thinker who in his own way incorporates the Kantian program to mediate knowledge in order to reach faith. Cf. Kurt Appel, *Zeit und Gott. Mythos und Logos der Zeit im Ausgang von Hegel und Schelling* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2008).

<sup>15</sup> In respect to the interpretation of revealed religion and absolute knowledge as the demise of any substantiality in the sense of a validity claim cf.: Appel, *Zeit und Gott*, pp. 276-298; Thomas Auinger, *Das absolute Wissen als Ort der Ver-Einigung. Zur absoluten Wissensdimension des Gewissens und der Religion in Hegels Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2003).

to take possession of it as the last self-protection of one's own noetic world. In this way, his character as the guest is safeguarded in the way that he "never ceases to give himself."<sup>16</sup>

At the beginning stands, therefore, the reception of the guest which challenges and questions the self. The gift of the guest is not something, but He himself. Therein "we" – in all vulnerability, exposure, and tangibility – become guests of a spiritual event; it emerges (perhaps) a participation in the joy, in the suffering and above all in the question of the other. Perhaps we also become part of a narration of a hospitable encounter, without ever being able to possess it. This encounter – for which humanism, Christians, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, and the secular will have to give testimony to – may flow "into the learning to be human," receiving the narrative of a universal hospitality,<sup>17</sup> which will have to write ever anew a text of invitation comprising the past, present, and future.

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<sup>16</sup> Bahr, *Die Sprache des Gastes*, p. 445.

<sup>17</sup> Gianni Vattimo, *Jenseits des Christentums. Gibt es eine Welt ohne Gott?* (Wien: Carl Hanser Verlag, 2004), pp. 128-142, especially p. 138.

## The Search for Lost Intimacy: Georges Bataille on Religion as Immanent Human Experience

THOMAS M. SCHMIDT

Religions, rituals, and myths have been studied as social practices and institutions by the sociology of religion. The symbolic function and representational content of rituals and myths have been elaborated into theologies and studied by cultural and interpretative anthropology. And participation in rituals and the mental organization of individuals and groups by myths produce a distinctive experience. It is this experience, 'inner experience', that was the focus of Georges Bataille's writings. The phenomenological explication of this experience led him to contest the theological elaborations of rituals and myths in their dominant interpretations by cultural and interpretative anthropology and to contest the dominant conceptions of the sociology of religion.<sup>1</sup>

Philosophers, theologians, sociologists, historians, and scholars of cultural and religious studies have tried exhaustingly to understand and explain religious practices and beliefs as expressions of human experience. The deepest divide and strongest distinction among all those approaches consists in the bifurcation between individualistic accounts of religious experience on the one hand, and social or collective ones on the other. I basically agree with Alphonso Lingis' interpretation that Georges Bataille's theory of religion focuses on the inner experience and challenges the traditional sociological conceptions of religion. But I am also convinced that Bataille's understanding of religious experience is not entirely individualistic. His concept of religion offers a unique and comprehensive combination of an individualistic approach to the existentialist, aesthetic, even mystical dimension of religious experience with a sociological account of the intersubjective and collective function of religious practices.

The social dimension of Bataille's notion of religion is manifested most significantly by his interest in a sociology of the sacred. Referring to the seminal works of Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss, Bataille developed his own original theory of religion. He followed Durkheim's basic sociological distinction between the profane and the sacred. He also agreed with Mauss that religion embodies patterns of social exchange which are based upon the ideas of gift and expenditure. Those religiously grounded ideas are completely distinct from the ordinary logic of productive work and the exchange of commodities of equivalent value. Bataille's reference to the idea of the sacred is the opposite from a nostalgic retreat to archaic societies. It is a conceptual prerequisite to understand modern society, especially its economic and technological dimensions, based on the principles of labor, utility, expedience and instrumental reasoning.

For similar reasons, Durkheim's notion of the sacred plays an important conceptual role in Jürgen Habermas' theory of modernity. The basic distinction between the sacred and the profane derived from Durkheim's sociology of religion is a fundamental concept for Habermas' own understanding of the social, moral and cognitive dimensions of the process of modernization. Thus comparing Bataille and Habermas with respect to their common

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<sup>1</sup> Alphonso Lingis, "Bataille's Contestation of Interpretative Anthropology and of the Sociology of Religion." Jeremy Biles and Kent L. Brintnall (eds.), *Negative Ecstasies. Georges Bataille and the Study of Religion* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), p. 138.

reference to the project of a sociology of the sacred might be helpful to understand their concepts of religion in general. Analyzing Bataille's concept of religion is my main interest here and shapes the main argument of the following essay. I would like to begin with some remarks about Jürgen Habermas and his reference to the concept of the holy. I will then compare his version of a sociology of the sacred with Bataille's concept of religion to elucidate the differences but also the striking similarities between Habermas' and Bataille's approach to religion as an immanent human experience.

### Linguistification of the Sacred: Habermas on Durkheim's Sociology of Religion

In his main work, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Habermas follows Max Weber in assigning to the secularization process the key role in explaining the development of Occidental rationalism. On closer inspection, Habermas' theory of secularized modernity proves to be based on a combination of Weber's theory of the differentiation of value spheres and Durkheim's idea of the opposition between the sacred and the profane as the basic social distinction and operation. In order to establish the new academic discipline called sociology Durkheim intended to demonstrate the existence of social facts which are ontologically distinct from natural facts and individual mental states. Social facts are phenomena which determine feelings, thoughts, actions of an individual person which can only be explained in social terms. Collective habits and shared norms are phenomena of that kind. Thus, the idea of collective symbolic representation and their internalization by cooperatively acting agents became a crucial methodological task of sociology. Religious representations such as myths and dogmas fulfill this methodological requirement since they are shared symbolic expressions of a common collective experience whose paradigm case is the religious ritual. For Durkheim, religion was not predominantly an aggregate of ideas but primarily a system of forces which manifest and express themselves as myths and beliefs. The content of shared norms and beliefs is constituted by iterated forms of collective practices and experiences.

Against this theoretical Durkheimian background, Habermas conceives modernity as a process of the linguistification of the sacred through which the potential for rationality inherent in communicative action is freed for the first time. Modernization is the process through which the "socially integrative and expressive functions that were at first fulfilled by ritual practice"<sup>2</sup> pass over to communicative action, and "the authority of the holy is gradually replaced by the authority of an achieved consensus. This means a freeing of communicative action from sacrally protected normative contexts."<sup>3</sup> The "spellbinding power of the holy, is sublimated into the *binding/bonding* force of criticizable validity claims and at the same time turned into an everyday occurrence"<sup>4</sup> – according to Habermas. Secularization, understood as the linguistification of the binding forces of the sacred forms the precondition for the proceduralization of moral justification, political legitimation and social integration as understood in the context of Habermas' *Theory of Communicative Action*. The modern process of differentiation follows a developmental logic that is geared to a constantly expanding universalization *qua* formalization of competences. Thus the diagnosis of the complete disenchantment of religious world views and the total linguistification of the sacred bears the main argumentative burden in upholding the notion of the now irreversible, necessarily procedural nature of post-metaphysical thinking. This genesis and unfolding of Occidental rationalism, understood as a

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<sup>2</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume 2, Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), p. 77.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

process of linguistification of the sacred creates the methodological preconditions for Habermas' normative view of modernity.

This idea of modernization as linguistification was criticized on the grounds that it supposedly leads to a dualistic separation of form and content. The tenor of the critique is that too sharp a distinction is drawn here between the reconstruction of anonymous rule systems, and the critical analysis of the empirical factors determining concrete life conduct. The developmental logic of world views, so the critique would have it, was distinguished too sharply from the typology of possible convictions. Since the process of linguistification of the sacred is then understood as the emergence of "culture-invariant validity claims,"<sup>5</sup> the critique continues, Habermas construes the social evolutionary process of a rationalization of world-views too strongly and one-sidedly as a process of abstraction.

One of the strategies pursued by Habermas in response to that critique comprises the loosening of the close link between the comprehension of meaning, normative knowledge and the coordination of action. Whereas in *The Theory of Communicative Action* the comprehension of an utterance was linked so closely to knowledge of the conditions of validity that from the standpoint of the speaker "the conditions of acceptability are identical to the conditions of his illocutionary success,"<sup>6</sup> later, in *Between facts and norms*<sup>7</sup> for instance, a stronger distinction is drawn between the semantic analysis of meaning, a pragmatic analysis of normativity, and the theoretical analysis proper of the actions linked to the medium of language. In contrast to earlier tendencies toward a dualistic separation of facts and norms, Habermas now uses a stage theory of general meaning and validity to elaborate the inherent relationship between the two. This modified definition of the relationship between meaning and norms is also articulated in a modified theoretical position toward religion. The strongly evolutionist emphasis prevailing in *The Theory of Communicative Action*, according to which religion was believed to be undergoing a process of substantial dissolution, gave way to a mildly skeptical, antagonistic stance toward religion's still unexhausted semantic potentials.

To be clear, Habermas' notion of post-metaphysical thinking still gives preference to secular reason. As a consequence, religious beliefs have to be translated into secular political reasons before they can enter the public sphere, at least to some extent. The insistence on 'translation' does not mean that religious beliefs should not be expressed in the public sphere, that they should not be considered as legitimate grounds of personal decisions in political issues. But the abstinence from religion is required when it comes to the establishment and enforcement of coercive laws. A further constraint upon the translation of religious beliefs into secular reasons is that, according to Habermas, secular reason "cannot appropriate *as* religious experience that to which religious discourse refers."<sup>8</sup> The "opaque core of religious experience"<sup>9</sup> can in his view only be circled by a philosophy that remains agnostic, but cannot be penetrated using the analytical tools available to philosophy. Yet the question then arises of how the call for "cooperative translation" and "saving appropriation" of religious content into secular reasons can be harmonized with the view that the "opaque core of religious

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>6</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume 1, Reason and the Rationalization of Society* (London: Heinemann 1984), p. 297f.

<sup>7</sup> Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997).

<sup>8</sup> Habermas, "Religion in the Public Sphere. Cognitive preconditions to the public use of rational thinking by religious and secular people," *European Journal of Philosophy* 14 (2006), p. 14.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

experience"<sup>10</sup> remains "so abysmally alien to discursive thought as does the core of aesthetic experience, which can likewise only be circled but not penetrated by philosophical reflection."<sup>11</sup>

The notion 'cooperative translation' tries to capture a kind of linguistification of the sacred which is considered a 'saving appropriation' of religious content in the light of secular thinking. Thus, basic concepts of religious studies like ritual and the sacred continue to play a central role in Habermas' recent theory of modernity. The emphasis in his work on religion has shifted from a predominantly sociological analysis of the function of religion to a more anthropological approach. Inspired by the work of Michael Tomasello, Habermas now stronger conceptualizes the relation between religious rituals and their linguistic expressions in terms of the transition from mere bodily gestures to symbols. In his essay "A Hypothesis Concerning the Evolutionary Meaning of Rites,"<sup>12</sup> for example, the main contribution of religion to the constitution and development of human society is still perceived by Habermas as a process of a linguistification of the sacred. This process is not confined to the proceduralization of semantic content. It is understood as the emergence of language use as such. A satisfying theory of ritual is required to explain how individual experiences and desires can find communally shared expressions in terms of symbols, doctrines and norms. In that respect the concept of linguistification of the sacred still represents a key notion in Habermas' explanation of the constitution and the rational progress of society. This is also the reason why Habermas is still interested in Durkheim's social theory of the sacred.

Habermas shares his continuous interest in Durkheim's "sociology of the sacred" with the project pursued by the members of the Collège de Sociologie in the 1930s. Like the most influential member of this group, Georges Bataille, Habermas follows Durkheim in using the notion of the sacred as a key concept of a theory of society, of modern society in particular. According to Habermas, Georges Bataille clearly stands in the tradition of Durkheim's sociology of religion. He "traces the heterogenous aspects of social as well as of psychic and mental life back to the sacred element that Durkheim had defined by contrasting it with the world of the profane."<sup>13</sup> Like Habermas' theory of communicative action, Bataille's work represents a specific contribution to the philosophical discourse on modern society. In order to understand society in general we have to understand the constitution of shared practices, norms and identities. Thus, we have to explain the forces which energize religious experience and manifest itself in rituals, myths and dogmas. But Bataille gives a different account of the relation between religious experience, religious rituals and symbols and their social function – based on a concept of communication which differs entirely from Habermas' formal-pragmatic analysis of linguistic behavior.

### Transgression and Sacrifice: Bataille's Sociology of the Sacred

Georges Bataille has influenced aesthetics, art criticism, literary theory and anthropology. He continues to be a marginal figure in the field of social theory, political philosophy, ethics and philosophy of religion. In general, Bataille seems an obscure writer. He was interested in death, degradation, violence and the power and potential of the obscene. Therefore, some have

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> "A Hypothesis Concerning the Evolutionary Meaning of Rites," in *Postmetaphysical Thinking II* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017).

<sup>13</sup> Jürgen Habermas, "Between Eroticism and General Economics: Georges Bataille," in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity. Twelve Lectures*, translated by Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), pp. 217-218.



interpreted the “development of his thought as a movement away from politics toward eroticism, hypersubjectivity, and mysticism.”<sup>14</sup> Bataille has been called the ‘metaphysician of evil’ and has been perceived as a representative of “Left fascism,”<sup>15</sup> as “the founding father of a confused Left Nietzscheanism.”<sup>16</sup>

One way to get into the ambivalent and complex thinking of Bataille is to consider his work as a specific contribution to the modern philosophical discourse on human experience. Following Alexander Kojève’s interpretation of Hegel, Bataille conceptualizes the modern society as a world of slavish discipline, a world in which labor remains the only path toward self-realization of the modern subject and its quest for autonomy. Bataille takes the Hegelian dialectic as the existential answer to the monotony of existence in the bourgeois world. It is the feeling of weariness in the face of life, of *ennui*, that leads Bataille to rebel against meaningless human existence. Drawing on the lectures of Kojève, Bataille interprets the Hegelian dialectic as the existential answer to the strongest challenge human experience has to face, the threat posed by death. As his point of departure Bataille chooses Kojève’s interpretation, who ascribes to Hegel the thesis of the end of history. According to this thesis, history is a mere sequence of events which does not lead beyond the established framework of the social reality in a liberal constitutional state. Thus, the end of history would also mean the impossibility of true action and meaningful experience. “All meaningful change – all transforming labor having to do with society, religion, and philosophy – is over.”<sup>17</sup> At this point in history “*nothing new could happen*. Human liberation, inseparable from human labor and the progress of philosophy, had ended; a state in which freedom was attained through the recognition of the other was definitive. From now on a State that implemented that freedom was all that could be postulated ... Of course, things would still ‘happen’ ... but the essential narrative was over.”<sup>18</sup>

From the 1920s to the 1940s Bataille raised objections against this view, by citing the contingent nature of human experience. He criticized the idea of the end of history as a manifestation of Hegel’s alleged one sided reading of the history of the modern subject. In Bataille’s interpretation Hegel’s idea of the free and sovereign subject is dependent on the notion of slave consciousness since the modern subject strives to realize itself entirely through the instrumental logic of labor and rationally justified obedience to the rule of law. On the contrary, true sovereign consciousness, according to Bataille, displays its sovereignty through its capacity for unlimited and unconstrained expenditure. “Human cultures, psychological processes, and everyday life, says Bataille, are constituted by play, by the nonproductive expenditure of ‘wasteful’ energy, by the various games and rituals that permit human contact with excess and superfluity.”<sup>19</sup>

The truly free consciousness appears to be sovereign only when it performs an act of total expenditure of itself, an act of destroying and sacrificing the useful products of its slavish labor. But the slave is capable of such expenditure in the ecstasy of the feast for isolated moments only. And the ecstatic expenditure is – as a means of recreation – integrated again into the re-stabilizing of the order of things, into the world of production of useful commodities. However,

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<sup>14</sup> Robyn Marasco, *The Highway of Despair. Critical Theory after Hegel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), p. 116.

<sup>15</sup> Richard Wolin, “Left Fascism: Georges Bataille and the German Ideology,” *Constellations* 2, no. 3 (1996), p. 413.

<sup>16</sup> Marasco, *The Highway of Despair*, p. 119.

<sup>17</sup> Allan Stoekl, *Bataille’s Peak. Energy, Religion, and Postsustainability* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), p. 75.

<sup>18</sup> Stoekl, *Bataille’s Peak*, p. IX.

<sup>19</sup> Marasco, *The Highway of Despair*, p. 123.

the sovereignty of the master also threatens to wither away and to turn into an empty gesture. The master is confronted by the choice of either dying in the permanent struggle for recognition or being stultified by pleasure. In the end, therefore, true sovereignty appears to be inconceivable, appears not to be a possible object of conscious human experience.

Thus, when Bataille returned to his engagement with Hegel in the 1950s, he specifically focused on the thought of death. It is the fear of death which nourishes the slave's desire that ultimately liberates him. The experience of death is the core of negativity which determines the experiences of self-consciousness human beings. Here again, Bataille relies on Kojève's interpretation of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, especially of the famous passage about the struggle for recognition. Confronted with the threat of death, imposed by another self-conscious being, one of the opponents in the struggle for recognition gives preference to its physical survival instead of the actualization of its self-image as a free and autonomous self. The subordinate consciousness renounces its claim to be sovereign in order to preserve its existence. As a result, the relation of lordship and bondage is established. The recognition of the legitimate power of the lord on the part of the bondsman leads to the development of an economy based on division of labor, an order of things, governed by instrumental reason. This order can be understood as an expression of fear in the face of death and, at the same time, as an effort toward overcoming this fear. Through subordination to the logic of labor, the slave also subjects himself to a discipline which, in the long run, will free him from the rule of the master. Since the master merely consumes objects as finished products and does not process them himself, the true experience of sovereign power over objects shifts from the master to the slave. Through disciplined labor the slave gains consciousness of his self-sufficiency. "Bataille presents work as our best expression of despair and our surest defense against its damages. Work, done in desperation, and performed with passion, offers a fugitive freedom under inhuman conditions."<sup>20</sup>

Bataille criticizes that Hegel follows only the narrative of the slave's liberation and in a sense lets the master go by the wayside of history. In his view Hegel ceased to give sufficient consideration to death as the true master. Whoever wants to escape from the clutches of slave consciousness must be able to conceptualize the master in order to grasp the meaning of sovereignty. This seems impossible. Sovereignty cannot be experienced or adequately conceptualized, because its essence is that of the absolute master, that of death. Man cannot consciously experience his own death. Such an experience is possible only through sacrifice, which allows the observing consciousness to identify with someone dying. Therefore, Bataille developed a theory of religion centered on the concept of sacrifice. At first glance, such a theory seems to offer an archaic, neo-pagan concept of religion. According to Bataille, this theory is designed to understand the constitutive role of religion for modern sovereign consciousness, for a kind of human experience which is meaningful and at the same time strictly immanent.

### Bataille's Theory of Religion

In his *Theory of Religion*,<sup>21</sup> posthumously published in 1973, Bataille followed Durkheim's approach in developing a general concept of religion, based on the distinction of the two realms of the world, the profane order of things and the sacred order of intimacy. The order of things is the world of distinct objects and their instrumental manipulation in productive work. It is the profane world ruled by discontinuity, individuation, division of labor, and separation into subjects and objects. In the order of things distinct and finite objects are separated from subjects which are enabled and entitled to touch and use those object. Sacred objects, on the other hand,

<sup>20</sup> Marasco, *The Highway of Despair*, p. 131.

<sup>21</sup> Georges Bataille, *Theory of Religion*, translated by Robert Hurley (New York: Zone Books, 1992).

“possess an auratic power that simultaneously entices and attracts even as it terrifies and repulses. If stimulated, they release shocking effects and represent a different, higher level of reality.”<sup>22</sup> The sacred world or the order of intimacy is the realm in which we experience no distinct objects or individual selves. The religious erotic desire for intimate communion is the desire for intimacy, the longing to break the shell of one’s individual selfhood and to really communicate with each other. Understanding communication as communion means to break free from the idea of the self as a self-contained entity. Thus religion, as ritualized performance and inner experience, is the search for lost intimacy.

According to Bataille (who again extends and modifies Durkheim), the profane world is the sphere of useful activity, goal-oriented thought, instrumental reason, and concern for the discontinuous self. It is the workaday world of utility, lasting order, and the accumulation of goods against the threat of death. The sacred, in stark opposition, includes those moods, moments, and operations that undo, always and only for a fleeting time, the usefulness of mere things, the pretenses of accomplishment, the claims of our future-oriented projects, the limits of mere reason. Sacrifice is a transgression of those prohibitions that constrict and restrict human experience, soldering the individual into a hermetic shell of self-protection defined by pecuniary interest, individual concern, and fear of death.<sup>23</sup>

Sacrifice is the operation by which we try to overcome the separation between subject and object and the alienation among subjects by transgressing the border between the sacred and the profane world. In sacrifice, we violate the norms and restrictions of the profane world of labor and instrumental reason. Sacrifice removes values and goods from the order of things by excessive consumption and expenditure. Religious experience, the experience of the sacred, is constituted by an inseparable mixture of fear and desire, of fascination and repulsion. Religion is an immanent human practice. It is part of this world and thus a part of the order of things. But it also connects us with the sacred, the realm of experience which is neglected, suppressed by the instrumental logic of things and the productive order of labor. Bataille follows Hubert and Mauss in this regard. Unlike Durkheim, who has taken the dualism of the sacred and the profane as absolute, Hubert and Mauss have argued that “the structure of sacrifice includes a *mediating* dimension to guarantee passage and/or contact with the divine. Sacrifice itself confers a sacred otherness onto the victim chosen to transmit a sacred element to the profane.”<sup>24</sup>

The transgressive force of sacrifice is a vital aspect of ourselves that we should not regret or deny. There is no question for Bataille that sacrifice is an a-moral act of transgression that can become a manifestation of extreme and violent self-affirmation. He does not praise cruelty for its own sake. In accordance to Kantian moral philosophy Bataille’s ethical thinking vehemently criticizes human actions and relations in which we instrumentalize other persons, when we treat them as means to an end. To treat others as distinct entities, as mere elements of the order of things, as objects we are entitled to use and manipulate, this is the source of all violence and cruelty in human life. In following de Sade to some extent, Bataille believes that cruelty and violence are ineradicable features of human life. They will not wither away as result of

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<sup>22</sup> Habermas, “Eroticism and General Economics,” p. 218.

<sup>23</sup> Jeremy Biles and Kent Brintnall (eds.), *Negative Ecstasies. Georges Bataille and the Study of Religion* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), p. 7.

<sup>24</sup> Michèle Richman, *Sacred Revolutions. Durkheim and the College de Sociologie* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), p. 42.

moral criticism. For this reason, Bataille believes that it is necessary to indulge in a form of communication which is ecstatic in order to establish free and human relationships. In establishing this kind of deep, non-instrumental human communication, cruelty does play an inevitable role since it belongs to the forces which break down the barriers between the isolated and encapsulated selves. As long as morality means to negate oneself, one's desires and inclinations in order to avoid inflicting harm on others, we subordinate ourselves to the given order of things and their logic. To neglect oneself in order to avoid evil will precisely help to bring it about since it puts us in isolation from one another. Only the sovereign self who does not subordinate itself to any given rule or rational project will be able to communicate with others in a non-instrumentalizing, non-objectifying way. This is the purpose of practices which try to achieve "ecstatic communication with others and the world in total. These practices combine the self-assertion that consists in rejecting our subordination to other people, to laws, and to rules with the self-negation of dissolving our self-contained subjectivity and its tendencies toward controlling and dominating others."<sup>25</sup> Thus, the sovereign subject is not an atomistic individual, detached from society, absorbed with its own self-fulfillment. Expenditure, waste, effervescence are constitutive forces of communities and societies.<sup>26</sup>

The sovereign subject is the one who lives completely for and in the present. "To be sovereign is to be in a state in which one is not a means to an end. Not to one's others ends and not to one's own future ends. To be sovereign is to be in the present moment, subject to nothing and no one else."<sup>27</sup> Sovereign moments are those moments in which we transgress the boundaries of our isolation and self-centeredness. Thus, rational consideration alone will not be capable to justify, constitute and constrain sovereign power. Rational moral norms will not suffice to domesticate violence nor will they be able to establish a kind of deep and meaningful communication as shared human experience. The only way to criticize cruelty and violence effectively lies in the Hegelian approach of following the course of a dialectical movement which longs to reconcile a lost totality by means of radicalized negativity. As the dialectical drama between sovereign and submissive subjectivity is played out, it will become obvious that mere self-affirmation is a self-contradictory concept of sovereignty. The submissive subject subordinates the satisfaction of needs and desires to the instrumental logic of labor and reasonable planning. In ordinary life, we subordinate the present moment to the future we are allocating resources for. In doing so, we subject our present self to something other than our present self, we act like the slave in Kojève's reading of Hegel's *Phenomenology*. Since the sovereign subject, on the other hand, disregards its own future, plans and ambitions it undermines the possibility of its existence and pleasure in the future. The act of radical self-affirmation of the sovereign self in the ecstatic moment leads to the result that there will be no self to affirm in the future. Thus, sovereignty is a paradoxical concept which encompasses both self-affirmation and self-denial. Because of its paradoxical character the subject will always be struggling to claim and regain its sovereignty. Sacrifice and expenditure are manifestations of this constant struggle for sovereignty. Therefore, religious experience as such does not

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<sup>25</sup> Stephen S. Bush, "Sovereignty and Cruelty. Self-Affirmation, Self-Dissolution and the Bataille Subject," in: J. Biles and K. Brintall (eds.), *Negative Ecstasies. Georges Bataille and the Study of Religion* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), p. 49.

<sup>26</sup> "Following Hegel's recognition of the specifically human character of negativity, Bataille posited expenditure in the most extreme sense as the basis for social groups. Imputing to humans the need to move beyond themselves in order to participate in some broader social experience, he explained the origins of the sacred in sacrifice, in the ability to lose oneself as well as things, a sentiment traditionally sanctioned in the effervescent festival-like atmosphere of ritualized destruction." Richman, *Sacred Revolutions*, p. 118.

<sup>27</sup> Bush, "Sovereignty and Cruelty," p. 45.

contradict the modern principle of autonomy. To enter the sacred sphere of sovereignty does not undermine the participation in the social world of free and rational self-determination. Transgressing “boundaries toward the sacral does not imply a humble self-surrender of subjectivity, but liberation to true sovereignty.”<sup>28</sup>

Religion as sacrifice transgresses the boundaries of the isolated self and reconnects it with our inner nature, the lost order of intimacy. “Sacrifice is a way of knowing, consciously, that one does not know – since utility and knowledge (planning, foresight, retrospection) are inseparable. If nature lacks knowledge ... then humans, through religion, knowingly reestablish contact with a natural realm of expenditure that is closed off from the human world of practical distinctions and coherent knowledge.”<sup>29</sup> With this idea of religion as *knowingly* reestablishing contact with nature Bataille tries to close a lacuna he perceives in Hegel’s concept of knowledge. Since he is influenced by Kojève’s reading of Hegel, Bataille takes the idea of absolute knowledge as a completely determined and closed kind of knowledge. For knowledge to be truly complete, the “unknowable must be known, but as *unknowable*.”<sup>30</sup> It is precisely the task of religion to bring about this paradoxical kind of knowledge.<sup>31</sup> “Myth is born in ritual acts concealed from the static vulgarity of disintegrated society, but the violent dynamic belonging to it has no other object than the return to lost totality.”<sup>32</sup> “The totality in question here is distinguished from the ‘closed’ system inherited from Hegel ... As experienced by the Bataillan subject, negativity reveals an individual consciousness suffering the condition of an ‘open wound’, in itself.” This is, “so Bataille claims – a refutation of Hegel.”<sup>33</sup>

The paradigm of religious experience which transgresses the constraints laid upon the human being by a rational logic of labor and which reconnects the self with nature is “mystical experience.” Bataille recognizes that the knowledge provided by mystical experience cannot be communicated adequately. To write about mystical experience is to lose its sense. Thus, expressions of the sense of human experience will always slip into the void. The reason lies in the “superabundance of meaning rather than [in] meaninglessness.”<sup>34</sup> Like wealth, sense is produced only to be given and destroyed. The established religions try to put mystical experience into words, into symbols and dogmas. Inner experience then acquires the noetic function of grounding and justifying the propositional contents of religious beliefs and doctrines. Established religions use mystical experience, they turn it into something useful. They “turn the radicality of the sacrificial event into a merely useful element in their liturgies.”<sup>35</sup> Bataille’s understanding of religion as sacrifice and inner mystical experience is not only anticlerical, it is radically immanent, explicitly atheistic. Following Kojève, Bataille conceives modernity as a period after the death of God. Religion, properly understood, as the experience and practice of sacrificial transgression, will not wither away in modern societies. It will continue to play an indispensable role in articulating and constituting meaningful human experience in the light of its utmost challenge, the threat of death.

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<sup>28</sup> Habermas, “Eroticism and General Economics,” p. 214.

<sup>29</sup> Stoekl, *Bataille’s Peak*, p. 61.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.

<sup>31</sup> “Sacrifice is a way of knowing, consciously, that one does not know – since utility and knowledge (planning, foresight, retrospection) are inseparable.” Stoekl, *Bataille’s Peak*, p. 61.

<sup>32</sup> Bataille, “The Sorcerer’s Apprentice,” *College of Sociology, 1937-1939*. Translated by Betsy Wing (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), p. 23.

<sup>33</sup> Richman, *Sacred Revolutions*, p. 117.

<sup>34</sup> Marasco, *The Highway of Despair*, p. 127.

<sup>35</sup> Stoekl, *Bataille’s Peak*, p. 63.

### Conclusion: Bataille, Habermas and the Sociology of the Sacred

Like Habermas, Bataille refers to Durkheim's account of the sacred as a key concept of a theory of society in general and modern society in particular. Following Durkheim, Bataille and Habermas both perceive a structural parallel between autonomous morality and the experience of the holy which consists in its "auratic power that simultaneously entices and attracts even as it terrifies and repulses."<sup>36</sup> Habermas and Bataille also share the interest to use a theory of religion as a foundation for a more comprehensive story of modernity, a narrative of Occidental rationalism which does not reduce the process of rationalization to the progress of labor and instrumental logic but allows to perceive this development as the unfolding of unrestricted communication and the realization of freedom of socialized individuals. Differences between Habermas' and Bataille's approaches consist in respect to method and content alike. Habermas' theory of religion puts the emphasis on a sociological and anthropological analysis of the function of religious rituals not on a philosophical interpretation of religion as an inner experience. As a consequence, in terms of content, Bataille and Habermas differ significantly in their perspectives on the consciousness of finitude and mortality of the self. While Bataille refers to the encounter with death in the literal and manifest sense, Habermas' notion is restricted to the symbolic psychological and social sense of death. His notion of the symbolic death in communication describes the anguish of the individual which is threatened both by the fear of being excluded from society on the one hand, and being overwhelmed and swallowed by collective consciousness on the other. These divergent perspectives on death are related to their different accounts of communication and meaning. Habermas und Bataille are both skeptical about the idea of a complete and total linguistification of the sacred, but for different, opposite reasons. Both believe that the inner core of religious experience cannot be translated completely and adequately into discursive language, they are convinced that the "sacred is resistant to representation."<sup>37</sup> But while Habermas conceives religious experience as opaque, as closed and impenetrable from the philosophical *outside*, shut off from external articulation and reflection, Bataille is convinced that religious experience transcends the limits of language *from within* due to its effervescent and often violent power to transgress given and fixed norms of meaning and understanding.

Despite all differences, Bataille and Habermas share the conviction that religion is an eminent and crucial manifestation of individual and collective human experience. Thus, no philosophical approach trying to understand what it means to be human in a globalized world would be complete without an adequate account of religion.

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<sup>36</sup> Habermas, "Eroticism and General Economics," p. 218.

<sup>37</sup> Richman, *Sacred Revolutions*, p. 21.

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## Transformations of Doctrine as Cases of Mutual Learning Between Religions and Cultures: Schleiermacher's Proposal for Translating Christology in Modernity\*

MAUREEN JUNKER-KENNY

The history of the religions that we still know is a history of translations and of the emergence of new self-understandings through their engagement with cultures marked by specific thought forms, practices and institutions. The development of Christian thinking owes itself to such histories of translation and reappropriation under new cultural conditions. Test cases for such translations that have kept the original message present to participants in subsequent cultures are the doctrine of God, Christology and Soteriology. *Christology* is the study of the person of Jesus of Nazareth from his historical origins to his history of reception; *Soteriology* is the study of the understandings of his work of redemption as they were specified in different eras. Core terms which manifest these processes of mutual learning include *Logos*, which is both a New Testament and a late antique philosophical term, Jesus Christ as *homoousios* – of one being with God, but with two hypostases or natures, to safeguard in doctrinal terms both his humanity and his divinity. From Early Christianity onwards the transformations that have taken place in the understandings of redemption and of Jesus Christ as the redeemer are instructive as markers of new cultural conditions in response to which theologians have profiled implications and critically selected key elements of the biblical texts. Also in the doctrine of God, experience in biblical monotheism has resulted in the reinterpretation of Greek philosophical attributes of God, such as immutability and eternity, as God's loyalty and mastership over time. What "immutability" expressed in substance ontological terms, was turned into an intersubjective category, the steadfast loyalty with God's people throughout their history.<sup>1</sup> The human relationship to God based on a personal call in monotheism is realized in terms of accountability, self-reflection and conversion, suffering and hope, as is evidenced in biblical narratives, the Prophets, Psalms, hymns and key lines such as "*Ich hoffe auf Dich*" (I hope in You) in Johannes Brahms's German Requiem.

While the personal calling in monotheism as the key entry route to the concept of God has changed the terminology of philosophical discourse about God, Christianity has also benefited from engaging with the intellectual traditions of the cultures it encountered, recognizing them as the general consciousness of truth and honoring the stringency of philosophical reflection. As Herta Nagl-Docekal has pointed out against static conceptions of religions as unchanging systems of doctrine, also religious traditions "can only persist through centuries if the believers manage – over and over again – to re-interpret the core convictions of their faith in a way that renders them accessible, and convincing, in view of their respective contemporary condition."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> On the hiddenness and closeness of God in biblical monotheism, see Seán Freyne, "God as Experience and Mystery: The Early Christian Understanding," in W. Jeanrond and C. Theobald (eds.), *God: Experience and Mystery, Concilium 37* (London: SCM Press, 2001), pp. 74-84. On the early Christian apologists' internal reworking of the categories of Greek philosophy or religion, a classical article is Wolfhart Panenberg, "The Appropriation of the Philosophical Concept of God as a Dogmatic Problem of Early Christian Theology," *Basic Questions in Theology*, Vol. II (London: SCM Press, 1971), pp. 119-184.

<sup>2</sup> Herta Nagl-Docekal, "Many Forms of Non-public Reason?," in H. Lenk (ed.), *Comparative and Inter-cultural Philosophy* (Berlin/Münster: LIT, 2009), p. 85.

She sees an analogy to such theological reappropriations of biblical testimonies in the interpretations of a Constitution, an equally normative foundational document that is also bound by its prior history of effects. It is not the type of text that a Literary Quartet could treat as completely exhaustible by a reader-response approach on a Saturday night on television. There is a normative aspect to the translation religions undertake in relation to their foundational Scriptures. As Fiachra Long, theologian and educationalist at University College Cork, points out, it is a task that is being complicated by conditions of uncertainty at both ends: the holy scriptures themselves, and the ever-changing situations of reception.

The Greek god, Hermes, who may have been fleet of foot and hugely competent in his essential work of communicating the wishes of Zeus to humankind, is not a very good model to explain the more ambiguous context of human meaning-making, not to mention the more complicated process of reading and re-reading the scriptures. Homer models his idea of message transfer on a linear logic, invoking a general asymmetry between the gods and humankind where the message, originating in a separate domain (Mount Olympus), is then communicated without distortion to a messenger (Hermes), before being translated by means of Hermes's consummate skill into the mind of a human recipient ... In such a case, the translation is doubly certain, untouched by human misunderstanding on two counts, it being perfectly clear in itself and second perfectly translated. The listener, as a result, has no desire to do anything else but to be patently enlightened by the message handed over ... To add to our difficulties, our receivers are not only technically imperfect listeners but are often prejudiced and closed to the message communicated because of their own learning ... A historical vulnerability seems to be built in to this process of engagement between creator and receiver.<sup>3</sup>

One needs to be aware of the internal plurality of these Scriptures, and of a key distinction: the Bible testifies and points to God's self-revelation but is not itself this revelation. The normative task of theology thus calls for investigating both the cultural worlds in which the Bible originated and into which it was translated. The times of origin of its books in their various genres of writing, such as history, law, prayers and hymns, include what Karl Jaspers has identified as the "axial age";<sup>4</sup> they are marked by factors like the experience of ancient empires, a patriarchal ethos, or an honor-shame culture. The languages and symbolic orders of the worlds into which subsequent theological interpreters tried to transmit the message of the New Testament were equally diverse: Greek, Syriac, Coptic, Latin,<sup>5</sup> each requiring them to forge adequate doctrinal language and systematic architectures such as a scheme of salvation history.<sup>6</sup> They were part of and helped shape the intellectual streams of their eras and profiled

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<sup>3</sup> Fiachra Long, "The Hermeneutic Task," in *Reading the Sacred Scriptures: From Oral Tradition to Written Documents and their Reception*, edited by Fiachra Long and Siobhán Dowling Long (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Jaspers, Karl, *The Origin and Goal of History*, trans. M. Bullock (London: Routledge, 1953).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Seán Freyne, *The Jesus Movement and Its Expansion. Meaning and Mission* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2014).

<sup>6</sup> The early Christian thinker Irenaeus of Lyon (d. around 200) is an example of such systematization and of the defence of the whole Bible, not just the New Testament, against Marcion as an account of God's history with humanity.

what they saw as the key elements of the biblical message of salvation against their competitors: Gnostic, cosmic determinist, middle Platonic, etc.

The era I have chosen to highlight as a new departure in translating the legacy of the Gospel to its time is the break-through to modernity exemplified by the Kantian turn to the subject. Friedrich Schleiermacher responded to this challenge and inaugurated a new type of dogmatic theology based on an analysis of human subjectivity. I will focus on the corrections in the second edition of *The Christian Faith*, undertaken to counter the criticism leveled against the first edition that it had sold out Christian faith convictions to a Rationalist Enlightenment context. In my first part, I shall exemplify how this view still prevails in influential English-speaking accounts, here by Alister McGrath. In my second part, I shall discuss the early critique by Ferdinand Christian Baur, its renewal by McGrath, and some of the crucial changes in the Second Edition.<sup>7</sup> From Schleiermacher's enterprise of *mutual* learning between religion and culture (which gave him the title "Father of cultural Protestantism") I finally draw the conclusion for contemporary encounters between cultures that a now global civilization more than ever needs to recognize particularity to earn the title of being universal.

### Modernity as a Framework for Theology?

A key disagreement in contemporary theology is whether Christian thinking needs to respond to contemporary conditions of justification, as part of proclaiming the gospel in a new era. The opposite view holds that all that is needed is the effort to reach an internal Christian agreement, nourished by a "resourcement"<sup>8</sup> from biblical testimonies and their histories of reception from the Patristic to the High Middle Ages. Yet can the basic identity of Christianity be presupposed, and just be proclaimed, with no need to take on board the insight constitutive of Modernity, the epistemological turn to the subject? Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) decisively changed the shared theistic horizon of previous attempts of responding to the cultural constellations of the age. It was no longer possible to argue for faith in God from a theory of the totality of the world. The unproblematic perspective of the cosmos had to be abandoned due to Kant's critique of the limits of human knowledge, and human subjectivity became the pivotal point for arguing for the possibility of faith in a divine Creator. For the Oxford theologian McGrath, however, a modern theology that makes the anthropological turn its own is on a straight line of descent to the post-Hegelian critic of religion, Ludwig Feuerbach. For McGrath, the alternative is to begin with the Word of God:

Feuerbach's critique of religion may indeed lose much of its force when dealing with non-theistic religions, or theologies (such as that of Karl Barth) which claim to deal with a divine encounter with man from outside him; when applied to a theistic construction or interpretation of man's emotional or psychological states, however, it is in its element."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> For a more extended account of this debate and of Schleiermacher's changes, see my chapter, "Nicht magisch, sondern kommunikativ durch Ansprechen anderer Freiheit: Erlösung in der 2. Auflage von Schleiermachers Glaubenslehre," in C. Danz and G. Essen (eds.), *Dogmatische Christologie in der Moderne. Problemkonstellationen gegenwärtiger Forschung* (Regensburg: Pustet, 2017, forthcoming).

<sup>8</sup> Johannes Hoff (ed.), "Editorial: German Theology in Contemporary Society," in *Modern Believing. Special Issue Liberal Theology in the Contemporary World*, vol. 50/1 (2009), p. 4.

<sup>9</sup> Alister McGrath, *The Making of Modern German Christology. From the Enlightenment to Pannenberg* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), pp. 45-46.

What is true in this observation is that appeal to “man’s emotional or psychological states” to justify religion would indeed be defenseless against the view that this could just be a human projection. Feuerbach’s theory claims more, namely certitude that God is “nothing but” a projection which is more than can be stated within the limits of human reason as delineated by Kant. The problem of McGrath’s perspective is that he misinterprets Schleiermacher’s justification of faith in God as being based on an emotion or feeling at the same level as other concrete psychological states; emotions, such as fascination or helplessness, come and go. Yet what Schleiermacher develops in the Second Edition of the *Glaubenslehre* is a justification of faith in God to the general consciousness of truth, as represented by philosophy, now turned into a critical analysis of the capacity of reason. He achieves this through a transcendental analysis of the structures of human subjectivity, as distinct from psychological or religious introspection into changing affections in the believer’s soul that cannot be ascertained by non-believers.

McGrath does not offer a step-by-step reconstruction of Schleiermacher’s analysis of human self-consciousness in the Introduction of *The Christian Faith*,<sup>10</sup> but fast-forwards to the material dogmatics which has been organized into two main parts, the consciousness of sin and of redemption by Jesus Christ. Making Ferdinand Christian Baur’s early critique his own, McGrath concludes that the presentation of Jesus Christ as “archetype” (*Urbild*) or “ideal” of the general human God-consciousness falls victim to Feuerbach’s critique of God as a figure that seems external, yet owes its existence to human projection:

Feuerbach’s critique of religion called into question the propriety of inferring the existence or nature of ‘God’ from religious feeling, in that this feeling could only be interpreted anthropologically, and not theologically. The possibility that the putative relation between the ‘archetypal Christ’ and the Jesus of history was purely illusory, resulting from the erroneous objectification and externalization of man’s aspirations, could no longer be ignored. The unsatisfactory foundation which Schleiermacher established for this relation was thus cruelly exposed, its inadequacy obvious to all.<sup>11</sup>

To give substance to this objection, it would be necessary to analyse the concept of piety or human religiosity on its own, before turning to Christology. Here, some necessary clarifications could be found: the “original meaning” of the term “God” that Schleiermacher wants to establish from “feeling” or the “immediate self-consciousness” of the human subject and independently of the philosophical analysis of his *Dialectics* is reached as the “Whence of our receptive and active existence” (§4.4. ET 16), not of emotion or feeling; it therefore constitutes an analysis of human facticity which is not vulnerable to Feuerbach’s theory that God is “nothing but” a projection. Human contingency poses a question that cannot be ignored or explained away; while it does not have to lead to a religious answer, but can be sustained as an open question, an analysis built on it does not fall under Feuerbach’s verdict. A theology which begins with the anthropological conditions for understanding God’s revelation is not automatically compromised by theories of projection which can be uncovered as naturalizing. The wish to clarify this presumes, however, that in order to have a dialogue with diverse convictions in contemporary culture, it is necessary to justify faith in a God as a possibility that

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<sup>10</sup> Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher, *Der christliche Glaube* 1821/22, 2 vols., ed. by Horst Peiter (Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 1984) (= KGA 1/7.1.2). ET of the Second Edition (1830/31): *The Christian Faith*, transl. and ed. by H.R. Mackintosh and J.S. Stewart (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1986).

<sup>11</sup> McGrath, *The Making of Modern German Christology*, p. 47, in the second chapter dedicated to “The Hegelian Critique of Schleiermacher: Strauss, Baur, and Feuerbach.”

does not contradict human reason and freedom. To argue for faith in God as such a practical option in response to the question of meaning which is made more urgent by the Kantian insight into the limits of knowledge and agency, requires drawing a distinction between the "unconditioned" and the "infinite."<sup>12</sup> This is necessary to avoid a naturalizing interpretation in terms of the human species where religiosity would just imply dependence on infinite human generation. Specifying that humans owe their existence to the "unconditioned," makes it clear that the endlessness of the human race is not a candidate that fulfills the requirement of an origin distinct from the relative infinity of the world and of humanity, a God who has created all that exists.

McGrath's misrecognition, similar to F. C. Baur, of the transcendental method means that he pits human feeling, emotion or introspection resulting in an "ideal Christ" against the New Testament as the source of knowledge about the historical person of Jesus. In my next step, I will examine their perception of a competition between a self-constructed ideal and the historical person whom the New Testament confesses as universal Redeemer. The key points of Baur's critical reading and the changes which Schleiermacher carried out in response to it in the Second Edition of *The Christian Faith* will be compared. McGrath does not mention the fact that Baur's critique applied to the First Edition and that it resulted in consistent changes to rebut the impression that the redeemer effect of Christ was conjured up in the believers' own mind. It is worth going into the details of the argumentations because the understanding of Jesus Christ as redeemer is the point where culture and faith, philosophy as autonomous reflection and theology as based on the self-revelation of God in Jesus, intersect. The "mutual learning" between religion and cultures on what it is to be human has to be aware of the distinct sources at play: revelation as what human reasoning could not have discovered or created by itself, namely the assurance of a God whose essence is love, and reason as the human subject's capacity to ask beyond empirical data about questions of meaning and ultimate fulfillment. For Baur in his early critique, before his turn to Hegelianism which became evident from 1835, the competition is between the *ideal* Christ, constructed by humans, and the *historical* person of Jesus as bearer of a supernatural truth.<sup>13</sup> In Baur's reading, by capturing the unique dignity of Jesus Christ in the term, "archetype" of the human God-consciousness, Schleiermacher has handed over to human reason and culture what is a religious truth, set down in the Bible by God. An "ideal" is a human construction which for Baur falls short of the New Testament proclamation at this stage. In the Schleiermacher interpretation that I will propose, engagement with "culture" or "reason" is exemplified by the transcendental method which is first used in

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<sup>12</sup> Saskia Wendel, "Die Renaissance des Religiösen und der Glaube an Gott," in *Gott im Kommen* (Salzburger Hochschulwochen 2006), ed. by Gregor Maria Hoff (Graz: Tyrolia, 2006), p. 214. Cf. also Claus Dierksmeier, "Zum Begriff des religiösen Gefühls im Anschluss an Kant," *Zeitschrift für Neuere Theologiegeschichte/Journal for the History of Modern Theology* 8 (2001) 201-217, where religion is identified as "symbolization of the unconditioned," instead of "schematization of the infinite" (214).

<sup>13</sup> The Introduction by Peter Hodgson to Baur's *The Epochs of Church Historiography* of 1852 and to *Introduction to Lectures on the History of Christian Dogma* of 1865 treats how his later work seeks to move "Beyond Supernaturalism and Rationalism," in *Ferdinand Christian Baur on the Writing of Church History*, ed. and trans. by P. C. Hodgson (Oxford: OUP, 1968), pp. 12-17. Baur's view of his fellow church historian August Neander reveals again his failure to identify the general claim of Schleiermacher's justification of religion which reaches the level of a transcendental argumentation in the Second Edition: "For Neander, as for his theological mentor, Schleiermacher, the interest in individuals stems from a romantic conviction that religion is a matter of subjectivity, of feeling, and therefore that 'all religious manifestations can be judged only in accord with the immediacy of the religious consciousness from which they proceed.'... Baur insists that historical study can be concerned only with that which objectifies or expresses itself outwardly in historical actions, not with inner religious piety." (17)

the crucial paragraphs 3 and 4 of the Second Edition. Since Kant, “transcendental method” refers to identifying the “conditions of the possibility” of a reality, such as human freedom as the condition one has to assume behind law as a visible organizational factor in society. I agree with Baur and McGrath that “religion” is distinct from it and stands for the historical, concrete self-revelation of God that cannot be derived from human activity. It is not, however, a question of having to choose between philosophy and the New Testament, as McGrath holds. The concern I share with McGrath is that Christian dogmatics is a normative enterprise in that the Christian understanding of Jesus Christ as God’s ultimate self-revelation is to be used as the yardstick of subsequent translations. The problem with his reading is that he sees the philosophical Introduction to the *Glaubenslehre* with its new transcendental analysis as being in direct competition with the Word of God, as authoritatively spoken, coming from “outside.” This ensures that it cannot be reduced to human capacities, yet leaves a question unasked which cannot be escaped: how this address by God can be understood by humans. The absence of any enquiry into the presuppositions in the human person for being able to relate to God’s external, historical revelation risks making McGrath’s approach an extrinsicist one that fails to explain why it is of relevance to human beings that God spoke and acted.

It is not the transcendental method, indicative of the turn to human subjectivity, as such that is theologically questionable. The line of interpretation I will be following together with the systematic theologians Thomas Pröpper, Susanne Schaefer, Saskia Wendel and others is that the justification to reason of the anthropological possibility of faith in God in the Introduction to the *Glaubenslehre* is a necessary part of theology’s accounting to the general consciousness of truth why faith is in keeping with human freedom. It is only in the final step of his analysis of temporal self-consciousness, in the conclusion which identifies the feeling of being utterly dependent with being in relation with God (§ 4, 4) that Schleiermacher oversteps the limits of this method. Up to the fourth section, the theory of subjectivity he develops in §§ 3 and 4 fulfills the criteria of providing a shared basis from which successful translations between religion and reason can take place. Why Christians speak of *imago Dei*, why they do not have to consider Adam’s fall as a historical event, why the person and the work of Jesus Christ have to be interlinked, become clear as relevant matters to consider even for contemporaries outside the Christian churches. They might have thought that religion holds on to models of understanding the world that have been surpassed by enquiries in history and science. McGrath’s judgment that an anthropological approach cannot defend itself against the suspicion of projection and is “cruelly exposed” to Feuerbach is to be refuted. The claim of § 4, 4, however, that humans do not only have a question of meaning but an inherent God-consciousness, is questionable. Baur has a point when he diagnoses that Christology is paying a price yet precision is needed in identifying the reasons for this. We first have to look at Schleiermacher’s corrections in response to Baur’s critique. They offer differentiations which counteract McGrath’s view that his work is discredited by Feuerbach and that a different approach is needed to “salvage” it “from the ashes.”<sup>14</sup>

### **Jesus Christ between Self-Generated Ideal and Historical Redeemer: Ferdinand Christian Baur’s Critique and Schleiermacher’s Response**

The inaccuracies of Baur’s first reading of the *Glaubenslehre* are repeated in his later references which equally misconstrue its argumentation. I shall first deal with claims that have

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<sup>14</sup> McGrath, *The Making of Modern German Christology*, p. 46: “Although Schleiermacher’s original Christological method now appeared to be seriously inadequate, it was not totally beyond salvage ... from the ashes of the old.”

to be dismissed since they fail to take into consideration the layout and key distinctions already made in the First Edition, and shall then judge McGrath's critique from the original version. Finally, I shall point out decisive changes in the Second Edition aimed at refuting Baur's impression and at clarifying misunderstandings in the wider reception of the original work.

*F.C. Baur on the Relationship Between Archetype and History*

Baur presents his diagnosis in two publications, the first written in Latin in 1827, the second a slightly modified review in German of the *Glaubenslehre* for the inaugural issue of the *Tübinger Zeitschrift für Theologie* in 1828.<sup>15</sup> His main finding is that the historical person of Jesus is replaced by the idea of a redeemer. The comparability with Gnosticism consists in downplaying the material, historical reality of Jesus and proposing an "ideal rationalism." The title is chosen to indicate that the historical form proper to Supernaturalism is projected onto the facts of consciousness in a way that they can no longer be thought of without the historical form.<sup>16</sup> In his understanding, Schleiermacher's differentiation of dogmatic statements into three propositional forms can be reduced to a duality of the basic forms of religious feeling: the "empirical-objective" of the Christian religious community, and the only "subjective" form of the feeling of absolute dependence. Schleiermacher had identified the doctrines that can be traced back to determinations of the Christian self-consciousness as the basic form; compared to these dogmatic propositions on "conceptions of divine attributes" and on the "constitution of the world" (§ 30. ET 125) only have a derived status. This sequence and weighting is taken by Baur as an opposition between a constructed, ideal redeemer and a historical one; the origin of Jesus is regarded as having been found in reason, and history as having been demoted.

The problem this critique is trying to identify will be returned to later. It is perceptive and has had a long history of reception, but it is built on a fundamental misconception which led to this specific diagnosis: Baur reduces to *one* level what is a key distinction for Schleiermacher: the difference between the indeterminate a priori relationship to God uncovered in the feeling of absolute dependence, and its historical concretizations in the range of the world's positive, individualized religions. For Baur, religion and the religions are not distinct; he does not analyze an a priori form of God-consciousness in contrast to the various historical-empirical traditions. This is why the fundamental form of dogmatic statements, the Christian self-consciousness, which could only become the epistemological principle of Christian dogmatics through being determined historically by the person and history of Jesus Christ, enters into competition with the New Testament. Seeing how Baur and others had collapsed the two levels was an incentive for Schleiermacher to reposition major parts of the Introduction and underline their character as separate from the proper material dogmatics by attributing them as "*Lehnsätze*," "borrowed propositions," to the disciplines from which they originated. What remains correct about Baur's objection from a philosophical perspective educated by Kant's distinction between knowing and thinking, which he does not share, is that the uncovering of

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<sup>15</sup> In what follows, I am drawing on my treatments of the original critique and its subsequent Hegelian turn in the "Exkurs zu Baur's Kritik," in *Das Urbild des Gottesbewusstseins. Zur Entwicklung der Religions- theorie und Christologie Schleiermachers von der ersten zur zweiten Auflage der Glaubenslehre* (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1990), pp. 133-150. "The Transcendental Turn. Shifts in Argumentation between the First and the Second Editions of the *Glaubenslehre*," *New Athenaeum/Neues Athenaeum* (1992) pp. 21-41. "Nicht magisch, sondern kommunikativ" (see n. 7).

<sup>16</sup> Ferdinand Christian Baur, *Primae Rationalismi et Supranaturalismi historia capita potiora, Pars II: Comparatur Gnosticismus cum Schleiermcherianae theologiae indole* (Tübinger Osterprogramm) (Tübingen: Hopferi de l'Orme, 1827); partly repr. in KGA 1/7.3, pp. 243-256. German summary, "Anzeige der beiden academischen Schriften," *Tübinger Zeitschrift für Theologie* 1 (1828): 220-264; partly repr. in KGA 1/7.3, pp. 256-277.

a natural certitude of God as an apriori in the Introduction is going too far, and that the Christian experience of God is not distinct enough in its content from the immediate God-consciousness.

A late reflection of the failure to distinguish the two levels, the philosophical analysis of self-consciousness leading to the statement of a universal human God-consciousness, and one of its particular, historical specifications, here through the life and destiny of Jesus, can be found in the position Baur takes to the work of fellow church historian August Neander. Baur's view of Neander reveals again his inability to identify the general claim of Schleiermacher's justification of religion which reaches the level of a transcendental argumentation in the Second Edition. Peter Hodgson summarizes:

For Neander, as for his theological mentor, Schleiermacher, the interest in individuals stems from a romantic conviction that religion is a matter of subjectivity, of feeling, and therefore that 'all religious manifestations can be judged only in accord with the immediacy of the religious consciousness from which they proceed' ... Baur insists that historical study can be concerned only with that which objectifies or expresses itself outwardly in historical actions, not with inner religious piety.<sup>17</sup>

The contrast could not be more misleading: immediate, subjective, inner versus objective, historical. For Schleiermacher, doctrinal statements are expressions and reflected "objectifications" of the primary consciousness of redemption, and each era has the task to check and revise these expressions so that they are in keeping with the essence of Christianity. The guideline, as 2§ 22 explains, is the definition of the "natural heresies" that arise when the balance is lost between being in need of, but also capable of being redeemed, as in Manichaeism and in Pelagianism, and if the humanity or the divinity of Jesus Christ are overemphasized, resulting in Ebionitism or Docetism. The alternative to giving the systematic theological component its due in the determination of what is "Christian" is to consider the view of the Christian religion as a culturally given, unmistakable entity as sufficient.

Two further elements of Baur's critique are only valid if one shares his premises. His demand is that Schleiermacher, instead of going back to the Christian self-consciousness, should have verified the definition of the essence of Christianity as redemption, given in § 18 of the First and in 2§ 11 of the Second Edition's Introduction, by checking it against the New Testament writings. This request partly shows his misunderstanding of the architecture of the dogmatic and of its difference from the Introduction, and partly reveals two opposite understandings of what can be historically proven. First, Schleiermacher's method of drawing conclusions for doctrine from the Christian self-consciousness is only operative in the material parts of the dogmatics, which does not treat the "idea" of a redeemer but the Christian testimony of the historical redeemer Jesus Christ. Baur's additional objection that the unity asserted between Christ as archetype of the human God-consciousness and the historical person of Jesus is an academically untenable claim is not an evident truth and can be contested. In the second half of the 1820s, his argument is different from the principled reasons that resulted from Baur's Hegelian turn in the following decade. From then onwards, it is impossible for the Idea to be realized in an individual, and any proof of its historical existence

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<sup>17</sup> The Introduction by Peter Hodgson to Baur's *The Epochs of Church Histeriography* of 1852 and to *Introduction to Lectures on the History of Christian Dogma* of 1865 treats how his later work seeks to move "Beyond Supernaturalism and Rationalism," in *Ferdinand Christian Baur on the Writing of Church History*, ed. and transl. by P. C. Hodgson (Oxford: OUP, 1968), p. 17.



must fail.<sup>18</sup> His earlier critique demands that a dogmatics which reflects the anthropological turn, that is, does not argue in a supernaturalistic manner, needs to supply proofs for the coincidence of historicity and ideality in Jesus. In Schleiermacher's view, however, this is the presupposition of faith which he only seeks to unfold, which cannot be demonstrated; for Baur, it is a point for which evidence has to be marshalled. In the *Glaubenslehre*, while the archetypal character is not something that can be verified by empirical methods, it is still there to be found in the New Testament. The experience of redemption is traced back to its cause in the person of Jesus, as portrayed by Scripture, especially by St. John's gospel.<sup>19</sup> The reproach that there is no role for historical enquiry in Schleiermacher's outline thus misunderstands the intention and the architecture of the *Glaubenslehre*. Baur's demand for drawing on Biblical Studies here is still a supernaturalist objection. It will turn to a different approach to guarantee meaning, Hegel's idealism, while still using the key terms "objective" and "historical" versus "subjective." Before indicating some of the responses of the Second Edition, I will turn to McGrath's position as a part of the history of reception of Baur's work.

#### *A. McGrath's Renewal of F. C. Baur's Reading*

Baur's diagnosis of an ideal rationalism is summed up by McGrath as follows, and the oppositional pair, "subjective" versus "historical" is taken over:

Nowhere, he argues, does Schleiermacher explain how he moves from the general consciousness of redemption to a specific historical individual as the ground of that consciousness. In fact, Schleiermacher appears to make the archetypal Christ (that is, the Christological interpretation of the subjective experience of redemption) prior to the historical Jesus, so that the person and work of Christ may only be treated as derivative functions of the religious consciousness. Baur therefore developed a penetrating critique of the Christology of Schleiermacher's *Glaubenslehre* on the basis of its perceived failure to mediate between the archetypal Christ and the historical Jesus. Unless theology begins with the historical Jesus, in terms of a critical analysis of the Gospel accounts (in which alone he may be encountered), he will never be found.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, McGrath, too, interprets the method of the material dogmatics, to justify each proposition (*Leitsatz*) and their exposition by tracing them back to the Christian self-consciousness as a clear indication of neglecting the historical proclamation of Jesus contained in the New Testament. As it constitutes a principled, deliberate approach to the material of the dogmatics – the history of Christian thinking that has to be brought into new systematic coherence –, it is beyond individual correction:

Baur is particularly critical of the manner in which Schleiermacher infers his Christology from religious consciousness. The experience of pious conscious-

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<sup>18</sup> Hodgson's Introduction to the English translation of two of Baur's works in the 1850s and 1860s outlines the search for a principle of unity which "depends ... on the 'starting-point in which the Idea that is to be realized through its entire temporal manifestation is clearly and definitely expressed'" (12, with reference to *Epochs*, 47, in that volume).

