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Values of the Human Person: Contemporary Challenges

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Edited by
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The University of Bucharest
The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy

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INTRODUCTION

MIHAELA POP

Contemporary knowledge is centered on the research on human dimensions. Philosophy should particularly appeal to values in the process of understanding the human nature. The valuable “becoming” of each human person requires growing ever more aware of his/her personal identity and of his/her role in this lifetime. In ethics, especially, values suppose moral choices or criteria on which a moral behavior is based. Max Scheler based his ethical theory on the distinction between goods and values. The “goods” are things to which we attach some physical worth, and the “values” are the object of emotional perception, of the “sentiment of value” and of the place they have in the hierarchy of values. Even if the human being attributes a certain worth to individual things, he/she is always searching for a universal value, which should exceed the contingency of that thing. This universal validity is a kind of ideal measure of the value of all empiric realities and it is articulated by a normative rationality. It forms a system of universal norms that contribute to the foundation of critical axiological judgments.

Heinrich Rickert was a philosopher who considered that the entire human existence should be divided into three areas: reality, values, and meaning. The reality is the object of science; the knowing subject belongs to the area of meanings, and he is the connecting element between reality and values. These do not physically exist, but they make valorization possible. Within the concrete process of valorization the human being as assessing subject succeeds in connecting the two other areas.

Friedrich Nietzsche was among the most revolutionary philosophers. He used an applied critique to the traditional morality, having the intention to reconsider all values. There are voices who claim that, even today, the echoes of his critical thinking are still heard. The phenomenon of globalization has stirred up an entire process of challenges and changes, not only within the technological and industrial universe, but also, and more importantly, within the world of spiritual and cultural achievements.

What values are the most enhanced by our post-modern society? Are they the same as during the modern period? What would distinguish them from the values of other cultural periods of humankind? How do we react to the new challenges generated by technological progress and the media? How do the classical disciplines such as philosophy, religion, anthropology, and art respond to these new challenges? And how could they help us to better adapt the writings of certain significant personalities to the modern and contemporary culture? These are only a few questions this volume will address. It contains a large number of articles by authors from various countries and continents: philosophers, and theologians, as well as researchers in medicine, anthropology, and new scientific technologies.

They convened in Bucharest, Romania an international conference entitled “Values of the Human Person: Contemporary Challenges.”

As the variety of topics is impressive, we tried to organize them into three thematic parts: “Part I: Fundamental Human Values. Contemporary Challenging Globalization,” “Part II: New Axiological Challenges in Technologies and Scientific Thinking,” and “Part III: Cultural and Spiritual Personalities: Possible Answers to Our Contemporary Changes.” In the following pages, we shall make a short presentation of each article in order to facilitate a quick familiarization with the entire volume.

Part I. Fundamental Human Values Challenging Contemporary Globalization

Chapter 1, “Value Differentiation and the Ideal of Mankind”, by Marin Aiftincă, identifies and discusses some fundamental theoretical aspects of the concept of value and its meanings. The relationship between personal values and common values in a strict connection with the ideal of humanity is the main topic of the article. The author starts from the thesis that the human being is essentially determined by his spirit, and he identifies himself through a set of values which he freely appropriates in connection with his own tradition, cognition, and aspirations. The distinction between personal and common values is considered to be significant. It takes various forms of expression due to the development of human knowledge and under the pressure of socio-political events. There is another significant distinction to be made: between the pure value and the embodied one. The latter shows itself together with its bearer and at the level of experience. Hence a person is, according to Aiftinca, the bearer of values. As a consequence, personal values embody themselves in a person without exhausting their content and their universality.

But a person is also a member of a community, and he becomes a responsible person by being educated within a certain axiological universe – that belonging to his community. There is, however, at this level a conflict of values that explains the crisis of the contemporary culture. The author considers that at present, the globalization process promotes and imposes the utilitarian values that feed the conflict between values, which is detrimental to the spiritual nature of the individual and collective person. Instead of the personal values that belong to the local or national cultural tradition, there are other ideas and values which are gradually brought under the pressure of globalization, such as liberty, equality, democracy, justice, market economy, and environmental protection.

Those who criticize globalization accuse it of having dangerous effects on both individual and community. Being a source of different discontents and conflicts, globalization is experienced in everyday life as uncertainty and anxiety, making people vulnerable to various tyrannies and cults. It also implies migration of capital and job loss, the distress of local wars and religious collisions, the split of societies into groups involved in ruinous

struggles. All of these have a negative influence on the structure of individual and collective values, giving way to the temptation of embracing non-values. Finally, the author pleads in favor of the preservation of the balance between personal and common values; the universal culture must be led by the ideal of the individual person's self-improvement.

Chapter 2, "The Values of the New Civilization," by Bogdana Todorova, remarks that our times, characterized by new forms of democracy, demand new solutions to contemporary challenges. The author explores the possibility of a synthesis of values belonging to different cultures, social groups, and types of intellectual praxis, and how an interaction between science and religion could be possible and useful in achieving this synthesis. This relationship has been changeable during history. An extremely unclear opposition between West and East was characteristic for Europe in the past and this pattern seems to extend today into the entire world. Making a historical review, the author establishes three main periods of the development of this relationship between religion and science: first, the traditional one, based on the Christian religious understanding of nature; second, the technological period, where nature is seen as a specific field of human manifestations; and third, the new civilizational and "post-neoclassical type of rationality related to complex developing systems possessing synergetic features." This new type can be considered a medium for the development of new values. In the author's opinion, it is evident that this general course of civilizational changes could influence the axiological system of various cultures, though she has doubts about the possibility of such changes within the Christian religion.

In her effort to discover new aspects of cultural universals that could assure a desired synthesis, the author mentions the global ecologism – "a good example of how new cultural universals emerge." The thought combines Buddhism, Jainism, and Hinduism, and the neo-Darwinist synthesis in the twentieth century becomes its secular variant. Another fundamental perspective is the *anthropic* one which is associated with Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. It was secularized, especially during the nineteenth century, identifying social sciences as humanistic religions. Believing that these two ways of thinking should not be opposed, but should be reunited by a philosophical synthesis, Todorova pleads for the contribution of philosophy to adopt a critical analysis and also apply the principle of complementarity.

Chapter 3 is an effort to identify the cultural coordinates of the human being in contemporary society. Leon Dyczewski, in his article "Man in Contemporary Culture," starts from the idea that the development of any society depends on creative individuals. Hence, the more such individuals there are, the more they are open to new problems, and the more quickly they enter new fields of life, the better. Contemporary society is marked by an increasing pluralism and differentiation in all fields of life, and by a rapid absorption of modern technologies. Mass culture is driven out by popular culture that abolishes the division into high and low culture,

forming a great mosaic of cultural groups. The author supports the idea that in our contemporary society a new social class or layer is slowly formed: the creative layer. In the future, it is this class that will shape our world. Thus, the author discusses some of the main characteristics of this creative class. It may be called technical-economical-managerial intelligentsia and differs significantly from the Renaissance model promoted by what was usually called the intelligentsia in Poland and Russia. It focused on values significant for the whole individual and social life, and generally its members were very well educated.

To the contrary, the technical-economical-managerial intelligentsia is formed by those who can easily shape the sphere of possessions, who can recognize human needs and satisfy them with new products, ideas, and behavior patterns. Unfortunately, this new class promotes a certain culture that could become dangerous, not only for individuals or small groups, but also for entire nations or even the whole world. Despite the ever greater knowledge of oneself and of the surrounding world, fascination of new inventions leads to forgetfulness about man himself and leads to a deep crisis of culture. The technical-economical-managerial intelligentsia is not able to think about the human being as a spiritual-bodily whole, nor about man's ultimate aims or the meaning of his life. Hence, Dyczewski thinks that the time has come for a new shaping of European society. Holistic theories are quite popular today and there is a growing demand for spiritual life and for deep personal ties. The supporters of this movement may be called the intelligentsia of life. The two categories of intelligentsia are not necessarily opposed. Both are necessary and form the creative class of our contemporary society.

Chapter 4 has a wide range of theoretical debates trying to get general characteristics of a contemporary axiological perspective. Dan Chițoiu in his article "Person and Personal Reality: The Actuality of the Eastern Christian Understanding of Man," proposes a special religious perspective. Contemporary science has succeeded in explaining many biological or physical processes so that we begin to have a consistent understanding of subtle interactions between body and mind. After Descartes, philosophers preferred the concept of *mind*, the human dimension understood as possessing self-reflexivity and intentionality. The old notion of *soul* was replaced by *mind* and starting from the assertion that thinking is an act of mind, a new domain of philosophy appeared during the twentieth century, the philosophy of mind. Man is described in a double sense: first, mind could not be understood as an intangible or incorporeal nature; second, mind can not have other support than body; experiments in neuroscience provided strong evidence of the material support of the mind.

Psychology, in its turn, affirms that the soul cannot be an object of study in any way – even indirectly; instead it deals with the description of cognitive processes, the nature of emotions, etc. These developments bring, inevitably, a crisis in the process of understanding the nature of man. During the last half of the twentieth century, some other theories proposed

to respond to this need. French phenomenology abandoned the search for a human essence in favor of a radical phenomenality. What characterizes the life of man is not the biological instinct, but his power to test himself. This is based on a distinction between *body* (corps) and *flesh* (chair). Similar explanatory insight can be found in the texts of authors involved in the neoPatristic movement: Gheorghii Florovsky, Justin Popovici, and Dumitru Stăniloae. They promoted a re-interpretation of the Gospel, as well as some texts of the Church Fathers to revive thereby the spirit of the first Christian textual sources. Since the Renaissance, the Christian anthropological perspective was considered to have been under influences not related to the tradition of the Fathers. This was valid not only for the Christian West, but even for Eastern Christianity. Some notions, such as *persona*, *prosopon*, and *hypostasis*, had slightly different meanings for the Church Fathers of the fourth century, and those meanings should now be reactivated.

Chapter 5, “Modern Society and Its Ethical Dilemmas,” by Cornelia Găspărel, suggests that society does not look perfect, but it has its dilemmas. The author tries to find solutions to these dilemmas. The starting point of the article is the present situation in Romania. Despite the emergence of new human rights after the end of the communist system, codes of conduct within the Romanian society seem to remain unchanged. Institutions that are supposed to create and apply the new rights are still tributary to traditional interpretations. As a consequence, the notion of ethics is often misunderstood, due to limitations on action and interpretation. While contextuality can be a solution to some of the ethical dilemmas, it is not satisfactory for a logical system of analysis. On the other hand, such modes of philosophical analysis as utilitarianism, consequentialism, or professional ethics are only a descriptive level. In conclusion, the author proposes setting a new direction of research built on psycho-philosophical coordinates focusing on the *philosophical, hereditary, and neurological* unconscious. She pleads in favor of repositioning and analysing the theories concerning the fact that the unconscious level has an incipient conscient life considered as a starting point (in terms of moral and spiritual virtues). Then, the following aspect would be the role of *memory*, which may or may not indicate the resources of *will*. In other words, Gaspărel wants to point out a different perspective on scientific and applied ethics. Choosing this way of thinking, the author intends to enhance morality by reconsidering the ontological structure (*conscience*) which may or may not justify the equity in human relations.

Chapter 6, “Aspirations and Anticipations of Universalism: The Global Village in Ancient Rome,” by Iulian-Gabriel Hrușcă, attempts to find solutions to today’s crises and proposes that looking back in history could help to a better understanding. Hrușcă points out that the phenomenon of globalization is not just a modern one; it can be seen in the Roman tradition. There is one huge difference: the expansion of technology and communications, greatly enlarging the scale at which the contemporary globalization takes place. On the level of community moral attitudes, the

author points out some of today's main notions that seem to be inherited from the ancient Rome.

The modern notion of global village/globalization can be attributed to the Roman tradition, claims Hrușcă, even if the twentieth century seems to have invented it through Marshal McLuhan's theory. The author mentions that the ancient Greek civilization invented terms such as *philanthropia*, which meant "goodwill toward all men," and promoted a moral obligation owed by every human being to every other one. The Roman equivalent of the Greek *philanthropia* was the concept of *humanitas Romana*. Despite the adverse impact that Rome must have had on other ethnic groups, it remained to posterity as the great exponent of multiculturalism. Other Roman notions analyzed by the author are *civitas*, *anticivitas*, *transcivitas*, and *imperium*. Hrușcă suggests that a deeper analysis of the Roman civilization could be helpful for a better understanding of today's process of globalization.

Chapter 7, "Was the Modern Cosmopolis Transformed into a Post-Modern Global Village?," by Constantin Stoenescu, develops, in a different way, the concept of *global village*. The author argues that the shift from Modernity to Post-Modernity was accompanied by a deep change of some presuppositions. He reveals that post-modernity replaces the so-called project of Cosmopolis with that of a global village. Stoenescu thinks that globalization should be considered the end of modernity, but not of history itself. This means in the author's opinion, that the old Kantian ideal about a common peaceful world was already fulfilled. This historical project was the basis of the modern society with the national state as a unit of global order. But the technological evolution and the market economy changed the society and the national state became something old-fashioned. The new aim is a global order based on transnational processes, and *the brave new world* looks like a village, a global village in which every person can know almost everything, if she or he wants, about everybody and everything. The author remarks that post-modernism, in its first phase, was a particular movement and had the main purpose of stopping and overcoming the modernism in architecture; it wasn't its aim to replace modernity with something like post-modernity. Later on, post-modernism undermined the authority of modern tradition and institutions. The idea of universality was under attack, as the new preferred approaches were deconstruction and the analysis of little fragments. All the strong modern claims for objectivity and universalism were put into question by post-modernism. The author remarks that surprisingly, a difference between what we wanted to build and what we have in fact built began to manifest itself. The main reason for this surprising result is the invasion of a new kind of subjectivity in all areas of social life, thinks Stoenescu. And he mentions that there is a new agenda in which some trends, philosophically supported, could be seen as a revival of culture, such as the return to the oral tradition or to the particular and to the local community. In the author's opinion, there is a way to unify and save all these revivals: to rediscover nature and to overcome the modern

dichotomy between nature and culture. The global village could be redesigned starting from the natural dimensions of our life on our planet.

Chapter 8, “Hermeneutic Dialogue as Social Value: An Inquiry into the ‘Unfindable Objects of Thought,’” by Adrian Costache, notes that another characteristic of the new society should be the hermeneutic dialogue. Costache identifies some meaningful areas of dialogue: in institutions of education and the sciences of education, where dialogue is seen as the prominent means for passing on knowledge and for the development of a harmonious personality, and in international relations and cultural studies, where dialogue, as cross-cultural conversation, is taken as the only means for facing and avoiding the perils confronting humanity as a whole in our times. The author supposes that dialogue is as old as human society itself; there is no society but through dialogue, nor can there be dialogue outside a certain sociality. The “dynamic genesis” of dialogue understood simply as an exchange of ideas or views about a matter at hand between an “I” and a “Thou” allows that dialogue is not only a value in and for our society, but the social value *par excellence*.

A dialogue presupposes the existence of a third person. It involves a third for only with the appearance of the third and through the third is the other seen as another “I,” and thus as a “Thou.” The third brings about and embodies the law that institutes and governs all possible and acceptable relations between human beings.

It is suggested that we must give up our obsession with the question of being, and renounce any philosophy of being altogether, in favor of a philosophy of multiplicity, of the “and.” We have to learn how to think not in terms of what “is” this or that, and not out of the wonder that there “is” something rather than nothing, but in terms of this *and* that *and* that *and*...Such metaphysics of the “and” will lead us to realize that the speaking subject and the “I” that engages a “Thou” in dialogue (just like the “Thou”) is not the substratum of the world or a transcendental condition of possibility. Rather, the speaking subject is a collective assemblage for enunciation through whose speech a multiplicity of order-words is expressed.

Hence also we will have to stop attributing to language and discourse (either written or spoken) any privilege. Instead, we will have finally to understand that although the flow of words is the only one to have meaning, it has just as much or as little sense as any other flow.

Chapter 9, “Rationality as a Human Value,” by Lavinia Marin, proves another fundamental value of today’s society rationality to be. Living today in big cities induces people to interact with other people belonging to different cultures. Problems arise when there are differences of education, generating misunderstandings and difficulties of communication. Marin thinks that this situation can also cause a philosophical problem as it expresses the need to reevaluate one’s own values and attitudes toward the others. In fact, each one should understand that his own values are for him as valuable as are the values of some other people for them. The author

wants to find an answer to some questions, such as: “How are we supposed to talk in public about our own values? How are we to negotiate our values in a multicultural society?” The author establishes that there are two kinds of values: communitarian and individual. There are also intrinsic values and instrumental ones. Two main attitudes of defending values can be mentioned: being irrational when choosing values but defending them in a rational way, and being rational about our values yet being fanatical about them and refusing any type of dialogue. The author goes on analyzing various solutions in order to adopt a rational attitude when defending a value. A solution with which the author seems to sympathize is the Contractualism version promoted by T.M. Scanlon. Finally, in order to put to work the theories already mentioned, Marin chooses two cases: the smoking ban imposed by the state on the citizens and the recent controversy regarding the wearing of the Islamic veil in France – *l'affaire du voile*.

Chapter 10, “Spiritual Cognition of a Person and Culture,” by Sergey Nizhnikov, thinks that not only rationality should be considered a fundamental value of our days, but also spiritual cognition. In today’s society, people seem to lose some of the spiritual values of the cultural tradition. Spiritual knowledge is considered as the essence of an individual, enabling him to use and display the human spiritual archetypes. The author stresses the fact that these archetypes become manifest in individual lives only when each person becomes aware of this heritage and makes it his own. Nizhnikov wants to achieve an extended image of the spiritual problematic not only from the individual side but also from a socio-cultural and historical point of view. Thus, the author uses not only European philosophy, but also spiritual theories belonging to various cultures and traditions of the world. He treats spirituality in connection with culture, knowledge, morals, and mysticism. The spiritual person is anxious for moral purification in order to reach the perfection of his nature. The author remarks that a person should be aware of the fact that he is in an on-going process of becoming from the spiritual point of view. Being a spiritual person is not a static dimension but a dynamic one, based on a self-knowing process. The purpose would be a deification of the human being as a consequence of this lifelong process of spiritual becoming. The hesychastic theological movement theorized by Gregory Palamas during the fourteenth century is one of the ways to reach this desired condition. Christ, Buddha, and Plato managed to understand the spiritual essence of a person in the world and to express it in symbols and concepts. As spiritual knowledge concerns what the person is in his essence, spiritual truth is he himself. When this essence of a person is completely developed, the spiritual archetype of humankind reveals itself in an individual appearance, says the author.

Chapter 11, “The Ends of Philosophy in the Context of Contemporary Biopolitics,” by Cristian Iftode, points out the role of philosophical thinking as extremely necessary in our contemporary society. Today, philosophy tends to revive the ancient formula of philosophy as “a way of life” or “care

of the self,” says the author. He wants to debate the ends of philosophy in the context of today’s culture and thinks that the radical critique of modern subjectivity could be a guiding thread for the understanding of all the relevant issues in contemporary (post-Nietzschean) philosophy. The author notices an important philosophical and cultural phenomenon in the West since the beginning of the 80s: the death of the “death of the subject” and the practical turn in contemporary philosophy. This return of the subject as an action subject could be considered at the same time a principle of practical reflexivity and the result of a process of *subjectivation*. The author points out three levels of resistance to the idea of philosophy as a practice aimed to perform an effective transformation of its *subject*: the prevailing socio-cultural context, so favorable to the idea of *self-acceptance*; the tradition of *modern* moral philosophy, bracketing the very meaning of ethics as an “ascetic” work whose goal is the *self-fashioning* of the individual; and some of the influential trends in the field of contemporary *moral psychology*. Ifode presents then three aporias that illustrate philosophy as a “form of life” and define the “condition” of any philosopher: (a) disinterested contemplation vs. existential practice; (b) Socratic-Nietzschean unsettlement vs. full embrace of a philosophy of life; (c) self-creation vs. self-discovery. In the end, the author emphasizes the present ethical and political relevance of the practice of philosophy, both on a personal, or rather interpersonal, level, with the goal of *self-transformation*, and on a public level, with the task of a consistently critical approach to all forms of disciplinary power.

Chapter 12, “The Human Value of Civil Disobedience in Democratic Societies,” by Dorina Pătrunsu, points out that there are not only positive values which characterize our society but also negative ones that could be positively re-used. Pătrunsu starts from the assertion that the role played by an individual within a democratic society depends on the limits within which the individual may freely interact with the other members of the society. Democratization supposes a social space where institutional structures provide individuals equality in opportunities and the same degree of liberty. Nevertheless, in real life, democratic societies have to face cases where certain rules fail to impose the same constraints to each individual, acting systematically to the disadvantage of some of them. In such cases, the people against whom the discrimination occurs are frustrated. This is one of the reasons that civil protests are supposed to play a crucial role in the process of self-regulation and self-correcting of the institutional structure. Civil disobedience becomes consequently a means for the improvement of the institutional system. This means that in a case where some group of citizens is systematically oppressed, that is, where some of their basic liberties are denied by some of the existing laws, the civil majority, if well-informed about the injustice, would be ready to put pressure on their political representatives to amend the system of laws. Pătrunsu develops some well-known theories and analyzes some cases of civil disobedience. She mentions the fundamental steps in the development

of a disobedient civic movement. Her purpose is to justify the civil disobedience.

Chapter 13, “Beauty as an Aesthetic Value: Contemporary Challenges,” by Mihaela Pop, suggests the aesthetic values as a side of the contemporary human person and fundamental inquiries. Pop pleads a subtle continuity of *classical* aesthetic values “dressed” in new appearances. The avant-gardes and especially the Dada movement generated a real revolution in the artistic world, not only at the theoretical level, but also in the manner of making artistic works. Aesthetic thought was called to answer to extremely courageous and shocking questions as the artists were exploring new ways of artistic expression. Theoretical principles, themes, methods of artistic work, materials – all were reconsidered. Was it “the end of art” already prophesized by Hegel? And what was going to happen *after* the end of art? And artistic beauty – was it yet a value for the new kind of art that Duchamp initiated? These are questions to which the author of this article tries to give some coherent answers. After a short presentation of the avant-garde movements and their main characteristics, Pop uses some significant aesthetic theories and their arguments in order to prove the fact that beauty is not only a historical aesthetic value, it is a fundamental human value that always finds its expression in accordance with the cultural context of the moment. In order to be more pertinent in her analysis, the author chose two artists whose works could illustrate this position.

Chapter 14, “What Kitsch Tells Us about Our Time,” by Ulrich Steinvorth, analyzes the negative aspect of kitsch and its various ways of manifestation. Steinvorth develops some significant ideas, pointing especially to some non-aesthetic meanings of the term. Modern kitsch is the new opium, disabling the reality contact necessary for rational action. There were two main meanings the twentieth century attributed to this term: an intellectual one and a political one, thinks the author. While the first half of the century criticized especially the intellectual dimension, during the Second World War and the second half of the century the political aspects were preponderant. In either of these, the kitsch phenomenon overlooked the aesthetic dimension. The author starts from one of the well-known definitions of kitsch as “bad taste” and “reality sweetener,” a definition that proves to be unsatisfactory, in his opinion. Thus, he explores an alternative. The author thinks that “bad taste is not a lack of knowledge or morality, but a lack of sense,” or its “misplacement.” Kitsch would suppose a kind of second emotion by which we think we have the same feelings as the entire world, and this emotion, which is not, in fact, a very profound and personal one, would be responsible for kitsch behavior. Indulging kitsch feelings supposes indulging our conformity to others. The author points out that kitsch obliterates the need for deliberation, or in other words, for any assessing judgment. Thus, people’s will is annihilated and they have only a false impression of giving their consent by argument. Kitsch becomes, therefore, a powerful tool in politics, advertisement, religion, and rhetoric. The conclusion would be that kitsch should not be reduced to “bad taste”

and “reality sweetener.” It blocks rational deliberation, which should assure freedom of thinking and autonomy; it prevents differentiated responses to stimuli. In art, a work turns into kitsch “not if it moves or pleases, but if it does so by preventing differentiation.”

Chapter 15, “Globalization, Modern Myth or Ideological Project?,” by Iulia Anghel, suggests differentiation another fundamental characteristic. Anghel intends to explore the real limits of globalization and to show some hidden aspects of it. Its fundamental characteristic would be the fact that it is defined by a core of values that tend to minimize other solutions. Even if globalization is usually considered a progressive and legitimate evolution of a universal project, there is still the possibility of the intervention of an ideological frame. In this situation, globalization becomes an expression of a quiet dominance of a pattern against diversity, not an “open model.” The author analyzes some other historical projects of globalization: Christianity, the Medieval Ages, the Enlightenment, and communist theory and its regimes. The general characteristic present in any of these historical periods is the fact that the unification trends are supporting a dissolving element.

In another chapter of her article, Anghel wonders whether the globalization process should be understood as a liberalization movement or as a totalitarian model. She mentions that there is a core of “good” values that are replacing some “dark paradigms” such as totalitarianism or archaic structures. But the real problem remains. She tries to highlight that there is the non-legitimate tendency of selection of interest spheres that must melt in the project. Finally, the author expresses a critical and not very optimistic attitude: “Maybe the Western cultural pattern is a good one and its extension is a sign of evolution, but the lack of permeability of this model and its monopolizing tendencies are proofs of a profound internal crisis. Maybe the border will continue to extend, but its eliminatory vocation remains constant.”

Part II. New Axiological Challenges in Technologies and Scientific Thinking

Chapter 16, “Human Being: from Spiritual Values to Technological Progress,” by Cristian Berți, debates the meaning of the human being today, his role and his expectations within the progress of knowledge. Berți presents the opinions of three philosophers of the twentieth century: Constantin Noica, Werner Jaeger, and José Ortega y Gasset. The common characteristic of these three philosophers is the fact that they discussed the problems of the human being through history and tried to articulate a profile of the human being of the twenty-first century. In the author’s opinion, this profile is very close to our contemporary image. In order to understand the future of the human being, the author thinks that a deep understanding of the past is strictly necessary. The three philosophers mentioned above adopted the same attitude. Noica thought that modern man is focused on finding the truth, but forgets about the moral attitude and the struggle for

the common good of the community. A return to the Christian commandments that make people more oriented toward the Other would be, in Noica's opinion, a good attitude for the future. Jaeger brings another, complementary idea: the education of contemporary man should be inspired from the Greek *paideia*, which was capable of building a humanist human being. Ortega y Gasset thought that the human being should look toward the future. This is what is lacking in contemporary man. Ortega y Gasset pleads in favor of an industrious and active man. Berti adds some ideas of Ernst Cassirer, pointing out that the essence of the human being doesn't consist in the search for his unity, but rather in the discovery of new sides, of new ways of being. The author is convinced that the greatest quality of the human being is the fact that he is able to adapt to the changes in his life. This ability will help him even during this epoch of great technological changes; he will be able to reshape his values.

Chapter 17, "The Worth of Man on the Threshold of his Technological Transformation," by Ana Bazac, discusses an important contemporary theme: are the new technologies already functioning in medicine and medical engineering capable of modifying the biological functions of the human being in order to ameliorate him, not only biologically, but also qualitatively? The author is much more interested in other kinds of changes, those specific to the human mind. The consequences would be that the "new" human being, the technological one, would transform his specific meanings. The author wants to find out whether these new values are or not human at all. Bazac thinks that the new mind – natural plus AI – will generate a new kind of *sapiens sapiens*, who would also be named *post-human* or *trans-human*.

Wondering on what level human society now is, the author mentions the predominance of capital as the unique manager of the right to existence, and even of whatever is the possible future. The author mentions that the article is based on the theory of engineered singularity and its ideological significance: as technophile optimism, transfiguring a deep social pessimism concerning the possible solving of the global problems by the present "natural" human being.

Thus the ontological view developed by Bazac concerns a twofold problematic: the presumable consequences of AI technology on the human being, and the social use of the present revolutionary science and engineering. The results of these two kinds of situations reveal a contradictory state of man: on one side is the fact that he is a rational being, and on the other, it shows the weakness of human reason and the social translation of this weakness, which generates a waste of human capabilities and lives.

Chapter 18, "Social Network Sites: A Microanalysis of the Involvement of Young Europeans," by Sebastian Chirimbu, focuses on a highly specific domain of our society, the internet. Chirimbu points out that the development of the internet depended, obviously, on technology. It is the most outstanding process of development of the end of the twentieth

century. Since its beginnings, the internet has been generating continuous new consequences for our contemporary society. One of them is the process of globalization. The internet is the result of the process of collaboration among people, institutions, groups, and states. As the author points out, the internet produced the most interesting phenomenon of the twentieth century: communication in real time all over the world. Practically speaking, the social networks hosted by the internet represent a global way of communication. Social networks appear to be interaction structures among users in an exchange relationship, with the nature of the network being given by the nature of the relationship. There are many channels of communication via internet. Chirimbu chooses Facebook as an example. Besides being anything else, Facebook is an agent of globalization, and due to it the global village we live in becomes virtually coherent in the infosphere. It is well known that Facebook was initially a system of communication among students. This makes the author question the situation of the young generations in today's society. European youth have witnessed and have been living in a fast-changing, fast-developing environment. It is a generation whose thinking patterns are fundamentally different from those of previous generations, mostly due to the different way of processing information in a time of technological boom. The author thinks that the young generation does not have enough access to the leading positions within the EU and this could cause social tensions.

Chapter 19, "Philosophical Reflection as to the Ethics of Network Information," by Gong Qun, manifests his interest for the same domain of network information considered from the ethics perspective. The author starts with the assertion that our contemporary life is based on information and especially on network facilities. This has already changed man's living and communication styles. We can see that this fact has also changed the characteristics of human ethical life, as it grows more evident that "net crimes" are a new section of human behavior. This article presents some theoretical philosophical premises and relevant principles of the ethics of network information. The change of identity of the network user is the ontological premise of this ethical discussion.

"Without any constraint mechanism, all those presumed to be seeking for maximum self-interest are just like the natural men in natural state mentioned by Hobbes. In such an anonymous space, every one is free and equal, and will never balk at hurting others for the maximization of his self-interest," says Gong Qun. Thus, in the author's opinion, the contractarianism of Hobbes and Gauthier can be considered the philosophical premise for the ethics of network information. This supposes that all participants in the network are of identical purpose of self-interest when partaking in the activities and construction of this world. The author thinks that the construction of a network ethic on the basis of restrictive pursuit of self-interest conceives a social contract among "Netizens." He is perfectly aware of the fact that there are people who care for others, even sacrifice themselves for others. They have the capacity for better realizing

self-restraint. However, people mostly pursue only their self-interest. Thus, the premise of the new ethic should be based on the expectation that people have the idea of justice by nature as it was mentioned by Rawls. That is, having a reasonable conception of self-good, people may accept an ethical behavior in the net world as the product of man's pursuit for a better life.

Chapter 20, "The Disunity of Anthropology: Reflections from a Philosophy of Science Perspective" by Richard David-Rus, notes another scientific perspective on our society and its challenges developed by anthropological research. The author tries to apply a philosophical enquiry to raise the issues of the relation between the biological and the social approaches to human nature and intends to address these problems from the perspective of philosophy and methodology of science. The subject of the unity of the sciences was a major topic in the classical neopositivist conception of science. O. Neurath and R. Carnap were behind the project of an encyclopedia of unified science. After presenting the traditional view and assessing its inadequacy for the question of unity of anthropology, the author explores some recent modalities of approaching the issue. The first one places it in a Hempelian frame regarding anthropology as a homothetic science. The second one takes into account the historicist reaction to the DN model, and sees anthropology as mainly dealing with particular sorts of statements, without aiming at discovering general laws. The third orientation draws on the ideas that understanding in social sciences is different from that in natural sciences. The task of the anthropologist is to make sense of the behavior of an individual people by contextualizing the behavior in the frame of the purposes, motives, beliefs, and norms of behavior of that people. Starting with the last two decades of the twentieth century, a new move can be detected. It was described as "localism," with reference to the positions articulated in the realism-antirealism debate. Regarding the anthropological investigation, David-Rus thinks that the actual situation does not imply that questions regarding human nature should no longer be asked. It is quite right to raise them, the obsession for a unique answer might not be justified. Instead, science offers us a patchwork of solutions from which one can choose.

Chapter 21, "The Concept of Dignity in the Capability Approach: A Personalist Perspective," by Asya Markova, focuses on the medical scientific domains and develops a conceptual account of human dignity including persons with mental disabilities. She does not accept the rationalistic reductionism of the dominant concept of dignity, sharing Martha Nussbaum's critique. The exclusion of persons with mental disabilities is one of the three central problems of justice, generated by rationalistic reductionism. However, Markova cannot agree with Nussbaum, who thinks that it is enough to use our intuitive understanding of what human dignity means. Markova starts with a short analysis of the implicit and explicit uses of the concept of dignity in Nussbaum's version of the capability approach. The author tries to elaborate further on the

concept of dignity using the personalist philosophy, especially Gabriel Marcel's concept of dignity.

When analyzing Marcel's concept of dignity, Markova links the distinctive interrelation between love and dignity to the situation of persons with mental disabilities. She points to the importance of resisting the ideological treatment of other people as a "thing," a treatment that stands in contradiction to the ways one has learned to know and value himself by his relations of love with the others. Human dignity, in Markova's discussion, consists in this basic capability to resist to one's own stigmatization and reification by others as well as to the struggle for one's own recognition as a valuable particular person.

Chapter 22, "Understanding Mental Health: Existential Situation and Social Attitude," by three researchers, Tebeanu Ana-Voichița, Macarie George-Florian and Manea Teodora, studies mental health. The authors start from the idea that mental health should not be considered only a specific field of medicine, but that it also supposes a cultural understanding. This would be the reason for keeping up the normal human condition in opposition to the abnormal one. Taking into consideration these aspects, the authors' interest leans toward the social attitudes generated by people with mental disorders, attitudes that may differ significantly from stigmatization to acceptance and even excessive praise or respect. The research is based on direct interviews with Romanian mental health professionals. The purpose is to discover how these doctors conceptualize mental health today.

The authors consider that philosophy could be very helpful in understanding cultural aspects of mental illnesses. They start from the observation that persons experiencing mental illnesses are confronted with a significant situation: they do not belong to the community any longer, as they no longer share with the others the quality of "being rational." This is in accordance with the Heideggerian meaning of *ek-sistance*. Next, a definition of what is normality and abnormality in mental condition reveals that being in accordance with the world and being consistent with others would be a classical definition of normality, while an ill person is "dysthymic and brings a fracture between the object of knowledge and the knowing intellect." After interviewing nine mental health professionals, the authors come to some conclusions, especially to the fact that being mentally healthy means not only the lack of symptoms and clinical signs, but also a general well being, which means that the human being should be considered in his totality and implicitly in his being integrated in the community to which he belongs.

Chapter 23, "Changes and Challenges in the Statement on the Quality of Dying," by Gabriel Roman, continues the medical research by stressing new contemporary meanings of the quality of dying. The author aims at revealing some meanings of a *good death* as it was thought by Romanian folkloric tradition and in today's communities. The article focuses on the values of the human person considered under the changes of globalization.

In old communities, the *good death* had a psychological and spiritual character, a time and a spatial aspect. Thus, the author finds five main aspects of this concept in the traditional ritual of *good death*: a social, a psychological, and a spiritual character, combined with a chronological and a spatial aspect. Today, and especially in urban communities, what is significant is the quality of dying in the context of the palliative care system. There are six aspects considered to express basically what people understand by a *good enough death*. The most important, in the author's opinion is "the affirmation of the whole person." A special interest goes toward the "death-denying society." The author mentions the increasing number of deaths in hospitals and also a more and more widespread interest for the transhumanist movement, or antiaging. The study provides discussions of the extent to which medical and scientific decisions erode traditional religious consolations for the problems involved in dying and bereavement.

Part III. Cultural and Spiritual Personalities: Possible Answers to our Contemporary Changes.

Each of the articles of this part refers to a significant personality whose theoretical contribution or personal experience of life could help us in the process of a better understanding of our contemporary society and its needs and challenges. We chose a chronological series of cultural portraits.

Chapter 24, "*Rousseau's 'Civil Religion' Reconsidered,*" by John Farina, presents some aspects of Rousseau's understanding and supposes that Jean-Jacques Rousseau's understanding of religion and civil society was more nuanced than was usually acknowledged. Reading again the writings of this French thinker may lay hints for the reformulation of theories of citizenship and religious identity in the twenty-first century. Farina wants to reconsider the role which religion might play in post-secular liberal Western societies. He mentions that Europe has never been post-Christian except for the fact that the church has been removed from a privileged place in the political structure. This is obvious by the manner in which the most liberal thinkers wrote their texts. Rousseau insisted that religion plays a crucial role in the new societies. Unfortunately, his interpreters took only the negative part of what he said about religion and forgot about the positive part. Farina wants to find out "whether an accommodation of religion is essential for the health of liberal societies in the new Europe and indeed in the global twenty-first century and what Rousseau's insights might contribute to such a new accommodation." Rousseau shows a great religious sensibility when speaking of a kind of fundamental religious sentiment basic to human nature, which he calls "the religion of nature," "true religion," or "the religion of man." He never denounces religion. Rather, his work consistently shows a spiritual sensitivity that blends easily with his artistic and moralizing bent. He defends religion against its naturalist critics, the skeptics, and atheists like

Voltaire. He also insists on the role of religion in civil society. Making distinctions among the religions of Man, of Citizen, and of the Priest, Rousseau points to the first one, who, in Farina's opinion, is in fact the Christianity of the Gospels. The religion of Citizen has become the official religion of the State usually named "civil religion," and the religion of the Priest supposes the strict control of its institution, the Church. Neither of these is oriented toward understanding the meanings of the Other. Rousseau's Religion of Man, by contrast, provides a basis for acknowledging in the Other what we experience in ourselves, as Farina states in his article.

Chapter 25, "The Authenticity of the Human Being in Christian Existentialism and Phenomenology: S. Kierkegaard and J. Tischner," by Marek Jan Pytko, develops a few fundamental aspects in order to reveal some main characteristics of Authenticity as a human value. The author wonders if it is still worthwhile to be an authentic person in our contemporary society, in the era of mass communication and globalization. In order to answer to his question, Pytko refers to some fundamental concepts of Soren Kierkegaard's philosophy as well as to those expressed by a Polish contemporary thinker, Jozef Tischner. Authenticity is a fundamental challenge of the human existence in Kierkegaard's thought. There are three main elements that help the human being to reach authenticity: decision, repetition, and passion. From the lowest level of his existence (the aesthetic one), through the ethic one, toward the highest level (the Christian way of living), man experiences challenges which make him live more and more authentically. Real authenticity is reached only when man's spirituality is fully open to the constant relationship with eternity, with God-Man. Who is man? What reveals the authenticity, or inauthenticity of his existence? These are some questions that Tischner tries to answer. Under Hegel's influence, Tischner thinks that man has a task for himself: he can be "for himself," *per se* in order to speak about authentic freedom and to achieve authentic freedom. Summarizing Tischner's ideas, Pytko thinks that the proper expression of freedom is no longer choosing automatically values transmitted by others. Man has the moral duty to make these values "his own values," to become aware of them. This is exactly what is *not* encouraged by our contemporary mass pop-culture and global sale of ideas, where the lack of authenticity is promoted. In this situation, as Pytko suggests, trying to make efforts to live authentically would be the necessary attitude for each person.

Chapter 26, "The Value of the Human Person: Rabindranath Tagore's Relevance to the Challenges of Today's World," by Seema Bose, brings to the reader's attention the contribution of another valuable personality of the twentieth century: Rabindranath Tagore. The author points out his spiritual heritage and the fact that it can be reactivated today. Rabindranath Tagore was a Bengali poet, and the first Asian to receive the Nobel Prize for literature. 'Man' occupies a vital position in Tagore's thinking. Creation through art, poetry, music, dance, and philosophy all stem from what he

calls “the surplus in man.” Mentioning Tagore’s thought, Bose thinks that creativity elevates man from a mere physical being to a complete man. In his creative capacity, man is similar to the divine. Another characteristic that Bose stresses is Tagore’s love of nature, and the fact that natural beauty cannot be overlooked. According to him, human personality cannot develop if there is a division between the human individual and nature or the world in general. In the human person nature becomes articulated. Love is the root of all relationships and is superior to knowledge. Fulfillment is achieved within interpersonal relationships in spite of pain, suffering, and death. At a time when violence plagues our world and when human beings are so often treated as tools in a world of objects, it is good to be reminded by Tagore that in reality our being is concrete, that is, not to be reduced to any kind of abstraction. Though people belong to different cultures, no one should be exploited at the cost of another. Tagore’s great emphasis on the dignity of the human person needs to be remembered in the midst of our tendency to think in terms of globalizing powers.

Chapter 27, “The Acting Person and the Vertical Experience of Transcendence in Karol Wojtyła’s Writings,” by Wilhelm Dancă, intends to undertake a critical consideration of the merits and limitations of the phenomenological analysis of the acting person, based on philosopher Karol Wojtyła’s chef-d’oeuvre, *The Acting Person*. In a short introduction, Dancă articulates Wojtyła’s methodology and anthropology, and points out the peculiarity of his philosophical endeavor which starts not from the ontological structure of person, but from human action as such. The deep basic idea consists in the intuition that the person is revealed in and through action. Wojtyła had the conviction that the phenomenology of experience can shed light on the divine roots of man’s mystery and the fact that he can find fulfillment only in the transformation resulting from the interpersonal love of communion with God as Person. By adopting this interpretation, Wojtyła saw humans as persons, that is, beings created in the image and likeness of God, intelligent beings endowed with spirituality, freedom, and subjective feelings – an “*imago Dei*.” In his analysis, the author shows that the phenomenology of the experience of human acts requires a perspective capable of taking it beyond simple morphological description. Such perspective becomes manifest at the level of conscience. Dancă examines only the free acts of man, his decisions, and choices, as related to the analysis of the fundamental experience of the *I can, but am not constrained to do this* and to the presentation of the person as the *effective cause* of its own actions. Following Wojtyła’s example, the author attempts to bring together phenomenology and metaphysics and, to this end, he mentions the experience of the vertical transcendence of person, with a focus on the spiritual nature of person. As a conclusion, the unity of the person’s being relies on the spiritual being. The spirit constitutes the person’s wealth and that of its acts.

Chapter 28, “Defining Human Dignity: Landmarks in the Thought of Pope Benedict XVI,” by Șerban Tarciziu, tries to point out his contribution

to the definition of various human values of the twenty-first century. The author begins his article by mentioning some negative aspects of the globalization process, especially in Eastern Europe. In ex-communist countries, many of the social institutions “meant to serve the common good and the human person seem more inclined to use the human person as an instrument, instead of serving his basic needs in keeping with the human person’s God-given dignity.” Tarcziu remarks that this trend is mostly visible in the process of globalization. The author discusses human dignity from the contemporary philosophical perspective as it results from certain works of T. De Koninck and Gilbert Larochelle, E. Levinas, or George Steiner. Thus he finds that there are many “areas in which human dignity is being denied or trampled nowadays.” In order to propose another perspective, a positive one, the author analyzes some important aspects of human dignity as it is defined in the pronouncements of Vatican II, especially in the pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*. To prove the idea that these pronouncements are functional in Catholic Church activity, Tarcziu mentions some significant documents, such as the Encyclical Letters of Pope Benedict XVI – *Deus caritas est*, *Spe salvi*, and *Caritas in veritate*, or in messages broadcast on various occasions.