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Thomas Pröpfer, "Schleiermachers Bestimmung des Christentums und der Erlösung," *Evangelium und freie Vernunft* (Freiburg: Herder, 2001), p. 142.

<sup>20</sup> McGrath, *The Making of Modern German Christology*, pp. 38-39.

ness within the Christian community is treated as the effect of the influence of a single individual, whose identity may be inferred by arguing backwards from effect to cause. For Baur, this is illegitimate: to understand a historical process, it is necessary to begin with the cause.<sup>21</sup>

Indeed, Schleiermacher's procedure is part of an even more grievous failure. The subordinated role of history in Schleiermacher's theory of Christ as archetype which Baur has shown up is part of a fundamental deficit: "Much more serious, however was the apparent disinclination of Schleiermacher to come to terms with the irreversible trend towards historicization initiated by the *Aufklärung*."<sup>22</sup>

With such a far-reaching and comprehensive accusation, McGrath seems to misrecognize one of the key reasons for Schleiermacher's new departure in dogmatic theology: the rise of the historical and the natural sciences which he wanted theology to take on board and not contradict. He shares the unquestionable insight into the necessity of a historical and text-critical investigation of the New Testament. This is documented in the exegetical part of his teaching, in his argument for the Deutero-Pauline origin of the Letter to the Ephesians, as well as in the provision of lectures on the life of Jesus. Biblical Studies as a historical subject may have discarded many of his reconstructions, but the "irreversible trend towards historicization initiated by the *Aufklärung*" is well represented in his work. McGrath presents it as an alternative in an analysis which extends the issue to Troeltsch:

The rise in historical thinking particularly associated with the Tübingen school led to an emphasis being placed upon the methodological priority of the *origins of Christianity* over its present-day manifestations ... the question of the significance of Jesus of Nazareth, and particularly his relation to the 'archetypal Christ' had to be answered by seeking that significance in his history, and not by inferring such significance from the present-day pious consciousness of the community of faith.<sup>23</sup>

What is missing is a critical reconstruction of Baur's own premises with which he accesses the First Edition of the *Glaubenslehre*, that explain why he overlooks specific contents that are treated in a different location from what he expects. Since McGrath does not distinguish between the general and the historically determined, concrete God-consciousness, he interprets the method of tracing doctrines back to it as taking flight to the Idea of a redeemer. It is seen not only as being defenseless against historically untenable projections but also as turning Christ into a property of the Christian community. If this was Schleiermacher's position, it would indeed not be far to the next step of appropriating the archetype as a principle of the self-description of God's creatures who are then no longer in need of a redeemer.

What is surprising for a critique that is theologically motivated is that McGrath does not mention the decisive theological reason which led Schleiermacher to this argumentation. It is his view of the necessary unity of the two divine decrees of creation and redemption. As Jacqueline Mariña points out, this is the guiding perspective.<sup>24</sup> Whether the reasoning for this

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31, n. 55.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>24</sup> Jacqueline Mariña, "Christology and Anthropology in Friedrich Schleiermacher," in J. Mariña (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Friedrich Schleiermacher* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 159-162.

strict link, to avoid attributing "arbitrariness" to God,<sup>25</sup> should be defended is another question.<sup>26</sup> But it needs to be noted that the reason is to be found in the doctrine of God, and not in a desire to please the educated among the despisers of religion.

*Places of Clarification That Redemption Is Not Construable*

The corrections of the Second Edition, not noted by either Baur or McGrath, include: structurally, a much clearer delineation between the Introduction and the material dogmatics and the deletion of statements that violated this limit; a precise and circumspect explanation of the process of elaborating a definition of the essence of Christianity in the interaction of different disciplines ("ethics," "philosophy of religion" and "apologetics"), as a historical concretization of the universal human God-consciousness, without anticipating material contents that belong to the dogmatics; no conclusions to be drawn from the concept of redemption to the historical self-understanding of Jesus Christ, as 1§ 18, 4 did but 2§ 11, 4 no longer does. The relationship between reason and revelation is revised to underline the historical origin. The concept of sin in his theological anthropology is reworked, the enduring distinction instead of a "fusion" (*Verschmelzung*) between the higher and lower self-consciousness is highlighted. All statements that could be interpreted as constructing redemption, such as above all 1§ 18, 5. 1, 68, which speaks in one breath of the "feeling of this opposition and its removal" ("*Gefühl jenes Gegensazes und seiner Aufhebung*") are removed. There is a new emphasis on the "one source from which all Christian doctrine is derived, namely, the self-proclamation of Christ" (2§ 19 PS; ET 92). All these corrections, however, remain in the framework Christian theology had to embrace in modernity, according to Schleiermacher: the turn to subjectivity in its facticity, vulnerability and truth, away from objectifying proofs by reason for the existence of God and from recourse to the Bible as a supernatural authority.

### Conclusion

Encountering Scriptures, testimonies and practices of other eras or other religious traditions presents us, as Fiachra Long points out, with a vulnerability at both ends: how to determine the identity, truth, or core content of the scriptural testimony itself; and how to pinpoint the culture within which their contemporary history of effects is to be actualized.

Schleiermacher was confident that the world would become Christian: "each is fashioned in readiness to become a member of the Christian fellowship, because he is foreseen as a believer" (2§ 120, 4. ET 558). For us, the Romantic interest in the particular includes the ongoing diversity of religions. The heritage of belief in God's good creation is to recognize the enduring plurality of humanity designed by God and to resist losing the diverse languages and cultures into which humanity always "has congealed" in one homogenizing world civilization.<sup>27</sup> The effort of learning to be human in global times can draw on the insight that universality can be

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<sup>25</sup> Both editions of *The Christian Faith*, in 1§ 20, 1. 1, 79 and 2§ 13, 1. ET 64, hold to this: "Otherwise it could only be explained as an arbitrary divine act that the restorative divine element made its appearance precisely in Jesus, and not in some other person."

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Thomas Pröpfer's and Susanne Schaefer's critiques that this rules out a relationship of freedom between God and humans in which God is moved by individuals, and continues to act in new historical responses. Th. Pröpfer, *Theologische Anthropologie*, 2 vols. (Freiburg: Herder, 2011) vol. I, p. 480, n. 176. S. Schaefer, *Gottes Sein zur Welt. Schleiermachers Subjektanalyse in ihrer Prinzipienfunktion für Glaubenslehre und Dialektik* (ratio fidei Bd. 12) (Regensburg: Pustet, 2002), pp. 134-135 and 237-262.

<sup>27</sup> Paul Ricoeur, "Universal Civilization and National Cultures," in *History and Truth*, transl. by Ch.A. Kelbley (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1965), p. 280.

reached from particular historical sources: from monolatry to ethical monotheism, to the universalism of Deutero-Isaiah<sup>28</sup> and the Genesis-inspired proclamation of a God of abundant generosity by Jesus. Studying the case of Schleiermacher's not flawless, but ground-breaking attempt to translate the God of Jesus to a modernity oriented by the concept of freedom can show that mutual learning is possible.

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. Andrew D.H. Mayes, "Monotheism and violence: the case of Ancient Israel," in *Search. A Church of Ireland Journal* 34 (2011), pp.19-29. Cf. also Georg Essen, "Ethical monotheism and human freedom," in N. Hintersteiner (ed.), *Naming and Thinking God in Europe Today* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), pp. 275-294, and Marie-Theres Wacker, "Biblical monotheism between contestation and revisioning. Perspectives from the Christian Old Testament," in E. Borgman, M. L. Bingemer, and A. Torres Queiruga (eds.), *Monotheism – Divinity and Unity Reconsidered, Concilium* 46 (2009) (London: SCM, 2009), 21-33.

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## Learning to be Human in the Silence

SIBYLLE TRAWÖGER

In light of certain challenges that we encounter in our society, one shaped by western ideals, I would like to explore the often-overlooked issue of silence and its potential in promoting human development and a peaceful living together. Therefore, this paper will make use of sociological, sociocultural-philosophical and theological approaches in order to draw near to Christian contemplation in the end.<sup>1</sup>

### Challenges in Our Time

“High-speed Society,”<sup>2</sup> “Event Society,”<sup>3</sup> and “Fatigue and Burnout Society”<sup>4</sup> are all buzzwords often used to describe our present, western-shaped society in concise and memorable ways. The sociological and socio-philosophical analyses which spawned these catchphrases have revealed, among other things, pathologies which are harmful, not only to individuals, but to society as a whole.<sup>5</sup> These pathologies evoke desires for different societal structures and moments of relaxation; consequently, the search for specific places that offer a personal and quiet retreat has become a central factor in our “Event and Fatigue Society.” The longing for pause, quiet and stillness has continuously grown in a society where nearly all areas of life are affected by tendencies of acceleration.

In this regard, different forms of silence can be found in our society which are each connected with different degrees of implicitness. In cities, places of silence – and here is meant the silence where you hear almost nothing – are a rare commodity. According to textile researcher Andrea Steinert, this seems to be in contrast to the olfactory silence which has been taken for granted by our society since the 1950s. Ever since that time, she observes, people have tried to entirely eliminate body odor by means of detergent, soap and deodorant, in order to wrap themselves in “olfactory silence.”<sup>6</sup>

### Learning the Attitude of Silence

Silence existing in its manifold ways – e.g., the auditory and the olfactory silence mentioned above – offers an ideal environment for practicing the “attitude of silence” each time afresh. As the title of this paper suggests, silence is our mentor and guide in teaching us how

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank my colleague Dr. Andreas Telser for his help with this paper, especially with some of the trickier German expressions. I am also grateful to Dr. Barnabas Palfrey for his useful feedback.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Hartmut Rosa, *Social Acceleration: A New Theory of Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013); Hartmut Rosa and William F. Scheuerman, *High-Speed Society: Social Acceleration, Power, and Modernity* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Gerhard Schulze, *Die Erlebnisgesellschaft: Kultursoziologie der Gegenwart* (Frankfurt am Main/New York: Campus Verlag, 1992).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Byung Chul Han, *The Burnout Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015).

<sup>5</sup> This is most obvious during arduous periods of life: e.g. when illness or grief impedes one’s everyday life, certain psychological and spiritual processes simply cannot be accelerated.

<sup>6</sup> Andrea Steinert, “Kunstseidene Welten: Die Erfahrung textiler Materialität im Kontext der 20er und 50er Jahre,” in *Bewegung Sprache Materialität: Kulturelle Manifestationen des Textilen*, ed. Gabriele Mentges and Heide Nixdorff (Berlin: Ebersbach, 2003), pp. 235-239.

to be human. In other words; going into the silence is a possible and helpful initial point in learning how to be human nowadays. The purpose of the following discussion is to substantiate this thesis.

There are different strategies to practice the attitude of silence. However, from the perspective of the observer who can only perceive the external appearance, it is not possible to notice a difference. There might be different intentions, premises, and foci underlying the respective practices that never become visible. Despite external similarities one needs to distinguish between autogenic training techniques, artistic performances (for example, Marina Abramovic's *The Artist is Present*) and prayer. Instead of comparing different forms of prayer and meditation from a religious studies perspective, this paper will delve into greater detail regarding contemplation in the Christian tradition.

When it comes to the contemplative prayer, the person who is praying tries not only to fully immerse themselves in his or her own being, but also – as a believer – in God at the very present moment each time anew. The praying person avoids clinging to discursive forms of prayer, to images, thoughts, wishes and desires in order to be able to engage her-/himself in perceiving (God's) presence.

To give you a clearer idea of this, let us consider an instruction of one contemporary form of contemplative prayer:<sup>7</sup> a session takes about 20 to 30 minutes. What is important is your positioning in the room. No matter if you prefer a seated or kneeling position you should ensure that you feel comfortable so as not to change it while praying. The time of prayer is framed; there is the declaration of intent at the beginning that you want to offer God the forthcoming time without other intentions besides being (a) present to God. This is followed by focusing your perception on individual parts of your body, as well as on your body as a whole. Finally, your attentiveness focuses on the center of your hands – for that you bring your palms as close together as possible. Your awareness should be centered on the rhythm of your breathing. Once you have attuned sufficiently well in perceiving your own body and its physical impulses, you shift your attention towards the inner sound of the words "Jesus Christ." While the word "Jesus" is connected to breathing out, the word "Christ" is tied to breathing in. It is a "silent" prayer of this "name." If feelings or thoughts do come into your conscious mind, it is recommended to perceive them briefly without dealing with them in any depth, in order to redirect your attention to your body and breathing. Only then should praying the name be resumed. Within the inaudible speaking of and listening to the name, the praying person believes the unintentional encounter with Jesus Christ is taking place.

I have recounted this practice in such a detailed manner because my systematic-theological interest is closely linked to it. With such a focus on contemplative prayer practices of everyday life, and by overlapping these practices with philosophical concepts and concepts generated by cultural studies, the aim of this paper is to develop some basic principles of contemplative prayer and beyond this, the attitude of silence in general.<sup>8</sup>

### Post-Hermeneutics and Contemplation

As exemplified in the previous example of contemplative practice, physical awareness and the word<sup>9</sup> "Jesus Christ," have always been key elements in contemplation. To further specify

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<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Franz Jalics, *Kontemplative Exerziten: Eine Einführung in die kontemplative Lebenshaltung und in das Jesusgebet* (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 2011).

<sup>8</sup> Accordingly, priority is not given to the historical development of contemplative prayer piety or the analysis of traditional texts written by some mystics.

<sup>9</sup> To recall: Priority is given to the inner sound of the word (and not to the *meaning* of the word).



contemplative silence, I'd like to confront these aspects with a philosophical approach called post-hermeneutics. It is quite difficult to outline Dieter Mersch's concept of post-hermeneutics in a brief and systematic way, for it seems as if this approach eludes a clear systematization. In brief: the post-hermeneutical approach is precisely about questioning and interrupting established systematizations and classifications in the humanities.<sup>10</sup>

Firstly, post-hermeneutics understands hermeneutics, to which it refers, in a "very broad sense":<sup>11</sup> It comprises all registers of "generating meaning through distinction."<sup>12</sup> The prefix "post" indicates a "transgression or [...] a leap"<sup>13</sup> beyond such a hermeneutical pre-understanding. It is to be recalled again and again that the resistant, the fragile and the excessive that go along<sup>14</sup> with each "event"<sup>15</sup> cannot be fully captured by a hermeneutical approach in the broad sense. An openness to the resistant and the other is required. Therefore, "incomprehensibility" should not be considered as being subordinate to but independent from "comprehensibility."<sup>16</sup>

Without completely rejecting it, Mersch criticizes the "apriori of interpretation"<sup>17</sup> that accompanies any scientific thinking and speaking. In using performative appeals<sup>18</sup> post-hermeneutics reminds us, that the resistant (the fragile, the materiality, the presence and the event) cannot be fully conceived in the "order of speech."<sup>19</sup> However, those overlooked aspects need to be recalled within the order of speech – then they can interrupt, so to speak, the "hermeneutic flow."

### Aspect I: Interruption

What is striking about the post-hermeneutical approach, as well as contemplative practice, is the aspect of "interruption." While post-hermeneutical practices seek to interrupt "her-

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<sup>10</sup> What will be obvious later on: Post-hermeneutics is intertwined with the concept of the "aesthetics of performativity." As a side note: one of my research interests focussed on the concept of performativity. After everything has turned "performative," performativity became an umbrella term (see, for example, Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Ästhetik des Performativen* [Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2002]) making its meaning rather fuzzy, while covering too much ground. Hence, it is key to look at the (scientific) context in which performativity is used: think, for example, on the one hand of John Austin's performativity in the context of linguistics and on the other hand of performativity in the context of theatre studies. To put it bluntly, while the philosopher of language is intent on the impact of language (only), cultural and theatre studies go beyond language and consider space, gestures, and other aspects as well. All this is to say that context matters, also when using the term performativity. Now if we dare to use performativity in the context of Systematic Theology, it is not limited in its meaning only to the linguistic aspect.

<sup>11</sup> Dieter Mersch, *Posthermeneutik* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2010), p. 11.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* "Generating meaning" by distinguishing various actualities and possibilities from each other leads to an "either-or" instead of a "both-and." See the explanation in the chapter entitled 'Non-intentionality'.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>14</sup> Mersch uses the German word *Mitgängigkeit* (*Ibid.*, p. 15).

<sup>15</sup> To clarify the use of the word "event" (*Ereignis*) in the context of post-hermeneutics and contemplation see Sibylle Trawöger, "Ein Blick unter die Matrize. Annäherungen an die Kontemplation mittels der 'Ästhetik des Performativen' ausgehend von der Eremitage des Linzer Mariendoms," in *Matratze/ Matrize. Möblierung von Subjekt und Gesellschaft. Konzepte in Kunst und Architektur*, eds. Irene Nierhaus and Katrin Heinz (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2016), pp. 167-181.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Dieter Mersch, "Gibt es Verstehen?" in *Kultur Nicht Verstehen*, ed. Albrecht Juerg et al. (Zürich: Springer Verlag, 2005), pp. 109-126.

<sup>17</sup> Mersch, *Posthermeneutik*, p. 9.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>19</sup> Dieter Mersch, *Was sich zeigt: Materialität, Präsenz, Ereignis* (München: Fink, 2002), p. 33.

menetic flow" in the humanities, contemplative practice interrupts the stream of thought by directing one's attentiveness to the body. These moments of interruption cannot always be equated with complete termination or cessation. The tendency of our exceedingly accelerated society may require us to take a step back or to recede from the goings-on; however, this must not end in permanent stagnation. Contemplative withdrawal into silence must not be equated with termination or closure.

### Aspect II: Non-Intentionality

Interruption does not subordinate the resistant and seemingly unfit to the general. It is the attempt to "sublate" the resistant in a "both-and." Simultaneously, a shift from intentionality to non-intentionality takes place. This shift to non-intentionality can be specified terminologically as "non-gaze."<sup>20</sup> By "non-gaze" Mersch means the "unintentional looking" which is distinct from a "fixating gaze."<sup>21</sup> The fixating gaze is analogous to the "commanding gaze," which destroys any "eroticism."<sup>22</sup> The mystical gaze, that might occur when closing one's eyes, enables an attentive attitude towards what is coming in the present moment, or to the blink of an eye without wanting to capture it in a loop of surveillance.

### Aspect III: Process-Like Perception

Besides "interruption" and "non-intentionality," contemplative silence is characterized by an attentiveness oriented towards a perception that occurs as a process. The act of perception during contemplation is multifaceted and complex: (1) On the one hand, the "objects" of perception (i.e., the "places," so to speak, whereupon the perception is directed) are at once diverse – for example, the body, the words and the voice – while also all are directed towards the "ordinary." The praying person trusts that these places of ordinary, even trivial, perceptions are places of possibly encountering God. Cultural Studies likewise centers on the ordinary (i.e. everyday life),<sup>23</sup> and I am also keen to focus on the ordinary perceptions that arise during contemplation. These might seem to be different from "rare moments" sometimes associated with enlightenment or an epiphany of some sort, but my (as yet untested) hypothesis is that these seemingly exceptional moments, when they occur, are not so different from the conscious contemplative perception of the ordinary.

(2) On the other hand, the modes of perception in contemplation are very complex. For instance, there are specific oscillating movements that take place within the act of contemplative perception. "Perception as a performative process"<sup>24</sup> comprises various phases, such as the oscillation between meaning and perception: The praying person tries not to cling to emerging streams of thoughts, but to immerse her-/himself once again into the perception of bodily sensations. This event can be traversed by rapidly oscillating movements: to put it bluntly, an oscillation between thinking and perceiving. While carefully observing these oscillating movements, the phenomenon of "perception" as such comes into focus.

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<sup>20</sup> Mersch uses the German word *Nichtblick* (Mersch, *Was sich zeigt*, p. 96).

<sup>21</sup> Dieter Mersch, *Ereignis und Aura: Untersuchungen zu einer Ästhetik des Performativen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2002), p. 177.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.

<sup>23</sup> See, for example, Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Ästhetik des Performativen*, pp. 173, 314.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 101-112.

While the praying person becomes aware of these oscillating movements, he/she can – given an “economy of attentiveness”<sup>25</sup> – opt explicitly for an “excessive” turn toward an attitude of conscious perception. Theater, performances and the “staging” of everyday life have their own ways of attracting attention; during contemplative prayer, the praying person attempts, while abstaining from external distractions, to focus his/her attention on the perception of his/her body, voice and the accompanying oscillating movements, in order to both firmly and purposelessly “squander” this “precious resource” in the occurrence of a relationship between God and human being.

#### Aspect IV: Passibility

The notion of perception and attentiveness in contemplation, thus unfolded, should have made clear that what is happening in contemplation cannot be understood as mere passiveness or passivity. A glance at early Christianity reveals that contemplative prayer, which ideally results in a contemplative attitude towards life, stresses not only its passive component. Even in the distant past, the desert fathers and mothers used specific early forms of what has come to be called contemplative prayer. Hermits withdrew and sought solitude. The desert not only served as a specific place of retreat, but also illustrated the inner retreat, with its resulting challenges. The image of the desert, as it was created by the hermits, provides an adequate understanding of spiritual retreats as it can also be experienced, admittedly on a much smaller scale, during the time of contemplative prayer. According to patristic scholar Anneliese Felber, at the time of the desert fathers, the desert was not only a place of quiet and contemplation, but it was also a place for demons and, thus, referring to the archetypal temptation of Jesus in the desert.<sup>26</sup> Hence the desert was understood from early as a place of probation and demanding tests. Temptations and challenges force one to live consciously and be alert. Hermits did not pray for the temptation to cease, but rather for them to gain sufficient stamina to be able to resist temptations. This interpretation of the desert prevents us from adopting an idealized image of retreat, which is of importance in our days. People tend to idealize retreats and their implied contemplative aspects, as they consider them to be passive counterparts to an over-active society. However, retreat must not be understood as a permanent and total sealing-off from society, surroundings or other people. Peace and quiet must not be mistaken for a standstill or any kind of inner resignation. “Retreat,” in the traditional sense of the desert fathers and mothers, implies one’s willingness to succumb to a strenuous purification and cathartic process. This purification process aims at one becoming more human. By means of that, the desert fathers and mothers attained wisdom saturated with experience in both life and faith. This wisdom was widely appreciated by many people and even today it can still support people’s search for orientation in their lives.

This short look at the early beginnings of Christianity should have clarified that reflection and silence during the contemplative prayer cannot be solely equated with doing nothing and being passive. To find more apt terms for it, the apparent passivity can be designated as “active passivity” or using the post-hermeneutically coined term of “passibility.”<sup>27</sup> Passibility demolishes the dualism of active and passive. The “both-and” of such moments, which the term

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 291.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Anneliese Felber, “Der Himmel beginnt in dir! Impulse aus dem Wüstenmönchtum,” in *Selmsucht Mystik*, eds. Elisabeth Pernkopf and Walter Schaupp (Innsbruck: Verlagsanstalt Tyrolia, 2011), pp. 19-38.

<sup>27</sup> Mersch uses the German word *Passibilität*. Cf. Mersch, *Posthermeneutik*, p. 25; Michael Mayer, *Humanismus im Widerstreit: Versuch über Passibilität* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2012).

passibility tries to capture, can be perceived by “contemplation in action.”<sup>28</sup> The attitude of silence needs to be adopted and practiced firmly and actively each time anew.

### Conclusion

All the aspects clarified above – interruption, non-intentionality, perception, and passibility – may also be understood as an unfolding of what it means “to be present” in the presence.

Looked at from a functionalistic point of view contemplation represents an opportunity for the late- or post-modern subject not to become entirely gripped by the earlier mentioned pathological excesses. Contemplative moments can contribute to dealing with the challenges of our time in a beneficial way and can, therefore, be mainly understood as (prophetic) counteractions. However, from a theological perspective, one needs to keep in mind that contemplation must not merely be instrumentalized as a passive counterbalance as this would only structurally sustain our overactive society and its forms of life. Silence is a performative appeal, an appeal that invites reflection. “Interruption” and “withdrawal/retreat” must neither be solely considered as taking a break in a slow movement oasis – which in turn only reinforces the structures of an “accelerated society” – nor as a permanent and total sealing-off from society, surroundings or other human beings. “Peace” and “quiet” as expressions of “non-intentionality” must not be confused with a standstill or any kind of inner resignation. “Living in the present/presence” should not degenerate into an excessively squandering and irresponsible lifestyle. Practicing the “perception of the body,” as described above, can prevent this.

Given these contemporary challenges, science (in its attempt to explain and understand societal phenomena) is now also in demand to provide guidance regarding orientation. While some fields of science consider themselves traditionally to be value-neutral, they often make normative claims. Therefore, Mersch’s post-hermeneutics obviously function as an appeal in the context of cultural studies and the humanities. The sociologist Hartmut Rosa, after having detected the live-impeding moments of an accelerated society, now searches for “a critical theory of time.”<sup>29</sup>

Theologians, sociologists, and philosophers of religion can – each in their own way – appropriate the basic principles of the (Christian) spiritual traditions and can thus contribute to the well-being of our society.

Let us bring our discussion to a close with an explicitly Christian theological thought: Jesus, confessed by Christians as the Christ, serves in his “being human” as an ideal type for discipleship to which each and every Christian is continually called. As explained earlier, this could be learned through practicing contemplation. The aspects “interruption,” “non-intentionality,” “perception,” and “passibility” are – amongst others – all forms of practicing to “let oneself into the present moment.” As the paradigmatic “scene of contemplation” in Exodus 3 – which shows Moses in front of the burning bush – testifies, God reveals by uttering His name the commitment and promise “to be present.” In faith-language this means that “presence” is an abode of God. Consequently, being in the presence/present constitutes a relationship – frequently far from the spoken word; and the contemplative practice to be in the presence/ present represents a form of practicing the ability to be in relationships which lead to being human more fully.

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<sup>28</sup> A formulation generated by Andreas Telsler.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Hartmut Rosa, *Resonanz: Eine Soziologie der Weltbeziehung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2016).

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## To Whom It May Concern: Humanity and Dignity in Interreligious Perspective

BIRGIT HELLER

### What Is Humanity? A Few Introductory Comments

Regarding the definition of the human being, a broad consensus is only available in biological terms. The definitions of cultures, religions, and academic disciplines are based on different ideas and images of the human being. Therefore, the problem, which is intertwined with the terms humanity and dignity, as well, is due to *different* normative requirements deduced from the postulated real nature or the ideal destination of humankind. Although global coexistence is in need of universal values and norms, no idea of humanity has evolved up to now that is completely free from particular cultural and religious perspectives, nor is one seemingly anticipated in the near future.

In the course of cultural development the human being, more precisely man, has very often been defined by distinction from others: from animals, "barbarians," slaves, women, and other genders.<sup>1</sup> Most of the time distinction was accompanied by discrimination towards the contrasted being. Man asserts himself by demanding authority and dominance based on his apparent peculiarity. This peculiarity of human existence constitutes human dignity. Therefore, religious and philosophical approaches to humanity are always concerned with human dignity as well. This is the reason I am addressing humanity and dignity simultaneously.

As a moral norm and ideal, humanity is more than an attitude towards and behavior among human beings. It is connected with the values of equality and justice and cannot be restricted to human beings alone. Humanity is not confined to the observance of human rights, but involves an active engagement and striving towards a good life for all. Humanity embraces respect and protection of life and nature, solidarity with the living beings, and responsibility for the welfare of the world. In the following I will deal with some aspects of humanity and dignity in the most influential religious traditions. First of all, I will give an overview of religious equivalents to the term dignity, and then I will focus on the issues of equality and justice which are inseparably linked with the different religious concepts of humanity. Aiming at the illustration of common and clearly distinct positions, I have selected the two topics of anthropocentrism and androcentrism. At long last, I will shortly address the question of whether and how religions can contribute to humanity.

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<sup>1</sup> Since ancient times, there exist many cultures which discern more than two genders and distinguish man from women and other genders. Nevertheless, man is regarded as the norm, from which all others deviate and, often enough, they are despised and marginalized. Although there are no uniform definitions for the many terms used to designate sex and gender variations, today all the culture-specific concepts can be subsumed under the umbrella term "transgender people" (there are also other notions, such as third/multiple gender, intergender, fluid gender, queer, and so on). A broad range of examples are collected by Sabrina Petra Ramet (ed.), *Gender Reversals and Gender Cultures* (London: Routledge, 1996); phenomena of "third gender" or transgender, respectively, hold a more than prominent place in the realms of Indian mythology, religion, and society, cf. Birgit Heller, "Symbols of Emancipation? Images of God/dess, Devotees and Trans-sex/gender in Hindu Traditions," *Interdisciplinary Journal for Religion and Transformation in Contemporary Society* 5/1, pp. 235-257. The following discussion of humanity and dignity is focused on animals and women, although the issues of "barbarians" and transgenders are equally relevant.

## Humanity and Dignity in Religious Traditions

### *Equivalents to the Term Dignity*

In the Jewish and Christian traditions, human dignity has its basis on the idea of the God-likeness of men. In ancient Hebrew, the terms which can be seen as the equivalent to this idea are *zelem elohim*, "image of God," and *demut*, "likeness to God." Another important term essential to the idea of human dignity is *kabod*, God's "glory." In Psalm 8 we read that God crowned humanity with "glory and honor." That could also be translated as "dignity and grandeur" and is referring to the royal insignia which were bestowed upon humankind by God during its creation.<sup>2</sup> In the Jewish-rabbinic tradition the term God-likeness could also mean that humans are similar to God in shape, represent the divine claim to power, or try to imitate God in terms of leading an ethical life. The Christian idea of God-likeness draws on the Hebrew Tora and modifies it insofar as Christ is viewed as the ideal image (*eikon*) of God (cf. 2 Cor. 4, 4). Christ is seen as the ideal Adam, conveying God-likeness to all men. Through the act of baptism all believers are taking part in the nature of Christ, which enables a just way of life. The classical term of human dignity was already taken up in early Christian theology and was interpreted as an expression of God-likeness.<sup>3</sup>

In Islam, human dignity does not have its basis on the idea of God-likeness, since the difference between God and men is clearly marked. But God has provided men with a special kind of dignity: He has honored humankind and preferred it among all other beings (cf. Sūrah 17, 70).<sup>4</sup> The modern Arabic term for human dignity (*karāmat al-insān*) is derived from the same word root as the verb "to honor," used in Sūrah 17, 70.<sup>5</sup> The notion that man is chosen as *khalīfa* (cf. Sūrah 2, 30) as God's vicegerent on earth, is also significant for the idea of human dignity.<sup>6</sup> The term *khalīfa* has a double meaning and, until recently, both interpretations, i.e. "successor" (of other creatures) and "vicegerent," had been considered in the Islamic tradition. In the meanwhile, Muslim theologians mostly agree that the term has to be understood as vicegerent of God.

In the Hindu traditions, there are at least two equivalents corresponding to the idea of human dignity. For the classic-brahmanical tradition two terms are decisive: *brahman*, denoting the impersonal, spiritual, and ultimate principle of the cosmos, and *ātman*, referring to this fundamental principle as present in each living being.<sup>7</sup> Concerning the tradition of the brahmanical scholars, the specific human dignity consists in the possibility of realizing the true essence of reality, the unity of *ātman/brahman*, thereby achieving liberation from the cycle of rebirth. The theistic traditions are shaped by *bhakti*, a term derived from the Sanskrit *bhaj*, "to distribute; to share; to partake," with the meaning of "loving devotion." In this context, the

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Klaus Seybold, "Feindbild und Menschenwürde. Das Zeugnis der Psalmen," in Herms, Eilert (ed.), *Menschenbild und Menschenwürde* (Gütersloh: Kaiser, Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2001), pp. 308f.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Wolfgang Huber, "Menschenwürde/Menschenrechte," in Müller, Gerhard (ed.), *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1992), Vol. 22, p. 578.

<sup>4</sup> All citations of the Qur'ān after: *The Koran Interpreted*, transl. Arthur J. Arberry (London: Allen & Unwin; New York: Macmillan, 1955), 2 Vols.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Rotraud Wielandt, "Menschenwürde und Freiheit in der Reflexion zeitgenössischer muslimischer Denker," in Schwartländer, Johannes (ed.), *Freiheit der Religion. Christentum und Islam unter dem Anspruch der Menschenrechte* (Mainz: Matthias Grünewald-Verlag, 1993), p. 187.

<sup>6</sup> Rotraud Wielandt, "Man and His Ranking in the Creation: On the Fundamental Understanding of Islamic Anthropology," in Bsteh, Andreas (ed.), *Islam Questioning Christianity: Lectures – Questions – Interventions* (Mödling: Verlag St. Gabriel, 2007), pp. 78f.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Axel Michaels, *Der Hinduismus: Geschichte und Gegenwart* (München: Beck, 2006), pp. 286-289.



accent lies on the personal relationship between an absolute personal God and the human being; thus, human dignity consists in self-surrender and participation in God.

The Buddhist concepts of human dignity are similar to the classic-brahmanical idea concerning structure. In the tradition of Theravāda, the specific dignity of human beings consists in the capability for enlightenment. It is the precious privilege of the human form of existence to become a Buddha and, thereby, gain liberation from the circle of rebirth.<sup>8</sup> A partly different approach to dignity can be found in the tradition of Mahāyāna. Some schools teach that all living beings own the same universal Buddha nature. The term *tathāgatagarbha* is used in this context, offering different possibilities of translation, like “embryonic Buddha” or “essence of Buddha.” Accordingly, the term expresses the possibility to become a Buddha, but can also mean that all living beings are already Buddha.<sup>9</sup>

*Anthropocentrism – Humans are only Animals too*

By definition, animals are no human beings, but human beings are animals. The dominant philosophical traditions in Western cultures have mostly stressed the difference between humans and animals.<sup>10</sup> Animals are predominantly considered as things and resources for the needs of human beings. And even if they are conceded a capacity for suffering or a certain form of intelligence, humans are said to have no (direct) moral obligations towards animals whatsoever. Only recently evolutionary biologists have gained impressive evidence on qualities such as empathy, justice, and benevolence, thus establishing a kind of morality in different species of mammals and especially among the apes.<sup>11</sup> This cognition provides conclusive reasons to oppose the claim that humanity and dignity are privileges of human beings alone. Recently, the perspectives of humanity and dignity have been broadened in different disciplines within the scientific community. Not only human rights, but also animal rights are increasingly under discussion.<sup>12</sup> Even the position of limiting humanity to beings possessing sentience or consciousness is controversial. In any case, attitudes against animals are guided by religious and philosophical ideas about animals and their relation to concepts such as soul, consciousness, matter and spirit, immortality, and so on.

Religions are divided in their attitudes towards animals. In Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, the traditional concepts of man being the image of God or God’s representative are shaped by anthropocentrism. In principle, in all these traditions, the idea of dignity is attributed to the whole creation and constitutes man’s responsible interaction with his environment.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, the conviction of man’s outstanding position as the climax or “crown” of creation dominated both thought and practice in the course of historical development. According to the Qur’ān, God has created the earth for the human beings to test them as regards to

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. Perry Schmidt-Leukel, “Das Boot der menschlichen Existenz. Zum Menschenbild im Buddhismus,” in Hoffmann, Herbert (ed.), *Werde Mensch. Wert und Würde des Menschen in den Weltreligionen* (Trier: Paulinus, 1999), p. 24.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Peter Gäng, *Buddhismus* (Frankfurt a.M.: Campus-Verlag, 2002), pp. 192-194, 208-211.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Gary Steiner, *Anthropocentrism and Its Discounts: The Moral Status of Animals in the History of Western Philosophy* (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010).

<sup>11</sup> One of the best known researchers is the primatologist Frans de Waal, who has published many scientific articles and popular scientific books about this issue, among them: *The Bonobo and the Atheist: In Search of Humanism Among the Primates* (New York: WW Norton, 2013).

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Cass R. Sunstein and Martha C. Nussbaum, *Animal Rights: Current Debates and New Directions* (New York, NY: Oxford Univ. Press, 2010).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Peter Gerlitz, *Mensch und Natur in den Weltreligionen: Grundlagen einer Religionsökologie* (Darmstadt: Primus-Verlag, 1998).

which of them is best in deed (Sūrah 18, 7), and moreover the whole creation has been subjected to man (Sūrah 31, 20). Thus, the earth primarily functions as the basis for human life and the place where people can prove their belief in God, although they are made responsible for the creation they are entrusted with. In accordance with the dominant lines of Jewish and Christian traditions, a clear anthropocentrism within the framework of human responsibility is evidently affirmed. In Islamic sources, statements about animals are contradictory.<sup>14</sup> On the one hand, there are traditions which condemn the ill-treatment and the senseless killing of animals; on the other hand, there is a saying that angels do not come in a house where a dog is. In any case, animals are definitely regarded as different from human beings because they lack rational soul. Therefore, generally they cannot participate in a life after death, although there is the belief that very special animals, like Muhammad's she-camel, will go to paradise. In Judaism, animals are regarded as sentient beings and the prohibition of cruelty towards them is enshrined in the Halacha, the Jewish Religious Law. Thus, animal slaughtering should be as painless as possible.<sup>15</sup> In sum, it can be stated that animals, both in the mainstream of Judaism and of Islam, should be well-treated, although most of the attention is paid to livestock. Concerning Christianity, most of the influential theologians of the early church advocated a hierarchical order of creation and distinguished human beings from animals, denying them dignity because of the lack of rationality, which is essential for the knowledge of God, and the (immortal) soul.<sup>16</sup> Increasingly, critical reflection on this anthropocentric image of the human being standing aloof from ... the "crown of creation," as well as extensive discussions about animal ethics and animal rights, are to be found in modern Christian theology.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, concerning concrete criticism of cruel methods or other brutalities against animals, the declarations of the Christian churches remain mostly vague and imprecise. This has recently changed with the clear statements of Pope Francis in his encyclical "Laudato Si," published in 2015.<sup>18</sup>

In contrast to the Abrahamic religions, both Hindu and Buddhist traditions maintain that human beings do not *fundamentally* differ from other forms of life.<sup>19</sup> All living beings are connected together in the cosmic cycle of existence; the differences between them are only of grade. The additional value of human life, however, consists in the possibility to gain liberation from the cycle of rebirth. In Hindu tradition, the principal equality of all living beings is based on the idea of the unity of the ultimate reality (*brahman*) which is present as *ātman* in each living being. Another way to establish equality is related to the same capability of devotion: In the

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. Halima Kraussen, "Islam," in Ferrari, Arianna and Petrus, Klaus (eds.), *Lexikon der Mensch-Tier-Beziehungen* (Bielefeld: Transcript-Verlag, 2015), p. 179.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Hanna Rheinz, "Judentum," in Ferrari, Arianna and Petrus, Klaus (eds.), *Lexikon der Mensch-Tier-Beziehungen* (Bielefeld: Transcript-Verlag, 2015), pp. 187-189.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Ulrich Volp, *Die Würde des Menschen. Ein Beitrag zur Anthropologie in der Alten Kirche* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), pp. 191, 215f., 221f., 229, 231-237.

<sup>17</sup> Cf., for example, Walter Dietz, "Christus – der neue Adam. Wert und Würde des Menschen im Christentum," in Hoffmann, Herbert (ed.), *Werde Mensch. Wert und Würde des Menschen in den Weltreligionen* (Trier: Paulinus, 1999), pp. 104f.; Kurt Remele, *Die Würde des Tieres ist unantastbar. Eine neue christliche Tierethik* (Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker), 2016.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Kurt Remele, "Christentum," in Ferrari, Arianna and Petrus, Klaus (eds.), *Lexikon der Mensch-Tier-Beziehungen* (Bielefeld: Transcript-Verlag, 2015), p. 64; Remele, *Die Würde des Tieres ist unantastbar*, pp. 115-117. The positions presented in the current World Catechism are still imprecise and do not take account of recent developments, cf. Remele, *Die Würde des Tieres ist unantastbar*, pp. 136-140.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Ram Adhar Mall, *Der Hinduismus* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1997), p. 37; Michael von Brück, "Die Menschenwürde in verschiedenen Religionen und Kulturräumen," in Vogel, Beatrix (ed.), *Umwertung der Menschenwürde – Kontroversen mit und nach Nietzsche* (Freiburg/München: Alber, 2014), pp. 347-349.

religiosity of the various *bhakti* traditions animals are important role models for the devotion to a personal godhead. It was not until modern times that representatives of the brahmanical Hindu tradition laid weight on the special status of human beings and justified their superiority on the possibility of gaining spiritual knowledge and the fulfillment of religious obligations.<sup>20</sup> In so far as man is proclaimed to be the center of the universe and the measure of all things,<sup>21</sup> the impact of Western philosophical thought is evident. Nevertheless, in history, there has always been a gap between the theoretical equality of all living beings and the actual practice. Some animals have been highly venerated (like cows or snakes), others have mostly been despised and ill-treated (like dogs).

Although the liberation from the cycle of rebirth is considered a human privilege in Buddhism, anthropocentric thinking as an expression of human hybris and does not find fertile soil. Equality between the living beings is established by the potentiality of Buddhahood or the universal Buddha-nature, respectively. The tales of the diverse existences of the historical Buddha in an animal's form<sup>22</sup> exemplify that animals are also on their way to Buddhahood and are therefore potential Buddhas. As written in an early Buddhist text called *Metta-Sutta*, the human being should cultivate boundless thoughts of loving kindness towards all beings on the way to enlightenment. This mindfulness is characterized as a state of recognizing oneself in all other beings by the prominent scholar of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE Buddhaghosa. Following Buddhaghosa, the state of recognizing oneself in all other beings more precisely means identifying all others with oneself.<sup>23</sup> Considering the mutual dependency of all living beings, Buddhist thought definitely has the potential to deconstruct the dualism between humans and animals. Nevertheless, Buddhist attitudes towards animals are not completely free of ambivalence: It cannot be denied that the human existence is regarded as clearly privileged and the propagated vegetarianism might not only be seen as an expression of empathy, but also as a means to avoid harm to human beings or even members of the own family who descended to the form of animals in the wheel of rebirth.<sup>24</sup>

#### *Androcentrism: Privileged Hu-man-ity*

Today's most prevalent religious traditions have a more or less androcentric bias in common. Thus, it is not clear at all if women are to be seen as entrusted with full humanity. Concerning the traditional positions of Jewish rabbis and Christian theologians, opinions about this subject are far away from being uniform, but it is widely taken for granted that women only indirectly have a share in the image of God. Therefore, it is pointed to the biblical account of creation, according to which God created the woman from the man's body. Whereas man is created in the image of God, woman is a "building" which God "prepared unto him [= unto

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. R. Balasubramanian, "Die Stellung des Menschen in der Welt aus der Sicht des Hinduismus," in Panikkar, Raimondo and Strolz, Walter (eds.), *Die Verantwortung des Menschen für eine bewohnbare Welt im Christentum, Hinduismus und Buddhismus* (Freiburg/B.: Herder, 1985), p. 77.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Balasubramanian, "Die Stellung des Menschen in der Welt aus der Sicht des Hinduismus," p. 76.

<sup>22</sup> *Once the Buddha Was a Monkey. Ārya Śūra's Jātakamāla*, transl. Peter Khoroché (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

<sup>23</sup> Cf. *Visuddhi-magga oder der Weg zur Reinheit: die größte und älteste systematische Darstellung des Buddhismus*, transl. Nyanatiloka (Konstanz: Christiani 1975), p. 352.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Scott Hurley, "Buddhismus," in Ferrari, Arianna and Petrus, Klaus (eds.), *Lexikon der Mensch-Tier-Beziehungen* (Bielefeld: Transcript-Verlag, 2015), pp. 61f.

man] out of himself [= out of man]" – the interpretation given in the Talmudic tractate *Kethuboth* 8a.<sup>25</sup>

The exact same line of reasoning dominates Christian tradition. In his first letter addressed to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul legitimates the demand that every woman should cover her head while praying to God according to the order of creation, building the foundation of a hierarchical gender order: Whereas man is the image and glory of God, woman is the glory of man. For man was not made from woman and not created for woman, he argues, but woman was made from man and created for man (1 Cor. 11, 7-9). Following the Church Father Augustine, whose influence in Western Christianity cannot be overestimated, man alone is the perfect and complete image of God, but woman is the image of God only in conjunction with man.<sup>26</sup> Concerning Thomas Aquinas,<sup>27</sup> whose positions were decisive for many Christian theologians until modern times, man presents the perfect image of God. Woman, by contrast, ranks behind man in respect to rationality, strength, and dignity. It is only in the course of the modern era that in Judaism and Christianity the opinion that both genders are assigned to dignity and humanity to the same extent gained grounds (as a side note, nowadays the question of full humanity and dignity has shifted to the debate on transgender people). Some decades ago, Jewish and Christian Feminist theology started to revise the androcentric traditions.<sup>28</sup> Whereas Feminist theologians lay the focus on gender equality, both orthodox Jewish rabbis and the Catholic teaching authority up to now are guided by the model of complementarity of man and woman, including a specific dignity of woman.<sup>29</sup>

In as far as women are subordinated to male authority in Islam they are obviously less qualified than men to be the vicegerent of God. According to Sūrah 4, 34, men are guardians, maintainers, or caretakers of women, for Allah has made them superior to women and because they must spend from their wealth. It is evident that, being dependent, women could not be *khalifas* in the same way as men were in Islamic history. Higher impurity of the body, lesser legal status, and partly reduced freedom of movement did not provide a good basis to fully entitle women to the role as representatives of God. Comparable to all other religious traditions, Muslim women as well have begun to reflect on their roles, their legacy, and their religious self-understanding.<sup>30</sup> The widespread view among modern Muslim thinkers is that

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<sup>25</sup> *The Babylonian Talmud: Tractate Kethuboth*, transl. Samuel Daiches and Israel W. Slotki (Soncino Talmud Online: <https://halakhah.com/pdf/nashim/Kethuboth.pdf>) [10.05.2017].

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Anne Jensen, *Frauen im frühen Christentum* (Bern: Lang, 2002), pp. 229-233.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Monika Leisch-Kiesel, *Eva als Andere: eine exemplarische Untersuchung zu Frühchristentum und Mittelalter* (Köln: Böhlau, 1992), pp. 136-144.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. for example Judith Plaskow, *Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism from a Feminist Perspective* (San Francisco, CA: Harper, 1990); Tal Ilan, *Mine and Yours Are Hers. Retrieving Women's History from Rabbinic Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 1997); Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (London: SCM Press LTD, 1983); Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel, *Das Land, wo Milch und Honig fließt: Perspektiven einer feministischen Theologie* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Mohn, 1985).

<sup>29</sup> Cf. for example the Apostolic Letter of Pope John Paul II, *On the Dignity and Vocation of Women on the Occasion of the Marian Year. Mulieris dignitatem* (Washington, D.C.: Unites States Catholic Conference, 1988).

<sup>30</sup> Cf. for example Riffat Hassan, "Muslim Women and Post-Patriarchal Islam," in Cooley, Paula M. et al. (eds.), *After Patriarchy. Feminist Transformations of the World Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994), pp. 39-64; Amina Wadud, *Inside the Gender Jihad: Women's Reform in Islam* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2008).

men and women are equal concerning their dignity. Women are seen to be appointed as representatives of God just the same as men.<sup>31</sup>

Up to modern times and partly beyond, the classic-brahmanical Hindu tradition is shaped by an extreme androcentrism leading to a number of negative spin-offs. Just as men who belong to the lowest social class, women are excluded from the path of knowledge leading to the realization of *ātman/brahman*. As a consequence, they are not endowed with the same dignity and humanity as men are. One might say that a woman's dignity consists in serving her husband. According to the *Manusmṛti* – the most prominent text proscribing the norms of Hindu behavior, – the religious initiation for women is identified with marriage (*Manu* II, 67) and “a husband must be constantly worshipped as a god by a faithful wife” (*Manu* V, 154).<sup>32</sup> For women, the path to liberation leads to the privilege of a male rebirth at first and, subsequently, towards the ultimate goal, on the condition that they meet the requirements of feminine life primarily consisting in subordination and self-surrender. The case with the various Hindu traditions shaped by *bhakti*-religiosity is quite different. In this context, the devotee is regarded as *bhakta*, “shareholder” of God, who will reach the supreme goal irrespectively of social class and gender. This idea is already formulated in the *Bhagavadgītā* (9, 29-32),<sup>33</sup> an immensely influential and more than 2,000 years-old text. Very seldom, however, this view has given way to social and political equality of all human beings; most of the time, equality remained restricted to the religious realm.<sup>34</sup> Concerning modern Hinduism, quite a few of the movements which emerged from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, base dignity and equality of man and woman (and of all human beings) on the concept of *ātman*, as being present in both genders in the same way. Characteristics of sex and gender are only regarded as external and superfluous differences.<sup>35</sup>

Although the same point of view is already vindicated in early Buddhism, gender plays nonetheless a decisive role here as well. Considering that the songs of the enlightened nuns, dating from the earliest Buddhist times, were delivered as part of the official Pali Canon, the capability of women for enlightenment was nevertheless put into question from the beginning. Soma, one of the nuns whose testimony of enlightenment is preserved, obviously gives an answer to the ongoing debate by asking why the fact of being a woman should be an obstacle to “get to see the place that sages want to reach”; for her, “what counts is that the heart is settled and that one sees what really is” (*Therīgāthā* 60-62).<sup>36</sup> A widespread idea in Mahāyāna Buddhism is that a spiritually developed woman can achieve the highest grade of a being becoming Buddha only by change of sex, either spontaneously in the actual life, or in the imminent

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<sup>31</sup> For example, cf. Fuad Kandil, *Blockierte Kommunikation: Islam und Christentum* (Berlin: LIT-Verlag, 2008), p. 299.

<sup>32</sup> *Manu. The Laws*, transl. Georg Bühler (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1988), p. 42 and 196.

<sup>33</sup> *The Bhagavad Gita*, transl. by Gavin D. Flood and Charles Martin (New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 2012), p. 76.

<sup>34</sup> The tradition of the Liṅgāyats presents an interesting exception to the restriction of equality to the religious realm only. Arising in the 12<sup>th</sup> century CE, the Liṅgāyats or Viraśaivas (belonging to the large complex of Śaivite traditions) emphasize the equality of all human beings regardless of social class and gender. Among the social consequences derived from this ideal, there are the abolishment of castes, the rejection of female impurity, and the permit of the remarriage of widows (forbidden by brahmanical law). Cf. Birgit Heller, *Heilige Mutter und Gottesbraut: Frauenemanzipation im modernen Hinduismus* (Wien: Milena-Verlag, 1999).

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 145f., 235-239.

<sup>36</sup> *Therīgāthā: poems of the First Buddhist Women*, transl. Charles Hallisey (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2015), p. 45.

rebirth.<sup>37</sup> Besides that, there are traditions, like Zen Buddhism and Tibetan Buddhism, which from the beginning argued against sexual discrimination and asserted that gender is irrelevant for enlightenment. In the meanwhile, the androcentric tendencies, being also evident in negative female stereotypes, are criticized by many Buddhist women and some Buddhist male authorities as well.<sup>38</sup>

### Can Religions Contribute to Humanity?

The chain of associations built up by the terms autonomy, individuality, rationality, freedom of will, and self-responsibility is typical for the secular understanding of dignity and humanity. Most religious positions mark significant differences. Maybe with the exception of Theravāda Buddhism<sup>39</sup> and later Confucianism,<sup>40</sup> today's major religions represent heteronomic concepts of dignity. Dignity and humanity are not based on the individual but on a dimension beyond. It cannot, however, be necessarily deduced from this that the individual is of no importance. Moreover, all traditions discuss the issues of autonomy, freedom of will, and self-responsibility, but dignity and humanity seem to be largely independent from these qualities. Quite the same holds true for rationality. Of course, partly, religious traditions do stress the connections between dignity, humanity, and rationality. There have always been theologians and other religious experts having laid emphasis on the intellectual capacity of human beings. But reason has been mainly regarded as an instrument for the knowledge of God or the ultimate reality, respectively. Most often, and with regard to the vocation and destiny of human existence, however, rationality plays only a subordinate role. Rationality is relativized in favor of spirit, intuition, and wisdom, but just as much in favor of responsible action, solidarity, and interconnectedness. Thus, dignity and humanity are primarily not a matter of certain qualities or capabilities. Dignity and humanity are first and foremost regarded as terms of relationship. This is evident from the concepts of God's image, God's representative, God's share-holder, as well as from concepts related to fundamental cosmic connectedness which is expressed by the identification of *ātman* and *brahman*, the overcoming of

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Diane Y. Paul, *Women in Buddhism Images of the Feminine in Mahāyāna Tradition* (Berkeley, CA: Asian Humanities Press, 1979), pp. 166-179.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. for example Rita M. Gross, *Buddhism after Patriarchy: A Feminist History, Analysis, and Reconstruction of Buddhism* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993); Karma Lekshe Tsomo (ed.), *Buddhist Women and Social Justice: Ideals, Challenges, and Achievements* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2004).

<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, even in Theravāda Buddhism the human capability to enlightenment (an equivalent to human dignity) does not lead to an automatic mechanism of self-liberation, but has to be understood as a process of spiritual growth which does not primarily depend on a person's own activities and strivings.

<sup>40</sup> The philosopher Mengzi (Meng-tzu, Lat. Mencius, ca. 370-290), whose work is said to represent best the moral substance of Confucian ethics, clearly expresses a general concept of man consisting in the idea of an innate human "nature." According to Mengzi, man is endowed with an intrinsic dignity – a so-called "good dignity" (*lianggui*) in contrast to the honor resulting of social position or personal achievements – which can be regarded as an equivalent to man's "heavenly rank/dignity" (*tianjue*). Thus, it seems to be "nature" or "heaven" (*tian*), respectively, conferring to every man a dignity within himself. In the book Mengzi, the original meaning of *tian* as a personal godhead has changed to a vague numinous connotation of this term. Therefore, the metaphysical and heteronomic basis of human dignity completely fades into the background pushing forward self-determination and moral autonomy. Cf. Heiner Roetz, "The 'Dignity within Oneself': Chinese Traditions and Human Rights," in Pohl, Karl Heinz (ed.), *Chinese Thought in a Global Context* (Leiden/Boston/Köln: Brill, 1999), pp. 240-253; Gregor Paul, "Konzepte der Menschenwürde in der klassischen chinesischen Philosophie," in Ommerborn, Wolfgang et al. (eds.), *Das Buch Mengzi im Kontext der Menschenrechtsfrage* (Berlin: LIT-Verlag, 2011), pp. 51-67.

egoism, or the idea of the Buddha nature. Dignity and humanity are not linked to autonomy, but are embedded into relations and interdependences.

Compared with the prevailing understanding of human dignity, religions set different accents regarding rationality and individuality. Thus, the interreligious perspective could serve as a critical corrective to reductionism (in the sense of humans being more than just brain and the appreciation of dimensions such as emotionality, spirituality, sociability, and so on) and to individualism succumbed to the obsession of autonomy in modern Western cultures. Concerning the narrowing of humanity to anthropocentrism, Abrahamic religions do not offer alternatives to the mainstream of secular approaches. The idea of interconnectedness of the living beings, however, is deeply rooted in Hindu and Buddhist traditions and offers the theoretical and practical opportunity to deconstruct the dualistic split between humans and animals. In concrete ethical concerns, however, the practice of nonviolence and vegetarianism has not so much been dominated by the notion of the animals' dignity, but on the interests of improving the conditions of humans for their own salvation. The horizontal issue of androcentrism, running throughout the history of the religious as well as the secular concepts of dignity and humanity,<sup>41</sup> makes clear just how difficult it is to even respect all human beings as equal in dignity and to concede them full humanity.

So far, humanity has not been fully realized. The history of religions demonstrates the problems involved by taking religious values as the benchmark for humanity. Often enough religions themselves have been used to legitimate inhuman thought and practice. Thus, there exist good reasons to protect human beings from any kind of evaluation by a secular concept of autonomy,<sup>42</sup> but there is no basis, however, for humanity in the sense of a reciprocal togetherness of all living beings. Human societies are dominated by selfish interests of social, ethnic, or religious groups, and human beings have laid claim to space and resources provided by the planet earth and even beyond. Religions have at least partly legitimized the pretensions of humankind or a privileged part of it. Nevertheless, religious traditions also comprise approaches to correct the human hybris. The Hindu myth of "Indra and the Ants" represents an impressive example of how that works:

Indra, the king of gods, troubles all other gods by his insatiable craving for bigger and more splendid palaces. Therefore, the gods are seeking help from the almighty God, Vishnu. Vishnu visits Indra in the disguise of a brahmanical boy. Because it always promises good fortune to invite a Brāhmaṇa – a member of the class of the priests – Indra is pleased to welcome the guest. Sitting with the proud Indra at dinner, suddenly, the boy starts smiling. Indra wants to know the reason for his behavior. Vishnu points at a parade of ants wandering through the hall, saying: "Once, each of them has been an Indra." (Vishnu declares that in a former birth each of them held the position of Indra.) Indra understands the message, repents, and turns to humility.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> A straight line can be drawn starting from the Stoa – defining human equality as brotherhood based on the idea of participation in the *logos* – through to the proclamation of "Liberty, equality, fraternity" in the French Revolution and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood."

<sup>42</sup> Walter Schweidler, "Asiatische Werte – asiatische Menschenrechte?" in Gareis, Sven Bernhard and Geiger, Gunter (eds.), *Internationaler Schutz der Menschenrechte: Stand und Perspektiven im 21. Jahrhundert* (Opladen & Farmington Hills, MI: Budrich, 2009), p. 184.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Heinrich Zimmer, *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization*, ed. Joseph Campbell (Princeton, NJ: Bollingen Paperback Printing, 1974), pp. 3-11.

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## Learning to Conceive of Climate Change as a Truly Global and Moral Problem<sup>1</sup>

ANGELA KALLHOFF

Climate change is a fact that has been underpinned by empirical studies, and this fact is about to change significantly the living conditions on planet Earth. Even though climate change is not the result of ill-will or bad intent, there is a continuous accumulation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere due to carbon-based industries, high emission in various industrial sectors, and a growing world population. Raising temperatures cause severe and extreme weather events, from the melting of the ices at the poles, to a host of negative side-effects so severe that today statistics account even for human victims of climate change.<sup>2</sup>

The development of deep changes to our natural surroundings are not only challenging in terms of the necessary readjustments we must make to create new living conditions. Instead, the world population is faced with a normative scenario that is unprecedented: Whereas one part of the world population profits from a life-style that produces high amounts of greenhouse gases, the other part of the world population suffers severe and even deadly damage. In particular, the moral conclusions from this scenario are by no means obvious. Whereas the diagnosis of climate injustice cannot be rejected any longer, the conclusions from this observation are difficult to draw. Does climate injustice include that climate victims deserve support from climate profiteers? How do we judge the motives of actors who are involved in economic development and who might even not have known that this development causes harm and pain? What about collective responsibility or specific responsibility of governments of the developed nation states?

In this contribution I wish to address a detail of the complex debate on climate justice. I wish to address the question of what it means to “learn to be human in a global world,” pre-supposed climate change fosters moral debate on climate justice. In order to “learn to be human in a global world,” it is not only important to acknowledge the fact of climate change. It is equally important to acknowledge the normative claims resulting from this new situation.

This contribution starts with an interpretation of climate change not only as a “truly global problem.” Instead, it has been conceived of as an imminently ethical problem. Even though not caused by ill will, climate change is the end result of activities and a life-style that up to today persist in highly developed rich countries. The rich north has not only caused climate change. It even does so at the cost of the poor south.<sup>3</sup> Today, the people who suffer most from climate change do not have the least means to protect themselves from the effects of climate change. Poor people cannot build dams or protect settlements effectively when mega-storms and flooding threaten to destroy houses and buildings. The same divide between rich and poor goes

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<sup>1</sup> This research has been supported by the Austrian Science Foundation project, “New Directions of Plant Ethics.”

<sup>2</sup> For data on climate change, see the summary of the fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change available at [https://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar5/syr/AR5\\_SYR\\_FINAL\\_SPM.pdf](https://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar5/syr/AR5_SYR_FINAL_SPM.pdf), accessed May 09, 2017.