Chapter 29, “Anthony de Mello’s Lifelong Spiritual Pedagogy – Awakening and Awareness,” by Magdalena Dumitrana, points out the fact that this Indian Jesuit priest and philosopher (1931-1987) wrote very sensible texts with spiritual and philosophical meanings but which are not completely in accordance with the Christian dogmas. In fact, as it is shown in the *Notification of the Catholic Church*, attached by Dumitrana, his philosophy combines in an interesting unity Christian ideas with Buddhist and Taoist thoughts. De Mello tries to enable the reader to understand in a deep way his place in the world and to act accordingly. He wants to break the barriers of the spiritual sleep, compelling people to understand, together with their own essence, the source of evil in everybody’s life and the way of changing this. He thought that philosophy and religion are useful as they help the human person to become aware of himself. Dumitrana analyzes some of de Mello’s fundamental ideas: people are used to living under rules, norms, and regulations, forgetting the sense of freedom; this gives them the illusion of living a protective life which is in fact, in de Mello’s thought, a life similar to a dream and to the oneiric utopia. Among other characteristics of the life-sleep, the author mentions egoism as a need to seek well-being and happiness for oneself. Awakening is the fundamental act of simultaneous understanding of the present condition as well as of the atemporal human nature; Awareness would be the leap from the artificial sleepy world to the Reality. Dumitrana also tries to find how de Mello’s texts could be classified. She remarks they cannot be assimilated to any present philosophical trend. There could be a possible affiliation with a certain pedagogical ray, still functional. During the seventeenth century, Jan Amos Comenius built a theological doctrine which supported an educational theory and practice that changed the world in the field of

pedagogy. This spirit was developed by some European pedagogues, and in India, Sri Aurobindo has delineated a type of integral education aiming to facilitate spiritual growth. De Mello was also a mystic, “a mystic who teaches, not preaches.” His spiritual philosophy is based on negative truths; in other words, an apophatic philosophical search.

Chapter 30, “The Human Person Between Transcendence and Fault: a Philosophical Perspective,” by Cătălin Bobb, is centered on Paul Ricoeur’s theory on the analysis of fault and transcendence. This theory generates a philosophical anthropology of the negative. In the author’s opinion, this could settle the fundamental issues for an axiological theory. In Ricoeur’s own words, fault is understood as absolute deficiency of the human being and transcendence as absolute origin of subjectivity. Following Ricoeur, Bobb articulates his arguments against the possibility of a strictly philosophical theory about the fundamental deficiencies of the human being without any help from mythological, theological, or religious contributions. In his *Philosophy of Will*, Ricoeur discusses the impossibility of building a phenomenology of transcendence and fault. The two concepts are denied a phenomenological analysis as they are the absolute marginal points either due to the fact that fault alters man’s intelligibility or, respectively, transcendence hides in it the origin of subjectivity. In this way, phenomenology seems to be incapable of discussing the “things in themselves.” Ricoeur “does not exclude from the field of phenomenological analysis transcendence and fault, but excludes, in the end, human subjectivity with its two extremes: origin and alteration,” says the author. These concepts are the extreme margins that frame the entire *philosophy of will*. But will remains entrapped in a perpetual road that can not surpass its own limits (within a phenomenological analysis) given by transcendence and fault. To go beyond, to aim *beyond* intentionality, means to go outside the phenomenology area; to be able to bring into discussion exactly what phenomenology can not talk about. The author elaborates on the following idea: pure will tells us nothing of morality; understanding morality and fundamentally human values originates within human passions; understanding passions and a possible solution regarding them surpasses the possibilities of philosophy.

Chapter 31, “Foucault’s Case Against Humanism,” by Maria Gioga, summarizes some of Foucault’s arguments against humanism. She is interested in placing them into the contemporary debate about the human essence. Gioga argues that Foucault’s anti-humanism has a pragmatic approach to the human rights problem. He wants human rights to be historically and pragmatically determined. Thus, in Gioga’s opinion, Foucault’s antihumanism is in fact against the modernist notion of subject and not at all for the core of humanist values. The author distinguishes among three categories of rejections of humanism: 1) conceptual or philosophical (humanism as too entangled in Western subject-focused metaphysics); 2) strategic (the appeal to humanist values as covering up strategies of domination); 3) normative (humanism as being intrinsically

objectionable on the grounds that subjection is *per se* a form of subjugation). These three possibilities are supposed to correspond to three main stages of Foucault's philosophical development (archaeology, genealogy, and the history of subjectivity). Gioga thinks that Foucault has adopted a pragmatic approach to the human rights problem. Foucault seems to have denied a metaphysical ground for human rights as, in his opinion, there is no human essence; however, rights are good as they help us to fight against the political power of governments.

In sum, this study is a proof of the interest that researchers from various countries and cultures pay to the contemporary challenges. At the same time, it illustrates the need for extensive collaboration in order to find the best solutions for the next decades of our century. These articles plead for the need to promote the spiritual and cultural values humankind has already created and consolidated during its long existence. The new challenges do not suppose the annihilation of traditional values; on the contrary, their demand is to assure the best combination between tradition and novelty.

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PART I

**FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN VALUES
CHALLENGING CONTEMPORARY
GLOBALIZATION**

CHAPTER I

VALUE DIFFERENTIATION AND THE IDEAL OF MANKIND

MARIN AIFTINĂ

Abstract: This paper aims to approach the problem of relationship between personal values and common values, in connection to an ideal of humanity. We start from the thesis that the human being, essentially determined by spirit, identifies itself through a set of values freely appropriated on the grounds of its own cultural tradition, cognition, and aspirations. Personal and common values permanently diversify as a result of the development of knowledge and increasing spreading of information, as well as under the pressure of the changes produced in the historical-social environment. This process is accompanied by a conflict of values that explains the crisis of the contemporary culture.

In each of its moments, culture cultivates certain values proper to its specific period or stage. At present, the globalization process promotes and imposes the utilitarian values that feed the conflict between values, which is detrimental to the spiritual nature of the individual and collective person.

Finally, I consider that the person, as a human being, is part of humanity, identifying itself through its own values. In this position, it has to be open to those common values that lead humankind, such as: peace, freedom, justice, truth, beauty, good, equality, sacred, etc. Preserving a balance between personal and common values, the universal culture must be lead by the ideal of the person's self-improvement. The education and the norms derived from personal and collective values have to be subordinated to achieving this ideal.

Keywords: Differentiation, Person, Personal values, Common values, Culture, Ideal.

Among the major phenomena of the contemporary world, one should take into consideration the tension between the increasing of globalization and the highlighting of diversity: two opposite factors that deeply affect the existence of mankind nowadays. To the tendency toward cultural homogeneity and annihilation of cultural particularity, which is specific to the first factor, the second factor opposes differentiation and heterogeneity. Being placed at the crossroads of the two opposite directions, the human person, in both its individual and collective (common) aspects, engenders contradictory effects while trying through action and creation to preserve and assert its identity, to understand itself, and to decipher the meaning of the world.

We obviously speak here of a human person as understood from a philosophical viewpoint, namely, in Scheler's terms, as a center of action from whose finite inner existence the spirit emerges;¹ or, according to another perspective, as a relational identity of human existence which is distinct due to its singularity and position in the world.²

The facts outlined above bring about at least two critical questions: in which way does the person react³ to the value differentiation, and, on the other hand, what kind of relation is established between personal (individual) and common (collective) values? To answer these questions, our investigation starts from the opinion according to which person, as far as its spirit is an essential determinative factor, lives in an unlimited value universe. Precisely on this presence of spirit the human person grounds its conscience of value, which guides it to freely choose the personal values that it joins and transforms into landmarks of its own life. The idea just stated compels us to remember that the being of value in its ideal state is different from its actual being, namely the reality in which value is embodied. That is to say, at the level of experience, value presents itself as a definite modality of the real, which is not the case for the "pure value." Accordingly, the embodied value shows itself together with its bearer, which could be a person, a utilitarian object, a work of art, etc. Hence the person is only a bearer of values and, as such, it represents only the conditions of value embodiment.⁴ As a consequence, personal values such as dignity, friendship, love, bravery, humility, faithfulness, prudence, piety, etc., embody themselves in a person without exhausting their content or affecting their universality. Anybody that respected these values could engender or "realize" them through attitude or behavior. This is a very significant aspect that, on one hand, certifies the difference and, at the same time, the unity between the transcendental and the empirical being of value, and, on the other hand, validates the extraordinary power of the value to join people together.

It is necessary to add that the choice of personal values is not a mere functional exercise. In the first place, it implies the ability to grasp the axiological universe and to perceive the plurality of values. As acts of

¹ See: Max Scheler, *Die Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos (The Human Place in the Cosmos)*, translated into Romanian by Vasile Muscă (Bucharest: Paralela 45 Publishing House, 2001), p. 40.

² *L'Enciclopedia della Filosofia e delle Scienze Umane* (Encyclopaedia of Philosophy and Human Sciences), translated into Romanian (Bucharest: All Educational Publishing House, 2004), p. 814.

³ We make a distinction between individual and person. By individual we mean human being taken separately, while person stands for human being in relation with others.

⁴ Nicolai Hartmann, *Vechea și noua ontologie și alte scrieri*, translated into Romanian by Alexandru Boboc (Bucharest: Paideia Publishing House, 1997), p. 104.

consciousness, they are inherently limited and cannot combine simultaneously all the values. For this phenomenon, Scheler employed the concept of “value blindness,” and N. Hartmann used to refer to it more properly as “narrowness of the value consciousness.” Naturally, consciousness does not repel any value that apprehends, yet its capacity of comprising values is also determined, besides the mentioned limitations, by its ability to open itself to them.⁵

No matter how large the opening of the axiological consciousness might be, the person’s choice of and commitment to certain values involve the act of preference that proves the difference between values and their arrangement in a hierarchical system. He/She who prefers a certain value doesn’t deny the other subordinated values, and does not exclude the possibility for their being preferred by other consciousnesses, which are not always compatible with his/hers. In such conditions, preference entails, according to Scheler, the intentional aiming at a plurality of values, employing only the individuality of the person, which is determined by its own vocation and place in the world.⁶ Therefore, the preference facing the plurality and differentiation of values exercises itself according to a series of criteria such as: cultural tradition, the development stage of the feeling of value, the historical change of life conditions, and most important, perhaps, the vocation and aspirations of the axiological subject. As a result, the preference, depending on its refinement, has a decisive influence on the choice of personal values and significantly prompts the will to realize or embody them in cultural goods, thus maintaining movement in the horizon of humanity and giving meaning to life.

While stating its own values according to the mentioned criteria, the human person acquires a constant, unitary style of thinking and acting, which is expressed in a peculiar place in the world, providing it with self-identity in relation to others. That is to say, as Housset put it, the person asserts itself as an “ontological unity of a subject which moulds itself within the unity of a specific history and biography.”⁷ It easily follows from the above considerations that persons distinguish themselves according to the values they freely assume, and, at the same time, according to the way in which they realize those values in their individual and social life.

There is no doubt that the value set assumed by the human person (either individual or collective) does not always remain identical with itself. Naturally, values are subjected to an uninterrupted process of differentiation which is produced and maintained by several factors. First of all, it is

⁵ See: *ibid.*, pp. 109-110.

⁶ See: Louis Lavelle, *Traité des valeurs*, Tome Premier, *Théorie générale de la valeur* (Paris : Presses Universitaires de France, 1951), p. 601.

⁷ Emmanuel Housset, *Personne et sujet selon Husserl* (Paris : P.U.F., 1997), p. 84.

necessary to mention that values themselves have a differential nature.⁸ Although they enjoy common features as autonomy and irreducibility, values distinguish themselves by specific traits that allow their grouping in distinct classes (economical, political, moral, theoretical, aesthetic, etc. But even inside one and the same class there are precise differences between values. Within the class of aesthetic values for instance, beauty – which is marked by harmony, proportion, and measure – is clearly distinguished as tragic, sublime, or comic.

As it is known, values are closely related to the real world. This fact explains another extremely important aspect that determines the differentiation of values, at least from the point of view of the approach being discussed. Depending on the real object to which they apply and on the soul's aspirations fulfilled by their embodiment, values present themselves to us in specific modalities of the real. Further, Vianu conceived a theory concerning the volume of value⁹ which asserts that values, including the personal ones, are being gradually differentiated by the acts of desire that comprise them: permanent or intermittent, more or less intense.¹⁰ The volume variations of values are also to be tracked within the individual consciousnesses,¹¹ or the consciousness of certain historical ages. There are persons to whom certain values might be more or less important depending on the associated desiderative acts, which might occur often or less frequently. This is also the case with the cultural consciousness of an era. As a result, the consciousness acts mentioned before, such as desire and preference, are closely related to the flexibility of life relations. Therefore, personal and common values depend on the action of determinative factors, such as: education, the extent and depth of the knowledge, tradition, the rapid diffusion of information, socio-historical changes, participation in the creation of culture, etc. These factors bring about an unceasing diversification and differentiation of values. The spirit itself is in search of increasingly new values as “the values themselves exist independently of it.”¹²

The differentiation of value phenomenon that came through ages from the depths of the history of culture brings about contradictory consequences. The philosophical critique points out the advantages and, at the same time, the difficulties of this phenomenon that had been grounded on the Kant's principle of irreducibility of values. According to this

⁸ Cf. Tudor Vianu, *Filosofia culturii* (Philosophy of Culture), in “Opere” (Works), vol. 8 (Bucharest: Minerva Publishing House, 1979), pp. 164–165.

⁹ The volume of value lies in “the psychological relation between the empiric constitution of desiderative consciousness and its object.” Tudor Vianu, *Introducere în teoria valorilor* (Introduction to the Theory of Values), in “Opere” (Works), vol. 8 (Bucharest: Minerva Publishing House, 1979), p. 83.

¹⁰ See: Tudor Vianu, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

¹² Nicolai Hartmann, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

principle, value has no other *genus proximum* than the totality of values, as the end of any value is an intrinsic one. Hence, the autonomy of value, since it cannot be subordinated in order to define another value(s).¹³

From the viewpoint of the afore-mentioned thesis, Vianu's analysis stressed that the modern differentiation of values was a necessary condition for cultural progress and personal freedom, and, at the same time, for social tolerance. But he also considered that the mentioned phenomenon gave rise to a series of inconveniences that led to the "disorganization of society" and instilled into the modern man "the depressing feeling of not having a central life theme." The modern differentiation of values made man unable to encompass life entirely, thus contributing to its breakup. The damaging consequences of the differentiation of values affect the destiny of modern man and of the entire society. Such arguments are frequently invoked, and not without reason, to support the thesis according to which the differentiation of values is the essential source of the conflict of values and thus of the crisis of modern culture. It is required to specify here that by crisis of culture we don't necessarily mean destruction, but rather creation and particularly rearrangement of values according to different criteria.¹⁴

We will not dwell here on the advantages and disadvantages of the modern differentiation of values, although they are worthy of attention, but rather on the conflict of values, whose disturbing effects are more visible nowadays. Of course, this is not a conflict between values themselves, although, being autonomous, they are involved in a true competition for their realization. This conflict affects in the first place the bearers of the values, whose process of evaluation sustains the embodiment of certain values and rejects the others. Only in this sense are we allowed to talk about values as being in conflict with one another. For example, a person, either individual or collective, can embrace a certain value, such as a religious one, and organize his life in terms of the adopted value, being indifferent to, or even intolerant of, all the others. This attitude might result in religious fanaticism, a behavior that devastates our historical era as well as others. Similar examples of axiological exclusiveness might be also encountered by those people who live according to the viewpoint of a single value, which can be the one related to their profession, or other values such as the economic, political, or aesthetic ones. Such an attitude proves to be a distortion of the axiological consciousness and has a negative impact on other people and on the entire culture.

In referring to this issue, Jiang Chang notes that different communities evolved throughout history under a variety of value systems, which configured the different cultural patterns, some of them being unchanged

¹³ See: Tudor Vianu, *op. cit.*, pp. 162–164.

¹⁴ See: Marin Aiftincă, *Filosofia culturii* (Philosophy of Culture) (Bucharest: The Romanian Academy Publishing House, 2008), p. 10.

even in the present day.¹⁵ This is beyond doubt the source of the existing conflict between Eastern and Western values, a conflict that was amplified rather than diminished by ever-increasing intercultural communication. To the same effect, the cited author asserted that “This is the chief feature of value conflicts in the present world. This kind of value conflict is much different from those that occurred before the twentieth century, especially before modern time.”¹⁶ Therefore, it is undeniable that today, one of the consequences of value differentiation and conflict, at both individual and collective levels of the person, consists in the fact that humanity is marked not by isolation, but rather by a tendency of fusing and merging values, at least with respect to the fundamental ones. Instead of the personal values that belong to the local or national cultural tradition, there are gradually embraced under the pressure of globalization ideas and values such as: liberty, equality, democracy, justice, market economy, environmental protection, etc. These values acquired universal validity and became, in Jiang Chang’s terms, goals of the entire world.¹⁷

The modern differentiation of values, accompanied by the conflict it engenders, is related, *inter alia*, to the phenomenon of globalization that is, as it is well known, one of the most serious challenges of the contemporary world. Judging by its consequences, globalization does not confine itself to universalizing some personal values and exterminating others. On the contrary, the critics of globalization accuse it of having dangerous effects on both individual and community. Being a source of different discontents and conflicts, globalization is experienced in everyday life as uncertainty and anxiety, making people vulnerable to various tyrannies and cults. It also implies migration of capital and job loss, the distress of local wars and religious collisions, the split of societies in groups involved in weird ruinous struggles. All of these have a negative influence on the structure of individual and collective values, giving way to the temptation of embracing non-values. Supported by several defining factors as information, trade, finances, industry, and technology, globalization is the agent of a single civilization, that is, of a so-called “global culture” that is detached from any cultural tradition.¹⁸ The products of this culture, which are composed by goods and symbols made in one or two centers of technological and financial power that are stimulated by an expanding market, are destined to be fully consumed. At the same time, they make up a stunningly less dogmatic but more persuasive ideology that modifies the axiological scale by overthrowing spiritual values and instead placing utilitarian values on

¹⁵ Jiang Chang, *Value Conflict and Identifying in the Background of Globalization*. Paper presented at the 21st Philosophy World Congress (Istanbul, August 2003).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹⁸ For further reading on this matter, see: Marin Aiftincă, *op. cit.*, pp. 127–149.

the highest level. Owing to their easy, hedonist, shallow nature, the latter possess an unusual force of persuasion by which they take hold of those minds that are turned especially to the outer world. Utilitarian values always lead us toward an easier, enticing, but perverse way, as it lures human beings into a cheap life, while spiritual values that guide the person toward self-knowledge and self-improvement call for serious efforts, abnegation, and sacrifice. Thus it is easy to understand why utilitarian values are so seductive. This lack of balance inside a person's pattern of values conceals the inner emptiness of man as both individual and member of a community, fascinated by outer world, by the shallow multicolored variety of a reality which is beyond his own self. The destruction of the relationship between spiritual and utilitarian values, ensuring the prevalence of the latter, explains the present crisis of culture that announces another kind of barbarism, whose signs are visible today in the entire realm of culture, especially in what constitutes moral behavior.

In the context of current approaches to the destiny of humanity, the critical reflection, concerned with the changes that are assaulting human societies – a rapid pace of change that defies perception and adaptation – emphasized an opposing tendency to globalization that leads to an atomization of society by dividing mankind in groups and regions. The fragmentation of community goes to the confused individual in search of identity and meaning. No matter how much we appreciate the widespread global technological revolution we are witnessing, we must not neglect the accompanying cultural revolution. Under the lasting influence of postmodern nihilism, the latter draws attention to the deconstruction of institutions and mentalities, and to the denying and overthrowing of the old cultural patterns and values, accused of falsity and hypocrisy. In an obstinate search for authenticity that transgresses the classic pattern, truth, universality, tradition, value, objective reality, and any other general concepts that played a part in the evolution of culture and human society are prosecuted and condemned. The blamed concepts were replaced by a series of notions as relativism, diversity, particularism, emotionalism, and multiculturalism. They support an emotionalist and extremist individualism that became an easy-to-manipulate constituent of a homogenizing global world, ruled by consumption.

Leaving out the undeniable advantages brought by knowledge, communication, and the convergence of some general interests at the global level, contemporary civilization seriously affects the human being by its offensive position against the classical life models, now being replaced by behaviors and values grounded on extreme liberalism, consumptionism, and striving after the sensational. The unadjusted human person is thus placed in an unstable, fragmented realm governed by extreme individualism. Therefore, the bearers of the new values are unable to encompass life in its entirety. This is also one of the consequences of value differentiation that places a person's values, either individual or common, in a dramatic

conflict with those promoted by actual changes, mostly sustained by money and economic profit.

Even though the mentioned phenomena and facts nourish the conflict of values and, therefore, the crisis of contemporary culture, they do not represent a sufficient reason to lay the entire blame on the differentiation of values, which is a process that accompanies the evolution of life. On the contrary, some philosophers have strong arguments to assert that “the differentiation of values is a modern achievement which cannot be unmade as far as it is the essential condition for that ‘promethean’ theme undertaken by modern man, which consists in an as-extensive-as-possible conquering of nature and spirit.”¹⁹ It is thus an important ingredient for the functioning of personal and common values. The teleological structure of soul is not one-sided; it is hierarchized and, at the same time, able to perceive and understand all other values. Therefore, we have the ability to organize our lives in accordance with a super-ordinate value without expelling all others; they can be subordinated to the principle value that guides the personal life, and can be grouped around it. Taking this chance, which is available to anyone, means to live in accordance with a single value and to be, at the same time, open-minded to the universe of all values, thus encompassing world in its entirety. Such a possibility is generally confirmed by the particular experience and, at the same time, by the entire experience of historical cultures.²⁰

As a human being, the person, which is identifiable by its own values, is part of the community at all its structural levels (i.e., family, nation, or world community), and, at the same time, of humankind in its entirety. As such, the person is united and can interact with all those who believe in the same values and organize their lives according to them. At the same time, a person can and must be open to the common values that guide the structures of community and the entire humankind. Such values as peace, liberty, welfare, justice, right, equality, dignity, beauty, truth, sacredness, etc., make up the sphere of personal values.

Preserving our individuality as a creative source and potential, we have to rationally correlate individual and common values so as to respect the values of community that ensure the dignified coexistence of all human beings and of cultures on the whole. Therefore, the answer is not to emphasize as absolute our personal values against the values of the community or vice versa, but to create a natural balance between them, preserving, at the same time, our plenary attachment to that one value which we raised to the rank of a life ideal. There is no perfect human being, but we can find instead an idea of moral self-improvement; Husserl expressed it in the following terms: “I wish from now on to live my whole

¹⁹ Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 172–179.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

life, with all its acts and contents, as the best of the possible lives.”²¹ We are dealing here with a husserlian categorical imperative that synthesises an infinite ideal of morality, and this is precisely why it appears to us as being limitative. We think there is a more complex and adequate ideal: the one that consists in the self-improvement of the human being, as it employs thinking, creation, and action under a moral form. To this infinite ideal should be subordinated the personal and common values, and all cultural forces should be dedicated to it. The education and the norms derived from personal and common values have to be correlated to achieving this ideal which remains an eternal calling toward the absolute over time and cultures.

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²¹ E. Husserl, *Einleitung in die Ethik. Vorlesungen Sommersemester 1920 und 1924*, Husserliana XXXVII, hrsg. Von Henning Puecker (Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2004).

CHAPTER II

THE VALUES OF THE NEW CIVILIZATION

BOGDANA TODOROVA

Abstract: The new period of challenges to democracy demands new intellectual efforts to find the way of the future. The philosopher's role is to analyze and criticize worldview systems in order to achieve a future value synthesis. Contemporary cultural resources (philosophy, religion and myth, moral and everyday consciousness) rooted in different social experience should be critically analyzed in terms of transition from the so-called technogenetic civilization to a new desirable social and intellectual order. Is the synthesis of values belonging to different cultures, social groups, and types of intellectual praxis possible at all? How do science and religion interact in these terms?

Keywords: values, identity, dialogue, religion.

The axiological discourse in science and religion is associated with the real historical experience of the relation of religion to church to society. This experience is in turn the subject of endless discussions between the representatives of various axiological systems – conservative, liberal and radical, secular and religious. A dialogue is required to minimize the possible proneness to conflict of this state. Science is centered in relation to examining the objective-substantive structure of the world, while religion puts an accent on the subject-subjective relation, the human effort to communicate, which regulates the fundamental values of culture. The relationship of science to religion varied through the historical course of civilization. Religion and myth have a dominating role in the culture of traditional societies. Tradition takes a central place among axiological priorities. In traditional cultures, religion and myth are what form the human worldview, and they set a unique mental framework, to which scientific research must correspond. The situation radically changed with the formation of the new type of civilizational development related to the Reformation and the Enlightenment in the European region. It is often defined by the extremely unclear concept of the West opposed to the traditional East. Today, this type of development comprises the whole world. We can define it as the technological civilization that develops when inventions, innovations, and the introduction of new technologies lead to accelerated changes of social life. Here, science gradually turns into one of the dominating values of civilization. However, this cult of scientific rationality also has its own historical roots.

In antiquity, the rational understanding of world was considered a condition for legitimate human behavior. Not only the ancient tradition, but also the Christian worldview played an enormous role in this rational

concept. Representing the imitation of Divine reason, human reason was seen as able to reach the Divine plan realized on Earth. There are two approaches for the religious understanding of Nature in the Christian tradition, with the better knowledge of God as the ultimate purpose (a natural theology). The approach characteristic to the early Church and which is preserved in Greek-Byzantine theology saw Nature as the symbolic system by which God speaks to men. The approach that was established in the Latin West from the early eighteenth century developed the aspiration to read the Book of Nature written by God in order to understand how its creation is formed and acts, and to reveal the logic of this process and its inner law. Similar concepts lead to the occurrence of a new type of rationality that developed further in modern European science. The Christian cultural tradition was a prerequisite to the new concept of Nature. It presented the bonding link between the ancient and modern European cultures. Medieval Christianity preserved the characteristics for the ancient cultural opposition between natural and factitious, but it included also the possibility for a transition to different, new levels of understanding, since Man was viewed as God's creature, created through His image and likeness.

The interpretation of experimental activity as the main method to examine Nature is the key factor for the formation of the new type of rationality. No such interpretation is present in ancient culture, since Nature is viewed as a living body, with any single part having its own feature and being subordinated to the harmony of the whole. The idea of experimenting with any single part is viewed as the violation of wholeness. The artificial (*techne*) is opposed to the natural (*physis*). Understanding the Cosmos is possible only notionally, so ancient science is ultimately philosophy and mathematics.

In a technological type of culture, Nature is seen as a specific field of human manifestations. The ancient concept of *physis* and Cosmos here opposes Nature, being the symbiosis of qualitatively different entities, which, however, possess the aspect of homogeneity, following common laws that are universal for the various classes of individual objects.

The values of the artificial and the natural are aligned in the New Age and the rational change in the nature of human activity does not contradict it, but is rather adjusted to its natural constitution. This new attitude toward Nature is visualized in the concept of Nature that serves as the prerequisite of the development of a fundamentally new notion of the understanding of the world. In the history of modern European culture, science comes into a serious contradiction to religion, starting to form its own opinion about the world and pretending that has its own worldview. There is no need to adapt some scientific picture of the world to the religious notions of a culture in order to include it in this culture. Moreover, the Christian tradition has an aspiration to coordinate the principles of the Christian concept of the world with scientific advances. Western culture, at the stage of a technological type of civilization, preserves Christian tradition in a reformed

configuration, combining it to the scientific values. Along with that, however, this new civilizational type also provoked global crises endangering human existence itself. We have good reason to doubt the ability of modern civilization to find the solution to the crisis without changing the strategy for development and the basal values of technological culture.

Thereafter, we can speak about a new civilizational type, a third one, comparing the traditionalistic and technological. Some researchers define it as a post-neoclassical type of rationality related to complex developing systems possessing synergetic features. Biological and social systems, nanotechnologies, and computer sets belong to this type of systems. If we must change the basal values of modern civilization, how this will affect the relationship of science and religion? The new trends in this relationship can be viewed as the growth of new values; for example, the construction of new situations for the dialogue between science and religion. It is not only national rationality that can be interpreted as the growth of new values occurs in the frameworks of the modern type of technological culture. Changes also take place in religion itself, and they can be assessed from the position of searching for new values.

IDENTITY AND DIALOGUE IN THE CONTEXT OF AN AXIOLOGICAL DISCOURSE

The concept of value is the central category of philosophical axiology. For believers and theologians, religious and corresponding theological values do not represent the features of culture but they are objectively present and are defined by the features of being; or at least this is the interpretation of Christianity.

For theologians, God is the basis of reality as a benefit, being the completeness of perfection. This is not a value, but the power that created the world and allowed us to live, and that gives us the chance of immortality and salvation. Christ is the personification of the soul-winning origin, the incarnation of eternal life; He is real, more real than anything real. He is the root of the empirical world and the Way to Paradise. In this regard, He is the mouthpiece of the other hypostases, the divine-existing features of reality as Truth, Good, Beauty, and Justice. The entire religious reality is penetrated by values that exist in various religions.

One of the reasons for the increase of religiosity in the modern world is the need for stable conceptual beliefs and opinions, in which science can participate, even in the best case, only indirectly. Unlike science, religion, with its tradition, is oriented to conceptually important questions and has the power of an authority and a historical being. The world of Christian culture, with its spiritual wealth, assimilated into itself metaphysical, ethical, artistic, and socio-economic thought that masks pure religious perspectives.

The main problem is this: is the general course of civilizational changes able to influence the axiological systems of autonomous cultures, involving them in the process of an inevitable inner change and testifying, in this manner, to its own cultural, but not transcendental, nature?

While positive answers in relation to a cultural system such as science is generally acknowledged, things differ in relation to religion. The existence of the Christian myth in itself is categorically withdrawn from the power resource of the time and culture. It is not acknowledged as the exclusive fruit of the activity of the human beings and human creativity. The truth can be dependent on time and culture of those who believe, but not against its own existence and dogmas. This difference is not devoid of doubts, but even so, it has to be taken into account. When European integration is at issue, one must not forget that any nation has different features proceeding from its national character, history, and culture.

Modern global society needs more than ever to make adequate decisions on the problems such as ecology, demography, and terrorism. Two scenarios can be developed regarding the needed decisions. The first relies on the dominating values or priorities of modernity: technological progress versus ecology, scientific rationality versus tradition, maximization of production and consumption at the expense of resources, a formal legality in relation to the person – the scenario that will lead to the aggravation of the crisis and later to cataclysm. The second scenario reckons on the radical change in axiological priorities. This requires the analysis of the two types of an axiological discourse, in science, on one hand, and in theology on the other. The 'logic' in the development of culture has to be also taken into account. Models for the development of knowledge that are borrowed from philosophy are established as its objective regularities – accumulation, proliferation, and the change of a paradigm.

The cumulative principle of replenishment proceeds from the past – an abstract philosophical norm, in which the accent is put on identity and the leading role of a dialogue. In the same way as the accumulated theoretical generalizations and facts in science, this model of a cultural development itself is the collection of advances based on the abstract philosophical norms of excellence. Being considered in this manner, culture keeps a human identity but alienates the person from the other persons in the cultural dialogue. This form of a cultural choice is determined by the rational logic supposing the regularities, which are characteristic of social sciences.

The model of the change of a paradigm is the revolutionary phenomenology that proceeds from the present. The emphasis here is put on the change of identity and the change of the positions in a dialogue. It focuses on the concrete sociological norm of human behavior that supposes both the partial and complete replacement. That is to say that culture is viewed as a field for free choice where any norm is completely incommensurable with the other. The same applies also to human identity

and cultural dialogue. According to this model, the history of culture is the complex of various cultural types that are not liable to a mutual comparison; the choice between them is controlled emotionally and not logically.

A third type – proliferation – is based on the principle of the relativistic democratism that relies on the future (the emphasis here is on the loss of identity and the arbitrary positions in a dialogue). The formulated purpose is practically inaccessible and often has nothing in common with real human behaviors. For this reason, the future is unpredictable but, simultaneously, only it allows a choice between different cultural systems to be made. According to this model, there is no sense in speaking about a definite identity and the self-sufficient position in a dialogue. The motto in this model is: “a purpose is nothing, movement is everything.”

All the three cultural scenarios can be traced in history and the logic of a culture is largely a projecting intentional strategy for the invasion in cultural creation and its theoretical understanding.

RATIONALITY AS THE REGULATIVE VALUE OF CULTURE

Our attitude toward culture as a comprehended reality presupposes rationality as a cultural value. The main problem is to combine our values with the values of others. Are different cultures incompatible in general? To what extent is a cultural synthesis possible by means of rational ways? Which forecasts and analyses are possible in this sphere? Can we measure the success of our cultural projects practically?

Jurgen Habermas speaks about such a project – the project for a communicative rationality, in which people participating in social discussions are engaged. His project assumes that people accept the rules of a rational discourse, which is in contradiction to the current situation of the radicalization of controversies. The opposition between the Western Christian, or the so-called rational, culture and the Eastern Islamic, or traditional, culture is strongly expressed. The majority of people, independent of their cultural affiliation, suffer at the time of an economic crisis, a war, or terroristic outrages but no one could preliminarily find the rational solution of such situations until now. The solutions are measured as rational *post factum* and they are taken by the victor. In fact, a cultural sense plays an important and real role only in two areas: our own cultural area and that of the other, which differs from ours. We exist in the first, but the second is only an emotional and conceptual construction for us. The culture to which we belong determines our knowledge. According to Schutz, we can examine objectively and scientifically only a foreign culture. If we aim at a rational and conscious effort searching a cultural synthesis, we have to leave the limits of local cultures and act neutrally regarding standards, values, and ideals. This is absolutely impossible due to the adherence to the ideal of a scientific objectiveness, which is adopted by

the paradigm of classical science. We are all foreigners today and we live everywhere, due to global communications.

Trying to understand various cultural determinants creating conditions for the rational discourse of culture, we can classify three levels:

- The level of direct life impressions – examining the native language, long-term relations in family, relatives, school, birth-place. At this level, we have the practical, unconscious emotional acquisition of a culture.

- The level of the acquisition of knowledge – an experience, contact with a foreign culture (travels, learning foreign languages, communication with foreigners). This level problematizes common sense and gives the possibility of increasing the sphere of cultural knowledge; the individual can form his own picture of a foreign culture, even a total misunderstanding or fear. Due to the separation of an indirect cultural basis, cognition appears correct at this level.

- The level of the philosophical and scientific research of the culture. Here, various cultures are examined as the equal parts of the third world, in the spirit of Popper. This sphere of an objective knowledge demonstrates the pluralism of cultural universals. Right here is the place of the rational dialogue of cultures.

THE MAIN DILEMMA: ANTHROPOLOGISM VERSUS ECOLOGISM

A dialogue does not occur in an intercultural space but within the frameworks of a definite culture, based on the resources characteristic of that culture. One of the modern myths that proceeds from sociobiology, along with the common disappointment of Western intellectuals and the boom of Eastern religious schools, is global ecologism – a good example of how new cultural universals emerge. The Anglo-American sociologist of science, Fuller, calls it a ‘karmic Darwinism.’ Its consequences are as follows: the elimination of a subject and the refusal of the anthropomorphic bases of culture; the refusal of science and technological progress; the refusal of rationality as the foundation of knowledge, communication, and social regulation. Fuller suggests that in the twenty-first century Western science will ally itself with the Biblical religions, which will lead to an ‘anthropic perspective’ as opposed to the karmic determinism. The anthropic perspective is associated with Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, and is secularized as positivism in the nineteenth century, identifying social sciences as humanistic religions. The second combines Buddhism, Jainism, and Hinduism, along with Western Epicureism. The neo-Darwinist synthesis in the twentieth century becomes its secular variant establishing a normative framework for the world. In their works, Dockins, Wilson, and Singer defend the idea for the refusal of normative privileges for man using naturalistic arguments. This idea received the enviable support of post-modernism. Fuller proposes that monotheists should combine themselves

with positivists to rehabilitate the collective humanistic project. The understanding of the participation in science as a civil obligation or even in the sense of Boyle, Newton, and Cont as a religious service has a decisive significance for this project. According to Fuller, the twenty-first century will witness the collision between the anthropic and karmic perspectives, and the main questions that will be asked are as follows: Is Man the image and likeness of God, and does he have the right of a privileged position in Nature because of this? The Western monotheistic religions come to an agreement on this point, while the pantheistic and polytheistic religions of the East do not. In metaphysical concepts, this sounds like the opposition between universum (the unity of hierarchies and regularities) and polyuniversum (the chaotic interaction of powers and substances). The key concepts of the karmic ideology are as follows: the equality of humans and animals, a moral-political and religious tolerance, the predominance of the elemental forces of social development, the negation of categories such as 'progress' and 'decay,' the predetermination of a natural (biological or cosmological) determinant over the cultural determinant, holism instead of individualism. Yet in the past (1960), similar ideas for a karmic ideology were criticized. Jorge Luis Borges and Roland Barthes with their theses about the 'death of the author' are the first, and later, their thesis is continued by the thesis of the death of the subject, in which Nietzsche's 'God's death' is introduced. Any minimization of the role of Man in Nature at the background of modern global cataclysms would be fatal. However, one positive thing in the idea of Fuller is the term 'anthropia.' In its essence, it is a new type of humanism. Ginsburg develops the idea for a secular humanism as the alternative to religion. This new humanism combines in itself the values of religion and philosophy. It is destined to define the new position of Man in the rational world. The old classicism is closely related to anthropocentrism, culture-centrism (the central place of the culture in relation to economics and politics), and interdisciplinarity (involvement with science as the source of a critical philosophical reflection). A dialogue between science and Christian theology is possible in it, as there is a place in it also for modernization. From a theological point of view, Man is similar to God and this places him at a forward position above all. The aspiration for an interdisciplinary synthesis is strongly expressed in the modern 'natural theology.' Religion as a cultural form separates from policy and economics, turning to the development of a person in its axiological dimensions. Religion has to be the ally of science, but not vice-versa. Hence, the place of a philosopher in the dialogue for values is significant.

THE PHILOSOPHER – CENTRIST OR MARGINAL?

The critical position of the humanist is at the crossroads of cultures. The position of the philosopher, at the intersecting point of cultural epochs.

The discussed anthropic perspective is a reference to the epoch of the Renaissance, when Man is given the status of a hero. The person is in a competition with God, creating societies and cultures, dominating Nature technologically, and showing the abilities of demiurge. If we look closer at current political and religious extremism and fanaticism, we will recognize new trends toward heroism. These are the new political leaders, anti-globalists, terroristic leaders who consider themselves new ‘crusaders,’ struggling against world evil. This heroism is a bad advisor regarding a dialogue for values, because compromise and synthesis as the goals of a rational discussion are alien to it. Such heroism cannot be the form of an axiological discourse. Only a philosophical analysis is able to show the false nature of an axiological polarization. If we return to the delineated three levels of cultural dynamics, we see that the opposition between the karmic and anthropic principles is possible only at the first two levels. Their limitation and syncretism can be seen at the third level of cultural dynamics, where the analysis is based on rationality. Therefore, the mass conscience constructs social values without being interested in their critical analysis. The ideological strategy is to justify your own values and to criticize the values of the other. Only the philosopher is able to exit from the frameworks of any axiological system trying to preserve political and axiological neutrality. Certainly, being at the first and second levels of cultural dynamics, representing an empirical subject, the philosopher can prefer and form a definite axiological significance, using the cumulative method and the method of a paradigmatic jump. However, according to his underlying essence, in Wittgenstein’s vision, action, and not just knowledge, is important for him – he knows that he does not know anything. The only position that he can take directly in a dialogue is to create the ways of achieving the dialogue leading to consensus. His neutrality is a guarantee of distance. The philosopher is able to build critical analytic values in the broader context of an intellectual culture. This distance allows him to see a horizon and to act in compliance with the principle of complementarity. Aligning the anthropic project with a philosophical discourse suggests a diversion from scientific to theological positions and vice versa as an effort to reach common axiological foundations.

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CHAPTER III

MAN IN CONTEMPORARY CULTURE

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Abstract: Modern (popular) culture creates a technical-economic-managerial man. He is professionally well-educated, operative, and exploits the development of natural sciences, information, and technique. He is a perfect consumer too. But he needs the spiritual sphere, higher (non-material) values, moral revival, the link between freedom and responsibility, and renunciation of uncritical consumerism. This new attitude is initiated by social groups and can be called “intelligence of life.” It warns against the instrumentalization of the human person, and is seeking a more profound sense of life.

Keywords: culture, society, social groups, creativity.

I. It is generally accepted that the development of any society depends on creative individuals. Hence, the more such individuals there are, the more they are open to new problems, and the more quickly these individuals enter new fields of life, the better. Their quantity and quality are a peculiar characteristic of modern society in relation to so-called mass society, and even more so to the old, traditional one. Passing from the mass society to the modern one is first of all marked by an increasing pluralism and differentiation in all fields of life, and in fast absorption of modern technologies to production, services, and everyday life. Hence, more and more professions appear, and mass production and standardized services are replaced by a variety of forms and qualities. Mass culture is driven out by a popular culture that abolishes the division into high and low culture, forming a great mosaic of cultural groups. Everyone may choose a culture that suits his tastes and his level. Individualized consumption competes perfectly well with mass consumption. Education that up to now has been to a large degree standardized becomes ever more specialized, and its levels are more varied. Creative work becomes more democratic and ever more frequently forming one's identity as self-reliant. These processes are caused by creative individuals, and many researchers notice an increase in their number in modern societies. Richard Florida, – like Peter Drucker, Dean Simonton, and in Poland Edward Nęcka, Józef Koziński, – advances the thesis that in the modern society a new social class (in Polish the term “layer” sounds better) is slowly formed; that is, the creative class (layer), and in the future it is this class that will shape the image of society. Florida includes in it “scientists, engineers, architects, designers, writers, artists, musicians, or those who use their creative work as the most important factor in their jobs: in business, education, health service, law, or other ones” (Florida: IX). Florida justifies his thesis on the example of American

society, in which the expenditure on research and development is increasing (from five million dollars in 1953 to two hundred and fifty million in 2000), the number of scientists and engineers is increasing (in 1950 their number was 400 in every 100 thousand inhabitants, and in 1999 it grew to 1800), the number of people who make a living of cultural and artistic work is growing (in 1950 there were 350 such individuals in every 1 million inhabitants, and in 1999 the number grew to 900), the number of patents is growing (in the years from 1954 to 1999, it was tripled), and so is the percentage of those who in their professional jobs ever more clearly look for satisfaction and take it on for other reasons than the pay; this also concerns those who often change their job (Florida: 100-105).

Formation of the creative class has been assuming the character of a conscious action, which is manifested by the meeting of 100 delegates from the USA, Canada, and Puerto Rico in 2003 in Memphis, Tennessee. At the end of the debate about the creative class in the modern society, the so-called Memphis Manifesto was created. In the Introduction its authors state that "Creativity has a fundamental significance for individuals and groups of people, and is an inalienable trait of every person" (Kozielicki (1): 18). Here are a few practical rules; to keep to them is to favor the development of the creative class:

- argue that every human being, especially every child, has the right to be creative;
- build a creative ecosystem – it may include artists, innovators, and designers;
- remove barriers that hinder creativity, like mediocrity, intolerance, social chaos, poverty, bad schools, and degradation of the environment (Kozielicki (1): 18).

Researchers give different estimates of the sizes of the creative class in particular societies. Bogdan Cichomski assesses that in Poland now it may amount to 11-13 percent, which is about 20 percentage points less than in developed countries (Kozielicki (1): 18).

Now the questions appear: what features does today's creative class have, what makes it stand out from other classes? Is it homogeneous or diverse, and to what degree? What are and what may be the further results of its activities? General statements saying that it is the opposite of passivity, the reverse of consumerism, unification, materialistic attitude, rat race, and comfort are not sufficient.

II. Modern society has chosen knowledge, technology, informatics, and economy as the solution. Knowledge that has been continuously broadened allows man to learn ever more about the objective world and to understand it better. Technology, continuously perfected, gives man power over the world. Knowing the world ever better and having ever better tools, man may more and more effectively intervene in nature and adjust it to his

needs. Economy and informatics, as particularly important branches of modern knowledge, help to quickly achieve the aims man has set, and to do it with smaller and smaller financial outlays.

Man, fascinated by the perpetual advancing of new achievements in the surrounding world, has forgotten about himself to a certain degree. Although he knows more about himself than even a dozen years ago, it seems to him that he understands himself ever less, that he feels more and more lost. In the past, when man's contribution to the appearance of the world was only slight, he occupied a definite place in it and felt surer of himself. Today, when he is able to change nearly everything in the world and to arrange it in his own way, it would seem that he should feel a lot better in it, since he knows it very well. However, he gets lost in it; often he cannot find the proper way.

Modern society, having taken the way of arranging the outer world and of accumulating possessions, not intending to decrease its dynamics of development while heading in this direction, favors individuals who are able to think in a business-like and systematic manner, who easily recognize and analyze the processes occurring in the objective world, who know how its particular elements and forces work, and who can compare and combine them in order to obtain new qualities. Modern society favors individuals with organizational talents who achieve their aims with the smallest possible outlays, who can recognize human needs and satisfy the needs with new products. Individuals searching for new technologies and working out models of development are especially privileged, as are the managers who implement their achievements. It is for their work that modern society allocates great sums of money, and it is they who are relatively well rewarded. In recent years those individuals who can collect, process and propagate information have clearly been gaining importance. They have such importance in the democratic societies guaranteeing freedom of speech and free transfer of information that they make mediocre politicians popular ones, and those politicians who are talented or valuable for the society, but inconvenient for them, they doom to "non-existence" in social awareness; they make a disease that is not very dangerous a pandemic (an example here may be bird flu – 2010); they threaten politicians that nobody can win if he opposes writers, radio journalists, film-makers, people writing on the Internet or working in public relations. In fact, this is what journalists said at the end of February 2006 to Jarosław Kaczyński, who proclaimed effecting changes in the world of the Polish *media*, and they have achieved their aim.

In modern society, the individuals that have been described above form the creative class, which, because of the features that are peculiar to it, may be called technical-economical-managerial intelligentsia. In the past, in Polish or Russian society, the intelligentsia as a specific social category was formed by individuals who best interpreted the values that were significant for the whole of individual and social life, who defended those values, and who propagated and consolidated them. At the same time, they generally

were well educated, which was exemplified by Erasmus of Rotterdam. Now, in our modern society, the technical-economical-managerial intelligentsia is formed by those who can easily shape the sphere of possessing, who can recognize human needs and satisfy them with new products, ideas, and behavior patterns. Owing to the technical-economical-managerial intelligentsia everyday life has become easier, more convenient and more pleasant; we move and communicate more quickly, we build nicer and safer houses, we furnish our flats in a better and nicer way, and we adjust our surroundings to our needs in a more functional way. Wherever this type of intelligentsia has developed earlier, the objective world is better organized and cleaner, more colorful and convenient, better-off and safer; the power of human muscles is ever more often replaced with robots, and tiring intellectual work by electronic devices. Infant mortality has decreased and life expectancy has increased; the life of animals is also protected. In the most developed countries the natural environment becomes more and more subjected to man. The yearly industrial emission of sulfur dioxide into the atmosphere has fallen in the USA from 1970 to 1995 by half; the degree of air contamination with lead compounds has decreased by more than 90%. At the end of the twentieth century Western Europe's afforestation rate was 30% greater than 50 years earlier. (cf. Bielecki: 72).

Seeing the achievements of the technical-economical-managerial intelligentsia and making use of them, Karl Popper had good reasons to state in his speech on the occasion of being awarded an honorary doctorate by the Eichstätt University in July 1991, "I am living in the happiest world we have yet had." This world is happy also for us. But is it happy in all its fields and for everybody?

Surveys conducted in many countries show that the number of suicides, of people feeling lonely, and of people with drug addiction has increased; also, the number of serious violations of accepted moral norms, assaults, and murders has increased, which has resulted in overcrowded prisons. Unemployment and poverty are lasting phenomena even in the wealthiest societies. The number of homeless people grows (at present in Poland it is estimated that there are about 300,000 such people); they beg for any meal, so that they will not die. There are more and more people and families who do not participate in public life even in the most democratic societies. About two thirds of the children in Polish schools are undernourished. A great number of children are sexually abused, which means that something noble and magnificent is poisoned and killed in them by those who have power over them, who have money and an unrestrained lust for pleasure. When in all the modern world there is talk about human rights, about cooperation, peace, and unity, on the borderlands of young African countries, on the Israeli-Arab borderland, in the countries of North Africa, the wars continue. In all European countries with a Christian tradition that is many centuries old and that defends life with the commandment "thou shall not kill" that admits no exceptions, the killing of

unborn babies has been legalized. After the introduction of the abortion law, first in the socialist countries, and then from 1967 gradually in the countries of Western Europe, the principle of absolute protection of human life from its conception to a natural death has been violated. Man's fundamental value, which is human life, has been gradually relativized, only ensuring possibly the best conditions for killing unborn babies at the wish of their mothers, or for killing people who are already grown up, at their own wish.

The facts that have been quoted here as examples indicate that not all people living in this affluent world are happy. There are still "the equal" and "the more equal." It is just that the "more equal" wear other colors and have their clothes sewn in a new way, not as in the past. Moreover, because of new techniques of manipulation and propaganda, many of them are elected to posts giving them power by the poor and by those who are not well aware of what the situation actually is. Many enlightened Europeans have forgotten that Europe, having experienced the death of more than 167 million people during the two world wars through Nazi crimes of genocide and Stalinist purges, not so long ago defended human life in a determined and devoted way. The progress of knowledge, technology, organization, moral liberalism, and freedom of speech has weakened the tough pro-life position in Europeans' awareness and conscience. In this way, the poet Bolesław Leśmian's statement that "one never dies sufficiently" has become true in the last three decades. Now people die in large numbers not only biologically, but spiritually as well, for many of them lose the meaning of life. Also, nature dies on a large scale. American scientists warn that the exploitation of the natural environment will cause extinction in the current century of half of the 30 million species living now. Many people do not ask themselves the questions about what nature is for, what ties connect them with it, how they should live in harmony with it, or in what condition they will leave nature to the next generations.

We do not mean to depict a bleak picture of our times here. Death has always been an inevitable phenomenon: throughout history, children have been dying, complete cities and whole tribes have died out, numerous species of plants and animals have become extinct. But the proportions the phenomenon of death has reached are greater today and they have peculiar features. Here are some of them:

1. Owing to the development of knowledge of the processes of life and death, as well as to new technologies, it is possible today to put someone to death causing less pain; the necessity of precipitating or delaying it may be justified by many reasons, even humanitarian ones, which in effect may weaken the opposition to killing even whole categories of people and of social groups, if somebody wants to do so because of economic, political, religious, racist, or other reasons.

2. Admittedly, in the past people were killed, but the act of killing was opposed by the general public, and those who did it were not welcome even in their own circles. This is why the names of executioners were not revealed,

and why they were often brought from other towns, or even from foreign countries, and why during the execution their faces were often hidden. Today, putting people to death is legalized, and those who do it belong to the ones who are well paid and the public opinion does not stigmatize them. At present “death-mongers” often have very good posts in the society. From a very early age, for many hours a day, we are being acclimated to killing and to not reacting to it, by programs of almost all television channels and by many “favorite” films. We have become so used to this that the owners of TV channels and cinemas state that they just give what people want.

3. Scientists, acknowledged experts working on inventing and producing lethal weapons as well as businessmen trading them, belong to the groups in modern societies that earn the most money; and so what they do – their job – is desired by many young people who do not fully realize what the results of such work may be.

Considering all these and also other phenomena Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker stated during the meeting of intellectuals in August 1985 in Castel Gandolfo: “We are living at the threshold of a global crisis, perhaps the most horrifying one in the history of the human race.” And it is horrifying first of all because it does not only concern “individuals, but societies, or even the whole of humanity. In the coming crisis the whole of humanity may die out” (Weizsäcker: 13), because the crisis has seized man himself, which is not understood by many people. And what is not understood is also not respected. Death casts a shadow over human life and the life of all nature, and hence the term used by Blessed John Paul II “civilization of death” with respect to our times, our culture, is well justified.

Summing up the twentieth century, Józef Koziński writes sadly: “in the colors of the past I can notice more grey and black colors than fair and white ones” (Koziński (2): 7). This may be why modern man, despite so many achievements, “cannot be pleased,” as Antoni Kępiński states. And the poet Bolesław Leśmian says and asks: “This is the way the world is! It is a bad world! Why isn’t there another world?” (1936).

Despite the magnificent achievements in many branches of life, phenomena can also be seen that signal a crisis of modern European culture. But do they signify its fall? What attitude should we assume toward them? Surely not the one that is manifested in excluding oneself from public life and escaping into the safe retreat of one’s own mind, one’s flat, or one’s warm circle of friends. This is what, for instance, Martin Heidegger did; at the beginning of the Nazi rule in Germany he became actively involved in shaping the new reality (he was a member of the NSDAP, and his speeches made in those years even today cause hot disputes and controversies). However, he soon backed out of public work and took shelter in the charming Schwarzwald to wait there “until everything that has been done, finally will be undone” (Cz. Miłosz). Waiting for a better time for oneself is a sign of opportunism.

The current social-cultural life of Europe reminds one of the Biblical text that is often read during prayers for a deceased person: “Human life changes,

but it does not end.” This is also the case with culture, which changes, as long as a man is alive, and is an effect of “human” cognition and desire, of our human experiences, yearnings, and actions that are ever richer. It is not the first time that Europeans have experienced a crisis of culture. But their characteristic feature is also that they always want to overcome these crises and they do not surrender to depressive moods. The question keeps returning: “Why isn’t there another world?” (Bolesław Leśmian), and Europeans search for that other world, and define its features. The shaping of a new world by Europeans is connected with noticing the shortcomings of the existing one, with its detailed analysis and with noticing new values. What threats do Europeans perceive in the world in which they live; what do they want to change and what are they aiming at; who is the leader in the way to a revival? Looking for an answer to these questions may help overcome the crises of culture.

III. The world built by the technical-economical-managerial intelligentsia proves to be full of shortcomings and insufficient. It lacks philosophical, ethical, and religious reflection. It has first gotten rid of God, and now it is getting rid of man. As Thomas Merton remarks, the motto saying that “science can do anything; it should do whatever it wants to; science is infallible and impeccable; anything science does is just. Hence a deed, however monstrous or criminal it is, cannot be undermined if it is justified by science” (Merton: 110) has become a *credo* of the modern man. Progress, usefulness, functionality, competence, cost-effectiveness, efficiency, and the recently emphasized profit and pleasure are the criteria of the value of what science and technology give. So for the sake of these criteria, experiments are continually done in order to come up with new inventions, to work out new technologies, to formulate new rules of management, to create new forms of life, without looking at the costs and consequences for the life of individuals or societies, without looking at what is happening to the inner life of man, with his spiritual life, with his family, to his neighborly and social ties.

Although the technical-economical-managerial intelligentsia has recently turned their interest to man himself, this has not happened in order to enrich him inwardly. They want to find out about the properties of the human organism and its body, to its needs and the ways it responds to stimuli, as well as to the techniques of affecting a man, in order to be able to impose some contents on others and to shape their consciousness, to control the processes of their development, to shape their needs and to more efficiently make them pursue defined objectives (e.g., to buy completely unnecessary things) in order to efficiently limit, when it is necessary, their freedom through various forms of organization and control. Representatives of the technical-economical-managerial intelligentsia today may quite easily manipulate people like objects, and this fact is at present recognized as the most dangerous one. The conviction appears that a man can heal, make happy, or save himself – all he needs to do is to learn proper technologies and the methods of their use; and if he is not able to learn and use them for himself he should trust those who have

already mastered them. So a variety of therapeutic offices are opened that efficiently drive out man's more serious reflection on himself.

Individual and social life based on science, technology, organization, and information has started being very pragmatic, expecting efficiency and profit, ever richer consumption and pleasure. Personalities with a narcissistic attitude have become common, ones idolizing themselves, focusing on pleasure, and being pleasure-seekers, with a kaleidoscope attitude having no system of values and norms. A constantly growing number of people are unable to control their own development or that of their dear ones, to solve tensions between themselves and their dear ones, to thoroughly understand and solve local and global conflicts. Even those who, because of their post or function are responsible for others, for the whole of social life, seek the popularity of their own person rather than the common good. Man has gained better living conditions, but questions about what he should and should not do have been weakened, or even completely silenced in him. Hence Józef Koziński thinks that contemporary man is infected by irresponsibility (Koziński (2): 8). He has become a personality without any property. Individuals with such a personality feel that they may do anything and they are able to do anything – including really heroic acts and mean deeds. Anybody may grab or bribe them.

These are the consequences of the domination of the technical-economical-managerial intelligentsia in modern societies, as it knows perfectly well how to achieve particular effects, but they cannot give satisfactory answers to the questions: what value do the consequences of their work have? What do they ultimately serve? What does the idea of man as a spiritual-bodily whole mean for them? Who is man and what are his ultimate aims; what is the meaning of his life? The technical-economical-managerial intelligentsia is not able to answer these questions at all because it relies on the "instrumental reason," as Max Horkheimer defines it. The instrumental reason develops necessary and wonderful instruments; but to what aim they may be used, what they can serve – these questions remain unanswered. They exceed the competencies of the technical-economical-managerial intelligentsia and they cannot be solved by this intelligentsia (Habermas). They have to be helped by another kind of intelligentsia.

IV. In modern society there is a growing demand for people who holistically interpret themselves and the world. Many purportedly holistic theories are extremely popular today. A demand is also growing for spiritual life and for deep personal ties. Ever more distinctly, the so-called extra-material values come into prominence. According to some sociologists, the "silent revolution" in modern societies shows that these values are becoming widespread; the revolution has started the formation of new life styles, fundamentally different from the ones that, characterized by a strong emphasis on possessing, passiveness, mediocrity, and sensuality, dominate at present. In modern societies ever more people, looking for extra-material values, wanting to move away from the consumerist life model and to overcome spiritual inertia, spend their holidays in monasteries or in religious groups with new

forms of religiosity. Instead of the term “progress” – the motto of modernism – increasingly often the word “limitation” (Bell: 222) appears: limitation of economic growth, limitation of the destruction of the natural environment, disarmament or limitation of military forces, consumption limitation, limitation of treating a man at work and in political life as an object, limitation of willfulness of those who threaten social peace. The trend of the new culture developing under the banner of “limitation” is strengthened by various groups of the alternative culture. Many of them add to the limitations that have already been mentioned: the limitation of all stimulants for the benefit of freedom of decision and responsibility for one’s behavior; the limitation of entertainment for the benefit of fun; the limitation of passive television and video watching for the benefit of talking to other people and of reflexive reading; limiting oneself to things that are really necessary in everyday life and not allowing the habit of buying kindled by aggressive advertising; limiting the use of the car, so as to use it only when it is indispensable, etc. People of the new culture aspire to develop spiritual values in themselves and in others; they form more human relations in social life. The limitations they undertake are only one of the ways to realize such an attitude in their lives.

Artists, writers, journalists, professors of various specialties, health service workers, farmers, engineers, clergymen who criticize the ideals promoted by the technical-economic-managerial intelligentsia, and who assert the right to have respect for life and who stand up for the nature that is being destroyed, for axiology, and who sympathize with the weakest groups in society, are becoming increasingly popular. Their appeals defending human life and the natural environment that is being destroyed stir millions of people. Many of them head social movements and political parties. The significance of this type of people is great and seems to be increasing, because:

1. They treat a man as a whole, noticing his fundamental and developmental needs, his need to have ever better living conditions and his need for a meaning of life, his worldly needs and transcendent ones, his need to be himself and to creatively co-exist with others.

2. They interpret social life as a whole. In the process of innovation, especially technological, they perceive a man – a human person – as the subject and target of these changes. They strongly oppose all the signs of treating a man as an object.

3. They closely connect their personal life with social and state-building life. From these connections the sense of responsibility for the society and its future arises in them. Hence, they try to realize their own development in connection with the development of the holistically understood society.

4. They do not directly take part in the process of technological modernization and the rapid raising of living standards, and this allows them to keep a distance from these processes, to analyze and assess them more objectively. They are also outside the group of technocrats, managers, politicians, nouveau riches, and decision-makers of various types who, first of all, constitute the driving force of mainstream modern society. Thanks to this

they are free and critical of the society in which they live. They observe the processes that take place in it and analyze their effects, assessing them and opposing them if they go in the wrong direction or their pace is wrong; in other words – they oppose them if they threaten a man’s individual and social life, or, in fact, not only a man’s life, but life in general.

5. They think globally and they act locally. Hence, they have much insight into their society as a whole and into the problems of the world; they feel ties with all people, they do not exclude any countries, any races, nations, or social groups from the field of their concern. Working in their local communities, they continually shape areas of human life. They do something for human ecology, not only conducting armchair-conference talks and discussions.

6. They stand up for observing the rules of ethics in all the domains of individual and social life; also – and this is now stressed especially strongly – for particularly observing the rules of ethics in economy and politics which, it seems, have broken away from the norms of ethics, accepting the rules of economic and efficient action.

7. They are sensitive to the transcendent world, to values, to religious figures and events. Even if they do not accept Christianity as the foundation of their lives, they increasingly and willingly reach for the Gospel, looking for indications for themselves there; they perceive Christianity better and more fully as a creative factor of European culture (Habermas, Ratzinger).

All those who represent this kind of attitude form a peculiar category of people that conventionally may be called the “intelligentsia of life” (Dyczewski). It holistically interprets man and the world; it defends life and consolidates it in all its forms and developmental stages. It is exactly this intelligentsia that most often opposes plans formulated by the technical-economic-managerial intelligentsia and its actions, as well as the effects of those plans and actions. The activity of many groups aiming at limiting the development of nuclear energy and of experimenting in the field of genetics is a perfect example here. Genetic engineering opens great possibilities to people, but it also carries the greatest threats for them. These possibilities are noticed by those who still have a living and versatile imagination, who apart from the flesh and blood see something more in man, who very well realize that the spiritual development of man most fully happens in the most natural conditions. No laboratory, even a perfect one, can replace the mother’s and father’s warm care, as it is the parents who give life to a new human being and care about his development. More and more people are convinced that “such features of man as the skill of giving and taking, responsibility, the ability to make sacrifices and to give help, may only be shaped in the family” (Gatterburg). Many abandon the slogans promoted by Rainer Langhans and Fritz Teufel in the 1960s: “never more family, never more Germany.” Although divorces often happen, the advantages of a lasting marriage and family for the development of an adult person and a child are ever more strongly emphasized: “Children coming from divorced families have more

troubles with learning and with establishing contacts; they show the tendency to take drugs and to commit crimes. And since they most often grow without fathers, they look for personal models in the street” (Gatterburg).

Those who belong to the intelligentsia of life are present in every country today. They protest against destroying the natural environment. They struggle for the life of every individual starting from conception to his/her natural death, and they actively join those who try to ensure adequate conditions for this development. They oppose legalization of euthanasia and experimenting with human embryos. They seek safer, more hygienic, and esthetic work conditions. They popularize a reflexive type of thinking and a creative lifestyle, opposing the consumerist style and passiveness.

The consequences of the explosion of the nuclear power plant in Chernobyl and the catastrophe of the nuclear power plant in Japan, the experiments in the field of genetics, the pollution of the natural environment, all these show that the technological-economic-organizational development must have its limits. If they are exceeded they could threaten the health of mankind; they can cause the relativization of the fundamental principles of life, death, or even destruction of a part of humanity and of the cultural heritage. The intelligentsia of life demands respecting the old principle: *man should not do everything he can do*.

In order to remind modern man about exactly this principle, to show man more holistically, to protect him from various kinds of abuses that come from science, technology, and organization, all sorts of institutions, associations, and organizations have come into being. Among others, on March 11, 1996 in Delaware, USA, the Institute for Frontier Science was established. As its objectives it sets: 1. Demanding that research, education, and information exchange in all key branches of science and health take into consideration bio-electromagnetic determinants, various forms of energy, and holistically healthful aspects; 2. Studying connections between the body, psyche, and soul, as well as between various states of awareness; 3. Building communication and cooperation between researchers, scientists, doctors, politicians, and those who understand the need of limitation of research fields and can do something in this domain; 4. Facilitating the use of new achievements in order to improve the holistically understood health of man, as well as to integrate medicine in its different branches, conventional and scientific medicine. Soon after the Institute was established, more than 3000 researchers, intellectuals, and doctors joined it (Neues).

Even though the intelligentsia of life is not as wealthy as the technical-economic-managerial intelligentsia, and it is not in power now, its significance is great and it is going to increase. It forms a sort of alternative culture with respect to the one that today is formed by technicians, economists, managers, and politicians. It formulates ideas for social revival and restoration of the proper place for the human person in the world of things and institutions, in which it is easy to get lost. It is also a significant pressure group that influences the technical-economic-managerial intelligentsia; and it is not the latter, as it was thought in the 1960s and even in the 1970s, but the intelligentsia of life

that is going to have the final word in the modern society, so that it will be more and more numerous and conscious of its tasks.

V. The technical-economic-managerial intelligentsia and the intelligentsia of life need not form an antagonistic arrangement in modern society. Both these categories of people are necessary and they both form the creative class in it. The former one shapes the living conditions, and the latter one creates an order in them, evaluates them, and makes a point of a man not becoming the tool of his own products, so that he could live in all the spheres of his personality and develop it in a versatile manner. The intelligentsia of life has a peculiar mission in the modern society: to propagate the love of life, its protection, to guard the inviolability of life-guiding principles, and to organize the best possible conditions for its development. So if the technical-economic-managerial intelligentsia first of all creates a world of things that is rather cold and impersonal, the intelligentsia of life complements it with the warmth of interpersonal and inter-group relations, ones based on respect for every man, for justice, peace, and love. A perfect symbiosis of these two social groups will be realized by a citizen of modern society, if on his desk he will have a computer – the symbol of the technical-economic-managerial intelligentsia – and the Decalogue complemented with Jesus Christ's Eight Blessings – the symbol of the intelligentsia of life. Then one will be able to be sure that man and culture will develop in the proper way, which means that man will know what to do and how to do it; he will use the goods he has in order "to be more humane." Combining science and technology harmoniously with religious postulates, so that people could be moderate in gathering material goods and could be open to others, so that they could sympathize with others, cry and be happy with others, so that they observe the principles of justice, and be people of pure heart and patience, so that they introduce peace into the life of others – this behavior is that which will determine the prosperity and well-being of society.

The intelligentsia of life complements the technical-economic-managerial intelligentsia with the world that escapes the research done by empirical sciences on which the latter is based. The norms contained in the Decalogue and the supernatural world are not the field of studies of empirical sciences, but this does not mean that they do not exist and that they should not be recognized, for it is them, these norms that contain the sense of truth and falsehood and of good and evil, that give man the feeling of certainty when choosing the right way, that give him the sense of community with others, that develop in him the longing for something more noble and more magnificent, that give human life its ultimate meaning. Then man knows and feels that he may not do anything that does not agree with this meaning. If people of this type of thinking organize social development, we may be confident of its direction, forms, and pace. Man will be its center and one would find such fundamental values as truth, good, and beauty (the old-Greek triad of values), faith, hope, and love (the Christian triad of values), freedom, equality, and brotherhood (the triad of values of the modern societies), the dignity of the

human person, pluralism, and solidarity (the contemporary triad of values) in the proper places. Only then, instead of the “civilization of death,” the “civilization of love” will be developed.

There is a variety of ways of educating both kinds of the creative class in modern society. The following ways seem to be the most certain:

1. Promoting education of the university type in the society, containing the science of man, the social sciences, and ethics, so that in the education process the university graduates could internalize the fundamental human values, human rights, and the rules of peaceful coexistence.

2. Forming hobbies, developing esthetic sensibility, so that life could be more interesting, cheerful, and pleasant.

3. Securing the possibility of continuing education and propagating a style of life that would integrate it as a fundamental element.

4. Shaping the identity (of sex and age as well as the local and national identity; the identity concerning the world view and religion) so that there would be as few dull individuals as possible. A man who has a distinct individual and collective identity is characterized by a sense of his own value and openness to others. He is able to have a dialogue with others. He has the sense of responsibility for the effects of his actions.

5. Teaching how to skillfully combine one’s own cultural heritage with modernity and other societies’ cultures.

6. Shaping the skill of finding peaceful solutions to difficult, critical, and conflictual situations.

7. Making possible the widespread availability of aids for those who have problems; making people look for solutions to complicated problems. Such situations facilitate a better acquaintance among people and an increase of the sense of responsibility.

8. Shaping the attitude of altruism and of willingness to collectively aid those who cannot cope with their lives and need help.

9. Shaping an open attitude toward spiritual values, toward the supernatural world, and toward God.

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CHAPTER IV

PERSON AND PERSONAL REALITY: THE ACTUALITY OF THE EASTERN CHRISTIAN UNDERSTANDING OF MAN¹

DAN CHIȚOIU

Abstract: This article aims at assessing the vision of man that the Eastern Christian tradition proposes, by understanding man as person. This notion is the result of the need the authors from the Patristic period had in describing the Christian perspective on man. The Patristic notion of person, first stated by Gregory of Nyssa and Basil the Great, received subsequent nuances and explanations with Byzantine authors, starting with Maxim the Confessor through Gregory Palamas' period. Modernity took over the notion of person and used it, answering some needs especially present in psychology and social sciences. But the significance of the notion of person in the modern context is different from the one in the Eastern Christian environment. The actuality of this Eastern understanding of man is revealed when there appeared explanatory needs which can no longer be satisfied by the anthropological modern paradigms. The recovery of a whole vision on man may find its sources in the Patristic and Byzantine description of man as person: this description affirms the person not as a psychological aspect but as a notion through which a reality is described, the sum of everything that man means and more. From this perspective, the person must be understood as a form of reality, nothing less than the physical reality, but which additionally has the possibility of freedom. It is, therefore, a reality that changes itself.

Keywords: Eastern Christian tradition, person, spiritual freedom.

Nowadays, the current progress of experimental research leads to the formation of a much wider vision of the physical universe, and also to a deeper understanding of the human being. We can better understand the extraordinarily complex processes present in the human body, and we have begun to have a consistent understanding of the subtle interactions between body and mind. The experimental results provided in research in neuroscience have as a consequence the abandonment of the paradigm explaining the human being present both in science and philosophy in the last two centuries. It is, in the first place, about leaving behind a famous

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duality of modern philosophy: the body-soul. After Descartes (in *Meditationes de Prima Philosophia* in 1641, where he talked about a total and absolute distinction between mental and material substance), philosophy began to deal even less with the body-soul distinction. This was due to the use of the soul concept, which was no longer held to be consistent with philosophical discourse. Immanuel Kant, for example, accepts only a weak use of the soul notion as an element of philosophical discourse. For the German philosopher, the soul is not demonstrable on the path of reason, although he considers that the mind must inevitably reach the conclusion that it exists: it is a prerequisite for the development of ethics and religion. Subsequently, William James sees the soul as a mere collection of mental phenomena: there is no consistency of the soul concept. After Descartes, there was a preference for the *mind* concept, the human dimension understood as possessing self-reflexivity and intentionality.

For philosophy, the question of the relationship between body, organs, and mind meant a revision of several dichotomies that described man with a double meaning: first, the mind could not be described as an intangible or of an incorporeal nature, and second, the mind may not have any other support than the body; the experiments in neuroscience have provided strong evidence of the material support of the mind. The soul concept started to be used only in spirituality, and this fact is due mainly to the direction taken by science since the seventeenth century, when the description of reality starts to be made by reducing it to what is measurable. The soul cannot be investigated by the Galilean type of science, the one that understands reality as schematic by way of mathematical devices. Such a direction imposed the use of a generic concept of matter as the universal constituent of reality (plus the energy related concept, later). Today there is a giving up of the search for evidence of the soul's existence by science: that happened during the time since Descartes.

In other words, it was not a denial of the soul's existence, but the suspension of the discussion about it in terms of science. In modern times, the place of discussions on the soul is taken by science and by psychology. But it is another approach and content: psychology affirms that the soul cannot be an object of study in any way, even indirectly; instead, it deals with the description of cognitive processes, the nature of emotions, etc. These developments inevitably bring a crisis in the understanding of man, not a crisis in the description of its functionality, but in terms of understanding its nature. Giving up the vision of the soul-body dualism is a plus in terms of explaining the data obtained by experimental investigation, but retains a degree of impairment in formulating an anthropological vision, as is required in philosophy.

There have been other perspectives coming from philosophy in the last half century, proposing an answer to this need, albeit sometimes indirectly. This is the case in French phenomenology which, through its representatives, Michel Henry, Jean-Luc Marion, and Jean-Yves Lacoste,

takes a direction that leaves the search for a human essence in favor of a radical phenomenology. Henry, referring to the Gospel of John, says that man should not be understood as a body possessing a soul, but as an *embodied being*. What should characterize the man's life is not the biological instinct, but the power to try himself. Such an assertion is based on a distinction between the *body* (corps) and *flesh* (chair). The body is the *inert body of universe*, which does not try and does not feel anything, a composition of physical chemical elements of our material dimension. The flesh is *trying to*, suffering, and enjoying, is able to feel that it is outside the body, to touch it and be touched. The incarnation of the Logos in the Gospel announcement indicates, according to Henry, a definition of man as embodied. The statement "The Logos became flesh" is opposed to the definition of the human being in the classical Greek conception, where the body was associated with animality. The French phenomenologist thinks that the Gospel message contains an entirely new definition, different from the Greek and Modern descriptions: a definition of the man as invisible, yet earthy, invisible as a flash.²

A similar definition can be found in the texts of authors who have been involved in what is called *the neo-Patristic movement*: George Florovsky, Justin Popovici, and Dumitru Stăniloae. There is a similarity with the French phenomenological approach: there is provided an anthropology exceeding the soul-body dualism, starting with a certain reading of the Gospel, as well as texts of Patristic authors. The neo-Patristic movement consists of the need to revive the authentic spirit of textual sources belonging to the first Christian horizon. This is due to the finding that, in the interval that followed the Renaissance, the Christian anthropological perspective received influences not related to the Tradition of the Fathers. This situation was seen as existing not only in Eastern Christianity, but also in the Christian West.

The perspective offered by Stăniloae has a special significance, indicating a radical solution in describing the notion of the human being. Stăniloae offers an interpretation of the central concepts belonging to the Patristic tradition, an interpretation which aims at responding to the recent needs of understanding the human dimension of reality, an interpretation that proves its timeliness and potential. The Romanian author expresses the most coherent and consistent recovery of the Patristic meaning of person, but with terms belonging to twentieth century philosophy, including Martin Heidegger's philosophy.

The term 'person' comes from the Latin *persona*, as a translation of what the Greek Fathers understood as the true designation of man, by linking two concepts formerly working in the Greek lexicon: *hypostasis* and *prosopon*. The Patristic authors of the fourth century found themselves needing to describe man as bearing the image of God and having additional

² Michel Henry, *Incarnation. Une Philosophie de la Chair* (Paris: Seuil, 2000), p. 43.

freedom. The Greek classicism did not know the idea of freedom, especially regarding man, because it is dominated by the idea that the world is a ‘cosmos,’ an order that cannot miss anything. Man’s freedom came into conflict with the harmony and order dictated by *moira*. Thus Gregory of Nyssa and Basil took those two concepts frequently used at the time and used them in a different way. The idea of *hypostasis* was used within classical Greek philosophy and Hellenism as an equivalent to *ousia*, but had a number of nuances that reinforced a particular understanding of the reality essence. In the first centuries after Christ, the term received a more real and concrete meaning, that of a real being as opposed to the apparent and evanescent being. Gregory and Basil used this term in order to indicate a difference in the acceptance of such essences, thus indicating a way of being. The Cappadocian Fathers made a real and significant move in understanding the signification of the term: reality can only have a hypostatic dimension; there is no pure essence. However, the identification between *hypostasis* and *prosopon* is very significant. The term *prosopon* belonged to the old Greek vocabulary, and it signified the part of the head right under the forehead – what we call today ‘face.’ It was especially used to mean *mask*, as part of the props used by actors in the ancient Greek theater. According to Zizioulas, theater, and especially tragedy, was the meeting site for human freedom and the necessity under which the world stood in the old Greek vision.³ It is known that, from the perspective of Greek philosophy, one cannot find the grounds to argue about the real essence of the free human act, because what obsessed the mentality of Greek antiquity was the order and harmony of a world that was essentially *cosmos*. For the Greeks who lived during that age, the world necessarily obeyed the power of an order that was conceived from a logical perspective, which allowed no deviance from the laws of the harmony of the whole. Greek tragedy exploited the conflict between man’s attempts to act according to his own will and to avoid his destiny, disregarding the gods’ will, although this attitude was ultimately doomed to failure; the closing scene of an ancient tragedy always recorded the fulfillment of destiny. We are concerned here with what could be termed *limited freedom*, a phrase that represents, in fact, a logical contradiction. What matters is that the tragedy actor feels the significations of the freedom state, and steers – though in a limited and unsuccessful way – toward assuming the state of a *person*, characterized by freedom, uniqueness, and non-repeatability. The mask, in ancient tragedy, proves to be a superimposed element and not something that pertains to his true being. However, this meaning of *prosopon* was exploited by the Cappadocian Fathers in order to confer the desired dimension to the understanding of the personal modality of the existence of God in Trinity and of people. An identification of the two gives an ontological dimension to “face”; to what was previously a mere *mask*. It

³ Ioannis Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985), p. 32.

is here not just a transmutation of understanding; it is the use of the words at another level: the movement from concept to sign.

Stăniloae considered as a central aspect of his speech the recovery of the meaning of “person.” Modernity used the term with other interpretations, often indistinct, and confused it with the *individual* (in the experimental fields of humanities, especially in psychology, but also in ethics). Modernity has given “person” a psychological or ethical meaning. The understanding shown by Stăniloae recovers a parentage of Patristic terms in an ontological dimension, intending to describe the person as a matter of *reality*. Stăniloae disagrees with the opposition between nature and person; by giving a negative valence to nature, it means that the reference is made to the fallen nature, a disfigured state of nature, and he quotes Saint Irenaeus, who says that a fallen man is not a true man. The Romanian author insists that the person is nothing else but “the actual existence of nature and people together comprised all of nature, giving it and receiving it mutually.”⁴ “Nature really persists in several hypostases endlessly rich and full in relationship between them.”⁵

According to the exegesis in the Patristic literature, the fall of man, who had been nominated to rule over all Creation, brought about another state of the world, of the cosmos, affecting its each and every last stone. This conditioning that man with his thickened body starts to receive from nature is, after all, an effect of his own deeds. Fallen man’s actual life on the earth means suffering and the pursuit of deliverance. This state has concrete consequences in man’s complex relationship with what is called nature, and which includes his own corporeality. Christ’s embodiment means the possibility to restore man’s humanity, but only as something potential. This restoration becomes real in the concrete case of each man, not identically, but in agreement with the characteristic features of the uniqueness of each personal exercise of the freedom *to be*. Restoration must not be understood as man’s return to what is proper to him, to his lost existential state; this change leads to another relationship and another way to exercise his influence on nature and on Creation. This change of relationship must be understood as real and not symbolic, as one that produces real and concrete effects in nature. The Patristic texts emphasize the fact that this is how man opens endless possibilities to bring about change and novelty in nature. This does not imply the flouting of nature’s laws and rationality, but contributing to actualize the potencies that it contains and that otherwise would never have become manifested. The Patristic vision of the world was that it was created as *a setting*, as the *site* of encounter between persons. The world does not have a meaning and a purpose in itself; it exists with the purpose of creating deeper and more

⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă [Orthodox Dogmatic Theology]*, vol. I (București: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al B.O.R., 1996), p. 278.

⁵ *Ibidem*.

effective possibilities for the encounter between persons – between the Persons of the Holy Trinity and people, as well as between people. This is due to the fact that the person is the reality of the highest existence degree, because it is aware of its existence and of the existence of persons and things. This is also due to the fact that the person exists as *I*, as *you*, or as *he/she*, as a conscience aiming toward another conscience, as Father Stăniloae stated.⁶ Thus, the determinism of nature, the existence of some laws of physical reality, is not an eternal given; it was modified when Adam fell, and it encounters continuous changes by the exercise of man's act of freedom, especially of the man who is on the restoration path.

It would be more appropriate to talk not so much about *natural laws* as about the rationality of the world, or, to be more precise, the *rationality of creation*. When we talk about the rationality of the world we give a more adequate expression to the purposes for which the world received its existence, a world which, for the Judeo-Christians, cannot have, under any circumstances, a purpose and a meaning in itself, simply existing. If there are limits in Creation, and if they are not due to man's fall, then the understanding of the limit must be positive: it is a limit that creates the possibility of communion, of encounter, and that proves to engender an infinity of possibilities. This would be the meaning of some reasons for creation, of some *logoi*, as Maximus the Confessor calls them. Man's aim is definitely to overcome conditionings; this fact appears in the whole historical behavior of humanity. Throughout his whole history on the Earth, man has attempted by all means to go beyond his conditionings, dependences, and limitations. The fact that he makes science pertains to this need as well. According to Saint Maximus, man has a high calling: to mediate and to unite. Man is called to consistently integrate the macrocosm with the microcosm, the objective perspective with the subjective one, in a common vision of spiritual *transitus*. The natural tension in the macrocosm between sensitive and intelligible reality must be mediated in the human microcosm via the spiritual vocation that is proper to the man of ascetic practice and contemplation.⁷ This mediation and unification asks for an *actual* change in reality, at all levels, for a subtle modification of a constitutive element in each of the mediation terms.

These are reasons for Stăniloae to indicate the person as having a kind of reality, *even being the Reality*. This centering of the person concept fulfills many needs. First, this is an understanding of human and humane meeting the explanatory requirements of recent philosophy. Second, it provides a wider perspective on reality, as it is now described in advanced scientific research, particularly in quantum physics. But it also offers a way

⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Studii de teologie dogmatică ortodoxă [Orthodox Dogmatic Theology Studies]*, (Craiova: Ed. Mitropolia Craiovei, 1990), p. 225.

⁷ Paul M. Blowers, *Exegesis and Spiritual Pedagogy in Maximus the Confessor. An Investigation of the Quaestiones ad Thalassium* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), p. 131.

of understanding the specifics of the cultural and spiritual area of the Christian East, the way of life of the Eastern man. With this understanding of the person can be justified the behavior the Eastern man, both at the individual level and the community one. If, for example, *sin* is not seen in this cultural area as a moral fact, but as having consequences at the ontological level (man does not “stand,” but moves up and down continuously), the consequences are diverse, complex, and sometimes paradoxical. Traces of the Patristic and Byzantine traditions occur in this type of assumption that clearly shows difference from other cultural areas.

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CHAPTER V

MODERN SOCIETY AND ITS ETHICAL DILEMMAS¹

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Abstract: The world today is faced with a lack of current moral models, so moral principles are often used as weapons for labeling and balancing certain social, political, and economic circumstances existing in society. The presence in the social space of such problems leads to dilemmatic interpretations, susceptible to overshadowing the discipline and the model of social coexistence on which the entire legal system is based. The deontological codes that exist in the diversity of academic and institutional communities are just a brief insight into the meanings of the ethical principles. We note, however, that despite the emergence of new human rights, codes of conduct existing in Romanian space remain the same, and the institutions that create and apply them remain tributary to limited and time dependent interpretations. In this context, the notion of ethics is often misunderstood, because there is an exaggeration of certain limitations of actions and the interpretation can be guided by criteria that have no connection with the internal standard, that is, the principles of the Deontological Code.

Contextuality can be the solution to a part of the ethical dilemmas, but it does not lead to logical indicators. One cannot bring too much criticism upon contextuality and upon its relativity of interpretation, as long as reality shows this can be the only viable solution. Human habit is for a person to reduce novelty in what he/she knows, in the idea of assimilation, which explains his/her aversion to everything that is new or requires the effort of thinking. Once assimilated, the novelty becomes active, so ethical reform in psychosocial research and practice consists in the removal of what is old and needs recontextualized, because we face new problems – genetic inventions, reordering of health insurance system, creation of new legal codes, etc.

We therefore believe that “Martin Cohen’s 101 Ethical Dilemmas” and Philip Zimbardo’s failed “Stanford Experiment,” joining one stream or

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another, whether it is utilitarianism, consequentialism, or professional ethics, configure only at a descriptive level the topics regarding the understanding of the purpose and of the ethical interpretation in the scientific society area which itself includes the contemporary one. The basis of this scientific paper is built on a series of psycho-philosophical coordinates which are focusing on the philosophical, hereditary, and neurological unconscious. Repositioning and analyzing the theories concerning unconscious have conscience as a starting point (in terms of moral and spiritual virtues), followed by the importance and the role of memory, which may or may not indicate the resources of will. In other words, we are talking about a different perspective on scientific and applied ethics, but the individuality of our current demarche brings the idea of enhancing morality by reconsidering the ontological structure (conscience) which may or may not justify equity in human relations.

Keywords: ethical dilemmas, contemporary society, contextuality, moral and spiritual values, memory, will.

FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE – ETHICAL ASPECTS OF CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

In analyzing how ethics is developed and reflected in *the sensible world* (in the Platonic meaning of the word) we must return to the issues of the moral foundation of any action. Simple, everyday actions are usually assigned value judgments based on common spirit, whose main attribute is to be moral. What is the source of these judgments, how can we assume the role of moral judges, and why do we consider the moral judgments of each of us to be universal? These are just some of the questions to which we should respond when we make a theoretical approach to morality.

We consider ethics a scientific synthesis of all regulations, approaches, and attitudes based on moral sense. In most cases they have been theorized and transferred into practical systems whose utility is found in everyday life. *Morality* is the ability of a society, group, or person to assign value judgments in relation to a certain attitude, idea, or behavior by which they are accepted or rejected based on a contextual assessment scale.

Objectivity in ethical analysis, whether we are talking about utilitarianism, legislative utilitarianism, multi-leveling actional utilitarianism, motivational and of character, biographic utilitarianism, or consequentialism (value – effect), more often focuses on the welfare and benefit of the largest possible group of humans, but from our point of view, this analysis should also focus on the value of *the moral agent* to determine the balance of power in the analysis and interpretation of actions.

“If morality would not involve human passions and our life in general,” Noica asserts, “then it could be as rigorous and safe as any other

deductive science.”² To some extent, this explains the relativism of interpretations from the social and scientific context, whether we refer to:

1. the legal system – the intentionality and the degree of social risk (socio-historical context) that are indicators, on which the legal classification of the action and of the perpetrator of the act is based;
2. the health system – the principle of liability that tends to create prerequisites for reordering the criteria for granting health insurance or,
3. research and experiments which are carried out within scientific communities and which may be questionable from an ethical point of view, although they apparently follow a series of ethical guidelines or principles.

In this context of debate and analysis of contemporary society and its ethical dilemmas existing in various scientific and institutional contexts, the question should rather be “What is not ethics?” to deduce what it is.

To this question P. Singer identifies an answer and refers to a set of benchmarks:

- “The first thing to say about ethics is that it is not a set of prohibitions particularly concerned with sex.”
- “Second, ethics is not an ideal system that is noble in theory but no good in practice.”
- “Third, ethics is not something intelligible only in the context of religion. I shall treat ethics as entirely independent of religion.”
- “The fourth, and last, claim about ethics that I shall deny in this opening chapter is that ethics is relative or subjective.”

By these statements Singer creates the conditions for a better understanding of the role of the moral agent, whose profile is outlined by John Stuart Mill.

Mill says every human action has three dimensions or aspects to be pursued: “its *moral* aspect, or that of its *right* and *wrong*; its *aesthetic* aspect or that of its *beauty*; and its *sympathetic* aspect, or that of its *lovableness*. The first addresses itself to our reason and conscience, the second to our imagination, the third to our human fellow feeling. According to the first, we approve or disapprove, according to the second, we admire or despise, according to the third, pity or dislike.”³

This new interpretation in which the importance falls on the person, the intention, and the act, leads us to assessing the role and the importance of the moral agent, which brings us closer to the question of what it means to be moral. And so the myth of Gyges in Plato’s *Republic* is updated,

² Constantin Noica, *Mathesis sau bucuriile simple* (Bucureşti: Editura Humanitas, 1992), p. 89.

³ John Stuart Mill, “Bentham,” in *The Collected Works*, ed. J.M. Robson., Vol. 10 (London and New York, Routledge, 1974), p. 112.

identifying the moral agent with the holder of the ring that makes you invisible. In this context you can be free to judge good and evil and to act. Therefore, to judge the morality of a person one must consider this possibility of *total freedom*, for to be right, you must act morally under any circumstances. In other words, the *moral man* is the *righteous man* whose profile we otherwise find in Plato's *Republic*. The difference between the righteous man (good) and the one who is unjust (bad) would be that the righteous man has to be right and not to seem right. "There must be no seeming, for if he seem to be just he will be honored and rewarded, and then we shall not know whether he is just for the sake of justice or for the sake of honors and reward; therefore, let him be clothed in justice only, and have no other covering; and he must be imagined in a state of life the opposite of the former. Let him be the best of men, and let him be thought the worst; then he will have been put to the proof; and we shall see whether he will be affected by the fear of infamy and its consequences. And let him continue thus to the hour of death; being just and seeming to be unjust. When both have reached the uttermost extreme the one of justice and the other of injustice, let judgment be given which of them is happier of the two."⁴ In a recent theoretical view of ethics, the righteous man is under *the veil of ignorance* that allows him to be right because he chooses to be in this way.