<sup>3</sup> This oversimplified opposition of climate profiteers and climate victims has been supplemented by a range of alternatives to classify climate injustice. See Steve Vanderheiden, *Atmospheric Justice: A Political Theory of Climate Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Dominic Roser, *Ethical perspectives on climate policy and climate economics* (Zurich: University of Zurich, Zurich Open Repository and Archive, 2010).

through societies and is a more general fact. Whereas rich people have a chance to buy out when it comes to environmental hazard, the poor are the most vulnerable group, left alone with environmental hazards.<sup>4</sup> The first section gives a sketch of the ethical challenges that can only be acknowledged after having framed the climate crisis accordingly.

Yet, there is no straight way to draw normative conclusions from the fact of injustice. Instead, authors in the field of climate justice have argued a range of fine-grained principles that help to adjust climate duties. In particular, two levels of debate need to be distinguished. On a most basic level, philosophers discuss whether or not moral claims can be reasoned at all. Two polar cases are provided: rescue cases, on the one hand, and a cosmopolitan ethics, on the other hand. I shall give a short sketch of both in order to demonstrate that it is fair to discuss the global duties of climate justice. I shall then explain some basic principles that address a second level of concern. Presupposed, it is fair to claim climate duties,<sup>5</sup> it also needs to be discussed how the burdens resulting from climate duties need to be allocated in order to provide a fair scheme of burden-sharing. The third section explains some of the principles that have been argued.

The final section summarizes this discussion and focuses on “learning to be human in a global world” by presenting two theses: Firstly, I shall argue that an important component of learning to be human in our current world is to also learn to shoulder climate duties. We, the current world population, need to learn that environmental duties are among the most urgent duties today. In particular, as embodied living beings, natural resources should be distributed according to principles of fairness. Secondly, I wish to defend the claim that authors invoking a “collective age” are right, in particular with regards to climate change. No single person, no single institution will change the world. Instead, it is important to learn to work together again, especially on an institutional level.

### Why Climate Change is a Moral Problem

In one respect, hardly anybody denies an ethical dimension to climate change today. This aspect has already been mentioned: Some people are the profiteers from climate change, at least in an indirect way. They live at the high end of economic development; in a way they still profit from emissions that were caused by their ancestors in building infrastructure, developing the economy, and supporting a highly consumer-based lifestyle. Yet, others who do not enjoy all these outcomes of a carbon-based and otherwise greenhouse-intense lifestyle suffer the effects of climate change. The already poor people today suffer from the effects of the high-end lifestyle of the rich. This is a problem of injustice.

A debate on climate change as a normative problem has to start with acknowledging a deep injustice. High emission rates are correlated with a rich and good lifestyle. Generations who profit from a highly developed economy today also do so at the cost of poorer regions of the world which suffer from negative side-effects of the accumulation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Since the climate victims have to suffer harm from the profit-seeking behavior of the rich, this is unfair. Yet, besides this acknowledgment, which is already not a widely shared everyday concern, almost everything depends on the theoretical framing of climate change. Interestingly, the differences in interpreting moral claims do not result primarily from

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<sup>4</sup> For an examination of this more general fact of environmental injustice, see Gordon P. Walker, *Environmental Justice: Concepts, Evidence, and Politics* (London/New York: Routledge, 2012).

<sup>5</sup> In the context of this contribution, the concept of a *climate duty* serves as an abbreviation for a diversity of moral obligations, including duties to either support climate victims or to contribute to bearing the burdens of mitigation, which is a reduction of greenhouse gases, and adaptation.

different empirical facts. Reservations result from taking into account further facts: Even though climate-change is to a high degree man-made, the cause of events cannot easily be changed today. Yet, moral claims are reasonable when it is possible to change or to adjust behavior. Moreover, climate-change has not been caused by intent, nor has it been the bad will of any actor to destroy climate stability.<sup>6</sup> Instead, consequences of industries with high greenhouse gas emissions were not foreseeable. Even when accountability in the case of climate change can be argued, this claim should address governments that are responsible for the welfare of citizens, but not single persons.

These are only some reservations about and against climate duties. In the remainder of this contribution, I shall argue that despite these reservations, climate duties are justified. I shall address them in two steps. I shall first argue that two approaches in ethics support the view that climate duties are justified. I shall then argue that even though this claim can be made, it is equally important to care for fair patterns of distribution. In the climate scenario, a fair distribution of burdens and profits does not only include transfer-payments of rich people to climate victims, it also includes a fair assessment of what climate duties propose and who the right addressee is.

### Climate Change and Moral Duties

A moral approach to climate change argues that climate change needs to be framed so that this theoretical framework also includes climate duties. The term 'climate duty' serves as an abbreviation for a range of obligations that relate to climate change. In order to reason climate duties, it does not suffice to acknowledge climate change as a fact; nor does it suffice to regard climate change as a fact that spurs injustice. Instead, it is necessary to explain why persons have moral obligations that relate to climate change. The reason to argue in favor of fulfilling climate duties is not that people who live at the high end really are responsible for the suffering of the poor from climate change-effects.<sup>7</sup> Nor are they guilty in the literal sense. Instead, the debate focuses on two scenarios, both of which come with different moral claims: a rescue ethics on the one hand, and a cosmopolitan ethics on the other hand. Both approaches provide arguments for justifying climate duties, even though they present these arguments in different ways.

Within a utilitarian framework, Peter Singer has described climate duties as rescue duties. His normative claims rely on two aspects of the climate case that have not been mentioned so far. Firstly, he interprets the atmosphere as a common natural good, whose access conditions need to be modeled against a basic fairness condition. In particular, the atmosphere serves as a sink for greenhouse gases. As long as another claim is not reasoned, it needs to be presupposed that each single person deserves the same piece of that atmospheric sink as everyone else.<sup>8</sup> Prima facie, there is no reason why a single person deserves a bigger part than each other person from a global and natural good. Secondly, persons are morally obliged to help persons

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<sup>6</sup> For a discussion of this argument, see Axel Gosseries, "Historical Emissions and Free riding," *Ethical Perspectives* 11/1 (2004), pp. 36-60.

<sup>7</sup> Arguments against direct responsibility include that the harm caused by climate change is neither literally 'caused' nor 'intended' by actors. Instead, climate change is an effect of an accumulation of gases in the atmosphere as a side-effect of carbon-based industries.

<sup>8</sup> Peter Singer, *One World: the Ethics of Globalization*, The Terry Lectures (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), p. 35.

in desperate situations, particularly when the rescue endeavor provides only marginal costs to them, yet has an enormous positive impact on the person who receives it.<sup>9</sup>

Singer states that he frequently prepares his students in this respect by discussing an example: Presupposed, you come along a lake in which a child is drowning: would it not be fair to ask each person passing by the lake to rescue that child if ever possible? He then asks his students:

[W]ould it make any difference if the child were far away, in another country perhaps, but similarly in danger of death, and equally within your means to save, at no great cost – and absolutely no danger – to yourself? Virtually all agree that distance and nationality make no moral difference to the situation. I then point out that we are all in that situation of the person passing the shallow pond: we can all save lives of people, both children and adults, who would otherwise die, and we can do so at a very small cost to us: the cost of a new CD, a shirt or a night out at a restaurant or concert, can mean the difference between life and death to more than one person somewhere in the world – and overseas aid agencies like Oxfam overcome the problem of acting at a distance.<sup>10</sup>

In the utilitarian framework, Singer does not claim that persons owe to each other the duty to rescue. But he says that persons as well as political institutions are obliged to invest in the welfare of humankind. In particular, each person is obliged to invest in rescuing the very poor in accordance with the most good she can do.<sup>11</sup> Following the principles of an optimal return on investment and of marginal utility, each person should give something to the very poor in order to enhance their living conditions. Each person living in the rich part of the world should rescue as many people as possible – in particular from desperate living conditions. In this framing, investing in adaptation, as for instance in new technologies and in climate-resistant agricultural cultivation, is a moral duty.

Overall, Singer's proposal breaks down to the minimum requirement – which is already substantial – to respond to urgent claims in terms of rescue scenarios. In particular, duties to contribute to rescue people internationally also reach beyond purely negative duties. Still, restricted to rules of efficaciousness and to rules of the priority of an individual's well-being, these are already positive duties.

Different from a utilitarian proposal, we also have climate duties that have been reasoned in the context of a cosmopolitan ethics. Here again a short sketch of a complex theory needs to suffice. In his writings on climate ethics, Simon Caney argues that climate duties are in line with a cosmopolitan no-harm principle.<sup>12</sup> Overall, Caney claims that persons are endowed with the most basic moral claims. They are summarized in a list of human rights. In particular, human rights are – to some degree – claim rights, which means that other persons need to respond to them. In particular, they are not tied to an institutional framework of the nation state. Com-

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<sup>9</sup> For a comprehensive justification of this rescue duty, see also Peter Singer, *The Most Good you can do: How Effective Altruism is Changing Ideas about Living Ethically*, Castle Lectures in Ethics, Politics, and Economics (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2015).

<sup>10</sup> Peter Singer, "The Drowning Child and the Expanding Circle," *New Internationalist*, April (1997), available at <https://www.utilitarian.net/singer/by/199704--.htm>.

<sup>11</sup> Singer, *The Most Good You Can Do*.

<sup>12</sup> For his "hybrid account" that includes a cosmopolitan framework and principles of justice, see Simon Caney, "Cosmopolitan Justice, Responsibility, and Global Climate Change," *Leiden Journal of International Law* 18/4 (2005), pp. 747-775; Simon Caney, "Just Emissions," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 40/4 (2012), pp. 255-300.

menting on climate duties, Caney does not support the view that a “right to the environment” is part of the list of human rights. Instead, he explains that climate rights as well as environmental rights need to be framed differently. I shall first recall his core argument and then comment on it. Caney states:

The argument begins with the assumption that

(P1) A person has a right to X when X is a fundamental interest that is weighty enough to generate obligations on others. ...

The next step in the argument maintains that

(P2) Persons have fundamental interests in not suffering from: (a) drought and crop failure; (b) heatstroke; (c) infectious diseases (such as malaria, cholera and dengue); (d) flooding and the destruction of homes and infrastructure; (e) enforced relocation; and (f) rapid, unpredictable and dramatic changes to their natural, social and economic world. ...

(C) Persons have the human right not to suffer from the disadvantages generated by global climate change.<sup>13</sup>

Presupposed, this argument holds – and many agree with the premise that basic human rights need to be respected and supported within a cosmopolitan framework –, Caney also states that duties correlate to human rights. Yet, this does not lead to the conclusion that each single person needs to account for the human right not to suffer from the disadvantages. Instead, this claim opens another field of research, which is research on principles that help to respond to human rights as outlined by Caney. The next section gives a short sketch of some of the key principles.

### Principles of Climate Justice

Presupposed, each single person has a right to either being rescued from climate death and severe climate damage and each single person even has a right not to suffer severe harm caused by climate change, then the debate about climate obligations is also opened. In taking rescue scenarios or human rights-scenarios seriously, it is also stated that persons deserve being rescued and deserve not being seriously harmed. Yet, this leaves much room for interpreting climate duties and for discussing the issue of whether or not these duties are moral duties in the strict sense.<sup>14</sup> Instead of presenting arguments for one or another approach to moral duties, I wish to discuss another issue. I shall presuppose that each single person and each single political institution has some obligation with regard to climate duties;<sup>15</sup> and I shall take the arguments presented in section one as providing sufficient evidence that climate

<sup>13</sup> Simon Caney, “Cosmopolitan Justice, Responsibility, and Global Climate Change,” p. 768.

<sup>14</sup> For a discussion of individual obligations as related to climate change, see: Marion Hourdequin, “Climate, Collective Action and Individual Ethical Obligation,” *Environmental Values* 19/4 (2010), pp. 443-464; Elizabeth Cripps, *Climate Change and the Moral Agent: Individual Duties in an Interdependent World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). For a rejection of individual duties as related to climate change policies, see Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, “It is not my Fault: Global Warming and Individual Moral Obligations,” in Walter Sinnott-Armstrong and Richard B. Howarth (eds.), *Perspectives on Climate Change: Science Economics, Politics, Ethics. Advances in the Economics of Environmental Research* 5 (Amsterdam: Elsevier JAI, 2005), pp. 293-315.

<sup>15</sup> For arguments that underpin this claim, see Angela Kallhoff, “Water Justice: A Multilayer Term and Its Role in Cooperation,” *Analyse & Kritik* 36/2 (2014), pp. 367-382; Angela Kallhoff, “Klima-koooperation: Kollektives Handeln für ein öffentliches Gut,” in Angela Kallhoff (ed.), *Klimagerechtigkeit und Klimaethik*, Wiener Reihe. Themen der Philosophie, Vol. 18 (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2015), pp. 143-167.

duties in one way or another exist and possibly also accrue to each single actor. The question that still needs to be discussed is how burdens can be allocated fairly – burdens that necessarily result from the fulfillment of climate duties. The question that this section discusses is: Presupposed climate duties are justified, how can the burdens resulting from the fulfillment of climate duties be allocated according to principles of fairness?

The debate on climate justice has provided a variety of principles that account for a fair allocation of burdens.<sup>16</sup> To answer the question in the context of this contribution, I shall give a short sketch of the following principles: historical responsibility, capacity principle, beneficiary pays and polluter pays-principle, efficaciousness principles, principles of distributive fairness. This sketch is not meant to portray the rich debate on climate justice; nor is it an exhaustive list. Instead, I wish to argue that it does not suffice to justify climate duties. Instead, climate duties provoke another irritating feature in the debate on moral obligations. Besides the fact that they cannot be reasoned without also taking into account an interpretation of climate change as man-made, as disastrous and as global, they cannot be reasoned accordingly without also taking into account that they are “conditional duties” in a second respect. The justification of climate duties in its concrete shape does not only depend on a moral-cum-empirical interpretation of facts, but also on further premises that shape climate duties in terms of principles of fairness. What has been recalled as a necessary step from “ideal theory” to “non-ideal theory”<sup>17</sup> is better conceived as the need to frame climate duties as conditional duties.

#### *Historical Responsibility*

In environmental ethics, the polluter-pays principle expresses historic responsibility: the actor who has spoiled an environmental good also needs to account for the costs of remediation. As for climate change, the moral idea that the actor causing harm needs to repair it is still valid.<sup>18</sup> Yet the empirical side is difficult, since climate change is the effect of an accumulation of greenhouse gases. The causal chains are distorted and the effects cannot easily be accrued to single actors. Therefore, authors argue for a broader concept of historical responsibility including the benefits that generations today face from former high emissions. Yet, both concepts – polluter pays and beneficiary pays – appear to presuppose intent of the emitters. Against this, it is helpful to recall a concept of liability which also works without intent.<sup>19</sup> Overall, the claim that highly emitting countries should take over historic responsibility for the damage which results from climate change today is one of the most important insights in allocating climate duties fairly. It claims that rich countries should shoulder climate duties first.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> For an overview over key positions, see Stephen M. Gardiner, Simon Caney, and Dale Jamieson et al. (eds.), *Climate Ethics. Essential Readings* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

<sup>17</sup> The distinction between “ideal” and “non-ideal reasoning” in political philosophy goes back to John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2005). Yet, in the climate debate it has been interpreted as explaining the transition from a theoretical to a strategic-political level of argumentation. See Derek Bell, “How Should We Think About Climate Justice?” *Environmental Ethics* 35/2 (2013), p. 191.

<sup>18</sup> In “One Atmosphere,” Peter Singer provides arguments that the polluter pays-principle in the climate case includes the claim “You Broke It, Now You Fix It.” Yet, different from other incidents of environmental pollution, it needs to include that “a wrongful expropriation is grounds for rectification or compensation” (Singer, *One world*, p. 32).

<sup>19</sup> For a discussion of “ignorance and obligation” in this context, see Simon Caney, “Cosmopolitan Justice, Responsibility, and Global Climate Change,” pp. 761-763.

<sup>20</sup> For a discussion of historical responsibility as a distributive principle, see Simon Caney, “Justice and the Distribution of Greenhouse Gas Emissions,” *Journal of Global Ethics* 5/2 (2009), pp. 133-135.



*Capacity Principle*

Another argument works on the concept of “ability to pay.”<sup>21</sup> Even though it is right to claim that each single actor bears climate duties, the most potent actors should take responsibility first. The capacity principle allocates the burdens of climate duties in accordance with the capacities of actors to either really rescue climate victims or to bring about change. In addition to adaptation to already happening climate change in terms of erecting dams, resettling people, or building more storm-resistant buildings, substituting carbon-based industries with green technologies is costly. The capacity principle claims leadership of the rich nations and of the rich firms and global players.

*Luxury-avoidance Principle*

Henry Shue has not only provided many core ideas in the climate justice debate. He also once argued a moral line between luxury emissions and basic emissions.<sup>22</sup> Shue argues that some sources of emissions are essential to a basically good life for persons, whereas others are not. He states:

The central point about equity is that it is not equitable to ask some people to surrender necessities so that other people can retain luxuries. It would be unfair to the point of being outrageous to ask that some (poor) people spend more on better feed for their ruminants in order to reduce methane emissions so that other (affluent) people do not have to pay more for steak from less crowded feedlots in order to reduce their methane and nitrous oxide emissions, even if less crowded feedlots for fattening luxury beef for the affluent world would cost considerably more than a better equality of feed grain for maintaining the subsistence herds of the poor.<sup>23</sup>

The point is that a fair allocation of burdens resulting from mitigation needs to account for the difference between “subsistence emissions” that account for basic needs and “luxury emissions.” Even though he later revoked this distinction to some degree because it might be taken as claiming that some parts of the world population should be granted additional emissions and freedom from mitigation,<sup>24</sup> the claim to distinguish between luxury emissions and subsistence emissions can be regarded as also providing a basic principle of justice. It says that luxury emissions should be avoided in order to prevent unnecessary harm caused by high emission rates. Overall, climate duties can also be framed as duties not to produce additional harm by fulfilling luxury interests such as traveling by plane, driving highly emitting cars, etc.

*Efficaciousness Principles*

Duties to reduce emissions or to avoid luxury emissions have been called into question as particularly inefficacious. A recurrent theme in the climate debate is that it is unfair to ask single persons to change their lifestyle, since individual actions do not change anything

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<sup>21</sup> Henry Shue, “Subsistence Emissions and Luxury Emissions,” *Law and Policy* 15/1 (1993), pp. 39-59.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>24</sup> Henry Shue, “Climate Hope: Implementing the Exit Strategy,” *Chicago Journal of International Law* 13/2 (2013), pp. 381-402.

regarding the mass budget. Most of these empirical arguments state that climate change results from high emission rates over a long period of time, not from single small emissions today. Here, I shall focus on one aspect regarding global duties. Presupposed climate duties can be reasoned, it is fair to allocate burdens according to an efficaciousness principle. It is reasonable to prioritize claims whose effects are proven and are highly effective. Efficaciousness does not have to be reasoned in terms of high amounts as a quantitative criterion. Instead, leadership effects and effects of crowding in are also important.

One proposal states that it is important that policy makers who lead highly emitting nations really invest in visible leadership regarding climate duties. The effects will be cumulative, since visible leadership can lead to many followers.<sup>25</sup> Another proposal says that even on a small scale, efficaciousness matters, yet it is only part of a more comprehensive political strategy to realize environmental justice.<sup>26</sup> City governments will not be able to eradicate already existing loads of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere; yet, intelligent environmental policies when efficacious will improve the living conditions of citizens and simultaneously contribute to a reduction of emissions.

#### *Further Principles of Distributive Justice*

In addition to the listed proposals, a range of principles of distributive justice that have already been reasoned-out in other contexts are also helpful in discussing climate fairness. Presupposed, gains and losses are distributed rather arbitrarily among rich and poor nations, it is fair to claim transfer payments to the worst off. This "priority view" has been reasoned against various theoretical backgrounds.<sup>27</sup> Following a proposal by Pogge, this transfer could also be reasoned against as an unequal and arbitrary distribution of natural goods.<sup>28</sup> As for climate change, it is possible to adjust these proposals to transfer payments to nation states which do not profit from climate change, but suffer from it.

Overall, a broad range of proposals have been made to explain the burdens that result from the fulfillment of climate duties accordingly. In my view, these proposals are particularly helpful as a second step in reasoning climate duties whose concrete content and extent is conditioned by a range of facts and insights regarding justice more generally. In particular, many of the principles do not present a radical alternative in allocating the burdens of climate duties. Instead, it is wise to share Simon Caney's view that on the level of non-ideal theory, a "hybrid" approach combining various principles of justice is the best choice.<sup>29</sup>

#### **Climate Change and Learning to be Human**

So far I have given a sketch of some of the central themes of the recent debate on climate justice. I have argued that it is right to discuss climate duties as moral obligations. Two argu-

<sup>25</sup> Bernward Gesang, "Gibt es politische Pflichten zum individuellen Klimaschutz?" in Angela Kallhoff (ed.), *Klimagerechtigkeit und Klimaethik* (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2015), pp. 135-142.

<sup>26</sup> Tim Hayward, "Ecological Citizenship: Justice, Rights and the Virtue of Resourcefulness," *Environmental Politics* 15/3 (2006), pp. 435-446; Derek Bell, "Liberal Environmental Citizenship," in Andrew Dobson and Ángel Valencia Sáiz (eds.), *Citizenship, Environment, Economy* (London/New York: Routledge, 2005), pp. 23-38.

<sup>27</sup> For a comprehensive overview of the broad range of principles of justice, see Bernward Gesang, *Klimaethik* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 2011), pp. 48-73.

<sup>28</sup> Thomas Pogge, "Eradicating Systemic Poverty: Brief for a Global Resources Dividend," *Journal of Human Development* 2/1 (2001), pp. 59-77.

<sup>29</sup> Simon Caney, "Justice and the Distribution of Greenhouse Gas Emissions."

ments that support this claim have been presented. In a utilitarian framework, rescue duties can be adjusted to include support for climate victims in the international arena. In a cosmopolitan framework, climate duties are based on the human right not to suffer arbitrary and severe harm from climate change. Both approaches suffice to demonstrate that climate change, whose effects have a growing impact on parts of the world population, needs to be addressed in a framework of mutual duties and obligations. The second section adds an important point: Presupposed, climate duties can be reasoned, opponents will still argue that climate duties need to be regarded as part of an ideal moral reasoning. In order to reject this reservation, some principles of justice that help to adjust the allocation of burdens resulting from climate duties have been presented.

This section aims at relating the discussion of climate justice to the issue of “learning to be human in a global world.” The climate debate has two important implications for this endeavor. Firstly, environmental duties and climate duties in particular cannot be neglected when addressing a framework that focuses on “learning to be human in a global world.” Today, climate duties are among the pressing duties in a world that suffers from climate change. In particular, there is no time for passing the buck to further generations, as Steven Gardiner argues.<sup>30</sup> It is utterly unfair to harvest the fruit of natural resources today, including the functions of natural goods as sinks, and to pass the rubbish and the severe harm that over-exploitation costs to subsequent generations.<sup>31</sup>

The debate on principles of fairness also provides answers to the reservation that climate duties cannot be fulfilled because of climate injustice as an inconsistent moral problem. Climate change deniers do not only evade normative claims by ignoring the facts; they also state that climate duties cannot be reasoned, because they do not cohere with conditions of responsibility or with conditions of fair regimes. Both can best be rejected by recalling the many options to frame climate duties according to principles of justice.

At this point, another important lesson needs to be taken into account. Climate change is not only a truly global problem. It also demonstrates that solutions to the most pressing problems of our times cannot be developed without also calling for political responsibility. Governments in particular are not only elected for “governing the people.” Instead, Broome is right in claiming: “Morality also requires governments to make the world better.”<sup>32</sup> It is no accident that this claim has been made in the context of investigating justice and fairness in the context of climate change. Independently of the proposal for a global climate politics, philosophers do agree that governments from all over the world need to work together in order to achieve a coherent and efficacious climate policy. Even the political and social “obstacles to action”<sup>33</sup> are all on the table. What is needed now is an efficacious and international climate regime that resonates with the duties to protect the poor and with the duties to work together in favor of a sustainable world.

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<sup>30</sup> Stephen M. Gardiner, *A Perfect Moral Storm: The Ethical Tragedy of Climate Change* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>31</sup> For arguments in favor of intergenerational justice in the climate case, see Vanderheiden, *Atmospheric Justice: A Political Theory of Climate Change*, pp. 111-142.

<sup>32</sup> John Broome, *Climate Matters: Ethics in a Warming World*, Amnesty International Global Ethics Series (New York/London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2012), p. 51.

<sup>33</sup> Dale Jamieson, *Reason in a Dark time. Why The Struggle Against Climate Change Failed – and What It Means For Our Future* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 61-104.

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## (Re-)Learning to be Human in Central and Eastern Europe: When Political Authoritarianism Flirts with Religious Fundamentalism

RITA PERINTFALVI

### Introduction

In this essay, I will analyze a transnational phenomenon currently taking root in Eastern and Central Europe, particularly in Hungary, at the base of which is a combination of a fundamentalist religious worldview and political authoritarianism. Christian fundamentalism is in essence a panic reaction to the individualism and pluralism of the modern age, and takes ever newer forms both in church and theological thought and in current political events. One of its particular forms in the present day are the culture wars against gender, which are being fought not only throughout Europe but also beyond its borders, and have become an almost global phenomenon.

The age of secularization and liberalism brought with it a diversity of worldviews and lifestyles that has deprived organized religions of their previous role – and indeed of any further possibility of fulfilling that role – as the unquestionable arbiters of morality, those who dictate social norms and exert ultimate social control.<sup>1</sup> For a fundamentalist, the new diversity of relationships, family models and gender roles has become a nightmare that brings with it deep insecurity, a loss of orientation and a threat to their very identity.

For many, these social changes, and the emancipatory movements that have struggled to bring them about, signify a kind of destructive anarchy that is a direct threat to the world order. In their view the new diversity leads to the “dictatorship of relativism.” Rather than trying to understand the reasons for social change and the motives of liberation movements, fundamentalist thinkers are more concerned with stopping the wheel of time. They choose one family or lifestyle model which they consider an absolute, moral model to be followed by all, as opposed to the multitude of other possible models, which they then categorically reject as deplorable, if not outright “satanic.”

This panic reaction can easily be exploited by authoritarian personalities (either religious or political leaders) who trade in simplistic worldviews and certainties. Thus, every religious fundamentalism necessarily creates its own political allies, in this case authoritarian right-wing populists. Religious fundamentalism and political authoritarianism reinforce each other’s negative traits, which then give rise to intolerance towards differing viewpoints and an incapacity for dialogue or mutual respect, and in extreme cases even to hate speech and the justification of violence.

In my opinion, this phenomenon can be observed in the increasing number of attacks on “gender” all over Europe, in which traditional churches are playing a major role, together with organizations that are either affiliated with the churches or independent but nominally religious organizations which have come under the influence of the churches’ political allies. This culture war sees danger not only in changing gender roles, but also in academic research that

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<sup>1</sup> Stephan Goertz, Rudolf B. Hein, and Katharina Klöcker, “Zur Genealogie und Kritik des katholischen Fundamentalismus: Eine Einführung,” in *Fluchtpunkt Fundamentalismus? Gegenwartsdiagnosen katholischer Moral* (Freiburg: Herder, 2013), pp. 11-76.

explores and studies any aspect of these subjects (such as gender studies) and in any political strategy aiming to achieve the social equality of men and women (gender main-streaming).

In this analysis, I will also show that the current culture war against gender is not just a classic backlash that threatens gender and LGBTQ equality, but a challenge to the political consensus on human rights' protections that has been the dominant political norm in Europe since the Second World War; and thus is of major concern to the European Union and to European democracy in general.

### Religious and Political Fundamentalism

To understand the core of fundamentalism we need to ask the question of where it begins. Does fundamentalist reaction start when someone seals themselves off from the new and the unexpected because they see it as a challenge that they cannot tackle, rather than one that might open a host of new questions? Or does it begin when the individual or the group no longer wish to subject their identity to examination? Is this what is happening in Europe with regard to the influx of Muslim migrants? Or does it begin when they surrender to fear and panic reactions instead of analyzing risks with reason and patience? In any case, if we wish to examine the connection between religious and political fundamentalism we must first define our terms.

Fundamentalism is a cluster of phenomena; the anti-modernist, religious intensity of which leads to the claim of absolutizing truth. Fundamentalism as a reaction to the modern age in the western world first appeared exclusively as religious fundamentalism, and only later spread to the political sphere. This change can be traced clearly in the definition given in the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (1958) of the authoritative German lexicon *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart (Religion, Past and Present)*: "a religious movement of American origin, in opposition to theological liberalism and modern scientific thinking, including the theory of evolution."<sup>2</sup> Barely forty years later, in 2000, the 4<sup>th</sup> edition gives a somewhat broader definition: "The meaning of the concept has widened since the eighties, and it no longer solely denotes religious directions and movements, but is also being used to describe political and societal directions and movements."<sup>3</sup>

The change is also evident in the words of the political analyst Thomas Meyer, who wrote in the 1970s that "the phenomenon also extends to the non-religious sector."<sup>4</sup> He also defined fundamentalism as a "conscious movement of protection against the openness of modernity."<sup>5</sup> He goes on to say:

As a political ideology and movement, fundamentalism is an attempt to reverse the modern processes of opening and questioning, either entirely or in central areas, and to make the interpretation of the world, the conduct, the ethics and the forms of social organization that its followers have declared to be absolute certainties, mandatory for everybody else. As a product of modernity, fundamentalism aims to overcome uncertainty and openness by turning one interpretation out of the many possible ones into an absolute. It does so by appealing to past tradition, which is seen as sacred, or to artificially preserved certainties. On this foundation, it builds a closed system of thought and action which suppresses all differences, doubts and alternatives, and which funda-

<sup>2</sup> Sydney E. Ahlstrom, "Fundamentalismus," *RGG* Vol. 2. 1958. Col. 1178f.

<sup>3</sup> Klaus Kienzler, "Fundamentalismus," *RGG* Vol. 3. 2000. Col. 414f.

<sup>4</sup> Goertz et al., "Zur Genealogie und Kritik des katholischen Fundamentalismus," p. 28.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Meyer, *Was ist Fundamentalismus? Eine Einführung* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag, 2011), p. 29.



mentalists intend to replace the openness of modern times, thus to impose guidelines and certainty, a secure orientation, a solid identity and an unshakable belief in their own truth that will be impervious to change in the future.<sup>6</sup>

### The Historical Background of Religious Fundamentalism

#### *From the Mid-19<sup>th</sup> to the Mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century*

Religious fundamentalism first appeared in the West in the USA in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. At the root of this North American neo-protestant movement were economic and political insecurities. The first global economic crisis (1857) and the American Civil War (1861-1865) revealed the fragility of the political and economic order. The same factors are now playing a role in the growing strength of the current wave of fundamentalism in Europe.<sup>7</sup>

#### *The Catholic Church: A Long Flirtation with Anti-liberal Authoritarianism*<sup>8</sup>

Between 1850 and 1950 quasi-official, hierarchically supported mainstream fundamentalism was a major feature of the life and ideology of the Catholic Church.<sup>9</sup> The Church – not unlike communism – was both anti-liberal and anti-capitalist in its social policy, and in fact until 1945 western-liberalism was a philosophical opponent as feared as Bolshevism. The Church was a firm supporter of long-standing authoritarian Catholic regimes and dictators, such as Franco in Spain, Tiso in Slovakia, Salazar in Portugal, the “Christian Corporate State” in Austria (1934-1938) and the Horthy era in Hungary (1920-1944). Even in 1944 there were strong voices in the Vatican expressing their preference for an authoritarian Catholic regime for Italy.<sup>10</sup>

The fact that the Hungarian Catholic Church now supports Viktor Orbán’s illiberal democracy and authoritarian government is thus not without historical precedent. This is particularly true for the “*völkisch*” concept, i.e. the new right’s concept of the nation built on ethnic principles. The emphasis on this concept in the present government’s rhetoric has become more vigorous since the beginning of the refugee crisis. Illiberalism, which is based on the rejection of liberalism in the sense of public law (checks and balances or civil rights for example), also undermines democracy itself.

#### *The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965): An Age of Change*

The Second Vatican Council brought about several defining reforms in the Catholic Church. The most relevant to this paper was the elaboration of an inclusive theology of the People of God. “God’s People” now meant “God’s people on the path to God.” The experience of the horrors of nationalism had caused a radical break with the concept of a “national church” based on the “*völkisch*” idea, and the concept became universal, applying to all people and all nations.

The council’s spirit of reform was typified by Pope John XXIII’s famous phrase “*aggiornamento*,” a “bringing up to date,” sometimes translated as a “leap forward.” The council aban-

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Goertz et al., “Zur Genealogie und Kritik des katholischen Fundamentalismus,” p. 17.

<sup>8</sup> Rainer Bucher, “Ausschluss und Kirchenbildung,” in Sonja Angelika Strube (ed.), *Rechtsextremismus als Herausforderung für die Theologie* (Freiburg: Herder, 2015), pp. 245-260.

<sup>9</sup> Goertz et al., “Zur Genealogie und Kritik des katholischen Fundamentalismus,” pp. 53-54.

<sup>10</sup> Rainer Bucher, “Ausschluss und Kirchenbildung,” p. 248.

done its opposition to modernity, and adopted a more forward-looking stance, as is illustrated by a key sentence in the Pastoral Constitution "*Gaudium et Spes*," "Scrutinize the signs of the times and interpret them in the light of the Gospel" (GS 4).<sup>11</sup> This expressed a new understanding that in order to be relevant to people in the present age, the Church would have to turn away from nostalgia for past certainties and renew its teachings in line with the complexity of the modern world. Church leaders saw that an adherence to the past would inexorably lead to the demise of the Church or at least to its decline into a large but isolated cult, out of touch with the lives of its followers in a rapidly developing world.<sup>12</sup>

*From the Second Vatican Council to the Present Day*

The Church's mainstream fundamentalism, characteristic of the years 1850-1950, became a minority view after the Second Vatican Council. However, the new openness to modernism also prepared the ground for the invigoration of restorative trends with an affinity for fundamentalism in the period after the council, and has thereby also promoted the process of a pluralistic Catholicism with the emergence of a "fundamentalist sector."<sup>13</sup>

A leading figure in this process was Marcel Lefebvre (1905-1991),<sup>14</sup> who in 1970 founded the Society of Saint Pius X, which came into serious conflict with the Vatican, under Pope John Paul II, on account of its illegal ordination of bishops. In 1988 the Pope excommunicated four of these bishops and two more who were preparing for ordination. The excommunications were withdrawn by Pope Benedict XVI in 2009, and since then there have been various attempts to mend the relationship between the society and the Vatican. The society's fundamentalist views are clear: they reject ecumenism, freedom of religion, dialogue with non-Christian faiths, and the collegiality of the bishops. Some of their members profess even more extreme – and dangerous – views: they reject the validity of the secular, democratic state, deny the Holocaust and the existence of antisemitism, oppose Islam, dismiss the equality of women and condemn homosexuality. The growing strength of this fundamentalist tendency can also be described as a radicalization.<sup>15</sup>

In Eastern Europe, unfortunately, the period of the Council and the decades thereafter overlapped with decades of communist dictatorships, which blocked the Church's life and theological development. The churches vegetated in a moribund state, impervious to the new directions of the council. The healthy pluralism in Church thinking in the West therefore never reached this region of Europe, and the conservative, reactionary and fundamentalist wings have remained completely dominant. This also determines how the power, methods and ideologies of the current authoritarian church hierarchy are legitimated. There are only a few bishops and priests, and the ones who disagree keep silent out of fear of disciplinary action. Since the church's finances are entirely dependent on the government, they are unable to fulfill their "prophetic critical" function, even when political events occur that undermine democracy or violate human dignity. There have been many occasions when the Catholic Church should

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<sup>11</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Pastoral constitution on the church in the modern world, Gaudium et Spes* (1965).

<sup>12</sup> Herman Häring, *Versuchung Fundamentalismus. Glaube und Vernunft in einer säkularen Gesellschaft*. (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2013), p. 21.

<sup>13</sup> Karl Gabriel, *Christentum zwischen Tradition und Postmoderne* (Freiburg: Herder, 1992), p. 179.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Yves Congar, *Challenge to the Church: The Case of Archbishop Lefebvre* (London: Collins, 1977); William D. Dinges, "Roman Catholic Traditionalism," *Fundamentalisms Observed* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 66-101; John A. Hardon, *The Catholic Lifetime Reading Plan* (New York: Doubleday, 1989).

<sup>15</sup> Gabriel, *Christentum*, p. 180.

have spoken up, or deployed acts of mercy – for example during the refugee crisis, especially after Pope Francis’s compelling pronouncements. However, with a few exceptions, it was not able to do so, since this would have endangered its financial existence. What this means in practice is that governments can play with national churches like so many “rag-dolls,” as Asztrik Varszegi, the Abbot of Pannonhalma,<sup>16</sup> phrased it in an interview.

### Religious Fundamentalism and Political Authoritarianism

Religious fundamentalism likes flirting with political authoritarianism, as the latter promises protection, stability, security, and the simplification of answers and explanations. In its view, the world is not so complex after all.

Every shade of fundamentalism splits the world into good and evil, and it easily slides into panic when confronted by phenomena that do not fit into these simple categories. This panic is well addressed by the secure orientation offered by authoritarian leaders, who do not call on people to reflect or to collaborate with others but rather to follow the unequivocal instructions of a father figure, an authoritarian politician or a religious leader. The attachment to authority is blind and without criticism. The insecure person tries to compensate for their own weaknesses through emotional subordination to the authority figure. The attendant risk is that they sacrifice their own patterns of thinking and freedom of action in favor of those of the authority. However, since this inflicts a wound on their integrity, it can be seen as a subtle form of self-aggression. The latter is rendered more palatable by a willingness to apply violence against weakness in others.<sup>17</sup>

Fundamentalism is always asymmetrical, since it is an ideology held by a smaller group that distinguishes itself from a larger group, for example by claiming to be the “chosen” ones. The spokespeople of fundamentalism are generally messianic figures who act as if they are the liberators of the persecuted. They possess a strong conviction of superiority because they believe that history, society or God himself will justify them eventually.<sup>18</sup> History shows, however, that their intimate relationship with authoritarian regimes may lead to substantial dangers in the longer term, threatening the stability of societies built on secular and democratic principles.

### Hatred and Violence Expressed by Fundamentalists

Religious fundamentalism becomes a source of danger for society when it considers its own direction as the only true way, compared to which all other convictions and life philosophies are inferior. This gives rise to a characteristically dualistic concept that sees everything that is “different” as of lesser value, and even identifies it with evil, or with Satan himself.

This in turn leads to adversarial, defensive behavior towards everything that appears to diverge from one’s own life philosophy or principles – a way of thinking that feeds anti-semitism and anti-Islamic racism (“wrong” faiths), homophobia, opposition to emancipation

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<sup>16</sup> Ferenc Hajba, “*Várszegi Asztrik: Rongybabaként játszanak az egyházzal a politikusok.*” [“Asztrik Varszegi: Politicians play with the churches like rag-dolls”] (nol.hu, 2016). URL: [http://nol.hu/bel\\_fold/varszegi-asztrik-rongybabakent-jatszanak-az-egyhazzal-a-politikusok-1583963](http://nol.hu/bel_fold/varszegi-asztrik-rongybabakent-jatszanak-az-egyhazzal-a-politikusok-1583963).

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Herman Häring, *Versuchung Fundamentalismus*, pp. 66-67.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 67.

and misogyny (“wrong” lifestyles).<sup>19</sup> The idea that a given religion is the singular holder of truth leads to a consciousness of superiority and supremacy, which always has political consequences, as it aims to transform its social environment in accordance with its own system of values. Fundamentalism is not capable of true dialogue or of the acceptance of people who think differently, because these would necessitate democratic communication. Instead, its communications tend to express intolerance, hatred, and violence. The intensity of these emotions may be reinforced by feelings of insecurity and by perceived threats to its values (due, for example, to processes of secularization, pluralism, and liberalism), to the extent that the person with fundamentalist views can be mobilized, and “called to a holy war,” at any time. The feeling of a holy war can be seen in the anti-gender movements too, since in the fundamentalist view the concept of gender is a threat to the family, the church, and the survival of the nation. They react to the threat by mobilizing their followers for actions large and small: collecting signatures for petitions, massing for demonstrations, writing influential editorials or fiery blog posts, and so on.

Extreme right-wing individuals are happy to join in the mobilization for this war, as are right-wing parties, who are moving away from the political middle ground and adopting extreme rhetoric in an attempt to win votes. Hans-Gerd Jaschke defines extreme right-wing thinking as follows: “The complex of attitudes, behavior patterns and actions which start from people’s race and ethnic social inequalities and aim at ethnic homogeneity.”<sup>20</sup>

Manfred Schmidt emphasizes their “anti-egalitarian stance” and defines their characteristics as attitudes which are xenophobic, homophobic and oppose both people with disabilities and gender concepts.<sup>21</sup>

What explains the attraction and power of right-wing ideas? According to Jaschke explanations include

... the need for harmony and a homogeneity (of one’s own group, faith community, the state) that is free of tensions, the romanticizing and idealizing of the past (the Church in the Middle Ages, pre-modern life, the nation’s history), ideals of human nature, the wish for one’s own ‘heroic’ deeds, the dream of a total solution within one’s own psychological universe (as propagated by various ideologies in the twentieth century).<sup>22</sup>

### **Anti-gender Attacks Reflecting the Convergence of Political Authoritarianism and Religious Fundamentalism**

If we examine the themes where Christian religious fundamentalist attitudes are emerging in Europe at present, and where they find particular resonance in right-wing populism or extreme right-wing politics, the following themes evoke the strongest response: thematic areas such as the traditional concept of the family (with active focal points such as the rejection of

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<sup>19</sup> Sonja Angelika Strube, “Problemanzeige: Rechtsextreme Tendenzen in sich christlich verstehenden Medien,” in *Rechtsextremismus als Herausforderung für die Theologie* (Freiburg: Herder, 2015), pp. 18-33, here pp. 28-29.

<sup>20</sup> Hans-Gerd Jaschke, *Rechtsextremismus und Fremdenfeindlichkeit. Begriffe, Positionen, Praxisfelder* (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2001), p. 30.

<sup>21</sup> Manfred G. Schmidt, “Rechtsradikalismus,” in *Wörterbuch zur Politik* (Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner, 2010), p. 668.

<sup>22</sup> Jaschke, *Rechtsextremismus*, p. 30.

homosexuality, abortion and gender mainstreaming), the relativization of the Holocaust, the persecution of Christians and Islam.<sup>23</sup>

The stance of the Catholic Church on the subject of human rights has been ambivalent and contradictory, to say the least. Despite its recent theoretical and practical support of human rights in the wider world, the Catholic Church still has a number of unresolved internal conflicts on the subject.<sup>24</sup> The Church has still not signed the major human rights conventions, in particular the European Convention on Human Rights of 1953. It is no coincidence that when “human rights discourse” is targeted in the political culture wars, there are a sizable number of Catholic Church leaders and affiliated NGOs who are happy to join the battle in order to defend “traditional family values.”

There have been strong transnational movements<sup>25</sup> unfolding in many countries in recent years that have called for people to fight the enemy. “Gender ideology” and “cultural Marxism” in most of Europe, “Gayropa” (Gay Europe) in the former Soviet states, and “political correctness” in the USA have become the main targets. These movements have been successful in whipping up emotions against struggles for human rights and equality, such as female reproductive rights, LGBT rights, gender equality policies and gender mainstreaming, sex education, gender studies as an academic discipline, and the implementation of principles of political correctness in theory and practice. These campaigns have not shied away from depicting “gender ideology” or political correctness as if they were new forms of Nazism or Leninism (Beata Kempa, Polish Member of Parliament), or as a means to enslave people (Sviatoslav Shevchuk, Archbishop of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church), or a source of danger to children that is akin to pedophilia (Pavol Gorisak, Slovak Member of Parliament).<sup>26</sup>

The debate about “gender ideology” opens a new chapter in the political, cultural and social map of Europe.<sup>27</sup> In the opinion of some scholars, this debate is not merely a conservative backlash against gender and LGBTQ equality, but is a new type of fundamentalism, which at

<sup>23</sup> Strube, “Rechtsextreme Tendenzen,” pp. 24-26.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Rudolf Uertz, *Vom Gottesrecht zum Menschenrecht. Das katholische Staatsdenken in Deutschland von der Französischen Revolution bis zum II. Vatikanischen Konzil* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2005) and Marianne Heimbach-Steins, *Menschenrechte in Gesellschaft und Kirche: Lernprozesse – Konfliktfelder – Zukunftschancen* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald, 2001).

<sup>25</sup> Attacks on “gender” became increasingly harsh in Central and Eastern Europe after 2011, especially in Poland, Slovakia and Croatia, as has been documented by political scientists and theologians: Magdalena Grabowska, *Cultural war or “business as usual”? Recent instances, and the historical origins, of a “backlash” against women’s and sexual rights in Poland* (Heinrich Böll Stiftung, Warsaw, 2014), pp. 1-10; Agnieszka Graff, “Gender és politika, de az igazai” [“Gender and Politics, but the real thing”] (Budapest: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2014), pp. 1-7; Agnieszka Graff, “Report from the gender trenches. War against ‘genderism’ in Poland” (*European Journal of Women’s Studies*, 2014), pp. 431-435. Rebeka J. Anić has written about the Church’s anti-gender mobilization in the Croatian context in: “Gender, Politik und die katholische Kirche. Ein Beitrag zum Abbau der alten Geschlechterstereotypen” (Ostfildern: Concilium, 2012), pp. 373-382; Rebeka J. Anić, “Der Begriff ‘Gender’ als Anathema. Eine Kampagne der kroatischen Bischöfe als Beispiel” (Freiburg: Herder Korrespondenz, 2015), pp. 157-161; and Rebeka J. Anić and Jadranka Brnčić, “Missverständnisse um den Begriff ‘Gender’. Überlegungen anlässlich einer Botschaft der kroatischen Bischöfs-konferenz” (Ostfildern: Concilium, 2015), pp. 121-126.

<sup>26</sup> Weronika Grzebalska, Eszter Kováts and Andrea Pető, “A gender mint szimbolikus kőanyag: miért lett hirtelen olyan fontos a társadalmi nem?” [“Gender as symbolic glue: why gender is suddenly such an important subject?”] (Kettős Mércé, 2017). URL: [http://kettosmerce.blog.hu/2017/03/06/a\\_gender\\_mint\\_szimbolikus\\_kotoanyag\\_miert lett\\_hirtelen\\_olyan\\_fontos\\_a\\_tarsadalmi\\_nem](http://kettosmerce.blog.hu/2017/03/06/a_gender_mint_szimbolikus_kotoanyag_miert lett_hirtelen_olyan_fontos_a_tarsadalmi_nem).

<sup>27</sup> Andrea Pető, ““Anti-gender” mobilizational discourse of conservative and far right parties as a challenge for progressive politics,” *Gender as symbolic glue. The position and role of conservative and far right parties in the antigender mobilizations in Europe* (Budapest: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2015), p. 126.

first sight seems to be attacking only the gender perspective, but is really about much more. Gender is a symbolic glue.<sup>28</sup> “For illiberal populist actors, the concept of ‘gender ideology’ has become a metaphor for the insecurities and injustices deriving from the current socioeconomic order, a metaphor that has made it possible for them to seize people’s dissatisfaction with the world around them, and steer it towards questions of equality.”<sup>29</sup> The concept of “gender” becomes a manifesto that concentrates many concerns and fears, and transforms them into anti-European, anti-liberal, anti-communist and homophobic attitudes.

### Hungary and the Gender Debate<sup>30</sup>

The first attempts at a gender debate took place in Hungary in 2010, during the first term of the new conservative right-wing Fidesz-KDNP coalition. The government’s Gender Equality Office was closed, and its tasks transferred to the Equal Opportunities Office at the Ministry for Human Resources. The Hungarian government then tried to replace the term “gender mainstreaming” with “family mainstreaming” during its EU Council presidency in 2011. The message behind the idea was meant to suggest that the EU should solve its demographic problems through an increased internal birthrate, rather than through migration.<sup>31</sup> In contrast to Slovakia, Poland and Croatia, gender mainstreaming has not been enforced in Hungarian legislation since 2012. A fundamentalist counter-reaction would have made no sense when the Hungarian government already represented an illiberal cultural agenda. It was to be expected, however, that if the government needed a new enemy after its successful demonization of refugees, it could easily initiate and fund such a movement itself. This was the reason why

<sup>28</sup> Pető, “‘Anti-gender’ mobilizational discourse,” p. 127.

<sup>29</sup> Grzebalska et al., “A gender mint szimbolikus kötőanyag.”

<sup>30</sup> In Hungary, gender started to be the subject of political debate in 2010, and to become the focus of direct government attacks in 2017. This process has been documented and analyzed in many scholarly articles, of which the most important are: Lídia Balogh, “A nemek közötti egyenlőség normái a ‘gender-ideológia’ diskurzusának tükrében” [“Gender equality norms in ‘gender ideology’ discourse”], (Budapest: Állam és Jogtudomány, 2014), pp. 3-25; Anikó Félix, “Hungary,” *Gender as symbolic glue* (Budapest: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2015), pp. 62-82; Nikolett Kormos, “Előszó: A genderideológiáról” [“The living word: on gender ideology”] (Budapest: *Replika*, 2014), pp. 7-11; Eszter Kováts and Eszter Petronella Soós, “Félelem a dominó-elvtől? A gender-ellenes európai mobilizáció jelensége. Francia esettanulmány és magyar kilátások” [“Fear of the domino effect? The European mobilization against gender. The case of France, and the outlook for Hungary”] (*Társadalmi Nemek Tudománya e-Folyóirat*, 2014), pp. 106-124. Gerhard Marschütz, “A biológiai nem megszüntetése? Teológiai megfontolások a katolikus területen folyó gender-vitához” [“The end of biological sex? Theological considerations on the gender debate in Catholicism”] (Budapest: *Keresztény-Zsidó Teológiai Évkönyv*, 2014), pp. 160-177. Rita Perintfalvi, “A genderellenes kultúrharc valódi arca, avagy egy újfajta politikai és vallási fundamentalizmus megjelenése Európában?” [“The true face of the cultural war against gender, or a new kind of political and religious fundamentalism in Europe”], (Budapest: *Keresztény-Zsidó Teológiai Évkönyv*, 2015), pp. 172-200; Rita Perintfalvi, “The true face of the ‘gender ideology’ discourse – Religious fundamentalism, or questioning the principles of democracy?,” *Sharing the Word of Hope with the World* (Leuven: Journal of the European Society of Women in Theological Research 2016), pp. 47-62; Rita Perintfalvi, “Geschlechterrolle und Familie aus ungarischer Perspektive,” *Mission 21. Das Evangelium in neuen Räumen erschließen* (Regensburg: Weltkirche und Mission, 2017), pp. 2-17; Pető, “‘Anti-gender’ mobilizational discourse,” pp. 126-132; Andrea Pető and Zoltán Vasali, “The ‘laboratory’ called Hungary: a challenge for understanding protest movements,” 2014. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-it/andrea-pet%C5%91-zolt%C3%A1n-vasali/%E2%80%98laboratory%E2%80%99-called-hungary-challenge-for-understanding>

<sup>31</sup> Borbála Juhász, *Orbán’s politics – a gender perspective* (Budapest: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2012), pp. 1-9.

attacks against gender studies started to intensify only in 2017, much later than in other countries in the region. At present, this is exactly what is happening, one year before the elections. The attack is well aligned with the government's freedom-fighter rhetoric, anti-European stance and mobilization strategy targeting EU norms and guidelines in the fields of gender equality and human rights.<sup>32</sup>

In his speech at the Budapest Demographic Forum on 5 November, 2015, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán emphasized how important it was that European communities should be able to sustain themselves without external help. This was also the event where the infamous question was asked, "Whose home is Europe?" The anti-gender rhetoric surfaces in this xenophobic context again and again. "It would make sense," said Orbán, "to talk about this; however, other matters and discussions that are against life receive much more attention, energy and money. These include the gender debate, gay marriage, and many other similar examples. These are nice and important matters; however, they are secondary, as they are not able to lead Europe out of its economic and social crisis."<sup>33</sup> Thus the Orbán government clearly expressed its view that gender equality and LGBTQ rights were not only of secondary importance but even "against life."

Another public debate about sexism erupted in Hungary in December 2015, when pop singer Ákos Kovács, who leans towards the right-wing government party Fidesz, declared publicly that women's task was to bring children into the world, adding that, "it is no coincidence that the hips of women are wider than those of men."<sup>34</sup> These statements triggered a storm of outrage; and were then followed by the statement of leading Fidesz politician and speaker of the Hungarian Parliament, László Kövér,<sup>35</sup> in which he urged women to content themselves with bearing children: "We would like to see our daughters diligently bear grandchildren for us and find their self-actualization in doing so." In light of the fact that less than ten percent of the members of the Hungarian parliament are women, and that there is not a single woman in the cabinet, these pronouncements are sufficient grounds for pessimism.

In 2017, as anti-refugee mobilization would now be less potent and resonate less than before, the government ordered the building of the border "fence." The government was looking for a new focus before the elections; and they found "gender." It is interesting to examine what happened:

An attack against the launch of gender studies MA courses at ELTE University; an open letter<sup>36</sup> protesting this to the rector from the Youth Chapter of KDNP; attacks from right-wing web portals. An announcement by the government that a "family studies" course would be launched.

An attack against the Central European University: the law directed against the CEU aims to curtail the freedom of education, and would thus infringe the rights of 1,500 students and 420 lecturers from 117 countries. The CEU, which is accredited in both New York State and Hungary, and awards academic degrees valid in both countries, has not violated any law. The

<sup>32</sup> Pető and Vasali, "The 'laboratory' called Hungary."

<sup>33</sup> The Prime Minister's speech can be accessed on his website (in Hungarian) at [http://www.miniszerelnok.hu/cikk/az\\_eu\\_nem\\_epitheti\\_a\\_jovojet\\_csaladok\\_helyett\\_bevandorlassra](http://www.miniszerelnok.hu/cikk/az_eu_nem_epitheti_a_jovojet_csaladok_helyett_bevandorlassra)

<sup>34</sup> Dávid Sajó, "A nőknek nem az a dolguk, hogy ugyanannyi pénzt keressenek, mint a férfiak" ["It is not women's job to earn as much money as men."] (index.hu, 2015). URL: [http://index.hu/kultur/zene/2015/12/14/a\\_noknek\\_nem\\_az\\_a\\_dolguk\\_hogy\\_ugyanannyi\\_penz\\_t\\_keressenek\\_mint\\_a\\_ferfiak/](http://index.hu/kultur/zene/2015/12/14/a_noknek_nem_az_a_dolguk_hogy_ugyanannyi_penz_t_keressenek_mint_a_ferfiak/).

<sup>35</sup> Áron Varga, "Kövér és az unokaszülés" ["Kövér and the production of grandchildren"] (Budapest: HVG weekly journal, 2015). At [http://hvg.hu/velemenynyuzsog/20151214\\_Kover\\_es\\_az\\_unokaszules](http://hvg.hu/velemenynyuzsog/20151214_Kover_es_az_unokaszules).

<sup>36</sup> Cf. the open letter from Lőrinc Nacs, the president of the Youth Chapter of KDNP. URL: <http://kdnp.hu/roviden/az-iksz-ny%C3%ADlt-levele-az-elte-rektor%C3%A1nak-gender-studies-szakt%C3%A9m%C3%A1j%C3%A1ban>

government wants to see an international treaty on the operation of the institution, which would severely risk the integrity of the institution by shifting its functioning from professional to political grounds. The university is an inseparable part of the Hungarian academic establishment, and ranks among the top fifty institutions worldwide in the fields of political science and international studies, among other academic honors. The reason for these attacks seems to be that according to the CEU's mission statement, it is an academic institution committed to the values of an open society, human dignity and equality, and democracy. In light of these values, which the university officially subscribes to, its members have expressed opinions about public matters many times. The institution also opened its courses to refugees arriving in Hungary in 2015, thus supporting victims of persecution. Following the latest government measures aiming to ban the university from Hungary, there were mass demonstrations in Budapest,<sup>37</sup> and a great deal of high-level international protest. The situation remains unresolved as of yet.

### Conclusion: Possibilities of Transformation?

Religious fundamentalism and political authoritarianism build societal structures around themselves that are based on exclusion and isolation. As political power increases its strength, the range of people who are labeled "different" or "alien" in some respect grows simultaneously. The principle of homogeneity becomes the main ordering principle, and naturally entails the elimination of any kind of heterogeneity or diversity. However, one of the main elements of exclusionary dynamics is that the people who support the exclusionary power, in the secure conviction that it supports their interests and benefits them and their group, do not consider that the circles of exclusion and hatred will gradually get tighter and that they, too, will at some point become "undesirables" and "enemies."

What is the ethical responsibility of a Christian in a situation like this? What should Christians do? As Lob-Hüdepohl says, "The principle of the fundamental equality of individuals is constitutive not only for human-rights oriented political thinking and all modern democratic state constitutions, but it also characterizes the fundamental option for a Christian concept of humanity."<sup>38</sup>

The foundations of Christian egalitarianism are to be found in the first book of the Hebrew Bible. Gen 1, 26-27 tells us that God created man in his own image, and this means that every person bears this dignity, irrespective of their sex, origin, faith or even sexual orientation. The idea that all creatures are created by God is the basis of human dignity and equality, and is thus the point at which Christian ethics meet human rights principles.

This parallel is also supported by the passage in Chapter 29 of the Second Vatican Council's document *Gaudium et Spes*, which states clearly: "Nevertheless, with respect to the fundamental rights of the person, every type of discrimination, whether social or cultural, and whether based on sex, race, color, social condition, language or religion, is to be overcome and eradicated as contrary to God's intent."

The example of Jesus gives us a template to follow. He identified with the sufferers, the weak and the disempowered, and he turned towards everybody with the same accepting love. No-one who wants to follow this God can concentrate solely on his own interests. If the state

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<sup>37</sup>Cf. Plankog, About mass demonstrations against 'lex CEU' in Budapest. (444.hu, 2017). URL: <https://444.hu/2017/04/02/ami-ellen-tiltakozott-tizezer-ember-az-sokkal-tobbrol-szol-mint-a-ceu>.

<sup>38</sup> Andreas Lob-Hüdepohl, "Die Verantwortung von Christinnen und Christen im Kampf gegen den Rechtsextemismus," *Rechtsextemismus als Herausforderung für die Theologie* (Freiburg: Herder, 2015), pp. 295-308, here p. 298.



becomes the embodiment of organized injustice, and contempt for whole groups of people becomes the norm, then a Christian person must resist. Faith not only requires orthodoxy but also orthopraxy, i.e. the implementation of the faith through deeds.

A Christian can only truly follow his teacher if he or she is willing to engage in political and even religious conflicts when necessary, just as Jesus did. Political engagement does not mean party political action. Rather, Christians and churches, as powers in civil society, should participate in shaping the public space to serve life.

Furthermore, the key concept in political engagement is solidarity. Solidarity with the victims of radical right-wing political concepts, with people whose lives and physical integrity are at risk; the union of love for thy neighbor and love for God; the practiced recognition of the other in their need for protection and support – these are all a manifestation of one’s love for their God as Creator and Savior. No real love of God can exist without the practiced love of our neighbors.

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## What is it to be a Human Being? Charles Taylor on “the Full Shape of the Human Linguistic Capacity”<sup>1</sup>

LUDWIG NAGL

My presentation will focus on the core thesis of Taylor’s recent book *The Language Animal* (2016), namely on his claim that “the human linguistic capacity [...] is more multifiform than has usually been supposed [since it] includes capacities for meaning creation which go far beyond that of encoding and communicating information, which is all too often taken as its central form.”<sup>2</sup> This thesis, I will argue, is of great importance as a critical intervention in a worldwide culture of scientism that tends to over-privilege object-relations and instrumental reason, and thus has to re-learn (*inter alia* by reappropriating thoughts expressed in classical philosophies of language) what humanity, in its full sense, is and has the potential to become.

My text has *four parts*. After outlining, in *part one*, the *general context* in which Taylor’s analyses are situated,<sup>3</sup> I will sketch, in *part two*, central ideas of Taylor’s take on language – his defense of Hamann’s, Herder’s and Humboldt’s comprehensive linguistic philosophies (the HHH theory, as Taylor calls it), and his critical reflections on the narrower, empiricist approach to language offered by Hobbes, Locke, and Condillac (the reductive HLC theory). In *part three* I will argue that Taylor’s analyses of HHH are important for an *in-depth analysis of praxis and institutional reform*; in *part four* I will focus on Taylor’s reflections on aesthetics, and on (the possibility of) a *non-fundamentalist, pluralism-sensitive philosophy of religion*.