The Myth of Gyges conveys surprisingly well the case of *the moral agent* and of his report to the world and his fundamental role. There is a representation of the situation of the absolute freedom of choice between what is right and what is wrong, between good deeds and bad deeds, without any social constraints. But in this situation Gyges prefers to do what is considered to be immoral, to deceive, to kill, and to steal, rather than opposing such trends.

We may conclude that three main ideas are to be found here, namely: man is prone to commit evil, injustice, rather than its opposite; committing good deeds does not have a source in benevolence, but rather in constraints; and, last but not least, a man performs a righteous act because he is unable to do an injustice.

Morality is manifested in individual forms until the occurrence of an external evaluation, when there is a certain inhibition and a deformation of the *social self* from the desire of compliance and submission to social norms and values. In other words man often shows an intended good behavior from his desire not to be subjected to public opprobrium or of social norms, but we have no guarantee that without censorship, his feelings and reactions are moral.

The trial of Socrates remains a testimony to the fact that morality is the basis for the harmony and communion between people, but it also can be a primary source of legal fault. In his old age, Socrates was on trial on

⁴ Plato, *The Republic of Plato* 361 c-d translated by B. Jowett, (Oxford: 1888), pp. 40-41.

grounds of immorality and was subsequently convicted. The accusations against him were that: *Socrates does not recognize the gods of the city; Socrates brings new gods; Socrates corrupts the youth*. A brief analysis of these charges demonstrates the subjectivity of the accusers who are dominated by passion (Meletius), envy (Lycon), ignorance (Anytos), and the immorality which leads to a crime on the judges' part. In this case we can clearly see where the interpretation and the subjectivity of analysis of some moral guilt in relation to the legal system – that is to the law – can lead.

The philosophers of that time had a certain attitude toward the gods, so Socrates was not the only one who could be accused of impiety. Moreover, Socrates acknowledged the gods, but did not accept the traditional anthropomorphic divine figures that outlined a profile of less morality. The second accusation shows and justifies the Socratic argument in the sense that by word, man can be corrupted and hence this can lead to a vice of interpretation.

Introducing new gods leads to interpretations in a society like that of Socrates, and that is because *the daimon* to which he calls in his demarches is actually his *conscience* and thus the obvious manifestation of his respect to the gods.

The last blame brought to Socrates refers to the fact that he corrupted young people through his discourses and teachings, therefore he was a danger to society. Against all these accusations Socrates defends himself and reveals the substrates that stand behind them, but eventually accepts the sentence to be poisoned.

But his conscience, his daimon, advises him, after a life in service of teaching people about virtue, to choose death and to respect the laws. Socrates knows that morality and dignity are most important and he is not afraid of the crowd and of the trial to which he is subjected, because he knows that the crowd is the least able to give an opinion. What is valuable at the time of his conviction and after his death is his teaching, the human mind and, by that, the consciousness of living “according to goodness.”

ETHICAL DILEMMAS – SOCIETY-PERSON-MORAL AGENT

This triad of “society-person-moral agent” that we bring into question in this analysis of contemporary society in terms of ethical dilemmas has its justification in the degree of intentionality, in the responsibility of the society, and of the individual that loses the status of *person* in a consumption society that stands under the sign of globalization. Therefore a repositioning of the human being to society is necessarily required to see to what extent the existing ethical guidelines values and protects it or exposes it to dissolution by the loss of the self-report which immediately contains “other.” Man often judges emotionally and without empathy to others, which is why there is a justification in part for the lack of logic in the analysis of moral behaviors contained in social relations. Deontical logic is

hardly accessible to the crowd, because we deal there with specific passions and specific levels of understanding, for which the existence of ethical dilemmas is justified. Orientations such as utilitarianism, consequentialism, and professional ethics justify and cover psychosocial problems, but do not confer determined ethical indicators of logic in the analysis of cause-effect, intention-act, or consciousness-unconsciousness.

The bridge dilemma demonstrates, by successive crossings from professional ethics to utilitarianism and consequentialism, the fact that there are problematic situations in current life in which, regardless of any type of decision one might make, a human sacrifice takes place. Man is suggestive and often provides emotional and less rational responses.

The bridge dilemma⁵ described by Cohen refers to the fact that a wagon out of control is likely to kill more people. Fred sees that and is able to report to the mechanic to avoid the accident. The problem here is: if the wagon goes left five people are killed and if it goes to the right one person is killed. The question here is that of stopping the wagon. What can be done in such a situation?

The second part of the dilemma ignores the first part of it and describes Fred as being in the position to warn the others, but having no means by which to be seen and identified. The lack of an object to help him draw the attention to himself leads him to think that he could push the young man who was near him. And the dilemma ends with the response that Cohen and others have tried to find as a middle solution to this dilemma. Cohen's answer is less relevant in this respect and what becomes important is the perception of individuals about the situation itself. And the people's answer is surprising, because they claim that Fred should have signaled, but should not have pushed the young man.

According to philosophers and psychologists, people's judgment is *intuitive* and *emotional*. They adopt the utilitarian principle, on one hand, but refuse to push the young man in front of the wagon, invoking the idea that it is immoral to take a human life. On the other hand, they can change their point of view choosing the Kantian direction, thinking that the categorical principle is inviolable. Therefore they are at first rational and then emotional, but the final effect is the same – the disappearance of a man in favor of the survival of five people. In terms of consequentialism, the effects are arithmetically equivalent, hence the idea of the *double effect* doctrine. The dilemma itself is perhaps one of the most difficult, because of trying to pass through these three orientations: ethical, utilitarian, and consequentialist.

The lack of transparency of some of the actions results in a subjectivization of choices and in a certain mental relativism, which leads to what philosophers call *the double effect doctrine*. According to the double effect, one and the same action may be regarded as moral in one

⁵ Martin Cohen, *101 Ethical Dilemmas* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 12.

sense and immoral in another. The consequences of the double effect can lead to relativism and to that subjectivity which some ethicists are reluctant to use in their analysis, but in practice are sometimes unable to avoid. For example, bombing a restaurant where there are terrorists is considered permissible and moral, but bombing a restaurant by terrorists who attack the U.S. is seen as negative and is not allowed. Zigmunt Bauman⁶ thinks that we are not moral because of the society (we are only ethical or obey the laws because of the society); but rather, “we live in society” and also “*we are* society,” thanks to the fact that we are moral. Still, above all there is a balance of power between man’s moral sense and the requirements of the social moral model.

The current approach in deontical logic requires a new interpretation, which does not exclude or annihilate the previous one, but makes it more accessible, in that it does not aim to facilitate the moral requirements or reduce their number, but attempts to provide an opportunity to be more moral. The current focus of professional ethics wants to be one that gives importance to vocation, because in relation to human beings, what becomes of great value is sympathy (love) for and understanding of the other in a way that does not affect one’s moral self and much less one’s own life.

Peter Singer, in his attempt to show what ethics is not (based on the 10 sins according to the Christian perspective), concludes that ethics is not a system of noble theories without application. For this he refers to the meaning of lies in different contexts. He says that normally it is not right to lie, but in a situation like wartime, telling Gestapo that you do not house a Hebrew family is, rather, a moral action.

Compliance with professional ethics does not also ensure maximum effectiveness of the intervention in the psyche and human condition. All social institutions backed by coercive measures were based and rely on the assumption that one cannot make good choices (whether good is interpreted as good for the person or good for the community or both at the same time). In the absence of a moral model, of clear ethical coordinates, and therefore of a continuous change in what do we interpret as being good and moral, we ask ourselves: what are the directions of orientation and the manners to correct behavior in interpersonal dialogue and coexistence?

The answer always implies considering *the context*, which can be defined by professional ethics, consequentialism, or utilitarianism. In a community of specialists a series of rules and principles are working, while in a society, professional ethics and, in this case, the code of ethics, lose their utility, due to criteria that may depend on the utilitarian or consequentialist analysis. This relativism created by the context or societies is also found in Cohen’s collection of ethical dilemmas. Through his 101 ethical dilemmas, Cohen describes current society issues, which allows not only a deontological analysis, but also an ethical analysis of context and of

⁶ Zigmunt Bauman, *Etica postmodernă* (Timișoara: Editura Amarcord, 2000), p. 68.

situation, meaning the promotion of practical wisdom, which involves the ability to predict effects and to make analogies to other situations, to be fair in relation to the others, but not without affection. He draws attention to the validity of the deontological analysis but subtly shows its effects, because complying with the code of conduct leads to lack of action, to a certain passivity with negative effects.

The usefulness and practicality of moral actions do not only make ethics vulnerable, because their purpose is not to present the advantages and disadvantages of actions, even if we are in an era of negotiations, but rather to determine the awareness of the existence of morality as part of human nature existing in the natural human fund. However, this is not enough, because today's society needs more to deliberate on what is/is not moral and to assimilate morality as something vital in relation to self and others. Pragmatism focuses more on numbers and less on debt criterion, because most of the time the usefulness of action upon the most people is considered, and the debt criterion becomes an adjacent aspect.

In the construction and the maintenance of social space as a cognitive process, in its essence, feelings are either suppressed or – when indicated – reduced to a secondary role. The trials and misfortunes of the creation of space are primarily cognitive: the most common and most relevant of its endemic sufferings is cognitive confusion: the imprecision of rules, the weakness in the ignorance of the ways to move forward.⁷

The metaphor according to which rich countries have no responsibility for the situation of poor countries produces a cognitive dissonance which, being brought to a broad sense, might cause a certain acceptance. In other words, if the same situation would be considered in another context, uncertainty would disappear. The saving from drowning⁸ of a larger number of people against a smaller group of people could be seen as an ethical action based on the principle of utility. According to this principle, I will save as many people as I can afford to save without endangering others. The risks which are produced, though, by such an analysis show that utilitarianism is true only in certain situations, and that application where it is not effective is more harmful than the lack of its implementation. This is because ethics is not simply a system of noble theories whose practical effectiveness is nonexistent, but a coherent system as far as considering the context on the basis of the appropriate ethical principle. In society it is difficult to analyze one situation or another from an ethical point of view and to follow general rules that are not applicable in most practical

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 180.

⁸ Martin Cohen, *101 Ethical Dilemmas* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 2.

situations. What you can see is the ease that people exhibit when passing by opposition from good to bad under the impulse of power.

For the first time, Philip Zimbardo's *Stanford Experiment*⁹ determined the restriction of the experiments between some ethical limits imposed in an effort to prevent the possibility of abuse that might spring from this feeling of power. In 1971 Zimbardo conducted an experiment in which he randomly chose two groups of student volunteers who would participate in the experiment.

The first group consisted only of women and the second group was mixed. Zimbardo describes only the experimental situation encountered in the group of women, because there the abuse of power is identified. Both groups are divided, and in the first part of the group of volunteers, students are depersonalised by replacing their names with numbers and their uniform with common prisoners' clothing, and then being transferred to a special prison. The other half of the group is also depersonalized because their names are replaced with numbers and they receive uniforms, except that theirs are the uniforms of the guards.

The guards took control over the prisoners and the effect of the role exchange made them become during those six days a kind of torturers. During the night shift, they subjected those in the second part of the group to abuses far exceeding the normal requirements of the experiment (e.g. by forcing them to wash the toilets with their hands, using insults, calling them names, etc.).

Zimbardo was compromised as experimenter and was forced to discontinue the experiment due to the excesses of his volunteer students in the role of guardians, and the experience itself seems to have led to a change of the principles and rules by which experiments are conducted.

The question Zimbardo asked himself is: do good people really exist? His response is as tough as it is realistic, and the retrospective he makes clearly outlines the border between mercy and murder.

The conclusion is that the border between the good man and the criminal is much easier to cross than philosophers might imagine, and he makes an overview of events which justify his assumption (prisoners in World War I, World War II camps, prisoners in Siberia, and the genocide in Rwanda and Cambodia).

All these examples justify the conclusion that man is prone to evil actions, so that the existence of clear ethical principles is necessarily imposed. Ethics shows that this quantification is often the indicator of the degree of morality of actions and therefore consequentialism would be closer to utilitarianism, that is, to an assessment of the usefulness and consequences upon majority.

"The crowd represents crushing, abolition, removing difference from the Other. Moral responsibility feeds itself from difference. The crowd lives

⁹ Philip Zimbardo, *Efectul lui Lucifer* (Bucureşti : Editura Nemira, 2009).

in similarity.”¹⁰ Through interpretation and analysis, the human being, whether it is in a therapeutic context, or in a social one, has access to a disclosed reality, imposed or created, that can cause trouble (misfortune), which leads to the following idea: “the fairness of the human act is judged by it producing the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people.”¹¹ Could this be enough?

John Broome conducted an analysis of medical situations that reminds us in some degree of *the principle of responsibility for the disease*, by which the medical services are distributed. Broome’s analysis and the graphic below highlight the patient’s response to a palliative treatment compared to the reaction to a second type of treatment that is more aggressive.

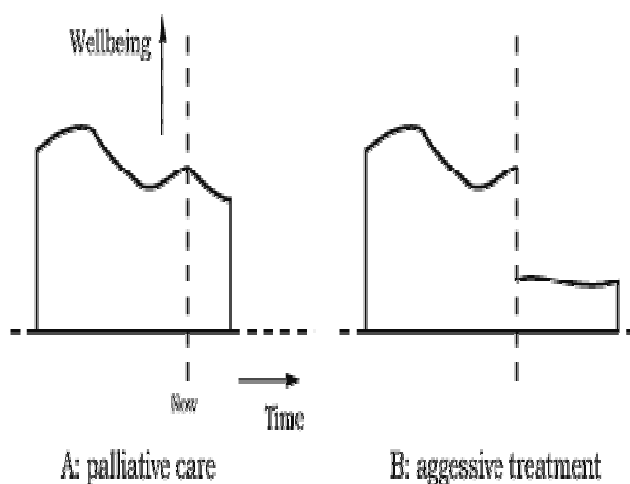


Figure 1. Comparative analysis of welfare between the application of a palliative or an aggressive treatment¹²

The real situation is that a person who has a form of terminal illness has a choice between a palliative option, in which the pain is reduced and life is prolonged, but prolonged for less time than with an aggressive form of treatment that will cause pain. Broome’s conclusion is that the best solution is the palliative but shorter version. Strictly from the medical point of view, the analysis is pertinent, but from a moral point of view we ask ourselves where this kind of analysis might lead?

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

¹¹ Mihaela Miroiu, Gabriela Blebea Nicolae, *Introducere în etica profesională* (București: Editura Trei, 2001), p. 32.

¹² John Broome, *Weighing Lives* (Oxford University, 2004), p. 2.

Society subjects us by its dilemmas to a variety of situations and to solutions that may surprise us as in the solution found in the second situation described by Broome. So, in a situation of choice, as one between a young person and an old one, we would be surprised that the analysis for such a situation is purely pragmatic, which leads us to think that the scale of utilitarianism may have a long-term effect extending to and including a wide range of current issues.

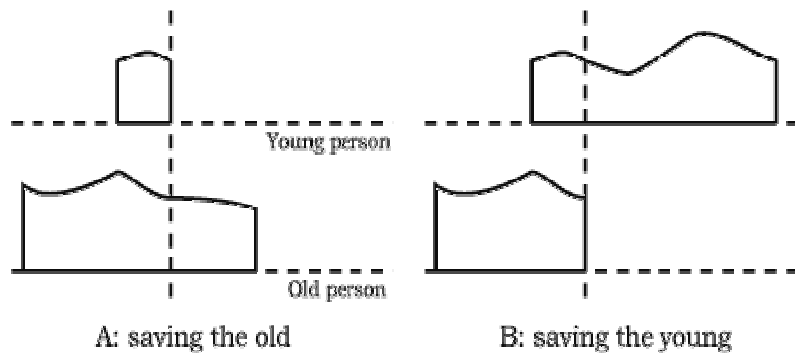


Figure 2. Assessment of welfare for young and elderly people¹³

Broome says the analysis carried out in such a situation refers to the welfare potential posed by the person concerned, in this case the young and elderly.

Rather, the concept of welfare has, in this context, a sense of procreation. Hence, a pragmatic criterion is followed, because the young will sooner be helped for future generations to survive and contribute to the welfare of society while the elder, due to his age, does not represent such a potential.

This situation of quantifying certain benefits leads our mind to a consumer society where moral principles are secondary. In the scientific context these benefits can lead to and support theories that were before countered by arguments, by which they manage to maintain and produce more or less positive effects. Maybe not in vain, the criticism on the unconscious theory was not assimilated. Beliefs and new behaviors are performed in time and by word. Therefore Richard Rorty thinks that “the acquisition of new vocabularies of moral reflection”¹⁴ can influence and trigger moral conscience or ethics, and, we believe, that this updated linguistic load that would lead us to our true depth represented by character

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 242.

and reveals consciousness, memory, and will, understood and analyzed in a context of freedom, is still missing.

REINTERPRETING THEORIES OF THE UNCONSCIOUS IN TERMS OF ETHICS– MEMORY, WILL AND FREEDOM

With the orthodox psychoanalysis and especially with the theories of the unconscious specifically promoted by Sigmund Freud, other approaches to unconscious (*hereditary neurological and philosophical* unconscious) have entered into obscurity and the epistemological foundation that we find in the psychological and philosophical approaches show us that arguments that stand behind this unconscious lost some of their value. To analyze the value, potential, and motives of the unconscious is perhaps needed to clear the space for analysis, definition, and interpretation of *conscience*, in the ethical and social sense, that is, from the philosophical and psychological perspective.

The human being lives his immediate present time and also his past, in a community that is reported and subjected to two fundamental laws, *the social law* of the community and *the divine law*, the first containing the law with its meanings and legal effects and hence the problem of placing blame easily. As Constantin Noica would say, “you can function only under a law, and so your deed is guilty as partial and mutilating. *You are guilty no matter what you do.*”¹⁵ Therefore it is important to see what it is meant by consciousness, especially *self-consciousness*, which involves and brings with it *the Other’s awareness*. We need to take away the guilt from the human being without sacrificing his accountability in a moral, legal, and social sense. The analysis of human interiority is rather a review and a clarification of frameworks and concepts for ideational and practical development.

As we believe that Noica’s perspective concerning the moments of realization of consciousness have as models the *steps cadence* but also *the warm’s movement*, because consciousness is the diverse One-himself, in other words, consciousness is what comes through sensations and perceptions – “if the course is that of the step, first you have, on the one who moves, the undifferentiated unity of the body, then you have a division that is the step itself, finally you have a unit which recovers, when you withdraw your foot. If the movement is that of a creeping worm, first you have an indefinite chain, then the tightening, the deflection, the bending of the chain, and last its recovery and its moving forward. That is the case of conscience. First you have indeterminacy, that of sensation, then determinations of perception, and then you have a relaxation and an annulment of determinations, in the laws of the intellect. First you have something subjective, indistinctive, then something objective,

¹⁵ Constantin Noica, *Povestiri despre om* (București: Editura Cartea Românească, 1980), p. 187.

differentiations, and eventually an absolute beyond differentiations. Subjective-objective-absolute, this is our cadence.”¹⁶ That is no more or less than self-consciousness, reason, and spirit, the perception of the individual as Universal.

Consciousness contains and brings with it the epistemological foundation that any analysis which has as referential the human interiority contained or not in a social or historical community should start. But this epistemological foundation leads us to the triad of *philosophical-hereditary-neurological* unconscious proposed by Marcel Gauchet, namely to return to *the history of the person*, which brings not only the appeal to *individual or collective consciousness*, but especially reveals all those experiences and feelings that lead us to the fragmented approaches of the theory of the unconscious and of *memory, will, and freedom*. We can say in this context of analysis, that we are interested in the human interiority and in the way it was analyzed so far from this perspective of *consciousness*, of the triad *memory-will- freedom*, because here we can reach a deeper understanding of the triad *memory-childhood-sexuality* – the one that Gauchet proposes to argue the importance and the role of the cerebral unconscious in scientific approaches. This direction toward which Gauchet leads us is significant, because on the basis of these theories of the unconscious and consciousness, *ethical, psychological, and legal theories* and interpretations were constructed, all of them aiming largely at human empowerment and also at their inclusion in a socio-historical context.

In psychological terms the triad *memory-liberty-will* loses part of the strength and value we find in the philosophical approaches and interpretations, which value man and give responsibility to the social and historical framework. If we are to consider only the question of freedom, whose psychological reference could be identified in concepts such as independence, self-esteem, or mental health, we find that we can actually, if desired, refer to the concept of freedom as we find it in Arthur Schopenhauer, namely: physical freedom, intellectual freedom, and moral freedom.

We believe that at this stage of analysis the removal of the epistemological foundation that philosophy as a science and ethics as logical system of classification and development of humanity gave it, through what we call the transition from *the individual* to *the act*, is under the sign of uncertainty in terms of knowledge, understanding, and interpretation. Human interiority brings with it a whole hereditary, social, and psychological history that would constitute what Freud called the unconscious. This simplistic reduction of the area of conscious acts to what unconscious acts would imply and that would strictly represent the person’s history, clearly shows a separation from the scientific philosophical framework that would have given a full and comprehensive knowledge of the immediacy and sensitivity in terms of sensation, perception, cognition,

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

and affectivity that is found in the triad of *memory-childhood-sexuality*. Therefore, we adhere in this regard to the reference to the moral foundations of psychology, proposed by Otto Weininger, who takes into consideration precisely this aspect of the importance of memory on moral and immoral acts, that consciously or unconsciously manifests through states of consciousness. He believes that “although memory is not a *logical and ethical act*, it is, however, a *logical and ethical phenomena*. Memory is also moral, because it allows *repentance* by itself. *Forgetting everything is in itself immoral*. Therefore piety is also a moral precept.”¹⁷ Simplifying the role and the importance of memory in terms of selectivity justifies the theory of unconscious but not the one of conscience.

“But what a man never forgets and what he cannot store best enables the characterization of his identity, of his character,”¹⁸ Weininger believes, which is not far from Noica’s perspective, who considers that “the man who cannot forget cannot be lucid ever again.” The drama of the contemporary man seems to be no other than this: he cannot forget.”¹⁹ In this view of the memory, consciousness regains its primary position, the original one, that of being moral. This ethical dimension of consciousness brings man into the light of his given nature and subtly makes him responsible, without social and historical but rather inherited constraints. And from here we would say that we could also look toward the universal, which first would be the responsibility of the other, in the sense of society, system, or person, to recover the right to memory, freedom, and individual will, which would include the right to self-defense.

For memory, understood in a broad sense, aims not only the strict informational aspects, but an entire personal and social history, which lies in the genetic and emotional code and to which we differently have access, because of these differences of self-consciousness. It is necessary therefore to see what would happen to man without memory, be it strictly informational. The human genetic code is, if you want, his inherited memory, without which he could not relate to others because through it, the genetic code, the hereditary dowry, one can observe the *difference* and the *similarity*; and the difference could be in the context of ethical review, what Noica called *moral genius*, which is more than the consciousness of fulfilled duty.

Repositioning and analysing the theories concerning the unconscious in terms of innovations in science (genetics), of re-ordering the health insurance systems, and of revising the legal codes brings with it a re-contextualization of certain moral models, ethical principles that will lead to

¹⁷ Otto Weininger, *Sex și caracter* (București: Editura Anastasia, 2002), p. 251.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 212.

¹⁹ Constantin Noica, *Mathesis sau bucuriile simple* (București: Editura Humanitas, 1992), p. 37.

approaching the human being from particular to general, because from the particular cases generality eventually forms, as in *The Universal*.

Through memory man regains his right to *self defense*, looking back into the past with a degree of *freedom and will* he possesses in a society in which constraints are justified or not. “When the moralist overlooks the relationship of an act to a certain state of mind as its cause, and its connection through that common cause with large classes and groups of actions apparently very little resembling itself, his estimation even of the consequences of the very act itself, is rendered imperfect.”²⁰

In other words, the interpretations that take into consideration the presence of a wellness state, having as landmark the number and less the context (or the means of obtaining it), lose sight of the ethical analysis component. Self-knowledge enhances knowledge of others, which may lead to accountability and morality.

If we accept this view, then this implies that we should also subscribe to Richard Rorty’s view that “far from what we have in common with other members of our species, self-knowledge is precisely what distinguishes us from them: our random idiosyncrasies, “irrational” components of our egos, the ones that divide us into incompatible sets of beliefs and desires.”²¹ Self-knowledge can lead to personal autonomy in the social context. Self-knowledge does not exclude socialization, but rather it triggers and may lead to moral behavior causing *suffering, consciousness, and difference*.

What could be more daring, more recent than the courage to announce to *physicists* that the inert will be explained by the vivid; to *biologists* that life can only be understood by thinking; to *philosophers* that generalities are not philosophical; to *teachers* that they need to learn about the whole before talking about elements; to *students* that they should start with perfection; and to *humans* – more torn than ever by hatred and selfishness – that their “natural impulse is their generosity.”²²

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²⁰ John Stuart Mill, “Remarks on Bentham's Philosophy,” in *The Collected Works*, ed. J.M. Robson, Volume 10 (London and New York: Routledge, 1974), p. 8.

²¹ Richard Rorty, *Pragmatism și filosofie post-nietzscheană* (București: Editura Univers, 2000), p. 233.

²² Henri Bergson, *Introducere în metafizică* (Iași: Editura Institutului European, 1993), p. 220.

CHAPTER VI

**ASPIRATIONS AND ANTICIPATIONS OF
UNIVERSALISM:
THE GLOBAL VILLAGE IN ANCIENT ROME¹**

IULIAN-GABRIEL HRUȘCĂ

Abstract: Globalization is not only a modern phenomenon. The modern notion of global village is tributary to the Roman tradition. The main differences between antiquity and modernism are the technological progress, the far more sophisticated means of communication today, and the larger scale at which the contemporary process of globalization takes place.

Ancient Greece anticipated some characteristics of any process of globalization, but from the point of view of globalization, the Latin Miracle is far and away more significant than the Greek Miracle. The Roman Empire was the first significant global village and the ideal of universalism derives from the concept of *humanitas Romana*.

Keywords: globalization, Roman globalization, ancient social processes.

In our study we want to emphasize that globalization is not only a modern phenomenon, because similar elements of the actual process of globalization could be found also in the past, in the case of ancient Rome, for example. At the same time, we wish to create the opportunity to reflect on some aspects of *Roman globalization*, which was a model, in some respects, for the way in which the modern world acts today in global circumstances. Our study is intended to be also a mirror of some ancient manifestations of the globalization process that were, sometimes, managed in a more sophisticated manner by the Romans and could offer us new subtleties of behavior.

The concept of *globalization/global village*² existed also in antiquity, having been formulated by Greek philosophers in theory and by Greek politicians in practice. However, the Romans succeeded in finding a

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² I am especially indebted to Richard A. Bauman, *The Global Village in Ancient Rome and in Modern Times*, in *Menschenrechte und europäische Identität. Die antiken Grundlagen*, by Klaus M. Girardet and Ulrich Nortmann, (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2005), pp. 38-48.

practical solution for the ideas of universality only theoretically propagated in the spheres of the Hellenistic civilization. Universal Rome was both a concept and a practical reality.³

The modern notion of *global village* is tributary to the Roman tradition. The main differences between antiquity and modernism are technological progress, the far more sophisticated means of communication nowadays, and the bigger scale at which the contemporary process of globalization takes place. However, today the *global village* is considered a unique manifestation of modernity. Especially from the twentieth century till the present, the modern human being has considered himself the *inventor* of globalization as of many other things, ignoring that the first true process of globalization took place at a smaller scale in the entire Mediterranean world and even on further lands, and had an impact on all the people from this large geographical space.

Global village is a term that is associated with Marshall McLuhan, who made famous the term especially in the books *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (1962) and *Understanding Media* (1964). McLuhan described how the globe has been reduced to the manifestations of a village by electric technology and the very fast flow of information. Through the term *global village*, McLuhan understood a world “in which the electronic media have radically reduced the distance and isolation of people from each other, restoring to humans some of their original sense of being part of a village or tribe”⁴. Today, the term *global village* is commonly used to describe the effects of telecommunications at the society level; it is an expression that identifies itself with the Internet and World Wide Web, and this term also brings us to the idea of a vast and unified global community.

McLuhan’s term – used mainly by Bauman⁵ – seems to have been ignored by other specialists who rather preferred the word *globalization*⁶ or even the word *globalution*.⁷ However, the specialists and writers⁸ who used

³ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

⁴ See Marshall McLuhan & Bruce R. Powers, *The Global Village: Transformations in World Life and Media in the Twenty-first Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

⁵ Richard A. Bauman, *op. cit.*, *supra note 2*, pp. 38-48.

⁶ See for example Tony Ballantyne, *Globalization in World History* (London: Pimlico, 2002) and Paul Dobrescu, *Violența globalizării. Asaltul asupra puterii americane [Cunning of Globalization. The Assault on American Power]* (Iași: The European Institute, 2010).

⁷ See Thomas Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* (London: Harper Collins, 1999).

⁸ This syntagm refers to personalities such as Marshall McLuhan, Thomas Friedman, Paul Dobrescu, Paul M. Kennedy, Francis Fukuyama, Samuel P. Huntington.

the term in one form or another, theorizing about it, forget that the modern notion of *global village* is tributary to classical antiquity.

If in modern times the notion of *global village/globalization* was put into a theoretical shape by theorists and thinkers⁹, Bauman noticed that the same notion – which in extension presumes *universalism* and the concept of *humanitas*¹⁰ – took, in some respects, a practical form in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, which was adopted by the United Nations in 1948.¹¹

In the introduction, it is written that “the inherent dignity and ... equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family [are] the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.” This is not much more than a reassertion of the doctrine of universalism that was brought to Rome by Greeks as Crates, Polybius, Panaetius or his disciple, Hecato of Rhodes, who, in their turns, were propagating the sociological and cosmopolitan conception of Cleanthes, Chrysippus, or Zenon of Tarsus. After this Hellenistic contribution to the development of Roman mentality, Rome itself perpetuated these ideas and found a practical application for them, giving birth to the concept of *humanitas Romana*, becoming a *civitas* of the entire world and rethinking Greece. From that point, *humanitas* was, for over two thousand years, the foundation of culture and knowledge.

The Declaration that is so similar with the postulations of ancient universalism is grouped by Bauman in the following categories of rights:

1. The right to life, liberty, security of person, equality before the law, fair trial, asylum, and freedom from torture and inhuman punishment;
2. The right to privacy, reputation, opinions, religion, mobility, nationality;
3. The right to marry, own property, take part in government, choose one’s occupation, receive an education.¹²

Some of these rights have Roman correspondents. The first group of rights, which declares the struggle against acts of brutality on human beings is the central problem of human rights and concerns both the modern scene and the ancient scene. Despite the negative opinions circulating about the Romans and their acts of violence, ancient Rome was not, as often as many believe, a generator of brutal acts on others. In fact, the Roman state emerged from a conflict zone where no one was angel and in a period of time when the struggle of a community for survival was severe. Roman *imperialism* – and in Eugen Cizek’s opinion, this term is not appropriate to

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ See I. Heinemann, *Humanitas*, *RE Supp.* 5 (1931), pp. 282-310.

¹¹ Richard A. Bauman, *op. cit.*, *supra* footnote 2, p. 39.

¹² See Richard A. Bauman, *Human Rights in Ancient Rome* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 2-3.

define the massive and rapid Roman expansion¹³ – was, at least in the beginning, based on defensive principles.¹⁴ And, when Rome was powerful and vast enough, the Romans provided the Mediterranean populations with a political unity which – as the Stoic philosophers predicted – generated Roman universalism and a model of international order called *Pax Romana*. Having the possibility to use force on others, Rome only occasionally abused its power. We consider that there are empires that spread culture, welfare, and a sort of universal unity among governed, and others that remained in history only as conquerors and profiteers. Rome was an empire that can be included in the first category as a state that benefited from their subjects, but also dealt with the welfare of the conquered populations and was a civilizing factor in a Europe too often brutal and savage. At the same time, Rome managed to create a space where peace ruled for a very long period during the *Pax Romana*, according to Polybius' ideal of a state where conflicts remain a manifestation of the past.¹⁵ How many other empires can boast such a performance?

For a better understanding of the anticipation of *globalization/global village* in ancient Rome, we should also refer to some aspects prior to the Roman process of globalization. Ancient Greece anticipated some characteristics of the process of globalization. Greek thinkers elaborated on the principles of *philanthropia*,¹⁶ a term that had the meaning of “goodwill toward all men,” and promoted the idea of a moral obligation owed by every human being to every other human person. The concept of universal unity of the human race, of *universalism/cosmopolitanism*, which is seen as a derivative of *philanthropia*, was easy to draw out from such ideas. However, such concepts remained in ancient Greece at a declarative level, because the Greeks were also very elitist and independent persons, dividing humanity into Hellenes and Barbarians. The dissociation between the ones who are Greek and the ones who are not was even more emphasized when it was about the practical application of the principles of *philanthropia*. Those who were not Greek were always considered inferior and the Greeks never really assimilated another culture or another population in a manner similar to the Romans. In fact, the Greeks never achieved in practice a universal unity of all human beings. The continuous wars between the different *poleis* led to the defeat of Greece by Macedonia, then by Rome and, in the end, by the Ottoman Empire. This gradual transition from one conqueror to another is somehow reflected in the degradation of the heroic

¹³ Eugen Cizek, *Istoria Romei [The History of Rome]* (București: Paideia, 2002), p. 106.

¹⁴ Specialists as Theodor Mommsen, E. Badian, Paul Veyne, or M. Holleaux sustained such a point of view. Others, such as Montesquieu, Bossuet, and W. V. Harris, declared that Roman *imperialism* was voluntary.

¹⁵ Gerardo Zampaglione, *The Idea of Peace in Antiquity* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1973), p. 142.

¹⁶ Richard A. Bauman, *op. cit.*, *supra* footnote 12, pp. 10-19.

Greek to the stage of *Graecus vir*, then of *Graeculus* and, in the end, of a sort of *Balkan Graeculus*. The Greeks used the term of *bárbaros* (in Latin *barbarus*) in a way that indicated a contemptuous attitude. In the beginning, the Greeks extended the term of *bárbaros* even to Romans, which caused the anger of Cato the Elder (Marcus Porcius Cato Maior – 234 BC-149 BC) when they said “*nos dictitant barbaros [esse]*”¹⁷. After the spiritual unity between the Greeks and the Romans became more obvious, the Greeks finally transformed the statement “*pas me hélien bárbaros esti*”/ “the one who is not Greek is a Barbarian” into the statement “*pas me hélien kai romaíos bárbaros esti*”/ “the one who is not Greek or Roman is a Barbarian.” Unlike the Greeks, the Romans tried to integrate others, the Barbarians, into their community. The difference between the Greeks’ attitude of rejection and the Romans’ integration approach was clearly emphasized by Emperor Claudius and by Tacitus (*An.*, 11, 24, 2-5). Under the Empire, the Romans showed curiosity and interest impregnated by the taste of exotic for the *other*, for the *Barbarian*.¹⁸

In Ancient Greece, however, the first move toward a sort of cosmopolitanism was the Athenian empire of the fifth century BC. The second move toward partial universalism was made in Central Greece by the Achaean Confederacy. Finally, the empire of Alexander the Great introduced some idea of universalism when it was about the Persians, but this gentle treatment was based rather on the laws of conquest than on *ius gentium*,¹⁹ as it will be known to the Romans. However, these forms of empires were no more than a prelude to Rome’s achievements concerning universalism.²⁰

From the point of view of globalization, the *Latin Miracle* is far more significant than the *Greek Miracle*: “Rome anticipated the modern idea of creating a world environment in which solutions become possible. The Roman Empire was the first significant global village. It was the unique place to give effect to the ideal of universalism.”²¹ The idea of Rome’s universalism, planted in Italian soil by Greek thinkers and augmented by the concept of *humanitas Romana*, crossed over time from the period of the Scipionic Circle to the end of empire and even more. During Trajan, for example, Rome was a *communis patria* of a great part of Europe and Asia and included the entire Mediterranean world.

The multicultural aspect of the Roman state is described very eloquently by Publius Aelius Aristides, a Greek-speaking Roman. In the year 155, he praises the Emperor Antoninus in a panegyric. The conditions

¹⁷ Pliny the Elder (*Natural History* XXIX,14) has this passage from Cato: “*Nos quoque dictitant barbaros.*”

¹⁸ See Eugen Cizek, [*The History of Rome*] (București: Paideia, 2002), p. 13.

¹⁹ Rights common to all men.

²⁰ Richard Bauman, *op. cit.*, *supra* footnote 2, p. 41.

²¹ Richard Bauman, *op. cit.*, *supra* footnote 12, p. 6.

were totally opposed to the ones in which Ovid expressed his *laudatio* to Augustus in Tomis, almost at the end of the world; now Aelius Aristides glorifies *Pax Romana* and the emperor in the most wonderful city of the time: Rome. However, Aelius Aristides praises not only the Emperor Antoninus, but also the entire Roman elite and administration that govern the vast space of the Roman Empire in the spirit of universalism. He emphasizes that the Roman citizenship is not only referring to the people living in a city but to a general race, one that balanced all the rest through culture and behavior. This state is universal, because the ones who are not Romans are treated not as foreigners, but as their own people by the magistrates. Even the wars are now a manifestation of the past (*Panegyric to Rome*, 59-60, 63-71, 102).²²

Rome managed to put in practice the theoretical ideas promoted by the Greeks and even more. The Romans shaped a concept in their particular manner and applied the principles of *humanitas* in the space they created and governed, influencing the way in which universalism functioned. *Humanitas Romana* was not the copied Roman equivalent of the Greek *philanthropia* or *paideia*, but a notion conceived in a Roman manner. The Romans have dissociated in the semantic area of *humanitas* a psycho-moral hemisphere, based on kindness, goodness, and mercy, but also a cultural and philosophical hemisphere, based on training, education, and culture. The concept was theorized by the treaties of Cicero and Seneca, was reflected in literature by the works of Terentius, Virgil, or Ovid, and had a practical side conferred by law and processes. Later, the concept also influenced the development of humanism in literature. *Humanitas Romana* was based on a multitude of values that were part of the conduct code of a Roman citizen: *mores*, *dignitas*, *gravitas*, *integritas*, *clementia*, *aequitas*, *lenitas*, *mansuetudo*, *moderatio*, *indulgentia*, *iustitia*, *pietas*, *fides*. This made the universalism of Rome to be unique and different from the cosmopolitanism of the Greeks that, as said before, never took a serious and strong shape.

Bauman noticed some characteristics of Universal Rome that put it in advantage over any other previous versions of universalism. The most important, in our opinion, are the following three characteristics:

1. The creation of an imperial, multicultural citizenship that worked together with the local citizenship. Patriotism is encouraged in the sense of belonging to an exclusive club.
2. The powerful notion of permanence and universality.
3. The creation of a kind of ancient multinational corporations that stand outside the reach of national governments.²³

²² See also Laurent Pernot, *Aelius Aristides and Rome*, in *Aelius Aristides between Greece, Rome and the Gods*, edited by W. V. Harris and Brooke Holmes (Leiden: Brill, 2009), pp. 173-202.

²³ Richard A. Bauman, *op. cit.*, *supra* footnote 2, pp. 42-43.

Although the modern notion is different from what *natio* was in the eyes of the Romans, it seems that, in some respects, there is an interesting equation between the term of *natio*, Roman citizenship, and the actual perception of nation. The feeling of belonging to an exclusive club could be associated with the feeling of an immigrant that in a new country wants to rally to the same symbols as the others and wants to be a member of the new community. The people from the entire space ruled by Romans had the chance to rally to the same symbols, myths, welfare, and way of life. In addition, they had the chance to come in the new *club* with their religions and myths, a situation that is very similar with the actual one.

Of course, there are also some negative features of Ancient Rome, such as genocide and slavery. But despite these negative sides of the Roman rule, Rome is famous even today for its multicultural side. In a way, for many moderns, even the process of Romanization is associated first with the oppression and only secondly with a process of civilization, omitting the universal, cosmopolitan, and multicultural aspects of the phenomenon, all of these being connected with *humanitas Romana* and deriving from it. We do not want to say that the Romans were a blessing to a conquered people, but for the next generations, the Roman rule surely had benefits, as well.

Now it is appropriate to tackle the issue of *civitas* and *anticivitas*.²⁴ *Civitas* is significant for the period of Republican Rome. *Civitas* indicated for a Roman that he is part of the city-state, the country, and the common family of all citizens. *Civitas* was Rome and its colonies, the new cities of Rome from Italy and from provinces. Even the military camps, *castra*, represented fragments of *civitas*.

During the Roman Empire *civitas* ceased to function as a mental structure, in the opinion of Claude Nicolet. *Imperium* had a geographical and territorial connotation in that period. Even in the first century BC, we can notice a new sort of Latin, new techniques of communication, that are qualified by Nicolet as aspects of *anticivitas*. The citizens, in his opinion, lost the feeling of solidarity with the city-state and they felt like part of a population located on a vast territory, respectively, *anticivitas*. Indeed, they felt like citizens of a very large state, but this aspect is not opposed to *civitas*, we can say, but is a continuation. All the inhabitants of the Empire were still glorifying Rome, *caput-imperii*. The mental structure indeed changed, but as a following consequence of an extended *civitas*, in this case the proper term being in our opinion *transcivitas*; that better summarizes the multicultural aspect of the Roman Empire and the idea of Roman universalism. Roman civilization did not disappear without leaving significant traces. The idea of Eternal and Universal Rome survived many

²⁴ See Claude Nicolet, *The World of the Citizen in Republican Rome* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980) and Eugen Cizek, *Istoria Romei*, *op. cit.*, *supra* footnote 18, 19-21.

centuries after the collapse of the Western Empire. Indeed, it was no longer a geographical location, but a perpetual *transcivitas*.

In general, we are prone to label things. The specialists are no exception to the rule. Ancient Rome was labeled with the term of *imperialism* or with the term of *universalism*, among many others. We believe that we approach quite enough ancient realities if we express a preference for the universalism label. Universal Rome expresses a viable idea.

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CHAPTER VII

WAS THE MODERN COSMOPOLIS TRANSFORMED INTO A POST-MODERN GLOBAL VILLAGE?

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Abstract: I argue in this paper that the shift from Modernity to post-Modernity was accompanied by a deep change of some presuppositions shared by all the people who belong to this tradition. Following Stephen Toulmin's idea about the age of modernity from his book *Cosmopolis, The Hidden Agenda of Modernity*, I try to demonstrate that post-Modernity replaces the so-called Project of Cosmopolis with that of a global village. In other words, there is a difference between what we want to build and what we have built in fact. The main reason for this process is the invasion of a new kind of subjectivity in all areas of social life.

Keywords: modernity, post-modernity, *cosmopolis*, social life, change.

PROLOGUE: POST-MODERNITY AND POST-MODERNISM, TWO IN ONE

When we think about the future, we do it *within a framework of expectations*. Our beliefs and foresights are shaped by the limits of the present, because we want to do and we want to decide to do only desirable things. In this sense our capacity to forecast is limited and any imaginable future will look like the present. Therefore, I don't want to make a prediction here about the course of events in the future, but only to describe a trend and to explain on this basis what happened and, insofar as the future looks like the past, to announce a possible future. Anyway, although we take the past as an ally, the idea about the future must be viewed as a product of speculative imagination, because, as we already know from Hume, we don't have any reliable epistemological reason to think that things will be as they were in the past.

The question from the title of this study is put forward as a weak commitment for an answer. As we know, a question contains within itself a selected answer; it is a constraint or a framework for uncertain possibilities. The project of Modernity was equated by Toulmin to the project of a Cosmopolis: starting with the seventeenth century, "Humanity seemed to have set aside all doubts and ambiguities about its capacity to achieve its goals here on Earth, and in historical time, rather than deferring human fulfillment from an Afterlife in Eternity – that was what had made the project of Modernity rational – and this optimism led to major advances

not just in natural science but in moral, political, and social thought...”¹ If the Cosmopolis was a philosophical or an ideological construct of Modernity and we accept this idea as an unproblematic statement, then my main aim here is to describe this state of fact and to offer an approach to the so-called state of arts in the present, in times of a new cultural age, post-modernity. And the new question is if the Cosmopolis is still available or if it was demolished by the architects of post-modernity. I prefer to use the expression *post-modernity* as a name for a process with at least two phases, modernity and post-modernity, and to let slide the expression *post-modernism*. The two, post-modernity and post-modernism, overlap and have in common a hard core, but differ as types of succession: post – modernity is a new form of modernity, post- modernism is another age, a case of secession, even a clash with modernity, not just a simple succession. Post- modernity is a new phase of modernity in the same tradition or an effect of modernity, post-modernism is the destruction of modernity or of the so-called weak modernity, if we may use Vattimo’s idea about weak thought and his nihilistic reading of history.²

What relation is there, then, between the modern Cosmopolis and the global village? First of all, I think that globalization is the end of modernity, and only of modernity, not of history, as Fukuyama stated.³ This means that the old Kantian ideal about a common peaceful world was fulfilled in this manner, as a global world, even if somebody may not like this or may not recognize in it a Kantian ideal. Kant wanted to change the world through the forces of peace, rationality, and law, first of all. This historical project was the basis of modern society with the national state as a cell of global order. But the technological evolution and the market economy changed society, and the national state became something old-fashioned. The new aim is a global order based on transnational processes and the new brave world looks like a village, like a global village in which every person can know almost everything, if she or he wants, about everybody. We, the citizens of the global village, have new values in common, and try to live together, face to face, connected to mass-media, ready to take a job with the benefits of our global community. Is this a real picture or just another ideological movement?

¹ Stephen Toulmin, *Cosmopolis, The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. IX.

² See Gianni Vattimo, *The End of Modernity – Nihilism and Hermeneutics in the Post-Modern Culture*, translated by John P. Snyder (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), for this nihilistic understanding of our history.

³ See Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (Illinois: Free Press, 1992).

SECESSION AND SUCCESSION: A TERMINOLOGICAL DEBATE OR A REAL CHANGE IN THE WORLD?

The debate about the changing world began in architecture after the First World War, regarding the new style proposed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and then by some of his contemporaries, among them Walter Gropius and Le Corbusier. Their minimal buildings, made from steel and glass, guided by the principle that *less means more*, became a new pattern, the so-called *skin and bones* design, for the architectural development of cities/towns and for urban planning. This anonymous simplicity has as a result a lack of specificity and a high similarity between public buildings, especially those for offices. This style was named Modern, because it was conceived as a style of Modern times, in opposition with the Classical style of Antiquity and the Gothic style of the Medieval Age.

After 1970, a new generation of architects and designers appeared, with Robert Venturi as a leader. They tried to give the imagination back to architecture, especially the historical references and decorative elements. Their criticism against modernity wasn't in fact a critique of modernity as a whole, but just this particular movement in architecture initialized by Mies and named Modernism. Therefore, post-modernism in its first phase is a particular movement and has as its aim only to stop and to surpass or overcome modernism in architecture. It wasn't its aim to finish with modernity or to replace modernity with something like post-modernity.

On the other hand, understood as a critique of modernity, post-modernism undermines the authority of modern tradition and that of modern institutions. First of all, the idea of universality is under attack because the new preferred approaches are deconstruction and the analysis of little fragments. As a cultural movement, post-modernism is opposite to modernity. In literature, post-modernism lead in the end to the break with realism and chose to explore and to enter the inner space of conscience or the virtual space of dreams. Writers like Joyce and Fowels ceased to describe the facts objectively and used the subtle capacities of language to express thoughts, actions, and attitudes.

The term post-modernism was used by Jean Francois Lyotard in the year 1979 in his book *La condition post-moderne*. Is post-modernism something new in philosophy, entirely different from modernity? Using the Wittgsteinian model of language games, Lyotard has tried to describe the new rules of the postmodern age. In the *Stanford Encyclopedia* postmodernism is defined as a set of critical practices employing concepts such as difference, repetition, the trace, the simulacrum, and hyperreality in order to destabilize concepts such as presence, identity, historical progress, epistemic reality, and the univocity of meaning. Did the postmodernists use a new list of speech acts? Not even if we take into account the style of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. The critique of philosophical systems built after a Hegelian pattern is one of the common jobs of postmodern philosophers.

At the same time, any subjective approach, like that used by Nietzsche in his theory of values, is considered at least a sign of post-modernity.

Some philosophers think that there is a secession war between modernity and post – modernity, a violent separation and a clash between tradition and the new age of post – modernism. Two of them are E. M. Cioran and Michel Henry. Both of them have described contemporary times as an age of barbarians. Cioran wrote in terms of a deep gap between us and modern tradition: “We no longer have a past, or rather, there is nothing left of the past which is our own, no longer a chosen country, no longer salvation, and no refuge in yore. Our prospects? Impossible to distinguish them, we are barbarians without a future.”⁴ Henry⁵ has described the secession like a fight between good and evil. The ideal aims of modernity, the universal and objective science, and the quest for truth led to the elimination of subjectivity and sensibility from culture and society. Although science isn’t bad in itself, it became a social and cultural monster because it promoted a way of life without humanism, without the values of subjectivity, and, therefore, without real life, namely, without art, religion, and ethic. In fact, science and technology have no ethic because they are objective.

Therefore, as a reaction against bad objectivity, some people think that the first move on the way to post-modernism belongs to Kant and is related to his “Copernican Revolution:” subjectivity was rediscovered, the knowing subject put in the spotlight, and the object dependent on the subject. Objectivity becomes, in Kantian terms, objectivity only in a weak sense, namely, transcendental subjectivity. Remembering Vatimo’s idea about weak thought, we could summarize that all the modern strong claims for objectivity and universalism were put into question by post-modernism.

Briefly speaking, the term “modern” is asymmetrical. After Latour, it is doubly asymmetrical because “it designates a break in the regular passage of time, and it designates a combat in which there are victors and vanquished.”⁶ I think we can also apply this idea to the word “post-modernism.” This means that we could speak about a translation and purification in the passage from modernity to post-modernism. But this isn’t the place for such a discussion about humans, things, and hybrids. Anyway, according to Latour, modernity is a double process, a *translation* on one hand, and a *purification* on the other. By translation we create new types of beings; by purification we create two distinct ontological zones: nature and culture.

⁴ Emil M. Cioran, *The Temptation to Exist*), transl. by Richard Howard (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 89.

⁵ See Michel Henry, *La Barbarie* (Paris: Grasset, 1987).

⁶ Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, translated by Catherine Porter (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993), p.10.

THE MODERN COSMOPOLIS

The general framework of understanding is given by the idea that right from the beginning, the struggle for social and political stability interacts with the quest for scientific and intellectual certainty and stability in the modern Cosmopolis.⁷

But, first of all, the modern Cosmopolis was a social project. The idea of a change in modern tradition, especially in society, politics, and economy was taken into account by Stephen Toulmin in his book, *Cosmopolis, The Hidden Agenda of Modernity*. His thesis is that at the beginning of modernity, in Descartes's times, the issues of certainty, rational consensus, and necessity weren't just some challenges for philosophy, but they were also responses to practical and historical challenges, primarily the need for a new social and political order after the Thirty Years War. The general crises (economic and social, intellectual and spiritual) in the early seventeenth century broke the public confidence in the older consensus and the Age of Modernity was in fact an effect of several different attempts to build a new one.

In the year 1965 Peter Drucker published the book *Landmarks for Tomorrow*, in which he expressed the belief that we had to differentiate between the sovereign national state in the age of modernity, understood as a political and economic unity formed in the seventeenth century, and the new type of transnational institutions who serve transnational aims. The loyalty for the national state was replaced with transnational interests. The national language as a sign of identity sometimes became an obstacle.

This social project has some deep philosophical roots. The Cartesian program leads philosophy into a dead end. In a Cartesian world, which first of all has its own intellectual goals, making clear our ideas and gaining certainty step by step by rational proof, rhetoric was subordinated to formal logic: "the validity and truth of *rational* arguments is independent of *who* presents them, to whom or in what context – such rhetorical questions can contribute nothing to the impartial establishment of human knowledge. For the first time since Aristotle, logical analysis was separated from, and elevated above, the study of rhetoric, discourse, and argumentation."⁸ The basic Cartesian distinction was the Mind-Body dichotomy, and its result was the distinction between rational freedom and causal necessity, between the world of human experience and the world of natural phenomena.

An interesting topic related to these changes in the world is the link between science and modernity. Was science the most fruitful creation of

⁷ Stephen Toulmin, *Cosmopolis, The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 92.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 75. Similar ideas, as Toulmin himself has mentioned, may be found in Dewey (1930), and Rorty (1979). Anyway, the question, "Why did educated people find the quest for certainty so attractive?" becomes in the end a Cartesian rhetorical statement.

modernity? What could we say about the reciprocal relations between science, technological development, and industrial revolution as a whole? Most of the thinkers of those times thought that the development of science was the sign of the new age of modernity. Few of them, like William Blake and Friedrich Schiller, cautioned about the “inhuman” nature of Newtonian science.

Regarding educational institutions it is important to mention that the culture of modern Cosmopolis was socially divided in two parts or two traditions. Therefore, the university training given to higher civil servants or to the administrative group had as background literature Latin language and philosophy, while the engineers were trained on the exact sciences.⁹

The Cartesian dichotomy interacted with the need for absolute claims. The modern Cosmopolis was thereby built on the basis of some such claims:

- the new European system of states was built on the absolute claims to nationhood;
- the new political balance of power was built on the claims to stability;
- the new system of social relations within each nation was built on the basis of a new horizontal social class structure;
- the new science was built on the absolute claims to certainty.

And all these steps were the result of a rational conduct to the aim of objectivity.

A NEW SUBJECTIVITY

The relationship between modernity and rationality seems to be without any doubt the hard core of any approach. But this new order of modern Cosmopolis based on rational control over nature and society, rules and hierarchy, had some unexpected consequences at the levels of social structure and personal subjectivity.

First of all, it is impossible to rationalize and control everything. For example, in modern society some groups cannot be controlled and administrated. The persons belonging to these groups are perceived as strangers. Bauman understands the stranger as a person who is unfamiliar and, because of this, he is seen as a threat. At the same time, another source of uncertainty is globalization, because we are not able to direct events while our affairs take place in a global market on a global scale.¹⁰ Secondly, our society translated from a society of producers to a society of consumers.

⁹ See C.P. Snow, *The Two Cultures* (New York: Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998).

¹⁰ See Zigmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence* (New York: Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1991).

This shift from modernity to post-modernity ensures more freedom for the individuals, but as consumers, not as citizens. They have the freedom to consume and to enjoy their lives. Thirdly, as I have mentioned above, the social quest for certainty transformed scientific knowledge into a pattern for all the other intellectual activities. The universal and objective truth became the main goal of science and this process led to a new type of subjectivity, which we will call subjectivity without sensibility. According to Henry, in our barbarian times, science tends to exclude or to minimize art, religion, and ethics.

Therefore, the modern Cosmopolis was built on the values of tolerance, reciprocity, and trust in a world of certainty and stability. But how do we react against the different threats, for example, when we meet a stranger or when we are the strangers? Individuals try to invent or to discover new ways of life and new organizational frameworks in order to reduce uncertainty and insecurity. In fact, we passed, in Bauman's terms, from a solid modernity to a liquid modernity.¹¹ Social forms of life and institutions don't have enough time to solidify and individuals need to switch from one choice to another. The result of this social metamorphosis is described by Bauman: "Insecurity affects us all, immersed as we all are in a fluid and unpredictable world of deregulation, flexibility, competitiveness, and endemic uncertainty, but each one of us suffers anxiety on our own, as a private problem, an outcome of personal failings and a challenge to our *savoir faire* and agility. We are called, as Ulrich Beck has acidly observed, to seek biographical solutions to more systematic contradictions: we look for individual salvation from shared troubles."¹²

On the other hand, as Antonio Gramsci has observed in a brilliant remark, "the crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear."¹³ There are many levels of this crisis, but the most important is that of Western culture as a totality. This interregnum, when modernity collapsed and post-modernity was the newcomer still unborn, was perceived and described by philosophers as a cultural crisis.

For example, Edmund Husserl, in his Vienna Lecture which was held in May 1935, known under the title, "The Crisis of European Humanity and Philosophy," wrote about the cultural roots of the European crisis in terms of the need for a humanistic reform after the fail of modern rationalistic culture: "The European nations are sick: Europe itself, it is said, is in crisis. We are by no means lacking something like nature doctors. Indeed, we are

¹¹ See Zigmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000).

¹² Zigmunt Baumann, *Seeking Safety in an Insecure World* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), p. 144.

¹³ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), p. 276.

practically inundated by a flood of naïve and excessive suggestions for reform. But why do the so richly developed humanistic disciplines fail to perform the service here that is so admirably performed by the natural sciences in their sphere?"¹⁴ For Husserl, the new cultural movement must be a reiteration of the European spiritual shape under the supervision of Humanities, because, without any doubt, "our surrounding world is a spiritual structure in us and in our historical life."¹⁵ We could also mention the approach proposed by Oswald Spengler in his controversial book *The Decline of the West*.¹⁶ Although I do not entirely share the content of Spengler's thesis, I think that post-modern subjectivity is due to a spiritual crisis and that its roots are in the quest for objectivity and certainty. Among other things, the cynical nature of modern civilization gave rise to a new attitude toward the uses of technologies.

MASS MEDIA AND THE NEW NEIGHBORHOOD

Lyotard noted in his book about the postmodern condition that the computer and new technologies have transformed knowledge into information. This means that knowledge has been reduced to its propositional dimension, and more specifically, to semantic information. Knowledge is seen as a final product split from the process by which the knowing subject obtained it. We can manage information as a useful thing with a market value, but all these technologies and commercial operations have no connection with the knower's feelings. As a result, we can build different language games, using multiplicity of meanings and the diversity of subjective understanding.

But another effect of new technologies is the so-called suspension of space. Using the computer and the virtual web we can be in connection with any person in real time. We can see his or her pictures, we can change impressions about an event, be in a state of neighborhood, without borders or other obstacles. We can learn almost anything about anyone from anywhere in the world. Bauman has tried to show how computers have produced the decline of traditional public space.¹⁷

Instead of a Cosmopolis and an order of national states, we have a network of people who are connected in a global village. It is easy to travel far and wide so that the planet becomes a common space for all its citizens. We live in a world in which time is accelerated and space is compressed.

¹⁴ Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Philosophy*, translation and introduction by David Carr, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), p. 269.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

¹⁶ See Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West. Form and Actuality*, trad. Charles Francis Atkinson (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1926).

¹⁷ See Zigmunt Bauman, 1998, *Globalization. The Human Consequences* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

But even under conditions providing for an apparently unlimited access to the Internet, the global village suffers from what is called the “digital divide”: different groups within a community or society don’t have equal access to new technologies. Moreover, we could also speak about a global digital divide on an international scale between developing and developed countries. If we take into account the content which is transmitted, then we can identify a second level digital divide between the producers and the consumers of content. So, the global village, far from being an open space, leads to further internal fragmentation.

According to Henry, in mass media we find the highest expression of barbarism, because the subjectivity and the sensibility are minimized, deleted, and replaced by technical procedures in the name of communicational efficiency. For example, television reduces life to an event. A suicide becomes an event for prime time news and journalists don’t pay any attention or respect to human despair or to human dignity. Television reduces all events to incoherent and insignificant facts.

Henry claims that mass media is the best example of mediocrity in social life. Mass media becomes in time the root of evil. Although initially mass media seemed to be an element of a rational and free society, it was used as a means for social control. Mass media has become, – let’s use Marcuse’s terms, without his ideological commitment, – a source of one-dimensional man. The question raised by Marcuse becomes an exercise in rhetoric: “Can we really distinguish between the mass media as instruments of information and entertainment, and as agents of manipulation and indoctrination?”¹⁸

A NEW AGENDA

Is there an antidote to all this? I will try to portray a modest and minimal way to improve, to overcome the bottlenecks. In the paragraph “From Leviathan to Lilliput,”¹⁹ Toulmin asserts that we need a new intellectual agenda that forces us to shift the focus from stability and system to adaptability and function. For instance, the sovereign nation state has led to inequality at the international level. We need to take into account the sub- and transnational levels and to consider seriously multinational institutions and procedures.

Things have already happened in this way in science. We passed from a disciplinary approach to subdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, and multidisciplinary perspectives. We have given up looking for a universal

¹⁸Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man. Studies in Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), p.8.

¹⁹Stephen Toulmin, *Cosmopolis, The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 192-3.

method and we make science in a new mode, opened to context and centered on the needs of society.²⁰

Undoubtedly, we are dealing with a change in all areas of society. But what do we have to do if we want to do the best? Toulmin notes some trends, philosophically supported, that could be seen as a revival of culture. Let's enumerate them:

- Return to timeliness. Philosophy worked traditionally with universal timeless questions but it's time to look at this strategy with skepticism. Even if our goal is to describe the order in Nature, it is a mistake to describe everything in terms of stability and hierarchy, using the pattern of cosmology. Biology, for example, suggests a discourse in terms of adaptation. Anyway, we don't deal only with abstract ideas, but also with flesh and blood human beings. As is done in clinical medicine, we must follow the "course" of a disease and to change the procedure.²¹

- Return to the oral tradition. In last decades, text was recontextualized after a long period of decontextualization. Modernity keeps the text as such, in its letter, and the moderns focused on the rationality and meaning of different parts of language, preferably, on the printed text. But the return to oral language means the revival of discourse, rhetoric, and communication. The philosophical movement from *propositions* to *utterances*, *speech*, and *forms of life* was made gradually by Wittgenstein, J. L. Austin, Gadamer, and Habermas. The logical validity remains important, but it doesn't capture anything from the linguistic interactions between subjects in the context of discourse. Moreover, the reasoning itself depends of its context.

- The return to the particular. Modern Science has imposed the idea that knowledge is equal to the discovery and the understanding of universal. A scientific experiment must be intersubjectively testable in order to be available. But the temptation to generalize was challenged, first of all, by moral philosophers. They discussed so-called case ethics and rediscovered the casuistical traditions. Life isn't something abstract, real processes aren't just effects of essences, and actions aren't entirely the results of purely rational decisions. Applied ethics is as important as moral philosophy.

-The return to the local. Modern philosophers thought that human nature was universal and that we didn't need to use our time for ethnographical or anthropological studies. The factual realities and the cultural differences don't matter in the search for the truth about the human person and peoples. But this view was overturned. Researchers are now taking the facts into account in their local context in trying to reconstruct the historical forms of life in their uniqueness.

²⁰ For a larger debate on this topic see Gibbons et al. (1994).

²¹ For this analogy see Stephen Toulmin, *Cosmopolis, The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 189.

In my view, one way to unify and to save all these returns or reversions is to rediscover nature and to overcome the modern dichotomy between nature and culture. The global village would be truly designed starting from the natural dimensions of our life on our planet. In this respect, the environmental movement belongs to post-modernity. As environmental patterns of thought, I could mention Barry Commoner's book *The Closing Circle* or the *Silent Spring* manifesto published by Rachel Carson, and the idea of a "deep ecology" launched by Arne Naess. If we judge positively and optimistically, then we could claim that the modern Cosmopolis could be really replaced in an ecologicistic way by a global village. As the environmentalists say, we are all in the same boat.

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CHAPTER VIII

HERMENEUTIC DIALOGUE AS SOCIAL VALUE: AN INQUIRY INTO “UNDISCOVERABLE OBJECTS OF THOUGHT”¹

ADRIAN COSTACHE

Abstract: In our globalized world as the locus of encounter between a multiplicity of cultures, religions, traditions, customs, and views of the world, hermeneutic dialogue is taken by a growing number of philosophers to be the social value par excellence. The reason for this, as Hans-Georg Gadamer argues, is that the dialogue that leads toward understanding another is ontologically constitutive to the human being and represents the foundation of our social and historical life. But is this really so? This study endeavors to offer an answer to this question through an analysis of the exchange between Gadamer and Jacques Derrida by showing first that Derrida’s interpellation and “critique” of philosophical hermeneutics is neither nonsensical, nor misguided or misdirected as it has been intimated in the literature, but, rather, goes straight to the heart of the matter. Also, when properly understood, the phenomenon of language makes dialogue as philosophical hermeneutics conceives it and the social value attached to that dialogue both undesirable and impossible.

Keywords: Dialogue, language, social values, hermeneutics, deconstruction.

It is enough to take a quick glance at the dominant public discourses of any social sphere to be convinced of the value associated with dialogue, of the valuable character of dialogue in our society.

Take, for example, the discourse on interdisciplinarity dominant in our academic institutions. What it comes down to and what it requires of every researcher is, in the end, an openness to dialogue with his or her peers from the other fields and a striving toward the constitution of a common language. In this sense Jacques Derrida remarks:

...I believe that no research is possible in a community (for example, academic) without the prior search for the minimal

¹ This paper was written within The Knowledge Based Society Project supported by the Sectorial Operational Programme Human Resources Development (SOP HRD), financed from the European Social Fund and by the Romanian Government under the contract number POSDRU ID 56815.

consensus and without discussion around this minimal consensus.²

In 1964 one of the most prominent religious institutions in the world, through the voice of Pope Paul VI, proclaimed:

Dialogue is demanded nowadays...is demanded by the dynamic course of action which is changing the face of modern society. It is demanded by the pluralism of society and by the maturity man has reached in this day and age.³

After the pronouncement of this encyclical, theologian Leonard Swidler set out to establish the basic rules that ought to guide any intra-, interreligious and interideological dialogue whatsoever. Swidler's canon has the respectable quality of being both common sensical (i.e., easily acceptable) and exhaustive.⁴ Along with the "ten commandments" of dialogue (ten, of course) Swidler also offers us a vast array of conversation starters between the different Christian confessions and with the other great religions and the most prominent ideologies of our times (e.g. Marxism).

In our institutions of education and in the sciences of education – the cradles of our societies and, respectively, their guiding light – dialogue is praised as the prominent means for the transmission of knowledge and the development of a harmonious personality well suited for active engagement in social life.

And, in international relations and cultural studies, the idea of dialogue, of cross-cultural conversation, is taken as the only means for facing and diverting the perils confronting humanity as a whole in our times.⁵ If we do not engage in dialogue with our neighbors, if we do not heed to their voicing of their discontent and listen to their claims, our local conflicts could easily escalate into a war whose consequences are hardly imaginable in the atomic age. The only philosopher that begs to differ – at least, that we know of – is Richard Rorty, who does not question the valuable character of dialogue *per se* but, rather, its necessity. For him, cross-cultural conversation between West and East and how to make it happen should not be a concern for us in the West, because the West has

²Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc*, trans. Alan Bass and Samuel Weber (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1988), pp. 2-3., 146.

³Pope Paul the 6th, "Ecclesiam Suam. No. 9, August 6," http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_06081964_ecclesiam_en.html.

⁴See Leonard Swidler, *After the Absolute. The Dialogical Future of Religious Reflection* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press: 1990), pp. 42-46.

⁵See Anindita Balslev (ed.), *Toward a Greater Human Solidarity. Options for a Plural World* (Kolkata: Dasgupta & Co. Ltd., 2005).

reached a cultural and civilizational peak that the East ought to try to achieve by following in the footsteps of the West and learning from it.⁶

All these discussions in few, albeit important, dimensions of our society attest in a convincing manner that dialogue is regarded as one of its highest values. But is it really a social value? A value in and for a society is one thing, a social value, another. An example *in extremis* shows us that there is a fine but nonetheless clear distinction here. Respect for the Arian race was definitely a value in German society in the 30s, but it was definitely not a social value, for it led to the extermination of a large part of it. It is our conviction that if one takes a closer look at what could be called the “dynamic genesis” of dialogue, understood simply as an exchange of ideas or views about a matter at hand between an “I” and a “Thou,” it becomes apparent that dialogue is not only a value in and for our society, but the social value *par excellence*.

From the point of view of what we call “dynamic genesis,” from the point of view of the factual circumstances in which the dialogue with an other is established, it is manifest that it presupposes as a precondition the existence of a third person. Dialogue, just like society, involves a third along with myself and the other, for only with the appearance of the third and through the third is the other seen as an other “I,” thus as a “Thou.” Otherwise, the other is perceived as a non-“I” whose claim to truth need not be heard and who can be treated as an object, as a means, but never as an end in itself. The third brings about and embodies the law that institutes and governs all possible and acceptable relations between human beings.

This is readily apparent. In a lonely world the first encounter with an Other is experienced either as the arrival of a long awaited guest or as the violation of an intruder. The Other I love or hate; I befriend or attack as foe; I cherish or exploit for my own advantage. And I do all these “silently,” without ever wanting or trying to understand him or her.

Only with the third person, the neutral, indifferent Other, who comes after the long awaited one has arrived or after the familiarity of my world has been violated, does the necessity to understand the Other, to engage him or her in dialogue, to listen to his or her claim to truth and to expose mine appear. Otherwise it is unnecessary.

This is the greatest lesson we have been taught by Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*. But it is also one of the great lessons of psychoanalysis.

Re-read Defoe and you will see that so long as Robinson is alone with Friday on the island, there is no dialogue taking place. Friday is told what to do and how to behave; he is told how to think and what are the standards with which to judge his deeds. He is told over and over again that he is a savage and is engaged in a process of transformation, a becoming, that will annul everything that he has been, that is, to annul himself. The moth

⁶ See Anindita Balslev, *Cultural Otherness. Correspondence with Richard Rorty* (New York & London: Oxford University Press, 1999), p.19.

becomes a butterfly nimble and gentle, thus well suited for the company of gentleman, but only at the price of its annihilation.

Friday is never given by the more powerful (because armed) Robinson the chance to state his claim to truth, to say what he thinks and feels, to express his views about Robinson's customs. He is taken as an entity ready-to-hand that is to be instructed ("educated") so as to fulfill Robinson's desire for company.

Dialogue first occurs on the island only with the arrival of the Spaniard – Robinson's equal, more or less, for which reason he is more or less indifferent to him – and with the planning for leaving that God-forsaken place disguised as a tropical paradise.

But we can go even further with our dynamic genesis of dialogue taking a step back from the situation of an I in a lonely world to the very moment the ego enters the world for the first time. This is the great lesson of psychoanalysis.

As Melanie Klein showed, the child's becoming a social being by yielding to the injunctions of the superego (the instance of social order *per se*) and the development of his or her ability to speak (to employ sounds made by his or her body as words) mark the same stage of his or her development – the passing from the paranoid-schizoid to the depressive position and the formation of the oedipal complex. And this takes place only through the separation of the father's body from the mother's – that is, through splitting the Other in half and thus by the appearance in the child's world of a second Other, a third.

In view of all these, we take it we have established with a certain level of conviction that dialogue is the social value *par excellence*. When seen at the same time and through the same conditions, dialogue and society might very well be co-originary. Coming into being at the same time, one might be the form or give the law of the other: there's no society but through dialogue, or there can be no dialogue outside certain sociality.

Thus, along with Derrida we could say that nothing is truly good for a society, for any community whatsoever, but the good will to understand the other, to understand one another at play as a fundamental precondition every time someone begins a dialogue. This good will, taken as a "commitment to the desire for consensus in understanding" is "not just one of the axioms of ethics. It is the point where ethics begins for any community of speakers, even regulating the phenomena of disagreement and misunderstanding."⁷

But does this axiom refer to something real? Is dialogue as exchange of views about a matter at hand between an "I" and a "Thou" real, if not in the strong philosophical sense of *Realität* at least as *Wirklichkeit*? Or is it,

⁷Diane Mitchelfelder and Richard E. Palmer, eds., *Dialogue and Deconstruction. The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1989), p. 52.

as Derrida puts it, an “unfindable object of thought,”⁸ a mere illusion of reason sprung forth in the shadows of society? (Which would explain their com-possibility and the appearance of their co-originary...)

Throughout the history of philosophy the idea of dialogue, the possibility of dialogue and its reality, has been taken as the most evident thing in the world, even as self-evident. That is why, from Plato to Gadamer, philosophy is usually defined as the soul’s dialogue with itself.

It goes to Derrida’s credit to have questioned for the first time the evidence of dialogue for Western thought. And he did it during his first ever encounter with Gadamer in Paris in 1981. The encounter was a carefully planned event, being regarded from the very beginning by the organizers from the Goethe Institute as a context for a head-on confrontation between the two major philosophical orientations of the times: hermeneutics and deconstruction.

In good faith and animated by the good will to understand the other, Gadamer prepared a talk on text and interpretation marking explicitly several cues that would facilitate the dialogue with Derrida.⁹ Derrida did nothing of the sort. He delivered a speech on signatures in Nietzsche¹⁰ and, when it came to the discussions part, he addressed Gadamer three questions that seemed unrelated to what he said.¹¹ That is why the first gesture of most interpreters of the whole affair was either to question Derrida’s seriousness or to project behind his words a hidden strategy meant to put in question dialogue on ethical grounds. Is dialogue to be searched for? Isn’t it an expression of the will to power, and thus a means of domination?

We have seen in the first paragraph quoted in this paper that for the French philosopher, too, dialogue is to be sought after, that it has a social value. We do not have the space to show here that Derrida’s questions are not to be taken as mere frivolities. We did it elsewhere, convincingly, we hope. What we would like to do is, rather, to show that the French philosopher is actually right in describing dialogue as an “unfindable object of thought” by reconstructing (but not necessarily rehearsing) his investigation into the problematics of language pursued in *Of Grammatology* and *Dissemination*. The question of language is a key problem for any hermeneutic project whatsoever. On the terrain of language, on the question of the reality, the unreality of dialogue is decided.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

⁹See Hans-Georg Gadamer, “Text and Interpretation” in Diane Mitchelfelder and Richard Palmer, eds., *Dialogue and Deconstruction. The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter*, pp. 21-51.

¹⁰See Jacques Derrida, “Interpreting Signatures (Nietzsche/Heidegger): Two Questions” in Diane Mitchelfelder and Richard Palmer, eds., *Dialogue and Deconstruction. The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter*, pp.58-71.

¹¹Jacques Derrida, “Three Questions to Hans-Georg Gadamer” in Diane Mitchelfelder and Richard Palmer, eds., *Dialogue and Deconstruction. The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter*, pp. 52-54.

Whereas in his philosophical hermeneutics Gadamer approaches language from a diachronic point of view, trying to describe the movement of its constitution and the process whereby it stocks within itself human experience becoming thus a “view of the world,” Derrida approaches it in strictly synchronic terms. For him, too, language is a “view of the world,” but *as a system of differences subjected to an arbitrary bonding*.

As Ferdinand de Saussure has shown, formally, language is a system of signs taken as the union of an acoustic image (*signifier*) and a mental representation (*signified*) bonded together simply because each differs from all the other acoustic images and mental representations possible. For example, what makes “five” an English word is that the sequence of sounds “f-i-v-e” constituting it is different from all the other sequences of sounds that can be uttered in English and that it sends to the determinate idea “5.”

In *Course in General Linguistics* Saussure writes:

Psychologically our thought – apart from its expression in words – is only a shapeless and indistinct mass. Philosophers and linguists have always agreed in recognizing that without the help of signs we would be unable to make a clear-cut, consistent distinction between two ideas. [...] The characteristic role of language with respect to thought is not to create a material phonetic means for expressing ideas but to serve as a link between thought and sound, under conditions that of necessity bring about the reciprocal delimitation of units.¹²

But if language is constituted as a system of arbitrary signs, the fundamental principle governing it being the principle of differentiation, inasmuch as language is a *system of differences without positive terms* then every linguistic sign is forced to carry within itself traces of all the other signs of the language to which it belongs. For example, sending to the idea “5” the word “five” sends also to “4” and “6” as those natural numbers preceding and, respectively, following it, the numbers that make it possible and, respectively, those made possible by it; “5” appears through the addition of a unit to “4” and serves to the constitution of “6” through the addition of a unit to it.

Gadamer obviously knew something of this when in *Truth and Method* he spoke about a “center of language” and its “speculative nature”:

...every word breaks forth as if from a center and is related to a whole, through which alone it is a word. Every word causes the

¹²Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, ed. Charles Bally, Albert Sechehaye, and Albert Riedlinger, trans. Wade Baskin (New York, Toronto & London: McGraw Hill, 1998), pp. 112-113.

whole of the language to which it belongs to resonate and the whole world-view that underlies it to appear.¹³

What neither Gadamer nor Saussure knew, but should have known, for it is one step away from these premises, is that by carrying within itself the traces of all the other signs of the language to which it belongs, every sign “is” ontologically the sign of something that is not given in language, of another order *than* language and, in general, of something that can never be present as such.

The “unmotivatedness” of the sign requires a synthesis in which the *completely other* is announced as such – without any simplicity, and identity, any semblance or continuity – within what is not.¹⁴ (italics are mine)

In truth, the work of the principle of differentiation in language can be carried on to infinity. The signifiers can be forever differentiating themselves from all the other signifiers just like the signifieds can. This is the reason why the final term of the sequence of signifiers and, respectively, signifieds serving as reference for the differentiation of the antepenultimate and all the others before it is, in fact, itself always already antepenultimate.

Derrida calls “différance” – with an “a” (not the usual “e”) written but never read or pronounced¹⁵ – this “completely other” announcing itself in language only to ceaselessly withhold its presence from it and from the present. As soon as it makes its trace seen, this *différance* renders the idea of dialogue *de facto* impossible. It is easy to see that insomuch as the possibility of meaning is tied to the ceaseless deferral of its full presence from itself brought along by the “completely other” inhabiting language, the “Thou” expressing itself in and through language will itself be forced to forever become an other. The constant deferral of the full presence of meaning from itself will engage also a deferral of the “Thou” speaking to the “I,” obviously, just as it defers the presence of the “I” to the “Thou.”

Between parentheses, we should note that if it is true, as the hermeneutic philosophies of Heidegger, Gadamer, and Ricoeur contend, that language either as *Rede*, *Gesprach*, or narrative is an ontological condition of human existence, then we ought to say that *différance* as the “completely other” inhabiting language suspends not only the presence of the “I” and the “Thou” but also their *stable identity* as such. Through the play of *différance*

¹³ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (London & New York: Continuum, 2004), p. 454.

¹⁴ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), p.47.

¹⁵ See Jacques Derrida, “Différance” in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp.1-27.

the “I” and the “Thou” become many, “I” and “Thou” labeling multiplicities.

Thus, a dialogue aimed at understanding an other will not be an actual dialogue with the other as such, but with an other that *has been*. For as soon as the other has expressed his or her position, he or she ceases to be who he or she was and becomes an other. In this sense the possibly other *than* myself whom I engaged in dialogue becomes a mere projection of my endeavor to understand an other *as* myself.

Despite how complicated it may sound what is referred to here is something quite simple. Anyone familiar with how a therapeutic session goes knows very well that simply by discussing what he or she thinks and feels, by putting his or her mental state into words, the patient gains a certain relief, this constituting also the first step of the cure. What we are actually witnessing here is a movement of becoming an other rendered possible by the fact that through its very expression, the expressed meaning brings to light other meanings and other ways of being the patient could assume.

But *différance* puts the possibility in question not only of what might we call its “I” – “Thou” axis, but also on that of the “*Sache*,” the matter at hand, or the theme around which any dialogue whatsoever revolves. In the hermeneutic tradition the possibility of the “*Sache*” has always been taken for granted. Philosophical hermeneutics in particular go so far as to even define dialogue in terms of it. Above, we were actually following Gadamer closely in defining dialogue as “an exchange of ideas or views about a matter at hand between an “I” and a “Thou.”

Insomuch as we assume the play of *différance* in language, though, the possibility of the *Sache* becomes problematic. For this play, in a paradoxical manner, makes language at the same time *rich* and *poor* in meaning. It is *rich* for the reason that every signifier will send meaning to the idea signified *plus* all the other ideas on which the first depends *plus* the trace of the “completely other” of *différance*. And *poor* for, insomuch as it makes any idea signified dependent on others, this “completely other” indirectly signified represents basically a depletion of the fullness of meaning. By being *rich* and *poor* in meaning, though, language is endowed with a “certain inexhaustibility”¹⁶ transcending the possibilities of the concept of horizon. The play of *différance* makes us say both more *and* less than we want to say each time we open our mouths or put pen to paper, and what is actually said exceeds the boundaries of the horizon of meaning of what could have been said. The “completely other” of *différance* pierces through the horizon that might encircle any meaning uttered and thus it displaces its limits.

In this manner the play of *différance* prevents the appearance of a matter at hand in any dialogue and does not let any theme become thematic.

¹⁶Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1981), p. 250.

But insomuch as no dialogue gravitates toward one matter at hand, this does not mean that it gravitates toward two or any other determinate number. The play of *différance* actually transforms the to and fro movement of question and answer in a chaotic movement going in an indefinite number of directions at once.

Now, this is again complicated talk for designating something quite common. Many are the cases when we start talking with someone about one thing, end up talking about something else, after having made quite a few digressions, and the only thing we recall afterward is how our interlocutor pronounces certain words or his or her smile. Here we find the play of *différance* with its exceeding of intentionality and the displacement of the horizon of meaning at its finest.

Now we can understand that, as *Realität*, the reality of dialogue is actually out of the question. For, as we have seen, there can never be a true exchange between the “I” and the “Thou,” because each is forever becoming an other in the process. What takes place in our speaking to one another is really a simulacrum of exchange. And such a simulacrum never takes place around a matter at hand for the flow of uttered words does not go in the direction of a dominant meaning but in all directions possible.

But neither is the reality of dialogue as *Wirklichkeit* very real. If a conversation happens to have any effects on the partners this is only by accident. For this reason, from the point of view of the expectations leading them to engage in conversation, their impact can only be very low, if not completely insignificant.

The disparaging of the power of dialogue for the development of human relations and social life and the introduction of chance in understanding, though, should not be taken as a nihilist gesture. We are not proclaiming here that all is good for nothing, and we are not advocating muteness. On the contrary, we are proclaiming life and advocating the necessity of reconstructing the idea of dialogue in other terms, ones that would increase its efficacy and make it more real (*Wirklich*). In our opinion, the axioms of this reconstruction can be found, above all, in Gilles Deleuze’s thought, but their being put to work presupposes giving up quite a few of our philosophical obsessions.

If we would like our dialogues to matter, to change something in ourselves and others, and eventually to change our world, first of all, we will have to give up our obsession with the question of being, to renounce any philosophy of being altogether in favor of a philosophy of multiplicity, of the “and.” We will have to learn how to think not in terms of what “is” this or that, and not out of the wonder that there “is” something rather than nothing, but in terms of *and* this *and* that *and* that *and*...

Such a metaphysics of the “and” will lead us to the realization that the speaking subject and the “I” that engages a “Thou” in dialogue (just like the “Thou”) is not the substratum of the world, respectively, a transcendental condition of possibility. Rather, the speaking subject is a collective assemblage of enunciation through whose speech a multiplicity of order-

words is expressed, and the “I,” the intersection of various series of singularities and its actualization according to a rule. We “are” collections of singularities – a smile, a scar, a gesture, a belief or another, this or that emotion, several thoughts...

And, second of all, we will have to stop attributing language and discourse (either written or spoken) any privilege. We will have to finally understand that although the flow of words is the only one to have meaning, it has just as much or as little sense as any other flow. The sense of the flow of sound taking the form of music or of a howl is not inferior to that of a philosophical text or a poem. Each is just a flow like any other; it pushes us toward one direction or another.

When we have learned to give up these philosophical obsessions, we arrive at the only rule of dialogue, the only axiom of the “ethics of discussion” (Derrida): do everything in your power to touch and join the other; do everything possible so that the flow of your words intersects and gets interconnected with the other’s, or with the flow of his or her gestures, or song, or dance... whichever. Never interpret, analyze, or criticize what the other says. Interpretation never led anyone anywhere. Rather, try to establish points of communication so that something comes to pass between you, something that changes both and leads to the construction of a “me-you.” The goal is to create other flows from those given, to create something new.

As Deleuze puts it:

This could be what a conversation is – simply the outline of a becoming. The wasp and the orchid provide the example. The orchid seems to form a wasp image, but in fact there is a wasp-becoming of the orchid, and an orchid-becoming of the wasp, a double capture since ‘what’ each becomes changes no less than that ‘which becomes.’ The wasp becomes part of the orchid’s reproductive apparatus at the same time as the orchid becomes the sexual organ of the wasp. One and the same becoming, a single block of becoming, or, as Rémy Chauvin says, an ‘a-parallel evolution of two beings who have nothing whatsoever to do with one another.’¹⁷

The precise contours of this new form of dialogue are yet to be traced, but from its axioms, it announces itself to be more real and more fruitful than the other.

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¹⁷ Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), pp.2-3.

CHAPTER IX

RATIONALITY AS A HUMAN VALUE

LAVINIA MARIN

Abstract: Rationality is not a value in itself but it can be used in contexts where a debate among opposing values or cultures takes place, thus making it valuable in an instrumental way. In order for rationality to work as a mediator in discussions about conflicting values we have to assume a Scanlonian contractualist framework and also a few other virtues of thought such as as maturity, imagination, sympathy, and culture.

Keywords: rationality, values, contractualism, cultural difference, objectivity, autonomy, instrumental, intrinsic

The modern times in which we live have generated several new problems, some of them being caused by the unprecedented situation of the culturally mixed environment in which we all have come to live. Nowadays, more than ever before, people of different cultures and religions live together in big cities and are forced to interact with the “strangeness” of others’ cultural backgrounds on a daily basis. The problems arise when the education one has received doesn’t provide enough basis for this interaction; this problem is not only a social one – namely how are we to behave in culturally mixed environments – but it’s also a philosophical one because it makes people reevaluate their own values and attitudes toward values.

A person can be quite neutral about his or her values in a culturally homogenous environment, yet when confronted with shockingly different values, one might develop unexpected behaviors, such as violence, aggression, self-doubt, and feelings of social inadequacy. The internalization of the statement that there are different people out there who don’t believe the same things as oneself, and that maybe they are not necessarily wrong while oneself is not wrong either, requires a certain philosophical background and preparation. Most people are not prepared philosophically to argue for their values, to concede when necessary, to defend those values, to negotiate and accept compromises. Most people still live in the paradigm of the “one and only truth, my truth” while thinking that everybody else is dead wrong. How can philosophy be of help in these cases? How are we to use philosophical thought as a tool to reconcile these differences and make possible a self-fulfilled life among strangers?

As Donald Davidson pointed out, we all think our values are objective:

In our unguarded moments we all tend to be objectivists about values. We see ourselves as arguing with others who maintain values opposed to ours. In the heat of dispute it does not seem

that we are expressing attitudes with which our opponents are at liberty to differ, nor do we think we are merely trying to bring them to share our goals. We are convinced that we are right and they are wrong, not just in the sense that our values are better than theirs, or more enlightened, but that we are objectively correct and they are not. We assume, and assert, that our judgments of what is good, right, or just are true, and that those who disagree with us hold false views (Donald Davidson, *The Objectivity of Values, Problems of Rationality*).

When individuals feel isolated inside multicultural communities, their response is either the diminishing of trust in one's own values or the emerging need to defend one's values publicly and perhaps to perform solitary acts of fanaticism.

On the other hand, when a large homogenous community contains a few minorities that require respect and a voice in the community, the majority feels threatened by this diversity and feels the need to repress these manifestations, even though nothing illegal has happened. Such were the cases in Romania when the gay community wanted to be seen and heard through at its annual "gay pride" marches – immediately a reaction appeared from the religious orthodox community who wanted to assert its values at the same time, on the same day, and in the same place, by another march, one of Christian pride. Two marches took place in the same time and the situation almost escalated to a riot. Why did the majority feel threatened by this display of different values and why did it feel the need to assert its presence, which was otherwise well expressed in everyday life? The most obvious answer would be that people can't be rational about their own values when they feel threatened, even though in other areas of life they are perfectly rational. Yet I would like to propose the mediation of rationality in exactly such cases of cultural difference and conflicting values.