### Part 1: Some Remarks on the Context in which Taylor’s Language Philosophy Is Situated

In our digital age the temptation to describe the core of human reflexivity along the lines of a theory of computer algorithms is considerable,<sup>4</sup> and many people do actually succumb to

<sup>1</sup> Charles Taylor, *The Language Animal. The Full Shape of the Human Linguistic Capacity* (Cambridge, MA/London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. IX.

<sup>3</sup> See also Ludwig Nagl, “Begegnungen mit Charles Taylor, Anregungen durch Charles Taylor,” *Transit. Europäische Revue* (Frankfurt a.M.: Verlag Neue Kritik, 2016), Part 2, Charles Taylor zum 85. Geburtstag, pp. 151-154.

<sup>4</sup> See Hubert Dreyfus und Charles Taylor, *Retrieving Realism* (Cambridge, MA/London, England: Harvard University Press, 2015), where the authors analyze “the vogue in recent decades for accounts of thinking based on the idea that the brain operates in some respects like a digital computer.” This idea has four characteristics: “(1) It speaks of the mind as receiving ‘inputs’ from the environment, and producing ‘outputs’. (2) Computations proceed on the basis of bits of clearly defined information. (3) The brain as a computer is a purely ‘syntactic’ engine; its computations get their ‘reference’ in the world through these ‘inputs’. And (4) the account proceeds on the materialist basis that these mental operations are to be explained by the physical operations of the underlying engine, the brain.” (*Ibid.*, p. 15) This picture, according to Dreyfus and Taylor, seems convincing to many, which is not surprising, because it has (to speak with Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations*, Par. 115) the quality of a (wrong and oversimplistic) “picture” that holds us captive. See also Hubert Dreyfus and Stuart E. Dreyfus, “Coping with Change: Why People Can and Computers Can’t,” in *Wo steht die sprachanalytische Philosophie heute?*, edited by Ludwig Nagl and Richard Heinrich (Wien/München: Oldenbourg, 1986), pp. 150-170, and Lutz Ellrich, “Medienphilosophie des Computers,” in *Systematische Medienphilosophie*, edited by Mike Sand-

it. Computers are surrounded with an aura of vague promises and all kinds of “predicates” that they actually do not possess are attributed to them. Thus, *via unwarranted analogies*, the gains that are – undoubtedly – produced by their global reach, by the high speed in which they can “execute” automated operations, perform corrections of their programs, and even carry out purposive rational sub-elements of social planning,<sup>5</sup> are *blown up* into the *myth* that these powerful machines will be like persons *soon* because they display (what metaphorically can be called) a “learning capacity.” On sober reflection, however, this (so-called) “learning” turns out to be, by all accounts, a borrowed quality, since the (so-called) “auto”-improvements of computers<sup>6</sup> are, *at their core*, nothing but the fruits of our human ingenuity: of algorithms that – even in their potential for auto-referentiality and a partial simulation of “interaction” – are invented by reflecting human agents (and will, hopefully, be controlled by them). Ideologues of the digital age tend to claim, however, that the reach of computer science is much wider,<sup>7</sup> and that it will be able to explain, *in the future*, all those human capacities that it presently cannot digitally reconstruct. For journalists and the AI-lobby, there is hardly a limit to the list of exaggerated expectations and pseudo-problems resulting from this claim.<sup>8</sup>

Reductive mythologies are not new, however. Decades before the “digital age” even started, Herbert Marcuse,<sup>9</sup> in *One-Dimensional Man*, critically analyzed the career of abstract self-images that result from an over-privileging of object relations. In some regards, Marcuse’s

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bothe and Ludwig Nagl (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2005), Part 3, “Hermeneutische Belehrungen,” pp. 352-354.

<sup>5</sup> See, e.g., the “Belief-desire-intention software model” – a model “developed for programing intelligent agents” that implements (as the Wikipedia entry, explaining it, points out) “the principal aspects of Michael Bratman’s theory of human practical reasoning.” (See Michael E. Bratman, *Shared Agency: A Planning Theory of Acting Together*, Oxford University Press, 2014.) In the BDI model, the interconnected algorithms – called “intelligent agents” – are “able to balance the time spent on deliberating about plans (choosing what to do) and executing those plans (doing it). A third activity,” however, – *creating the plan in the first place* – is, as the Wikipedia entry correctly points out – “not within the scope of the model, and is left to the system designer and programmer” (to *actual* human agents, i.e., who are capable of using – to speak with Charles Taylor – “the full shape of the human linguistic capacity.”) (See “Belief-desire-intention software model,” <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>)

<sup>6</sup> That is to say, the (so-called) “learning processes” of machines (of interconnected algorithms, i.e., devoid of a “self”).

<sup>7</sup> See in this context, e.g., Daniel C. Dennett, *From Bacteria to Bach and Back. The Evolution of Minds*, New York: Norton, 2017. In this book, Dennett defends the (AI-friendly) reductionist position, that we are nothing but “physical objects,” and that consciousness is thus just “a particularly salient and convincing user-illusion.” This claim leads, however, as Thomas Nagel points out in his review of Dennett’s book – to an “openly paradoxical” position: “You may ask how consciousness can be an illusion, since every illusion is itself a conscious experience – an appearance that doesn’t correspond to reality. So it cannot appear to me that I am conscious though I am not: as Descartes famously observed, the reality of my own consciousness is the one thing I cannot be deluded about.” (Thomas Nagel, “Is Consciousness an Illusion,” *The New York Review of Books*, March 2017, Vol. LXIV, No. 4, p. 33.)

<sup>8</sup> See, for instance, some of the topics that are proposed for the 2017 issue of the *Journal of Ethics and Information Technology*: “Should intelligent machines and human beings be allowed to marry?,” “Do intelligent machines enjoy human rights?,” “Intelligent machines and modern slavery. Will machines become our ‘new’ slaves?,” “How to bridge the gender gap with robotics?,” “Does every company need roboethics?” etc. See also *Die Zeit*, November 3, 2016, where the question is (seriously!) raised whether “bots” (computer programs that pretend to be humans and distribute digitally produced “political views”) should be entitled to their “freedom of expression.” (Adrian Lobe, “Meinung aus dem Bot,” *ibid.*, p. 49.)

<sup>9</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man. Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1964).

analyses show similarities to Taylor's early reflections on – what he called – "the malaises of modernity."<sup>10</sup> One of these "malaises" is the primacy given to instrumental reason – "the kind of rationality we draw on," Taylor states, "when we calculate the most economical application of means to a given end. Maximum efficiency, the best cost-output ratio, is its measure of success."<sup>11</sup> The computer, we might add, is the penultimate optimizer-"tool" through which this instrumental logics materializes and is universally distributed.

It is obvious for Taylor that, on the one hand, the ameliorizations produced by the modernization process are great: modernity has been (and continues to be) liberating.<sup>12</sup> But there is – at the same time – "a widespread unease [...] that instrumental reason [...] threatens to take over our lives [...]. The fear is that what ought to be determined by other criteria will be decided in terms of efficiency or 'cost-benefit' analysis."<sup>13</sup> Depleted languages undermine the complexity of ethical claims, and of other- and self-related responsibilities.

Is this trend toward an over-privileging of *one particular mode* of our linguistically dimensioned *ratio* our historical destiny? Will reason ("Vernunft"), more and more be reduced to instrumental calculus – to "smartness," and to the ever-increasing realm of "smart" devices? No, Taylor says, this is itself an abstract conclusion, since we can critically reflect on these developments, and take a stance: "Our degrees of freedom are not zero."<sup>14</sup> Modernity is not chained to *any* of its "malaises." Our "secular age" is complex, and has many faces. It is not *just* "the age of instrumental reason." *Practical reason* ("praktische Vernunft") is not identical with rationality ("Verstand"), as Kant and Hegel have argued, although it is also true that we cannot do without purposive-rationality ("dass der Verstand nicht geschenkt werden kann"), as Hegel said.

In his philosophical analysis of the *multiformity* of contemporary world views Taylor shows that substantial constituents of them can be traced back to (at least) three quite different, post-Hegelian *thought paradigms*,<sup>15</sup> all of which (at least in their sophisticated modes) seek to rein in the dominance of "purposive rationality" by resituating *ratio* within a non-instrumentalist, "practical" background. The *first* of these paradigms is "*exclusive humanism*," as Taylor calls it: a Feuerbach-inspired *immanentism* which, while avoiding religious "transcendence," focuses – with reference to an ethics inspired by universalism – (ideally) on the advancement of the maximum well-being of the "*human species*." This first paradigm is, *secondly*, (with and after Nietzsche) challenged by a different post-Hegelian mode of secularism: by – what Taylor calls – "*anti-humanist counter-Enlightenment*." In spite of its potentially dogmatic radicalism, this second paradigm, which dreams of an *overcoming of man* altogether, contains – according to Taylor – a lucid critique of a pathological sub-tendency that threatens paradigm 1, "exclusive humanism": the regression of paradigm 1 into what Nietzsche called the "pitiable comfort" of the "last man" ("*das erbärmliche Behagen des letzten Menschen*").<sup>16</sup> "Humanism," in this depraved sense, has turned into both an emotion-driven hedonism supported by technologies which make a fetish of purposive rationality and an action horizon that is constantly reinforced by a

<sup>10</sup> Charles Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity* (Concord, Ontario: House of Anansi Press Limited, 1991).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>12</sup> Taylor, *Malaise*, p. 5.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8. See also Ludwig Nagl, "'Grenzen des ethischen Universalismus'. Charles Taylors Analyse der 'Malaise of Modernity'," *Mesotes. Zeitschrift für philosophischen Ost-West-Dialog*, Vol. 2 (1992), pp. 158-171.

<sup>15</sup> See Charles Taylor, "Die immanente Gegenauflärung," in *Religion nach der Religionskritik*, edited by Ludwig Nagl (Wien: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2003), pp. 60-85.

<sup>16</sup> See Taylor, *Malaise*, p. 4.

thoroughly economized “culture industry” which focuses on entertainment and subject-restabilization, and is thus devoid of any ethical or aesthetical aspiration.<sup>17</sup>

The *third* identity paradigm comprises the variety of different *world views which include religious motifs*. Its adherents seek to avoid, or to overcome, the secularist bracketing (and/or a deconstructive de-thematizing) of the dialectics between human finiteness and its limiting notion, the divine.<sup>18</sup>

As Taylor claims, this tri-polar field forms the background to contemporary practical discourses. All three paradigms (at least in their sophisticated modes) seek to (re-)explore what the human being is and can become, by criticizing the deficits of human self-images, and by making suggestions as to how to “enhance” human potentials. They do this, however, in radically different ways. In his seminal study of 2007, *A Secular Age*, Taylor started to investigate this complex situation.<sup>19</sup> In his most recent book, *The Language Animal*, he focuses on the *primordial medium* operative in all these different identity projects: *human language*.

## Part 2: In Search of “the Full Shape of the Human Linguistic Capacity”

Taylor distinguishes two major *classical* ways to analyze language use – the so-called Hamann-Herder-Humboldt model (or HHH, as he names it) and the Hobbes-Locke-Condillac model (HLC).<sup>20</sup> Only model 1, HHH – he claims – can provide the means to resist the lure of, reductively, interpreting our linguistic capacities as primarily focused on “information encoding.”

The surface plausibility of HLC – which, in its core, is instrumentalism-affined, comes from what Wittgenstein critically called “a too narrow diet of examples,” Taylor says: from its concentration on description, and – most frequently – on descriptions of independent objects (rather than, for instance, self-description); and “even more from the paradigm status of science in our culture, which involves description and explanation in terms that have been purged of purpose, and in general of ‘human meaning’.”<sup>21</sup>

Locke and Hume did suggest that “the primary use of language” is “the encoding of our thoughts, or of information.”<sup>22</sup> This, Taylor says, is a “very ‘excarnate’ way of thinking of

<sup>17</sup> Nietzsche’s Zarathustra warns his audience: “Beware! The time approaches when human beings will no longer give birth to a dancing star. Beware! The time of the most contemptible human is coming, the one, who can no longer have contempt for himself! Behold! I show *you the last human being*. ‘What is love? What is creation? What is longing? What is a star?’ – thus asks the last human being, blinking. The earth has become small, and on it hops the last human being, who makes everything small. His kind is ineradicable, like the flea beetle; the last human being lives longest. ‘We invented happiness’ – says the last human being, blinking. [...] ‘A bit of poison once a while; that makes for pleasant dreams. And much poison in the end, for a pleasant death’. [...] No shepherd and one herd! Each wants the same, each is the same, and whoever feels differently goes voluntarily into the insane asylum.” (Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* [Cambridge University Press, 2014], pp. 9-10.)

<sup>18</sup> See Ludwig Nagl, “Einleitung: Religion nach der Religionskritik. Erkundungen einer ‘nichtidentischen Wiederkehr’,” in *Religion nach der Religionskritik*, edited by Ludwig Nagl (Wien/Berlin: Oldenbourg-Akademie Verlag, 2003), pp. 15-19.

<sup>19</sup> For a discussion of this book see “Symposium zu Charles Taylor: ‘A Secular Age’,” edited by Ludwig Nagl, *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie*, Vol. 57, No. 2 (2009), pp. 288-327.

<sup>20</sup> Taylor characterizes the main feature of this “designative-instrumental view of language” as “its interweaving with the modern epistemology which comes down to us from Descartes and Locke; its tendency to reify the mind.” (Taylor, *The Language Animal*, pp. 110-111)

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 83-84.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84.



language”: “an ‘enframing’ theory” that asserts “that language doesn’t alter the basic purposes of the creatures possessing it.”<sup>23</sup> It is often tied to the idea of a “continuity between humans and other ‘higher’ species.”<sup>24</sup> According to such a view, our technology must be seen as a “significant achievement of the same basic capacity that the chimpanzee shows when it knocks the banana down with a stick.”<sup>25</sup>

The HHH – or “constitutive” – theory (i.e. the *non-reductive language philosophy* which Taylor defends) “gives us a picture of language as making possible new purposes, new levels of behaviour, new meanings, and hence as not explicable within a framework picture of human life conceived without language.”<sup>26</sup> *We do not merely use language, we “exist in language”* (or, to speak with late Wittgenstein, we use a *plurality of “language games”*<sup>27</sup>). Language is thus not, as the information-coding view tends to see it, just an immensely useful *instrument* for achieving *pre-given ends*.<sup>28</sup>

As Taylor emphasizes (with HHH), a significant discontinuity distinguishes pre-human and human mammals: man is an animal – one might say with Hegel – but insofar as he knows that he is an animal, he gives himself a spirit-related existence.<sup>29</sup>

Taylor elucidates, in *five points*, “some features of (our) linguistic existence, and of the uses of language, which are too often sidelined” in empirico-technical, reductive language concepts. We have time only to look at *three* of them.

Firstly, “*Communion*”: to be inducted into language, according to Taylor, “is to be in a relation of potential communion with others.” *Human language is, from the start, not monological* (not the relation of a singular “receiver” to an “object”). That *inter-subjectivity* is at play in all language learning holds true in two senses, Taylor points out: a) “In principle [communion] could relate us to anybody and everybody” (i.e. to all other beings that “exist in language”), but b) “in practice we live in certain circles or communities: family, village, political society, religious or affinity group.”<sup>30</sup> This *expandable reach* of the idea of community is deeply embedded in the structure of language itself (as will be briefly pointed out when we look at Taylor’s reading of the “Axial Age” revolution and its consequences).

Secondly, “*Agency*” and “*Articulation*”: “Human or *metabiological* meanings,”<sup>31</sup> according to Taylor, operate within the (open) praxis horizon of “agents”: in order to understand what is going on here, one has *not just* to look at things, but “one has to go inside the language of self-

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*; see also p. 4.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>27</sup> See Charles Taylor, “Lichtung or Lebensform: Parallels between Heidegger and Wittgenstein,” in *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge, MA/London, England: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 61-78.

<sup>28</sup> See Taylor, *The Language Animal*, p. 90.

<sup>29</sup> See G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik I* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1970), p. 112: “Der Mensch ist Tier, doch selbst in seinen tierischen Funktionen bleibt er nicht als in einem Ansich stehen wie das Tier, sondern wird ihrer bewußt, erkennt sie und erhebt sie, wie z.B. den Prozess der Verdauung, zu selbstbewußter Wissenschaft.”

<sup>30</sup> Taylor, *The Language Animal*, p. 90.

<sup>31</sup> Taylor’s analysis of the *malleability* of human meanings resembles ideas expressed – post Herder and in a new philosophical context – in American pragmatism. Charles S. Peirce as well as Josiah Royce see language as a process of “*semiosis*” – a collective re-reading of signs, i.e., not a fixed mode of identical sign instantiation. See Ludwig Nagl’s essays on Peirce and Royce in: Ludwig Nagl, *Das verhüllte Absolute. Essays zur zeitgenössischen Religionsphilosophie* (Frankfurt a.M. et al.: Peter Lang, 2010), Part III, Pragmatismus/Neopragmatismus, pp. 73-329.

description.<sup>32</sup> This opens up a complex dialectics, since all human action – as related to a “self” – is (in this very relation) deeply tied to linguistic (self-)articulation: “The aspiration to, or need for, love or friendship can only impinge on me, and motivate me to act, *in some articulation*. Outside of any articulation, I cannot see what I need here,” Taylor says.<sup>33</sup> For the proponents of the enframing, or reductive-continuist [HLC] perspective of language, however, the “constitutive force” of this dialectics remains out of sight.<sup>34</sup> The adherents of HLC offer, instead, abstract “explanations” – for example by “ignoring the different modes and qualities of sexual love” as “epiphenomenal,” and “defining as crucial [...] the externally identifiable [biological] pattern of ‘pair bonding’.”<sup>35</sup>

Thirdly, *The “Background” of Actual Speech*. Language, according to Taylor, is not a collection of single, “referring” words: every word that humans utter is (latently) embedded in “a background” in at least *three* ways. We sense, a), that the words we use in outer or inner speech are part of a larger linguistic capacity;<sup>36</sup> b), that what we can now express has boundaries;<sup>37</sup> and c), that the places and objects which we now focus on are part of a larger whole in space and time.<sup>38</sup>

Language is thus situated in a “*being there*,” which can be *either non-thematic or thematic*: “Most of the time we are fixing on some particular object, with some particular issue in mind, and then the holism retreats into the background.”<sup>39</sup> From this focused stage Taylor distinguishes “a stance which might be thought of unfocused; just being here, with a sense of the whole background streaming in. I look at this tree, and sense the sun, the whole wood, the distant horizon, my life as in a stream of time, how this place calls up memories; and the meaning of all thus.”<sup>40</sup> This second stance<sup>41</sup> is the threshold from which we can step to what Taylor calls (using a Heideggerian term) “dwelling.”<sup>42</sup> (Taylor might in this context have also referred to Peirce who, decades before Heidegger, in his essay “A Neglected Argument for the Reality of God,” thematized such an “unfocused” mode of sign use – Peirce calls it “musement” – as the “humble,” generally available pathway to a reflection on ourselves, the cosmos and the divine.<sup>43</sup>) In this mode, the “full corona of liminal meanings” can come to the fore: that is

<sup>32</sup> Taylor, *The Language Animal*, p. 92.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> See also Chapter 5, “The Figuring Dimension of Language,” *ibid.*, pp. 129-176. Key human phenomena, “norms, footing, institutions, social order,” are “constituted and transformed in discourse, often in rhetorical speech acts which purport to refer to established values [...], but which in fact bootstrap” (*ibid.*, p. 283), i.e., manage to lift themselves up to something new.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>36</sup> See Taylor, *The Language Animal*, p. 87. Post Herder, and after linguistic positivism, this insight informs not only hermeneutics, but also the “language game” concept of Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations*.

<sup>37</sup> Any actual meaning is accompanied by (latent) “liminal meanings,” according to Taylor: by a meaning-horizon which constitutes the background of the present linguistic practice. (See Taylor, *The Language Animal*, p. 87.)

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* That every word is embedded has an intralinguistic and an extralinguistic component: “The right word figures as such among many possible words, actual or to be invented; so language as a whole has to pre-exist”; and “the object named stands out from a context, the background: so there has to be a sense of a whole situation, geographic, social, cosmic.” (Taylor, *The Language Animal*, p. 94.)

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Taylor calls this stance “protodwelling” (*ibid.*, p. 97).

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 84-87.

<sup>43</sup> See Ludwig Nagl, “Peirce’s ‘A Neglected Argument for the Reality of God,’” in *Religionsphilosophie und Religionskritik* (Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2018 [forthcoming]).

to say the sense that everything “is inextricably linked to a wider context” (in Heidegger, linked to the “fourfold [*Geviert*]”: “to mortal and divine beings, earth and sky.”)<sup>44</sup> These (background) meanings remain out of sight in linguistic theories that over-privilege science-related modes of “description.”<sup>45</sup>

### Part 3: Learning to be Human in Globalized Times: Ethics and Institutional Reform

As HHH argues, our human linguistic capacities are not a mere product of nature but were formed *historically*. In *The Language Animal*, Taylor sketches some stages in this (*en detail unexplored*) formation process. On the way to achieving full language capacity, hominids had to develop “joint attention” as a precursor of human “communion.” “Play” – as Robert Bellah showed in *Religion in Human Evolution*<sup>46</sup> – became of “growing importance” as a “platform for the development of ritual.” Significantly later, in the “Axial Age,” elements of these early, ritualistic, modes of social constitution were (in part) replaced by “*theoria*”: by “philosophy, metaphysics, and self-consciously non-mythical histories.” Much later, “post-Galilean natural science” started to untie, and centralize, *one segment* of Classical *theoria* – object description.<sup>47</sup> It was in this way, Taylor says, that the question arose “about the status of accounts of things which do not, or cannot, operate with this kind of bracketing,” such as “arguments regarding ethics, or metaphysics; or of full accounts of human action, in daily life, society, or history.”<sup>48</sup>

This post-Aristotelian development – the untying of *theoria* from metaphysics – is, on the one hand (as Bellah and Taylor argue) a success story of the first order. But if it is not critically reflected on it comes at a very high price. Re-reading Aristotle’s definition of man as “*Zoon logon echon*,” Taylor invites us to appreciate its complexity, and to avoid two traps set by today’s heirs of the HLC model of language: “On the one hand the Scylla of declaring ethics a realm of purely subjective judgments or projections, and on the other, the Charybdis of imposing an alien model of rationality [upon ethical judgments].”<sup>49</sup>

Humans are able to constitute institutional contexts, and to reflect on their ethical validity. This not only opens up a new field of possibilities, but also causes *problems* (two of which will be briefly presented now):

1. *Prima vista* humans and animals are quite similar: like animals, humans mate, are gregarious, and so on: “But the ways in which these common impulses express themselves” are not fixed at all. They “not only are different from society to society, but also undergo

<sup>44</sup> Taylor, *The Language Animal*, p. 95.

<sup>45</sup> “The ‘country’ of language goes way beyond the ‘province’ of information-encoding, important as it is.” (*Ibid.*, p. 99.)

<sup>46</sup> Robert Bellah, *Religion in Human Evolution: From the Paleolithic to the Axial Age* (Cambridge, MA/London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011). See also: Ludwig Nagl, “Bellah on Aristotle and ‘the Heritage of the Axial Age’,” *World Congress “Aristotle 2400 Years,”* Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece, May 2016. (Live streaming at: <http://www.livemedia.com/video/234916>)

<sup>47</sup> See Robert Bellah’s analysis of this process in “The Heritage of the Axial Age,” in *The Axial Age and its Consequences*, edited by Robert Bellah and Hans Joas (Cambridge, MA/London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2012), pp. 463-464; and Ludwig Nagl, “Bellah on Aristotle and ‘the Heritage of the Axial Age’,” Part 2, “Ambivalences in the Axial-Age heritage: *theoria*, social inequality, ecological problems, and the (possibility) of a new, post-ethnocentric understanding of culture and religion.”

<sup>48</sup> Taylor, *The Language Animal*, p. 338.

<sup>49</sup> Taylor, *The Language Animal*, p. 339.

changes [...], as the generations succeed each other."<sup>50</sup> These differences, which are *culturally constituted*, pose a problem, since some of them cannot, if they are ethically incompatible, be resolved by an appeal to "moral subjectivism."<sup>51</sup>

2. Societies constitute themselves by organizing "solidarity with insiders." Thus they tend to show, as their other side, "*wariness, even hostility, to outsiders*."<sup>52</sup> In this they resemble their animal analogues. One of the most astonishing processes in human history is thus, Taylor says, the development of a *universalist ethics which runs against this deeply ingrained tendency to hostile exclusion*. Like Bellah (with recourse to Karl Jaspers<sup>53</sup>), and like Habermas, Taylor argues that this "remarkable turn" (which was later more fully explored in Enlightenment philosophy) started in "changes which have come to be called 'Axial Age'<sup>54</sup> – in transformations in religion like those we see in the preaching of the Buddha, in the teaching of Confucius, in the Hebrew prophets, and in post-Socratic philosophy. They all make central some notion of a higher good, going way beyond the demand of personal and social survival and flourishing."<sup>55</sup> What began in the "Axial Age," however, has nowhere been completed, and, until today, remains on the political agenda.<sup>56</sup> One of the (possible) results of today's developed post-Axial Age discourse, Bellah wrote, quite optimistically, in 2011,<sup>57</sup> might be a tolerant, ethnocentrism-distant affirmation of *different (religious and secular) world views*, and the peaceful exploration of their overlappings, as well as their differences.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> For instance, it is impossible for us – as Taylor points out – to endorse the principles of a slave society without renouncing our own core values. But nor can we solve the problem by considering alien people who endorse slavery as members of another species. [...] [I]n ethics, thus, we cannot avoid claiming "that there are valid grounds which could in the best circumstances bring the intuitions of our opponents into alignment with ours (or vice versa)." (*Ibid.*, pp. 339-340.)

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 340.

<sup>53</sup> Karl Jaspers, *Vom Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte* (Frankfurt a.M./Hamburg: Fischer Verlag, 1955).

<sup>54</sup> Charles Taylor, "What Was the 'Axial Age'," in: Charles Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), pp. 367-379. See also: Ludwig Nagl, "Re-reading Traditional Chinese Texts: The Axial Age Debate, Various Forms of Enlightenment, and Pluralism-sensible (Neo-) Pragmatic Philosophies of Religion," in *Songshan Forum On Chinese and World Civilizations 2014, Academic Forum Collected Papers* (Beijing: Institute for Advanced Humanistic Studies at Peking University, 2014), pp. 164-180.

<sup>55</sup> Taylor, *The Language Animal*, p. 340.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.* "To carry through, integrally, on this ethic would involve a kind of transcendence in relation to the instincts," that is "it would require an instinct of belonging, of solidarity, without the obligatory contrast case of the other, the outsider."

<sup>57</sup> Bellah, *Religion*, p. 602.

<sup>58</sup> Today, Bellah says, an attitude has become possible that is able to "understand and appreciate all religions on their own terms," and is "not driven to set up one as the apex, either because it was the best, or because it was the most historically progressive." (Bellah, *Religion*, p. 603) William James's *Varieties of Religious Experience* and Ludwig Wittgenstein's reflections on "religious belief" are examples of such a changed view. Bellah remains cautious, however: Such a new attitude is still not widespread (*ibid.*, p. 605). It is "neither a shallow new-age relativism, nor merely the affirmation of 'inter-religious dialogue' (important though that is)": "What I am thinking of now," Bellah writes, "is the increasing number of serious students of religion who can accept religious pluralism as our destiny without making a claim to the superiority of one tradition." (*Ibid.*, pp. 603-604) This acceptance, it seems, presupposes (something like) the idea of a *constitutive family resemblance* with regard to "*the divine*." Bellah finds convincing the idea of Wilfred Cantwell Smith who, in his book *Toward a World Theology*, uses the word "God" as the basic reference of all religions, though recognizing the difficulties in so doing (*ibid.*, p. 604). Cantwell Smith "identified himself as a Christian," but "wants to include the whole of human religiosity in his perspective without privileging any one tradition or any kind of tradition." (*Ibid.*) "He has taught me,"

#### Part 4: The "Full Corona of Liminal Meaning" and Poetry: *En route* to a New, Pluralism-Sensible Discourse on Religion?

Taylor agrees with some (though not with all) aspects of Bellah's analysis. As he writes in *Retrieving Realism*, the Axial Age revolution managed to organize a "ratchet effect."<sup>59</sup> The core of this revolution, the universalist imperative, articulates – one could say with Kant – a form of progress that (in the long run) does "not forget itself."<sup>60</sup> The ethical maxim to respect every human being equally (which from the start – albeit inexplicitly – formed the depth structure of human language itself,<sup>61</sup> has up to the present nowhere been sufficiently implemented.<sup>62</sup> As the acceptance of human rights shows, there are, globally, (some) convergences, but significant differences remain: "The world consensus on human rights," Taylor says, "seems valid to many people, but for very different reasons in different milieus. Some will ground the right to life on a view of humans as made in the image of God, others on the Buddhist principle of *ahimsa*, others on the Kantian notion of the dignity of humans as rational agents," and so on. That, however, ultimately means: "We are no closer to consensus on our deepest underlying reasons."<sup>63</sup>

What chances does tolerance thus have, and will there ever be a unification of perspectives? Taylor/Dreyfus address the vastness of unresolved problems. Not only are religions very often accompanied by their wicked partners: by fanaticism and a religiously masked tribal lust for power and domination.<sup>64</sup> Many unresolved differences are tied, internally, to core constituents of the various beliefs themselves – differences that are seen as extremely important, and thus invite dangerously regressive readings. Taylor/Dreyfus therefore characterize today's situation as follows: "There is an undoubted affinity between the teachings of Plato, the prophets of Israel, and the Buddha, for instance, *but there remain deep differences of basic ontology*. [...] Thus, we have good reasons, moral and intellectual, to press

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Bellah says, "that religions don't differ so much in giving different answers to the same questions as in asking different questions." A similar praise for the positive value of the *variety* of religions was voiced recently also by Hilary Putnam in his essay "Plädoyer für eine Verabschiedung des Begriffs 'Idolatrie,'" in *Religion nach der Religionskritik*, edited by Ludwig Nagl (Wien: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2003), pp. 49-59. This new approach implies no relativism, but raises the claim that "universal categories" – like "the divine" – come bound up with particularities that give them different emphases. (Bellah, *Religion*, pp. 605-606.) "Thomas McCarthy (in *Race, Empire, and the Idea of Human Development*, Cambridge University Press, 2009) puts it well," Bellah writes: "The conceptual point is this: *by their very nature*, the universal cannot be actual without the particular, nor the formal without the substantive." (*Ibid.*, p. 606)

<sup>58</sup> Bellah, *Religion*, p. 599.

<sup>59</sup> Dreyfus and Taylor, *Retrieving Realism*, p. 167.

<sup>60</sup> See Immanuel Kant, *The Conflict of the Faculties*, Second Part, No. 7, "Prophetic History of Humanity" (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), p. 159. In the German original this passage runs as follows: "Ein solches Phänomen in der Menschengeschichte *vergift sich nicht mehr*." (I have corrected the cited English translation, and altered it into: [this progress] "does (in the long run) 'not forget itself'.")

<sup>61</sup> This claim is not only raised by Taylor (see part 2 of this essay), but also by Derrida, who speaks of "a messianic structure that belongs to all language." (Jacques Derrida, "Remarks on Deconstruction and Pragmatism," in *Deconstruction and Pragmatism*, edited by Chantal Mouffe [London: Routledge, 1996], p. 82.)

<sup>62</sup> Dreyfus and Taylor, *Retrieving Realism*, p. 167.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> See William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1982), pp. 337-338.

forward and attempt a unification of perspectives, but also good reasons not to be too sanguine about our prospects."<sup>65</sup>

Taylor hopes that today's – troubled – dialogue between secularism and the plurality of (in part dangerously re-politicized) religions<sup>66</sup> can be improved by a still deeper exploration of the capacities of language. In a projected sequel to *The Human Animal* he plans to focus on the constitutive features of our awareness of the world as it is present in "*Dichtung*." Poetry, according to Taylor, is deeply tied to our most intense exploration attempts of the "full corona of liminal meanings of language." Here thoughts recur that were marginalized by the instrumental focus that – in addition an extended legal discourse – increasingly dominates our "Secular Age."<sup>67</sup>

This is an ambition project, indeed, since it entails, *inter alia*, an in-depth exploration of the concept of "sign."<sup>68</sup> Taylor is convinced that *art – and in particular: poetry* ("understood in a broad sense"<sup>69</sup>) – has the potential to supersede *systematic philosophical approaches* which aimed (in Kant, say, and in Hegel) at a *conceptual* exploration of our language-mediated *experiences of human praxis and its limit*, as well as of the dialectics between finitude and the Absolute. *Systematic* philosophy, for Taylor, has come to an open, "hermeneutical" end.<sup>70</sup> In today's life-forms, a "re-valuation of aesthetic experience" – he argues –, tends to occupy the place formerly occupied by *philosophical* speculation, and the "subtle languages of post-Romantic poetics" enter the scene.<sup>71</sup> This is, on the one hand, a correct observation (with reference to Heidegger and Hölderlin):<sup>72</sup> but it might, nevertheless, irritate some of Taylor's readers. Doesn't there today also exist – in phenomenology and deconstruction,<sup>73</sup> in post-analytic philosophies

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<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 167-168. (Italics L.N.)

<sup>66</sup> See in this context Charles Taylor, "Shapes of Faith Today," in *Renewing the Church in a Secular Age. Holistic Dialogue and Kenotic Vision*, edited by Charles Taylor, José Casanova, George F. McLean, and João J. Vila-Chã (Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2016), pp. 269-281.

<sup>67</sup> In his future work, Taylor intends to explore further the connections between the HHH theory "and the poetics which emerges from the Romantic era," focusing in doing so on the literary experiments that seek "the real language, the living creative one, which reconnects, as against the dead language which simply designates things that everyone can see, and allows us to manipulate them, totally ignoring their sign-character." (Taylor, *The Language Animal*, p. 344.)

<sup>68</sup> This comprises, in addition, a (post-Hegelian) attempt to "retrieve realism" – a "pluralist robust realism" as he writes in Dreyfus and Taylor, *Retrieving Realism*, p. 160.

<sup>69</sup> Taylor, *The Language Animal*, p. 342.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 313-314. For Taylor "the attempt to achieve clarity [about human meanings] is met by a hermeneutic which can never establish a final interpretation, invulnerable to critique and admitting no further improvement." In reflecting on this hermeneutic perspective, Ludwig Siep points out, critically, that the validity claims raised in Taylor's narrative remain quite unsettled. Taylor's hermeneutical analyses, so Siep, "stehen auf einem weitaus rutschigeren Boden [als] Hegels Versuch, den Geist der Epoche aus seinen 'Objektivierungen' zu begreifen." (Ludwig Siep, "Hegels und Taylors Kritik der Moderne," in *Unerfüllte Moderne? Festschrift für Charles Taylor*, edited by Michael Kühnlein and Matthias Lutz-Bachmann [Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2011], p. 285.)

<sup>71</sup> See Ludwig Nagl, "Vom 'Begriff' zu den Metaphern 'subtiler Sprachen'. Charles Taylor über das Verhältnis von Kunst, Religion und Philosophie: Eine Nachbesichtigung von 'Hegel today'," in *Hegels Ästhetik als Theorie der Moderne*, edited by Annemarie Gethmann-Siefert, Herta Nagl-Docekal, Erzsébet Rózsa, and Elisabeth Weisser-Lohmann (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2013), pp. 109-140.

<sup>72</sup> See, for instance, Dieter Henrich's recent book *Sein oder Nichts. Erkundungen um Samuel Beckett und Hölderlin* (München: Verlag C.H. Beck, 2016).

<sup>73</sup> See *Essays zu Jacques Derrida and Gianni Vattimo, 'Religion'*, edited by Ludwig Nagl (Frankfurt a.M. et al.: Peter Lang Verlag, 2001).

influenced by late Wittgenstein,<sup>74</sup> in Critical Theory,<sup>75</sup> and in American Pragmatism and Neo-pragmatism<sup>76</sup> – an extended *philosophical* discourse on religion?<sup>77</sup> Against Taylor's new emphasis on aesthetics, I would argue that *philosophical exploration attempts* (new<sup>78</sup> and old), and hardly *poetry* itself, are ultimately of the greatest importance in the ongoing project to elucidate the (finitude- and hope-related) depth layers of our linguistic capacities.<sup>79</sup> Is Taylor's critique, and rejection, of Hegel's insistence on a significant structural difference between the argumentative powers of art, religion, and philosophy, indeed, plausible?<sup>80</sup> Can art transport meaning in a self-explanatory manner, or do its "gestures" – as Lyotard says – invite *philosophical* exploration, not just "literary criticism": do "artists expect that *the philosophers* make understandable what they produce?"<sup>81</sup>

These open questions<sup>82</sup> cannot, however, detract us from giving Charles Taylor full credit for his hermeneutics-inspired critique of some of the deep-seated linguistic reductionisms

<sup>74</sup> See Ludwig Nagl, "'James's book *The Varieties of Religious Experience* does me a lot of good'. Wittgensteins therapeutische Jameslektüren," in *Wittgenstein Studien*, Vol. 8 (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2017), pp. 185-209.

<sup>75</sup> See Ludwig Nagl, "Habermas' partielle Zuwendung zum Pragmatismus," in *Habermas und die Religion*, edited by Klaus Viertbauer and Franz Gruber (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2017).

<sup>76</sup> See Ludwig Nagl, "(Neo-)Pragmatic explorations of religion: Richard Rorty, Cornel West, Hilary Putnam," in *La religione dopo la critica alla religione. Un dibattito filosofico*, edited by Herta Nagl-Docekal, Wolfgang Kaltenbacher, and Claudia Melica (Napoli: La scuola di Pitagora editrice, 2017), pp. 115-146.

<sup>77</sup> These recent *philosophical* discourses on philosophy, religion and art are nowhere (extensively) analyzed in Taylor's voluminous studies. There is one exception, however. In his *Vienna Lectures Varieties of Religion Today. William James Revisited* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), Taylor deals *en detail* with William James. See Ludwig Nagl "'The Jamesian open space'. Charles Taylor und der Pragmatismus," in *Unerfüllte Moderne? Festschrift für Charles Taylor*, edited by Michael Kühnlein and Matthias Lutz-Bachmann (Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2011), pp. 117-160.

<sup>78</sup> See, for instance, Ludwig Nagl, "Der Philosophie geht es nicht darum, 'die Religion umzustoßen': Ist Hegel – als Religionsphilosoph – 'a thinker of the future'? (Derrida/Malabou und Royce)," in *Viele Religionen – eine Vernunft? Ein Disput zu Hegel*, edited by Herta Nagl-Docekal, Wolfgang Kaltenbacher, and Ludwig Nagl (Wien/Berlin: Böhlau-Akademie Verlag, 2008), pp. 88-105; and Ludwig Nagl, "Josiah Royce's späte, 'pragmatizistische' Religionsphilosophie: ein innovativer Denkansatz, inspiriert von Peirce, Kant und Hegel," in *Pragmata. Festschrift für Klaus Oehler zum 80. Geburtstag*, edited by Kai-Michael Hingst and Maria Liatsi (Tübingen: Narr Francke Attempto Verlag, 2008), pp. 244-257.

<sup>79</sup> Peirce, Royce, Adorno, Levinas, Derrida, Putnam, and Vattimo seek, in *extended philosophical reflections*, to encircle, post-dialectically, an "Absolute" that we finite beings can only *try* to spell out (differently), while, in *its fullness*, it remains "veiled" to us. (See Nagl, *Das verhüllte Absolute*.)

<sup>80</sup> In his analyses of "How Narrative Makes Meaning," Taylor concedes, on the one hand, that "a great deal can be gained by the movement back and forth between text and literature" (Taylor, *The Language Animal*, p. 314), but he rejects, on the other hand, *philosophical* reconstructions of literature via argumentations that aim at a greater stringency than literature itself. (See *ibid.*, p. 299)

<sup>81</sup> English translation L.N. The quoted text passage runs as follows: "[Die Künstler] erwarten – und sie werden das auch in Zukunft tun –, dass der Philosoph verständlich macht, was sie produziert haben." (Jean-François Lyotard, "Geste und Kommentar," in *Textualität der Philosophie. Philosophie und Literatur*, edited by Ludwig Nagl and Hugh J. Silverman [Wien/München: Oldenbourg, 1994], p. 125.)

<sup>82</sup> In Taylor's analyses the question remains unanswered whether *art* (a mode of reflection and practice that, today, is "subjectivized" up to the point of a decomposition of "the subject") is able to reinvigorate the discourse that, earlier on, took place in *philosophical* attempts to thematize "the Absolute." Is (post)Romantic "poetics," indeed, able to re-occupy the very space that, as Hegel pointed out, segments of the Romantic movement started to empty via irony – a space, i.e., whose "authentic" exploration is, in

intruding into our contemporary life forms: of reductionisms that are accelerated by the mythologies of the “digital age” – by their (latent as well as manifest) over-privileging of object-relations, i.e. of “instrumental reason.”

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addition, threatened by the ever increasing culture-industrial “deaestheticization of art”? (See Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997], p. 16.)



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## The Happiness of the Defeated: Jan Patočka and Walter Benjamin on the Human between Annihilation and Redemption

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If humanism has run dry, that only means that the question of man is posed in a more radical sense than humanism could ever dream of. ... The "minimum" of metaphysics does not mean "less," but more "elementary" in matters metaphysical.

Jacob Taubes, "Letter to Armin Mohler," 14 February 1952<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

"The human" is a somewhat problematic concept, even more so if linked to a normative aspect, suggesting that it is desirable to be human, to behave humanly, to act humanly, etc. A recent example for this is the title of the XXIV. World Congress of Philosophy "Learning to be Human." One might recall a passage from the Berlin Lectures of the late Schelling where in referring to the enlightenment hope that history is the unfolding of rational man he says: "Thus far from man and his endeavors making the world comprehensible, it is man himself that is the most incomprehensible and who [...] drives me to the belief in the wretchedness of all being [...]: It is precisely man who drives me to the final desperate question: Why is there anything at all? Why is there not nothing?"<sup>2</sup>

Precisely because of its problematic character the concept of "the human" is one of the most contested concepts in contemporary discourse. In particular, the ongoing debates on the post-human and the trans-human bear witness to that. Correctly, in my view, post-humanist criticism refers to the anthropological tendency to sustain or perpetuate the violent character of human existence noted by, for example, Schelling by turning particular qualities of what is supposedly "human" into essentialist definitions. In many instances, however, post-humanist criticism may be too hasty. As a result, it creates at best partially convincing alternatives to what has been already discussed under the banner of "the human," particularly with regard to a viable ethical attitude. Not to mention the somewhat different aspirations of transhumanism that aim at overcoming human frailty by means of superhuman technology. In any case I believe that against this background (that certainly would have to be explored in far more detail), it could indeed prove more fruitful to reconceive the concept of "the human" differently in order to see if we can turn it into a tool leading us out of the context of violence that is human history.

In what follows, I will elaborate on aspects of Jan Patočka's and Walter Benjamin's thinking, who each, in his own way, dealt with the human condition. In particular, Patočka but also, even if in a rather implicit way, Benjamin worked out the specific ontological structure of the human, stressing that, beyond being simply given, it is something that has to be realized in an

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<sup>1</sup> While I agree with this quotation, I neither share the declared Gnosticism of Taubes nor his love-hate-relationship with the Conservative Revolution.

<sup>2</sup> F.W.J. Schelling, *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy. The Berlin Lectures*, transl. Bruce Matthews (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), p. 94.

ongoing process. Accordingly, we could say that “the human” is what we discover in ourselves, as a certain dynamics, that calls us beyond ourselves towards what we have not yet become. From this perspective, “the human” is rather a matter of being pushed beyond the momentarily given than something we can attribute to ourselves.

It is important to see that both Patočka and Benjamin connect the experience of being human and the understanding of what it means to be human with a moment of crisis. To be human is therefore indeed something genuinely problematic, i.e., a matter of constant struggle. Yet as we shall see, its unsettled character notwithstanding, “the human” is equally a matter of overcoming isolated individual interests in favor of trans-individual relations.

Due to their respective styles of thinking Patočka’s ontology is far more elaborate than the one of Benjamin. In the first part of this paper I will therefore develop both the unsettled and problematic aspect of “the human” in referring to Patočka, in particular his *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*. Afterwards I will briefly discuss what I regard as the shortcomings of his approach. In the second part of the paper I will suggest how Benjamin’s philosophy of history could correct some of these shortcomings. In following Benjamin, I will propose to recognize the messianic and therefore redemption-oriented character of the crisis that constitutes the unfolding of the human in both theory and practice. We could say, then, that there is no being human without a messianic, redemptive element. It testifies to what is always more than we can grasp and define. Yet in doing so it is both the core and the ultimate reference point of human existence.

### **Patočka: Incommensurability and Problematicity of Being**

It should be noted first that in Patočka the problem of the human is intrinsically connected with the ontological problem of understanding being. Obviously there is a strong element of Heidegger in Patočka, especially of Heidegger’s fundamental ontology. Yet as we shall see, Patočka eventually goes in another, far more concrete direction than Heidegger.<sup>3</sup>

According to Patočka, the human is a being that is open to being, that is, it refers to the fact that it itself exists as well as that there is something at all. Put differently, humans understand that they exist and, therefore, they “have to carry on their being, to carry it out.”<sup>4</sup> There is a profound incommensurability coming along with the awareness of existence, and this has to do with the fact that being as such, i.e., the fact “that I am,” the fact “that it is,” is not representable, that it is no object. Thatness is not something of which I can say *what* it is.

This is both positive and negative at the same time. Positively speaking, what follows from the incommensurability of being is that beings are incommensurable, too, i.e., there is no form of objectification that can exhaust their existence (unlike Heidegger, I translate ‘thatness’ quite classically with “*existentia*,” i.e., “existence”). In other words, by virtue of existence, there is a surplus or excess of beings over their representational appearing. Yet negatively speaking, the incommensurability of being implies that beings are lacking an ultimate foundation or ground. There might be being in its irreducible positivity. Yet as Patočka discusses in setting himself apart from Plato’s theory of ideas (if you wish, the prototype of metaphysics),<sup>5</sup> being has no

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<sup>3</sup> See James Dodd, “The Twentieth Century as War,” in *Jan Patočka and the Heritage of Phenomenology. Centenary Papers*, ed. Ivan Chvatik and Erika Abrams (Dordrecht et al.: Springer, 2011), p. 205.

<sup>4</sup> Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, transl. Erazim Kohák, ed. James Dodd (Chicago and La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1996), 47.

<sup>5</sup> Instead Patočka follows what he calls a “negative Platonism.” See Jan Patočka, “Negativní Platonismus,” in *Sebrané spisy, 1: Péče o duši, I [Collected Works, Vol. 1: Care of the Soul, Part I]*, ed. Ivan Chvatik and Pavel Kouba (Prague: Oikumene, 1996), pp. 303-336.

content. I may understand *that* I am, but this understanding of the factuality of my being implies no definite knowledge of *what* I am or *how* I am supposed to live. Again, since I am open to being, I cannot escape carrying out my being, and this means that I am always challenged to project what I am and how I want to live. The challenge to project one's concrete being against the backdrop of the empty positivity of being (its nothingness, in a sense) indicates what Patočka calls the *problematicity* (*problematičnost*) of being. Being is problematic in lacking a definite meaning, even if it is inherently meaningful. This means that being open to being always implies both searching for and questioning meaning.

This gives way to a first characterization of the human, for we can say that in Patočka the human is what constantly realizes the problematic character of being. However, there is a second aspect that again reminds one of Heidegger, namely, his distinction between "*Eigentlichkeit*" (authenticity) and "*Uneigentlichkeit*" (inauthenticity). For Patočka, to be human also implies the possibility to conceal the problematic character of being in order to simply live. In fact, there would be no practical life if one would constantly live in light of the problematicity of being. Yet there is a danger that this problematicity is suppressed for the sake of a smooth conduct of life, with the result that, ultimately, human life is reduced to being invested into its own self-preservation.

Hence the second characterization of the human: it can either evade or confront the problematicity of being. There is a constant struggle between both possibilities. This definition is clearly illustrated if we turn to the impact that the suppression of the problematicity of being had, according to Patočka, on modern life.

Before turning to Patočka's analysis of the modern condition, it should be noted that it has a twofold status. On the one hand it deals paradigmatically with the ontological situation of the human, on the other it refers to a specific historical situation. This has to do with the fact that for Patočka ontology is never something detached from historical life. Rather ontology realizes itself in history in the sense that the meaning of being is mirrored in the changing historical understanding of being. Since I focus on the problem of the human, I will primarily read Patočka's analysis in a paradigmatic sense. Yet as is quite obvious, one can understand it also as a critique of a now classical enlightenment humanism.

As Patočka observes, since the enlightenment there is a tendency to obscure the negative, problematic aspect of being. Accordingly, there arises what Patočka terms the "ideas of the day with its interest,"<sup>6</sup> i.e., ideas that claim the absolute value of life and progress in the service of life, its preservation and comfort. However, as in the case of most repression processes, there is a return of the repressed, too. Eventually, individual life falls prey to the logic of the absolute preservation of life. This is so, because the life to be preserved is in fact something general, "a continuum within which individuals function as the bearers of a general movement which alone matters"<sup>7</sup> and for which they will be sacrificed again and again. Patočka summarizes this process as "the 20<sup>th</sup> century as war" (the sixth of Patočka's *Heretical Essays* has the pointed title *The Wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and the 20<sup>th</sup> Century as War*). The state of war in modern life is evident considering two World Wars. In addition, the 20<sup>th</sup> century is characterized by a constant non-military mobilization that occurs also in times of supposed peace. Something that, by the way, also holds true for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is evidenced, for example, by today's labor market where in many areas short-term contracts, part-time employment, frequent job rotation, that is, continuous readiness has become the rule.

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<sup>6</sup> Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays*, p. 120.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

Tellingly Patočka understands such phenomena as indicating “a life addicted to what is inhuman by its very nature.”<sup>8</sup> Accordingly, one could say that a life reduced to the preservation of an impersonal life system has reached the zero point of the human, even if – as Patočka wisely adds – “it thinks itself full”<sup>9</sup> life. In order to retrieve the human, i.e., the dynamic tension connected with the problemat�city of being, we have to inaugurate a radical change of direction, a “*metanoia*,”<sup>10</sup> as Patočka writes. This involves directing an allegedly full life to what could be called a state of extreme poverty. Note that we find here a mystical element in Patočka. It is no coincidence that within the same context Patočka refers to Teilhard de Chardin.

Patočka demonstrates this change of direction in referring to the frontline experience in World War I. Since I am interested in the paradigmatic function of his thoughts, I suggest to understand them in a structural sense. While I am well aware of the apodictic character of this statement that would require an in-depth discussion, this implies that – human being-in-the-world is always characterized by a state of war, namely, by the self-interested struggle for self-preservation driven by physical need. This is what I mean when I will be speaking of the “mundane state of war.” Modern life systems turn this into a general, supra-individual structure.

Patočka distinguishes two phases of the experience of *metanoia* in war. The first phase is pure negativity: “[It] is the experience of meaninglessness and [...] *absurdity* par excellence. *What we had* only suspected here becomes reality: all that humans hold most precious is [...] torn to shreds. The *only meaning* is that of a proof that a *world* capable of producing something like that must *disappear*.”<sup>11</sup> We can understand the recognition that “everything precious is torn to shreds” and “the world must disappear” as evidence of a radical loss of both self and world.

The second phase is based on the first, yet comes as a sudden rupture. “Here [...] the participants are assaulted by an absolute freedom, freedom from all the interests of peace, of life, of the day.”<sup>12</sup> This experience of absolute freedom goes hand in hand with “an overwhelming sense of meaningfulness.”<sup>13</sup> Clearly, this meaningfulness has nothing to do with any worldly meaning because there is no world any more. Rather, in this instance meaning lies in the absolute and irreducible incommensurability of existence, the fact “that I am.” Again we can observe the ambivalent character of existential incommensurability. Obviously it is negative in the sense that there is no mundane designation, and no form of appropriation that could capture it; it escapes all objectification and representation. Yet this negativity also entails the possibility to overcome mundane meaning in order to experience absolute meaning. This absolute meaning emerging from the profound crisis of the war-experience is the vanishing point of the dynamics of being human. As such it designates both a state of exception and what is human par excellence, the “core” of being human, which is not just there but has to be realized in temporal processes. Thus, the touchstone of being human is existential incommensurability, being beyond worldly meaning, and ultimately beyond mundane sacrifice and death.

Based on this, Patočka refers to what one may regard as the ultimate human gesture that his approach permits, namely, to the so-called “solidarity of the shaken” (*solidarita otřesených*).<sup>14</sup> Shaken are those who have experienced the absurdity of the mundane state of war. Being

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<sup>8</sup> Patočka, *Heretical Essays*, p. 97.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 129.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 131.

detached from their mundane *personae*, they discover their own incommensurability as well as the incommensurability of the others who “participate in the same situation.”<sup>15</sup> As Patočka writes, “here we encounter the abysmal realm of the ‘prayer for the enemy’, the phenomenon of ‘loving those who hate us’.”<sup>16</sup> In other words, here we find a suspension or deposition (*Entsetzung*)<sup>17</sup> of war that goes along with the dawn of a different type of relation in which individual lives are not invested but rather drawn beyond themselves.

Let me briefly address my criticism of Patočka: his approach is insufficient for even if there is the human ultimate gesture of prayer for and love of the enemy, the war will continue and there is no way to stop it. In order to stop the war, we would have to show that there is more to human incommensurability than its being non-representable, more than just an open question. The problematicity of the human may prevent it from being totally consumed by war. Yet this negative, resistant character does not suffice to create a real alternative to the ongoing state of war. I believe that, at this point, the messianic perspective of Benjamin will push us further, since it allows us to understand that the experience of incommensurability in crisis, that is the experience of absolute meaning, is also the experience of possible redemption, i.e., of a life to the full. This then allows us to re-establish the idea of happiness that in Patočka seems to be lost to the false interests of the day.

### Benjamin: Two Opposing Forces

Let me start with some general remarks. In Patočka human incommensurability shows itself in the experience of crisis. Yet apart from that it lacks a positive manifestation. It is what *cannot* be grasped, *cannot* be appropriated, in a word, what *cannot* be objectified. Its power consists of negation. By contrast, in Benjamin the incommensurable dimension of human existence does never appear as such. In other words: there is no “phenomenologization” of incommensurability. Yet the incommensurable creates an undeniable system of references that can be traced, expanded and, last but not least, implemented in action. Its manifestation is therefore hidden but positive. In a sense and, admittedly, further specifying and extending Benjamin’s thinking beyond what he himself was willing to reveal the incommensurable is not only the factual and objectively inexhaustible dimension of existence, it is also that towards which everything existing is oriented, i.e., its own being beyond its finite appearing, or a supra-temporal plenitude in which everything is absolutely saturated in itself. From this perspective – that is, indeed, complementary to Patočka’s phenomenological perspective –, incommensurability is a positive force. It constantly realizes itself; even if it is never entirely realized, at least not in “the world of appearance,” or rather in “phenomenal being” as I will call it in what follows.

Incommensurability in this perspective is to be called “redemption.” Accordingly, if being human means to be concerned with the problematic and incommensurable character of being, then this also means to be concerned with redemption, that is, with the plenitude of being. Therefore, in order to understand “the human,” we have to understand what the characteristics of this concern are and what specific economy of action it demands, especially so, if we want to consider “the human” as a normative category.

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> The term “Entsetzung” refers to Walter Benjamin’s essay *Zur Kritik der Gewalt*. See Walter Benjamin, “Zur Kritik der Gewalt,” in Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften III/1*, eds. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1991), p. 202. It was later on adopted by authors such as Jacques Derrida and Giorgio Agamben.

If we follow Benjamin, redemption has two aspects that reflect a twofold approach, namely, one that focuses on redemption properly speaking, and another that is based on the finite phenomenal relation to redemption. Both approaches are intertwined with each other in a dialectical manner. As we shall see, this prevents the objectification of incommensurability just as it allows for a positive account of incommensurability in phenomenal being.

As for the first aspect, redemption indicates incommensurability as the plenitude of phenomenal being that nevertheless cannot be established by phenomenal being itself. Accordingly, in one of the most important passages of Benjamin's openly theological writings, i.e., the *Theologico-Political Fragment*, he notes:

Only the Messiah consummates all history, in the sense that only he redeems, completes, creates its relation to the Messianic. For this reason nothing historical can relate itself on its own account to anything Messianic [i.e., to incommensurable plenitude, S.L.]. Therefore the Kingdom of God is not the *telos* of the historical dynamic.<sup>18</sup>

There is a similarity between this account of incommensurability and the one of Patočka (and as a matter of fact also to the one of Heidegger's *Being and Time*): Even if there is incommensurability, there is no way to render it in its fullness. An 'access' is literally limited and, accordingly, incommensurability ultimately manifests itself "not [as] the goal, but the end"<sup>19</sup> of finite appearance

Second, there is also a positive reference of phenomenal being to incommensurability. In the human case, this is reflected in "the idea of happiness."<sup>20</sup> Therefore, as Benjamin continues, "the order of the profane cannot be built up on the idea of the Divine Kingdom... [Rather it] should be erected on the idea of happiness."<sup>21</sup> Obviously, and in contrast to Patočka, who dismisses everything that is reminiscent of "the ideas of the day with its interest," Benjamin recognizes the human right to a fulfilling life. I should like to stress this point, because it is crucial. In fact, it changes the view with regard to the scope of practical and, especially, political action. It does not only allow saying "'no' to the measures of mobilization which make the state of war permanent."<sup>22</sup> Rather it supports the pursuit of "free humanity,"<sup>23</sup> i.e., the attempt to actively counteract the present state of war by establishing an alternative order of things. Yet this does not mean that Benjamin simply returns to 19<sup>th</sup> century humanism. In the ultimate perspective, the pursuit of happiness can only be justified if it is associated with redemption proper, and this means that it has to undergo a dialectical procedure in the course of which it is first disintegrated and in a second step that requires a change, it is reestablished. In this respect we have to return to another crucial passage of the *Theologico-Political Fragment*. Note that we can find in Benjamin an equally mystical notion of crisis as in Patočka. Accordingly, Benjamin speaks of a "mystical conception of history":<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Walter Benjamin, "Theologico-Political Fragment," in *Reflections*, ed. Peter Demetz (New York: Schocken Books, 1986), p. 312.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Patočka, *Heretical Essays*, p. 135.

<sup>23</sup> Benjamin, "Theologico-Political Fragment," p. 12.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*



If one arrow points to the goal toward which the profane dynamic acts, and another marks the direction of Messianic intensity, then certainly the quest of free humanity for happiness runs counter to the Messianic direction; but just as a force can, through acting, increase another that is acting in the opposite direction, so the order of the profane assists, through being profane, the coming of the Messianic Kingdom. The profane, therefore, although not itself a category of this Kingdom, is a decisive category of its quietest approach. For in happiness all that is earthly seeks its downfall, and only in good fortune is its downfall destined to find it.<sup>25</sup>

Three aspects seem important here. First and most fundamental, Benjamin suggests that the pursuit of happiness has actually nothing to do with leading a satisfied life in the world. On the contrary, and this indeed recalls mystics such as Meister Eckhart (who, by the way, was a widely read author among the German intelligentsia of the 1920s), happiness has to do with a complete detachment from earthly well-being. It demands consent to a complete annihilation of the mundane *persona*, a withdrawal from all hopes and desires, willingness to “downfall” as Benjamin writes.

Second, Benjamin’s historical-philosophical *Denkbild* (image of thought) indicates that the ‘nothing-but’ profane pursuit of happiness has itself a destructive character. In fact, its destructive power is far more serious than the destructive demands of redemptive incommensurability: It “runs counter to the Messianic direction,” i.e., it closes itself to the overcoming of the finite order and in doing so it perpetuates mundane violence. As Eric Jacobson rightly observed, in Benjamin “the ‘pursuit of happiness of free humanity’ [can] be seen as representing the Antichrist of the Messianic dialectic.”<sup>26</sup> This holds even truer for Benjamin’s last major work, *Theses on the Philosophy of History* that Benjamin himself regarded as directly connected with the *Theologico-Political Fragment*.<sup>27</sup> Profane happiness here turns out to be the happiness of the historical “victor ... [and his or her] heirs ... [who] step over those who are lying prostrate.”<sup>28</sup> It is precisely them at whom the famous “angel of history” (Benjamin’s ninth thesis) is looking when he is seeing but “one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage.”<sup>29</sup> And it is because of the victors of history and their purely profane, promising *dynamis* of “progress”<sup>30</sup> that “one cannot contemplate without horror”<sup>31</sup> the most refined products of mundane happiness, i.e., “the cultural treasures, ... the document[s] of civilization [which are at the same time] document[s] of barbarism.”<sup>32</sup>

Third, the late Benjamin also recognizes a connection between the profane longing for happiness and redemption. In *Theses on the Philosophy of History* this connection is formally established by a messianic economy of time. According to it, every temporal moment is connected with the fullness of time. This is also why “every second [is] the strait gate through

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Eric Jacobson, *Metaphysics of the Profane. The Political Theology of Walter Benjamin and Gershom Scholem* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), p. 35.

<sup>27</sup> As for the history of both texts and their relation, see Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften, III/1*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1977), pp. 946-949.

<sup>28</sup> Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” in Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, transl. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1969), p. 256.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 257.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 258.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 256.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

which the Messiah might enter."<sup>33</sup> Thus, the happiness we are yearning for is tied "to the time to which the course of our own existence has assigned us,"<sup>34</sup> i.e., it is bound up with the presence. As such, however, it is also "indissolubly bound up with the image of redemption."<sup>35</sup> It is because of this relation that every image of happiness is fully justified *despite* the fact that it might turn out catastrophic if put into practice. Rather, in being related to redemption, or put more strictly, only under the premise of this relation, every image of fulfilled finite life testifies to the plenitude of life beyond violence and death, and to a state of complete integrity.

Against this background, I like to propose a vision of practice beyond mere resistance, saying "no," or critique. This is no small thing. Yet speaking concretely and again with regard to both the 20<sup>th</sup> and the 21<sup>st</sup> century, opposition, refusal, or a critical spirit seem not enough to stop the ongoing processes of mobilization and reification today occurring mostly under the guise of economy. Rather it seems necessary to provide theoretical means to create a different image of life, of (not only interpersonal) coexistence, and of human agency.

I suggest that for this purpose we make use of Benjamin's notion of *Eingedenken* (remembrance) as a model; under the premise that we understand the "human" in "human agency" as that which is concerned with the non-objectifiable, the surplus of existence, that is, the incommensurable. We shall see that, even if at first glance "remembrance" has seemingly to do with a contemplative approach linked to the past, it also has to do with action and, thus, with the future.

Paralleling Patočka, the pivotal point of *Eingedenken* is the experience of crisis. In *Theses on the Philosophy of History* Benjamin defines crisis as the situation of being "singled out by history at a moment of danger."<sup>36</sup> Yet in contrast to Patočka, in Benjamin the moment of danger is always already trans-personal even if it is experienced by the individual: "It affects both the content of the tradition and its receivers,"<sup>37</sup> i.e., those who have been singled out. This is because every individual is embedded in the trans-personal context of redemption and, accordingly, in the trans-personal context of history where the forces of redemption and the forces of the solely profane interact. For Benjamin, who is both informed by the Kabbalah and by Jewish and Christian apocalyptic literature, the redemptive forces are at work in "the tradition" while the profane forces are to be identified as the forces of the "Antichrist."<sup>38</sup> The Antichrist supports "the enemy that has not ceased to be victorious,"<sup>39</sup> i.e., the victors of history. Accordingly, the receivers of the tradition belong to those "lying prostrate," i.e., to the defeated of history.

Following this perspective, there is no other way to be human than to identify with the defeated and – irrespective of the master narrative of our times – to abandon the will to mundane success, to comprehensive well-being, and to prosperity. And yet this rejection of worldly splendor and power does not mean to be powerless. Rather, it activates the "weak messianic power [...] on which the past has a claim."<sup>40</sup> This power is not in the service of preserving and expanding present happiness, let alone one's own flourishing (Benjamin enforces self-denial with ascetic severity; in the *Theological-Political Fragment* he writes: "the immediate Messianic

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<sup>33</sup> Benjamin, *Theses*, p. 264.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 254.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Benjamin, *Theses*, p. 255.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Benjamin, *Theses*, p. 254.

intensity of the heart [...] passes through misfortune, as suffering"<sup>41</sup>). Quite the contrary, this *messianic* power is committed to the broken dreams and lives of the past. Whoever acts in accordance with the messianic *dynamis* takes upon herself what seem to be lost hopes. She will make them her own in order to make them right, i.e., to justify them in front of the ruthless eyes of profane history.

It is clear from Benjamin's writings that this is not an excessive demand, even if, in truth, all past is shattered and a pile of wreckage. Yet weak messianic power is concentrated on the immediate influence of individuals that also has a temporal character. It can extend to the past beyond one's own lifetime. That is because "our coming was expected on earth."<sup>42</sup> It was expected by someone or by a group of people. The moment of crisis reveals this. It brings forth "the image of the past"<sup>43</sup> that allows us to relate to this specific past and to recognize it "as one of [our] own concerns."<sup>44</sup> It is worth noting here – and, in fact, it is not inconsistent with Benjamin, even if he is primarily concerned with inter-generational relations – that the past is a relative term. It can be a matter of centuries but also of the last couple of hours.

There is a power to act in the relation to a distorted past, a power for those who can no longer tolerate the violent ordinary run of things, who break with it, and who will therefore run the risk of being weak and defeated, too. Yet their example will show that there are other powers than those resulting from egotism or an identity-focused group consciousness. There are messianic powers of "the solidarity of the shaken"; powers that enable to denounce oneself for the sake of justice being done; powers that dissolve the entanglement with the profane; ideally speaking powers that turn one into a pure agent of justice that the primacy of the "I" or "we" be replaced by the primacy of "the other who affects directly," i.e., the primacy of "the neighbor."

## Two Objections

While a number of objections could be raised to this proposal. I shall mention only two that seem most important.

First, one might argue that according to this proposal "the human" is an almost empty category for there is hardly anyone who can live up to it. It demands the severity and austerity of saints, a rigid self-denial and an unconditional devotion to the others (someone like Simone Weil comes to mind).<sup>45</sup> However, I do not understand "the human" as a determined species as it is understood, for example, in biology. In fact, for too long (and also in philosophy) concepts have been believed to entail static classifications. Yet this only applies to concepts that are indeed used in a classificatory manner. Ontologically far more relevant are those concepts that indicate a possibility that is established, but not yet realized and that changes, or rather clarifies itself, in the course of the process of realization. One might recall Kant's "transcendental ideas" here, with the restriction that Kant detaches them from phenomenal being while, in my view (this again would need a further discussion since it, in fact, indicates a turn from epistemology to ontology), one would have to understand them as being both constitutive and regulative. From this perspective, "the human" would allow one to be or appear in the sense described

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<sup>41</sup> Benjamin, "Theologico-Political Fragment," p. 313.

<sup>42</sup> Benjamin, *Theses*, p. 254.

<sup>43</sup> Benjamin, *Theses*, p. 255.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> On the relation between Benjamin and Weil see the excellent study of Andreas Telser, *Theologie als öffentlicher Diskurs. Zur Relevanz der Systematischen Theologie David Tracy's* (Innsbruck/Wien: Tyrolia-Verlag, 2016), pp. 326-339.

above; yet to be or appear as human is not something given once and for all. Rather, it is something that has to be achieved over and over again. It is an ongoing process, and even if the direction of this process is clear, its coordinates can change.

Second, one might object that in the proposed model the human is too strongly linked to an exceptional case, namely, to crisis. Let me counter this with a question: Is the situation of crisis really exceptional? Rather it seems that because of our temporal and transient character we are ceaselessly exposed to crisis. We literally live all the time under the threat of nothingness: there is no guarantee for anything; and what we want to see realized might not unfold or that comes to an abrupt end. One might recall here Heidegger's analysis in *Being and Time* of "Angst" (Heidegger's epitome of crisis) as an always valid existential fact. "Angst" might be even more instructive than Patočka's reference to the front line when it comes to understanding crisis; even if Patočka's analysis has stronger historical and political significance because it links a situation of imminent reification to a possible self-transcendence. Yet both the nothingness and the incommensurability of our existence can befall us at any time. And yet again, as we learn from Benjamin, it is for this reason that at any time we are ready for the *mémoire involontaire* of "the true image of the past ... that flashes up at the instant when it can be recognized."<sup>46</sup> To put it concisely: Due to our ontological condition we exist out of and towards incommensurable plenitude, and in doing so we are always in possible crisis. This is why we are also open to others and to their past. And, again, this is why we have the capacity to go against the current of history, to take up lost hopes of others and to act on their behalf. In other words, this is why we are capable to be and become human.

Admittedly, further work is needed as to the exact characteristics of being human, especially with regard to practice. However, in this paper it was not my intention to provide practical guidelines. I simply wanted to outline the ontological structure on which practical guidelines could be based. Above all I wanted to show that "the human" is a dynamic rather than an essentialist category.

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## The Human Being – “A Beginner”: Anthropological Foundations and Current Relevance of Hannah Arendt’s Understanding of Childhood and Education

LEONHARD WEISS

### Introduction

The starting point of this paper is the consideration that ‘learning to be human’ requires first and foremost that those who are doing the learning are recognized as being human. What this essentially means will be discussed with the help of thoughts taken from Hannah Arendt. The arguments as developed are primarily of an education philosophy nature, despite the fact that Arendt herself never claimed to be an education philosopher, since her field of focus was ‘political theory’, and therefore her thoughts on the question of education should be seen from the perspective of her political thinking. Arendt herself said that about education “in the specialist’s sense” she “knows nothing.”<sup>1</sup> She emphasized this particularly in her lecture in 1958 on the “crisis in education.” Despite this, one can find in Arendt some very interesting thoughts on education, thoughts that relate on an anthropological level as well as to questions on religion and the philosophy of religion.

### Arendt and the ‘Crisis in Education’

The background to the title ‘Crisis in Education’ had something to do with what Arendt considered the problematic development of the American education system in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This critique on so-called ‘progressive education’ is not our theme for today and so I would like to draw your attention to another point in Arendt’s analysis. She speaks out very firmly against what she called the “illusion that a new world is being built through the education of the children.”<sup>2</sup> Arendt considered that since the 18<sup>th</sup> century many people have been of the opinion that sustainable political change is affected by education. The role played by education in political utopias shows, “how natural it seems to start a new world with those who are by birth and nature new.”<sup>3</sup> Arendt defines ‘new’ in terms of the ancient Greek expression *νέοι*, as the children. According to Arendt children are “newcomers by birth.”<sup>4</sup>

Every child is “new in a world that is strange to him and he is in process of becoming, he is a new human being and he is a becoming human being.”<sup>5</sup> In the double definition of ‘new’ and ‘becoming’ lies the primary characteristic of humanity.

... the child is a human being in process of becoming, just as a kitten is a cat in process of becoming. But the child is new only in relation to a world that was

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<sup>1</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future. Six Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: The Viking Press, 1961), p. 174.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 177.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 176.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 185.

there before him, that will continue after his death, and in which he is to spend his life.<sup>6</sup>

### Anthropological Foundations

#### *"Initium, Newcomer and Beginner"*

According to the principles of Arendt's thinking on the "*conditio humana*," the 'finitude' of mankind is not just determined by his death, but also by his 'natality'. "Terminality" can only occur where there is also a beginning. This applies to the finiteness of a human life, and naturally also to animals. Interestingly, Arendt defines the specific human-animal difference on the basis of decisive contrasts in the start of life. For example, in German one says that a dog 'throws' ('wirft') a puppy, whereas human beings are 'born' ('geboren'). This is not an easy concept to grasp since with humans the birth is not affected by the subject itself, rather, it is dependent on a host of different people. There are also the needs of nature and the fact that the subject finds himself in circumstances he hasn't chosen himself. According to Arendt one definitive difference between a human being 'born' and animals being 'thrown' is that human beings are born into an already existing society. We are immediately integrated into a "web of human relationships."<sup>7</sup> I will return to this particular point.

Arendt's emphasis on natality as a specific human condition can be best understood, in my opinion, in relation to Heidegger, who defined human life as the "*Vorlaufen in den Tod*" ('Being-towards-death'). With the expression 'Vorlaufen' Heidegger did not mean so much the automatic progress of human life towards death, rather, it is the human being's knowledge of this fact. Because "*Being-towards-death*" is the "*anticipation of possibility*" and "*Anticipation turns out to be the possibility of understanding one's ownmost and uttermost potentiality-for-Being – that is to say, the possibility of authentic existence.*"<sup>8</sup>

It is in the knowledge of our mortality that our 'anticipation' of death happens and not in the biological process of aging.

If one turns ones thinking to 'natality' one can see that it is not that we are born as such, rather, that we are to some degree able to look back to our birth. It is in the consciousness of our natality, in the consciousness that we were born, where we can experience that we once had a new beginning in an already existing world, and that it is possible for something new to begin in the middle of the natural process and cycle of life. However, this leads us to understand the life of a human being only in terms of a linear development.

In this regard Arendt often refers to the thinking of Augustinus: "*Initium ut esset homo creatus est – 'that a beginning be made man was created'* said Augustine. This beginning is guaranteed by each new birth; it is indeed every man."<sup>9</sup> In this quote by Arendt of "*Civitate Dei*," Augustinus criticizes the ancient notion of an eternal repetition of the same. He places this cyclical world picture in opposition to the thoughts of the singularity of human life and the linear presentation of humanity as found in Christian history.<sup>10</sup> Arendt makes this theological statement by Augustinus the central thought in her anthropological and political

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 184.

<sup>8</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (New York/Evanston: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1962), p. 307.

<sup>9</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Schocken Books, 2004), p. 616.

<sup>10</sup> Augustinus, *Vom Gottesstaat* (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 2007), Book XII/19.



considerations. Although Arendt's approach is rightly considered questionable<sup>11</sup> according to Hans Saner, her anthropological considerations developing out of this quote from Augustinus are very interesting in terms of our context. These are even more clearly formulated in 'The Human Condition' than in her book on totalitarianism. In it she writes: "With the creation of man, the principle of beginning came into the world itself."<sup>12</sup> She continues: "Because they are initium, newcomers and beginners by virtue of birth, men take initiative, are prompted into action."<sup>13</sup>

Every child that is born brings something completely new and unforeseeable into the already existing world, whose abilities we can only become aware of through a retrospective recognition of our own birth, and through the observation of the birth of others. This is because the birth of every human being is connected to, especially in the case of the parents of the new born, certain expectations, assumptions and hopes, and yet at the same time the development of the child shows that no one can actually fulfill these expectations. This is precisely because the children are 'new', and they therefore bring something 'new' with them.

### Action – the "Second Birth"

That which we experience through our natality is, for Arendt, the original motive of mankind and the human ability to act: to make a new start. She therefore speaks at times of 'deed' or 'action' as a "second birth."<sup>14</sup> Here one should note that Arendt regards 'action' or 'deed' as political, whereas she regards 'work' or 'labor' as activities for organic survival. Arendt proposes that mankind's most important form of activity is that we are able to organize our world together with others. She suggests that it is only in this political sense that we can truly experience 'freedom', while work and labor as such are done out of necessity and are bound to our material, biological survival. Political freedom implies the concept that political questions are not pre-destined or pre-determinable. Rahel Jaeggi wrote:

Dass etwas in Arendts Sinn 'politisch' wird, bedeutet nämlich gleichzeitig, dass es in einen Bereich des möglichen Dissenses und der Konflikthaftigkeit gerät. Allerdings ist damit nicht die Art von Konflikthaftigkeit gemeint, die der wirtschaftsliberalen Vorstellung von Konkurrenz und Nutzenmaximierung zugrundeliegt, sondern eine gewissermaßen genuin politische Konflikthaftigkeit oder Agonalität, die sich aus der Konkurrenz um die gemeinsam beste Lösung und aus der prinzipiellen Unabschließbarkeit von Entscheidungsprozessen, die das gemeinsam beste Leben betreffen, speist.<sup>15</sup>

The issue of conflict within political activity as per Jaeggi has, according to Arendt, as much to do with birth and the coming into being of the new, since with the new something

<sup>11</sup> See Hans Saner, "Die politische Bedeutung der Natalität bei Hannah Arendt," in *Hannah Arendt. Nach dem Totalitarismus* (Hamburg: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1997), p. 109.

<sup>12</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 177.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 176.

<sup>15</sup> "In Arendt's sense of 'political', it means the potential to end up in dissent and conflict. Although she did not mean conflict in the sense of the liberal economic views of competition and maximising opportunity, rather, conflict arising out of genuine political endeavour and the agony of those trying to find the best solution within the inconclusiveness of decision processes." [translation L.W.] Rahel Jaeggi, "Die im Dunklen sieht man nicht: Hannah Arendts Theorie der Politisierung," in *Hannah Arendt: Verborgene Tradition – Unzeitgemäße Aktualität?* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2007), p. 247.

always “happens against the overwhelming odds of statistical laws and their probability.” Because “the fact that man is capable of action means that the unexpected can be expected.”<sup>16</sup> For “it is in the very nature of a beginning to carry with itself a measure of complete arbitrariness,”<sup>17</sup> because it is neither determined nor swayed from existing laws since “the beginning has, as it were, nothing whatsoever to hold on to; it is as though it came out of nowhere in either time or space.”<sup>18</sup>

Activity can be regarded as the ‘second birth’ also because it is only through activity that the potential which is present at the birth can be realized. It is only through activity that man takes responsibility for that which he brought into the new beginning, but understandably this does not apply in the case of the birth. “The new beginning inherent in the birth can make itself felt in the world only because the newcomer possesses the capacity of beginning something anew, that is, of acting.”<sup>19</sup> One must note here that Arendt is not referring merely to a simple ‘beginning’ but rather to a completely new start; a ‘new beginning’. As Christina Schues rightly emphasizes, in contradiction, there can be no new beginning as such in that a “Neuanfang [...] niemals gänzlich ‘neu’ sein, er bezieht sich auf etwas Vorhergegangenes, von dem der Mensch sich abgrenzen oder befreien musste.”<sup>20</sup> “Ein Neuanfangen soll den Aufschwung zu einem ‘besseren Leben’ bewirken.”<sup>21</sup>

The new start consists of a dimension of hope and is therefore oriented towards the future, but it also always requires a past.

For Arendt, ‘hope’ is especially connected to the birth of a child as “our hope always hangs on the new which every generation brings.”<sup>22</sup> It is in the “divinity of birth as such, as the world’s potential salvation lies in the very fact that the human species regenerates itself constantly and forever.”<sup>23</sup> Here she reveals her political perspectives as referred to earlier, and her theories on education and childhood. It is a certain political hopefulness that she formulates here.

### Revolution and Birth – ‘Something New on Earth’

The strongest political expression of the human ability to start something new can be seen, according to Arendt, in the phenomenon of revolution.<sup>24</sup> It is in revolution that one can observe “the experience of man’s faculty to begin something new.”<sup>25</sup> It is in this sense too that the 18<sup>th</sup> century was of such historical importance for Arendt:

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<sup>16</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 178.

<sup>17</sup> Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Viking Press, 1963), p. 207.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 9.

<sup>20</sup> “A new beginning cannot be something completely new as there is always a connection to something that was before, from which man must separate or free himself from.” [translation L.W.] Schues, *Philosophie des Geborensseins* (Freiburg/München: Verlag Karl Alber, 2008), p. 423.

<sup>21</sup> “A new beginning should be the impulse of an upsurge to a ‘better life’.” [translation L.W.] Schues, *Philosophie des Geborensseins*, pp. 423f.

<sup>22</sup> Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, p. 192.

<sup>23</sup> Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 212.

<sup>24</sup> For Arendt, next to historical revolutions, religious legends such as the biblical story of Exodus are also representative of her considerations in this regard, cf. Claudia Althaus, “Das Wunder des Neuanfangs,” in *Das Neue. Eine Denkfigur der Moderne* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 2002).

<sup>25</sup> Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 27.

It was only in the course of the eighteen-century revolutions that men began to be aware that a new beginning could be a political phenomenon, that it could be the result of what men had done.<sup>26</sup>

Arendt busied herself at length with the American and French revolutions where she showed an obvious sympathy for the American Revolution. This was, in her opinion, especially carried by the communal effort of the revolutionaries in order to found a new political order, a constitution. For Arendt this highlights the defining difference between the character of a 'revolution' and that of a 'rebellion'. Every real revolution is about freedom and the establishing of a new political system. In this connection Arendt makes an interesting point on the attitude of the revolutionary who possesses "the exhilarating awareness of the human capacity of beginning, the high spirits which have always attended the birth of something new on earth."<sup>27</sup>

Here we once again encounter a strong connection with birth and revolution in Arendt's thinking. This leads us to question why, when the connection between birth and a new beginning is so definitive for Arendt, she opposes any attempt to build a new world through the education of the 'new ones', the children. Ultimately, this would be a contradiction in her terms: "To prepare a new generation for a new world can only mean that one wishes to strike from the newcomers' hands their own chance at the new."<sup>28</sup>

Arendt recognized that such an education would exactly prevent any possibility for the 'new' to be realized. This is why she warned pedagogically active adults from making their concepts of the future the basis of educational practice, for wherever we claim to know what the future will look like in which the child will act, we take away from the child its potential for the new, a thought with which I agree. However, if education is not to be based on these terms, then we have to pose another question for the alternative task of education. Arendt herself offers an answer to this at the end of the following quote which focuses on the hopes and expectations placed on children:

Our hope always hangs on the new which every generation brings; but precisely because we can base our hope only on this, we destroy everything if we so try to control the new that we, the old, can dictate how it will look. Exactly for the sake of what is new and revolutionary in every child, education must be conservative; it must preserve this newness and introduce it as a new thing into an old world.<sup>29</sup>

### Education Assumes Responsibility

#### *A "Conservative Education"*

According to Arendt, education must literally be "conservative" or "preservative" in a two-fold way: firstly, it is the central task of pedagogy to protect children against influences from a world into which they have not yet had the chance to grow. Arendt makes it clear that

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 225. As Oliver Marchart showed, it is in this "ontological optimism" of Arendt, that lies her characterization of political activity as "fun," Oliver Marchart, "'Acting is fun'. Aktualität und Ambivalenz im Werk Hannah Arendts," in *Hannah Arendt: Verborgene Tradition – Unzeitgemäße Aktualität?* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2007), p. 356.

<sup>28</sup> Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, p. 177.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 192f.

this protection should be such that the potential within the new child is ‘preserved’ and that through his education he is further protected from being ‘instrumentalized’ by political idealism. Education must however, says Arendt, also preserve and protect the world from the revolutionary in the ‘new’ because, “from the standpoint of the next generation [the world is always] superannuated and close to destruction.”<sup>30</sup> It would seem that these two ‘conservative’ functions of education are contradictory. However, before saying anything further one must consider Arendt’s explanation of the second ‘preservative’ function, and then one sees Arendt’s central concept come into play, namely that of ‘authority’.

#### *Pedagogical Authority*

‘Authority’ is always a characteristic of relationships;<sup>31</sup> relationships that can be described as ‘recognition-based’ relationships, since authority “in the last analysis rests on opinion.”<sup>32</sup> At this point in the German edition of the book there is reference not just to ‘Meinung’ (‘opinion’) but also to ‘Anerkennung’ (‘recognition’), on which all authority is based.<sup>33</sup> In one of the main explanations of her authority theory Arendt interestingly formulates the negative: the case where there is no relationship of authority, where either through force or argument one person is forced to take on the convictions of another as his own practical and theoretical world approach. Whoever must persuade or convince the other is no ‘authority’. “Authority [...] is incompatible with persuasion, which presupposes equality and works through a process of argumentation.”<sup>34</sup> Yet, every form of coercion contradicts the structure of an authority-based relationship in the sense that “where force is used, authority itself has failed.”<sup>35</sup> Where one conviction is carried through with force, or even where the potential for this exists, influences are present that Arendt would not describe as real authority. For Arendt, a person has real authority only when their statement is given as “advice, needing neither the form of command nor external coercion to make itself heard.”<sup>36</sup> For Arendt, it is in this sense that the Roman Senate of old had ‘authority’, because in the Roman understanding of authority, he who had it “obtained it by descent and by transmission (tradition) from those who had laid the foundations for all things to come, the ancestors.”<sup>37</sup> The authority of the Senate was based on a conscious adherence to Roman tradition. Arendt draws attention to the three most important aspects in all authority relationships: a) the paradoxical basic structures which one could describe in exaggerated terms as ‘influence without power’, b) the argument-free form of influence, and c) where someone achieves his authority through shared common belief.

In looking at pedagogical authority Arendt makes yet a further significant stipulation:

The authority of the educator and the qualifications of the teacher are not the same thing. Although a measure of qualification is indispensable for authority, the highest possible qualification can never by itself beget authority. The teacher’s qualification consists in knowing the world and being able to instruct

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<sup>30</sup> Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, p. 193.

<sup>31</sup> Roland Reichenbach, *Pädagogische Autorität. Macht und Vertrauen in der Erziehung* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer Verlag, 2011), p. 205.

<sup>32</sup> Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 230.

<sup>33</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Über die Revolution* (München: Piper, 2014), p. 293.

<sup>34</sup> Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, p. 93.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122.

others about it, but his authority rests on his assumption of responsibility for the world.<sup>38</sup>

Pedagogical authority is based on the assumption of responsibility. This requires the preparedness to engage with the world, especially in the political field, and to act. Taking responsibility also challenges the authority to be something of a “representative”<sup>39</sup> in the world and therefore to commit himself to it. What is thus required is in some way an affirmative attitude towards the world and not a critical distancing, because pedagogical authority needs to show the child that “This is our world.”<sup>40</sup> This is the prerequisite in order for the child to build and develop a positive relationship to the world and to connect itself with the world in which he, as a ‘newcomer’, will initially be a stranger. This initiation of the youth into the world, as stipulated by the authorities, is therefore a form of protection of the world from the newcomers in the sense of the second ‘conservative’ task of education, as well as a form of protection of the new and their potential for a new beginning. This points once again to Arendt’s revolution theory, since another critical point in Arendt Theory on historical revolution is that while a new start happens, the past cannot be entirely ignored. She regarded it “the great good fortune of the American Revolution [...] that the people of the colonies, prior to their conflict with England, were organized in self-governing bodies.”<sup>41</sup> This also means that revolutions, as new political beginnings, are embedded within an historical context, and that this is also applies to the revolution implicit in every new individual birth. I mentioned previously that for Arendt the primary difference in the ‘being born’ of the human being and the ‘being thrown’ as in the case of animals, is that the human being is integrated into a ‘web of human relationships’. This ‘web’ lays the foundation and framework for every human action in terms of each specific new beginning. Even this presents a parallel to her thinking on political revolution, which is always concerned with a system of “promises, covenants, and mutual pledges.”<sup>42</sup> The American Revolution was, as per Arendt’s quote of John Adams, a success due to the “confidence in one another, and in the common people.”<sup>43</sup>

The task therefore of a pedagogical authority is to facilitate a mutually trusting involvement in the existing social web, for it is only in this web that action is possible. In this connection Volker Gerhardt stresses the following: “Soll das Handeln sich wirklich ungehindert entfalten können, dann braucht es den politischen Raum.”<sup>44</sup> Therein lies not only a very simple and convincing link from the anthropological view of the meaning of action in the political sense, as stressed by Gerhardt, but it also points to the tasks of education: The preservation of the social web against premature destruction by the newcomers. The highest goal of pedagogical authorities must be, despite this, to facilitate and empower a revolutionary “spirit of beginning something new”<sup>45</sup> in the children.

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 189.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 164.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 182.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> “For action to be able to unfold completely unhindered, it needs the political realm.” [translation L.W.] Volker Gerhardt, “Mensch und Politik. Anthropologie und Politische Philosophie bei Hannah Arendt,” in *Hannah Arendt: Verborgene Tradition – Unzeitgemäße Aktualität?* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2007), p. 225.

<sup>45</sup> Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 284.

## Closing Thoughts: Consequences for Education Theory

### *A Community of 'Beginners'*

Here we once again face the contradictory designation of the two 'conservative' functions of education. Every education has to ask the fundamental question of whether it serves a social or an individual end. Should it educate the child towards current social norms, or support his development as an individual?

In my opinion Arendt offers a very interesting answer: Within the pedagogical authority's education of 'newcomers' for integration into the existing social world, the foundations for individual, free action in the world, above all for 'revolutionary beginnings' should be laid. Ultimately, the necessary individual freedom is of political interest in the sense of community, because common political change is only possible where that which is revolutionary can be realized, and this happens only where people are able to implement new beginnings.

A 'human' society, according to Arendt, is only possible where people are allowed to be 'beginners' on a basis of mutual respect. This is because only as 'beginners' are we truly free beings. Totalitarian control is therefore 'inhuman' as it specifically aims to prevent new beginnings from taking place.

### *Authority and Freedom*

One should note here that there are still questions and problems in Arendt's theory of education and her central concept of pedagogical authority. As mentioned previously, for Arendt, pedagogical authority is based on the preparedness to take on responsibility for the world, a responsibility that the others, the children, cannot and must not take. Since it is commonly understood in modern times that everyone can play a role in and even take responsibility for politics, it stands to reason that there can be no more real 'authority' in the political sphere. This is also because, as Arendt stresses: "in the political realm we always deal with adults who are past the age of education" and politics begins "where education has come to an end."<sup>46</sup> This implies that authority has a place in education but not in politics. This differentiation made by Arendt, which has been significant for countless political theorists,<sup>47</sup> is naturally quite conceivable and vital. However, one should note here that there needs to be a link between the sphere of education in which, as Arendt says, authority plays a central role and politics, in which the freedom to act is the central point and where authoritative relationships simply torpedo it.

Arendt sketches one possible bridge with her emphasis on the need for authority when leading the child into the world. The taking on of responsibility for the world by the authority provides a sense of security, which forms a necessary foundation for future engagement. In this sense one can say that the experience of true authority is a necessary prerequisite for freedom.

Another possibility on which to base a connection between authority and freedom can, to my mind, be rooted in recognition theory. If we state that the task of authority is not just to lead the youth into the world, but also to confer acknowledgement and appreciation of the child, and we then consider how much the subjective nature of the acknowledgement giver affects the receiver, then we can justifiably conclude that the acknowledgement a child

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<sup>46</sup> Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, p. 119.

<sup>47</sup> Friedhelm Brügggen, "Autorität, pädagogisch," *Zeitschrift für Pädagogik* 53 (2007) 5, pp. 602-614.

experiences from an accepted authority, these being highly valued people, would have an extraordinary influence on the self-conscious development of the child.

Since it is absolutely clear that a well-developed self-consciousness is an important basis for the ability to act, one can explain, using the same terms, why an authority can, through his recognition and appreciation of the child, help the child towards being able to act.<sup>48</sup> When an authority strengthens a young person's consciousness development in this way, it would ultimately lead the child to value his own freedom of thought, which may well be contrary to that of the accepted authority, and act, in Arendt's sense, in a revolutionary way.

This argument for justifying the value of pedagogical authority is, however, not to be found in Arendt. This may be because for Arendt, as already mentioned, freedom is ultimately only conceivable in the political sense; it plays no role in the general category of intersubjectivity, even though it is exactly on these fields of interpersonal and social interaction that one can practice and realize freedom. It is precisely in not recognizing this that the weaknesses of Arendt's educational theory lie, a theory which is presumably based on her political understanding.

Arendt sees politics as the *only* sphere of action and freedom, while all other areas of society ultimately have only to do with necessity. This dividing line between 'politics' and 'society' as drawn by Arendt is not just problematic in terms of socially relevant questions, which Arendt largely places outside the discourse on politics and for which many interpreters have criticized her. It is also from the viewpoint of the development of the individual where, for me, there appears to be a cross over from authority-needing childhood to the realm of political engagement. From Arendt's perspective it would seem that no bridge is conceivable, only a separation.

#### *Letting the Newcomers Create the New*

Despite this weakness, Arendt's education theory can be thoroughly inspiring in the context of education policy debate, since the fact that we can really only be human where we are respected as actors, and thereby as 'beginners', is for Arendt a political thought. Precisely because Arendt's argument that an education according to its own concepts of how the world should develop, ultimately robs the young person of the chance to realize its newness is not aimed only against political idealists and their education demands, but is also aimed against an education which has at its core the utilization of knowledge purely for economic ends. In addition, whoever understands education as a process for unfolding 'competencies' in the interests of achieving 'human capital', ultimately educates out of his own concept of society and not with the aim of allowing the 'new ones' to develop the new. Whoever considers it necessary to make children 'fit' only for later economic success, narrows the child's view of and involvement in the world, and he essentially snatches away every chance at a future that only the new beginners can bring about. In Arendt's terms one could even consider this particular concept of education as 'conservative' – however it lacks the intention to empower revolutionaries, and as Arendt herself emphasized, "in politics this conservative attitude – which accepts the world as it is, striving only to preserve the status quo – can only lead to destruction."<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> More on the above sketch of recognition-based perspectives of the phenomenon of pedagogical authority can be found in: Leonhard Weiss, "'... eine Autorität neben sich haben.' Anerkennungs-theoretische Überlegungen zum Autoritätsverständnis der Waldorfpädagogik," in *Personalität in Schule und Lehrerbildung. Perspektiven in Zeiten der Ökonomisierung und Digitalisierung* (Opladen: Verlag Barbara Budrich, 2017), pp. 191-210.

<sup>49</sup> Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, p. 192.

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## Educating Humanity: A Core Concern of Kant's Philosophy of History

HERTA NAGL-DOCEKAL

What is philosophy good for, unless it directs the means of people's education towards their true best.<sup>1</sup>

There is good reason to refer to Kant in the context of this conference. Kant's work is guided, in its entirety, by his concern with exploring how human beings can become fully human. Based upon the systematic framework of his philosophy, he elaborates a concept of the education of both the individual and the human race as a whole, underscoring the importance of a cosmopolitan, that is to say global perspective. As we read his theory today, we find nuanced distinctions which do not receive the appropriate attention in the mainstream of the contemporary debate on social issues. Thus the focus of the following reflections is not on the history of philosophy *per se* but on how Kant's approach might prove helpful for tackling current phenomena of crisis, and exposing the limits of received perceptions.

### The Anthropological Framework of History

Kant first addresses the anthropological conditions that human beings have encountered since their very beginnings.

Nature seems to have moved with the strictest parsimony, and to have measured her animal gifts precisely to the most stringent needs of a beginning existence. [...] Her giving to man reason and the freedom of the will which depends upon it is clear indication of her purpose. [...] Man was not to be guided by instinct, not nurtured and instructed with ready-made knowledge; rather, he should bring forth everything out of his own resources. Securing his own food, shelter, safety and defense [...], all amusement which can make life pleasant, insight and intelligence, finally even goodness of his heart – all this should be wholly his own work.<sup>2</sup>

Thus Kant portrays humans as being located at the intersection of nature and freedom. While continuing to be vulnerable organisms, they find themselves confronted with a multitude of challenges that call for responses in terms of theory as well as practice. Addressing the wide scope of human tasks, Kant underscores that these tasks cannot be fulfilled once and for all, as it were, by one generation; rather, continuous efforts towards improvement are required in all the different areas. These endeavors, including the struggles they spark and the manifold setbacks they suffer, constitute the very core of human history. (It is important to note that – in contrast to a widely held opinion – Kant by no means defends an idea of linear historical

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<sup>1</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Reflexion 1438*: "Was nutzt Philosophie, wenn sie nicht die Mittel des Unterrichts der Menschen auf ihr wahres Beste lenkt?" (Transl. H.N.-D.), *Kants gesammelte Schriften* (Berlin: Königlich-Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1910f.), vol. 15, 2.

<sup>2</sup> Immanuel Kant, "Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View," in Lewis White Beck (ed.), *Kant on History* (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963), p. 14.

progress.) As to the main thrust of these numerous endeavors, Kant emphasizes the need “to develop all man’s natural gifts in their due proportion, and to see that he fulfills his destiny.”<sup>3</sup> Clearly, Kant’s reflections suggest that the idea of “*re-learning* to be human” would fail to make sense; Kant rather contends that humans, at no time in history, have succeeded in being fully human. Focusing on morality, he emphasizes this point in a critical comment on a controversy of his time: “But is man by nature morally good or bad? He is neither, for he is not by nature a moral being. He only becomes a moral being when his reason has developed ideas of duty and law.”<sup>4</sup>

As regards today’s mainstream, the way in which Kant describes the multiple potential of the human being – based upon an open list of challenges – may seem to concur, in its basic outline, with the concept of human capabilities elaborated by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum. There exists a crucial difference, however: while the theory of capabilities focuses on social and developmental politics – specifying the diverse aspects of human life that need to be considered in programs aiming at full human flourishing, Kant addresses the *moral* development of both society as a whole and of individuals, contending that the endeavor to lead a moral life is the noblest task of humans which, ultimately, ought to guide all their other efforts. From this perspective, he provides a systematic approach, claiming that human striving for improvement is required on three levels: cultivation, civilization and moralization. This distinction (which will be taken up again) correlates with the three dimensions of human practice Kant specifies, for instance, in the *Groundwork*: technical, pragmatic, moral.

Kant finds himself in agreement with the biblical book of Genesis. Addressing the issue of how the *condition humaine* first came into being – and arguing that we cannot achieve any knowledge in this regard, but may make conjectures – he suggests viewing the narrative of Adam and Eve as a very subtle conjecture on how humans first proceeded “from the tutelage of nature to the state of freedom.”<sup>5</sup> As it first narrates how “reason [...] sought to enlarge its foodstuffs beyond the bounds of instinctual knowledge (3:6),”<sup>6</sup> the Bible emphasizes, Kant notes, that human relations with nature are typically of a reflective character. “[Man] discovered in himself a power of choosing for himself a way of life, of not being bound without alternative, to a single way, like the animals.”<sup>7</sup> One of the most significant consequences of this, Kant continues, is addressed in those sections of the book of Genesis, that portray humans as being capable of viewing relations among them through a moral lens. “The fig leaf, then, was a far greater manifestation of reason than that shown in the earlier stage of development. [...] Refusal was the feat which brought about the passage from merely sensual to spiritual attractions, from mere animal desire gradually to love. [...] In addition, there came a first hint at the development of man as a moral creature. [...] Here, incidentally, lies the real basis of all sociability.”<sup>8</sup> Kant sums up by claiming: “This may be a small beginning. But if it gives a new direction to thought, such a beginning is epoch-making.”<sup>9</sup>

Kant goes on to note further anthropological insights expressed in this biblical text, stressing in particular that the reflective relationship with nature immediately proved to be “the most inexhaustible source of cares and troubles” for both men and women, and caused

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<sup>3</sup> Immanuel Kant, *On Education*, transl. Annette Churton (Boston: D.C. Heath & Co, 1904), p. 9.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 108.

<sup>5</sup> Immanuel Kant, “Conjectural Beginning of Human History,” in Lewis White Beck (ed.), *Kant on History* (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963), p. 60.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

them to foresee, "with fear," their own death.<sup>10</sup> The following chapter of Genesis which portrays a period of "labour and strive" represents, Kant says, the "prelude for unification in society."<sup>11</sup> In this manner, he concludes, the Bible makes the destiny of the human species clear: "This consists in nothing less than progress towards perfection, be the first attempts toward that aim, or even the first long series of attempts ever so faulty."<sup>12</sup> Elucidating this idea of perfection in the context of his moral philosophy, Kant states: "The ultimate destiny of the human race is the highest moral perfection, in so far as it is brought about by the freedom of humans."<sup>13</sup>

### The Present State of Affairs, or Glittering Misery

Applying his anthropological reflections to the course of history, Kant notes that "so long as the last stage to which the human race must climb is not attained, [...] human nature must suffer the cruelest hardships under the guise of external wellbeing."<sup>14</sup> He elaborates this thesis with regard to his own time as follows: "To a high degree we are, through art and science, *cultured*. We are *civilized* – perhaps too much for our own good – in all sorts of social grace and decorum. But to consider ourselves as having reached *mortality* – for that, much is lacking. [...] Everything good that is not based on a morally good disposition, however, is nothing but pretense and glittering misery."<sup>15</sup> Without doubt, these observations resonate with what we are experiencing at present. Hence the question arises whether Kant's suggestions for overcoming the deplorable situation he describes can be, or ought to be, adopted today.

The prime moral duty Kant addresses in this context is that of establishing the rule of law, not only within the limits of the single state but also globally, that is in relations between states as well as among cosmopolitan citizens. This comprehensive duty is based upon the categorical imperative, which can be demonstrated clearly with reference to the following formula in the *Groundwork*: "So act that you use humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means."<sup>16</sup> One implication of this basic moral principle is this: if all humans ought to be treated as persons who are capable of deciding their ends themselves – in contrast to things, which do not have such a capacity at their disposal – then all individuals must be granted their own space to act, that is to say they must have "external"<sup>17</sup> freedom. (This demand by no means expresses all of the implications

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60. For an in-depth comment on Kant's reading of the book of Genesis see: Volker Gerhardt, "Mutmaßlicher Anfang der Menschengeschichte," in Otfried Höffe (ed.), *Immanuel Kant, Schriften zur Geschichtsphilosophie* (Berlin: Akademie, 1995), pp. 175-196.

<sup>13</sup> The German original reads: "Die letzte Bestimmung des menschlichen Geschlechts ist die größte moralische Vollkommenheit, sofern sie durch die Freiheit des Menschen bewirkt wird." Paul Menzer (ed.), *Eine Vorlesung Kants über Ethik* (Berlin: Pan Rolf Heise, 1924), p. 317 (transl. H.N.-D.).

<sup>14</sup> Kant, *Idea for a Universal History*, p. 21.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, transl. Mary Gregor (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 38. Comparing the relevance of the three formulas of the categorical imperative specified in the *Groundwork*, Allen Wood argues that Kant "overwhelmingly prefers the Formula of Humanity as the formula in terms of which the moral law is to be applied." Allan Wood, "The Final Form of Kant's Practical Philosophy," in Mark Timmons (ed.), *Kant's Metaphysics of Morals. Interpretative Essays* (Oxford, UK/New York: Oxford University Press), pp. 12-13.

<sup>17</sup> As Kant explains, juridical laws refer to "the external use of choice." See: Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, transl. Mary Gregor (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 186.

of the categorical imperative, but it does indicate a necessary first step.) From this perspective Kant develops his philosophy of law in terms of the social contract. He argues that the freedom of individuals to enact their capacity for choice<sup>18</sup> ought to be limited equally – however only as far as is absolutely necessary – so that “the freedom of choice of each can coexist with everyone’s freedom in accordance with a universal law.”<sup>19</sup> As Kant further explains, this moral duty implies a global task: “The problem of establishing a perfectly just civic constitution is dependent upon the problem of a lawful external relation among states and cannot be solved without a solution of the latter problem.”<sup>20</sup>

However, Kant emphasizes, to establish the rule of law across the globe “is the greatest problem for the human race,”<sup>21</sup> and therefore “the last to be solved by mankind.”<sup>22</sup> Throughout the course of history, the idea of a perfectly just civic constitution has represented a yardstick, according to which each generation must confront anew the existing conditions, in order to uncover injustices and work to overcome them. It may well be, Kant notes, that mankind will never be able to fully attain this aim – “from such crooked wood as man is made of, nothing perfectly straight can be built”<sup>23</sup> – yet this perspective does not affect the obligation of each generation to contribute, as best they can, to the gradual progress towards the ultimate goal. “Only the approximation to this goal is imposed upon us,”<sup>24</sup> Kant claims.

With regard to the individual agents, we find a specific type of obligation here. While the categorical imperative addresses each individual – “so act that ...,” the duty to establish the rule of law, albeit based upon this moral principle, obviously cannot be realized on the basis of separate individuals, but calls for a cooperative effort. Taking into account that the problem of establishing a perfectly just global order is the “last to be solved,” Kant argues that the implementation of this duty is up to “the human race.”<sup>25</sup> In a similar context (to be discussed below) he introduces the concept of “a duty which is *sui generis*, not of men toward men but of the human race toward itself.”<sup>26</sup> This thesis has sparked a debate among some Kant scholars as to whether social progress is linked at all to individual moral duties.<sup>27</sup> To read Kant in this manner does not, however, seem to be well founded. His reflections rather suggest that our overall moral duty does imply the obligation to contribute to cooperative efforts of establishing, and persistently improving, social relations, but with the following qualification: in contrast to moral obligations “which concern what we know to lie in our own power,”<sup>28</sup> we, obviously, cannot be considered fully accountable for cooperative efforts. As Kant expounds the scope of this social type of moral duty, he addresses diverse relations that include not only

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<sup>18</sup> Kant uses the term “Willkür.”

<sup>19</sup> Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 56.

<sup>20</sup> Kant, *Idea for a Universal History*, p. 18.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>24</sup> “Nur die Annäherung zu dieser Idee ist uns [...] auferlegt.” Immanuel Kant, *Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht*. Quoted from Immanuel Kant, *Werke in sechs Bänden*, ed. Wilhelm Weischedel (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1964), vol. VI, p. 41. [This passage is missing in the English translation used here.]

<sup>25</sup> Kant, *Idea for a Universal History*, p. 16. See also p. 13.

<sup>26</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*, transl. Theodore M. Greene and Hoyt H. Hudson (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), p. 89.

<sup>27</sup> For an overview see: Sharon Anderson-Gold, *Unnecessary Evil. History and Moral Progress in the Philosophy of Kant* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2001), pp. 8-11.

<sup>28</sup> Kant, *Religion Within the Limits*, p. 89.

the internal and global civic order but also personal friendship<sup>29</sup> and the ethical commonwealth, a concept which will be addressed below.

One aspect of Kant's theory of historical progress deserves particular attention: as is well known, Kant's core concern is not the perfect civic constitution *per se*, but the pressing problem of how war can be brought to an end. Only just international relations – to be established in a "league of nations" – he argues, provide the basis for lasting peace: "In a league of nations, even the smallest state could expect security and justice, not from its own power and by its own decrees, but only from [...] a united power acting according to decisions reached under the laws of their united will."<sup>30</sup> The issue of "learning to be human" is closely connected with this conception. Kant maintains that, when a "universal cosmopolitan constitution [...] will come into being," it will be "the womb wherein all the original capacities of the human race can develop."<sup>31</sup> He argues: "So long as states waste their forces in vain and violent self-expansion, and thereby constantly thwart the slow efforts to improve the minds of their citizens by even withdrawing all support from them, nothing in the way of a moral order is to be expected. For such an end, a long internal working of each political body toward the education of its citizens is required."<sup>32</sup> Most poignantly Kant claims that "a good moral condition of a people is to be expected only under a good constitution."<sup>33</sup>

The specific capacity of such a "good constitution" is not only that it is based upon the principle of mutual recognition, but also that it proactively supports the individual development of citizens, including the cultivation of their moral sensitivity. As a passage cited above indicates, Kant attributes to the ideal state the task of promoting efforts "toward the education of its citizens." The educational process addressed here is conceived as a cooperative endeavor for the benefit of all citizens. Within this framework, Kant elaborates the concept of *culture*, emphasizing "the perfectionalization of the human being through advancing culture."<sup>34</sup> Specifying the relation between culture and morality, Kant claims that "art and science," while not in fact making us moral, may contribute to this aim in an indirect manner, since "the ideal of morality belongs to culture."<sup>35</sup>

Thus, in Kant's terms, the program of "learning to be human" can be fully implemented only by means of cooperative efforts. Yet, obviously, these efforts need to be taken up by the individual: "Man is destined to live in society with human beings, and, in this context, to cultivate himself through art and science, to civilize and to moralize himself."<sup>36</sup> It is every-

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<sup>29</sup> For a careful reading of Kant's approach to friendship see: Christine M. Korsgaard, *Creating the Kingdom of Ends* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 188-221.

<sup>30</sup> Kant, *Idea for a Universal History*, p. 19. For a lucid introduction to Kant's conception of peace see: Paul Guyer, *Kant* (London/New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 294-301.

<sup>31</sup> Kant, *Idea for a Universal History*, p. 23.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>33</sup> Immanuel Kant, "Perpetual Peace," transl. Lewis White Beck, in Lewis White Beck (ed.), *Kant on History*, p. 366. See also: Immanuel Kant, "An Old Question Raised Again: Is the Human Race Constantly Progressing?" Transl. Robert Anchove, in Lewis White Beck (ed.), *Kant on History*, pp. 92-93. For an explanatory comment see: Korsgaard, *Creating the Kingdom of Ends*, p. 33.

<sup>34</sup> The German original reads: "die Perfektionierung des Menschen durch fortschreitende Kultur." Immanuel Kant, *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht*. Quoted from Immanuel Kant, *Werke in sechs Bänden*, ed. Wilhelm Weischedel (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1964), vol. VI, p. 674. (Transl. H.N.-D.)

<sup>35</sup> Kant, *Idea for a Universal History*, p. 21.

<sup>36</sup> "Der Mensch ist bestimmt, in einer Gesellschaft mit Menschen zu sein und in ihr sich durch Kunst und Wissenschaft zu kultivieren, zu zivilisieren und zu moralisieren." Kant, *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht*, p. 678.

body's moral duty to strive persistently for his/her own perfection. In his theory of "duties to oneself" – that are defined as "duties of wide obligation" – Kant distinguishes two dimensions: first, the duty to promote one's "natural perfection," as "the cultivation of any capacities whatever for furthering ends set forth by reason"; it is the duty "to make oneself worthy of humanity by culture in general, by procuring and promoting the capacity to realize all sorts of possible ends."<sup>37</sup> Secondly: "The cultivation of morality in us. Man's greatest moral perfection is to do his duty from duty," that is "to strive with all one's might that the thought of duty for its own sake is the sufficient incentive of every action."<sup>38</sup> It is important to note that these reflections are part of Kant's theory of *virtue*, which addresses the temporal dimension of morality, stressing that we need to make fresh efforts on a continuous basis. Nobody can legitimately claim, "I am a moral person"; even a firm resolution to live in accordance with the moral law cannot shield us, once and for all, from temptation. Therefore, we need to engage in an incessant fight against the "greatest obstacles within ourselves,"<sup>39</sup> which requires cultivating a sense of "fortitude (fortitudo)."<sup>40</sup> "Virtue," Kant argues, means "fortitudo moralis."<sup>41</sup> Thus, regarding individual moral biography, he claims that "virtue is always in progress and yet always starts from the beginning."<sup>42</sup> As Roger Sullivan explains, "[e]ven when we are virtuous, we still are only contingently so."<sup>43</sup>

As Kant further explores the obligations of society with regard to gradually bringing about "the development of all the capacities of men,"<sup>44</sup> he connects the topic of historical progress with that of the education of the next generation.

### How to Educate Cosmopolitans

In a critical remark on common child-rearing practices of his time – a remark that seems to have preserved its relevance to this very day – Kant notes: "Parents usually educate their children merely in such a manner that, however bad the world may be, they may adapt themselves to the present conditions. But they ought to give them an education so much better than this."<sup>45</sup> He contends that "children ought to be educated, not for the present, but for a possibly improved condition of man in the future; that is, in a manner which is adapted to the idea of humanity and the whole destiny of man."<sup>46</sup> In more general terms, Kant notes: "Man can only become man by education."<sup>47</sup>

Guided by this perspective, Kant elaborates "the idea of an education which will develop all man's natural gifts."<sup>48</sup> In order to implement this idea in the best possible way in the course of rearing the individual child, he argues that four different principles need to be heeded. Firstly, children must be "subject to *discipline*," which means restraining their "animal nature"

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<sup>37</sup> Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 195.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 196.

<sup>39</sup> Kant, *Religion Within the Limits*, p. 171.

<sup>40</sup> Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 186.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 209.

<sup>43</sup> Roger J. Sullivan, *Immanuel Kant's Moral Theory* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 141.

<sup>44</sup> Kant, *Idea for a Universal History*, p. 15.

<sup>45</sup> Kant, *Education*, p. 14.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

from causing "unruliness."<sup>49</sup> Significantly, the remaining three principles agree with the three modes of practical orientation which Kant distinguishes with regard to social life in general. Thus, secondly, education must supply children with *culture*: "It is culture which brings out ability. Ability is the possession of a faculty which is capable of being adapted to various ends."<sup>50</sup> Thirdly, education must supply the pupil with prudence, so that he "may be able to conduct himself in society, that he may be liked, and that he may gain influence." Summing up this aim, Kant uses the term "*civilization*."<sup>51</sup> Fourthly, "*moral* training must form a part of education"; that is to say that the child's "disposition must be so trained that he shall choose none but good ends."<sup>52</sup> Conceding that moral education is the most difficult of these four tasks, Kant points out a complex time frame: while "moral training [...] comes last in order of time," since it is based upon fundamental principles which the child must himself comprehend, it also needs to "be taken into account from the beginning, at the same time with physical training; for if moral training be omitted, many faults will take root in the child."<sup>53</sup>

A further challenge comes with the need to educate children for an improved future condition that their parents (and other educators) have never experienced. In this context, Kant underscores once again what he considers the most pressing problem of our time: "We live in an age of discipline, culture and refinement, but we are still a long way off from the age of moral training," and he adds that, looking at "the present conditions of mankind, one might say that the prosperity of the state grows side by side with the misery of the people."<sup>54</sup> Analyzing this deficiency from the perspective of education, Kant notes: "Almost all our schools are lacking something which would nevertheless greatly tend to the formation of uprightness in children, namely, a catechism of right. This should contain, in a popular form, everyday questions of right and wrong."<sup>55</sup> Kant provides some specific advice here: "If there were a book of this kind, an hour might very profitably be spent daily in studying it, so that children might learn and take to heart lessons of the right of humans, that apple of God's eye upon earth."<sup>56</sup> It is important, he claims, to teach children to understand basic practical distinctions, such as this: "When we give alms, we do a meritorious act; but in paying our debts, we do what we are bound to do."<sup>57</sup> Along the lines of his *Doctrine of Right*,<sup>58</sup> Kant also introduces a universalist perspective of education, arguing that parents and sovereigns, in contrast to their current limited focus, ought to "have as their aim the universal good and the perfection to which man is destined, and for which he has also a natural disposition"; therefore "the basis of a scheme of education must be *cosmopolitan*."<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103. (With regard to the expression "Katechismus des Rechts" used by Kant in the German original, the author of this paper has introduced the term "catechism of right" to replace the term "catechism of right conduct," used in the English translation cited here.)

<sup>56</sup> Kant, *Education*, p. 104. (The expression "Recht der Menschen" used in the German original, is rendered by the expression "right conduct" in the translation cited here. The author of this paper has replaced it with the expression "right of humans.")

<sup>57</sup> Kant, *Education*, p. 104.

<sup>58</sup> Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, Part I: "The Metaphysical First Principles of the Doctrine of Right," pp. 35-177.

<sup>59</sup> Kant, *Education*, p. 15.

### A Social Order in which Virtue is Supported

Given the current conditions, as described in Kant's critique, it is obvious that the need for moral education concerns not only children but adults as well. But how might the task be implemented with regard to the latter? In this respect, Kant suggests a cooperative effort once again, which he spells out in his concept of the "ethical commonwealth." This concept is based upon the thought that, while all human beings have the duty to strive toward their moral improvement, these efforts will face enormous obstacles unless the individuals cooperate in establishing a community ruled by the laws of virtue: "[T]he highest moral good cannot be achieved merely by the exertions of the single individual toward his own moral perfection, but requires rather a union of such individuals into a whole toward the same goal – into a system of well-disposed men, in which and through whose unity alone the highest moral good can come to pass."<sup>60</sup> Emphasizing the social claim of moral duty, Kant writes: "In addition to prescribing laws to each individual, morally legislative reason also unfurls a banner of virtue as a rallying point for all who love the good that they may gather beneath it."<sup>61</sup> With regard to a common (mis-)understanding, it is important to underscore that these reflections do not suggest any modification of the concept of the constitutional state. Kant rather insists on the need to establish both the "political" and the "ethical republic" alongside, yet clearly distinguished from, each other. Examining the relation between these two types of "commonwealth," he points out that the "ethical commonwealth [...] can exist in the midst of a political commonwealth and may even be made up of all its members [...]. It has, however, a special and unique principle of union (virtue), and hence a form and constitution that distinguish it from the political commonwealth."<sup>62</sup>

Since Kant describes the "ethical commonwealth" as a necessary means, for fallible humans, to promote the "highest moral good" as far as possible, the question arises as to where we might find an "ethical commonwealth," at least in a rudimentary form, or how we might have to go about building one. Discussing this question, Kant introduces a link between the spheres of moral life and religion. He states that "the concept of an ethical commonwealth is the concept of a people of God under ethical laws,"<sup>63</sup> and continues with the thesis that "the idea of a people of God can be realized (through human organization) only in the form of a church."<sup>64</sup> The most important aspect, according to Kant, is that the laws of virtue cannot be taken as having been laid down by humans: "If the commonwealth to be established is to be juridical, the mass of people uniting itself as a whole would itself have to be the lawgiver (of constitutional law) [...], and, as a result, the general will sets up an external legal control. But if the commonwealth is to be *ethical*, the people, as a people, cannot be regarded as the lawgiver. For in such a commonwealth the laws are expressly designed to promote the *morality* of actions (which is something *inner*, and hence cannot be subject to public human laws)."<sup>65</sup> As Kant, at this point, takes up the belief in God as "the lawgiver for an ethical commonwealth,"<sup>66</sup> he does so with one decisive qualification. He emphasizes: "Yet, ethical laws cannot be thought of as emanating originally from the will of this superior being (as statutes, which, had he not

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<sup>60</sup> Kant, *Religion Within the Limits*, p. 89.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86. As Kant further stresses, "The sovereignty of the good principle is attainable, so far as men can work toward it, only through the establishment and spread of a society in accordance with, and for the sake of, the laws of virtue." (*Ibid.*, p. 86)

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*



first commanded them, would perhaps not be binding), for then they would not be ethical laws and the duty proper to them would be [...] the coercive [kind of] duty."<sup>67</sup> This explanation reveals that Kant addresses two different issues simultaneously: while his primary concern is the moral duty to establish the "ethical commonwealth" – an obligation which is imposed on all human beings –, he also seeks to demonstrate to believers of monotheistic creeds that their faith in "God" does, in fact, imply this duty, that is to say that their respective conceptions of community, or "church," must – in philosophical terms – be understood as different ways of implementing this shared duty.<sup>68</sup>

Ultimately, this mode of linking the spheres of morality and religion defines Kant's philosophical approach to all religious traditions rather than only to those shaped by monotheistic conceptions. Referring to the previous epochs of world history, Kant contends that, initially, no other means of establishing an "ethical commonwealth" has been available to mankind than that of forming religious communities – that the great diversity of religious narratives and practices may be viewed as so many efforts to realize, within the respective particular cultural contexts, humanity's most demanding moral task. This thesis is certainly of interest in the context of the current debate on religious conflicts. If we employ Kant's approach in this debate, the prime focus is not on addressing the disparities – or similarities – of religious confessions on the surface level, as it were, but on considering their shared moral basis. Significantly, from this perspective every creed, since humanity's earliest religious ideas, has had intrinsic value, and the task is to examine which contribution each of them has made to creating a community whose members seek to provide mutual support and to improve their moral lives.

Kant's approach does, however, open up a critical perspective as well, which concerns the institutional realities of religious communities. Elaborating on this point, Kant adopts the traditional distinction between "invisible" and "visible" church: "An ethical commonwealth under divine moral legislation is a church which [...] is called the *church invisible* (a mere idea of the union of all the righteous [...]), an idea serving all as the archetype of what is to be established by men). The *visible church* is the actual union of men into a whole."<sup>69</sup> In his observations on the realities of religious communities, including the Protestant church he belonged to, Kant applies this distinction, noting that "the sublime, yet never wholly attainable, idea of an ethical commonwealth dwindles markedly under men's hands. [...] How indeed can one expect something perfectly straight to be framed out of such crooked wood?"<sup>70</sup>

The most pressing problem Kant addresses is based upon the fact that, as institutions shaped by humans, churches commonly have adopted political models of structuring, e.g. "monarchical (under a pope or patriarch)," "aristocratic (under bishops and prelates)," or "democratic (as of sectarian illuminati)"<sup>71</sup> paradigms. In this manner "statutory laws,"<sup>72</sup> laid down by church authorities, have tended to get into the way of the moral law. Kant warns that "obedience to them would concern not the morality but merely the legality of acts."<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> For further explication of this view see Allan W. Wood, "Rational Theology, Moral Faith, and Religion," in Paul Guyer (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Kant* (Cambridge, UK/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 394-416.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92 (italics by Immanuel Kant).