How are we supposed to talk in public about our own values? How are we to negotiate our values in a multicultural society? It all depends on what type of values are we discussing: communitarian values lead to a necessary dialogue between communities, while personal values lead to the dialogue between the community and the individual or between different individuals inside the community framework. We need to have this dialogue because we want meaningful lives and such lives are impossible without being integrated socially. We don't want to be left out, alone with our values; we want to share them with a community or with a few peers, at least.

A few examples of conflicting values are the following: traditionalism vs modernity, patriotism vs cosmopolitanism, hierarchy vs equality, individualism vs solidarity, risk-taking vs safety, health vs. pleasure.

I am not going to enter into the metaphysics of values here but in general it is accepted that there are two types of values: intrinsic values and instrumental ones. Instrumental values are those which are good because

they serve a higher purpose which is good in itself, for example health is valuable because it serves and prolongs human life, which is valuable in itself. However, this distinction isn't as clear-cut as we would want it; there are people for whom instrumental values become intrinsic values, health being again the suitable example.

When people choose their values there are a few possible attitudes that I will outline here:

- We can be irrational when choosing our values yet defend them in a rational manner.
- We can be rational about our values yet be fanatic about them and refuse any type of dialogue.

Most of the time, these types of attitudes, and not necessarily the values in themselves, generate the responses we get from the other participants in the dialogue.

RATIONALITY AND VALUES

Wittgenstein once said in the *Tractatus* that goodness, value, or meaning are not to be found in the world; therefore his conclusion was that one shouldn't talk about such things, as it was a pointless endeavor.

The tendency of all men who ever tried to write or talk Ethics or Religion was to run against the boundaries of language (Wittgenstein, *Lecture on Ethics*, 1929).

Good is outside the space of facts (Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, p. 3).

Wittgenstein's point here was that one cannot argue rationally for certain values, as rationality has a constraining effect. If there were a mathematical proof of what is beautiful and, following this proof, most of what we think as beautiful would be considered ugly, would we give up our aesthetic judgment? Would we start thinking that what was once beautiful is now ugly for certain? Of course not, we would still perceive beauty in spite of our own rationality or judgment.

Yet here comes the problem we need to face: in our social dialogue in the multicultural society we need to talk rationally about values; we can't have a public discourse that is irrational when we negotiate values. Yet philosophically speaking we also know that we shouldn't talk about values at all, as there is nothing to say, as Wittgenstein warned us. So how are we to talk about something about which we should keep silent? The solution I propose is to use rationality not in order to say what values are, but rather to say how we should behave in a value-ridden context. Rationality can be

used as a means to reach social consensus and set boundaries between the public and private display of value allegiance.

The rights that occur from values are determined partially by how we see values, as either objective or subjective, and also by the attitudes people have toward them: either autonomous or dependent. If our values are objective, are we entitled to impose them upon others? I personally think that truth doesn't need eloquent lawyers, as it makes a case for itself. What we can do effectively is just create the conditions necessary for people to see the true values more clearly. However, if we tried to impose them dogmatically, their objectivity would become futile. If, on the other hand, our values are subjective and we acknowledge this, we can't impose them on anyone, but we can argue that, although they are subjective, the world would be a better place if more people would adopt them. If we chose our values by an autonomous process of thinking, it doesn't make any sense to impose them dogmatically to someone else because the autonomy of the others would be breached.

However, it is the duty of every rational person to manifest a certain critical detachment toward one's own values because, in order to rationally talk about values, one has to keep in mind that none of the interlocutors has chosen his/her values completely autonomously. Up to a point in our lives, our values were imposed upon us. So neither interlocutor can argue for the objectivity of one's values. If one assumes subjectivity on the interlocutor's part, one has to assume subjectivity for oneself as well. And if one assumes objectivity about one's values, one has to concede the same to the opponent. Only if this condition is fulfilled can we have a genuine dialogue about values.

Sometimes, even if we share the same values as our own community, the difference in attitudes toward them can make us strangers inside the same community: we can see those values as instrumental and not final, we can choose other means to serve or respect those values, we can interpret those values to mean something different than the majority ruled. Every value in the world can generate fanaticism, as the cause is not in the value itself, but in the attitude toward it. In order to have fanaticism, one would have to think that the value is intrinsic, that there is only one correct interpretation of it and only one way of serving or respecting that value, everything else being blasphemy and defilement.

Being rational about one's own values is very hard because, as Francis Bacon shows, rationality has the tendency to overlook arguments against its point and give preference to favorable arguments. Up to a point, rationality can be misguided by values, but only if we never engage in a dialogue about values. In such a dialogue the errors we make can be easily pointed out by an outside observer.

The human understanding when it has once adopted an opinion draws all things else to support and agree with it. And though there be a greater number and weight of instances to be found on

the other side, yet these it either neglects and despises, or else by some distinction sets aside and rejects, in order that by this great and pernicious predetermination the authority of its former conclusion may remain inviolate (Francis Bacon).

The requirement for any rational person would be, then, to be critical and open to discussion about one's values and yet remain loyal to them – a very hard task. Rationality can be classified in many ways but, following the work of Max Weber, we notice that rationality falls in almost the same categories as value does: we have instrumental rationality (*zweckrational*), a sort of technocratic thinking related to the means used to attain certain ends, and intrinsic rationality (*Wertrational*) which is value or belief-oriented.

So, how can we use rationality when discussing values? One obvious proposal would be to use it in order to check for internal consistency of value sets, but this would be a misuse of rationality, because on one hand it does too little and, on the other hand, as Simon Blackburn points out, internal coherence doesn't give us much to work with as there may be an infinite number of internally coherent systems of values.

We can appeal as well to other virtues of thought, such as maturity, imagination, sympathy, culture. An immature, unimaginative, unsympathetic, and uncultivated ethic might be quite coherent, in the way that the Decalogue is quite coherent. But that does not make it the last word (Simon Blackburn, *Ruling Passions*).

We can't argue for or against a certain set of values, but we can argue for rational behavior while holding a certain set of values. We don't want just the "right values," we need to be rational about them. That is to be moderate, mature, sympathetic, and imaginative about them. All these are rational qualities and we need them in order not to fall into the traps of fanaticism or intolerance. If one adopts a rational attitude toward one's values in the sense outlined by Blackburn, one should be safe from fanaticism, no matter what values one holds.

Another way of using rationality to rule in cases concerning opposing values would be to use Scanlon's contractualism, which presupposes a mutual recognition between rational agents. What Scanlon's contractualism proposes is "a way of living with others which is typified by an ideal of mutual recognition between rational agents, where mutual recognition demands that moral agents acknowledge the value of human life and respond to this value in the right ways." (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/T._M._Scanlon)

There are a few major forms of contractualism and Scanlon's has its distinct place among them. First I will make a few distinctions and show

how contractualism fits in but also distinguishes from the main forms of similar political thought.

Contractarianism appeared first in Hobbes' writings, and the main idea was based on mutual self-interest. People were agreeing to cooperate because it was mutually advantageous for all the selfish subjects involved in it. Contractualism, however, is based on the equal moral status of each person involved, because the persons are seen as autonomous agents, each one with one's own rationality and purposes.

According to contractualism, morality consists in what would result if we were to make binding agreements from a point of view that respects our equal moral importance as rational autonomous agents (Ashford, Elizabeth and Mulgan, Tim, "Contractualism," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*).

There are at least three main types of contractualism: Kantian, Rawlsian, and Scanlonian, and all of them presuppose a rational agent that seeks to pursue one's interests in ways that are justifiable to other agents who have different interests in mind.

In the Kantian type, the contractualist establishes certain principles with which all rational agents would agree, while the Scanlonian contractualist seeks principles that that no one can reasonably reject, rather than principles all rational people would agree to. Rawls' contractualism is first of all a political one rather than an ethical one (as it is the case with Scanlon's) and second, in following Kant's work, also seeks principles that all rational agents would agree to.

Scanlon, by contrast, invokes no veil of ignorance. I know my own circumstances. It is not self-interest combined with ignorance of self that makes me take account of everyone's interests, but rather my concern to justify myself to everyone else (Ashford, Elizabeth and Mulgan, Tim, "Contractualism," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*).

By not using the veil of ignorance and assuming from the start the known situation of the moral subject, Scanlon insures that the rational agents can in fact argue for particular sets of values that would have been unthinkable behind the veil of ignorance, and this makes it very useful in arguing real life positions. Also, by ensuring that the consensus reached concerns principles that no one would reasonably reject, Scanlon's contractualism has another advantage, as it aggregates the opinions faster because people will focus on where they all agree rather than on what separates them. Not using idealised rational agents makes this type of contractualism more suitable for real life situations also.

What about Utilitarianism? Is contractualism a better framework for a rational dialogue than Utilitarianism? First of all, one has to notice that

contractualism doesn't apply to all of morality (unlike Utilitarianism) but only to the public sphere of it, in the realm of what we owe to each other. Secondly, by not seeing the well-being of persons as a basic moral concept, contractualism makes room for other types of values and personal preferences that Utilitarianism couldn't. Utilitarianism supposes an underlying set of moral values with happiness, pleasure, or well-being among them, and this makes it unsuitable as a framework for discussions when other types of values are involved, values that cannot be reduced to well-being or that even oppose it.

Instead of lumping everyone together and allowing one person's rights to be trampled to provide greater aggregate benefits to others, contractualism recognises that each of us has a unique life to live. The contractualist objection to utilitarianism is that it does not guarantee principles that benefit each individually, and that command each person's free assent (Ashford, Elizabeth and Mulgan, Tim, "Contractualism," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*).

By considering the principles that no one could reasonably reject, Scanlon's contractualism facilitates the finding of common grounds between subjects with extremely different views and values and, while doing that, it doesn't suppose that there is one unique rational attitude toward value, but that there have to be certain principles that all people adhere to if they want to live together. When objecting to someone else's principles the subject has to take into consideration not only the burden it imposes on itself, but also how it affects others in the same community: if strangers have to bear a greater burden than I do, although my inherent egoism tells me to pursue the principle benefiting me the most, the rational principles to which we all agree tell me to yield.

An act is wrong if its performance under the circumstances would be disallowed by any set of principles for the general regulation of behavior that no one could reasonably reject as a basis for informed, unforced, general agreement (Scanlon 1998, p. 153).

In Scanlon's contractualism, the main moral predicate is "wrong" while the "right" is defined as the absence of wrong. No wrong act can be justified to others and this is what all wrong acts have in common. We might not all agree on what we want to happen to ourselves but a common agreement on what we don't want to happen can be reached.

We should expect enlightened values – the reasons we would have for valuing and acting if we had all the (non-evaluative) facts straight – to converge; we should expect people who are

enlightened and fully understand one another to agree on their basic values” (Donald Davidson, *Problems of Rationality*).

Following Davidson’s account of rationality, I think we can all agree that rationality may be used as a universal language common to all sets of values and as a mediation tool.

CASE STUDIES

Even inside the same culture there can be diverging opinions concerning the same set of values to which everyone adheres. Let’s take the case of the smoking ban imposed by the state upon its citizens. The main reason for doing this lies in seeing human health as an intrinsic value. When the State tells people not to smoke, not to eat junk food, or to exercise more, the State actually tells them that they should pursue certain purposes. However, people have the right to disagree with the State and they can bring arguments against these kinds of policies.

Even if we also believe that health is a value worth pursuing, we might think of it as an instrumental value, not an intrinsic one, like the instrument for a happy life. If a life of smoking and eating junk food makes me happier and more fulfilled, the State has no case against me. I can argue rationally that for me this is a better life even if shorter.

How can the State argue in a contractualist way against my smoking? If the State says: “smoking kills you,” then I can reply: “I know this, but the quality of life I lead until death will be much improved because I will be much happier.” And then the State will have to yield.

However, if the state says: “your smoking kills others (by second-hand smoke)” – then I have no possible rational argument to defeat this (unless I am to deny the premise).

In the case of eating junk food and exercising, the State has no right to tell me what to do because it’s telling me how I am to be rational about my life and that an instrumental value should be an intrinsic one. The State is actually telling me that my rationality about health should be *Wertrational* (value-oriented) *and not instrumental*, but it has no way of proving that.

A second case study concerns the recent controversy regarding the wearing of the Islamic veil in France, or *L'affaire du Voile*, as it was called. This is a typical cross-cultural conflict about values, with both parties involved coming from different cultures with different values. Below is a summary of the main arguments for and against the scarf:

For the scarf	Against the scarf
“Respectability” and “discretion.”	Submission to men
Avoidance of violence	Not a free choice/ public pressure
Muslim identity	Laïcité arguments

The people who argued for the scarf had the following arguments:

a) The argument of the “respectability” and “discretion.” This was a typical example of how an attribute such as “respectable” has different meanings in different communities. For the Islamic community, a girl showing her hair was seen as offering herself, being “easy” and promiscuous. By wearing the veil, the girls stated their virtue and unavailability to strangers.

b) Avoidance of violence. In some neighborhoods there were cases of unveiled women being targeted by attacks of Muslim men.

c) Muslim identity. By wearing the veil, the girls clearly differentiated themselves from the local Western people and stated their cultural background in an obvious way.

The motivations of those opposed to allowing hijabs to be worn in schools:

a) The feminist arguments stated that the wearing of the veil symbolized women’s submission to men as the wearing of the hijab was not by free choice but rather imposed by family and by the social pressure.

b) Another argument stated that France is a laic state and the wearing religious clothes in schools infringes upon this constitutional principle.

How are we to rationally evaluate these arguments presupposing a Scanlonian contractualism? The arguments for wearing the veil are all culturally embedded; they infer that because the Islamic culture is such and such and we cannot change it, we have to abide by it.

a) The argument of the “respectability” and “discretion” advances prejudices. As in Eastern culture “easy” women are judged by their clothes, the same thing happens in Islamic culture to women, just that there are different types of clothes and opposite judgments. Instead of challenging these prejudices, this argument states that we should live by them.

b) The argument against the violence makes a point: who would want to get hurt? But then again, the practice of people hurting unveiled women shouldn’t be accepted, because it’s something illegal. It shouldn’t count in the general norm just as the risk of crime or theft shouldn’t count – we don’t assume theft when we make laws, we fight against it. If we lived in a country ruled by a mob and the general practice was to pay protection fees to them, this would make it rational to follow this rule in a practical or instrumental way, but not in a universally justifiable way.

c) The identity argument. If the identity of Islam were given by the practice to wrap women in veils and only by this practice alone, then this argument would make sense. However, we all know that Islam is much more than this. Also Western Christian identity for a long time accepted the submission of women and treating them as inferior, forbidding them to work or to get an education. The Western Christian world has actually given up this practice without losing its identity. Identities change over time

and this should be encouraged if these identities involve the unfair treatment of other human beings.

All three arguments so far show a non-critical attitude by Muslims toward their own values. The arguments against wearing the veil are also of cultural origin to some extent.

d) The submission to men. If the law had stated that men should dress in a certain way also, it wouldn't have been a submission to men anymore. If the law that forces women to wear the veil had been passed by women would it have been just then?

e) The argument stating that women don't want to wear the veil but are forced to do so. We need sociological studies to prove that women would not actually want to wear the veil if they had a choice. But if this is true, then we have found the principle that no one could reasonably reject: no culture should make its citizens do something they don't want to do. John Stuart Mill argues for the Harm Principle, which says that the only legitimate grounds for social coercion is to prevent harm to others, but what harm to others prevents the wearing of the veil?

f) The argument in favor of the *laïcité* is also an identity issue, but for France. If it is so important for France not to lose its laic identity, the same right should be also conceded for Muslim people – namely, not to lose their religious identity.

CONCLUSIONS

Public debates about values are possible if

- a) We assume the opponents to be rational
- b) We all agree upon a contractualist framework (Scanlonian)
- c) We are critical and detached about our own values first, that is to say, rational.

We all have the fundamental right to hold other values than those of the society's in which we live, even if the society has chosen these values by vote or in an utilitarian fashion by preference aggregation. The life of every individual is unique and should be lived to its maximum potential. A gay person has to look for happiness even when born in a homophobic society; he can't put his life or his happiness on hold because he had the misfortune of being born in the wrong place. We don't have the option of giving up on a happy and fulfilled life, so we need to negotiate our values with whomever we can. And for this we need to appeal to the common ground of rationality; rationality in itself is not a value, but its employment in value negotiations makes it valuable in an instrumental way.

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CHAPTER X

SPIRITUAL COGNITION OF A PERSON AND CULTURE

NIZHNIKOV SERGEY

Abstract: Nowadays, humankind loses the character of its spiritual archetype; the person loses its humaneness. It is therefore necessary to reveal time-honored values with new force. These values form an integral part of all spiritual-cultural traditions of peoples that dwell on Earth. The spiritual archetype of humankind is unique, but it is formulated by different languages, cultures, symbols, concepts, and methods. Spiritual knowledge is defined in this case as deployment of the essence of a person that leads to a display of the spiritual archetype of humankind.

The spiritual phenomenon is present only when there is a carrier – a spiritual person. In other words, without a concrete person there is no presence of the spiritual at all. It can be ciphered in cultures and in their texts but to decode it, to make it effective and alive, the person is called. Therefore the spiritual exists only there, and then, where it is existentially filled. Spiritual self-knowledge is possible only in such a seizure of the person, or transcendence in existential fullness at which personal essences are unpacked.

Keywords: spiritual cognition, self-knowledge, transcendence, existence, spiritual archetype of humankind, symbol.

Nowadays, there is much debate about the lack of spirituality in a society and in a person, but what is the spiritual as it is? You may hear the various answers to this question: someone sees the spiritual only in the sphere of religion or mysticism, someone else associates it with the whole area of culture or identifies it as morals. Especially frequent nowadays is the connection of the spiritual to any mystical visions or ideas, extrasensory or parapsychological abilities. The ordinary consciousness maintains the concept of spiritual¹ in the individual interests. But what does its essence consist of? It is possible to answer this question in a more or less objective way if you rely on the analysis of the concept of the spiritual and on the

¹ Gramatically speaking, it is generally agreed upon that *spiritual* is to be used as an adjective, while *spirituality* is the corresponding noun. However, considering the specificity of the Eastern theological thought, the author has deemed it necessary to use the former rather than the latter, as it embodies a particular, clearly delineated concept (*Ed*).

history of its development, of the creation of the spiritual sphere as it is; then such a description will crystallize and shape the concept of spiritual.

In order to clarify the problematic of spiritual it is necessary to *already* know something about it from the very beginning. Starting research, it is already necessary to know something about the subject, because we can investigate the unknown, but not the totally incomprehensible. The incomprehensible shows itself in the unknown, and by that, it allows us to ask some questions. The unknown concerns that about which it is possible to formulate a question, when something is already shown for a question, but remains rather inconceivable and demands deeper explorations, for expansion of thinking about itself.

Such unknown objects are for us the concept of spiritual. The word *spiritual* has already been found. It reflects something about ourselves, but it was already found, only in vague and intuitive ways. It is still indistinct, but undoubtedly present in human life and makes it what it is. It is necessary to look closely so that the spiritual should become more clear.

Having designated our unknown as spiritual, it is further necessary to reveal its characteristics as concepts which would be appropriate and would now give us the possibility to carry out theoretical research. Thus, we inevitably find ourselves within a limited circle, or a hermeneutical circle², and only again and again passing around it and marking and outlining its borders, can we define the specifics of the spiritual phenomenon, its difference from anything else. And only after the spiritual field and its arrangement and its action are determined is it possible to move further to the center of the circle, getting deeper into the spiritual as it is. There are no doubts that such preliminary knowledge of the subject should inevitably be abstract, because it may become more concrete only as a result of complete and full research. Nevertheless, even this abstract knowledge should be essential enough that the object under investigation would never get out of sight, which should result in its more detailed and deeper description.

Thus, for the analysis of the problem of spiritual it is necessary to have the initial definition of the characteristics of a spiritual phenomenon, and also of the sphere of its actions and reflections. If anything should develop, it is necessary that right at the beginning of the process it should comprise within itself the further becoming in the closed and undeveloped form. It is necessary to define right at the beginning of research an orientation of expansion of that which is curtailed. The concept itself represents a kind of such self-developing cell.

By analogy, the definition of the concept of spiritual can be compared to the definition of the concept of philosophy and its subject. Nobody can ever give the exhaustive answer to this question as both philosophy and its subject are in constant becoming. The fullest answer can only be the history of philosophy itself, which proceeds constantly. It is the same with the

² Gadamer H.-G. *Truth and Method*, translation by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald Marshall (New York: Continuum, 1989), pp. 291-293.

concept of spiritual, which will be described and filled up with content in the process of research; therefore it is not necessary to hasten with definitions. The present work as a whole is an experience of expansion of the concept of spiritual in all directions through the description of a spiritual problematic both from the point of view of the individual life of a person and from a social-cultural, historical one.

However, we shall try to approach directly the clearing up of a spiritual phenomenon. First of all, it is not likely that anybody will challenge the fact that spiritual is closely connected to significance, especially with the most important part to any person – to the significance of his own life. This question stands in front of any person, regardless of his being a grain-grower or a philosopher, but not everyone thinks of it. And only when a person tries to pose this question himself can he make the step toward understanding the spiritual. The human being has an existence, but not always in the human image, and especially asking about the meaning of life clears up his own life for a person. All history of humankind's spiritual culture is endlessly asking for that purification and revealing of the essence of the human being in the world. However, a person poorly advanced in the spiritual-moral attitude could connect the meaning of life to sensual pleasure, to satisfaction of his extremely material, egoistic needs. But along with the growth of a person's sensibleness, intelligence grows as well, and so he begins the transition from material needs to spiritual ones, from satisfaction of egoistic inquiries to creativity for the benefit of other people and all humankind.

SPIRITUAL AS SELF-KNOWLEDGE

In the most intimate spiritual work, where the person is extremely honest with himself, he is capable of touching the depths of his own life, of meeting himself, sometimes for the first time is able to truly discover and know himself. Thus the spiritual self-knowledge is carried out, for such self-recognition brings simultaneous spiritual transformation of the person.

Spiritual as a process represents itself in disclosing the essence of a person, and that is nothing else than self-cognition. In the act of self-knowledge a person is given to himself, but in a paradoxical way, so that he has a special essence that is in the dark concerning his own nature. Therefore the first precept appealed to a person from God, became a commandment "know thyself." In history, it arises for the first time as an inscription on Apollonian temple in Delphi, then it is repeated by Thales, and it becomes the meaning of life for Socrates, getting into Plato's theory about knowledge as reminiscence of a complete kind. The same requirement is proclaimed in religion, though in the form specific to it, it also becomes the basic theme of art, especially in Aeschylus's tragedies in Ancient Greece, in Indian *Bhagavad-Gita* and even in *Epos about Gilgamesh* in ancient Mesopotamia.

The spiritual phenomenon develops in a person, and this process can be named self-knowledge. Hegel characterized the given process in the following way: “Know *thyself*.” This absolute precept has no value, neither in itself, nor there where it was stated historically, as *the self-cognition* directed to *certain* abilities, character, propensities and weakness of an individual, but only the value of knowledge of that originally in the person, originally in itself and for itself, knowledge of the *essence* as spirit. In the philosophy of spirit so-called human-knowledge is of small value, aspiring to investigate in other people their *features*, their passions, and weaknesses – these as they are called, the bends of human heart – knowledge, on one hand, having the sense in case it can appraise the knowledge of *general* – a person as such and by that the essence – spirit and on the other hand – engaged in casual, insignificant, *not original* kinds of existence of spiritual, but not penetrating up to *substantial* – up to the spirit itself³.

Resulting from the aforesaid, the spirit could be defined as the essence of spiritual. However, in distinction to Hegel, who has taken as a principle the philosophy of absolute idea and spirit as metaphysical categories, in the present work the object will be not spirit, but spiritual as it is reflected in human life: not so much about metaphysics, but mainly about a form of a human spiritual life. Certainly, metaphysics shows the quintessence of concept of spiritual in philosophical categories, but at the present stage of investigation the spread of scope plays a more important role. And from this point of view it is necessary not to metaphase the spiritual phenomenon, but to study how it is submitted in a human life and its spiritual products: philosophy, religion, and art.

True philosophy is spiritual making, within the framework of it, and by it, self-knowledge is accomplished. Even the first naturalistic philosophers studied the universe to learn about themselves. Heraclites, even earlier than Socrates, in fact, was also engaged in self-knowledge, sitting on the steps of a temple, playing dice with children and reflecting on eternity. He, “...as if having realized something majestic and important, speaks: “I searched for myself” – and from Delphian sayings considered, by most, divine: “Know thyself,” – that has served Socrates as a starting point, raising this question and his research...” So wrote Plutarch about Heraclites.⁴

Socrates passes to a more direct self-knowledge; he is not interested anymore in roundabout ways to himself: “I have refused research of objective reality,” he said.⁵ Following Socrates, it is possible to say that spiritual knowledge is “art which helps us to care for ourselves,” that is to say, it is directed not toward that which belongs to us, but toward

³ G.V.F. Hegel, *Encyclopedia of Philosophy Science*, in 3 volumes. V. 3 (Moscow, 1977), p. 6.

⁴ *Abstracts of Earliest Greek Philosophers*. p. 1 (Moscow, 1989), p. 194.

⁵ Plato, *Dialogues*, 3 volumes, V. 1 (Moscow, 1970), p. 70.

improvement of ourselves.⁶ As per Socrates, spiritual knowledge is directed as a search of the essence of human ego that later Plato has defined as the *idea* or the *eidos* of a person.⁷ The identification of *idea* with the essence of spiritual has resulted, then, in its understanding as metaphysic-super-sensual; to avoid it in the given work, spiritual knowledge is defined as disclosing of essence of a person.

Deep conformity can be found in Eastern philosophy. In Ancient Indian philosophy the spiritual purpose began to be determined by the concept *moksha*, or “deliverance” in translation from Sanskrit, and *Mokshadharmā* – as a way of delivering the law and one of Mahabharata’s books simultaneously. *Mokshadharmā*, as well as the Upanishads, comprises the basic conceptual system and principles, that is, the archetype of Ancient Indian Culture. In Indian philosophy spiritual knowledge and the essence of a person are defined through transcendental-immanent understanding of Brahman-Atman. The same is said, for example, in Taoist book “Guan In-Tzu “: “to search for wisdom outside of itself – the height of nonsense,” and the ancient Confucian philosopher Meng-tzu, said that “the doctrine has only one purpose – search of lost human nature.”⁸

The fundamental metaphysical categories of philosophy and basic religious symbols can be considered as conceptions of the essence of a person. Then also the category of being is a symbol of the essence of a person, because to it he is called to transcend from his existence, finding himself, thus, in *a gleam* of being (Heidegger). A person is an eternal way to himself, and for this purpose it is necessary for him to learn about all the universe as in the breadth of the heavens, and the depth of his own psyche, the logos of which is infinite in its self-increasing (Heraclites). And for this purpose he needs transcendence and immanence, being and empirical world, and such concepts as *atom* (Democritus), *idea* (Plato), “the *unmoved-mover*” (Aristotle), the supreme *unity* (Neoplatonist’s *The One*, Vedanta, VI. Solovyev) etc. They are, among other things, symbols of the essence of the person, points of a foothold for thought and self-creation. In spiritual knowledge a person finds a way to his essence.

A person can be a slave not only to empirical circumstances, but also to ideas which are imposed on him by culture or ideology. Therefore, by researching the forms of spiritual and analyzing the concept, we clear the consciousness of illusions. The philosophical analysis of the spiritual is a way to freedom, in the process of self-purification and self-deliverance. In this sense philosophy, for example, is an esoteric science, accessible to everybody, but not comprehended by all.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

⁷ Plato, *Collection of Compositions*, 4 volumes, V. 1 (Moscow, 1990), pp. 256, 733.

⁸ *Anthology of the World Philosophy* in 4 volumes. V.1. Part. 2 (Moscow, 1969), p. 210.

SPIRITUAL AND CULTURE

Spiritual penetrates all spheres of human activities. Without the spiritual a person does not exist at all, but there can be various levels of spiritualization. In connection to this we shall consider reflections of spiritual phenomenon in culture, mysticism, and morals.

The experience of spiritual self-cognition that creates the essence of a person also creates a culture. It is the form-building core; we shall recollect confessions of St. Augustine, Rousseau, and Leo Tolstoy: they are not only the reflection of revolution in culture, but in many respects have also served as its catalyst. In the cultural history of mankind, the spiritual experience of knowledge is seen as Revelation, – a Tree with three branches: religion, philosophy, and art. They are united by the phenomenon of spiritual that, however, is materialized in these three spheres in a specific way, based on various intrinsic forces of the person, his abilities, and his potential.

Strictly speaking, the phenomenon of spiritual is not the property of culture in the sense that it arises on the basis of spiritual acts. From nothingness strings of being are weaved, from spiritual the cultural is created, its cloth is weaved. In culture, the movement of spiritual is objectified. Culture alone is capable of preventing the degradation of a person down to a barbaric condition, and even that is not always within its power. A person who has tasted the spiritual always stays in opposition to prevailing representations, whether he is a philosopher or a religious reformer, an art worker or a spiritual mystic. Culture lives on spiritual acts, without which culture would be incomprehensible and useless. But, after having become set as congealed and objectified knowledge, culture can become hostile to any appearance of really spiritual creativity which frequently destroys the established traditions and outlooks. However, at the same time there is also a way back from spirituality objectified in culture toward spiritual.

Nietzsche is the brightest representative of a struggler with a culture, with congealed spiritual values. He struggled alone, face-to-face against all the might of a long-established thousand-year stubborn culture, but, eventually, its pressure destroyed him. Gains of spirit are not given to a person as a gift; for that he pays in blood, for spiritual creativity is always a revelation. F.M. Dostoevsky has shown the animosities of culture to any real display of spiritual very well in the novel the “*Brothers Karamazov*” (the legend about the great inquisitor) where the congealed religious image became more important than its direct appearance. Spiritual is always unknown, and demands from a person his total self- rebellion, risk, and struggle.

SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE AND MORAL

The phenomenon of spiritual, when implemented as a process of self-cognition, during which the essence of a person is developed, finds itself in

the increasing degree of the humanizing of the person. The basic moral precepts are born as revelations in the deep experience of self-knowledge. And this means that spiritual knowledge is directly connected to morals. Spiritual knowledge develops the humanity in a person, because in fact it can come to light only in its own existence. "The humanity of a person," wrote Heidegger about this, "is based in his essence." And further: "non-humane," is someone "not humanistic" (we name the person, – S.N.)...that has broken away from his essence."⁹ From this it is possible to conclude that a person in his essence, by his spiritual nature is good-natured and that he becomes malicious only when he forgets himself, keeping away from his essence. Out of such oblivion grows the spiritual crisis of humankind as the loss of humanity by a person, the loss of humanism, the loss of his own countenance. "It starts to seem that to the person that now only he appears everywhere," writes further Heidegger. "Meanwhile actually with itself, i.e., with the essence, the person does not appear anywhere." His essence is hidden both by technique and by his own not-spiritualized sensuality. From spiritual knowledge also grows true humanism, which is the intrinsic characteristic of the spiritual phenomenon. Heidegger, examining ontological roots of humanism, thinks of it as "humanity of a human being from affinity to being."

In spiritual creativity the person finds freedom and dignity. Spiritual acts require senses and real values, social and juridical rules, morals. A person being of an extremely versatile essence is nevertheless compelled to make his way to integrity of spiritual knowledge through absolutization of one of his intrinsic forces. As a result, various spheres of demonstration of spiritual appear that, despite of their intrinsic unity, enter in inconsistent mutual relation: reason may be opposed to belief, to mind – to feeling, but these contradictions stimulate spiritual development, conduct humankind along the way of creation of the complete person.

Frequently in ordinary consciousness spiritual is identified with ethics and moral norms that do not correspond to the truth. It is already determined that spiritual knowledge is expressed in the disclosing of the essence of a person; the outcome of that is finding humanity. Then morals are essentially connected to spiritual and are one of the forms of its display. Morals are moral only when born from the depths of spiritual, instead of being postulated from the outside and prevailing over a person. Morals having the basis of spiritual are centered not so much on the law, but mostly on blessedness, which itself forms the laws. Spiritual love is the supreme legislator and includes in itself a duty.

The basic moral precepts have been born as revelations within the depth of self-cognition experience, regardless of the basis on which it was grounded. So, for example, a precept "Don't kill!" has been known for thousands of years, but wars proceed on Earth, and the state laws of many

⁹ *Problems of a Person in Western Philosophy* (Moscow, 1988), pp. 318-319.

countries include a death sentence in its codes. All this speaks of a spiritual level that does not understand that life of any person is beyond any price, and nobody has the moral right to take it away. It is not understood that evil can not overcome the evil, but only goodness is capable of transforming it. Leo Tolstoy with his sermon of nonresistance to harm by violence was not understood even in the homeland, and Mahatma Ghandi was killed by people to whom he had devoted his life. The presence of murders on Earth, regardless of whatever “plausible excuse” it is based upon, means that humankind has not yet entered a spiritual phase of its development.

SPIRITUAL AND MYSTICISM

After analyzing some intrinsic characteristics of a spiritual phenomenon and defining its displays, for the sake of clarity, we shall also define what is not spiritual and what it is frequently identified with by ordinary consciousness. Let's move further to the analysis of mysticism and its relations to the phenomenon of spiritual, for in ordinary consciousness it is the most confusing question. Especially during the years of changes, when consciousness is no longer tied to the old ideology, huge numbers of all possible kinds of psychics, parapsychologists, sorcerers, and preachers come to the surface of public consciousness, many of whom characterize their activity as spiritual. On the other hand, many serious people place mysticism entirely into the area of imaginations and superstitions. Therefore, first of all, it is necessary to define the term.

In translation from ancient Greek, “mystical” means “mysterious.” This term characterizes, probably, the position of a person in the world, that any knowledge expands the sphere of unknown. The essence of a person and its world existence have their roots in this mysteriousness, being unknown and even incomprehensible, and there is nothing unnatural in it. Mysticism always turns to mysterious, always looks with skepticism at what is already obtained by reason, and this stimulates a person to search his new cognition and earlier unknown areas. New types of cultures and knowledge arise in an intuitive sphere and within a mystical frame, and then slowly transform into a certain rationality and completeness of forms. Heraclites and Pythagoras were closely connected to priests and all sorts of diviners; originally the archetype of Christianities had been developed in the mystical philosophy of Philo Judaeus (Alexandrian), Origen, St. Gregory of Nyssa, and Maximus the Confessor; in Meister Eckhart's mysticism and then Jakob Boehme, it has served as the catalyst of thought for German classical philosophy. Thus, it is clear that within a mystical shell acts the spiritual itself, though not in a clear shape yet, but intuitively, because it is not yet illuminated by enlightening of consciousness. Eventually, the mystical is a root of religious views, said Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna). Philosophical metaphysical categories also contain it in themselves, many of them more postulated than proved. Mysticism in a positive sense is a constant openness of a person to the unknown; constant

inquiring and searching. Presence and realization of a spiritual phenomenon here are again available.

But mysticism can also have other meanings; it can be understood as extrasensory perception and parapsychology, or simply as some concept that designs other levels of reality. And the matter is not that all these are products of imagination; they can probably just as well exist. But the essence of the affair is that all this has no relation to spiritual. In this case, mysticism represents only the expansion of an usual way of human knowledge, but in unconventional areas for modern culture. The crux is that the spiritual knowledge is not characterized by expansion in breadth; it qualitatively differs from all other methods of knowledge as it spreads itself into the depth. While scientific and extrasensory perception of any kind is distributed horizontally, though in different directions, the spiritual acts in relation to them as knowledge are vertical, not only as knowledge that relates to the abilities of a person and his properties and their development, but also as knowledge concerning its owner, knowledge of essence, ego, and human nature. The spiritual person is not anxious about the development of his abilities and expansion of the horizon of his knowledge, but he is anxious about the detection of his essence or perfection of his nature, or moral purification. He is interested in, first of all, how to dispose of that he already has in the proper way.

SPIRITUAL ANTHROPOLOGY

The aforesaid understanding of spiritual does not coincide with the anthropology of L. Feuerbach. The latter reduced all understanding of spiritual to love, and mostly sensual, rather than spiritual. In the pathos of bringing the transcendental down to earth, he has missed the essence of the person disclosing itself through the process of transcendence, without which the birth of spiritual is impossible. Love, as the strongest and the deepest experience, regardless of the object toward which it is directed, already comprises in itself elements of transcendence, self-rebellion, and spreading beyond its limits. For this reason Descartes said: “the concept of God precedes me.”¹⁰ This short phrase contains more wisdom than in all directly anthropological representations. Through the given statement, the philosopher probably wanted to say that a person is born spiritually from the supreme idea, from the original pattern of transcendence, instead of a monkey. “The pure concept,” explains Descartes in another place, “is there is a God.”¹¹ Only relying on such high concepts is a person capable of accomplishing spiritual cognition, which creates his essence. Through them, a person pulls himself out of an animal life, same as Munchausen – out of a bog. In this sense, a person has his origin from God, or from human being, depending on what conceptual system he selects. As to the

¹⁰ R. Descartes. *Selected Works* (Moscow, 1950), p. 363.

¹¹ A.J. Lyatker, *Descartes* (Moscow, 1974), p. 184.

traditional anthropology, Heidegger remarked that it “is such interpretation of the person which basically already knows what he is; consequently it is never possible to ask a question as to what creature he is.”¹²

However, despite everything that has been said, spiritual knowledge as constructing the essence of a person, or developing it, should be studied under the name of the object, such as, anthropology, science about a person; in this case, it is possible to express it as “spiritual anthropology.” The latter should not evaluate a person as something that is constant once and forever, and not as a static concept. Even when a person thinks about himself and defines himself through a pronoun *I*, *I* is no more than a symbol of infinite depth, and *I* is only its name. The essence of a person is not something static; the creative person is capable each day of recognizing himself as something else. The essence of a person is developed during the spiritual self-cognition leading a person in his infinite way to the Person, to perfection, and to an ideal that is to open the spiritual archetype of humankind to the full volume. This process by itself is the supreme kind of spiritual creativity and creation where a person creates not something alien to itself, or something auxiliary for his existence, but his very essence.

Up until now we have established that the concept of spiritual as different from all others, and, having made this work, we inevitably gave birth to a word. Heidegger remarks, that “everything that occurs in the ‘logos,’ is the task of ‘sofia,’ or philosophers.”¹³ Thus, a vicious circle appears: if we try to address the problem of spiritual without depending on religion, philosophy, and other spheres, and start to allocate it as independent, it becomes impossible to avoid *logos* and *sofia*; and if the love for an object of research is initially present, then all characteristics of philosophy are intact. It seems to be ineradicable. It happens that exactly those who break the established stereotypes and opinions about philosophy are the true philosophers. That is exactly what happened with Pascal and Kierkegaard, with Camus and Kafka. Then the true philosophy appears as meta-philosophizing, for which there are no borders. Then the analysis of the problem of spiritual becomes an attempt to catch all its intrinsic displays in logos, and these displays are not limited by the sphere of traditional philosophy, but they comprise both ancient mysteries and the newest scientific research about the person.

The ideal of Eastern Christian anthropology can be expressed through the concept of theology¹⁴ (coming from Greek. θεωσις – theosis) that is

¹² M. Heidegger, *Metaphysics – What is it?* (Moscow: 1986), p. 117.

¹³ M. Heidegger, *Main Concepts of Metaphysics // Journal «Questions of Philosophy», № 7, 1989, p. 136.*

¹⁴ Concerning this thematic see the following materials: Illarion (Alfeev), *Hierom Saint Simeon New Theologian and Orthodox Tradition* (Moscow: 1998); Illarion (Alfeev), *Hierom Life and Doctrine of Saint George Theologian* (Moscow: 1998); Macarius Egyptian (the Great), *Spiritual Talks of Saint Trinity Sergio Monastery* (1994); *Mythical Theology*, Kiev, “Way to the Truth”

characterized by the ecstatic experience of direct uniting with Absolute. Though a historical analogue and prototype of deification can be distinguished in ancient times in shaman – orgies cults, that aimed at removing distance between a man and the Gods (world of spirits), nevertheless deification in the true sense of the word appears only when spiritual cognition comes to the concept of transcendental Personality – personalized theism.

Deification is not just “moral” unity and utmost limit of human perfection, but it is an ontological one. At the same time it does not mean unity with God; that is impossible in personalized theistic traditions of a transcendental type. According to these traditions, a problem appears: What is a way to bring together an ontological character of a man’s deification and transcendental incomprehensibility of God? The source of the deification of a man is not his deity essence (Nature) but a grace, God-blessing energy. Grace of Spirit differs, but it is not separated from essence. Thus, the divine presence becomes possible regardless of the absolute transcendence of God. Present basic postulates that characterize deification were approved by Constantinople councils of 1341 and 1351, and that was connected with the activity of St. Gregory Palamas (1296-1359). In Russia, Hesychastic ideas of deification developed in the creations and lives of St. Sergius of Radonezh (ok. 1315-92), Nil Sorsky (St. Nilus of Sora, 1433-1508), Blessed Paisius Velichkovsky (1722-1794), Seraphim of Sarov (1760-1833), the Optina Monastery Elders (startzy), Joann Kronstadtsky - (1829-1909), and others.

Deification is directed to the transformation of a man as a biological specimen into a man as a spiritual creature; it does not diminish or destroy humanity but enriches it. (J. Meyendorff). It is realized through transcendence of real existence and it means a break to being and reason, on the basis of religious-existential experience (death, depravity, penitence, cry, blessing, and love). At the same time, not only the identity (personality) of a man remains, but a fundamental self-cognition occurs that leads to deployment of man’s essence and revelation of a spiritual archetype of humankind. Theosis in this connection means orthodoxy and not absorption of a creature being (V.N. Losskiy). Deification not only keeps a man personality intact (holism), but for the first time at the ontological level establishes it; not only a soul is glorified but also a body. Thus, the deification doctrine expresses the anthropological ideal of Eastern

(1991); Gregory Palamas, *Triodes for Protection of Saint-Mutes* (Moscow: Canon, 1995); I.V. Popov, *Idea of Divinity in Ancient Eastern Church* (1909); Saint Simeon New Theologian, *The Deity Anthem*, (Sergiev Posad, 1989); Kiprian (Kern), Archimandrite, *Anthropology of St Gregory Palamas* (Moscow: «Palmer», 1996); G.V. Florovsky, *Gregory Palamas and Divinity // Dogma and History* (Moscow: 1998), pp. 386-393; S.S. Horougiy, *To Phenomenology of Austerity* (Moscow: 1998); N. Russell, *The Concept of Deification in the Early Greek Fathers*, Ph.D. thesis (Oxford: 1988)

Christianity which, to some extent, was a foothold for Russian philosophy that, contrary to Kant and Hume, established *I* substantiality as a metaphysic of faith; personalization in contrast to Hegel; spiritual origin of a personality as different from L. Feuerbach.

The spiritual phenomenon can also be defined through the concept of transformation. Spiritual is carried out when a certain essence is transformed into the Person. Furthermore, this process can acquire its own symbolism and terminology, depending on what material is accomplished: religious, philosophical, or other creative materials. But in its essence the spiritual act is only spiritual, and then it is objectified in other certain areas and disciplines. When asking a question about spiritual, we inevitably find ourselves in the bosom of thousand-year cultural traditions. For spiritual knowledge, a person requires some levers which would enable him to release him from himself. Here we inevitably enter the three mentioned spheres; each of them has the language in which and by means of which spiritual knowledge is gained, the results of which are fixed in the same language, and on which it is carried out. Certain methods of spiritual knowledge have developed appropriate to specifics of spheres of its realization: philosophizing on the basis of thinking, religious belief on the basis of ability of the person to access the supreme feelings. According to young K. Marks, “the originality of each intrinsic force”¹⁵ of a person creates “the original way of its objectification.” The disclosing of a united process of spiritual knowledge disintegrates and shows results in different areas, and through these channels it allows a person to create himself. The phenomenon of spiritual cannot be turned off from its manifestations as being from living, but it is also impossible to reduce it to them. Spiritual only shows itself in an image; only then it can be seen by a person, but any image disguises spiritual as such. “Jesus said: Images appear to the person, and the light in them is shadowed. In the image of the father’s light, the light will be disclosed, and the image of the father will be shadowed by the light.”¹⁶ Identifying images of spiritual with the spirit itself, the person limits himself and, thus, deforms his own essence, running into narrow dogmatism and fanaticism. However, living in the world of alienation, in the world of spiritual the person is also compelled to move by way of trial and error.