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91-92.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93. For a detailed discussion of this issue see the section entitled "First Part: The Conflict of the Philosophy Faculty with the Theology Faculty," in: Immanuel Kant, *The Conflict of Faculties*, transl. Mary Gregor (Lincoln/London: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), pp. 31-139.

Consequently, with regard to his own time, Kant pleads for revising the widely held (mis-) understanding of the normative competences of church authorities. While being fully aware of the fact that any kind of human community needs to “rest on public laws,”<sup>74</sup> he emphasizes that “an ethical commonwealth [...], in the form of a church,” is essentially “a mere representative of a city of God” and therefore “really has, as regards its basics, nothing resembling a political constitution.”<sup>75</sup> It seems legitimate to read this claim, in more general terms, as insisting on the distinctive, sacrosanct character of the laws of virtue. Based upon this reading, Kant’s thesis presents itself as applicable to all religious communities. This allows us to assess Kant’s thought as suggesting that the genuine moral teachings that are contained in each traditional confession can be fully brought to light, and made available as practical guidelines, only by detaching them from hierarchical pressures that seek to establish a heteronomous form of acting.

As regards the concept of the “ethical commonwealth,” it is important to note that Kant introduces a *meta-level* here: “man’s duty to join such a state” must not be understood as one duty among others; rather, duty *as such* represents the leading concern of action. The idea is that, in the moral sphere, people should no longer “lack a principle which unites them,”<sup>76</sup> but form a unity with the purpose of promoting virtue in all spheres of life. This obligation demands the establishment of a society “for the sake of the laws of virtue, a society whose task and duty it is rationally to impress these laws in all their scope upon the entire human race.”<sup>77</sup> Explaining this point, Kant elaborates an idea already anticipated in his philosophy of history, as he argues that “here we have a duty which is *sui generis*, not of men toward men but of the human race toward itself.” This is an idea “completely distinguished from all moral laws (which concern what we know to lie in our own power). [...] Hence this duty is distinguished from all others both in kind and in principle.”<sup>78</sup> As this thought implies, it is only under the roof of such an alliance that our understanding, and heeding, of the diverse duties implied in the moral law can be carefully cultivated.

The most striking aspect of Kant’s concept of the “ethical commonwealth” is not that of philosophical systematization, but that it has the character of an appeal: all human beings are called upon to commit themselves to actually creating this kind of unity under the “banner of virtue.” However, what has become of this idea since the days of Kant? Presumably because, in many parts of the world, religion has lost its appeal for substantial segments of the population, and because current debates on what a “good life” would look like have focused on individual prosperity rather than issues of virtue, Kant’s concept is widely considered obsolete today, even among Kant scholars.

Challenging this trend, the present paper suggests that, precisely in view of the current mainstream opinions just cited, it seems worthwhile to re-consider Kant’s thesis that mankind is, at best, only half way through with the project of “learning to be human,” and that manifold efforts, both on the individual and the societal level, are called for.

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<sup>74</sup> Kant, *Religion within the Limits*, p. 88.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89. In the German original, Kant uses the gender-neutral term “Mensch” rather than a misleading term like “man,” as introduced by the translators of the English editions cited here. Also the German term for child: “Kind” is gender neutral.

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## The Conception of Love in Immanuel Kant and Friedrich Schlegel: Its Relevance for a Comprehensive Theory of the Human Being

CORNELIA EȘIANU

True love, according to its origin, should at the same time be quite arbitrary and quite accidental, and appear necessarily and freely; according to its character, it is at the same time destiny and virtue, a mystery and a miracle.<sup>1</sup>

The less a human being can be constrained by natural means and the more he can be constrained morally (through the mere representation of duty), so much the more free he is.<sup>2</sup>

### Introduction

In today's reality it is true that we are faced by a skeptical attitude towards love, as if it were no longer possible, as if the idea of true love is more a matter of the risible, verging on the ridiculous, with more consumer issues, filling up the media and the television commercials. However, as Angelika Krebs observes in her recent book about the philosophy of love:<sup>3</sup> "Love is one of the most important human things in life. Such thing is not to be left to hormones or genes. And one is also not satisfied with cheap replacement."<sup>4</sup> This author finds in the work of the American-British writer Henry James what love, assuming that "everything goes well,"<sup>5</sup> can also be for us, namely "the only true thing,"<sup>6</sup> or "The Real Thing."<sup>7</sup> But is this not the term used to refer to the romantic love as understood in the horizon of the infinite by the romantic German Friedrich Schlegel?

Facing reality and resisting it involves understanding, as Hannah Arendt stated.<sup>8</sup> Herta Nagl-Docekal outlines in a more detailed approach the problems we face today concerning the topic of true love.<sup>9</sup> Thus, the author emphasizes that today's common conceptions of marriage and family "often have an asymmetrical structuring, which means a position that disadvan-

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<sup>1</sup> Friedrich Schlegel, *Kritische Ausgabe seiner Werke [KSA]* (Paderborn/München/Wien/Zürich: Schöningh, 1962), vol. 2, Fragment 50 (Transl. C.E.), p. 173.

<sup>2</sup> Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, translated and edited by Mary Gregor. Introduction by Roger J. Sullivan (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 147 (Footnote).

<sup>3</sup> See Angelika Krebs, *Zwischen Ich und Du. Eine dialogische Philosophie der Liebe* (Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2015).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12. Krebs means here "the mere simulacra of intimacy: shallow friendships or soulless sex."

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> This is the title of a short story written by Henry James 1892. See Krebs, *Zwischen Ich und Du*, p. 12.

<sup>8</sup> Hannah Arendt cited by Ursula Ludz, "Einleitung," in *Hannah Arendt. Ich will verstehen. Selbstauskünfte zu Leben und Werk* (München/Zürich: Piper Verlag, 2013), p. 13.

<sup>9</sup> Herta Nagl-Docekal, "Philosophische Reflexionen über Liebe und die Gefahr ihrer Unterbestimmung im zeitgenössischen Diskurs," in *Jenseits der Säkularisierung. Religionsphilosophische Studien* (Berlin: Parerga Verlag, 2008), pp. 111-141.

tages women in numerous ways.<sup>10</sup> According to her, clearly responsible for this circumstance is the conception of gender roles. Remarking that the two genders are assigned to a different area of life – the men to the public sphere, the women to the private one –, Nagl-Docekal emphasizes the validity of the bourgeois gender discourse, which, in fact, still applies to the present day. In this discourse, men are given the position of the head of the family, while women are not given equal participation in decision-making processes. She justifies this fact, among other things, with the glass ceiling, which can be experienced in various circumstances. The result is that women – unlike men – are seen from the perspective of their sexuality.<sup>11</sup> This perspective is illustrated for instance in the digital media in numerous Romanian online newspapers.<sup>12</sup>

Actually, the broader issue I question here is what would stop us from turning our attention to thinkers of stature of Friedrich Schlegel or Kant<sup>13</sup> and from seeing how we can use their concepts of love today amid the problems already outlined? To what extent can they help us to confront the reality comprehensively and to resist it, i.e. to oppose it and transform it? Can we think of an alternative? To what extent can man understand and apply the concept of love today? To answer these questions, I would like to focus on two authors, with whom I have dealt more intensively, Friedrich Schlegel and Kant, and who, by their nature, seem to contradict each other – I have in mind, in particular, the critique Schlegel brings repeatedly towards Kant, and which, from my point of view, is often more strategic than philosophical, because, in essence, by their conception of the human being they come closer to each other. The concept of love plays an important role here, even if the method of investigation used by these two authors differs.<sup>14</sup> It is not possible to understand the human being as a whole (or in itself) without love. Nonetheless, loving a human being means treating him or her as a whole, which is to say respecting humans in their humanity. My thesis is that taking into account a non-reductionist concept of the human being as formulated in different ways in Kant and Schlegel and articulated through their concept of love it is possible to find also a solution for the outlined gender issues.

Precisely what I would like to show in a more detailed way in this essay are the different meanings attributed to the concept of love by Kant and Schlegel in order to delineate a comprehensive theory of the human being, by which I mean a non-reductionist one, i.e. a theory of the human being within which God and religion also play a part (love as religion in the case of Schlegel, or as a certain type of duty in the case of Kant). Thus, appealing to his concept of love

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.

<sup>12</sup> The bourgeois feminine discourse seems to dominate the digital Eastern European media. This discourse includes the idea that intellectuality is a masculine trait, which leads to a strong and pictorially physical emphasis on the media portrayal of women. In other words, it is worth mentioning that the feminine form of the Romanian substantive “philosopher” – “filozoafă” – stands for the Romanian speaker, with a pejorative connotation. Sometimes, it even appears between inverted commas on online blogs. See <https://mizeriaistoriei.wordpress.com/tag/pogromul-de-la-bucuresti/page/31/> [7. 7.2017].

<sup>13</sup> On the significance of Kant today see: Herta Nagl-Docekal and Rudolf Langthaler (eds.), *Recht – Geschichte – Religion. Die Bedeutung Kants für die Gegenwart* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2004). Regarding Schlegel see: Cornelia Eșianu, “Und so führt die Philosophie zur Poesie” – *Systematische Forschungen zu Friedrich Schlegel* (Wien: Lit-Verlag, 2016). See also: Andreas Arndt, “Die Frühromantik als Bestandteil der klassischen deutschen Philosophie,” in Helmut Hühn / Joachim Schiedermaier (eds.), *Europäische Romantik: interdisziplinäre Perspektiven der Forschung* (Berlin / Boston: De Gruyter, 2015), pp. 143-156.

<sup>14</sup> Schlegel, *KSA*, vol. 18, Fragment 163, p. 34. “The critical method is both philosophical and philological.”

as a spiritual sentiment (love as religion<sup>15</sup>), Friedrich Schlegel argues in favor of human individuality (God is also seen by Schlegel as an individual<sup>16</sup>), while Kant distinguishes between pathological love<sup>17</sup> and practical love, without excluding the crucial discussion of human individuality. For this he was blamed by the Romantics who accused him of articulating a version of reason without love. “Reason is the formal egoism without love,”<sup>18</sup> as stated by Schlegel. For Kant, love involves at a very fundamental level this respect for human dignity, mine and the other, which means that humans are beings who live not only according to their natural instincts, but with the awareness of their inner freedom that has the ability to “force” them into a relation of duty towards themselves and others.

Starting with methodological considerations, I will address the first type of approach to love, the one articulated by Friedrich Schlegel. This one is referred to as existential love (also metaphysical, ontological love) while the type of love we find in Kant, especially in *The doctrine of virtue*, is the love for human being (die *Menschenliebe*). This kind of love will be treated as friendship, in which love and respect are both associated. It is referred to as moral or practical love. In this case the concept of friendship deserves special attention, for which Kant uses the metaphor of the black swan, i.e. moral friendship. Although Kant says that we meet it from time to time, I dare say it is likely not seeing at all by humans today who are being increasingly immersed in sophisticated electronic means of mass surveillance that have begun with the telephone, continued with television and computers and end with different possibilities of digital media.

### The Existential/Ontological/Metaphysical Approach to Love in Friedrich Schlegel

I would like to talk about Friedrich Schlegel’s theory in the first place. I will recall some of its elements which help us to understand love as an existential form and to integrate it into a broader understanding of the human being, for whom, from the point of view of Schlegel, love is a feeling controlled by the mind (or better said by the spirit). Specific to Schlegel’s concept of love are its various ways of use, among them the most important seems to be addressing the existential-human, where more than being a mere instrument of reproduction with the aim of perpetuating the human species, love has with predilection the function of man’s spiritual training. Thus, Schlegel says in an excerpt from 1800: “Only through love and through the consciousness of love will man become man.”<sup>19</sup> For Schlegel, love is tangential to the existence of human life indefinitely related to the Infinity. If we want to treat such an issue from a philosophical perspective, then necessarily we have to keep in mind this dimension of Schlegel’s thinking, which is the absolute. In his *Theory of Nature* (1805-1806), Schlegel claims:

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<sup>15</sup> Schlegel uses the term “religion of love” in his novel *Lucinde* (1800), in Chapter 3: “Dithyrambische Fantasie über die schönste Situation.” See Schlegel, *KSA*, vol. 5, pp. 1-82, here 12: “Do you remember how the first germ of this thought arose before you in my soul, and at the same time took root in your soul? Thus, the religion of love inverts our love more and more closely together, as the child doubles the pleasure of affectionate parents like an echo.” (Transl. C.E.)

<sup>16</sup> Schlegel, *KSA*, vol. 18, Fragment 199, p. 37: “In religion one regards the absolute as you. No thing is individual. Strictly speaking, only God is an individual.” See also *KSA*, vol. 16, Fragment 441, p. 122: “Spirit is absolute individuality.” Concerning the Schlegelian concept of “true individuality” see Eşianu, “Und so führt die Philosophie zur Poesie,” p. 349 and p. 379.

<sup>17</sup> Kant distinguishes sex or love in the narrowest meaning of the word, the “ferventness” from the love of well-being and of benevolence.

<sup>18</sup> Schlegel, *KSA*, vol. 19, Fragment 120, p. 53. See also Fragment 125, p. 54: “Reason is the imagined egoism that has forgotten love.”

<sup>19</sup> Schlegel, *KSA*, vol. 2, Fragment 83 (Transl. C.E.), p. 264.

"The divine spirit is perfected love."<sup>20</sup> Then, later, in his *Philosophy of Language and the Word*, he will state that God is love.<sup>21</sup> All human activities, both of theoretical and practical nature, are accompanied by the feeling of love, which, as Schlegel points out in his *Paris' Lectures on Philosophy* (1803) is "the actual human feeling."<sup>22</sup> In "The Theory of Human Consciousness in Particular," where Schlegel is doing speculative psychology, the concept of love is again well represented – therefore I speak of the existential approach to love. So, love is here associated with the enthusiasm and consciousness, which relates both to finite and infinity. According to Schlegel, love is

the mark of enthusiasm, the conscience is the sign of sincere love, and thus the authenticity of both. Love, as the criterion of enthusiasm, must be thought of as a loving mind and attitude. [...] Conscience is the guarantee for the authenticity of the enthusiasm and the truth of love. It is the most intimate, innermost, free, and active activity within us, so to speak, the core of consciousness; it hovers as a feeling of proportion in the middle between the two worlds.<sup>23</sup>

One can therefore state that Schlegel attempts to substantiate his philosophy, especially his theory of consciousness, by defining the concept of love. Thus, the beginning of human consciousness, which should not be identified in Schlegel either with thinking, or with knowledge, which is just a form of thinking, begins with love. However, love is also "the end and the highest, the ideal and the maximum of the consciousness."<sup>24</sup> Not only is it "the full center and the living center of the whole consciousness, uniting all extremes in itself,"<sup>25</sup> but specific to it is also the fact that: "The consciousness of *love* does not contain any dichotomy. *I* and *you* are not separated, but interwoven and intertwined in the separation. Doubling and multiplying union."<sup>26</sup>

Only in the occurrence of overcoming dichotomies, however, not in a static unit, but in a living permanence that is always looking for its form of expression lies the value of love for human existence, practically and theoretically speaking. Reflecting in his very specific way on love one could say that Schlegel offers an attempt of a phenomenological understanding of love. How is love approached? Is it the same with his concept of love consciousness? I will not go into details on how far Schlegel defines the concept, but it has to be highlighted that in formulating a theory of consciousness, Schlegel gives systemic virtues to the notion of love, in attaining the realization of the whole. Schlegel motivates his appeal on love in a systematic manner. Here I remember his fragment 53 where he emphasizes the dialectic between having and not having a system in construction of the philosophical thought.<sup>27</sup> He argues that the beginning of consciousness is represented by love which is a form of love that needs no companion. He calls it *Sehnsucht* – nostalgia –, which he characterizes as such: "It is the absolutely indeterminate and indeterminable instinct which flows in all directions, in an infinite way."<sup>28</sup>

His argument lies in the need to provide an alternative justification to the idealistic attempts of grounding the philosophy and human consciousness, and which, according to him,

<sup>20</sup> Schlegel, *KSA*, vol. 13, p. 441.

<sup>21</sup> Schlegel, *KSA*, vol. 10, p. 343.

<sup>22</sup> Schlegel, *KSA*, vol. 11, p. 65.

<sup>23</sup> Schlegel, *KSA*, vol. 12, p. 397.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 374.

<sup>25</sup> Schlegel, *KSA*, vol. 10, p. 424.

<sup>26</sup> Schlegel, *KSA*, vol. 19, Fragment 252 (Transl. C.E.), p. 232.

<sup>27</sup> Schlegel, *KSA*, vol. 2, Fragment 53 (Transl. C.E.), p. 173.

<sup>28</sup> Schlegel, *KSA*, vol. 12, p. 378.



were unsuccessful. We see here an indirect critic of Kant. It is Schlegel's philosophical program to save metaphysics in the form of an inner empirical science – a speculative psychology, whereby the feeling in its different forms plays an important role. "All metaphysical [Metaphysische] is nothing but *the principles of feeling and imagination*,"<sup>29</sup> or "metaphysics is poetry,"<sup>30</sup> he says in his fragments to philosophy. Best, love can be taught through poetry. It is an essential element of poetry. Schlegel distinguishes between the kinds of love found in ancient culture, especially in ancient Greece, from its modern form, the Christian one. The first focuses on sensuality, the second is more spiritual, because of its relation to the absolute. In this context, love becomes a spiritual feeling like joy. He also enumerates animal feelings like anger, fear, and grief. But what are love and especially the consciousness of love, which he speaks of? If we understand consciousness as intentionality, as an awareness of something on which we focus on, then what is that thing called love? Schlegel says that love does not occur in a pure form, but "in various forms such as trust, humility, devotion, joy, fidelity, shame and gratitude; but most of all as longing and silent melancholy."<sup>31</sup>

### The Moral-practical Approach of Love in Kant

I understand Kant's approach to love on the assumption that the aim of his philosophical project envisages the fact that in "the end everything comes down to *the practical*."<sup>32</sup> This quote comes from Kant's *Introduction to Logic*. And he continues:

The sole, unconditioned, and final end (ultimate end) to which all practical use of our cognition must finally relate is *morality*, which on this account we may also call the practical *without qualification or the absolutely practical*. And that part of philosophy which has morality as its object would accordingly have to be called practical philosophy *kat' exochén*.<sup>33</sup>

Kant treats the philosophical topic of love within the framework of his practical philosophy, especially in his writing *The Metaphysics of Morals* (1797-1798), in the second part, "Metaphysical First Principles of the Doctrine of Virtue." Practical insights, according to Kant, are either imperatives or contain the reasons for possible imperatives. A logical question therefore would be: Can love be an imperative? Love cannot be commanded, said Schlegel. That would be "an absurdity"<sup>34</sup> ("ein Unding"), Kant also stated. And yet Kant speaks of love as a duty while Schlegel refers to it as "a call."<sup>35</sup> Schlegel remarks that Jesus teaches love as a call. "All maxims, all prudence, shall be abolished thereby, and burst into flames of enthusiasm,"<sup>36</sup> argues Schlegel in his *Transzendentalphilosophie* with reference to the biblical saying "Love your enemies."<sup>37</sup>

One has to stress that the concept of the practical used by Schlegel and Kant are not identical, since Schlegel draws a distinction between philosophy and praxis, while Kant con-

<sup>29</sup> Schlegel, *KSA*, vol. 19, Fragment 261 (Transl. C.E.), p. 233.

<sup>30</sup> Schlegel, *KSA*, vol. 19, Fragment 273 (Transl. C.E.), p. 112.

<sup>31</sup> Schlegel, *KSA*, vol. 2, Fragment 104, p. 266.

<sup>32</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Logic* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 587.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 587-588.

<sup>34</sup> Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 161.

<sup>35</sup> Schlegel, *KSA*, vol. 12, p. 70.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> See *The Bible* (King James Version) Matthew 5:44.

cludes at the end of his text *On the Old Saw: That May Be Right in Theory but It Won't Work in Practice*: "What is valid in theory, on rational grounds, is valid also in practice."<sup>38</sup> But Schlegel, whom I cannot discuss now, proposes the term of philosophy of life,<sup>39</sup> trying to complete what Kant – from Schlegel's point of view – has missed existentially. In fact, it is about creating another perspective, or, let's say, a personal perspective which touches upon the same human problems, the subject of love being one of them.

For Kant, there are duties of self-love and duties of charity (*Nächstenliebe*) and within the latter he cites the duties of love (like beneficence, gratitude and sympathetic feeling). But how does he solve this alleged contradiction affirming on the one hand that commanding love is an absurdity, and on the other hand formulating duties of love like the ones mentioned above? Kant solves this apparent contradiction by firstly distinguishing between pathological and practical love, in order to deal exclusively with the latter, although there are some slight differences to this aspect; secondly, Kant brings the concepts of duty and purpose together in what he called duties of virtue.<sup>40</sup> Derived from the categorical imperative, the duties of virtue – like one's own perfection and the happiness of the others – are ethical duties which, unlike the duties of right, are of wide obligation. This means that the duties of virtue are imposed by reason as being our purpose, so that one has to permanently strive for perfection, but attaining perfection is entirely up to the abilities of the subjects. That ethical duty, which is less concerned with the purpose – the matter, the object of arbitrariness – than with the formal, as Kant says, is concerned with the moral determination of the will, i.e. dutiful action must also be a duty, and is valid for all actions.

The practical love of human beings is for Kant a duty of all human beings towards one another, "whether or not one finds them worthy of love."<sup>41</sup> Even towards a misanthropist, benevolence always remains a duty. According to Kant, one cannot love him, but one can prove dutiful action to him.<sup>42</sup> The relationship between beneficence and love, as described by Kant in the biblical commandment "You ought to love your neighbour as yourself,"<sup>43</sup> is an interesting aspect, which can be discussed with the help of the following considerations in Kant, which I am paraphrasing here: If you want to foster love of humanity in you, then you shall not love first, offering help afterwards, but first of all, do good to your fellow, and this beneficence will bring you to human love, which Kant understands as beneficence in general.<sup>44</sup> Practical love as the maxim of benevolence qualifies for self-legislation. Love is an end, which is a duty, because it lies in practical reason. Practical human love is a maxim that cannot be selfish. Although I cannot commit to love myself, it is allowed to be kind to me, on condition, Kant says, that I also want to benefit others. For if I omit the duties of love-charity, gratitude, respect for the benefactor – the *sympathia moralis* – then I surrender to the level of *peccatum*, of lack of virtue, or even vice, when failing to show respect for other human beings.

## Friendship

The love of humanity based on the idea of active benevolence I would now like to explain

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<sup>38</sup> Immanuel Kant, *On the Old Saw: That May Be Right in Theory but It Won't Work in Practice* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 1974), p. 81.

<sup>39</sup> See Friedrich Schlegel's lectures on *Philosophie des Lebens* (1828), Schlegel, *KSA*, vol. 10, pp. 1-307.

<sup>40</sup> Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, pp. 156-157.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 230.

<sup>42</sup> See Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 162.

<sup>43</sup> See *The Bible*, Matthew 22:39.

<sup>44</sup> Schlegel, *KSA*, vol. 12, p. 70.

as friendship in which respect and love are joined together and to describe with it more precisely the moral-practical dimension of love. For Kant moral friendship means:

the complete confidence of two persons in revealing their secret judgments and feelings, as far as such disclosures are consistent with mutual respect. [...] Every human being has his secrets and dare not confide blindly in others [...]. This (merely moral friendship) is not an ideal, but (like black swans) actually exists here and there in its perfection.<sup>45</sup>

But, as Kant says at the beginning of his *Concluding Remark* in *The Doctrine of Virtue*, “all moral relations of rational beings, which contain a principle of the harmony of the will of one with that of another, can be reduced to *love* and *respect*.”<sup>46</sup> In other words, each time these two “moral forces”<sup>47</sup> – as Kant calls attention and love –, come together in the most intimate connection, we deal with a form of friendship – genuine friendship, as the Romantics describe it – or in the emphatic meaning with moral friendship, for which the philosopher uses the term “black swan” mentioned above in a figurative sense.

Forms that express love to Schlegel are trust, humility, devotion, joy, fidelity, shame and gratitude, desire and nostalgia. The obligation to have a purpose lies in the concepts of practical reason. Kant finds its highest expression in the loyalty of friendship where love and respect are unified. I proceed now from Kant to Schlegel’s concept of love, which, in my view, is best exemplified in his concept of marriage as “complete friendship” (*volle Freundschaft*). (There are, of course, deviations from this meaning, since Schlegel’s conceptions developed, but I cannot discuss all of them here.) “Nowhere can the principle of love be as pure as in friendship.”<sup>48</sup> In a fragment of the young Friedrich Schlegel from 1797, which was not published at the time, it is written:

Only in marriage can complete friendship take place. Only here can the connection approach somewhat the absolute through sensuality, children, that woman is the absolute antithesis of man [...]. But marriage can learn much from friendship, more than from sentimental love and knightly gallantry, especially from old friendship. One who does not have a sense of friendship is probably not capable of actual marriage.<sup>49</sup>

This view of friendship is interesting to us today, as it allows us to reveal hidden aspects in the concept of friendship – alongside those which Kant has shown us in the union of love and respect. Thus, for Friedrich Schlegel, it is not sympathy between the two partners in a relation of friendship which plays the essential role, but what he named as “symmetry of the spirit,” and which consequently allows including antipathy in the sphere of love. Schlegel says in a further unpublished fragment of 1798: “Every friendship must be based on the symmetry of the spirit, and not on sympathy. When two spirits stand side by side, they touch each other and have meaning for each other. Antipathy belongs to love; only there can one touch on two sides.”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, pp. 216-217.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 230.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 198.

<sup>48</sup> Schlegel, *KSA*, vol. 12, p. 71. (Transl. C.E.)

<sup>49</sup> Schlegel, *KSA*, vol. 18, Fragment 111 (Transl. C.E.), p. 28.

<sup>50</sup> Schlegel, *KSA*, vol. 18, Fragment 485 (Transl. C.E.), p. 69.

One can hardly imagine today that such a sentence belongs to Romanticism, in view of the degradation of the concept of romantic love in the current public debate. In this debate, the media must be held partly responsible, insofar it accepts to deal with words of no great importance. On the contrary, romanticism teaches a spiritual meaning of love, which has been forgotten today. I find the first quotation of Schlegel here, "The woman is the absolute anti-thesis of man," and especially the attribute of the absolute added to it, quite remarkable, because it opens new meanings, pointing – why not – to Rudolf Otto's "alterity par excellence" (*das ganz Andere*<sup>51</sup>), by which he defines God. I also believe that this concept of complete friendship described by Schlegel in the concept of marriage could be compared to the concept of moral friendship in Kant, at least in the understanding of what Schlegel could have meant with the expression "symmetry of the spirit,"<sup>52</sup> which he doesn't develop further in the quoted fragment.<sup>53</sup> Speaking of Kant, Schlegel's symmetry of spirit can mean for instance "one with his own concordant way of judging things," that is the same view of things.<sup>54</sup> The human being, according to Kant, is a being determined for society, who, despite his unsociability, feels the need to open himself or herself up to others, even without intending to do something about it. It is noteworthy that this idea of equality, which forms the basis of friendship between the partners, focuses on a communion of ideas, and that Schlegel, through the cited symmetry of the spirits, also relates to marriage. Due to the spiritual symmetry/marriage between man and woman one can also legitimate globally the importance of women in leading positions or the principle of equal pay for equal work in today's cultures and societies, insofar as reason (*Vernunft*) is not an exclusively male attribute.<sup>55</sup>

### The Relevance for a Comprehensive Theory of the Human Being

I stopped at the concepts of love by Friedrich Schlegel and Kant, with the aim to highlight those elements that may be essential for a comprehensive theory of the human being nowadays. I compared the existential love approach in Friedrich Schlegel and the practical, moral love approach in Kant. As two important elements in the economy of an understanding theory of the human being, I regard on the one hand Schlegel's concept of love as pointing to what he called "complete friendship," as he might see it in marriage, for instance, and which reflects his idea of the symmetry of spirits, always approximating the absolute. On the other hand, I have in view Kant's concept of moral friendship in his metaphysics of morals as an answer to

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<sup>51</sup> Rudolf Otto, *Das Heilige. Über das Irrationale in der Idee des Göttlichen und sein Verhältnis zum Rationalen* (München: C.H. Beck, 1958), p. 31. On the incomprehensibility of women in the young Friedrich Schlegel see Cornelia Eșianu, *Hypostasen der Identität beim jungen Friedrich Schlegel. Eine Untersuchung von Leben und Werk aus identitätstheoretischer Sicht* (Bukarest: Verlag Paideia, 2004), pp. 160-161.

<sup>52</sup> Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, pp. 216-217.

<sup>53</sup> A notable position in describing love today from a philosophical point of view is that of Herta Nagl-Docekal, "Liebe in 'unserer Zeit'," in Herta Nagl-Docekal, *Innere Freiheit. Grenzen der nachmetaphysischen Moralkonzeptionen* (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter 2014), pp. 129-147. The concept of love, as depicted in Hegel's early writings between man and woman, is expanded by the author to the relationship between people in general. Hegel's idea of love "directs us to look at all individuals in such a way that they are worth being loved in their uniqueness" (p. 147).

<sup>54</sup> See Friedrich Schlegel, *Lucinde. Ein Roman*, in Schlegel, *KSA*, vol. 5, pp. 1-82, here p. 11: "I can no longer say my love or your love; both are equal and perfect, so much love as required love. It is marriage, eternal unity and union of our spirits, not just for what we call this or that world, but for the one true, indivisible, nameless, infinite world, for our entire eternal being and life."

<sup>55</sup> See Herta Nagl-Docekal, *Feministische Ergebnisse, Probleme, Perspektiven* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuchverlag, 2001).

humanity's need for opening up to other people in what he called the culture of the social state, arguing that the human being is a being meant to be engaged in society although he is at the same time an unsocial soul (see Kant's expression of unsocial sociability). It is precisely these two aspects that are at risk in an unsafe environment today when, as statistics show – just to have an eye on Schlegel's discussion of the concept of love – one third of marriages end up in divorces, and friendship and love are replaced by surrogates such as superficial friendships and casual dating.

We could say that what is at issue in Schlegel's theory of love is its spiritual component as explained throughout my discussion in a metaphysical (God is love), ontological (the origin of consciousness, its maxim and end is love) and existential version (the human being becomes human only through love). I would argue that Schlegel's theory of love represents Kant's concept of virtue as the "final form"<sup>56</sup> of Kant's practical philosophy, as the philosopher Allen Wood stated. Kant targets with his concept of love the possibility, even the moral obligation of the human being under the form of the duty of virtue to be a friend to others. The fact that this theme is as current today doesn't need to be stressed further.

"The human being" said Schlegel in one of the fragments of his *Ideen* from 1800 "is a finite formed into infinity."<sup>57</sup> This being formed into infinity is only possible through love in its supporting function, for, since we do not know what the individual is meant to be, we are called upon to support the person in the development of its individuality. Love means to respect and accept the other in its being. At any time, as Kant emphasizes, attention is directed only to persons, never to things which, though loved, can never raise respect. If Schlegel, in his *Transcendental Philosophy*, emphasizes in the chapter on the theory of man that there is no general destiny of man and each and every individual has to strive for his ideal, which means nothing else than becoming what he has to be, then love is that element which can guarantee that this process of formation does not hinder its development or break off or negate its natural, sensible course. In other words, love takes respect in its manifestation as respect for the individuality of the other.

In an interview with journalist Bill Moyers in the late 1980s, Sheldon Wolin, a political theorist from Princeton University, summarized his view of democracy: "I think, fundamentally, democracy in a democratic culture comes down not to big, highfalutin institutions or policies, it comes down ultimately to how we treat each other in our ordinary range of relationships and in conversations."<sup>58</sup>

I would like to conclude with a quotation: As Kant said, only when human love is not lacking can the world be represented as "a beautiful moral whole in all its perfection."<sup>59</sup>

The message of this essay is a plea for the recovery of the full concept of love, in which the spiritual dimension of the human leads a humble existence. The idea of equality, which is the basis of love and friendship in Kant and Schlegel, has to be globally implemented at all levels of life in the relationships between men and women. Last but not least, even if telephone and digital-electronic communication are monitored, as one can always see from the media today, it is necessary to look for the black swan – as Kant called moral friendship – and to cultivate it.

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<sup>56</sup> Allen Wood, "The Final Form of Kant's Practical Philosophy," in Mark Timmons (ed.), *Kant's Metaphysics of Morals. Interpretative Essays* (Oxford: University Press, 2002), pp. 1-22. Here 21-22.

<sup>57</sup> See Schlegel, *KSA*, vol. 2, Fragment 98 (Transl. C.E.), p. 266.

<sup>58</sup> See Sheldon Wolin, *The State of Democracy* (Interview with Bill Moyers), <http://billmoyers.com/content/sheldon-wolin/>.

<sup>59</sup> Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 206.

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## Lessing's Ideal Model for Culture, Religion, and Ethics Today: Humanity

CLAUDIA MELICA

This paper will try to find possible answers to the following questions. Which problems leave globalization open today? What is meant in this paper by globalization is a process of interaction of subjects. If it is really so, is globalization in our day a concrete socio-cultural exchange between human beings? The actual interconnectivity and social exchange of different cultures among people will truly help each person to accept the pluralism of religions. But how can religion help nowadays to solve some of the difficulties of globalization? In this text the meaning of religion is intended as a set of general life rules, which put in context the sharing of common moral values which human beings consider to be sacred. Within each religion, every member acts in keeping with a certain moral behavior. Furthermore, some moral values may shape a person as a human being. Each adherent to a religion can develop their own spiritual potential, which at the beginning may be hidden from them. It is in fact, "humanity" which might be considered a universal philosophical-moral concept that could be understood as a key representative concept by different religions. The deep way to reach such a dimension of humanity is the spiritual aspect of each member's conscience.

Therefore, the aim of this essay is to analyze principally Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's (1729-1781) interpretation of *Menschlichkeit* (humanity) in two different works: *Nathan the Wise* (1779) and especially *The Education of the Human Race* (1780).<sup>1</sup> First, let us investigate the reasons as to why Hannah Arendt referred to Lessing's concept of "true humanity" (*amor mundi*), followed by an examination of both of Lessing's oeuvres. Lessing's pluralism in viewing different religions will be demonstrated. As *The Education of the Human Race* shows, there is no one single and true religion, because each of them is a phase of humankind's historical development. Therefore, especially in the case of the three monotheistic religions, we can assist in a progressive revelation of God into different historical periods, represented by various religions at various points in time. Such a process implies a gradual light on both, humankind as individuals and as a group of people. Each human being should act with an intention directed to the good in order to pursue only the good, as a common good. In this way, moral progress for every human being in history could be possible and no personal rewards will be bestowed for each individual's action. The goal is to achieve perfection as a human being with special moral virtues. This procedure is possible only if each individual is brought up (*Erziehung*) in a certain way and then he/she will improve his/her inner-self thanks to *Bildung* (education). Only at the end of this process will we have individuals both educated and morally trained to the perfection of the self. As a consequence, we will have human beings with a special form of *Kultur* (culture). The latter would not mean that a person needs to have wide knowledge of many notions, but that he/she has to be a cultivated individual who has reached a high level of humanity. The character of Nathan in the drama *Nathan the Wise* is, for Lessing, both a perfect model of pluralism among religions and an extraordinary representative of humankind. Such "religion of humanity" expressed by Lessing in those two works should be taken into consideration again when thinking of the current difficulties of globalization.

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<sup>1</sup> All translations of Lessing from German to English is the author's own work. Throughout this paper §§ is in reference to the section of the text in *The Education of the Human Race*.

When Hannah Arendt received the Lessing Prize from the city of Hamburg in 1959, she delivered an extraordinary speech entitled: "Humanity in Dark Times. Thoughts about Lessing."<sup>2</sup> The philosopher Arendt wondered what the concept of humanity could be in catastrophic historical and political eras, such as the period during and after World War II (1939-1945). She used the expression "Dark Times" because in a period of such uncertainty, people expected politics to be capable of fulfilling individual needs and private freedom. Arendt wondered – how could individuals responsibly participate in the creation of universal principles, thus being helpful to the world again in the perspective of developing collective values? How should humankind be conceived once more to initiate a dialogue among human beings? For those reasons, Arendt made reference to the German philosopher Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, since he had attempted to rethink the idea of humanity in the late eighteenth century. Arendt's answer was to identify values such as fraternity and brotherhood, compassion, freedom of thought and above all, friendship in humankind. True humanity, according to Arendt, is attained only when authentic friendship is established and it is based on the solidarity of shared aims. Friendship should be not interpreted as an intimate feeling between two friends for mutual private passions. She intended not only "warm humanity," which means to be closed strictly to another. Friendship, in Arendt's interpretation of Lessing, should have a political function, which requires us to disclose the world's obstacles for and to other human beings, showing empathy for difficulties. A particularly important point is the interaction between subjects so that they will have the feeling of being in a real community. In such a meaning, "humanity" will be part then of so-called public civilized values.

Such a question arises again in modern times, since the Council for Research in Values and Philosophy (Washington, D.C.) has given us the task of investigating: "Learning to be Human for Global Times." Initially, globalization seemed a positive process of, "spreading ideas on a worldwide scale," whose aim was to, "increase social and cultural integration among the various areas of the world."<sup>3</sup> However, such a concept has shown its disadvantages. If on one side, it seemed that, thanks to globalization, the various "barriers among the nations" could have been abolished, on the other, the conflicting relationships among the people as a result of their cultural and religious identities have remained unaltered. In fact, the result was the development of complex phenomena, such as mass immigration and the difficulty associated with the integration of immigrants into other societies. In Europe – and in Italy in particular – authentic relationships of exchange and mutual collaboration between people from a multitude of cultural backgrounds are idealistic, in the times we live in. Individuals from different cultures may try to live in the same country in a globalized society, but they keep their own vastly different moral codes, thus leading to irreconcilable conflicts.

Therefore, how could different cultures share a fruitful relationship if globalization has shown such weaknesses? Can religion alone solve such difficulties, indicating universal values that contribute to enhancing social life, instead of leading to a division among the people? In order to formulate an acceptable proposal, "new awareness" of cultural and religious pillars of individuals should be disseminated. Religious context is originally a private one, but it can

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<sup>2</sup> Hannah Arendt, "Humanity in Dark Times. Thoughts about Lessing," in Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, transl. Clara and Richardson Winston (San Diego/New York/London: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1968), pp. 3-32. See also Peg Birmingham, *Hannah Arendt and Human Rights. The Predicament of Common Responsibility* (Indiana: Indiana Press, 2006), p. 153: "Her address is a self-conscious reflection on the difficulty she faces as a German Jew who returned from forced exile to accept a humanitarian award from the country which forced her to flee."

<sup>3</sup> See Entry "Globalizzazione," in *Enciclopedia Treccani* (online), accessed 1 December 2017. <http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/globalizzazione/>.



have a huge social and public influence. Therefore, we should firstly consider the religious life which, in this sense, can have a public impact on social life too. Religion should be thought of as a potentially special connection between human beings.

From an anthropological point of view, hence, religion (as a set of human relationships) implies the progressive education of each individual who will then act as a person with his/her moral vision of the world. It is thanks precisely to this attitude that individuals awaken their own conscience and awareness of their human value. Therefore, individuals as persons, not only devote themselves to something holy, they also acquire in their lives something "sacred" (humanity) that should be protected in any place or time. For this reason, based on Lessing's model, people should tend to the perfection of the self, to pursue humankind's highest moral concept as a person. Religion should be able to combine the moral development of each person with collective ethical principles in order to reshape the concept of humanity. Religion should be considered the moral approach for any individual to pursue a progressive improvement of the self. For these reasons, in Lessing's religious approach a key role is played by education. If religion is necessary in a moral sense, that is why it also has educational implications.

Lessing's philosophical attitude towards religion, within the framework of the European and above all, German Enlightenment of the late eighteenth century, inherited some ideas of the past and re-framed them in an original perspective. Lessing's thought deserves further in-depth analysis, since it could be a model for inspiration in our task of "learning to be human." My intention is not to focus on his several religious essays, but to analyze two of them, the drama *Nathan the Wise* and, above all, *The Education of the Human Race*.

In the latter book, Lessing focused on religion in a broad sense, including it in the philosophy of history that is of progress within history, of moral values through different religions and civilizations. As demonstrated by some Italian interpreters, his thought was partly influenced by the French Enlightenment tradition and, in particular, by Voltaire's theories expressed in his introductory work *The Philosophy of History* (1765), written before *An Essay on the Manners and Spirit of Nations* (1756). Lessing was also influenced by some discussions, which took place in the framework of the German Enlightenment, whose aim was to consider sacred books and their religious message in a historical perspective. In particular, I am hinting at the hermeneutic science and biblical criticism of the time, which was then called "Neology" and whose most outstanding scholar was Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694-1768). Such an innovative theology emphasized moral values to bridge the "gap, caused by 'Deism', between natural religion and the revelation," i.e. the postulation of the existence of a divine, rational principle transcending revelation. Lessing's originality lies in his ability to, "reconcile reason and revelation," taking into account the results of such new theological approaches and trying to preserve the "inner truth of religion" from the demolishing action of the hermeneutic truth, an inner truth which was not based on an already "pre-set possession" of the truth, but rather on a continuous pursuit of the truth in view of the achievement of the historical perfectibility of mankind.<sup>4</sup>

I should now clarify what Lessing meant by "revelation" in *The Education of the Human Race*. The concept of "revelation" has several meanings in this context and I will only attempt to mention a couple of them. On one side, Lessing holds "revelation" as the ability of God to manifest Himself and to make Himself known to the human race in history, i.e. God makes Himself known in His interaction with mankind (incarnation). On the other side, Lessing seemed to prefer the Protestant approach of some German theologians of the Enlightenment who meant "revelation" in the sense of "disclosure." "Revelation" progressively "unveils" in

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<sup>4</sup> Luigi Cataldi Madonna, "Tradizione e rischiaramento," in *Storia della filosofia. Il Settecento*, eds. Pietro Rossi and Carlo Augusto Viano (Roma/Bari: Laterza, 1996), pp. 412-413.

history and, thus, the term *Offenbarung* (revelation) could be associated with *Aufklärung* (Enlightenment). A progressive “disclosure” of God into history (revelation) corresponds to a gradual “light” on humanity as a whole.

Now I would like to analyze Lessing’s work *The Education of the Human Race*, which was printed in 1780 without the author’s name. In the *Publisher’s Preliminary Notice* (actually written by the author himself, but under a pseudonym), Lessing does not criticize the so-called “positive religions,” i.e. historical religions that make reference to the “revelation to humankind” through the Old and New Testament. Unlike the contrast promoted by some thinkers of the Enlightenment, who opposed rationalism to “positive religions,” there is no hostility in Lessing towards the “positive religions.” The *incipit* of the oeuvre immediately emphasizes Lessing’s religious pluralism and his tolerant approach towards all religions. Moreover, it is evident that Lessing maintains that there is not only one true religion, because each religion should be a phase in the history of human development towards perfection, until reaching the end-goal of a fulfilled civilization.

Lessing wrote, “instead of mocking or assailing one of the positive religions, should not we rather see in each of them the *path* through which the human intellect was able to develop and still continues to do so?” (*Preface*) The first paragraphs indicate the fundamental basis of the work. Lessing maintains:

§ 1 *What education is to the individual, revelation is to the human race as a whole.*

§ 2 *Education is revelation that affects the individual; and revelation is education which has affected, and still affects, the human race.*

Therefore, revelation is the education of the human race throughout history. The main subject of the book is to interpret “human history” as a progressive and constant advance, “towards even higher degrees of rational insight and hence to ever higher levels of moral consciousness and disinterested virtue.”<sup>5</sup>

What is the advantage, according to Lessing, of education? It helps man to “learn by himself” some truths “more quickly and less arduously.” Unaided human reason could have attained some advantages for humankind by itself; but revelation helped mankind to reach such truths somewhat sooner (§ 4). The aim is to attain universal and immutable laws of reason; only through these can progress be made to the advantage of the whole of humankind.

Lessing maintains that history went through various historical, religious, but above all, moral stages. “Perfection did not exist in the origin,” it “was progressively attained by means of reason.”<sup>6</sup> Also “revelation” of God in history gradually occurred, following the development of the moral phases of humankind. If Lessing’s assumption is correct, then it will mean that progress in history has a religious and moral nature in line with educational progress. What is more, perfection is not attained once and forever, since the moral development of humankind implies that individuals are required to live more than once, in order to acquire new knowledge of the world (*metempsychosis*).

I am not interested in carefully discussing here the kind of historical and moral progress attained, according to Lessing, with Christianity, Judaism or other monotheistic religions. To him, with the advent of a moral figure such as Jesus Christ (or Socrates), civilizations were faced with the “first reliable teacher.” (§ 53) The originality of Jesus Christ was – according to

<sup>5</sup> Hugh Barr Nisbet, “Lessing and Philosophy,” in *A Companion to the Works of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing*, eds. Barbara Fischer and Thomas C. Fox (New York: Camden House, 2005), p. 134.

<sup>6</sup> Jean-Pierre Sironneau, “Crisi religiosa dei Lumi e secolarizzazione,” in *Crisi, Rotture e Cambiamenti* (Milano: Editrice Massimo, 1995), p. 300.

Lessing – his proposal of a new moral conception led by “nobler motives.” (§ 55-56) What is more “To recommend an inner purity of heart with a view toward another life was reserved for him alone.” (§ 61)

Such a process of moral improvement for humankind, of which Jesus Christ is a moral model, aims for virtue *per se* and not because of “future rewards.” Based on Lessing’s ideas, ethics aim for virtue only for its own sake; there is no reward for a good deed, in so far as the human heart should be capable of “loving virtue for the sake of its eternal blessed consequences.” (§ 79)

Because of the selfishness of the human heart we “wish to exercise the understanding only on those things that concern our corporal needs,” without considering that this “would be to blunt rather than to sharpen it” (our mind). “It absolutely must be exercised on spiritual objects,” since “it is to attain complete enlightenment and bring about that purity of heart which qualifies us to love virtue for its own sake” (§ 80). In this perspective, individuals do not act because they will obtain a profit in the future, but because their mind has been enlightened and they are aware that there is an even better future. The reward is an inner one and it has a value when virtue is a value *per se*. We will act well only because it is good.

In a previous work written only one year earlier, *Nathan the Wise*, that was regarded as the “literary manifesto” of *The Education of the Human Race* – Lessing, by means of a narrative device, set his story in twelfth century Jerusalem during the Third Crusade (1189-1192), when the city was under the occupation of the Muslim leader Saladin. Lessing’s originality among other European thinkers of the eighteenth century lies in the fact that he “employed” the East in a positive and constructive way. He suggested that the principle, which could mediate between Christianity and Judaism, was Islam. The historical place where the two religions came together was a tolerant and pluralist Jerusalem. After the well-known “Parable of the Three Rings” recounted by Lessing, at the end of the narration of the allegory of the three monotheist religions (Judaism, Islam and Christianity) in such figurative language, we are told that there is no single true religion. Every religion can be true, if its adherents live a good life. The value of the “ring” given by the father to his sons will be discovered only after they have been practicing a good life in reference to it.<sup>7</sup>

Readers of this work are struck by Lessing’s ability to depict the different characters as representing varying levels of humankind. The highest level of humanity, in its purest and most articulated essence, is represented by Nathan, who is defined as “the wise” for the following motivation. According to Lessing, Nathan is the perfect model, since he does not judge individuals based on prejudices or because of their race or religion. In this sense he is truly “wise,” because he deals with each individual person as such. In fact, Lessing allows Nathan to speak in the following friendly way: “How much more close I now must cling to you; We must be friends [...] Do you and I make up our races? [...] Oh, if I’ve found in you one more for whom it is enough to be A MAN!”

The *Leitmotiv* of this work prompts us to relate to each other based on the concept of humankind: nothing more than “being a man” is sufficient. For this reason, and because Nathan has a high concept of humankind, he can become an educator for the world. In Nathan’s words, “I know as well / that all lands bear good men. Again, what is a folk / are Jew and Christian sooner Jew and Christian / than man? How good, if I have found in you / one more who is content to bear the name of man.”

I may ask then; what is “humanity” and if respect for human nature in general should then refer to a universal ethic. Some individual moral values can be universal and the link between different religions. In order to achieve human perfection, we should really re-learn to

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<sup>7</sup> Hugh Barr Nisbet, “Lessing’s Ethics,” in *Lessing Yearbook XXV* (1993), pp. 18-19.

be human. Using education and morality we will achieve the highest religious meaning of humankind, when being human is considered sacred. Lessing's conclusions expressed through Nathan are the following:

"What we can do is to live in a spirit of mutual generosity and friendship, loving humankind and making ourselves worthy of being the heirs to the *true religion, whatever it is.*" Because: "He loved you all, and loved you all alike."

My personal interpretation, based on the drama *Nathan the Wise*, and of the metaphor of an "earthly and historical Jerusalem" (twelfth century) as a place where the three monotheist religions live in peace, is to consider humankind a value which leads us to peace and to mutual respect for differences and religions. We hope to be able to build – not in a specific city or nation, but in an ideal "moral Jerusalem" – a community of human beings where any contrast could be settled because of the common and universal reference to *humanum*. In such a community, we should refer to the "religion of humankind," as if it were an ethical and universal resource for social ties. It is, indeed, a "religion of humankind," that which assumes *humanitas* as a regulatory criterion of universal ethics.<sup>8</sup> Only through the moral progress of the whole of mankind and by approaching ethical virtues (unselfishness, kindness, brotherhood and, above all, friendship) could we pursue a morally virtuous sphere where "good for good's sake" or "the virtue for itself" are attained, thus reaching also that "inner purity of the heart" mentioned by the author and upon which all religions and people might find harmony.

From these assumptions, we can infer that Lessing had a peculiar idea of "Culture" (*Kultur*) expressed above all in terms of *Humanitas*. Culture encompasses not only humanistic disciplines, but also a model of education where people and their humanity are the goal. In such a neo-humanistic perspective, the role of philosophy is to lead individuals towards a human existence in order to attain a better social and civil co-existence. Culture is a very complex term and it is strictly intertwined with the concept of "education" (*Erziehung*) and "human construction and development of the self" (*Bildung*). "Culture" (*Kultur*) is neither acquired as simple intellectual knowledge through study, nor as plain information in the form of masses of data. Even "culture" does not correspond to such a superficial approach to life that was called "civilization" in a negative sense; that is the practicing of polite manners and meticulous etiquette in high society. "Culture" is, rather, an ideal that should make reference to the ancient Greek concept of *paideia*, that is the notion where "education" (*Erziehung*) and "human construction and development of the self" (*Bildung*) are two elements interacting in the gradual process of an individual being. In this sense "culture" can be the content of such "human construction and development of the self" (*Bildung*) which can be acquired through "education" (*Erziehung*). Such an ideal has, consequently, a moral nature too, since it aims at the continuous improvement of the human being. Lessing's proposal lies in the evolution and constant development of humankind as a result of the relationship between revelation and *paideia*. It is an ideal educational project of purely humanistic nature, whose aim is the "human construction and development of the self" of a person with his/her valid moral values.

The access of individuals to the world is not natural or simply biological, in the sense that it is not based on one's own innate and physical inclination. According to Lessing, in fact, it is necessary to educate each individual as a person to make them social and, above all, "human" in the highest sense of the term. The educational process (in the meaning of *Erziehung*) entails an initial passive step in the inner training of the self. In the second stage, by promoting the self-development of the individual as a person (*Bildung*), the process becomes an active one.

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<sup>8</sup> Guido Ghia, "Introduzione," in Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Opere filosofiche*, ed. Guido Ghia (Torino: Utet, 2008), p. 45 and footnote.

At the end of the educational-training process, the outcome is a "cultivated" person. Only such "cultivated" individuals can act in society based on an unselfish and respectful deontology.

If such an interpretation of Lessing is valid, I should underline the spiritual dimension of moral values. Interpreted in such a perspective (morality as *Selbstentwicklung* of the human being in relation to the others due also to a certain education), then, each person should not respect certain formal abstract norms or divine laws, but should develop the spiritual potential which is hidden in each person: humanity. Therefore, as Paul Tillich has written, the deepest spiritual dimension to reach is *Mit-Menschlichkeit*.<sup>9</sup>

Coming back to the initial question, namely how "learning to be human in global times," a hypothesis could be suggested. We might say that a peaceful life among different people in one nation can be secured only if each member in a society makes an effort to develop an ethical life hinged on inter-subjective human relationships that are not based on control of other people, but on respect for ethnic and cultural differences. Only by means of such training, leading to a human being developed in the highest sense, could we establish relationships as people, based on common moral values. Through this approach, we might aim at reaching positive relationships based on the concept of *humanitas*. The inner essence of man imposes, in a certain way, the ideal of *humanitas* as the supreme destination.

The hope is that these goals might be attained as Lessing had already indicated in his work *The Education of the Human Race*:

it will come, it will surely come, the time of fulfillment, when man, the more convinced his reason is of an ever better future, will nevertheless have no need to borrow motives for his actions from this future; when he will do good because it is good, not because it is tied to arbitrary rewards that were previously intended merely to fix and strengthen his unsteady gaze, so that he recognizes the inner, better, rewards of doing good. (§ 85)

Lessing also used an argument, employed later by Immanuel Kant in his work dedicated to religion. It is necessary to progress from bad to good to improve each human being and make him "cultivated." Therefore, progress is made by an inner moral development in the direction of the good. Civilization, moral development is the best way in which a human being can cultivate him/herself. Religion, hence, is not theology (reasoning around God). Religion (later affirmed by Ernst Troeltsch in his book *Religion und Ethik*) is part of this moral-cultural process. In fact, each religion manifests itself historically through different cultural forms. Furthermore, it manifests itself on a different level of humanity. Consequently, if we consider "humanity" as a common, universal moral value, perhaps, different religions may find an agreement based on this principle.<sup>10</sup>

The common denominator will be the humanitarian approach that every nation should build by educating all its members in a broad sense. The hope is to counteract the current problem of a globalized culture imposed on other nations by Western countries. Each nation could, therefore, preserve its own cultural specificity, but religion, through the ethical life of the human beings, can form a basis for social unity with its communal values. Religion, not as a private matter for each member, may play an important public and social function within a

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<sup>9</sup> Paul Tillich, *Die religiöse Substanz der Kultur. Schriften zur Theologie der Kultur (Gesammelte Werke, vol. 9)* (Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlagswerk, 1967), p. 293.

<sup>10</sup> Jochen Schmidt, "Religion, Kultur und Moral. Überlegungen im Anschluss an Kant und Wittgenstein," in *Kultur und Religion*, eds. Klaus von Stosch, Sabine Schmitz and Michael Hofman (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), pp. 163-174, p. 170.

state. Despite the considerable complexity of the relationship between religion and culture, we could say that religion is a cultural phenomenon when it is composed of collective customs, defining a group of individuals that identify themselves with such a set of habits. Although some specific habits of groups in each religion may be different, any religion must make reference to something universal, i.e. a common denominator: a concept of humanity. The fact that at the end of Lessing's drama *Nathan the Wise*, all of the characters that had been originally presented as belonging to different religions, are *de facto* relatives with common blood ties, indicates that we are all brothers and sisters, who can establish ties and relationships because we are all human beings.

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# **Empathy – Attentiveness – Responsibility: Milestones of Humanity in the Work of Edith Stein, Simone Weil, and Dag Hammarskjöld and Their Relevance in the World today**

CARLO WILLMANN

## **Introduction**

The aspiration to materialize humanity must always be measurable against the challenges posed to this aspiration in a certain age. For modern European societies, such challenges reach a peak with the manifold transformations brought about by the globalization of life contexts, and more recently, by enormous migration flows triggered by a multitude of causes – which have differentiated societal systems not only socio-economically, but also culturally and religiously. The following contribution seeks to bring to the fore three concepts, which seem indispensable for the human shaping of and coping with such processes: empathy, attentiveness and responsibility. Three concepts that are closely linked to the life and works of Edith Stein, Simone Weil, and Dag Hammarskjöld.

## **A Brief Overview of the Critical Point of Departure**

In recent years, within and beyond Europe, there have been developments which were somewhat predictable, but which I did not expect to arrive with such vehemence, for example, concepts such as “fake news” or “alternative facts.” What have we lost when half-truths, lies, and cold-hearted thoughts do not even need to be disguised with phony politeness before someone says them in public?

The established order is floundering. People are uncertain. They are irritated. And many people are satisfied with simple solutions. Solutions such as: reason should be replaced by authority. Some political authority should finally come and put an end to annoying discussions and “fruitless” debates.

Several pressing questions arise at this point: discussions and debates – are these not our territory? Are they not part of our jobs? Are we really the “superfluous elite” everyone is talking about? When the existence of a university like the Central European University in Budapest is suddenly politically threatened, then is that not a threat to all of us who want to carry out rational discussions with an open and critical spirit?

Given these developments, from the perspective of religious-philosophical reflection, I differentiate three concepts which I see as crucial in the world we live in today: empathy, attention, and responsibility. They are concepts, but they are also human qualities which can be learned; they represent paths toward the development of one’s humanity. For me, there are three individuals who I particularly associate with these qualities: Edith Stein, Simone Weil, and Dag Hammarskjöld.

### Empathy: The Concept of *Einfühlung* in the Work of Edith Stein

The philosopher Edith Stein – born on October 12, 1891 on Yom Kippur in Breslau, and put to death on August 9, 1942 in Auschwitz-Birkenau – was an extraordinary person in the intellectual history of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, both in the path her life took and in her philosophical writings.

As one of the first women in Germany to study at a university, she enthusiastically immersed herself in Edmund Husserl's philosophical methodology. Through a phenomenological approach, the meaning of the "thing itself" should become imminently apparent. The focus of analysis is on the world we live in. The quintessence, the inner meaning of things, can only be discovered by starting with observations of the perceptible world around us.

Such thoughts inspired Edith Stein in her search for knowledge and truth. She wrote about her experiences with Husserl's phenomenology: "Knowledge appeared again as an act of receiving, in which the inner laws were granted by the things themselves. (Knowledge is) not – as critical philosophy would have it – a determinant, which imposes its laws on things."<sup>1</sup>

In 1916 Edith Stein completed her dissertation. The subject of her thesis was the concept of *Einfühlung*, meaning empathy, or – literally translated – *ein-fühlung* – "feeling into" one's subject matter. At this point, her work was still strongly under Husserl's influence. Though her later thinking was more independent, the central themes of her dissertation continue throughout her work: questions about the essential nature of man, possibilities of mutual understanding and the development of community.

Her talent and hard work were, however, confronted by two factors which prohibited an academic career: She made four attempts to complete a post-doctoral thesis. All four attempts failed – a foregone conclusion, especially for a woman with Jewish heritage and ancestry.

In June 1921, she made three important decisions: she decided to convert to Christianity; she wanted to become a Roman Catholic, and that she wished to join the Carmelite Order. These three life decisions she realized step by step and finally, she was admitted to the Order of the Carmelite nuns in Cologne in April 1934.

In these years, she completed impressive translations of the *Quaestiones* of Thomas Aquinas, and revisions of her post-doctoral thesis, which was published finally posthumously in 1950 under the title *Finite and Eternal Being*. This is her main philosophical work, and it reveals her as an independent, discerning thinker, whose thoughts were well-versed in the work of Thomas Aquinas. Her Jewish heritage, her philosophical work and her path into Christianity helped to build a person of extraordinary depth.

There are three distinct phases that can be discerned in Edith Stein's philosophical work: a phenomenological phase, influenced by Edmund Husserl, an ontological phase, influenced by Thomas Aquinas, and finally a mystical phase, in which she published a book about the Spanish Mystic that led her to achieve a breakthrough. First, I would like to focus on the phenomenological phase.

When we study the writings, letters, and testimonies of Edith Stein, it becomes apparent that her central theme was that of overcoming individual loneliness. She was occupied with the question of how people can override self-centeredness to develop realms of mutual understanding and community.

Therefore, she already commences her work in the phenomenological phase with the concept of *Einfühlung*, at the time certainly relevant for philosophical-historical reasons and evident in the work of Hans Lipps, Max Scheler, Martin Heidegger, and, of course, Edmund Husserl.

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<sup>1</sup> Edith Stein, *Werke*, vol. 7 (Freiburg/Basel/Wien: Herder, 1985), p. 219f.



Edith Stein's approach is to think about *Einfühlung* in three stages: first, the "emerging of the experience" occurs, i.e. I perceive the other. Second, the "fulfilling explanation," whereby I put myself into the experiential world of the other, and third, the "objectification," at which point I interpret what I have perceived about the other.<sup>2</sup>

The decisive point is that it is not only the comprehending or the reflecting I that allows full access to the other, but that this access can only be realized in connection with the experience of the sensations of the other through another experiencing subject. The proper I, however, can no longer be understood as primordial, but makes a contribution to a form of dialogical intersubjectivity, through which a perpetually new objectivity, which, in turn, is always preliminary and open to new experience. (It is this possibility of transcendence, which Edith Stein claims for the notion of person.)

For Edith Stein *Einfühlung* is an experience. It is *the* experience that "an I can have of another I."<sup>3</sup> The other I is something foreign. It disrupts my own I, it interrupts the continuity of my experience of my own I. And yet this experience becomes part of my own self. It is not myself, but I stand in a relationship to it – a relationship that is at once familiar and foreign. *Einfühlung* means that the object of my attention "pulls me in." Stein writes, "I am no longer facing it, directing my attention toward it, but I am inside of it, facing its object. I am with its subject, I am taking the place of its subject."<sup>4</sup>

The boundary between the viewer and the object being viewed nonetheless remains. Stein does not speak of "*Einsfühlung*" – becoming *one* with – as Hans Lipps does for example. But the boundary, in her work, becomes as thin as breath. Yet it is this boundary which prevents the danger of being taken in by the object. In *Einfühlung* as Stein describes it, the boundary between myself and the object of inquiry is always present in an act of knowing. It distinguishes between subject and object. It supports the permanency of the subject, which should not *lose* itself in the other, but rather *find* itself. But the other should also not be monopolized, not be taken over – he, she, or it is, and should remain a mystery. In *Einfühlung*, an act of empathy, we experience the boundary of our own I. We also experience the boundary of the other. *Einfühlung* allows the other to fully and radically reveal itself to me, and it allows me to experience myself in knowing the other.

*Einfühlung* – empathy – is in essence a process of cooperation, of working together to embrace the present. It is an exercise in openness – and it opens processes of transformation. We are moved by experiences of vulnerability and dependence, by pain, and by compassion. The "other" wants to be experienced, to be known, to be understood, and this demands effort on our part. But the effort which we put into feeling our way into another person, into an object which we want to understand, develops an inner ability within ourselves: the ability to dig beneath the surface of things, overcoming superficiality, and reaching into the "innermost depths," as Stein puts it, which need to be grasped so that we take hold of our lives.<sup>5</sup>

What can be the meaning of Edith Stein's thoughts and insights for us in the contemporary world as delineated earlier? We all know that one of the greatest challenges that European society faces now in a global context is the integration of hundreds of thousands of people who come from other cultures, who are rooted in other religious beliefs and who often carry the baggage of traumatic personal experiences. It is a simple fact that this process of integration must succeed if we want to continue living under the conditions which we are used to. But

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<sup>2</sup> Edith Stein, *Zum Problem der Einfühlung* (München: Verlag Gerhard Kaffke, 1980), pp. 8-10.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>5</sup> Edith Stein, *Endliches und ewiges Sein. Versuch eines Aufstiegs zum Sinn des Seins* (Freiburg/Wien et al.: Herder, 1950), p. 405.

unless we are able to empathize with the situation of these people and their cultural backgrounds, we will not have the inner strength to develop the necessary openness and to realize the changes which need to be made on all sides. Empathy is a philosophical category of humanity. It aims toward the totality of life. As such, it is also a social and even political category.

It is astonishing how the concept of the other, the alien, has again seized space in the sociopolitical realm and how this is regrettably continuing and taking shape in the threatening form of xenophobia. Even the borders – mental, geographic, political and cultural – are being emphasized again. It is exactly the foreign, the other, the border as a borderline experience, that seems to be the underlying interest of Edith Stein when it comes to the philosophical reasoning and creation of the concept of *Einfühlung*.

She expressed clearly that “Einfühlung ... is the experience of foreign consciousness in general, no matter of which kind the experiencing subject is, in which way the subject will experience its consciousness ...”<sup>6</sup> Similarly, J. Piecuch notes that “The issue of attentiveness, the way it is being interpreted phenomenologically by Edith Stein, turns out to be profoundly connected with the concept of the other. It can be said that the concept of the other contributes constitutively to an understanding of the issue of attentiveness ...”<sup>7</sup>

From this point of view, an engagement with and an approximation of the problem and exercise of an emphatic encounter is a highly relevant desideratum.

### Attentiveness – *attente* as a Social Category for Simone Weil

Attentiveness – *attente*, the second concept this contribution focuses on, is a key term in the thought of Simone Weil. She was born in 1909, as the child of wealthy Jewish parents in Paris. She finished her studies in philosophy in 1931, and became a teacher in various parts of France. She dedicated herself to the rights of the working class, and was later involved in the French Résistance. She died of hunger and consumption in Ashford, England, on August 24, 1943.

Her thoughts and experiences were never captured in a finished written work, though collections of short writings, aphorisms, and letters were published posthumously. Her life was marked by both historical and personal tragedy, but it was also characterized by an unusual inner richness: Her diaries bear testimony to mystical experiences of Christ.

Attentiveness is, for Simone Weil, an essential premise for all understanding. Understanding is, for Simone Weil, an organic process of gradually and patiently delving ever deeper into a subject matter, until knowledge becomes a kind of physical experience. It takes time, but it leads to insight into increasingly complex interrelationships. Its final aim is the foundation of all existence.

Attentiveness is not a personality trait; it is a frame of mind. It is a way of being which can be learned. It cannot be understood in a static manner, as something which one person has and another person does not. Rather, it is an ability which – through work and effort – can be developed. With practice, attentiveness becomes a dynamic approach to life. But it is not an act of will, it is not tiring work, nor is it a violent intervention or a stressful chore. Weil wrote:

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<sup>6</sup> Stein, *Zum Problem der Einfühlung*, p.10.

<sup>7</sup> Joachim Piecuch, “Leid und Mitleid als Antwort auf das Fremde. Edith Steins Weg der inneren Freiheit,” in *Leid und Mitleid bei Edith Stein*, eds. Malgorzate Bogaczyk-Vormayr, Elisabeth Kapferer, and Clemens Sedmak (Salzburg: Anton Pustet, 2013), p. 100.

Attentiveness is an effort, perhaps the greatest struggle of all, but it is a negative effort. Attentiveness itself does not make you tired... It involves suspending one's thinking, so that one's spirit is empty, available and open to the object of attention. Various pieces of knowledge, which one has already acquired, and which might be useful, need to be held at a lower level, so that they are near to one's spirit and easy to reach, but without touching it. Most of all, the spirit needs to be empty, waiting, not searching for anything, but ready to assume the naked truth of the object which will come into it.<sup>8</sup>

Accordingly, being genuinely attentive is something like putting one's spirit on "hold" – suspending its activity, but still maintaining a constant openness, an unconditional readiness to listen to whatever the world might speak to it. Precision and clarity are the results.

Attentiveness is also the expression of a spontaneous activity arising from one's own deepest inner life. It is an expression of freedom and of identity. It is a creative process, providing for creative renewal.

Attentiveness counteracts laziness and absent-mindedness: two qualities which allow for only a superficial knowledge of the world, distracted from the depths of knowledge which nourish the soul and allow for a creative connection with the world. Attentiveness is, most of all, something which we owe our work that grants us identity and roots us in the whole of the cosmos.

A felicitous relationship with the world, according to Simone Weil, therefore manifests in meaningful human activity that is led by attentiveness of and in the world. Wherever this fails, the tragic uprooting of the human being follows. "A culture which grew out of an imbuing of work with soul would, to the highest degree, root people in the cosmos – and thereby achieve the opposite of our current situation, in which we are almost completely unrooted. There is nothing in the world which can compare to the joy of working."<sup>9</sup>

The lost joy in work is, for Simone Weil, therefore a form of misfortune. Misfortune, "Malheur," is another important category in the thought of Simone Weil. As misfortune always signifies, "... uprootedness of life, something, that more or less, in a weakened form, resembles death."<sup>10</sup>

Accordingly, mishap is the opposite of attentiveness, which gifts us with rooting and connectedness with the world (and God), and is a means to stand misfortune and overcome it eventually.

Attentiveness is a kind of meditation which brings us into the present. A person who works to develop attentiveness does not only obtain knowledge of the world, but more so, they develop knowledge of themselves. And through attentiveness, they are also able to transform themselves.

A process of transformation is initiated, in which weaknesses become strengths, shadows become light, hate becomes love. Each time, writes Simone Weil, "If one is really attentive, then something evil within oneself is destroyed."<sup>11</sup>

One should not wish, that a personal weakness should disappear, but instead ask for the grace with which transform it ... (one should) try to remedy one's

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<sup>8</sup> Simone Weil, *Zeugnis für das Gute. Spiritualität einer Philosophin* (Zürich/Düsseldorf: Benziger, 1998), pp. 57f.

<sup>9</sup> Simone Weil, *Die Einwurzelung* (München: Kösel, 1956), p. 150.

<sup>10</sup> Weil, *Zeugnis für das Gute*, p. 14.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

shortcomings through attentiveness, and not by means of will. Observing a potential evil for a long time without committing it brings about a kind of transubstantiation.<sup>12</sup>

Through attentiveness, we can transform not only ourselves, but also meaningfully affect others. It is an important trait in Simone Weil's thought, that attentiveness, or, more specifically, the practice of attentiveness, leads to the formation of an ethical consciousness, which in turn generates a relationship to the world that is determined by love. Attentiveness is thus not to be understood as a particular ability for passive perception, but rather as an active, creative process, offered to the other to be assimilated, thus transforming the other and ourselves. It is thus a social force, that is directed primarily towards humans who are living or existing in an unfortunate condition. Weil wrote:

Unfortunate people need nothing else in the world but people who are able to grant them attention. The ability to turn one's attention to the unfortunates is something very rare and difficult ... The warmth of the feeling, the willingness of the heart, the compassion alone do not suffice here.<sup>13</sup>

Exactly because this form of attentiveness, which is directed unconditionally at the other's misfortune, is so hard to accomplish, enables Simone Weil to formulate this astonishing sentence, "Attentiveness is the rarest and purest form of generosity" ("L'attention est la forme plus rare et plus pure de la générosité.")<sup>14</sup>

The quality of being attentive is one which I see as particularly endangered in our fast-paced world of multi-tasking, of floods of information – far more than we can digest – and of frequently random and indiscriminate use of electronic media, resulting in what Manfred Spitzer refers to as "digital dementia."<sup>15</sup> Despite this lack of active concentration and willing attentiveness, exactly these qualities are so crucial. When I am attentive, I am fully present, both conscious of myself and open to truly perceiving other people. This attitude of mindful attentiveness is the prerequisite for being able to genuinely empathize. If, according to Simone Weil, uprooting is the central cause for humanities' misfortune, then we must observe and realize today that – formulated differently – it is the misfortune of uprooting that accompanies all humans who are fleeing from war, persecution, hunger and destitution, for which we must create a new form of community building to counteract the uprooting of their lives.

This is where the qualities of attention and empathy are indispensable for the development of such a community, which must be the human result of a globalized world.

### **Responsibility as a Central Concept in Dag Hammarskjöld's Political Ethics**

Community is something to which Dag Hammarskjöld devoted his work. Hammarskjöld was born in 1905, in the city of Jönköping in central Sweden. He grew up in Uppsala and then studied national economics, philosophy, French and law at the University of Stockholm. After holding various political posts in Sweden, he became a member of the Swedish UNO-

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<sup>12</sup>Quoted after Elisabeth Ott, *Die Aufmerksamkeit als Grundvollzug der christlichen Meditation. Der geistliche Weg der Simone Weil* (Geist und Leben 47, Heft 2, 1974), p. 98. (Translation C.W.)

<sup>13</sup>Weil, *Zeugnis für das Gute*, p. 61.

<sup>14</sup>Simone Weil and Joë Bousquet, *Correspondance* (Lausanne: L'Age d'homme, 1982), p. 18.

<sup>15</sup>Manfred Spitzer, *Digitale Demenz. Wie wir uns und unsere Kinder um den Verstand bringen* (München: Droemer, 2012).

delegation, rising to General Secretary of UNO in 1953. His life ended on a UNO mission in 1961, when the airplane he was travelling in crashed in what is now Zambia.

After his death, his diary was found in his New York residence, along with a letter allowing for its publication. This work, published in 1963 and entitled *Vägmärken*, contains surprising entries and notes, often lyrical or aphoristic. They reveal that Dag Hammarskjöld, despite all external strain and international activity, led an inner life informed by mysticism, which allowed him to have a far-sighted view on the world and a strong inner position regarding his work. The diary indicated that Dag Hammarskjöld was intellectually demanding and emotional, but also quite a solitary person, who dedicated his life to deeds and to political action (in a subordinate sense to compensation and justice). It is not surprising that the publication of this diary caused quite some disconcertment; nobody had expected that the UN Secretary-General identified with religious-spiritual topoi.

In studying Hammarskjöld's diary, it becomes clear that he was influenced on a literary level by the works of great mystics, such as Meister Eckhart, Thomas von Kempen, and St. John of the Cross. An appropriate understanding of this diary without a differentiated consideration of the tradition of the mystical experiential record, which by means of diary-like records, or textualization of spiritual encounters, also feed into Christian literature – originating from Augustinus' well-known *Confessiones* up to contemporary works such as the previously discussed *Cahiers* by Simone Weil or the *Notes Intimes* by the French lyricist Marie Noël, is hardly possible.

Only through such reading and with reference back to this literary genre of religious self-reflection, an appropriate interpretation of this "marking" becomes possible. But he was also influenced by writers who were his contemporaries, some of whom he also knew personally – Martin Buber, Albert Schweitzer and Henri Bergson, for example. The character and works of Martin Buber had a particularly significant impact on him; apart from a personal encounter, a dialogical exchange of letters between the philosopher Buber and the diplomat Hammarskjöld reveals parallel paths of thought. Those finally come together in their ethically motivated search for a role model of a new humanism, which for Hammarskjöld results in the ethics of an "in-depth politics," impressively portrayed by Clemens Sedmak with recourse to the diary entries.<sup>16</sup>

Returning to the spiritual character of Hammarskjöld's diary once more, it can be noted that the emerging approach is a mysticism of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, characterized by its dedication to life itself, rudimentarily following the interpretation of Ruth und Karl-Heinz Röhlin.<sup>17</sup> It is a dedication:

1. to a life of practicing self-knowledge;
2. to a life of seeking meaning;
3. to saying "yes" to all of life;
4. to a life in friendship with death;
5. to a life which allows for unprecedented experiences, beyond known limits.

The diary entries all revolve around these themes, though self-reflection and self-development play the most important part. "The longest journey," he writes, "is the inward

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<sup>16</sup> Clemens Sedmak, "Dag Hammarskjölds Gedanken als Wegmarken einer tiefen Politik," in Andreas Müller and Troy Jodok (eds.), *Ein Mann, der wurde, was er konnte. Dag Hammarskjöld zum 50. Todestag. Beiträge zur Politischen Wissenschaft* Bd. 173. (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot), pp. 131-160.

<sup>17</sup> Ruth Röhlin and Karl-Heinz Röhlin, *Dag Hammarskjöld. Mystiker und Politiker* (München: Kösel, 2005), p. 98 et seq.

journey.”<sup>18</sup> It is not about learning to like himself more, but rather about growing beyond his own limitations. With a certain self-irony, Hammarskjöld called his diary “a kind of White Paper about my negotiations with myself – and with God.”<sup>19</sup> He saw it as his obligation to reach out wherever human life and human ethics can take on the character and meaning of universal truths. The universal ethic which Hammarskjöld sought is one which does not degenerate into uniformity. Instead, it recognizes variety and diversity within unity. Hammarskjöld expressed this in the text he wrote to accompany the meditation room in the main building of the UN. In the middle of the room, there is a block of iron ore which he described as follows: “We may see it as an altar, empty not because there is no God, or because it is an altar to an unknown God, but because it is dedicated to the God whom man worships under many names and in many forms.”<sup>20</sup>

The prerequisites for the thought that Hammarskjöld expresses here are *solidarity* and *respect* – two key words in Hammarskjöld’s ethics. Solidarity and respect provide the foundation for the willingness to understand other people and to work together, which lead politically to international cooperation and peaceful coexistence.

Integrity and universality, solidarity, and optimism: these are the virtues of Hammarskjöld’s ethics.<sup>21</sup> As mentioned previously, the engagement with Martin Buber and his works, and the analysis of the life works of Albert Schweitzer, contributed to the fact that in Hammarskjöld’s understanding it is not only about postulates of a theoretical ethics, but much more about profound readiness to act according to such principles. Ultimately, it was these three men’s responsibility to endure and to create positively the tension between ethical responsibility and political and societal realities, respectively from their individual life perspectives.

Considered cumulatively, these four concepts together create the ethical attribute which Dag Hammarskjöld’s life can stand for here: responsibility. It is a responsibility which results from two convictions: first, that service, and not dominance, is the key to responsibility. Secondly, that a person in a position of responsibility has a duty to all of humankind, in a universal sense, and not only to the special interests of a segment of society. Hammarskjöld’s universal concept of responsibility is based on the thought of the unity of all humanity, which he considered as a fundamental basis for his political work as UN Secretary General, and which significantly determined the self-conception of his doing. Hammarskjöld described it in his diary as a “responsibility for everyone with respect to everyone, and a responsibility for the past with respect to the future.”<sup>22</sup>

The historical constellations have changed since Hammarskjöld’s times, we know. We are confronted not with fewer tasks, but rather more complex challenges. Therefore, we need courage to take responsibility to serve in the interests of everyone. Not my house first, my country first and so on, but the first and foremost aim needs to be the finding of common ground, and common solutions in everyone’s interests, as difficult as this may be.

### Summary and Outlook

In summing up these thoughts, let us change the sequence of the three concepts – empathy, attentiveness, and responsibility – and say: Wakeful and selfless attentiveness seem to

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<sup>18</sup> Dag Hammarskjöld, *Zeichen am Weg* (München: Knauer, 2005), p. 81.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>20</sup> “A Room of Quiet,” December 1957, quoted from Manuel Fröhlich, *Dag Hammarskjöld und die Vereinten Nationen* (Paderborn et al: Schöningh, 2002), p. 215.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 211-220.

<sup>22</sup> Hammarskjöld, *Zeichen am Weg*, p. 169.

me the prerequisites for the empathy which allows us to really access other people without compromising their freedom, such that the experience of other individuals awakens our readiness to take on undivided responsibility for ourselves and for others. These three qualities need to be understood as methods of active perception of the world, as paths of schooling which we can follow if we are determined to productively overcome some of the deficient developments in contemporary society.

Through attentiveness, disinterest should be transformed into active inner participation; through empathy, the fear of the unknown should give way to enriching encounters; and with responsibility, paralysis and dissent should be overcome by proactive collaboration.

The reader probably did not fail to notice that all three protagonists of this paper were devoted to paths of inner schooling, which spiritually nourished their everyday work. The biographies of these three individuals are also characterized by the fact that they were dedicated to serving others. Through service, they gave their own lives and even their own deaths a quality of sacrifice. This is another quality which contrasts with so much of what we see in the news. Daniele Giglioli of the University of Bergamo pointed out how often people with political motivations purposefully cast themselves in the role of victims, pretending to have made great sacrifices, and play this part skillfully to achieve their own ends.<sup>23</sup>

But if we choose to follow the paths, learning from Edith Stein, Simone Weil and Dag Hammarskjöld, then we learn that sacrifices are not losses, but gains. We learn that serving others can be an act of freedom and not of oppression. On this foundation, and for these reasons, we can learn to be – and become – ever more human.

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<sup>23</sup> Daniele Giglioli, "Die Bösen sind immer die anderen," *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, March 15, 2017, p. 35.

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## Emersonian Anxieties: The Age of Anthropocene and the Legacy of Humanism

STEPHAN STEINER

In 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophy we encounter in manifold contexts fundamental philosophical conflicts that developed as a quarrel about the legacy of humanism. One prominent example is Martin Heidegger's debate with Ernst Cassirer in Davos, which is mirrored in Heidegger's later argument with Jean-Paul Sartre after World War II in his letter on humanism.

Some of Heidegger's most successful pupils – especially Hans Jonas, Karl Löwith, and Leo Strauss – pointed early to the question of nature as the centerpiece of Heidegger's stance against humanism. Such intellectual constellations are presupposed in today's debates on a so called "Age of Anthropocene." The expression "Anthropocene" reflects the new situation that *human* actions determine and *threaten* for the first time *nature* – and the persistence of natural history. Nature becomes therefore an issue of human freedom and conduct. On these grounds, Hans Jonas's demand for a *politics of nature* demonstrates a disturbing urgency.

Since humans, as natural beings, are capable of destroying their own means of existence, every quest for the legacy of humanism can only be answered on the grounds of a deepened understanding of nature. In my paper, I present two different readings of Friedrich Nietzsche in order to show how re-adjusting our notions of humanism and nature is directly linked to the philosophy of religion. First, I turn to Karl Löwith's 1935 book on Friedrich Nietzsche. There he tries to restore the legacy of humanism by polarizing nature and religion. For an alternative to Löwith's antagonism, the second part of my paper investigates Nietzsche's relation to Ralph Waldo Emerson.

### Restoring Humanism and Nature – against Religion

Karl Löwith's book *Friedrich Nietzsches Philosophie der ewigen Wiederkehr des Gleichen* from 1935 identifies the question of humanism with Nietzsche's project of reevaluating all values, and thus with the problem of nihilism.<sup>1</sup> Löwith argues for a *decisive shift* of emphasis in the description of nihilism. He no longer conventionalizes Nietzsche as the creator and missionary of nihilism. In fact, according to Löwith, Nietzsche *only diagnoses* the historical reality of the phenomenon and *articulates* it.

In addition, Löwith points out, that nihilism is significantly more than a mere phenomenon of moral decay. In fact, Nietzsche underscores that an upheaval of axial-age dimensions occurs: the shift from a theological-metaphysical to a scientific-technological interpretation of reality. This break – triggered by Copernicus and completed by Darwin – marks a radical transformation of the interpretation of man, which Löwith identifies as the core of Nietzsche's thought.

This relates to the natural philosophical clou as well as the religious significance of the doctrine of the "eternal recurrence of the same," which can hardly be overestimated in its key role for Löwith's image of Nietzsche's transformation of philosophy. Herein, the concept of temporality has particular significance. It is strained between the poles of an eschatological-

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<sup>1</sup> Karl Löwith, *Nietzsches Philosophie der ewigen Wiederkehr des Gleichen. Sämtliche Schriften* Bd. 6 (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1987), pp. 11-384.

Christian and a cyclical-antique comprehension of time. Löwith's interest is to show how this opposition *creates the categorical framework* for a new, modern interpretation of man and nature.

The return to a "pre-Socratic view of the world" is Nietzsche's form of addressing this concern.<sup>2</sup> Due to the progress of the natural sciences, industrialization, and technology, the modern disruption between the human and natural world *today* has become part of everyday experience. Nietzsche confronts this falling apart. In contrast to such alienation he postulates the unity of reality under the sign of the "natural." *Nietzsche's deed* then reverses the suspicion and hate against a part of the living (which he identifies as Christian) and intends to heal the wound in being.

Furthermore, Löwith insists that since the epoch of triumphal science, in which the transformation of nature into an abstract and mathematical totality is nearly completed, salvation and a restoration of the lost unity of man and world *is no longer to be expected from a new concept of nature*. This, we shall see, is the issue on which Löwith's Nietzsche interpretation and Emerson's reflection significantly diverge. Löwith claims, that since "the death of God" man has lost his granted purpose, and taking Darwin's revolution seriously he is not going to find substitution for it in the idea of nature. For it is, after all, the same, *specific modern will to intellectual honesty*, which drove all teleology and anthropomorphism out of nature: "The contradiction of the world dawns, the world which we adore, and the world which we live, which we are. There is no other course; we must either abolish our admiration or us ourselves."<sup>3</sup>

Here we get a grip on the unresolved problem at the core of Löwith's reading of Nietzsche: a "non-moral" interpretation of being and truth, as the *cosmological doctrine* of eternal recurrence represents, *does not* reestablish the unity between man and world. In fact it *only displaces the form of separation*. The fission now runs between the two poles of a "cosmic ego" and an "anthropomorphized world." *Under the rule of a modern concept of nature, dictated by science alone*, Nietzsche's doctrine of eternal recurrence itself decays into *anthropological* and *cosmological Halves*, without him being able to assemble the separated parts: "the contradiction of the world, the world which we adore and the world which we live" remains. This separation is grasped in the term "nihilism."

For the remaining part of my paper I would like to offer an alternative view on Nietzsche by unraveling the presence and formative importance of Ralph Waldo Emerson's thought in Nietzsche's early writings. A detour through Emerson will show us, that one can take seriously the disintegration of man and world under the rule of a reductionist notion of nature (dictated by scientism, not science!) *without* turning against the idea of humanism *or* denigrating religion.

### Realigning Humanism and Nature – through Religion

In the midst of overwhelming industrialization, Nietzsche glorifies *Schopenhauer as an Educator*, who exhorts that humans are not "factory products."<sup>4</sup> Instead they need the courage "to live according to their own laws and standards."<sup>5</sup> Nietzsche's early essay on Schopenhauer is a most forceful *call for re-learning to be human in modern times!* For Nietzsche Schopenhauer reminds us, that "we are responsible to ourselves for our own existence."<sup>6</sup> But all of these challenges issued in Nietzsche's rehabilitation of Schopenhauer are spoken as through a mask, for

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 240.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 225.

<sup>4</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 127.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

Nietzsche finds the path to Schopenhauer himself only by a detour, namely through his formative reading of the American Transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson.

It is not only the familiar diction and the related topoi that serve as reminders of Emerson's essays "Self-Reliance" or "Nature," which Nietzsche had read intensively.<sup>7</sup> Even the framework of a pedagogical reflection on the model of an educator, which Nietzsche adopts for his Schopenhauer essay, finds its parallel in Emerson's famous speech "The American Scholar."<sup>8</sup> The traces of such connections are not a matter of mere speculation. Nietzsche's intensive Emerson-reception has been reconstructed by his annotated copy of Emerson's essays, and perhaps more importantly, Nietzsche both opens and closes his text on Schopenhauer programmatically with direct references to Emerson.

With the opening quotation, Nietzsche again invites the reader to go "on the single path along which no one can go but you," but he remains silent about the name of the author he cites and instead asks cryptically: "who was it who said: 'a man never rises higher than when he does not know whether his path can still lead him?'"<sup>9</sup> As you might know, the expression is to be found at the end of Emerson's essay "Circles."<sup>10</sup>

At the conclusion of his eighty page essay on Schopenhauer, Nietzsche then returns to Emerson and this time mentions him by name. He decries the decay and the disenchantment of the philosophical life in his age. Instead of providing a "source of the heroic," it has degenerated into mere "lecture-hall wisdom" and "lecture-hall cautiousness."<sup>11</sup> For his programmatic exhortation against the academization of philosophy Nietzsche invokes "an American":

Let an American tell them what a great thinker who arrives on this earth signifies as a new centre of tremendous forces. 'Beware', says Emerson, 'when the great God lets loose a thinker on this planet. Then all things are at risk. [...] A new degree of culture would instantly revolutionize the entire system of human pursuits'.<sup>12</sup>

In the following, I attempt to explicate how Emerson's hope for a "new degree of culture" and his exclamation that today "all things [are] at risk" inspired Nietzsche's project of re-evaluating all values and to highlight the link between the problem of nature and a new understanding of man.

For this purpose it is first pertinent, however, to briefly call to mind Emerson's essay "Nature" from 1836. In this text, which Nietzsche had already read as a 17 year old and which composes the starting point for the philosophical writings of his youth, Emerson develops a figure of thought according to which *Nature alone* enables modern persons to find themselves and to lead a meaningful life. It is precisely this thought that Nietzsche picks up in the third Untimely Meditation when he links his reception of Emerson with Rousseau's understanding of nature in order to develop a remarkable dialectic of the re-sacralization of nature.

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<sup>7</sup> George J. Stack, *Nietzsche and Emerson: An Elective Affinity* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1992). Recently Jennifer Ratner-Rosenhagen also published an insightful book on this topic: *American Nietzsche: A History of an Icon and His Ideas* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

<sup>8</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Essays and Lectures* (New York, NY: Library of America, 1983).

<sup>9</sup> Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, p. 129.

<sup>10</sup> In the original Emerson quotes Oliver Cromwell and writes: "A man [...] never rises so high as when he knows not whither he is going." Emerson, *Essays and Lectures*, p. 414.

<sup>11</sup> Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, p. 193.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

In the midst of an era enjoying the success of positivistic science Nietzsche fundamentally transforms the understanding of nature by linking it to the problem of the conduct of life. This elective affinity is clearly expressed in the third Untimely Meditation. For the decisive argument by which Nietzsche builds the bridge from the experience of nature to the experience of freedom and the experience of self is already to be found in Emerson. When Emerson tries to define the essence of nature in his essay, he does so with the intention of representing *the use* of nature for humans. He defines this "use" in contradistinction to the narrow understanding of nature, which he diagnoses as the core of the harmful life in the city and in society. Through Emerson, Nietzsche becomes acquainted with a rhetoric that links nature and the idea of man, while indicting human degeneration with powerful gestures:

Man is the dwarf of himself. [...] [He] applies to nature but half his force. He works on the world with his understanding alone. He lives in it, and masters it by a penny-wisdom; and he that works most in it, is but a half-man, and whilst his arms are strong and his digestion good, his mind is imbruted, and he is a selfish savage.<sup>13</sup>

Instead of diametrically opposing reflection on the goals and nature of man to the occupation with nature – by fearfully retreating in the face of the interpretational claims of the natural sciences – Emerson connects these inseparably to each other: it is solely by observing nature that man gets to know himself *comprehensively*. "To the body and mind which have been cramped by noxious work or company, nature is medicinal and restores their tone. The tradesman, the attorney comes out of the din and craft of the street, and sees the sky and the woods, and is a man again. In their eternal calm, he finds himself."<sup>14</sup>

This revolutionary thought of a renewed connection between human self-understanding and the study of nature – in the midst of an age of scientism and its concomitant reductionistic interpretation of nature – is echoed in Nietzsche when he sketches "three images of man."<sup>15</sup> He develops these images according to their respective relation to nature and associates with them the names *Rousseau*, *Goethe*, and *Schopenhauer*: "There are three images of man which our modern age has set up one after the other and which will no doubt long inspire mortals to a transfiguration of their own lives: they are the man of Rousseau, the man of Goethe and finally the man of Schopenhauer."<sup>16</sup>

Nietzsche's claim, that those images of man "will no doubt long inspire mortals to a transfiguration of their own lives," should be taken seriously as the articulation of a programmatic self-characterization. It is in this context that Nietzsche coins the expression "holy nature," which he imagines – by referring to Rousseau – as an instance for judging and correcting misguided ways of life:

Oppressed and half crushed by arrogant upper classes and merciless wealth, ruined by priests and bad education and rendered contemptible to himself by ludicrous customs, man cries in his distress to 'holy nature' and suddenly feels that it is as distant from him as any Epicurean god. His prayers do not reach it, so deeply is he sunk in the chaos of unnaturalness.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Emerson, *Essays and Lectures*, p. 46.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 14f.

<sup>15</sup> Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, p. 150.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 151.

Significantly, *this distance* is for Nietzsche *not at all a salutary disenchantment* (opposed to Löwith's interpretation) but rather a development to revolt against. Therefore, he continues:

Scornfully he throws from him all the gaudy finery which only a short time before had seemed to him to constitute his essential humanity, his arts and sciences, the advantages of a refined life; he beats with his fists against the walls in whose shadow he has so degenerated, and demands light, sun, forest and mountain.<sup>18</sup>

*This cry to nature*, not meant as disenchantment or dissolution of a human perspective but precisely as a refuge for its realization, opens for Nietzsche the path to human self-critique, which finally leads to the motif of the superman: "And when he cries: 'Only nature is good, only the natural is human', he despises himself and longs to go beyond himself."<sup>19</sup> Here we are able to observe how Nietzsche's motif of the superman should be understood in relation to his philosophy of nature – and with the intention of protecting ideals of a human life.

In contrast, Goethe (*and significantly not Emerson!*) represents in this line the all too one-sided "gospel of good nature," since in this nature, "all violence, all sudden transition," indeed "all act" is bracketed.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, Nietzsche ridicules the "world-liberator Faust" as a mere "world-traveller."<sup>21</sup> In this situation only the Schopenhauerian man reminds us that "perfection" is indissolubly linked to "suffering" and that nature as an ideal is also cruel.<sup>22</sup> He alone who "takes upon himself the suffering involved in being truthful" will do justice to nature in its ambivalence.<sup>23</sup> And he alone who does not forget that Janus-faced character of nature is positioned "*not to forget himself" either.*"<sup>24</sup>

Nietzsche explicates this dialectic of perfection and suffering, which characterizes both nature and human life as being part of nature, in a raging polemic that distinguishes between great and little men:

[The great man] knows as well as any little man how to take life easily and how soft the bed is on which he could lie down if his attitude towards himself and his fellow men were that of the majority: for the objective of all human arrangements is through distracting one's thoughts to cease to be aware of life. Why does he desire the opposite to be aware precisely of life, that is to say to suffer from life – so strongly? Because he realizes that he is in danger of being cheated out of himself.<sup>25</sup>

Hence, Schopenhauer's image of man connects two poles: Only a demanding understanding of nature reminds man in his conduct of life not to flee from his "inner admonition," from his call to freedom.<sup>26</sup> What is most striking to me in Nietzsche's line of thought, however, is the fact, that by redeeming Schopenhauer in the middle of an age of positivism in which the

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 152.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 152.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 155.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 154.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

scientific disenchantment of nature appears to be all-encompassing, Nietzsche pronounces a fiery plea for individuality and individual lifestyle exactly *in the name of nature!* The achievement of the positivistic turn since Hegel's death to strictly divide nature and the conduct of life, nature and values or teleology is reversed or at least made questionable in its legitimacy. Instead of pitting the realm of freedom against the realm of nature as Kant had already done – forcibly establishing an all too familiar antagonism between religion and nature – Nietzsche evokes *the expressivist protest of Herder* to counter such reduced and truncated understandings of nature.

Yet, the decisive fact remains that Nietzsche cannot imagine taking recourse to this German tradition of an integral understanding of nature. Those ideas become living options for him only via the detour of Emerson's transcendentalism. Nietzsche had his reasons for abstaining from direct recourse to the German tradition and we should consider his reasons for believing that it does not suffice to simply take a fresh look at German Idealism's understanding of nature.

To conclude: Nietzsche discovered early the practical and reflexive advantages of an American perspective. Investigating his relation to Emerson we found, that he himself is not necessarily bound to the anti-humanist rage which his European followers mostly exhibit. Even more noticeable seems to me the fact that *we learn* from Emerson a new way of conceptualizing the relation of religion and humanism *by re-establishing a link between our concept of nature and the conduct of life*. In such a perspective the relation of religion and humanism is *not inspired by antagonism* but by the will to deepen human self-understanding.

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## Moral Enhancement Theory: A Challenge for Moral Philosophy

BRIGITTE BUCHHAMMER

### Introduction

Neuro-philosophy, neuro-ethics, neuro-law, neuro-ecology – these are the sub-disciplines of neuro-sciences which have dominated recent academic and public debates. Social sciences, life-sciences, applied ethics and philosophy eagerly discuss the best method to enhance the morality of humankind. Using chemical substances and technical instruments (e.g. beta blockers, ataractics, etc.), scientists try to improve human morals. I will refer, for example, to the studies of Raphael van Riel, Ezio Di Nucci, Jan Schildmann, and John R. Shook, philosophers whose field of research encompasses studies in moral enhancement theories. My next step is to follow the research-question: what would Kant say to these theories?<sup>1</sup> What is the duty of philosophy in the context of moral enhancement-theories? The role of philosophy is to offer subtleties of various aspects of these questions. It is important to clearly identify two levels. Firstly: what areas are the neuro-sciences able to explore and what are their methodical limits? Secondly: what are questions of moral-philosophical relevance? Regarding Kant's *The Conflict of the Faculties*,<sup>2</sup> philosophy has to criticize every kind of superstition, including even scientific superstition. To what extent are neuro-sciences in service to neo-liberalistic ideology?

Philosophy has to develop an adequate concept of humankind. With reference to Kant's practical philosophy I would like to develop a non-reductionist concept of humankind. In terms of the philosophical concept of the world, philosophy has to delve deeply into the heart of the question: What does it mean to be a human being? What place in the world does a sentient human being with both bodily existence and philosophical reason occupy? In the chapter entitled "Transcendental Doctrine of Method" in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant develops the undertaking of philosophy in three key questions: 1) What can I know? 2) What ought I to do? 3) What may I hope? These three questions culminate in the fourth and final question: What does it mean to be human?

The duty of philosophy is to be an advocate of humanism and of a counter-reductionist theory of humankind. Otfried Höffe explains this understanding of philosophy with brilliant purity and simplicity: philosophy in its essence should be an advocate for the whole of humanity.<sup>3</sup> One of the main problems in these debates is to develop a theory of moral enhancement in terms of improving the ability of moral judgment. Scientists consider the possibility of moral improvement through physiological and pharmaceutical interventions. The task of philosophy is to refute this reductionist theory of ethics and morality.

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<sup>1</sup> With reference to Otfried Höffe, "Der entlarvte Ruck. Was sagt Kant den Gehirnforschern?" in *Hirnforschung und Willensfreiheit. Zur Deutung der neuesten Experimente*, ed. Christian Geyer (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 2004).

<sup>2</sup> Immanuel Kant, *The Conflict of the Faculties*, transl. Mary J. Gregor (New York: Abaris Books, 1979).

<sup>3</sup> Otfried Höffe, *Die Macht der Moral im 21. Jahrhundert. Annäherung an eine zeitgemäße Ethik* (München: Beck, 2014), p. 15.

### Core Elements in Current Moral Enhancement Theories

Neuroenhancement theories seek to highlight the difference between neuroenhancement and conventional methods of improving cognitive abilities such as autogenous training, yoga, relaxation, learning and thorough study.<sup>4</sup> What exactly does “neuroenhancement” mean in these debates? The term neuroenhancement describes, on first inspection, an immediate, primary modulation of brain function. A typical example would be treatment with pharmaceuticals such as beta blockers or oxytocin, to achieve increased efficiency.<sup>5</sup> But in such cases science seeks a further goal; to improve a human being’s moral judgment. The fundamental question about influencing human’s moral judgment is no longer a problem of education, cultivation, learning or psychotherapy, but rather an issue of physiological intervention. To improve human’s moral abilities, John R. Shook, a neuro-philosopher, argues that the intention of these sciences is to modify the human brain in a manner that only actions which are accepted as moral actions and which maximize the wealth, benefit and profit of everyone (the greater good) are the desired result.<sup>6</sup> This is a utilitarian argument, which shortens morality to a utilitarian concept of acting. Shook continues: moral enhancement theories have to build an alliance with a “minimum moral naturalism,”<sup>7</sup> which means: to find out, how people accomplish their moral judgment without any regard to an inexistent entity. The minimum moral naturalism is content with a morality or ethics, which pass the criteria of a biological or sociological test. In this sense, morality is merely an issue of natural sciences. In this case ethics are diminished to a simple utilitarian action. This is a reductionist concept of morality, which greatly narrows the human competence of ethical acting. Later in this paper I would like to outline Kant’s practical philosophy, as an instrument to critique and scrutinize the shortcomings of such moral enhancement theories.

Pharmaceutical companies need investors and consequently the manufacturers of pharmaceutical moral enhancers have to pitch their products to them. Shook’s argument unmasks the entanglement of this kind of research with neoliberalist interests:

From the standpoint of marketing we can say: tell us your social problem and we can find the appropriate moral in question and a new product from our pharmaceutical lab could prove helpful and beneficial. One and the same enhancer of loyalty could be helpful both in one country to intensify the loyalty of employees to their organization, and in a theocratic state to raise the religious fervor of the believers. But, the point of principle is: who should decide what a better morality is? What criteria should be set?<sup>8</sup>

Shook explains, “All that you need is the license of a research committee. You should apply the traditional moral standards of the surrounding society.”<sup>9</sup> His argument, that clever

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<sup>4</sup> Raphael van Riel and Jan Schildmann, “Enhancement der Moral – Zur Einführung,” in *Enhancement der Moral*, eds. Raphael van Riel, Ezio Di Nucci, and Jan Schildmann (Münster: Mentis Verlag, 2015), p. 10.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> John R. Shook, “Neuroethik und die möglichen Arten des Enhancements der Moral,” in *Enhancement der Moral*, eds. Raphael van Riel, Ezio Di Nucci, and Jan Schildmann (Münster: Mentis Verlag, 2015), p. 22.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35. Translated by Brigitte Buchhammer (author).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38. Translated by Brigitte Buchhammer (author).



marketing and political propaganda would help to achieve broad agreement to these kinds of moral enhancers in the consumer society, unmask the neoliberalist interests.

Shook emphasizes that no one knows what morality at its heart really means. Advanced cognitive sciences have at their disposal plenty of effective techniques to manipulate human moral decisions. Julian Savulescu and Ingmar Persson explain in their work that anti-depressants and antihypertensive drugs have, as a side effect, an influence on human moral behavior.

Does moral enhancement restrict human liberty? Savulescu and Persson answer: bio-medical interventions, which influence people to be less immoral and destructive in their actions, achieve this by allowing the individual less freedom to act in immoral ways.<sup>10</sup> Medical treatment of people with psychopathic disorders would be a bio-enhancement of moral judgment, because it makes immoral actions impossible. Freedom would not be impaired, because people are compelled to relinquish immoral and destructive behavior that is to say that they are unable to act in an unethical and immoral manner. This interpretation of freedom manifests a reductionism of freedom of acting, which I will demonstrate with Kant.

However, in these theories, which seem very innovative and original, we can find the age-old established gender-stereotypes and biological reductionisms. Savulescu and Persson bring forward the argument that women are basically more altruistic than men. The core of this assertion is that women inherently have less of a tendency to do harm to others than men. Therefore, with the aid of biomedical methods and pharmaceutical substances, men could be moralized by making them more akin to women in this respect.

Savulescu and Persson conjure up visions of a "God-machine."<sup>11</sup> They fantasize about genetically modified neurons, signatures of light, which are absorbed by an omnipresent, light-based communication network. A God-machine in the context of the utopia of the Great Moral Project is envisioned as a construct of the most powerful, self-learning control, self-developed bio-quantum computer. This God-machine controls all the thoughts, beliefs, convictions, desires and intentions of each and every human being. This machine would be able to modify all the thoughts, desires and intentions of humans within nanoseconds, without their knowledge or awareness. The God-machine was constructed to ensure the freedom of human beings, only to intervene or hinder injustice and extremely immoral behavior. For example, a person intends to murder someone. The God-machine would intervene in such a manner, that the person would change his or her own mind. The installation of the God-machine would be able to eliminate homicide, rape and violence. Best of all, people who intend to murder or be violent against others, would never be aware, that their intentions were changed by an authority outside of themselves. It would seem, at least to the persons affected, that they had changed their minds on their own terms. People will live in complete freedom, but they would be unable to commit immoral acts. At this point I would like to indicate, that it would be necessary to outline Kant's subtle philosophy of religion, his concept of God as "Herzenskündiger" (the knower of hearts) in Herta Nagl-Docekal's interpretation of Kant.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> John Harris, "Moral Enhancement and Freedom," *Bioethics* 25, no. 102 (2011), p. 7, quoted: Julian Savulescu and Ingmar Persson, "Enhancement der Moral, Freiheit und die Gottmaschine," in *Enhancement der Moral*, eds. Raphael van Riel, Ezio Di Nucci, and Jan Schildmann (Münster: Mentis Verlag, 2015), p. 62.

<sup>11</sup> Savulescu and Persson, "Enhancement der Moral," pp. 65ff.

<sup>12</sup> Herta Nagl-Docekal, "Ist die Konzeption des 'Herzenskündigers' obsolet geworden?" in *Philosophisches Jahrbuch*, 2. Halbband (2010), pp. 319-338.

### The Task of Philosophy

My next step is to start with some philosophical reflections on what we have already discussed. One of the essential roles of philosophy is to introduce differentiation into these debates, differentiations of diverse aspects. By means of philosophical argument we have to scrutinize the particular methods of every science and to consider the competences and limits of any kind of science and knowledge. Individual empirical sciences must inherently research within their own methodical framework and with their own scientific instruments. They necessarily conduct research with methodical abstraction. For example, the neuro-sciences are very important disciplines, which research important aspects of human beings. But when they overstep the mark by saying: an individual is nothing short of a bundle of neuronal networks – then philosophy has the duty to say: stop! At this point philosophy has to start its scrutinizing work and must emphasize that this is an ontological statement about the entire and whole human being. As soon as an empirical science issues statements about the whole and entire human being, this empirical science crosses the methodical limits of its own discipline. In his dialogue *Phaidon*, Plato delineates this problem very clearly in the passage about the “sitting Socrates.”<sup>13</sup> Socrates is sitting in prison because he has committed himself to a society of greater justice and fairness. Justice and fairness are notions, which cannot be researched by empirical sciences – justice and fairness are ideas. The neuro-sciences are necessarily limited to studying the mechanics of the brain while an individual is thinking, “I want to live in a well-ordered society.” Moreover, the ethical and moral aspects of the words “well-ordered” or “fair and just,” the moral meaning of these words, cannot be explained by neuro-sciences. Socrates excoriated natural philosophers in his own time. Questions such as, “Why is Socrates sitting in prison?” were answered by natural-philosophers; because his body has bones and sinews, which allow the body to sit, stand and move.

All these comments fall short of the only reason for Socrates’ sitting in prison; that the jury of Athens has found him guilty. Single empirical sciences research within the causal nexus of cause and effect the bodily functions which are necessary to move, sit, walk and rest. Although all of these investigations are important, philosophy should highlight the crucial difference between cause and reason. Empirical sciences are excellent in researching causes, with methodical abstraction, but they are never capable of finding out the reason for human actions. If empirical sciences intend to reduce human beings to measurable, empirical components within the causal nexus, then they perpetrate the shortcoming to interpret their methodical abstraction in an ontological manner, and that produces an inappropriate theory of human beings. The crucial duty of philosophy is to bring into focus every dimension of human beings in the world. Can the empirical sciences, within their methodology, really discover everything about the human being as a spiritual and reasonable person? Single empirical sciences have the competence to discover a lot of partial facets of our world and of human beings, but they are incapable, as a result of their methodology, of grasping the entirety of the human being.<sup>14</sup>

What could the contribution of philosophy be in matters of scrutinizing scientific reductionisms in the concept of the human being? Referring to this question I will emphasize the core elements of Kant’s practical philosophy.

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<sup>13</sup> Plato, “Phaidon,” in *Sämtliche Dialoge*, ed. Otto Apelt, vol. 2 (Hamburg: Meiner, 1993).

<sup>14</sup> Brigitte Buchhammer, *Feministische Religionsphilosophie. Philosophisch-systematische Grundlagen* (Wien-Berlin: LIT, 2011), pp. 44f.

### Kant's Practical Philosophy

Now I would like to outline the core elements of Kant's practical philosophy in relation to questions of moral enhancement-research. Moral enhancement scientists assert that nobody knows what morality at its heart really means. I would like to demonstrate, on the foundation of Kant's practical philosophy, that this assertion is deeply flawed. In Kant's philosophical conception the duty of philosophy is to develop a notion of human beings, which is a viable criterion to criticize and refute reductionist ideas of the human being. Practical reason in every human being is the area of the categorical imperative; the moral law. The essence of the categorical imperative is, "(A) rational nature exists as an end in itself."<sup>15</sup> The practical imperative would be the following, "So act that you use humanity, in your own person as well as in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means."<sup>16</sup>

Our own practical reason, the categorical imperative, demands respect for every human's dignity at all times, all over the world. We are not allowed to instrumentalize our fellow human beings or ourselves. Every human being should be recognized as a reasonable person with the competence of freedom of action. Kant argues:

Now I say: a human being and generally every rational being exists as an end in itself, not merely as a means for the discretionary use for this or that will, but must in all its actions, whether directed towards itself or also to other rational beings, always be considered at the same time as an end. [...] Rational beings are called persons, because their nature already marks them out as ends in themselves, i.e. as something that may not be used merely as a means, and hence to that extent limits all choice (and is an object of respect). These are therefore not merely subjective ends, the existence of which, as the effect of our actions, has a worth for us; but rather objective ends, i.e. entities whose existence in itself is an end, an end such that no other end can be put in its place, for which they would do service merely as means, because without it nothing whatsoever of absolute worth could be found [...].<sup>17</sup>

The categorical imperative is composed of two facets: a command and a ban (the ban is a negative duty, which is strict, a narrow duty). According to the ban, to the negative duty, we are strictly not allowed to instrumentalize any other individual. The command is a term of wide comprehension, it postulates an active benevolence, an active practical beneficence; the welfare of others is my end. This means the obligation of making my own ends the ends of others, insofar as these ends are not immoral. "Acting beneficently to our fellows, according to our ability, is our duty, and that, too, whether we love them or not [...]."<sup>18</sup> Kant also argues, "The duty of loving my neighbor may be thus expressed, – that it is the duty of making my own ends and interests of others, in so far as these ends are not immoral. The duty of reverencing my neighbor is expressed in the formula, to lower no man to be a bare means instrumental towards attaining my own ends [...]."<sup>19</sup> In other words, "Whether mankind be found worthy of love or not, a practical principle of goodwill (active philanthropy) is a duty

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<sup>15</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, eds. Mary Gregor and Jens Timmermann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 41.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 40f.

<sup>18</sup> Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Ethics*, transl. J.W. Semple (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1886), p. 132.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 162.

mutually owed by all men to one another, according to the ethical precept of perfection, love thy neighbor as thyself; [...]."<sup>20</sup> We have to support other people in a non-paternalistic manner. "It is impossible that I can act kindly toward any other (infants and madmen excepted) by force of my idea of his happiness, but only by studying his ideas of welfare, to whom I wish to. Exhibit my affection, no kindness being truly shown when I thrust upon him a present without his will."<sup>21</sup> And we are bound to respect our own human dignity, "Become not the slaves of other men. Suffer not thy rights to be trampled underfoot by others with impunity."<sup>22</sup>

The categorical imperative implicates two consequences. Firstly, to found a political community, a state, both national and international. The utmost end of reason is morality. Human acting and figuring out the world, all rational and reasonable activity have one goal: morality. The end goal of the world is the existence of human beings, who are capable of being both reasonable and moral, to maintain their lives under the claim of moral law. Human beings are bound in honor to found a legal, judicially structured state, and in a cosmopolitan sense, to found an international confederation. It needs to enter into the "compound of right," so that humans are capable of leading their lives as autonomous and self-legislative persons. Human rights are derived from moral law. The universal law of liberty states, "Every action is right and just, the maxim of which allows the agents' freedom of choice to harmonize with the freedom of every other, according to a universal law of liberty."<sup>23</sup> Our first task at the source of the notion of right is to gather with other humans in a civil society, in a legally structured state. Humans in civil contact need a universal social contract. The civil contract must be democratic: I haven't to obey any other rules than those to which I give my consent. As one state cannot be peaceful in complete isolation, hence we need cohesive international law. To enable a permanent peace, which is the supreme political property, we need voluntary entry into a true league of nations. A necessary supplement of public international law is what Kant refers to as the "cosmopolitan right." The cosmopolitan right guarantees that every human being should be respected as an end in itself and is to be treated with reference to universal human rights, which are inherently and inalienably accorded to every human being. The violation of human rights in one place on the earth can be felt everywhere and by everyone.<sup>24</sup> But this lightens merely the legal-political problem. The state and its legal system are merely able to rule the external actions of humans. The only way out of moral derailment persists in a foundation of a moral union of all humans in an open, well-regulated community.<sup>25</sup>

The second consequence of the categorical imperative is the responsibility to establish a moral commonwealth. We have to ensure conditions, which enable us to fulfill the duty of respecting each human being's dignity, i.e. the duty of respecting the autonomy and freedom of agency of each human being as much as possible. In Kant's thinking, our own practical

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 163.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 165.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 152.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 108.

<sup>24</sup> Immanuel Kant, "Zum ewigen Frieden," in Immanuel Kant, *Schriften zur Anthropologie, Geschichtsphilosophie, Politik und Pädagogik 1. Werkausgabe* vol. XI, ed. Wilhelm Weischedel (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1968), p. 216: "Da es nun mit der unter den Völkern der Erde einmal durchgängig überhand genommenen (engeren oder weiteren) Gemeinschaft so weit gekommen ist, daß die Rechtsverletzung an einem Platz der Erde an allen gefühlt wird: so ist die Idee eines Weltbürgerrechts keine phantastische und überspannte Vorstellungsart des Rechts, sondern eine notwendige Ergänzung des ungeschriebenen Kodex, sowohl des Staats- als Völkerrechts zum öffentlichen Menschenrechte überhaupt, und so zum ewigen Frieden [...]."

<sup>25</sup> Herta Nagl-Docekal, *Innere Freiheit. Grenzen der nachmetaphysischen Moralkonzeption* (Berlin/Boston: de Gruyter, 2014), parts II and III.

reason demands that we have to establish and develop a virtuous society. Kant says, this is a “voluntary, universal and enduring, wholehearted, virtuous and high-minded commonwealth.” It is our moral duty to strive for this commonwealth. At this point the notion of church in Kant’s meaning is relevant. How should this genuine church, this synthesis of idea and its realization, be organized? Kant describes this ethical commonwealth as “voluntary, universal and enduring, wholehearted, virtuous and high-minded,” in the manner of an amicable and trustworthy solidarity between human beings. He writes in his *Metaphysics of Ethics* about friendship: Friendship is “the intimate blending of love with reverence.” “Friendship, regarded in its perfection, is the union of two persons by mutual equal love and reverence.”<sup>26</sup> Friendship amongst humans is a duty of virtue. Friendship is the notion of mutual supreme high-mindedness, of reciprocal love and esteem. It is our moral duty to blend together with other humans all over the world in friendship and solidarity. The ethical commonwealth is conceived as cosmopolitan union.

The service of the genuine ethical commonwealth comprises acting in the spirit of moral law, of the categorical imperative. The holy narrative’s innermost core is the categorical imperative, the moral law. The innermost meaning of all holy narratives is that they should encourage us to act high-mindedly and morally: to respect the inviolability of human dignity. The responsibility of the ethical commonwealth is to support human’s development of moral autonomy and freedom of action. We have to commit ourselves to deliberating and developing the most improving moral issues for the world with a brave and fearless heart.

### Explanation of Categorical Mistakes in Neuro-Enhancement Theories

After this draft of Kant’s practical theory and his idea of humankind I would like to return to the imaginative notions of the neuro-sciences on moral enhancement. Shook describes his research as explorations of “conservative or liberal brains,” that is to say our brain is expected to think, to sympathize, to develop political convictions or religious creed. However, it is not our brain which is thinking, feeling and has the power of persuasion, but rather humans by dint of their brains. Neuro-sciences pretend to observe the intellectual procedures while we are thinking and feeling. Only in a manner of speaking are neuro-scientists capable of claiming to observe the human brain. All that they are able to see is the objective spatiotemporal architecture of our brain, but never the intellectual procedures of thinking, discerning and feeling, as Otfried Höffe explicates.<sup>27</sup> Neuro-sciences are concerned with neurological and biochemical processes in our brain. Action and thinking are based upon free will. Höffe states: freedom of action is the competence to act upon your own reasons, and this competence we can describe as practical reason in the Kantian sense. Responsible authorship consists of the combination of motivations and our own free will.<sup>28</sup> In thinking and acting we reside in the territory of reasons. Neuro-sciences are never able, within the limits of their methods, to examine the area of freedom and reasons. Neuro-sciences play a very important role, but they have to be aware of the limits of their empirical methods. Neuro-ethicists refer to the results of neuro-sciences and reports on pharmacological and technical enhancements of morality, for example beta blockers as an aid for anxiety. Neuro-scientists claim that these pharmaceuticals could help to reduce racist attitudes. Oxytocin would be able to help individuals to be generous, serene and benevolent. However, we have to make a clear contrast on two levels. On the one hand we

<sup>26</sup> Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Ethics*, p. 175.

<sup>27</sup> Otfried Höffe, “Der entlarvte Ruck,” pp. 178ff. and Otfried Höffe, *Lebenskunst und Moral?* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2007), pp. 246ff.

<sup>28</sup> Otfried Höffe, *Lebenskunst und Moral*, p. 253.

have the situation, that pharmaceuticals can forcibly raise concentration or put nervous human minds at ease. Though it is an unacceptable neurological reduction to assert the influence on reasons for actions. On the other hand, we have to be aware: the “kingdom of reasons” is unattainable through the use of pharmaceuticals. Markus Gabriel denotes this tendency, outlined above as “neurocentrism.”<sup>29</sup> Morality and ethics are based on liberty and free will. Medicine can certainly help against anxiety, depression and other mental health conditions. Neuro-enhancement through drugs helps at best to temporarily improve your concentration, though we have to be aware that they have a lot of harmful side effects. At best, they help to settle down destructive or distracted individuals, but this is never a moral enhancement, because drugs are not able to influence an individual’s freewill. There is a different area, which is reached through drugs, the biochemical sphere of our body, but drugs never ever reach the “kingdom of reasons.” Höffe argues: free volition is the “territory of reasons,” and neuronal correlates are never able to create free actions. Reasons are intellectual arguments, but not neuronal conditions or states of mind. Anyone who smuggles the term “reason,” which stems from the area of spirit and intellect, into the context of the brain and neuronal processes, commits a categorical error. Furthermore, anyone who suppresses this difference, commits intellectual fraud, Höffe explains.<sup>30</sup>

### The Philosophical Question of Human Beings

The noble duty of philosophy as a science of principle is to develop an adequate and non-reduced concept of human beings and of humanity. In this sense, philosophy has to be committed in being an advocate for fully developed humanity. It is a dangerous diminution of human beings to say “humankind is nothing short of ... a bundle of neuronal correlations.” This “nothing short of ...” is the eschatological creed of the self-misconception of empirical science, as Erich Heintel often argues in many of his lucid works.

On this subject, let us remember Gottfried Leibniz and his parable of the mill from *Monadology*. If our brain was a mill and one could walk around in this building, we would see some cogs and wheels, but we could never see a thought, such as the thought of justice, love or moral integrity. There is therefore necessarily a limit to the reach of sciences (such as brain research) in this respect. Philosophy has to take care to be sensible in respecting this limit. Diminutions of human beings cause many forms of injustice and discrimination against people. Philosophy is basically a cardinal ability of self-reflection of the human being, a systematic self-reflection. The noble task of philosophy is to develop a non-reductionist concept of human being and of humanity as a measure to refute diminutions in the idea of the human being.

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<sup>29</sup> Markus Gabriel, *Ich ist nicht Gehirn. Philosophie des Geistes für das 21. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Ullstein, 2015).

<sup>30</sup> Otfried Höffe, *Lebenskunst und Moral*, p. 261.

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## Occam's Razor: Simplicity versus Simplification or How to Deal with the Complex Images of Humanity

ELISABETH MENSCHL

### Introduction

William of Ockham is, along with Thomas Aquinas and John Duns Scotus, among the most prominent figures in the history of philosophy during the High Middle Ages. He is probably best known today for his espousal of metaphysical nominalism; indeed, the methodological principle known as "Occam's razor" is named after him. Still, Ockham's "nominalism," in both the first and the second of the above senses, is often viewed as being derived from a common source: an underlying concern for ontological parsimony. This is summed up in the famous slogan known as "Occam's razor," often expressed as, "Don't multiply entities beyond necessity."<sup>1</sup> Although the sentiment is certainly Ockham's, that particular formulation is nowhere to be found in his texts. The question, of course, is which entities are needed and which are not. Occam's razor, in the sense in which it can be found in Ockham himself, never allows us to *deny* putative entities; at best it allows us to refrain from positing them in the absence of known compelling reasons for doing so. Occam's razor is more commonly described as, "the simplest answer is most often the correct one," although this is an oversimplification. The "correct" interpretation is that entities should not be multiplied needlessly. It will be shown that the principle of simplicity, the central theme of Ockham's approach, may not be confounded with simplification or parsimony. Ockham uses the razor to eliminate unnecessary hypotheses, not to minimize entities. Without giving some considerations to Ockham's complete work, it is impossible to understand his "principle of simplicity" in an optimum way.