We say that the spiritual exists, *is*, but it is *nothing* like any other thing in the common world. Spiritual is boundless both in breadth and in depth, but only manifests itself concretely. A person cannot cognize himself directly, for that would contradict his position in the world; he should either eliminate his consciousness or become God. He is capable to cognize himself only indirectly, through displays of the essence and its symbols. And since the spiritual essence basically can’t be objectified, it is possible to cognize it only in its existence. The cognition of spiritual can be carried

¹⁵ K. Marks, F. Engels, *Early Works* (Moscow: 1956), p. 593.

¹⁶ See Thomas’ *Gospel*.

out only through its available products. A less direct way can turn out to be the easiest way, as a roundabout road uphill is easier to take than climbing it straight. Therefore everything that is created in culture is a mediated path to spiritual. And each person chooses an appropriate way that appeals to him and to his essence. It is impossible to say that A. Pushkin's aesthetic creativity was not the spiritual way, compared to St. Seraphim of Sarov's prayer.¹⁷ For the writer or the poet, his artistic activity is the spiritual creativity, the appropriate method of disclosing his essence. From this point of view it is probably difficult to allocate what has most importance and priority, religion or philosophy, art creativity or, for example, music. The concrete personal approach is necessary here, the criterion of which is the depth of disclosing his essence.

Spiritual knowledge is revelation that splits into three basic spheres, but forms a unity, nevertheless. Philosophy, religion, and art as specific ways of displaying the spiritual do not only contradict each other, but also communicate and interact with each other in the entire culture of mankind.

CONCLUSIONS

Therefore, some intrinsic characteristics of the spiritual phenomenon are already determined, the spheres of its actions and objectivities allocated. When talking about the definition of the concept of spiritual, it is impossible to stop at any of the pre-established points of view, for example, extremely religious or atheistic; it would deform the concept of spiritual as this would only be a one-sided consideration of it. In the modern world we notice every possible, and sometimes opposite, type of world view. The task is that their carriers must find a common language, and, moreover, the general spiritual basis for dialogue. Therefore this work attempts an all-round analysis of a spiritual phenomenon and through its displays it attempts to create a complete and intrinsic representation about it. But it is equally necessary to find some starting point of research, and it is already determined: spiritual is examined as the process of uncovering the person's essence. The basis of this analysis is the position of a person in the world, a position in which he discovers himself in the act of consciousness. He discovers himself as essence, which inside him contains contradictions and moves among them. The essence of them is that the person is as if crucified between two worlds: empirical and theoretical, sensual and speculative; he is simultaneously spiritual and material essence. This position of a person in the world is reflected by religion in the basic doctrines and by philosophy in categories: through the symbol of the fall from grace and a category of being or essence. Disclosing of religious symbolism and philosophical categorical apparatus is the answer, in the attempt of making judgments and

¹⁷ A.S. Pushkin is a great Russian writer, while Seraphim of Sarov is a famous saint of the Russian Orthodox Church. They lived at the same time at the beginning of the 19th century.

in the feeling of overcoming the contradictions of the human position in the world. There are concepts of ideal and material, goodness and maliciousness, etc. The concept of spiritual in this case is considered not as a category that is counter material, and not as some absolute that would have removed in itself matter and spirit, but as the highest level of intelligence, sensibleness by a person of his position in the world, his being and his essence. The spiritual truth is nothing else than true and correct, agreeable to the attitude of a person to himself and the world. "Truth that," wrote Kafka, "is necessary for each person for life; nevertheless, he can not receive or get that from anybody. Each person continuously should give rise to it from itself, otherwise he will be lost. Life without truth is impossible. It can be said that the truth is the very life."¹⁸

Originally, the spiritual existed for a person as such a mystery in which he must lose himself, enter some kind of ecstasy, the changed condition of consciousness, thus accomplishing thus some transcendence of his routine existence. But all this occurred mostly due to the elimination of conscious life, rather than due to the increase of sensibleness. However, a person needed some way of transcendence, because even now, having come to a deadlock, he can choose as a remedy alcohol, drugs, or various mystical illusions. Qualitatively a new understanding of spiritual and a method of its achievement has appeared along with the occurrence of philosophy and monotheistic religions. The spiritual attitude toward life began to appear, where a person began to comprehend life metaphysically from his position in the world. Based on such judgment the representation of Plato's *idea* was born; the idea about the ideal relation to life, that is, the spiritual, appeared. The idea as a spiritual vision is expressed most adequately, though not without some problems, in Plato's philosophy. In religion the metaphysical comprehension of life is fixed on its central symbol. Through such a symbol or idea for human consciousness arises the possibility of an entry into spiritual and it is the realization by a person of his spiritual life. Christ, Buddha, and Plato have managed to penetrate into the spiritual essence of a person's position in the world and to express it in symbols and concepts. Their positions contain a speculative truth which is demonstrated in the materials of various cultures and through various methods. And as spiritual knowledge concerns neither the abilities of a person nor what he has, but what he is in his essence, the spiritual truth is he himself on the highest level of sensibleness of his being, once the essence is completely developed, resulting in the appearance of the spiritual archetype of humankind. For this reason Christ said "I am the way," and al-Hallaj, "I am the Truth."

Spiritual results from the position of a person in the world, which is characterized by such concepts as freedom, will, consciousness, speculation, etc. From the realization of spiritual cognition and from its

¹⁸ F. Kafka, *Castle. Stories and Legends // Letter to Dad* (Moscow: 1991), p. 568.

consideration here and now arise such concepts as existence and transcendence, which essentially characterize a phenomenon of spiritual.

The necessity of spiritual comes from the position of a person in the world that is characterized by duality and contradictions: *a human person by nature is a biological creature, and by essence, spiritual*, but a person is a unity and integrity of everything he has. He enters the sphere of spiritual or essentially human area when he starts posing existential questions about the significance of his own life. Spiritual is represented as truth of human life, which is born from comprehension of the life itself. Spiritual is the supreme product of life as it is, which comes to the self-consciousness and conscious increasing in the person. Searching for the meaning of life results in the necessity of self-knowledge, the essence of being. Spiritual cognition is a vertical path whereas all other kinds of knowledge are distributed in a horizontal plane. This vertical path, or the intrinsic cognition of the meaning of life, is nothing else but self-cognition, as a result of which the essence of the person is developed and created, showing the spiritual archetype of humankind.

The self-cognition as knowledge of the cognizing subject is speculation about his essence, as a result of which it comes to the increasing appearance that, in its turn, is characterized by the humanizing of a person, results in his complete humanization. Such knowledge is the supreme kind of creativity: self-mastery. In an ideally achieved spiritual perfection it is possible to count in the one who has developed his essence, has humanized himself, and has opened in himself the spiritual archetype of humankind.

The process of spiritual creativity in a history of culture splits into three basic streams in which spiritual proves the most direct image: religion, philosophy, and art. Spiritual as it is, is the unity in its concept, but during historical periods it is carried out in various ways. It is transformation of a person into a spiritual creature which would be impossible without “points of support,” symbols of religion and metaphysical categories of philosophy, based on which the consciousness is capable of purifying itself. Spiritual penetrates all human life activity and without it in general there is no person, though in other spheres its activity is submitted only indirectly. However, to its self-consciousness spiritual can come, if it is inquiring not about something else, but about it itself, not about its spheres, even some directly objectified, but about spiritual as initial revelation, as contemplation in which all intrinsic forces of a person result in supreme harmony, and as perfection when the essence of a person is completely realized in its existence, history, and culture.

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CHAPTER XI

THE ENDS OF PHILOSOPHY IN THE CONTEXT OF CONTEMPORARY BIOPOLITICS

CRISTIAN IFTODE

Abstract: The purpose of this study is to propose and endorse a specific answer to the question regarding the ends of philosophy in the context of today's culture. After a series of general remarks about the baffling landscape of twentieth century philosophy, I will suggest that we could regard the radical critique of modern subjectivity as being a guiding thread for the understanding of all the relevant issues in contemporary (post-Nietzschean) philosophy, as well as for the understanding of the way philosophers have been relating to what they were doing. Nevertheless, I shall argue that a very important philosophical and cultural phenomenon can be noticed in the West since the beginning of the 1980s: the death of the "death of the subject" and the practical turn in contemporary philosophy. More than this, I will hold that it is this return of the subject, nowadays, as an action subject (at the same time, a principle of practical reflexivity and the result of a process of subjectivation), rather than an epistemic one, that favors a rebirth of philosophy in its inaugural concept of "way of life" and "care of the self." After pointing out three levels of resistance to the idea of philosophy as a practice (or set of practices) aimed to perform an effective transformation of its subject (the prevailing socio-cultural context, so favorable to the idea of self-acceptance; the tradition of modern moral philosophy, bracketing the very meaning of ethics as an "ascetic" work whose goal is the self-fashioning of the individual; some of the influential trends in the field of contemporary moral psychology), I will speak about three aporias that illustrate this "form of life" that is philosophy and also define the "condition" of any philosopher: (a) disinterested contemplation vs. existential practice; (b) Socratic-Nietzschean unsettlement vs. full embrace of a philosophy of life; (c) self-creation vs. self-discovery. In the end, I shall emphasize the present ethical and political relevance of the practice of philosophy, both on a personal or rather interpersonal level (with the goal of self-transformation) and on a public level (with the task of consistently critically approaching all forms of disciplinary power).

Keywords: self, subject authenticity, Foucault, philosophy as practice, self-fashioning.

The Contemporary Landscape of Philosophy: The Distinction between “Analytic” and “Continental” Philosophy

What is the meaning and purpose of philosophy in the context of today’s culture? There is most likely no other discipline whose tradition could match that of philosophy. In fact, any person having a medium degree of education is probably aware of the following situation: it is in the realm of philosophy that most of the disciplines constituting the “educational offer” of a university nowadays first came into being as specific ways of interrogation. But it is also true that there is no other discipline today that offers, at least at first sight, the impression of such a fragmentation, dispersion, irreducible plurality of approaches, methods, research programs, and “objectives,” as contemporary philosophy does. The “mental cramp” – to make use of a Wittgensteinian expression – that any given fresh graduate student in Philosophy would experience if asked to produce one of those fashionable presentations “in a nutshell” on the topic *Contemporary Philosophy*, has to do, I believe, with something more than an education urging him or her to be extremely cautious with any quick generalization: it is the expression of a fundamental difficulty, if not a sheer impossibility. It is not only about assessing an unavoidable hermeneutical circle that constrains us to realize any historical or thematic presentation of philosophy *from a particular philosophical perspective*; it is also about how many aspects or elements of the contemporary landscape our graduate student would feel he has to leave aside or be silent about. There is no doubt that philosophy has presumed since its early beginnings opposite schools, that it has lived and fed from polemics, quarrels, mutual criticisms of the most bitter kind between its “followers.” But we could state that what has happened in the twentieth century brings the traditional polyphony of philosophical discourse toward a worrisome scattering. To paraphrase a Nietzschean saying, not only do we know today less than ever what a good philosophy book should look like; we are not at all sure about the philosopher’s role, purpose, or task in the public space. It is no accident that this kind of major uncertainty about the ends of philosophy is reflected in the social environment, making hard to reject an embarrassing remark such as the following, quoted from one of P. Raabe’s books on philosophical counseling: if we were to analyze the job opportunities that the graduate students in philosophy have outside universities and research institutes, we would be forced to conclude that “academic philosophers give birth to children who must live in other people’s houses in order to survive.”¹

It is true that, in order to get a better orientation in the complicated landscape of twentieth century philosophy, we are usually referred to a strongly “ideologized” distinction: that between “analytic” and “continental” philosophers. The English philosopher B. Williams once

¹ P. Raabe, *Issues in Philosophical Counseling* (London: Greenwood Publishing, 2002), p. 4.

convincingly argued that “the distinction rests upon a confusion of geographical and methodological terms, as if one were to classify cars into front-wheel drive and Japanese.”² Also, K. Mulligan openly admitted that, “in numerous ways, continental philosophy is an Anglo-American creation.”³ Most of the times the “analytics” use this expression, they refer to a “nosology of thought” (D. Stove), that is a (hopefully) complete inventory of *ill* or bad forms of doing philosophy, away from the “canon” of the exact sciences. But even if we were to assume (which may prove extremely unwise) that “analytic” philosophy is something unitary, supposing a powerfully individualized way of philosophizing, specific conceptual tools, and a clearly defined research program, it will be almost impossible for us to make any order (let alone subsuming all the visions to any common “denominator”) out of the troubled landscape of so many different trends and orientations in contemporary philosophy, such as phenomenology, hermeneutics, existentialism, neo-Marxism, personalism, structuralism and post-structuralism, “debolism,” deconstruction, critical theory, neo-pragmatism, and so on.

There is yet another particular circumstance that could definitively block our graduate student trying to produce that overview of twentieth century philosophy I mentioned earlier. There is surely no other field apart from philosophy in which so many notable figures have made careers by announcing, loud and clear, its *death*. All these successive “deaths” of philosophy would no doubt deserve an independent study. But what interests me now is the complicity between this kind of discourse and the compelling announcement of yet another illustrious death: *the death of the subject*.

The Radical Critique of Modern Subjectivity: A Major Theme in Twentieth Century Philosophy

We all know that “the death of the Author” represented a real obsession for contemporary literary theory and a trademark of structuralist approaches; nevertheless, from a philosophical point of view, such a theme should be regarded as an echo or an “application” of *the radical critique of modern subjectivity*, an essential motif for contemporary (post-Nietzschean) philosophy, at least on the “continent.” We could argue that for someone interested in finding a key, a guiding thread that would allow him or her to grasp, at least to some degree, the inner logic of the polymorphous spectrum of philosophical debates in the last century or so, *the critique of the subject* (in fact, of the entire modern philosophy denounced as being

² A clear presentation of Williams’s point of view is to be found in S. Critchley, *Continental Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 32-34.

³ K. Mulligan, “C’était quoi la philosophie dite «continentale» ?”, in *Un siècle de philosophie. 1900-2000* (Collectif) (Paris: Gallimard, 2000), p. 334.

grounded on a “metaphysics of the subject”) appears not only as one of the main themes, but also as a horizon of understanding for all the relevant philosophical issues, as well as for the way philosophers have been relating to what they were doing, to the nature of philosophy, its relevance, its purpose or its lack of “practical” purpose. The critique of the modern subject, generically identified (yet often in extreme haste) with the Cartesian *cogito*, a subject understood as a *center* of experience and action, endowed with the attribute of *reflexivity* (self-consciousness) and, thus, capable of self-determination, is, in a sense, “the mark of destiny” for our *late* modernity (or “postmodernity,” if the term is not somehow imprudent). Moreover, it doesn’t seem unwise to point out the correspondence between this radical, generalized critique of the “subject” in all its shapes and forms (the contemporary anti-humanism being only a dimension of this critique), so popular in the “continental” tradition, and the “reductionist” way, to use D. Parfit’s word, to deal with the problem of personal identity, embraced by most of the analytic philosophers.

The Death of the “Death of the Subject” and the “Practical” Turn in Contemporary Philosophy. The New Action Subject: A Principle of Practical Reflexivity. Philosophy as a Way of Life. Conflicting Metaphilosophical Views: Applied Philosophy Versus Practical Philosophy

Without going any further with the presentation of this generalized critique of the subject, I would like, to draw attention to a very important philosophical and cultural phenomenon that can be noticed in the West since the beginning of the 1980s. To put it briefly and a bit theatrically, I am speaking about *the death of the “death of the subject.”* We notice in the last decades more and more approaches claiming “the return of the subject,” the rethinking of the concept of subjectivity, or even the resettlement of the subject in that central position of knowledge and action so strongly challenged since the end of the nineteenth century.⁴ And yet, I believe we are not fully grasping the historical challenge that all these approaches suppose, as long as we perceive them as being nothing more than attempts to restore a naïve conception about *subjectivity* (one that identifies “subject”

⁴ “So it seems that this subject, which the moderns had tried to propose as its own foundation and also that of the real, is now broken. Having become, from now on, opaque for its own gaze, knowing itself thrown into a world that it doesn’t constitute, how could it still remain, at the end of the various upheavals whose object it was, a subject for philosophical interrogation? And yet, paradoxically, perhaps the debate around subjectivity has never been more alive as it is in the different traditions of thought that structure world thinking today,” A. Renault, *Découvrir la philosophie: Le sujet* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2010), pp. 31-32.

with “consciousness”),⁵ or a notion of *subject* elaborated in modern philosophy (whether we are referring to the Cartesian *cogito*, the Leibnizian monad, or the transcendental subject of Kant).

The subject that seems to return, nowadays, is an action subject, rather than an epistemic one;⁶ it is not a transcendental position, but a principle of practical reflexivity; it is neither an “originary auto-affection” nor merely a discursive function (as in post-modern approaches), but the result of a process of subjectivation.

I will make another strong assumption: it is this death of “the death of the subject” that favors a rebirth of philosophy in its inaugural concept of “way of life” and “care of the self.” And yet, in order to avoid a primary misunderstanding of these old desiderata, a considerable effort might be required, an effort to conceive the nature of philosophy in a significantly different manner than the one currently propagated in universities and engraved on the minds of the public. What I mean is that we are accustomed to regard philosophy as a body of theories having possible applications. But what if we tried to see philosophy as a kind of practice in itself or, even better, as a set of social practices, most of which have, of course, an eminently discursive or dialogical character?⁷ What I have in

⁵ “It is not about exploiting, for instance, the conscience of a loss that we all feel, more or less, when confronted by the tyranny of Mass Media or publicity or by the phenomena of cultural conditioning, in order to simply reestablish, in its old form, the theme of subjectivity (...); we rightfully exclude the idea of an unproblematic return to the perspective of a self-transparent subject, sovereign author of all of its acts” (*ibidem*, p. 34).

⁶ The hypothesis I am embracing rests also upon this fact, stated by Renault: it is in the field of *moral* and *political* reflection that contemporary philosophy explicitly attested its impossibility to abandon the theme of the subject. Regarding the former, it will be sufficient to remember the impossibility of understanding “moral experience without understanding ourselves as being responsible for our actions,” which obviously refers to “a ‘self’ capable of answering to another as well as to its own conscience” for its deeds, and thus to a moral *subject* (*ibidem*, p. 34). As to the political philosophy of our times, it is interesting to notice that we are witnessing, in the following of the Heideggerian reading of modern metaphysics, “the condemnation of a founding subjectivity as being the distant root of totalitarian or technocratic subjection,” since this kind of denouncement makes sense only by appeal to “a particular idea of the human being as one to whom, in an enslaved world, is denied any opportunity and any right of being the fundament of its own thoughts and actions; in short: of being a *subject* and not only an *object*, reified bearer of an endless manipulation” (*ibidem*, p. 33).

⁷ “What is philosophy when rather than as merely *logos*, one wants to think of it as *ergon*? ... For philosophy to find its reality it must be practice (both in the singular and plural, a practice and practices); the reality of philosophy is found in its practices,” stated Foucault in his 1983 course at *Collège de France*, while commenting on Plato’s *Seventh Letter*, see M.

mind are two conflicting representations about the distinctive mark of philosophy, or even two competing metaphilosophical views: according to the one I am now endorsing, “*practical* philosophy” is a very different thing from “*applied* philosophy,” while the famous dichotomy between theoretical and practical philosophy seems to become rather irrelevant.

This change of perspective regarding philosophical activity is then decisive in order to have a right evaluation of the strictly philosophical purpose that the so-called “techniques of the self” suppose (or, if we are to use the traditional expression, prone nowadays to unfortunate misunderstandings, the “spiritual exercises,” involving various techniques of concentration, meditation, increasing attention, etc., developed and transmitted in the field of philosophy since its historical beginnings). I am referring to exercises of thought (in a very generic sense) aimed to produce a determined *ethical* effect: performing an effective transformation in the “being” itself of the one who philosophizes, in his or her way of living, of relating to the world, to people and to himself or herself; curing illusions and freeing from prejudices; strengthening the mind and the soul, acquiring serenity and inner equilibrium through “the therapy of desire” (M. Nussbaum) and “the education of affectivity” (P. Aubenque). These “techniques of the self” (I make use of M. Foucault’s expression) shouldn’t be regarded as *applications* of a philosophical doctrine of some kind; they are the very *concretization* of a philosophy, its “incorporation,” synonymous with the *subjectivation* of a discourse of truth.

The Contemporary Spirituality Crisis and the Levels of Resistance to the Idea of Philosophy as “a Way of Life” and “Care of the Self”

I am convinced that we shouldn’t hurry with the celebration of this alleged re-appreciation of philosophy in terms of “way of life” (P. Hadot) and genuine *ascetics* (Foucault); it is natural to ask ourselves whether we are dealing with something more than an attractive slogan lacking any coverage in daily life. And it is clear that, no matter how sincere this appeal made by some of the notable figures in contemporary philosophy may be, it has to face powerful resistances.

The first level of resistance is no other than the prevailing socio-cultural context, one so favorable to the idea of *self-acceptance*. We are being bombarded on all channels with messages, commercials, promos, “enlightening” examples, and motivational speeches whose basic idea seems to be the following: *Learn to accept yourself as you are, and everything will be fine!* An amazing web of forces is eroding the faith in the spiritual potential within *each* of us that is in our inborn capacities of personal *evolution*, our power of self-fashioning and self-cultivation. How far we are today from that precept of sages from Antiquity: learn to accept

Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others (1982-1983)*, trans. G. Burchell (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 251-252.

what is not in your power to change, but never indulge in accepting yourself “as you are” – there is always room for improvement; there is always room for spiritual development and self-change! We thus forget the warning that could be read behind Nietzsche’s definition of man as “the animal whose nature has not yet been fixed”⁸: *the moment we stopped evolving, we’ve already begun to devolve!* What we risk losing for good in the “affluent society” is precisely the idea of *spiritualizing* daily life, not in a mystical sense⁹, but in the sense of a continuous *effort* (hence the generic meaning of the philosophical “askesis”) to expand our horizons and deepen our perspective, acknowledging the fact that, “in contrast to the tradition of the *cogito* and to the pretension of the subject to know itself by immediate intuition, ...we understand ourselves only by the long detour of the signs of humanity deposited in cultural works.”¹⁰

Ch. Taylor has underlined the following fact: a “simplified expressivism” permeated Western society after the Second World War.¹¹ We are told incessantly: *be yourself!* But the right question to ask ourselves is whether this modern obsession for authenticity (generating all kinds of “recipes” for personal happiness) is not, in fact, yet another mechanism in service of the “System,” certifying the “biopolitical paradigm” of our time (so-named by critics of modernity such as Foucault or Agamben): a paradigm in which the *telos* of our existence is practically reduced to the “ideal” of physical and economic health of the society’s members, and the subjectivation of human beings is being realized by a repertoire of disciplinary techniques aiming at the “normalization” and leveling of individuals. Encouraging us to “be ourselves” without stipulating any need for a prior spiritual “training” whatsoever, the modern ideal of authenticity is addressed to an individual led to believe that he can find himself through a spontaneous and unprogrammed effort. Convinced that he is knowingly “choosing himself,” the individual who is in complete ignorance of the ancient “techniques of the self” (techniques of detachment, of analyzing representations, and enhancing attention) is actually and unavoidably

⁸ See Fr. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, § 62.

⁹ Following Foucault’s suggestions from his 1982 course at *Collège de France*, if “we will call ‘philosophy’ the form of thought that ... attempts to determine the conditions and limits of the subject’s access to the truth ... then I think we could call ‘spirituality’ the search, practice, and experience through which the subject carries out the necessary transformations on himself in order to have access to the truth,” M. Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject. Lectures at the Collège de France 1981-1982*, trans. G. Burchell (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 15.

¹⁰ See P. Ricoeur, *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics II*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1991[1986]).

¹¹ Ch. Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 475.

assimilating one of the identity “recipes” that circulates on the market.¹² Each of us thinks he is being “himself,” but we all become the same: people following the latest fashion and trends, hollow, obsessed with material wealth, and deprived of any spiritual horizon.

“When one sees the meaning, or rather the near-total absence of meaning, given to all the familiar expressions, such as: come back to yourself, free yourself, be yourself, be authentic, etc....one might begin to suspect the impossibility of constituting today an ethic of the self. However, it is perhaps an urgent, fundamental, and politically indispensable task, that of constituting an ethic of the self, if it is true that after all there is no other point...of resistance to political power than in the relation of the self to itself,” stated Foucault in his 1982 course at Collège de France.¹³

An edifying clue regarding the spiritual crisis we are facing today¹⁴ comes also from the confrontation of the Socratic maxim of *care of the self* – the fundamental principle for the entire Greek and Latin ancient philosophy, at least in Foucault’s view – with the principle of *moral indifference toward yourself*, so fashionable today. This last principle could be seen as the slogan of an ethical minimalism exerting great power of seduction in the present context, a minimalism whose stake is to transfer the principle of *neutrality* from political liberal philosophy into the realm of personal relationships, by denying the relevance of *any* moral judgment about what you are doing with your own life, as long as you are not causing any direct and intended harm to others¹⁵. But we could again ask ourselves if this principle of “neutrality” is not in fact yet another instrument of disciplinary power designed to put us off our guard, a slogan behind which operates multiple conditionings and manipulations, diverse and subtle techniques of domination, leveling, and “normalization.”

We spoke until now about a cultural and social resistance that the revival of the meaning of philosophy as “care of the self” has to face. A second resistance comes from the philosophical sphere itself, more precisely, from the tradition of *modern moral philosophy*, a philosophy

¹² Thus, the demand for authenticity loses any actual meaning and, worse than that, it becomes itself a disciplinary technique, an instrument used in ascribing to individuals “normal,” standard identities, reassuring them that this is what they “really” want or what they “really” are.

¹³ The passage is quoted from E. McGushin, *Foucault’s Askêsis: An Introduction to the Philosophical Life* (Evanston, IL.: Northwestern University Press, 2007), p. XV. The full passage, in a slightly different translation, is to be found in M. Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, pp. 251-252.

¹⁴ A theme for reflection that perhaps shouldn’t remain the monopoly of religious fundamentalism is the extent to which a specific “spirituality” crisis in Western society could be regarded as one of the key factors in the current global economic crisis.

¹⁵ See R. Ogien, *L’éthique aujourd’hui. Maximalistes et minimalistes* (Paris : Ed. Gallimard, 2007).

focused on the elaboration of theories of *right action* that bracket (when not explicitly denying) the very possibility of *fashioning the character* through “practices of the self.”

If we take into consideration the general framework in which moral philosophy has been elaborated in twentieth century, I think we can easily observe a few major tendencies:

(A) Anglo-Saxon moral philosophy was characterized by an oscillation between the Kantian tradition of duty-based ethics and versions of utilitarianism. But what these two methods of moral thinking have in common, despite the differences – intrinsically right principles vs. rational evaluation of consequences – is “*the impersonal point of view*,” the assumption that the right action is the action that *any* given subject should choose in a similar situation. It is clear that such an approach implies, as I said earlier, the bracketing of the meaning of ethics as an “ascetic” work whose goal is the “self-fashioning” of the individual.

(B) On the Continent, in the first half of the twentieth century, as in the years following the Second World War, we witness the rise of a number of existentialist ethics that highlight the subject’s “transcendence” and the agent’s freedom, but are denying this subject any substantial reality, reducing it to (or confronting it with) “a set of perpetually open possibilities.” It would follow that any “self-choice” is nothing but an accident, a contingent fact, the ideal of authenticity thus being reduced to a *perpetual self-distancing or self-denial* (at least this is the Sartrean conception of the thirties and forties, one so influential in its times¹⁶). Then, the ascent of structuralism in the decades following the war is in fact synonymous with that announcement of “the death of the subject” earlier mentioned: a subject seen only as a variable position in a structure or being reduced to a simple discursive function, a kind of approach that seemed, at that point, to produce the decisive frame for the “dissolution” of the traditional issues of ethics (“the good life”) into a “political” theory searching to define “the optimum of political functioning.”¹⁷

It is not before the 1980s – on one hand, by the emergence and the success of “philosophical counseling” in the Anglo-Saxon space (a practice resuming, in a very pragmatic spirit, the ancient claims of philosophy to prove itself relevant in the context of daily life), and on the other hand by

¹⁶ Note how MacIntyre points out that the “nullity” of the self, separated from its social roles, is a common assumption (and thus symptomatic for the “spirit of the time”) of two seemingly opposite approaches, such as Sartrean existentialist philosophy and Goffman’s sociology, see Al. MacIntyre, *After Virtue. A Study in Moral Theory* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), p. 32.

¹⁷ See, for instance, the interview given by M. Foucault to P. Caruso in 1967, “Qui êtes-vous, professeur Foucault?”, reproduced in M. Foucault, *Dits et écrits I. 1955-1975* (Paris: Ed. Gallimard (Quarto), 2001), pp. 645-646.

the extremely favorable reception of the pledges of Hadot or Foucault for understanding ancient philosophy as being ultimately a form of life¹⁸ – that the possibility to see the *constitution* of the ethical subject as the explicit stake and task of practical philosophy is constantly and insistently brought into discussion.¹⁹

A third level of resistance that the philosophical concern for the “care of the self” has to face is located in the field of a *moral psychology* that declines the very possibility of ethical subjectivation by challenging the central assumption of any “virtue ethics”: the idea that the “character” of a human being can be shaped by forming some stable habits or behavior reflexes. This rejection would seem justified on the basis of two different (even opposite) approaches:

(A) In the psychology of personality there is an influent current called “situationism,” which states, on the basis of some empirical researches more or less relevant, the *non-existence* of character in a strong, Aristotelian sense.²⁰ For instance, conducting a series of tests on preschool children designed to provoke reactions of honesty and honor, some psychologists pointed out the fact that these children behaved fairly or unfairly in a totally inconsistent way; hence, it was concluded that “honesty” is not an “inner entity,” but only “a function of situation.” Still, let’s recognize that an Aristotelian wouldn’t feel at all embarrassed by such an experiment, precisely because he is not tempted to refer to the personality of a child as something certifying Rousseauist purity of the authentic and intrinsically good “self,” uncontaminated by society, but only as to a raw material to be shaped. Also, the critics of virtue ethics often tend to neglect a fundamental distinction for the Stagirite, that between “natural virtues” and “real virtues,” the former being nothing more than rough and especially *fluctuating* impulses that, in the absence of right assessment of each

¹⁸ Let’s not forget the massive success, not only in the French space, currently registered by the books of L. Ferry, M. Onfray or A. Comte-Sponville.

¹⁹ It can be argued in this context that the analysis of the “care of the self” in ancient philosophy is the starting point in formulating a current philosophical alternative to the various attempts to “deconstruct the subject” registered in the twentieth century. However, it can be argued, based on Derrida’s statements, that the experience of “deconstruction” is a “spiritual exercise” *in itself*, necessary to all of us that have received a philosophical education (see on this topic E. McGushin, “Foucault and the Problem of the Subject,” in *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, vol. 31, 5-6 / 2005).

²⁰ See on this matter J. Doris, *Lack of Character: Personality and Moral Behavior* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 23-27, approvingly quoted by R. Ogien, *L’éthique aujourd’hui*, pp. 63-66.

situation, often cause reckless behavior, contrary to truly virtuous conduct.²¹

(B) There would be yet another alternative, opposite to the one outlined above, but equally disastrous for “virtue ethics”: to claim that “characters” really do exist, but in a sense so strong that they are exclusively the result of heredity, possibly of the experiences from the first years of life, however, excluding any prospect of further (re)shaping! In the same context, recalling that “character shaping” is, in terms of the Ancients, a task synonymous with “the education of affectivity” and, at the same time, defining emotions as “*involuntary reactions*” in the strictest sense,²² we would conclude that the idea of acquiring the virtues is a goal lacking any coverage in real life.

But what if we were to confront these two divergent positions and, using a strategy not at all unfamiliar to philosophers, see the Situationist arguments as arguments supporting the possibility of considering the self not a fixed and immutable given, but *a work to accomplish*? I think a similar strategy is also used by P. Ricoeur when, taking note of the sequence of *puzzling cases* through which Parfit sought to undermine the importance we “spontaneously” attach to the idea of “personal identity,” he suggests that we see them not as arguments in favor of a “quasi Buddhist” dissolution of the self, but as arguments stressing the need to assume a *narrative* conception about the self.²³ Perhaps our personal identity is truly not the *summing up* of some physical determinations, but the *assuming* of a *personal history* – which is a completely different thing than the evidence of a “psychological continuity” more or less fluctuating. I also find relevant for what I have earlier qualified as being the death of “the death of the subject” in contemporary philosophy the fact that in the last decades of the twentieth century, two philosophers descending from completely different traditions, D. Dennett and Ricoeur, come to propose (beyond all that separates their conceptions and methods) an open notion of *narrative self* as

²¹ “Each of us seems to possess the character he has in some sense by nature, since right from birth we are just, prone to temperance, courageous, and the rest. Nevertheless, we expect to find that what is really good is something different, and that we shall possess these qualities in another way; for both children and animals have the natural states, but without intellect they are obviously harmful ... But if the agent acquires intellect, then his action is quite different; his state, while similar to what it was, will then be real virtue ... so there are two in the part related to character – natural virtue and real virtue; and of these, real virtue does not develop without practical wisdom,” Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, VI, 13, 1144b, trans. R. Crisp (Cambridge University Press, 2004).

²² A possibility outlined by R. Ogien, *L'éthique aujourd'hui*, p. 67.

²³ See P. Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. K. Blamey (The University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 138-139.

a way to overcome the paradoxes that the problem of personal identity has raised in modern philosophy.

Aporias that Define the Philosopher's Condition: (a) Disinterested Contemplation vs. Existential Practice; (b) Socratic-Nietzschean Unsettling vs. Full Embrace of a Philosophy of Life; (c) Self-Creation vs. Self-Discovery

If we try to regard philosophy not as a body of *theories* having questionable applications in the real life, but as a set of social *practices*, most of which have a discursive character or even an eminently *dialogical* one, I think the following aspect will result: the aporias that we first have to face are not those that equally configure and complicate the philosophical discourse in general, but the aporias that illustrate this “form of life” that is philosophy, philosophy as a practice, therefore the aporias defining the condition of the philosopher himself or herself!²⁴

I will try to make explicit three such aporias intimately linked, drawn from what I would imagine as an open-ended series:

(a) The first emphasizes the tension between the aim of philosophical “contemplation” on one hand, understood as a way to transcend the concrete data of existence and to connect, by Reason, to the eternal and the universal, and to the “practical” meaning of philosophy on the other (“the return to the cave,” if we were to make use of the Platonic metaphor), the task of enlightening and educating, the care of the self and of one’s fellows, which many philosophers have felt as their ultimate calling. At this point, we are not speaking, as before, of two conflicting *metaphilosophical* views (“one focusing on the pole of discourse, the other, on the pole of life choice”²⁵), but instead we are trying to grasp what may lay behind a *personal* choice for philosophy. Each of us who have received philosophical instruction should ask ourselves why we chose philosophy: in order to escape from the miseries and frustrations of everyday life in an “ivory tower,” or because we fostered the belief that philosophy can change our lives and our selves, that it can bring us “spiritual strengthening” and greater control over the daily facts of life, a control emerged from a superior understanding of the world, of the relationships with the others, and with ourselves? And yet, it is precisely because I don’t think we can give a clear-cut answer to this question that I am speaking of an “aporia.”

²⁴ Following Aristotle but also N. Hartmann, I assume that the discovery of “aporias” does not amount to a definitive blockage, to a stunning of thought; on the contrary, an aporia could be seen as the invitation to find a personal answer (with *contextual* validity) to an “eternal problem.”

²⁵ See P. Hadot, *La philosophie comme manière de vivre : Entretiens avec J. Carlier et A. Davidson* (Albin Michel, 2001).

Hadot has shown that in the ancient world, the philosopher always seemed to the others a strange (*atopos*), unclassifiable character, one who was not “at ease” in the world. All the ancient schools of philosophy, even the Sceptics, saw the philosophical life as a rupture of the quotidian; “but at the same time, the philosopher acts in the quotidian life, sometimes giving even specific indications.”²⁶ Socrates provided the model *par excellence* of the philosophical life, conceived not as a complete escape from the quotidian, but as a way of sustaining a modified and lucid relationship with oneself, with others, and with nature. (It is here that we could detect the roots of Heidegger’s notion of “authenticity”). This relationship defines the very meaning of the spiritual *conversion* attained through the practice of philosophy in Antiquity: not the immersion in a private, interior world of a human being, but a modified relation to the “exterior,” or the entire network of practices that equally express and constitute the self (as *extended* self, to use an expression borrowed from sociology, as opposed to the modern *nuclear* self). Plutarch, as reminded by Hadot, clearly stated: “Socrates was a philosopher not because he taught from a chair, but because he talked to his friends and joked with them; he also went in the agora and, in the end, he had an exemplary death. So it is the practice of Socrates’s everyday life that was his true philosophy.”²⁷

Still, such a judgment may seem extreme and unfair in regard to all of those philosophers who had outstanding contributions in various fields of academic philosophy, even though there was nothing special about their lives, at least compared with Socrates’s legendary destiny. This is why I would prefer to suggest that a general and very formal “solution” of the aporia above may lay in its “temporalization”: trying to see philosophical contemplation as a necessary *moment* of escape from the quotidian, and the “care of the self,” the community practices, as a necessary *sequel* of the philosophical course.²⁸ But I believe a more accurate picture would be that of a continuous “back and forth” along the entire philosophical life, between the space of abstract thought and the demands arising from the fact of living in the world and sharing it with your fellow people. It should be said that the “abstract” often proves itself to be “a necessary hiding space” and an existential respite in order “for understanding, and maybe change, to take place”²⁹: you temporarily run away from the death of your loved one by thematizing “the being-toward-death.” But the important thing is not to forget to return and examine your concrete existence in the light of your

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

²⁸ The Stoics could provide us with the model of combining the exercise of the “view from above” in their moments of solitude with the focus on the present and the increasing of attention in relation to others in the agora.

²⁹ See L. Amir, “Philosophical Practice: A Method and Three Cases,” in *Practical Philosophy*, vol. 6.1, 2003, pp. 36-41.

philosophical commitments; without the belief in the power of philosophy to change and improve your life, you are no better than any sophist.

It is also worth adding that, in the end, *each* philosophical school of Antiquity proposed a specific way of *conversion* and of *harmonization* of the theoretical dimension of philosophy with the demands of living in community, but that these “life choices” are placed, following Hadot’s point of view, in a relatively small number of “transhistorical or transcultural” possible attitudes toward existence.³⁰

(b) A second aporia that a philosopher has to face engages other two conflicting demands: the Socratic-Nietzschean demand for a specific *unsettlement* and a continuous experimentation, an extreme willingness to place oneself in any position, to judge things from as many perspectives as possible, to think otherwise than before, to think *against* your own “intuitions” and prejudices, confronted with the demand for full *acceptance* of a particular point of view, involving a notion of authenticity that “condemns” to an existence lived in perfect harmony with the philosophical principles already adopted.

You do not permit yourself to stop before any ultimate wisdom, ultimate goodness, ultimate power, while unharnessing your thoughts;...perhaps man will rise ever higher as soon as he ceases to *flow out* into a god.³¹

On one hand, the critical willingness that a philosopher must prove by questioning any personal belief and by always trying to see things through other theoretical “lenses” than the ones he or her has grown accustomed to use³² seems to be a prerequisite for any philosophical *training* whatsoever: assuming there exist, for instance, those “transcultural” philosophical attitudes Hadot spoke about (corresponding, say, to the six major schools of

³⁰ See P. Hadot, *La philosophie comme manière de vivre*, pp. 118-119, where the French exegete mentions, for instance, the *attitudinal* agreement between Pyrrho and Lao Tzu, between the Plotinian mystic and some trends in Hindu thought, or between the Stoic attitude of accepting fate and of placing your individual existence in the grand scheme of things, and some Chinese or Buddhist attitudes.

³¹ Fr. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, § 285, trans. W. Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1974), pp. 229-230.

³² “*Brief habits*. I love brief habits and consider them an inestimable means for getting to know *many* things and states, down to the bottom of their sweetness and bitternesses” (Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, § 295, p. 236). Nietzsche refines this idea in a footnote: “some stability and temporary equilibrium are needed to permit the concentration of all mental and emotional resources on the most important problems. One simply cannot question everything at once. The most one can do is to grant nothing *permanent* immunity.”

philosophy in ancient Greece), how could I truly understand their positioning and particularities without becoming myself, in turn, Platonist, Epicurean, Stoic, Skeptic, and so forth? But on the other hand, the philosopher who confines himself or herself to change his or her ideas as often as he or she changes shirts loses credibility before his or her fellows and is considered a mere sophist. Besides the internal consistency of a doctrine, the harmony or the full correspondence between *acts* and *words* has always been a criterion for judging the relevance of a philosophy. And it is precisely this existential or – to use a term of ancient origin – “parrhesiastic”³³ notion of truth that gave to the spiritual exercises the meaning of concrete techniques of subjectivation or “incorporation” of a philosophical discourse. The texts and, in particular, the courses from Foucault's last years brilliantly illustrate this tension between the demand of a permanent self-distancing (*se déprendre de soi-même*) and the requirement to make of your own life and body a “theater of truth.”

Again, a specific “temporalization” seems to be the generic “solution” of the aporia, transforming its two “arms” in a succession of moments: the self-distancing may thus be regarded as an indispensable preparatory moment before *choosing* a particular philosophy. In fact, as in the previous case, it may be just a theoretical simplification of a continuous “back and forth”: the philosopher is a person without dogmas, who puts everything “on the table” in any debate, in any genuine exercise of dialogue, only later to find out what remains of his or her beliefs or, more precisely, which of the ideas he has endorsed, in various formulations, *return*. (Here I have in mind a possible application of Nietzsche's doctrine of the Eternal Return as an “ethical-selective” criterion, in the sense of Deleuze's interpretation.³⁴)

Perhaps the philosopher's *truths* can never “freeze,” cannot take the form of definitive certainty, being only the ideas you *regain*, here and now, with every dialogue and every controversy. Likewise, maybe your projective self can only be subject to retrospective consideration: it is nothing but the “precipitate” of numerous variations³⁵.

³³ Term derived from the noun *parrhêsia*, the Greek word that designates boldness and freedom of speech. Initially employed in the political context of Athenian democracy, *parrhêsia* supposed the determination to speak the truth at any cost, to fearlessly speak at all times, regardless of the consequences. Foucault focused his last courses on the study of the ethical-philosophical implications of this notion.

³⁴ See G. Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. H. Tomlinson (Columbia University Press, 2006).

³⁵ Assuming the fact that we cannot simply discover “who we really are” and that the elaboration of our own conception about life is always made on the ground of the possibilities of (self)interpretation available in our culture, we are left with the *hope* that by trying different perspectives and by constantly putting to the test our professed beliefs and commitments in the space of free dialogue, we will finally be able to “sediment” our guiding ideas. Perhaps this remains the only way to get to affirm “It is a *fact* that I think what I think and I am what

(c) If we place the “philosophical life” conceived as “true life” (*alêthês bios*) between the two poles of authenticity mentioned above, we may be led to a third aporia: is *the philosopher’s “self” something that has to be (re)discovered or something that has to be created?*

“I do not think it is ever completely clear or resolved ... whether the self is something to which you return because it is given in advance or an objective you must set for yourself and to which you might finally gain access if you achieve wisdom. Is the self the point to which you return through the long detour of ascesis and philosophical practice? Or is the self an object you keep always before your eyes and reach through a movement that in the end can only be bestowed by wisdom? I think this is one of the elements of fundamental uncertainty, or fundamental oscillation, in this practice of the self,” stated Foucault in his 1982 course about the techniques of the self in Greek and Roman philosophy.³⁶

In fact, this is the point that ultimately separates the two interpretations provided by Foucault and Hadot to the goal of “salvation” and spiritual conversion in Greek and Roman philosophy: while, for Hadot, the conversion signifies a way to access “the best portion of the self,” “the perfect reason,” thus reaching a kind of cosmic consciousness, Foucault would seek to identify the coordinates of a genuine “culture of the self” in late Antiquity, motivated by the aspiration to transform an ordinary life into a “work of art.”³⁷ While Foucault is interested in shaping the coordinates of a *self-creation* process, insisting “much more on the exercises of auto-subjection, of the ethical fortification (*reinforcement*) of the self by

I am,” without implying a *theological* reference to the idea of personhood or the dismissal from the start of the idea of freedom. However, two clarifications should be made. First of all, I am not trying to suggest the possibility of a *chronological* sequence of moments; it is not about *periods* of life that would succeed in the philosophical “training,” but, as is also shown in thematizing the aporias outlined above, the more accurate perspective is that of a “back and forth” between philosophical debates and the daily life, a process of self-interpretation without firm boundaries and an existential *bet* that will always preserve a dose of uncertainty. Secondly, it has to be said that the “putting to the test” refers to *conceptions* about life, not to immediate life *decisions*. I believe it is here that the uses of philosophical “training” stand out: while decisions about concrete life situations are generally irrevocable (in fact, you are never being offered a *second* chance, but, at the most, an *another* chance), regarding conceptions, you always have the chance to change your mind, to radically revise your beliefs and start over again. Philosophy could then become a “school” that prepares us for a life lived without regrets, increasing our chances to get to relate to our own existence as a *whole* in a fully *committed* fashion.