William of Ockham, also called *Doctor Invincibilis* or *Venerabilis Inceptor*: philosopher, theologian, political writer and late scholastic thinker. Ockham stood outside the mainstream of Catholic thought in his lifetime. He should not be interpreted as though he were a modern empiricist; he was a Franciscan and a theologian. There are various elements in Ockham's thought and it does not seem easy to synthesize all these elements; empiricist elements, the rationalist and logical elements and the theological element. One of Ockham's main issues as a philosopher was to purify Christian theology and the philosophy of Greek necessitarianism.<sup>2</sup> Methodologically, Ockham considered himself a devoted follower of Aristotle whom he called "The Philosopher." Ockham may have a unique understanding of Aristotle or he may be using Aristotle as cover for developing views he knew would be threatening to the status quo. In metaphysics, Ockham forces nominalism, the view that universal essences, such as humanity or whiteness, are nothing more than concepts in the mind. He develops an Aristotelian ontology, admitting only individual substances and qualities. In logic, Ockham presents a version of supposition theory which had various purposes in medieval logic, one of which was to explain how words bear meaning. Against the mainstream, he insists that theology is not a science and rejects all the alleged proofs of the existence of God. Ockham's ethics is a divine

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<sup>1</sup> For the history of "Occam's Razor," see Charles Kenneth Brampton, "A Note on the Manuscript Tradition of Ockham's Tractatus 'De Quantitate'," *Archivum franciscanum historicum* vol. 57 (1964), 383-391; Armand A. Maurer, "Method in Ockham's Nominalism," *The Monist*, 61 (1978), 426-443; and Armand A. Maurer, "Ockham's Razor and Chatton's Anti-Razor," *Mediaeval Studies* 46 (1) (1984), 463-475.

<sup>2</sup> Frederick J. Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, vol. 1-11 (London: Continuum, 1946-1986), vol. 3, p. 48.

command theory and can be seen as a consequence of his metaphysical libertarianism. In political theory, Ockham advances the notion of rights, separation of church and state, and freedom of speech.

### Metaphysics, Universals, and Nominalism

William of Ockham attacked one part of the metaphysics of essences because that part was a non-Christian invention, which had no place in Christian theology and philosophy. As to the other part of the metaphysics of essences, he attacked all forms of "realism," especially that of Duns Scotus by using 'terminist' logic. Ockham was not the inventor of terminist logic.<sup>3</sup>

The theory of supposition was used by Ockham in his discussion of the problem of universals and his rejection of all realist theories of universals. Ockham starts with a consideration of terms, but we should be aware of the fact that the ascription to Ockham of various logical words and notions should not necessarily be taken to imply that he invented them. Ockham called the concept or *terminus conceptus* a "natural sign" because he thought that the direct apprehension of anything causes a concept of that thing in our minds. When Ockham is called a nominalist, it should not be meant that he ascribed universality to words considered precisely as *termini prolati* or *scripti* that would be the consideration of terms as conventional signs: it was the natural sign, the *terminus conceptus* he was thinking of.<sup>4</sup> Ockham's answer to the problem of universals was thus: universals are terms which signify individual things and which stand for them in propositions. Only individual things exist and by the very fact that a thing exists it is individual. There are not and cannot be existent universals.

One of the most basic challenges in metaphysics is to explain how it is that things are the same despite differences. The fact that things change through time and vary from place to place does not seem to prevent us from having knowledge. From this point, some philosophers, such as Plato and Augustine, draw the conclusion that for example, Heraclitus was wrong to suppose that everything is in flux. Something stays the same, something that lays underneath the changing and varying surfaces we perceive, namely, the universal essence of things.

For example, although individual human beings change from day to day and vary from place to place, they all share the universal essence of humanity, which is eternally the same. For trees, oceans, and even qualities there must be a universal essence of blueness, heat and anything else one can think of. Universal essences are not physical realities; if you dissect a human being, you will not find humanity inside like you would a heart or a stomach! Nevertheless, universal essences are metaphysical realities, they provide the invisible structure of things.

Belief in universal essences is called "metaphysical realism," because it asserts that universal essences are real even though we cannot physically see them. Ockham rejects metaphysical realism and skepticism in favor of nominalism: the view that universal essences are concepts in the mind. Earlier nominalists such as the French philosopher Roscelin had advanced the more radical view that universal essences are just names that have no basis in reality. Ockham developed a more sophisticated version of nominalism often called "conceptualism" because it holds that universal essences are concepts caused in our minds when we perceive real similarities among things in the world. His main point is that there is no need to postulate any factors other than the mind and individuals in order to explain the universal. The concepts of universals arise simply because there are varying degrees of similarity between individual things. Ockham prefers to say the universal concept is an act of understanding.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

For example, when a child comes in contact with different human beings over time, it begins to form the concept of humanity. The realist would say that he has detected the invisible common structure of these individuals. Ockham, in contrast, insists that the child has merely perceived similarities that fit into one concept.

Ockham is convinced that realism is incoherent. Incoherence means that the theory contains a contradiction and contradictions cannot be true. Ockham asserts that metaphysical realism cannot be true because it holds that a universal essence is one thing and many things at the same time. The form of humanity is one thing, because it is what all humans have in common, but it is also many things because it provides an invisible structure of each one of us as an individual. That is to say that it is both one thing and not one thing at the same time, which is a contradiction. Ockham writes, "There is no universal outside the mind really existing in individual substances or in the essences of things ... The reason is that everything that is not many things is necessarily one thing in number and consequently a singular thing."<sup>5</sup>

Ockham presents a thought experiment to prove universal essences do not exist. He writes that according to realism,

... it would follow that God would not be able to annihilate one individual substance without destroying the other individuals of the same kind. For, if he were to annihilate one individual, he would destroy the whole that is essentially that individual and, consequently, he would destroy the universal that is in it and in others of the same essence. Other things of the same essence would not remain, for they could not continue to exist without the universal that constitutes a part of them.<sup>6</sup>

Since God is omnipotent, he should be able to annihilate a human being. The universal form of humanity lies within that human being. By destroying the individual, he will destroy the universal. If he destroys the universal, which is humanity, then he destroys all the other humans as well. It is tempting to assume that Ockham rejects metaphysical realism because of the principle of simplicity. After all, realism requires believing in invisible entities that might not actually exist. As a matter of fact, however, Ockham never uses the razor to attack realism and on closer examination, this makes sense.

Epistemology is the study of knowledge, but what is it, and how do we come to have it? There are two basic approaches to epistemology; rationalists claim that knowledge consists of innate certainties that we discover through reason; empiricists claim that knowledge consists in accurate perceptions that we accumulate through experience. Following Aristotle, Ockham asserts that there are no innate certainties to be discovered in our minds. We learn by observing qualities in objects, Ockham denies that there is any intermediary between the perceiver and the world.

Ockham pre-empts idealism through the notion of intuitive cognition, which plays a crucial role in his four-step account of knowledge acquisition. It can be summarized as follows. The first step is sensory cognition: receiving data through the five senses. This is an ability human beings share with other animals. The second step, intuitive cognition, is uniquely human. Intuitive cognition is the awareness that the particular individual perceived exists and possesses the qualities it has. The third step is recordative cognition, by which we remember past perceptions. The fourth step is abstractive cognition, by which we place individuals in

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<sup>5</sup> William of Ockham, *Opera Philosophica et Theologica*, ed. by Gedeon Gál, et al. (St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: The Franciscan Institute, 1967-1988), vol. II, pp. 11-12.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

groups of similar individuals. In normal adult human perception, all four of the above steps happen together so quickly that it is hard to separate them.<sup>7</sup>

Although the human mind is born without any knowledge, according to Ockham, it does come fully equipped with a system for processing perceptions as they are acquired. This system is thought, which Ockham understands in terms of an unspoken, mental language. The term "human being" means human being because the concept you think of when you write it or say it was caused by the human beings you have perceived. Human beings cause the same kinds of concepts in all human beings. Written and spoken language is conventional, signification itself is natural. Ockham was the first philosopher to develop in some detail the notion of "mental language" and to put it to work. Aristotle, Boethius and several others had mentioned it before, but Ockham's innovation was to systematically transpose to the analysis of human thought both the grammatical categories of his time, such as those of noun, verb, adverb, singular, plural and so on, and even more importantly, the central semantical ideas of signification, connotation, and supposition. Written words for him are "subordinated" to "spoken words," and spoken words in turn are "subordinated" to mental units called "concepts," which can be combined into syntactically structured mental propositions, just as spoken and written words can be combined into audible or visible sentences.<sup>8</sup> Although supposition theory was a major preoccupation of late medieval logicians, scholars are still divided over its purpose. Some think it was an effort to build a system of formal logic that ultimately failed. Others think it was more akin to a modern theory of logical form.

Ockham's interest in supposition theory seems motivated by his concern to clarify conceptual confusion. Ockham asserts that many philosophical errors arise due to the misunderstanding of language. He took metaphysical realism to be a prime example. Conceiving of human beings in general leads us to use the word "humanity." Metaphysical realists conclude that this word must refer to a universal essence within all human beings. For Ockham, however, the word "humanity" stands for a habit that enables us to conceive of all the human beings we have perceived to date in a very efficient manner: stripped of all of their individual details. In this way, only absolute names, that is, concepts signifying things composed of matter and form, have definitions expressing real essence. Some examples of this sort of name are "human being," "horse" and "dog." Connotative and relative names, on the other hand, which signify one thing directly and another thing indirectly, have definitions expressing nominal essence. Some examples of this sort of name are "white," "hot," "parent," and "child."<sup>9</sup>

Although the distinction between absolute and connotative terms seems minor, Ockham uses it for radical purposes. Aristotle holds that there are ten categories of existing things as follows: substance, quality, quantity, relation, place, time, position, state, action, and passion. According to Ockham's reading, however, Aristotle holds that there are only two categories of existing things: substance and quality. Ockham bases his interpretation on the thesis that only substances and qualities have real essence definitions signifying things composed of matter and form. The other eight categories signify a substance or a quality while connoting some-

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<sup>7</sup> See Calvin G. Normore, "Some Aspects of Ockham's Logic," in Paul Vincent Spade (Ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Ockham* (Cambridge Companions to Philosophy) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 31-52, here: p. 33. This notion of signification is ultimately derived from Aristotle, *On Interpretation* 3, 16b19-21, and especially from Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, II, 1.1.

<sup>8</sup> See Claude Panaccio, "Semantics and Mental Language," in Paul Vincent Spade (Ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Ockham* (Cambridge Companions to Philosophy) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 53-75, here: p. 53.

<sup>9</sup> See Ockham, *Opera Philosophica et Theologica*, vol. IX, p. 554.

thing else. They therefore have nominal essence definitions, meaning that they are not things in existence.<sup>10</sup>

One question scholars continue to ask is why Ockham allows for two of the ten categories to remain instead of just one, namely, substance. It seems that qualities, such as whiteness, sweetness etc., can just as easily be reduced to nominal essences; they signify the substance itself while connoting the nose or eye that perceives it. Of course, if Ockham had eliminated quality, he really would have had no basis left for saving the miracle of transubstantiation. Perhaps that was reason enough to stay his razor.

Let us consider briefly Ockham's theory of science: He divides science into two main types, real science (*scientia realis*) which is concerned with real things and rational science (*scientia rationalis*) which is concerned with terms which do not stand immediately for real things. Thus logic, which deals with terms of second intention like "species" and "genus," is a rational science.<sup>11</sup> Ockham tried to keep theology separate from science and philosophy, "If I accepted no authority, I would claim that it cannot be proved either from statements known in themselves or from experience that every effect has a final cause ... Someone who is just following natural reason would claim that the question 'why?' is inappropriate in the case of natural actions."<sup>12</sup> For Ockham it is not a real question to ask something such as; for what reason is fire generated? Ockham rejects all of the alleged proofs of the existence of God.

### Ockham on Ethics

Ockham's ethics combines a number of themes. For one, it is a *will*-based ethics in which intentions count for everything and external behavior or actions count for nothing. In themselves, all actions are morally neutral. Widely divergent interpretations are current. Some consider Ockham to be a voluntarist, others a rationalist.<sup>13</sup> Others confirm that Ockham is simply inconsistent, while others still have attempted to mediate the conflict between voluntarism and rationalism.

For Peter King, Ockham presents his ethical theory not in a systematic way, but rather in remarks and discussions scattered throughout his writings, a fact that has obscured the structure of his views.<sup>14</sup> He worked within a tradition of moral philosophy that took the basic normative principles to be given in the Bible and the conceptual tools of moral theory to be given by Aristotle. Morality deals with human acts that are within our control, with acts that are subject to the power of the will according to the natural dictate of reason and other circumstances.<sup>15</sup>

Ockham asks whether there can be demonstrative knowledge with respect to morality. He distinguishes two parts of ethical theory: positive moral knowledge which "contains human

<sup>10</sup> See Calvin G. Normore, *The Logic of Time and Modality in the Later Middle Ages: The Contribution of William of Ockham* (Ph.D. dissertation: University of Toronto, 1975); and Elizabeth Karger, *A Study of William of Ockham's Modal Logic* (Ph.D. dissertation: University of California, 1976).

<sup>11</sup> See Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, vol. 3, pp. 54-58.

<sup>12</sup> See Ockham, *Summa totius logicae* 3, 2.

<sup>13</sup> See William of Ockham, *Philosophical Writings*, ed. and transl. by Philotheus Boehner, rev. ed. (Indianapolis, IN.: Hackett, 1990), pp. xlviii ff.

<sup>14</sup> Peter King, "Ockham's Ethical Theory," in Paul Vincent Spade (Ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Ockham* (Cambridge Companions to Philosophy) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 227-244.

<sup>15</sup> William of Ockham, *Quodlibetal Questions*, transl. by Alfred J. Freddoso and Francis E. Kelly (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1991), 2, 14 (= *Opera Philosophica et Theologica*, vol. IX, pp. 176, 11-177, 16).

and divine laws that obligate one to pursue or to avoid things that are good or evil only because they are prohibited or commanded by a superior whose role it is to establish the laws," namely a superior such as a legislator or God; non-positive moral knowledge which "directs human actions without any precept from a superior, as principles that are either known per se or by experience direct them."<sup>16</sup> The former is regulated by logic and reason but is based on positive laws or commands that need not be evidently known. The latter is a matter of principles that are evidently known and the conclusions that can be drawn from them, and so can be formulated in demonstrative form. Positive morality, consisting of divine commands, can clearly provide substantive moral content to human action. Non-positive morality consists of ethical principles that are either known per se or derived from experience.<sup>17</sup>

Ockham holds that all acts are morally neutral, neither good nor bad in themselves, except for the act of loving God above all else for his own sake. One and the same act is good when combined with one intention and evil when combined with another. His typical example is of a person who sets off to church intending to praise and honor God, but at some point continues his journey out of vainglory.<sup>18</sup> Only the agent's intentions are good or evil, although the acts corresponding to them may be extrinsically denominated as such.

There is a strong aspect of divine command theory in Ockham's ethics. Nevertheless, despite the divine command themes in Ockham's ethics, it is also clear that he wanted morality to be a matter of reason to some extent. Unlike Augustine, Ockham accepted the possibility of the "virtuous pagan"; moral virtue for Ockham does not depend on having access to revelation. A virtue is a habit of the will inclining one toward good acts. The highest degree of a given virtue attainable by an unbeliever is to be habitually disposed to will the good acts associated with that virtue, "precisely and solely because they are dictated by right reason."<sup>19</sup> While moral virtue is possible even for the pagan, moral virtue is not enough for salvation by itself. Salvation requires not just virtue but merit, and merit requires grace, a free gift from God. In short, there is no necessary connection between virtue, moral goodness and salvation. Ockham repeatedly emphasizes that "God is a debtor to no one"; he does not *owe* us anything, no matter what we do. In his view, God does not conform to an independently existing standard of goodness; rather, God himself is the standard of goodness. This means it is not the case that God commands us to be kind because kindness is good. Rather, kindness is good because God commands it. Ockham was a divine command theorist: God's will establishes right and wrong.<sup>20</sup> In Ockham's view, God always has commanded and always will command kindness. Nevertheless, it is possible for him to command otherwise. This possibility is a straightforward requirement of divine omnipotence: the most important thing to understand about God's nature, in Ockham's view, is that it is maximally free. There are no constraints, external or internal, to what God can will.

Ockham grants that it is hard to imagine a world in which God reverses his commands. Yet this is the price of preserving divine freedom,

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* (= *Opera Philosophica et Theologica*, vol. IX, p. 177, 18-28).

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* (= *Opera Philosophica et Theologica*, vol. IX, p. 176, 26-27).

<sup>18</sup> Ockham, Sent., 3q, 11 (*Opera Philosophica et Theologica*, vol. VI, p. 360, 8-16).

<sup>19</sup> See Ockham, *Opera Philosophica et Theologica*, vol. VIII, p. 335.

<sup>20</sup> See William of Ockham, *Ockham on the Virtues*, transl. by Rega Wood (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press); Marilyn McCord Adams, "The Structure of Ockham's Moral Theory," *Franciscan Studies* 29 (1986), 1-35; Lucan Freppert, *Basis of Morality According to William Ockham* (Chicago: Franciscan Press, 1988), pp. 83-89; King, "Ockham's Ethical Theory."

I reply that hatred, theft, adultery, and the like may involve evil according to the common law, in so far as they are done by someone who is obligated by a divine command to perform the opposite act. As far as everything absolute in these actions is concerned, however, God can perform them without involving any evil. And they can even be performed meritoriously by someone on earth if they should fall under a divine command, just as now the opposite of these, in fact, fall under a divine command.<sup>21</sup>

Ockham feels confident that we experience freedom. We can no more dismiss this experience than we can dismiss our experience of the external world. Free will is the uniquely human dignity that enables us to break the tie between two equally reasonable options. Free will is at the core of human nature.

Although Ockham is very suspicious of the notion of final causality and teleology in general, Ockham grants that human beings have a natural orientation, a tendency toward their own ultimate good; he does not think this restricts their choices. I might choose, for example, to do nothing at all, and I might choose this knowing full well what I am doing. Moreover: I can choose to act in full knowledge and awareness directly *against* my ultimate good, I can choose evil *as evil*. For Ockham these conclusions are not just required by theory; they are confirmed by experience.<sup>22</sup>

### Political Philosophy

Ockham's contributions in political thought are less well-known and appreciated than they may have been if he had been able to publish them. His role in history was to make way for new ideas. While Ockham was not allowed to publish his political treatises, they circulated widely underground, indirectly influencing major developments in political thought. The divine command themes so prominent in Ockham's ethics are much more muted in his political theory, which on the contrary tends to be far more "natural" and "secular." Ockham's political writings began at Avignon with a discussion of the issue of poverty. At a later stage the issues were generalized to include church-state relations more broadly. He was one of the first medieval authors to advocate a form of church-state separation, and was important for the early development of the notion of property rights.<sup>23</sup>

The Franciscan Order at this time was divided into two parties, which came to be known as the "Conventuals" and the "Spirituals." The Spirituals, whose members included William of Ockham, Michael of Cesena and the other exiles, who joined them in fleeing Avignon, tried to preserve the original ideal of austere poverty practiced and advocated by St. Francis himself. The Conventuals, on the other hand, while recognizing this ideal, were prepared to compromise in order to accommodate the practical needs of a large, organized religious order. The Conventuals comprised the vast majority of the order.

As a nominalist Ockham was in an excellent position to show why reducing something to a name is not the same as reducing it to nothing at all. A name is a mental concept, and a mental concept is an intention. Ockham set out to show that the intention to use is distinct from the intention to own. Ownership is not just a conventional relationship established through social agreement. It is a natural relationship that arises through the act of making something of your own free will. Free will naturally confers ownership because it implies sole responsibility. To

<sup>21</sup> Ockham, *Opera Philosophica et Theologica*, vol. V, p. 352.

<sup>22</sup> See Armand A. Maurer, *Medieval Philosophy* (New York: Random House, 1962), pp. 285-286.

<sup>23</sup> See Guillaume Mollat, *The Popes in Avignon 1307-1378* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1963), pp. 16-20.

own something is to do what you will with it. The Franciscans do not do as they will with the donations given to them, according to Ockham, but rather as the owner wills because the owner retains a right (*ius*) to what he owns.<sup>24</sup>

The notion of a right is one of the most important characteristics of modern political theory and its emergence in the history of Western thought is a long and complicated story. Nevertheless, the Franciscan poverty debate is widely considered an important turning point in social and political philosophy, in which Ockham played a significant role.

### The Separation of Church and State

Ockham extends his commitment to poverty beyond just the Franciscan order, convinced that wealth is an inappropriate source of power for the Catholic Church as a whole. In his view, the Catholic Church has a spiritual power which sets it apart from the secular world. This conviction leads Ockham to propose the doctrine that was to become the foundation of many Western Democratic constitutions (e.g. for the United States Constitution): the separation of church and state.

Throughout the Middle Ages the political momentum was split in two directions and it was not at all clear which way things would go. One side pushed for hierocracy, where the pope, as the highest authority, appoints the emperor. The other side pushed for imperialism, where the emperor, as the highest authority, appoints the pope. Ockham proposes a third alternative: the pope and the emperor should be separate but equal, each supreme in his own domain. This was an outrageous suggestion, unwelcome on both sides.

In the Garden of Eden, God gave the earth to human beings to use to their common benefit. As long as we were willing to share there was no need for property among us. After the fall, however, human beings became selfish and exploitative. Laws became necessary to restrain immoderate appetite for secular or "temporal" goods and to prevent the neglect of their management. Since laws are useless without the ability to enforce them, we arrived at the need for secular power. The function of the secular power is to punish law-breakers and in general coerce everyone into obeying the law.

By renouncing property, the Franciscans were attempting to live as God originally intended. In a perfect world, there would be no need for property and the coercive authority it spawns. All Christians should aspire to this anarchic utopia, even though they may never fully achieve it. In the meantime, they should avoid mixing the spiritual and the secular as much as possible. For this reason, the head of Christians does not, as a rule, have power to punish secular wrongs with a capital penalty and other bodily penalties and it is for thus punishing such wrongs that temporal power and riches are chiefly necessary; such punishment is granted chiefly to the secular power. The pope therefore, can, as a rule, correct wrongdoers only with a spiritual penalty. For Ockham, the separation of church and state is a separation of the ideal and the real.

### Freedom of Speech

Although Ockham never came to criticize the institution of the papacy itself, as later Protestant thinkers would, he did accuse the popes he opposed of heresy and called for their expulsion. Ironically, Ockham's extensive analysis of the concept of heresy turns into a defense

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<sup>24</sup> See John Kilcullen, "The Political Writings," in Paul Vincent Spade (Ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Ockham* (Cambridge Companions to Philosophy) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 302-325.



of free speech. In keeping with his doctrine of the separation of church and state, Ockham maintains that the pope, and only the pope, has the right to impose spiritual penalties, and only spiritual penalties, against someone who knowingly asserts theological falsehoods and refuses to be corrected. A man might unknowingly assert a theological falsehood a thousand times, however. As long as he is willing to be corrected, he should not be judged a heretic, especially by the pope.

Ockham's political treatises are strewn with biblical exegesis. In Matthew 28:20 Jesus promises his disciples, "I will be with you always, to the end of the age." This text traditionally provided justification for the doctrine of papal infallibility according to which the pope cannot be wrong when speaking about official church matters. Ockham rejects this doctrine; any theological claim, no matter how ancient or universally accepted, is always open for dispute, "... purely philosophical assertions which do not pertain to theology should not be solemnly condemned or forbidden by anyone, because in connection with such assertions anyone at all ought to be free to say freely what pleases him."<sup>25</sup> This statement long predates the *Areopagitica* of John Milton, which is typically heralded as the earliest defense of free speech in Western history.

### The Razor as the Principle of Simplicity

There is a widespread philosophical presumption that simplicity is a theoretical virtue and the simpler the theory the better. Often it remains implicit; sometimes it is invoked as a primitive, self-evident proposition; other times it is elevated to the status of a "Principle" and labeled as such for example, the "Principle of Parsimony" the "Principle of Economy" and so on. However, it is perhaps best known by the name "Occam's (or Ockham's) razor." Simplicity principles have been proposed in various forms by theologians, philosophers, and scientists, from ancient through medieval to modern times. Thus Aristotle claims in his *Posterior Analytics*, that we may assume the superiority *ceteris paribus* of the demonstration which derives from fewer postulates or hypotheses. Moving to the medieval period, Aquinas notes, "if a thing can be done adequately by means of one, it is superfluous to do it by means of several; for we observe that nature does not employ two instruments where one suffices."<sup>26</sup> Kant supports in *Critique of Pure Reason* the maxim that "rudiments or principles must not be unnecessarily multiplied" (*entia praeter necessitatem non esse multiplicanda*), and argues that this is a regulative idea of pure reason which underlies scientists' theorizing about nature.<sup>27</sup> Both Galileo and Newton accepted versions of "Occam's razor." Indeed, Newton includes a principle of parsimony as one and the first of his three "Rules of Reasoning in Philosophy" at the beginning of Book III of *Principia Mathematica*: we are to admit no more causes of natural things than such as are both true and sufficient to explain their appearances. Newton goes on to remark that "Nature is pleased with simplicity, and affects not the pomp of superfluous causes."<sup>28</sup> Galileo, in the course of making a detailed comparison of the Ptolemaic and Copernican models of the solar system, maintains that "Nature does not multiply things unnecessarily; that she makes use of the easiest and simplest means for producing her effects; that she does nothing in vain,

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<sup>25</sup> See William of Ockham, *Dialogus*, ed. by John Kilcullen *et al.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 2011), I, 2, 22.

<sup>26</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Basic Writings of St. Thomas Aquinas* (New York: Random House), p. 129.

<sup>27</sup> Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason* (New York: Humanities Press, 1950), pp. 538-539.

<sup>28</sup> Isaac Newton, *The Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy (Principia Mathematica)* (New York: Citadel Press, 1964), p. 398.

and the like."<sup>29</sup> For some, the principle of simplicity implies that the world is maximally simple. Aquinas, for example, argues that nature does not employ two instruments where one suffices. Nevertheless, we do sometimes have sufficient methodological grounds for positively affirming the existence of certain things. Ockham acknowledges three sources for such grounds of positive knowledge, "For nothing ought to be posited without a reason given, unless it is self-evident or known by experience or proved by the authority of Sacred Scripture."<sup>30</sup>

This interpretation of the principle is also suggested by its most popular formulation: entities should not be multiplied beyond necessity. Yet this is a problematic assertion. In any case, Ockham never makes this assumption and he does not use the popular formulation of the principle. For Ockham, the principle of simplicity limits the multiplication of hypotheses, not necessarily entities and may be, he would have preferred the formulation: it is useless to do with more what can be done with less. Ockham implies that theories are meant to do things, namely, explain and predict, and these things can be accomplished more effectively with fewer assumptions. Ockham advocates simplicity in order to reduce the risk of error. Every hypothesis carries the possibility that it may be wrong. The more hypotheses you accept, the more you increase your risk. Ockham strove to avoid error at all times, even if it meant abandoning well-loved, traditional beliefs.

### Simplicity versus Simplification

The philosophical issues surrounding the notion of simplicity are numerous and somewhat tangled. The apparent familiarity of the notion of simplicity means that it is often left unanalyzed, while its vagueness and multiplicity of meanings contributes to the challenge of pinning the notion down precisely. A distinction is often made between two fundamentally distinct senses of simplicity: syntactic simplicity, the number and complexity of hypotheses and ontological simplicity, the number and complexity of things/entities postulated. These two facets of simplicity are often referred to as *elegance* and *parsimony* respectively. For the purposes of the present overview I will follow this usage and reserve "parsimony" specifically for simplicity in the ontological sense, in my term "simplification." It should be noted, however, that the terms "parsimony" and "simplicity" are used virtually interchangeably in much of the philosophical literature, thus my definition of parsimony is simplification. Principles such as "Occam's razor" are frequently stated in a way which is ambiguous between the two notions, for example, "Don't multiply postulations beyond necessity." Here it is unclear whether "postulation" refers to the entities being postulated or the hypotheses which are doing the postulating, or both.

While these two facets of simplicity are frequently conflated, it is important to treat them as distinct. One reason for doing so is that considerations of parsimony (simplification) and of elegance (simplicity) typically pull in different directions: Postulating extra entities may allow a theory to be formulated more simply, while reducing the ontology of a theory may only be possible at the price of making it syntactically more complex. There is typically a trade-off between ontology and ideology to use the terminology favored by Quine in which contraction in one domain requires expansion in the other. This shows another way of characterizing the simplicity-elegance and the simplification-parsimony distinction, in terms of simplicity of theory versus simplification of world. Sober argues that both these facets of simplicity can be interpreted in terms of minimization and both forms of minimization pull in the same

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<sup>29</sup> Galileo Galilei, *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962), p. 397.

<sup>30</sup> See Ockham, *Opera Philosophica et Theologica*, vol. I, dist. 30, q. 1.

direction; postulating the existence of such entities makes both our theories of the world and the world as represented by our theories less simple than they might be.<sup>31</sup> Sober has expressed dissatisfaction with epistemological justifications for Occam's razor. He thinks that there must be a metaphysical presupposition for Occam's razor, but offers no alternatives.

This question concerns potential justifications for principles of ontological parsimony/simplification such as "Occam's razor." The demand for justification of such principles can be understood in two importantly distinct ways, corresponding to the distinction between epistemic principles and methodological principles. Justifying an epistemic principle requires answering an epistemic question: why are parsimonious theories more likely to be true? The case is more difficult to make for ontological parsimony/simplification. Before looking at approaches to answering the epistemic justification question, we should mention two positions in the literature which do not fall squarely into either the pragmatic or epistemic frame. The first position, associated primarily with Quine, argues that parsimony carries with it pragmatic advantages and that pragmatic considerations themselves provide rational grounds for discriminating between competing theories.<sup>32</sup> Quine's position bases an answer to the second question on the answer to the first, thus blurring the boundary between pragmatic and epistemic justification. The second position, due to Sober, rejects the implicit assumption in both the above questions that some global justification of parsimony can be found, "The legitimacy of parsimony stands or falls, in a particular research context, on subject matter specific (and *a posteriori*) considerations."<sup>33</sup> What makes parsimony reasonable in one context may have nothing in common with why it matters in another.

Philosophers who reject these arguments of Quine and Sober, and thus take the demand for a global, epistemic justification seriously, have developed a variety of approaches to justifying parsimony. Most of these approaches can be collected under two broad headings: *a priori* philosophical, metaphysical, or theological justifications and naturalistic justifications, based on appeal to scientific practice.

### A Priori Justifications of Simplicity

The role of simplicity as a theoretical virtue seems so widespread, fundamental, and implicit that many philosophers, scientists, and theologians have sought a justification for principles such as "Occam's razor" on similarly broad and basic grounds. This rationalist approach is connected to the view that making *a priori* simplicity assumptions is the only way to get around the underdetermination of theory by data. Until the second half of the twentieth century this was probably the predominant approach to the issue of simplicity. Despite its changing fortunes, the rationalist approach to simplicity still has its adherents, for example Richard Swinburne,

I seek ... to show that – other things being equal – the simplest hypothesis proposed as an explanation of phenomena is more likely to be the true one than is any other available hypothesis, that its predictions are more likely to be true

<sup>31</sup> See Elliott Sober, "What is the Problem of Simplicity?" in A. Zellner, H. Keuzenkamp, and M. McAleer (eds.), *Simplicity, Inference, and Modelling* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 13-31.

<sup>32</sup> See W.V.O. Quine, "On Simple Theories of a Complex World," in W.V.O. Quine, *The Ways of Paradox* (New York: Random House, 1966), pp. 250-252.

<sup>33</sup> Elliott Sober, "Let's Razor Ockham's razor," in Elliott Sober, *From A Biological Point of View* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 136-157.

than those of any other available hypothesis, and that it is an ultimate *a priori* epistemic principle that simplicity is evidence for truth.<sup>34</sup>

One approach to justifying simplicity principles is to embed such principles in some more general metaphysical framework. Perhaps the clearest historical example of systematic metaphysics of this sort is the work of Leibniz. The leading contemporary example of this approach and in one sense a direct descendant of Leibniz's methodology is the "possible worlds" framework of David Lewis, "I subscribe to the general view that qualitative parsimony is good in a philosophical or empirical hypothesis."<sup>35</sup> Lewis has been attacked for not saying more about what exactly he takes simplicity to be.<sup>36</sup> However, what is clear is that simplicity plays a key role in underpinning his metaphysical framework, and is also taken to be a theoretical virtue.

Some philosophers have approached the issue of justifying simplicity principles by arguing that simplicity has intrinsic value as a theoretical goal. Sober, for example, writes: Just as the question "why be rational?" may have no non-circular answer, the same may be true of the question "why should simplicity be considered in evaluating the plausibility of hypotheses?"<sup>37</sup> Such intrinsic value may be "primitive" in some sense, or it may be analyzable as one aspect of a broader value. In general, forging a connection between aesthetic virtue and simplicity principles seems better suited to defending methodological rather than epistemic principles.

### Naturalistic Justifications of Simplicity

From the naturalistic perspective, philosophy is conceived of as contiguous with science, and not as having some independently privileged status. The perspective of the naturalistic philosopher may be broader, but her concerns and methods are not fundamentally different from those of the scientist. The conclusion is that science neither needs nor can legitimately be given external philosophical justification.

Helen Longino mainly criticizes Quine's approach of underdetermination and argues that underdetermination arguments support the conclusion that no amount of empirical data can uniquely determine theory choice. The full content of a theory outreaches the elements of it (the observational elements) that can be shown to be true (or in agreement with actual observations). A number of strategies have been developed to minimize the threat such arguments pose to our aspirations to scientific knowledge. Longino wants to focus on one such strategy: the invocation of additional criteria drawn from a pool of cognitive or theoretical values, such as simplicity or generality, to bolster judgments about the worth of models, theories, and hypotheses. What is the status of such criteria? Longino is not interested in the purportedly self-validating nature of cognitive values, but their cognitive nature. It is this cognitive/noncognitive distinction that Longino wishes to query. Longino argues against simplicity as follows: simplicity discriminates between more or less probable theories only if it applies to all competing accounts of explanation, the universe is simple, or does not depend on conventions for describing data. Simplicity does not apply to all competing accounts of explanation. There can be no evidence that the universe is simple. Simplicity depends on conventions for describing

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<sup>34</sup> Richard Swinburne, *Simplicity as Evidence for Truth* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1997), p. 1.

<sup>35</sup> David Lewis, *Counterfactuals* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), p. 87.

<sup>36</sup> See James Woodward, *Making Things Happen: A Theory of Causal Explanation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

<sup>37</sup> Sober, "What is the Problem of Simplicity," p. 19.

data. Simplicity does not discriminate between more or less probable theories.<sup>38</sup> Her arguments against simplicity affirm my conviction against parsimony-simplification, but unfortunately Longino does not distinguish not between simplicity and simplification.

Simplicity can be a deceptive tactic, when used to obfuscate and simple explanations have complex underpinnings. Our "simple" explanations are only simple, because we choose to conort reality in extremely exhaustive complexities in order to force simplicity. Simplicity, on many occasions, is only an illusion. Simplicity implies that enough data exists to warrant a conclusion regarding an observation, thus further implies that a disposition must be tendered immediately. Simplicity in this fashion is sold through the construction of a false dilemma; a fatal logical fallacy. A focus on simplicity rather than utility can bias a person against the incremental nature of scientific explanatory progression. When rational thinking becomes nothing more than an exercise in simply dismissing observations to suit one's inherited ontology, then the entire integral will and mind of the individual participating in such activity, has been broken.

Be aware of the tyranny of the simple! Simplification as a principle of discretion is best suited for the clear application of judgments and governances, and as such is usually based on sets of laws and procedure, which change only slowly and under great necessity. Laws only change as people change, and people are slow to change. As a result of this, laws of governance are always behind current understandings. Unassailable principles of governance have little place in discovery and science. The principle of parsimony or simplification builds the basis of methodological reductionism. In its simplest form the so-called "razor" states that one should not make more assumptions than needed. When multiple explanations are available for a phenomenon, the simplest version is preferred. Scientists who use reductionist methods often take an approach that relies on contradicting previous contributions in their own context to science in order to validate a new theory, when sometimes there is no need to disprove existing theories in order to provide new insight.

Occam's razor is a sharp but not universal tool, and needs to be wielded with the proper care demanded by specific circumstances. There is no shortcut for a serious investigation of the world, including the spelling out of our auxiliary, and often unexplored, hypotheses and assumptions. As a methodological principle, the demand for simplicity suggested by Occam's razor cannot be generally sustained. Occam's razor cannot help toward a rational decision between competing explanations of the same empirical facts. One problem in formulating an explicit general principle is that complexity and simplicity are perspective notions, whose meaning depends on the context of application and the user's prior understanding. Uncertainty and non-existence cannot be deduced from Occam's razor alone. It can separate two theories that make the same predictions, but do not rule out other theories that might make a different prediction. Empirical evidence is also required and Ockham himself argued *for* empiricism, not *against* it. In the absence of an objective criterion for simplicity and complexity, Occam's razor itself does not support an objective epistemology.

### Conclusion

Occam's razor is known by several different names including the "Principle of Parsimony," "The Principle of Simplicity," and "The Principle of Economy." The reason for these alternate names can be explained by the association of simplicity and parsimony/simplifica-

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<sup>38</sup> Helen F. Longino, "Cognitive and Non-Cognitive Values in Science: Rethinking the Dichotomy," in Lynn Hankinson Nelson and Jack Nelson (eds.), *Feminism, Science, and the Philosophy of Science* (Dordrecht, NL: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1996), pp. 39-58.

tion. Prior to the twentieth century it was believed that the metaphysical justification for Occam's razor was simplicity. It was thought that nature was in some sense simple and that our theories about nature should reflect that simplicity. With such a metaphysical justification came the implication that Occam's razor is a metaphysical principle. From the beginning of the twentieth century, these views fell out of favor as scientists presented an increasingly complex worldview. In response, philosophers turned away from metaphysical justifications for Occam's razor to epistemological ones including inductive, pragmatic, likelihood and probabilistic justifications, which is where things stand today. Thus, Occam's razor is currently conceived of as a methodological principle. Within philosophy, the razor is often wielded against metaphysical theories which involve allegedly superfluous ontological apparatus. Thus, materialists about the mind may use "Occam's razor" against dualism, on the grounds that dualism postulates an extra ontological category for mental phenomena. Similarly, nominalists about abstract objects may use Occam's razor against their Platonist opponents, taking them to task for committing to an uncountable vast realm of abstract mathematical entities. The aim of appeals to simplicity in such contexts seem to be more about shifting the burden of proof, and less about refuting the less simple theory outright.

Researchers should avoid "stacking" information to prove a theory if a simpler explanation fits the observations. Occam's razor is the process of paring down information to make finding the truth easier. In science, it is getting rid of all the assumptions that make no difference to the predictions of the hypothesis. If you have a few hypotheses that could explain an observation, it is usually best to start with the simplest one. Occam's razor is not part of the reasoning process, as such, because it makes no definition of the relative strength of a theory. It is a "heuristic maxim." The purpose of Occam's razor is to begin the scientific method, not screen data out and finish it.

The abuse or misuse of "Occam's razor" is a key indicator as to an individual's lack of scientific literacy. Some have even found a use for "Occam's razor" to justify cost-cutting, arguing that "what can be done with less is done in vain with more." This approach seems to apply "Occam's razor" to the principle itself, eliminating the word "assumptions." It also confuses matters by confusing "less" with "fewer." Ockham was concerned with fewer assumptions, not less money. As mentioned before, Ockham himself never uses the razor to attack realism or to keep things simple. Simplicity is subjective and the universe does not always have the same ideas about simplicity as we do. Consider this: simplification is a misuse of simplicity!

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## Humanization and Desire: The Symbolic Dimensions in the Thinking of Jacques Lacan

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The whole thinking of Jacques Lacan could be interpreted as a continuous exegesis of Freud's works and as a return to Freud's authentic truth. One of the main questions of both thinkers is the question of desire (*Wunsch, désir*). In his systematical re-thinking of the Freudian heritage, Lacan is convinced that the humanization of human life thoroughly corresponds to the *humanization of desire*. I have to say immediately that, in Lacan's thought, this humanization of desire does not deal with a sort of domestication or orthopedic control of drives, but with a crucial responsibility of the subject. We can affirm with Heidegger, that in desire "this being is concerned *about* its very being."<sup>1</sup> Regarding this, the main concern of Lacan is to emphasize the ethical consequences of the psychoanalytical understanding, seeking to introduce the notion of desire into the *domain of ethics* in a new way.

In this presentation, I cannot examine his complex rehabilitation and re-interpretation of the Freudian perspective, but I will try, firstly, to schematically illustrate the new understanding of desire, which Lacan elaborates above all in his first period (where the symbolic dimension plays a crucial role). Secondly, I will seek to show the ethical and anthropological consequences of Lacan's theory of desire and to enlighten above all their *humanizing potentialities*. For this purpose, I shall finally focus on the ambivalent structure of both desire and law to illustrate their respective possible drifts or dehumanizing effects.

### Desire and Object

Lacan's theory aims at emancipating the concept of desire from its different classical interpretations. Firstly, he strongly reacts to the psychological tendency that has reduced desire to a mere instinctual dimension. Lacan reacts to this flattening of desire to the naturalistic dimension of the drives. Within this perspective, desire only seeks to be saturated through the consumption or negation of objects. On the contrary, desire is never desire of something, but desire of the Other, that is the desire to be recognized by the Other. In his lecture *The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis* (1953), Lacan inaugurates his reflection on the symbolic power of language and on the role of the word and the symbol, and the significance of speaking within the organization of desire:

In short, nowhere does it appear more clearly that man's desire finds its meaning in the other's desire, not so much because the other holds the keys to the desired object, as because his first object(ive) is to be recognized by the other.<sup>2</sup>

In this perspective, Lacan affirms that desire primarily refers to another desire and not to an object or to natural and animal needs (e.g. I am hungry, therefore I eat). In this sense, humanity comes to light only if it negates and risks its mere animal dimension, exceeding the mere preservation of life in order to satisfy its human desire. Here he undoubtedly follows

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and time*, transl. by Joan Stambaugh (Albany: Suny Press, 1996), § 4, 10.

<sup>2</sup> Jacques Lacan, "The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis," in: *Écrits* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996), p. 222.

Hegel's *Philosophy of Spirit*, mediated by the lessons of Alexandre Kojève in Paris: In his *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, Kojève maintains that "Desire is different from animal Desire (which produces a natural being, merely living end having only a sentiment of its life) in that it is directed, not toward a real, 'positive', given object, but toward another Desire."<sup>3</sup> Desire is human, as distinguished from the realm of animality, only to the extent that it is *mediated* by the desire of the Other. This shows the anthropogenetic element of desire, which constitutes human reality as social reality: "Society is human only as a set of Desires mutually desiring one another as Desires." In this perspective, human history could be interpreted as a "history of desired desires" which struggle for their mutual recognition. "Desire is human – or, more exactly, 'humanizing', 'anthropogenetic' – only provided that it is directed toward another *Desire*," which separates desire from the physiological-instinctual dimension of the needs. The instinctual urgency transforms itself into a message addressed to the Other, into a word or a cry spoken to the Other, which satisfies itself only through the answer of the Other. It is not a question about something – about an object – but about the presence of the Other. I desire to have a place in the desire of the Other. Therefore, Lacan subordinates the immediate biological dimension of the object to the mediate dimension of the sign or the symbol.

In this sense, Lacan can say that every question is fundamentally a question of love, that is, a question which goes beyond need, natural need. Here we can mention the famous formula for love in *Seminar XII*: "Loving is to give what one does not have ... to someone who does not want it." (Seminar XII, June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1965) Love does not correspond to a request for an object: the "object" of the demand for love is never an object, but rather a "nothing" as no-thing, as absence of objects. Consequently, in Lacan's reading, love involves nothing more than the assumption of lack, so that his theory reveals itself to have a platonic side: "Poverty alone, Penia, can conceive Love."<sup>4</sup>

The Other here represents a presence that should be able to respond to the *demand for a sign* and to act according to the logic of being and not to that of having. "In other words, all human, anthropogenetic Desire – the Desire that generates Self-Consciousness, the human reality – is, finally, a function of the desire for 'recognition'."<sup>5</sup>

At the very moment when the objects are inscribed in the register of the Other, that is in the *regime of language* and signifier, a cut, a lack or a gap – a gesture of pure negativity – has been traced in them, since, as Lacan said in his Rome Discourse, "the word kills the thing." Language introduces a cut, a separation, a lack between the subject and the thing, and generates a *manqué-à-être* (lack-of-being) as the condition of possibility of desire. "The symbol manifests itself first of all as the murder of the thing, and this death constitutes in the subject the eternalization of his desire."<sup>6</sup>

In his Italian speech on *The Discourse of the Capitalist* (1972), which he "defines [as] the most clever of all discourses,"<sup>7</sup> Lacan maintains that this *lack* generating desire has transformed into a *void*. Lacan is convinced that the central discontent of the present civilization is the fact that lack has metamorphosed into a void, producing many different attempts to fill it through mani-

<sup>3</sup> Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel. Lectures on the "Phenomenology of Spirit"* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), p. 6.

<sup>4</sup> "There is no support for love [...] as I have told you: to give one's love, is very precisely and essentially to give as such nothing of what one has, because it is precisely in so far as one does not have it that there is question of love." (Seminar V, May 7<sup>th</sup>, 1958)

<sup>5</sup> Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, p. 7.

<sup>6</sup> Lacan, "The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis," p. 319.

<sup>7</sup> Lacan elaborates four discourses, trying to articulate which practice of language dominates in society and determines thought, affect, enjoyment, meaning and identity of the subject living in it.

fold forms of addiction to the object.<sup>8</sup> This metamorphosis corresponds to a fundamental mutation in how the symbolic order is structured as well as to an actual anthropological mutation. Charles Melman refers to a new *psychic economy* (*la nouvelle économie psychique*),<sup>9</sup> circulating around the planet of the object. The discourse of the capitalist announces that human life can flourish and find its salvation in the commodity-fetishism and promises to saturate the lack of the subject through the proliferation of objects. The trick or the slyness of the capitalistic reason (*die List der kapitalistischen Vernunft*) consists in the fact that it aims at perpetuating the consumption of objects that deepens the void and generates new needs. The object promises fulfillment and produces a drain that makes the subject dependent on it, progressively extinguishing desire. Through its illusion of condensing and uniting human life, the Discourse of the Capitalist abolishes the transcendent dimension of desire in its constitutive relationship with the Other.

### Desire and Vocation

In connection with this, I try to present the second important turn regarding Lacan's notion of desire, which can be found in his crucial *Seminar 7* on the *Ethics of psychoanalysis* (1959-1960). We can find the essential formulation of the problem at the very beginning of Seminar 7: "Given our condition as men, what must we do in order to act in the right way?"<sup>10</sup> Here, Lacan presents desire as the real alternative to the chaotic, capricious and volatile element of existence, as well as to the mirror trick of the consumer society, in which the subject gets lost. On the contrary, desire deals with the notion of responsibility and represents the organizing factor of existence.

Lacan analyses the etymological meaning of the German word *Wunsch*, which Freud used to nominate desire. He translates it into French with the term *vœux*, also wish, that is vow, promise, vocation. Desire corresponds to the experience of a *fundamental vocation* that orients and structures the subject's existence. On his part, Freud speaks about different desires, as well as an indestructible desire as the matrix of the multitude of desires that characterize a human life. In this sense, we can affirm that there are not desires in the plural, but, in this specific Lacanian understanding, there is only one desire as the fundamental vow of a subject from which "happiness" – if I may use this abused term – could emerge or not.

When Lacan speaks about the unconscious desire as vocation, he highlights the fact that desire is not something that should be disciplined or that one should get rid of. We can find this image, for example, in Plato, where the reason is represented by the rider and the desire by an animal, by a wild horse. In Lacanian theory, we cannot find a similar image, since the desire should not be domesticated: regarding this, the famous Freudian sentence *Wo es war, soll Ich werden* ("where it was, so the I shall be") does not mean that the Ego must take the place of Es, that is of desire, by means of a progressive rationalization of the unconscious. Lacan strongly contrasts the "Ego psychology" of his times, which insists on the governmental function of the Ego and on its false and narcissist mastery. In this perspective, the ethics of psycho-

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<sup>8</sup> The "new symptom" refers to symptoms such as addiction, anorexia, bulimia, cutting, depression, anxiety disorders, and so on.

<sup>9</sup> Charles Melman, *La nouvelle économie psychique. La façon de penser et de jouir aujourd'hui* (Toulouse: Éditions érès, 2009); Jean-Pierre Lebrun, *Un monde sans limite. Essai pour une clinique psychanalytique du social* (Toulouse: Éditions érès, 2007).

<sup>10</sup> Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis (1959-1960). The Seminar Book VII* (New York: Norton & Company, 1992), p. 19.

analysis cannot be associated to the dominating ethical perspective of the Western tradition, namely to the Aristotelian and to the Kantian paradigm.

His polemic reading of the *Nicomachean Ethics* focuses on Aristotle's understanding of the moral action as the development of proper habits, which can progressively generate practical wisdom (*phronêsis*). In this perspective, virtues are technical skills that generate a fundamental disposition, able to resist the counter-rational pressures.

The Aristotelian ethics of virtues emphasizes the control of reason over any excess in view of the Ideal of an internal harmony that is obtained through the value of continence (literally: mastery, *enkrateia*) in view of a condition of self-mastery and self-sufficiency. In this sense, the pleasure principle (flourishing: *eudaimonia*, but also hedonism) and the reality principle (naturalism) are interwoven, aiming at a possible homeostasis of appetites and emotions. In this sense, Aristotle and Freud agree when they both consider pleasure as a reduction of tension in the psychic system.

In contrast with this assumption, Lacan affirms that the subject constitutes itself in the moment in which it keeps contact with its desire: considering this, analysis is the process of the unmasking of the fundamental relation between a subject and the *truth of its desire*. This means that if I remain faithful to this desire/vocation, I could generate a fruitful life – if not, I get ill. In this perspective, it is not the Good as moral principle that orients and determines the realization of desire, but the Good corresponds to the *subjective faithfulness to one's own desire*, that is to the own existential vocation.

This connection between the notion of desire as vocation and the principle of responsibility is the turning point of the ethics of psychoanalysis. In his *Seminar 7* he writes:

We know better than those who went before how to recognize the nature of desire, which is at the heart of this existence, that a consideration of ethics is possible, that a form of ethical judgment is possible, of a kind that gives this question the force of a Last Judgment: Have you acted in conformity with the desire that is in you?<sup>11</sup>

At the core of this ethics there is the *ethical duty* to assume one's own desire: This assumption does not represent a possession acquired once and for all, but rather a gesture and a decision that should be continuously renewed under the sign of a deep faithfulness. This is the *ethical turn* of psychoanalysis, which must come to terms with the truth of desire. The fundamental options of this ethics can be formulated through two principles: a) Do not hope to realize your desire by saturating it (this means: there is no enjoyment, *jouissance*). b) Do not cede upon your desire.

"Human desire," as Bruce Fink underlines, "is very unwieldly, unruly, and unmanageable (...). Lacan teaches us that our desire is such a precious thing to us that when faced with a possibility of its satisfaction, we often run the other way, preferring to remain unsatisfied so as to keep our desire alive."<sup>12</sup> As Judith Butler affirms, "this is an ambiguous claim, since he does not say that your desire should or must be satisfied. He says only that desire should not be stopped. Indeed, sometimes satisfaction is the very means by which one cedes upon desire, the means by which one turns against it, arranging for its quick death."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, p. 314.

<sup>12</sup> Bruce Fink, *Against Understanding, Volume 2: Cases and Commentary in a Lacanian Key* (London: Routledge, 2014), p. 55.

<sup>13</sup> Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself* (New York: Fordham Press, 2005), p. 43.

### Desire and Law

How can a subject be responsible for something that cannot be satisfied, but must be maintained? How can I be responsible for something that I have not chosen, but has chosen me, that I do not govern, but that governs me? This ethics reminds us that the responsibility of the subjects does (and must) not consist in the (impossible and perverse) realization of desire, but in the preservation of desire as a force generating life. It is here that a symptom emerges, as a signal "that is warning me that I am not where I want to be, I do not really think what I believe I think, I do not really want what I decide to want, I do not desire what I do feel I would like to."<sup>14</sup>

This ambiguity is, however, the crucial point of a possible ethics of psychoanalysis and, as I seek to show now, a possible way to *learn to be human today*. Precisely in this way we can learn to be human: namely, in the assumption of the universal call of desire that inhabits the very singularity on each subject. What have I done with this vocation, which is, in the language of St. Augustine, closer to us than we are to ourselves: *interior intimo meo et superior summo meo* ("higher than my highest and more inward than my innermost self") (*Confessions* III, 6, 11)?

In this perspective, Lacan advances a paradoxical formulation, which expresses the core of his ethical vision: "I propose then that, from an analytical point of view, the only thing of which one can be guilty is of having given ground relative to one's desire."<sup>15</sup> The only thing we are guilty of is the default on our desire, which corresponds to the betrayal of desire in us – what Freud technically called repression. However, Lacan interprets the notion of repression in the sense of an avoidance of the *ethical duty* to assume the own desire (and not in the sense of a disinhibition of sexual drives). This assumption does not represent a possess as acquired once and for all, but rather a gesture and a decision that should be continuously renewed under the sign of a deep faithfulness.

In this third and last part of the presentation I would like to illustrate another essential element of Lacan's analysis of desire, which could be of interest for a philosophy of religion, namely its relationship with the symbolic dimension of law.

The apparently contradictory "Law of desire" that Lacan proposes, that is the necessary connection between desire and responsibility, aims to reveal the always possible *despotic drifts*/deviation that are inherently related to both law and desire. The Ego could not confront itself with the ambivalence of the law as well as with that of desire alone, since "the ego is not master in its own house" anymore. Lacan's conviction is that the subjective process of emancipation from the law with a progressive gain in autonomy and in enjoyment is misleading. In the same way, an unconditional commitment to an external duty or authority is deceptive. Both the self-referentiality of the drives and the "extraneousness" and abstractness of the norm are dangerous figures of illusion and submission. The former lacks recognition, destining the subject for the excessive and destructive circuit of *jouissance* without castration that is without limits, words and law.<sup>16</sup> The latter abolishes subjectivity, abandoning it at the mercy of a law demanding an absolute self-sacrifice. Consequently, law pretending to substitute desire transforms

<sup>14</sup> Pierangelo Sequeri, *L'umano alla prova. Soggetto, identità, limite* (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 2002), p. 72.

<sup>15</sup> Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, p. 319.

<sup>16</sup> "The desire for the mother cannot be satisfied because it is the end, the terminal point, the abolition of the whole world of demand, which is the one that at its deepest level structures man's unconscious. It is to the extent that the function of the pleasure principle is to make man always search for what he has to find again, but which he never will attain, that one reaches the essence, namely, that sphere or relationship which is known as the law of prohibition of incest." (Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, p. 68.)

itself into the inhuman and repressive principle fighting against the transgressive power of desire.

On the contrary, Lacan indicates the necessity of a “Law that organizes the subject’s desire in accordance with its singular vocation.”<sup>17</sup> This correlation expresses the truth of desire, which becomes a categorical imperative inhabiting the subject beyond its own mastery. Lacan affirms in *Seminar 7*: “The *Wunsch* does not have the character of a universal law but, on the contrary, of the most particular of laws – even it is universal that this particularity is to be found in every human being.”<sup>18</sup> The Law of desire represents therefore a law without contents that confronts the subject with its own (unconscious) desire and brings it back to its responsibility.

If Aristotle, within his consciousness of the fundamental dialectics between Law and Desire, chose the method of the domestication of passions, according to Lacan a different author represents the true discoverer of the dramatic tension between Law and Desire, indicating at the same time “a more excellent way” to come to terms with it. In *Seminar 7*, Lacan recommends the Letters of the Apostle Paul to all participants as vacation reading. He comments on chapter 7, paragraph 7 of the Epistle to the Romans, where Paul dramatically problematizes the role of the Law, “which was ordained to life,” regarding sin: “For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.” (Rom 7:9)

Paul the Jew has radically understood that this dialectic between Law and Desire can decide both the sense of his experience and the truth of religion. On the one hand, he has explored with incomparable precision how an encounter with the Law beyond the level of a mere interdiction (which systematically produces its transgression) is possible. On the other hand, he was strongly convinced that a community of believers could only be founded on a paradoxical commandment, the *commandment of agape* as “the fulfilling of the law.” (Rom 13:10) Considering this, it is possible to observe the emergence of a Law of Desire, which finds its supreme synthesis in the commandment of Love.

In any case, this question deals above all with the possibility of the Name-of-God in post-religious and post-traditional times. In this perspective, I would maintain that this question goes beyond the alternative between theism and atheism, and discloses the question of a Third, of a Name which could be invoked whenever the subject is engaged in its (even dramatic) struggle for recognition and in its search for a vocation.

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<sup>17</sup> Massimo Recalcati, *Jacques Lacan. Desiderio, godimento e soggettivazione* (Milano: Cortina, 2012), p. 334. This is the analytical promise of “another *jouissance*,” of another form of enjoyment, which has passed through the Law of desire. “Castration means that *jouissance* has to be refused in order to be attained on the inverse scale of the Law of desire.” (Jacques Lacan, “The direction of the treatment and the principles of its power [1958]” in: *Écrits* [New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2006], p. 827.)

<sup>18</sup> Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, p. 24.

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# **The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy**

## **Purpose**

Today there is urgent need to attend to the nature and dignity of the person, to the quality of human life, to the purpose and goal of the physical transformation of our environment, and to the relation of all this to the development of social and political life. This, in turn, requires philosophic clarification of the base upon which freedom is exercised, that is, of the values which provide stability and guidance to one's decisions.

Such studies must be able to reach deeply into one's culture and that of other parts of the world as mutually reinforcing and enriching in order to uncover the roots of the dignity of persons and of their societies. They must be able to identify the conceptual forms in terms of which modern industrial and technological developments are structured and how these impact upon human self-understanding. Above all, they must be able to bring these elements together in the creative understanding essential for setting our goals and determining our modes of interaction. In the present complex global circumstances this is a condition for growing together with trust and justice, honest dedication and mutual concern.

The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy (RVP) unites scholars who share these concerns and are interested in the application thereto of existing capabilities in the field of philosophy and other disciplines. Its work is to identify areas in which study is needed, the intellectual resources which can be brought to bear thereupon, and the means for publication and interchange of the work from the various regions of the world. In bringing these together its goal is scientific discovery and publication which contributes to the present promotion of humankind.

In sum, our times present both the need and the opportunity for deeper and ever more progressive understanding of the person and of the foundations of social life. The development of such understanding is the goal of the RVP.

## **Projects**

A set of related research efforts is currently in process:

1. Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change: Philosophical Foundations for Social Life. Focused, mutually coordinated research teams in university centers prepare volumes as part of an integrated philosophic search for self-understanding differentiated by culture and civilization. These evolve more adequate understandings of the person in society and look to the cultural heritage of each for the resources to respond to the challenges of its own specific contemporary transformation.

2. Seminars on Culture and Contemporary Issues. This series of 10 week cross-cultural and interdisciplinary seminars is coordinated by the RVP in Washington.

3. Joint-Colloquia with Institutes of Philosophy of the National Academies of Science, university philosophy departments, and societies. Underway since 1976 in Eastern Europe and, since 1987, in China, these concern the person in contemporary society.

4. Foundations of Moral Education and Character Development. A study in values and education which unites philosophers, psychologists, social scientists and scholars in education in the elaboration of ways of enriching the moral content of education and character development. This work has been underway since 1980.

The personnel for these projects consists of established scholars willing to contribute their time and research as part of their professional commitment to life in contemporary society. For resources to implement this work the Council, as 501 C3 a non-profit organization incorporated in the District of Columbia, looks to various private foundations, public programs and enterprises.

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