³⁶ M. Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, pp. 213-214.

³⁷ See P. Hadot, “Reflections on the Idea of the ‘Cultivation of the Self,’” in *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, trans. M. Chase (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1995).

itself” and “marginalizing the spiritual exercises of the dissolution of the subject in a cosmic totality,”³⁸ Hadot interprets *self-discovery* as a release from the individual and an access to the universal, as an awareness of the fact that you are a part of nature and of “universal reason,” in other words, as a process of *trans-subjectivation*.³⁹

A general indication in order to find a personal answer to the aporia “discovered” vs. “created” self could be the following: even a radical proponent of *self-creation* will have to agree that there will always remain something that cannot be regarded as a creation in itself, something that has to be acknowledged as “already there,” in the human person; at least the *ability* for self-creation remains something to be *discovered* as an original *potency* of each and every person. But the amount to which the alleged self-fashioning is dependent on external factors or social and cultural conditionings varies greatly from one philosophical doctrine to another.

The Practice of Philosophy and its Present Ethical and Political Relevance

We began by addressing a vital question: *What is the meaning and purpose of philosophy in the context of today's culture?* Now, it seems that all the comments made so far were in fact aiming at the possibility to reformulate the starting question in a way that directly concerns us, in other words, in a more *personal* interrogation: *What is the task of a philosopher today?*

It may be considered that asking the question about the philosopher's task in a way that directly connects him or her to the present already expresses a specifically *modern* attitude. (Analyzing Kant's small text *Was ist Aufklärung?*, published in 1784 as an answer to an inquiry carried out by a German periodical, Foucault regarded it as a *paradigmatic* text for modernity, insofar as Kant explicitly inaugurated there a type of critical reflection in which a philosopher openly addresses the problem of “the contemporary status of his own enterprise.”⁴⁰) This “attitude of modernity,”

³⁸ F. Gros, “Le souci de soi chez Michel Foucault: A Review of *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*,” in *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, vol. 31, 5-6 / 2005, pp. 698-699.

³⁹ “Seneca does not find his joy in ‘Seneca’, but by transcending ‘Seneca’; by discovering that there is within him – within all human beings, that is, and within the cosmos itself – a reason which is a part of universal reason”. P. Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, p. 207.

⁴⁰ “No doubt it is not the first time that a philosopher has given his reasons for undertaking his work at a particular moment. But it seems to me that it is the first time that a philosopher has connected in this way, closely and from the inside, the significance of his work with respect to knowledge, a reflection on history and a particular analysis of the specific moment at which he is writing and because of which he is writing. It is in the reflection on “today” as difference in history and as motive for a particular philosophical task that the novelty of this text appears to me to lie,” see M. Foucault, “What is

as Foucault named it, would suppose, precisely, a critical interrogatory with respect to the present, a philosophical problematization of our own “historical mode of being.”⁴¹ In fact, it is not until modern times that the present itself becomes a central issue. The claim to reach an eternal, unhistorical truth becomes increasingly difficult to sustain, and the connection between the philosophical reflections on one hand and the present moment on the other (that is, a particular social, cultural, or scientific context) becomes an explicit task. “You have no right to despise the present,” warned Baudelaire, approvingly quoted by Foucault.

So how are we to answer the question about the philosopher’s task in the present context? I shall propose only some guiding threads that may help us in finding a viable answer to this question.

I think that when you try to look “from the outside” at the history of philosophy and see it as the history of a genre of discourse, sooner or later you will be haunted by a form of exasperation close to despair. On one hand, you realize that the effort of conceptual clarification knows no end and that you cannot avoid a kind of “regression to infinity”: you may very well build a philosophical jargon where you will get the impression of comfortably living (maybe together with your philosophical “friends”), but you will never be able to fully overcome the *semantic indistinction* that requires the bringing of your philosophical terms into the so-called “common” language as soon as you need to explain yourself, to make yourself understood by a public. On the other hand, a *structural* analysis of the types of philosophical discourse may give the impression that, in the end, there is nothing but *an impersonal textual machine*: everything is being reduced to an indefinite series of structural oppositions or hierarchical-oppositive structures,⁴² pairs of concepts placed in opposition to each other only to reveal afterward their mutual complicity or *chiasmic* nature. It seems enough to detect the structural opposition that outlines some problem’s field in order to subsequently obtain the number of (logical) possibilities of location in that field, the “functionalization” possibilities of that aporia, each possibility being sooner or later linked to some philosopher’s name.⁴³

Enlightenment?”, in P. Rabinow (ed.), *The Foucault Reader*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), p. 38.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

⁴² “...one might say philosophy’s *unique thesis*, the thesis which constitutes the concept of metaphor, the opposition of the proper and the nonproper, of essence and accident, of intuition and discourse, of thought and language, of the intelligible and the sensible,” see J. Derrida, “White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy,” in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. A. Bass (The Harvester Press, 1982), p. 229.

⁴³ The “quarrel of the universals” remains the paradigmatic example of philosophical “production” in the field of an “eternal” problem. A book that

It is only when you try to regard philosophy as a personal “affair”; when you ask yourself how it is possible to *choose* one particular philosophy over so many, how it is possible that *this* sum of abstractions directly concern you, and how it is that you resonate with certain “founding metaphors” (from a philosophical discourse) rather than others; when you ask yourself how you can be *moved* by a philosophy, how it may seduce you, convince you, how it might really become your “philosophy of life”; it is then and only then that the problem of *self-choosing* regains its central significance and the choice for a particular philosophy becomes a consequence or a personal option on the horizon of this fundamental choice. It is then that philosophy reveals to yourself a whole spectrum in which you can gain (or waste) your freedom, if not a *higher* form of freedom in itself – the “spiritual” one.

Perhaps it is only at this level, when confronted by the task of *self-choice*, that you can rediscover, after many sterile experiments, the confidence in philosophy – a confidence corresponding to that *hope* that defines us, above all despair and exasperation, as projective beings, *looking* for something, in need of *purpose* and direction. In this context, we can truly grasp the value of the lesson provided by MacIntyre in his famous book *After Virtue*⁴⁴: the *teleologism* continues to function on a “local” scale, giving meaning to our personal histories, even after the alleged abandonment of the grand narratives of legitimation, abandonment which would characterize, using Lyotard’s notorious expression, our “postmodern condition.”⁴⁵ The same context grounds the salutary attempt to change our representation about the nature of philosophy, ceasing to consider it as the summing of some abstract theories and instead trying to regard it as being from the start a “form of life” and a set of practices whose goal is the *self-transformation* of the individual,⁴⁶ the never complete release from various social conditionings, and the widening of the range of options. We could

brilliantly illustrates this perspective is *La querelle des universaux: De Platon à la fin du Moyen Age* (Paris: Seuil, 1998), by A. de Libera.

⁴⁴ See Al. MacIntyre, *After Virtue. A Study in Moral Theory*, first edition: (University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), in particular chapter 15: “The Virtues, the Unity of a Human Life and the Concept of Tradition.”

⁴⁵ See J.-F. Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. G. Benington and B. Massumi (University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

⁴⁶ “But the active life is not necessarily active in relation to other men, as some people think, nor are only those processes of thought active that are pursued for the sake of the objects that result from action, but far more, those speculations and thoughts (*theôrias kai dianoêseis*) that have their end in themselves and are pursued for their own sake; for the end is to do well, and therefore is a certain form of action (*praxis tis*). And even with actions done in relation to external objects, we predicate action in the full sense chiefly of the master-craftsmen who direct the action by their thoughts (*dianoiais architektonas*).” Aristotle, *Politics*, VII, 3, 1325b, trans. H. Rackman (Harvard University Press, 1959).

state that the *telos* of “authenticity” thus migrates from the so problematic realm of “being yourself” to the position of a *temporary escape* from the “System” – an escape that will not leave you *unchanged*.

More than this, I believe that this shift to self-transformation or spiritual conversion reconsidered as the ultimate philosophical end is also consistent with a significant contemporary mutation with respect to our understanding of the notion of *truth*. Our hermeneutical age makes us extremely skeptical about both the idea of factual correspondence (our “truths” prove to be provisional, only “hinges” of some *episteme* or paradigm) and the idea of textual coherence (there will always remain points of undecidability). As to the possibility of an essential *revelation*, we reasonably doubt the function and the recognition that a prophet or a “master of truth” could still claim in a “disenchanted,” secularized world. Our truth remains *the making of the truth (facere veritatem)*, the confirmation of the truth by someone’s living example: more simply put, truth is *what you make true by keeping your word*. Our truth is a truth of hope (not of faith or entrustment), *the truth of promise*, the commitment for a *future truth*, in a world shared with our fellows.

There is no doubt that we may frequently encounter similar reflections about the importance of self-realization on the beaten track of the so-called pop culture of authenticity. But what if this entire self-help “industry” is not mistaken with respect to the central message, but rather in the manner in which it oversimplifies it,⁴⁷ neglecting or, even worse, making us neglect all that is keeping us at every moment connected to the social network, promising us instead a seductive but illusory radical alternative: the “inner” self? Maybe *the self always already lives outside of itself*, and what we can really do about it – and what we should perhaps not hesitate to express in all its “banality” – is trying to be a little better every day, in all our enterprises: only thus will our world become, here and there, a little better.

Neither the “world of ideas,” nor the divine Revelation, nor the universal Reason can ground, today, the *parrhesiastic* truth, the truth of existence; the philosopher is forced to sustain his or her proposal before the community as the artist does, to submit it to local and historical validation, based on intersubjective criteria. But, in order not to fall back on the aporia that practically generated the modern ideal of authenticity as an individualistic declaration of independence from all the social roles we are constrained to assume with the purpose of being accepted by others, I would say that this validation is not the shallow recognition of the general public, but the recognition offered by the ones to whom you feel close, the ones you regard as being important characters in your narrative. Or, in an even more “exclusivist” perspective, the recognition provided by those you

⁴⁷ “The problem with self-help ideas is not that they are wrong, but that they are one-sided,” Ch. Guignon, *On being authentic* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004, p. VIII).

recognize in your turn as being valuable and significant, those who have gone through a philosophical training like your own.⁴⁸

In short, neither the withdrawal in a virtual space (it matters less than one might think if we are talking about *Second Life* or *The Phenomenology of Spirit*), nor the promotion of great revolutions (which will inevitably end, in the event of success, in another system of power and oppression), but only the work on yourself, the increased attention to you and others, and the attitude of critical vigilance continuously and consistently exercised toward all forms of disciplinary power remain today (perhaps today more than ever) the philosopher's task, and also the hope that philosophy still reserves for its practitioners.

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⁴⁸ Isn't that the very meaning of Plato's warning from the *Seventh Letter*, addressed to anyone who would have ventured to claim "competence" in Platonism and, more generally, in philosophy? Perhaps we should acknowledge the fact that "the love of wisdom," "the care of the self," or Aristotelian happiness are callings that remain, in principal, universal, but are in fact accessible only to a spiritual élite.

CHAPTER XII

THE HUMAN VALUE OF CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE IN DEMOCRATIC SOCIETIES

DORINA PĂTRUNSU

Abstract: According to Aristotle, for an individual to be human is to have a place in a society. Such a place, I believe, can be located only relative to the existent institutions – even better, relative to the constraints the institutions set on the individual. In other words, the relevant place an individual has in a society structured according to some institutional network is circumscribed by the limits within which the individual may freely interact with the social environment.

Arguably, in the societies guided by democratic values, there is a natural tendency of diminishing the differences among individuals in regard to their degrees of liberty. In principle, it is supposed that democratization generates that kind of social space in which institutional structure provides the individuals with equality in opportunities and with the same degree of liberty. By speaking about equality in opportunities and limits of liberty, I do not mean the obtaining of social uniformity, but rather the providing of equal conditions for each individual to develop freely his/her own personality, and also the imposing of equal constraints for each individual to respect his/her duties as member of society. Thus, to be individual in a democratic society is to enjoy an equal social status defined by certain generally accepted rights and duties.

Nevertheless, in real life, democratic societies have to face cases where some rules fail to impose the same constraints upon each individual, acting systematically to the disadvantage of some of them. In such cases, the obvious and correct thing to say is that those people who are victimized are frustrated and, more than that, they are entitled to let others know about the unfairness of the current system of laws by protesting in one way or another. For one thing, in democratic societies civil protests are supposed to play a crucial role in the process of self-regulation and self-correcting of the institutional structure. In this connection, Anthony Arblaster (1987) justly remarks that society is perceived as a collection of individuals whose interests and preferences are different and divergent; but what brings a society into agreement with the democratic values is that each of the individual interests is acknowledged as legitimate and, hence, each of the individual options matters in the process of designing the institutional framework.

This discussion aims to analyze civil disobedience – one of the means to be employed to the effect of improving the existent institutional system. In particular, civil disobedience is intended for a minority systematically

disadvantaged by the laws imposed by a majority that is not well-informed. Of course, one of the presuppositions is that the majority is already committed to democratic values, including that all citizens should enjoy equal basic liberties. The direct consequence is that, in a case where a group of citizens is systematically oppressed, that is, some of their basic liberties are denied to them by some of the existing laws, the civil majority, if it were well-informed about the injustice, would be ready to put pressure on their political representatives to amend the system of laws.

Let us consider for a moment that in a democratic country, there are elections. Before the second ballot tour there is a strong possibility that a candidate whose previous political statements express discriminatory beliefs directed against a certain ethnic minority will be elected. A group of individuals belonging to civil society decide to organize a demonstration to inform the population about the danger of xenophobia and the real convictions of the aforementioned political leader. But, during the elections, such a meeting is not legally allowed in this particular country. Thus, the participants commit an act of civil disobedience. Is it justified? I advocate not only for the legitimacy of such political acts, but also for the claim that the existence and the success of civil disobedience is a test-condition for any society oriented by democratic values.

Keywords: civil disobedience, democratic society, globalization

WHAT IS MEANT BY CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE?

Civil disobedience, says John Rawls, is a political, conscientious, public act contrary to law, but remaining nonviolent, by which it is made an appeal to the sense of justice of the majority of the community, with the aim of bringing about a change in the law or institutions of government. (*A Theory of Justice*, cap. 5, § 55, p. 364) Along these lines, Garry Francione and Ana Charlton consider that civil disobedience is the purposeful violation of law to communicate the protester's belief that the law is unconstitutional or morally defective. (*Demonstrating and Civil Disobedience: A Legal Guide for Activists*, cap.4, §.1) Thus, it is customary to associate civil disobedience with those kinds of public protests that break the law in a nonviolent manner, with the intention of informing people about the unjustness of the legal system, and creating public support and pressure to force a change in the law in question. The acts of civil disobedience are not guided by anarchical principles, but rather by the idea of improving the existing laws in the spirit of justice.

It is a familiar point that any democratic society should be a society open to change and improvement. But if this is so, then the possibility of taking the action of civil disobedience is a test for any democracy, because such an alternative, if available to civil society for controlling the government, gives individuals an important tool for adjusting the laws to their actual needs. Civil disobedience draws its justification and legitimacy

from the directory principles of any democracy: tolerance, diversity, and openness.¹

Both the act of civil disobedience and its success require several steps:

- the existence of some injustice in the legal system by which a minority is systematically disadvantaged, and the identification of the injustice by some people of the minority;
- the effective protest consisting in the action of making public the truth about the injustice by breaking some laws, especially the laws responsible for the blamed injustice;
- the immediate reaction of the public authorities (i.e. the authorities legitimated by the majority) for reestablishing the order in accordance with the laws;
- the spreading of news through the media channels;
- the acknowledgement of the injustice by the majority and, as a subsequent reaction, a change in the law made by the representatives.

Therefore, a discussion on the justification of civil disobedience should take into account at least two levels. On the first level, the analysis should identify which are the democratic principles shared by the majority of the social corpus – which are the principles that ground the institutional framework in any democratic society. The second level of analysis should identify the practical aspects that maximize the efficiency of an action of civil disobedience and minimize its risks.

The present discussion focuses only on the theoretical level of analysis. On that level, two different justifications for the legitimacy of civil disobedience can be distinguished. To begin with, principle justification is supported by the fact that, in a democratic society, its major part is committed to the elements – premises, rules, and goals – specific to the democratic game. More specific in any democracy is what might give to any kind of protest its moral ground, even though the protest violates the existing legal system: the spread and popular option for obeying the democratic principles. Nothing is above the law except the principles inspiring the law. Therefore, the appeal to civil disobedience is a legitimate violation of the law, because the law, in its turn, violates the democratic principles.

Functional-justification, the second kind of justification for civil disobedience, relies on the idea that it contributes, along with other forms of social protest, to the society, to the process of self-regulating and self-

¹ According to Robert Nozick, one of the characteristics of a liberal-democratic society is its capacity for receiving new individuals together with their wishes, preferences, and interests, even though these individuals are ethnically or racially different from the initial residential individuals, given the principles promoted by this kind of system, the democratic system. If the system is unjust, the late comers should have the same right as the older ones in proposing modifications to, and, ultimately, modifying the system. See Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, chapter 10.

correcting. Thus, it is its status of sensor for inconsistency with the democratic principles that gives acts of civil disobedience their democratic legitimacy.

Arblaster calls attention to what a danger the problems usually signaled by acts of civil disobedience – such as cases where minorities are disadvantaged in the process of political decision-making – would be for any democracy, if they were remain unknown to the majority and if the majority were insensitive to the aspirations of individuals belonging to minorities. In his paper *Democracy*, Arblaster remarks that “the existence of permanent minorities, whose aspirations, wishes, and even principles are systematically ignored or overridden in the collective decision-making processes, can easily make a majoritarian democracy unworkable.” (p. 68). He reiterates the point a bit later, showing that “a democracy in which some groups, ethnic, religious, or political, are permanently in a minority, and thus, in opposition, is likely to be instable and may lose legitimacy.” (p. 71)

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE – AN APPEAL TO THE THIRD AUTHORITY

The act of civil disobedience should be understood as an endeavor made by some individuals to be acknowledged in their social space. The Aristotelian idea that the individual cannot be human outside of a social space (that is, the individual’s membership in some polis is a necessary condition for being human) should be supplemented with the specification that the individual acquires human status only if the individual and his/her fundamental aspirations and interests are acknowledged by the social environment. Along the same lines, Berlin notes that the individual wishes to be acknowledged and understood even though such acknowledgment might bring hate or antipathy against the individual; the only persons able to give the individual the acknowledgement sought are the very members of the society with which the individual is historically, morally, economically, and, in some cases, ethnically related.²

If we grant that it is essential for any individual to receive social acknowledgement and consideration as a fundamental need, we should also admit that his/her attitude toward the existing rules, rights, duties, and obligations regulating public interactions among individuals is to be judged according to the degree to which the content of the social rules shows acknowledgement of the individual’s interests.

Given the premises that (1), the individual’s actions and behavior acquire intelligibility only when considered in the context of the interactions the individual has with other individuals, and (2), that these interactions, in order to be optimal, have to be regulated by some rules, then the conclusion that the existing social rules are necessary does not follow.

² See Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 241.

What follows is only the necessity of there being social rule in general. The social rules existing at a certain time should not be treated as absolute truths, but rather as standing under the sign of contingency in a land of approximation.³ The present rules specific to any period of time have at most a temporal guidance role, and they remain to be dismissed, revised, or amended according to the social dynamic and the particular crises emerging in the community. Recall what shock waves the technologic revolutions (e.g., the possibility of human cloning, sex-change surgery, etc.) and the emancipation of various minorities produced in the law system. Thus, the act of civil disobedience is justified as long as it signals a certain state of affairs in conflict with the social rules, the latter oppressing the individual's development of personality and the affirmation of the individual's identity.

Berlin claims that the laws ruling a society should rely on fundamental human needs. Granting that almost any individual pursues the fulfilment of the fundamental needs, Berlin infers that the changes affecting and modulating individuals' needs provide, when necessary, a reliable guidance for revising the social rules. By militating for an agreement among the fundamental needs and the existing rules, the act of the person who chooses the solution of civil disobedience becomes justified and justifiable to the majority. (It should be noted here that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is the document by which the fundamental human needs are explicitly defended, this document grounding most of the modern democratic constitutions.) The protest against the instauration by law of censorship or of restrictions on personal moral behavior, says Berlin, is based upon the belief that the prohibited activities correspond to some human fundamental needs, their prohibition being nothing else than a violation of personal liberties.⁴

Berlin justly notices that, in a democracy, the law is a product of the will of the majority, but, given that society is a heterogeneous construct, the will of the majority should not be taken for a coincidence of individual wills. Therefore, naturally, the law can come to affect some minorities in a negative way. In fact, this is the very limitation brought by majority rule. Then the question is: what would justify the protest made by a minority against a law adopted by a majority? In my view, the question as it is now cannot be answered. An analysis of whether or not a protest is justified requires some specifications about how the protest is made. In our case, the specification is that a protest consisting of an act of civil disobedience involves the protestant's breaking the law in a nonviolent way. Of course, if the protests remain within the limits prescribed by free speech rights, their justification is a superfluous matter. But, if they break the law, as is the case with the protests of civil disobedience, their justification requires some elaboration. The question is: "Who is right? The defenders of the law expressing the will of the majority, or the protesters who break the law in

³ See also Berlin, p. 272.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 255.

order to call attention to its unfairness?" The question requires a choice to be made between the authority of the order imposed by a majority and the authority of a protest shaking the actual order in the name of justice. The answer should rely upon a third authority that is higher than both parts. According to Berlin, as I have mentioned, fundamental human needs constitute the wanted referential authority. Democratic principles make explicit the ideal of respecting those needs. Therefore, if the contested law is in contradiction with some higher principles, such as some democratic principles, then the action of breaking the law in order to highlight the contradiction is justified even though the law is an expression of the will of the majority. The inference may also have practical value if it is the case that the majority is committed to democratic principles, and the imposing of the conflicting and contested law is nothing more than the effect of a lack of information.

For Peter Singer, the justification of civil disobedience is given by the intention of informing about an injustice. The protester's actions disobey the law, but obey the principle of communication on which a well-formed democracy depends. In his *Applied Ethics*, Singer says that the law imposed by the majority is not violated in order to force the majority to change its decision, but rather for the sake of informing the majority about the injustice made by supporting a contestable law through a hasty decision.⁵ Singer shows that, frequently, the conflicting decision is not a genuine expression of the will of the majority. Rather, the decision is made by the representatives by virtue of their investiture by the majority, and it is different from the opinion shared by the majority. Thus, many times, the act of civil disobedience undertaken by a minority is not against a majority, but rather the protest does the majority a service by informing it about the side-slip of its representatives.

Rawls posits the analysis on civil disobedience within the context of the conflict of duties, such as the conflict between the duty to obey the law and the duty to participate to the implementation of the principles of justice in valid laws. Thus, according to Rawls, the act of civil disobedience is justified because it is entitled by the highest authority of "the natural duty of justice." By the same token, I believe that the conflict between the defenders of the law and civil disobedience can be translated as a conflict between two kinds of interpretations of the principles of justice. On one hand, there are some inaccurate, but publicly notorious interpretations. On the other hand, there are some accurate interpretations whose defenders fight for their public recognition. For the case of civil disobedience, the defenders of the second show that the first interpretations are not what they should have to recognize.

In a society, says Rawls, there are only a small number of individuals situated in a superior position. Certainly, these lucky individuals have no

⁵ See Singer, *Applied Ethics*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986) p. 303.

interest in the transformation of the world. For one thing, they are content with their actual privileged status and do not want to degrade it by any change. In contrast, other individuals, being less lucky, feel frustrated and tend to act toward changing not only their own situation, but also toward reforming the political and legislative framework; that is to say, they orient their social behavior to their natural political duty.

That the social attitudes of individuals are guided by a public conception of justice is a thesis that can also be found in the texts of Berlin: "The respect for the principle of justice and the shame which we feel in the face of flagrant inequalities of treatment are as fundamental in a human being as the desire for freedom."⁶

THE FEEDBACK FUNCTION OF CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

The institutional framework of any democratic society should be a dynamic structure whose profile is continuously modulated by a mechanism by which the law comes under revision when it is necessary. The feedback function of this mechanism of self-regulation and self-stabilization is provided by civil society. In a democratic society, civil society plays the crucial role of signaling, when necessary, the incongruence between the legal system and social needs. Civil society is sensitive to the discrepancy between the present institutional design and the social state of affairs. Usually, the signals sent by civil society consist of debates about social problems, actions of protest, and proposals for social improvement. Thus, the action of civil disobedience as a reactive signal sent by civil society is not oriented against democratic society, but rather it helps democracy, behaving like a symptom of malfunction. The act of civil disobedience announces to society the existence of an anomaly in the implementation of the democratic principles. As Berlin remarks, the protesters appealing to civil disobedience do not claim an unlimited liberty, but rather they militate for an affirmation of the identity of the minority to which they belong.

The starting point in the process of improvement of any institutional structure is marked by granting an approximate interpretation of the principle of justice and working with the law implementing the interpretation. This is a compromise justified by practical reasons: without such a starting point, the potential of finding the optimal interpretation by engaging in theoretical debates would disappear.

There are at least two reasons for saying that legal debates are prevented from reaching in vitro the optimal form of a legal system. First, democratic debate cannot proceed without a legal framework. No matter how imperfect an institutional framework is in a democratic society, it should be seen as being a precondition for finding a better institutional solution. On the other hand, even though it is necessary for a period of time, no institutional framework should be considered sacrosanct. Once it comes

⁶ See Berlin, p. 255.

under the fire of justified criticisms, even if those criticisms are communicated by actions of civil disobedience, the present institutional framework should be revised accordingly.

The second reason against trying to find an optimal legal system exclusively by means of debates is that one cannot realize to what degree a law fulfills social expectations without confronting it in real situations, that is, without seeing how it succeeds in regulating human interactions. The act of civil disobedience is nothing more than one of the answers from social space, bearing relevant information about the justness of the laws.

CONCLUSION

Democratic society is based on the culture of acknowledging the identity of minorities. Civil disobedience is an extreme means for promoting the individuality of a minority and for protesting against the tyranny of the majority.

There are two arguments that provide acts of civil disobedience with democratic legitimacy. *Prima facie*, the act of civil disobedience emerges from a conflict between a majority and a minority. Actually, the conflict is only between a minority and the representatives of the majority whose decisions oppressed the minority. Granting that a large part of the society shares democratic principles, it follows that the majority, if were correctly informed, would take side the minority. Fundamental human needs and their expressions, such as the democratic principles, constitute the ultimate authority. Therefore, in a democratic society, a political act should be morally judged only in relation to such an axiological authority. Consequently, civil disobedience is justified from a democratic perspective.

The deployment of the second argument for legitimizing civil disobedience has emphasized the feedback function that justifies acts of protest in the process of self-regulation of society and its institutions.

The paper leaves aside the discussion on the practical or implementational aspects of the acts of civil disobedience. Nevertheless, I want to remark that an exhaustive approach to the issue of civil disobedience, whose ultimate aspects are practical in nature, should try to answer the following question: how far could it reach? For one thing, the risks should be minimized for both parts involved in "confrontation." On one hand, the individuals engaged in the action of civil disobedience should be granted a diminished risk of legal punishment. On the other hand, society should be secured against the risk of the degenerating of civil disobedience into violent manifestations and extended social instability akin to a state of anarchy.

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CHAPTER XIII

BEAUTY AS AN AESTHETIC VALUE: CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES

MIHAELA POP

Abstract: The Avant-Gardes and especially the Dada movement generated a real revolution in the artistic world, not only at the theoretical level, but also by making artistic works. Aesthetic thought was called to answer to extremely courageous and shocking questions as the artists were exploring new ways of artistic expression. Theoretical principles, themes, methods of artistic work, materials, all were reconsidered. Was it “the end of art” already prophesized by Hegel? And what was going to happen after the end of art? And artistic beauty ... was it yet a value for the new kind of art initiated by Duchamp? These are some questions to which this article tries to give some coherent answers. After a short presentation of the Avant-garde movements and their main characteristics, we shall use some significant aesthetic theories and their arguments in order to prove the fact that beauty is not only a historical aesthetic value, it is a fundamental human value that always finds its expression in accordance with the cultural context of the moment. In order to be more pertinent in our analysis, we chose two artists whose works could illustrate our position.

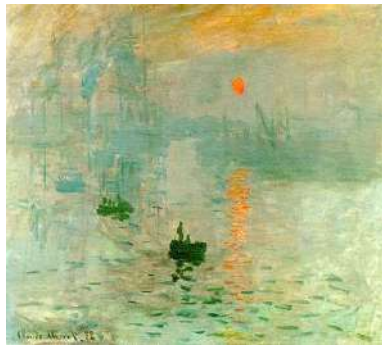
Keywords: artworld, aesthetic judgment, taste, beauty, conceptual art.

Beauty used to be one of the most significant values in European culture, especially in the field of artistic production. It was one of the fundamental principles of human spirituality, beginning with Socrates and Plato. According to Plato, Beauty, in close connection with Truth and Good, had not only an aesthetic meaning, but also an ontological one. The aesthetic side of Beauty itself was, in its turn, based on the Pythagorean concepts of harmony, symmetry, and proportion. In fact, this meaning of Beauty became the basis for the magnificent classical art of ancient Greece. Later on, during the Renaissance, it was reactivated, contributing significantly to the artistic definition of Beauty as an aesthetic category. Afterward, the entire Western culture was dominated for centuries by this category, theorized by philosophers and artists until the end of the nineteenth century.

Immanuel Kant and G.W.F. Hegel carried out deeper research on the aesthetic concept of beauty, pointing out that this general aesthetic category did not have only the Pythagorean meaning. Hegel moved forward with this matter, assuming that art should already have reached its end, since it is a product of the Spirit, which itself undergoes a process of evolution. Art was only a step taken in this process that should end in philosophical thought.

At the end of the nineteenth century, it seemed that Hegel's prediction became reality. Could the Avant-garde movement be considered anything other than a declaration of the "end of art"? All the "traditional" or "classical" criteria of making and evaluating art seemed to crumble down, piece by piece.

The Impressionists abandoned many of the painting techniques in use, including the process of painting in the painter's workshop. Their manner of laying colors on the canvas grew more and more different from the "classical" one. Moreover, their paintings were, of course, only "impressions" of reality, impressions generated by the way real objects were illuminated by solar light. The main characteristic of the Impressionists' paintings was the fact that the real world was perceived in strict correlation with the moment of the day and the optical effect generated by the solar light at that very moment. The object could show many faces, from very bright and clear to very gloomy and strange. Thus, reality proved to be illusory or in some way uncertain, showing many different and various appearances.

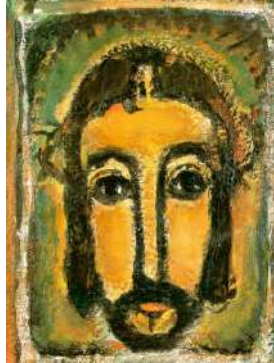


Cl. Monet - *Impression . Sunrise*



E. Manet - *Bar at Folies Bergères*

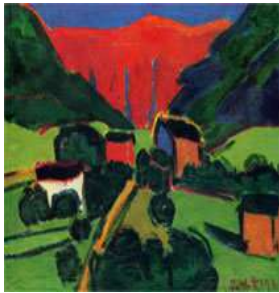
Then the Expressionists considered it more interesting to express their deep inner emotions freely, by means of colors. They hardly used clear lines in their drawings at all; instead, colors became their means to express themselves, to release very strong emotions arising from their inner tensions. Rouault, Munch, Rottluff, Marc, and Matisse endowed their colors and paintings with much force of expression.



G. Rouault-Mystic Masque



E. Munch-Golgotha



Sch. Rottluff-Skrigedal



H. Matisse-Open Window



F. Marc-The Blue Horse

Other artists, such as Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, James Ensor, or Egon Schiele, were interested in expressing deep inner troubles, dissatisfactions, dilemmas, uncertainties, and fears. The war's horrors, as well as the alienating feeling of losing one's personal identity in the fast-growing European towns of the Industrial Age were the fundamental themes worked out by the Expressionists.



J. Ensor- Skeletons
Fighting for a Herring



E.L. Kirchner-Self
Portrait as a Soldier



E. Schiele - Dead Mother

The Cubist painters showed a deep interest in the study of reality in order to reveal its basic and almost geometric structure. The search for this structure supposed an elaborated process of de-construction. Braque and Picasso are illustrative examples, especially in their analytical phases, when they were looking for the basic geometric and rational elements of reality.



G. Braques-*Viaduct at Estaque*



P. Picasso-*Weeping Woman*

Then, the Abstractionists Kandinsky and Klee¹ pursued this process of de-construction of reality even more deeply. They eliminated any objective representation of a material reality. Thus, they succeeded in liberating colors from subordination to mimetic purposes. The point, the line, and the surface (in fact, the point in its moving process) were the main characters of Kandinsky's paintings. Abstractionist painting eliminated in this manner any surviving ideas of the principle known since the Renaissance as the principle of *mimesis* (the painting should be an image, a re-presentation of reality). The Abstractionists' principle said *less is more* and it proved their need for purity. The two-dimensional completely replaced the three-dimensional in classical painting. And this movement was especially a conceptual one.

¹ Wasily Kandinsky, *Spiritualul în artă (Concerning the Spiritual in Art)* (București: Meridiane, 1994); *Point et ligne sur plan (Point and Line to Plane)* (Paris: Gallimard, 1991); Paul Klee, *La pensée créatrice. Ecrits sur l'art (Creative Thought. Writings about Art)* (Paris: Dessein et Tolra, 1989).



W. Kandinsky-*Happy* P. Klee-*Southern Gardens* P. Mondrian-*Composition Structure*

And what could be the definition of artistic beauty for this movement? Or, for the Cubist way of painting? Are these paintings beautiful or they are not? It is clear that the characteristics of classical beauty, at least the visible ones, have been abandoned. But do such paintings lack any sense of order or rhythm (meaning symmetry and proportion)? The answer is “No.” If we take into consideration Kandinsky’s and Klee’s writings, we can see how much they were interested in thinking, in projecting their works. The point itself was considered mostly in its dynamic condition, an entire process of thinking and projecting relations among figures. The inner and exterior forces which acted upon this tiny element were also taken into consideration. Every element of the painting was considered in relation to every other element of the painting and to the entire structure itself. But this way of thinking was already specific to Plato, as we see in the *Republic* or *Parmenides*. What, then, could this mean? The fact was that abstract painting *had* its beauty, but this beauty was not similar to the classical one.

Thus, at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, art was obviously going through a process of “profound becoming,” or trans-figuration. Classical art seemed obsolete and a new style was triumphant. It was the end of *a certain type* of art. The new one was liberating itself from the old norms and principles. This liberation grew more powerful with the Dada movement. It was the most revolutionary artistic movement of the beginning of the twentieth century. It claimed *the death of art* (of “classical” art). Once free, it started to explore a lot of possibilities (technical perspectives and also ways to communicate its messages) which were unacceptable for normative art. Cubist art had already explored the *collage* technique, bringing into the artistic world certain parts of contingent reality (small sheets of journals, parts of tissues, some raw materials such as sand, etc.) which were incorporated into the painting itself. Dada art took a huge step forward when Marcel Duchamp exhibited objects produced industrially. He exhibited such objects as a bottle rack and a snow shovel, which he named *ready-mades*.

M. Duchamp - *Bottle Rack**Playing Chess**Bike Wheel*

Bringing such objects into an art exhibition² was a real declaration of war against all the “classical” principles of the artistic world: the opposition between the uniqueness of the work of art and serial industrial production was now contradicted. And how could such a common thing be artistically appreciated? Where was the artist’s contribution? What could be the significance of such an object in the artistic world? How can we understand the meaning of the material used by the artist in such a work? These were only a few questions arising from such a tremendous change. One could say that the admittance of the most commonplace physical object into the art world should be interpreted as “reductiveness,” driving toward the “reification of art.” Rosalind Krauss insisted on this idea³, using some earlier studies written by Clement Greenberg, especially *The Crisis of Easel Painting* (1948).

From the Dada movement onwards, art was obviously completely different from what it had formerly been. And the same questions arose: what was the place of beauty in this new art? Could such works still be considered beautiful? How?

In our opinion, in order to answer to these questions, we have to see if this kind of beauty meets the “classical” criteria or not. And how could we define it, in the second situation?

Kant tells us⁴ that beauty is based on *aesthetic satisfaction*. But this kind of satisfaction differs from the moral one, which is earned through good behavior, and differs also from simple sensory pleasure. Aesthetic satisfaction is based on the fact that, even if it is not an objective judgment, like the philosophical one, it is still a judgment, a reflective one, tending toward universality. We have to remember that Kant spoke about the antinomy of taste. In his thesis, Kant says that the judgment of taste is not

² It was the art exhibition organized at the Grand Central Palace in New York, on April 9, 1917.

³ Rosalind Krauss, “*A Voyage on the North Sea*” – *Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1999), pp. 57-58.

⁴ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, transl. by J.C. Meredith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), pp. 206-208.

based upon concepts, for if it were, it would be open to dispute. Then the antithesis follows: the judgment of taste is based upon concepts, for otherwise, despite the diversity of aesthetic judgment, there could be no room even for contention. Thus, we have here the aesthetic judgment of beauty, which is a noncognitive and subjective judgment, but which is still a judgment. And this is possible because this judgment of taste belongs to the reason, to the regulative rational idea, and this makes possible the tendency toward universality, a tendency which is specific to the judgment of what is beautiful. Kant speaks about the *sensus communis*, a subjective principle which determines what pleases or displeases only by feeling and not by concepts, but yet with universal validity. The faculty of taste is in fact the product of reconciliation between what Kant calls the “aesthetic inexponible idea” (it is not theoretically established) and the “rational indemonstrable idea” (which cannot be shown to the senses). Thus, the faculty of taste ought to be supposed to be the endowment of every human being.

Nicolai Hartmann tells us in his *Aesthetics*⁵ about an entire process of artistic creativity. It supposes the idea of using both a material (an unworked physical support) and a spiritual medium belonging to the artist’s cultural identity. These two elements or components (one material and the other spiritual) are put together in order to work in a process which should assure the appearance of, or the fact of getting concreteness of, what was initially only a mental image – the creative idea. In this process of *showing up*, the work of art becomes a reality, rising from the inside of the artist’s mind. That is why the work consists not only of a single layer, the material one, but also of many other layers, more profound or more general (abstract), containing the artist’s ideas.

This vision is reactivated by Krauss, who speaks about the “flatness” of this first layer. At this level, the other deeper layers can reveal or show themselves. Thus the work of art is a “recursive structure,” a multi-layered construction. “It is something *made, not given*, something which is able to specify itself.”⁶ The creation of such a structure supposes a particular effort of rational thinking. Aesthetic satisfaction will be obtained when the spectator is able to get a comprehensive vision of this entire *creative journey* made by the artist.

In his *Theory of Formativity*⁷, Luigi Pareyson pointed also to the role of rational contribution to the artistic work. He proved that the work of art is not only something made, but something creative by its very nature. Works of art should be considered not only as *formata*, but also as *formans*. Pareyson wanted to emphasize that the work of art, after being produced by

⁵ Nicolai Hartmann, *Estetica (Aesthetics)* (București: Univers, 1974), pp. 124-135.

⁶ R. Krauss, *op.cit.*, p. 61.

⁷ Luigi Pareyson, *Estetica. Teoria formativității (Aesthetics. Theory of Formativity)* (București: Univers, 1977), pp. 93-183.

the artist's creativity, can generate by itself new ideas in the spectator's mind. The process is based on the supposition that the spectator has an aesthetic satisfaction, which stimulates him to develop certain suggestions generated by the work itself.

Liviu Rusu, a Romanian philosopher who lived during the second half of the twentieth century, pleaded in favor of the same theory.⁸ He insisted on the idea that the concept of beauty ought to be understood in a wider meaning. The creative process is very complex. Even if the result could seem chaotic to the eyes of a less attentive spectator, artistic thinking has its inner logic, conferring to the artistic product a specific order and structure. Even in a work praising the complete hazard, there is a certain intention, joining together the apparently chaotic elements. It is precisely this order that gives beauty to the work. And this order is due to the use of certain "logic" of composition within the creative process. In fact, Marcel Duchamp said that "choice is the main thing in art"⁹; the choice means a rational activity.

There are in fact today two major directions in the art world as Thierry de Duve already proved. One is based on Clement Greenberg's theory claiming that aesthetic value, the judgment of beauty, is based on feelings: "Aesthetic value, aesthetic quality, can be said to elicit satisfaction or dissatisfaction (which is) 'verdict of taste'."¹⁰ The second theory, corresponding to Kant's antithesis, belongs to Joseph Kosuth. He claims that "all art (after Duchamp) is conceptual in nature because art exists conceptually."¹¹

Arthur Danto mentions¹² a specific distinction separating a work of art from a common object, even if they look similar. He holds up the Warhol's *Brillo Box* and the cartons of the Brillo product as an example.¹³

⁸ Liviu Rusu, *Logica frumosului* (*The Logic of Beauty*) (București: Editura pentru Literatură Universală, 1968) and also *Eseu despre creația artistică. Contribuție la o estetică dinamică* (*Essay on Artistic Creativity. Contribution to Dynamic Aesthetics*) (București: Editura științifică și enciclopedică, 1989).

⁹ In an interview with Georges Charbonnier, RTF, 1961, see Thierry de Duve, *Kant after Duchamp* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London: The MIT Press, 1996), p. 161.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 258.

¹¹ Joseph Kosuth, *Art after Philosophy*, *Idea Art* (New York: Dutton, 1973), p. 80.

¹² Arthur Danto, *The End of Art: A Philosophical Defense*, www.jstore.org/Feb.9, 2006.

¹³ Arthur Danto, *Beyond the Brillo Box: The Visual Arts in Post-Historical Perspective* (The University of California Press, 1998). We have to mention that we used these terms which are specific to Danto's theory. They are present in all the works we quoted.



A. Warhol – Brillo Box Tomato Soup Three Coca-Cola Bottles

This distinction is based on the fact that the artistic work has certain *aboutness*: it “speaks” about something more general, more abstract than the common object to which it might correspond; it has a *meaning*. Whatever we name it, “aboutness” or capacity to appear (to show itself), or “formativity,” or logic of beauty, it is obvious that the work of art is very different from the commonplace item that is later trans-figured, according to Danto.¹⁴ And the beauty of this transformation of the commonplace consists precisely in the creative process of trans-figuration itself. It is clear that contemporary art is more generic than and not as specific as it used to be. The painter has become *artist*, and painting was assimilated to a generic art. The classical concept of beauty was replaced by art. What used to be judged as beautiful is now judged as art. Clement Greenberg used to say that the aesthetic coincides with the artistic. “This is art” is the judgment that has already replaced the classical “this is beautiful.” But this does not mean that this proposition does not suppose aesthetic feeling and that this feeling includes not only the love of artistic products, but also aesthetic dissatisfaction, negative aesthetic feelings. It is clear that the concept of art is not a determined concept but a nondetermined idea of reason which cannot be demonstrated theoretically and cannot be shown empirically, but can be analogically exemplified by an object designated by the word “this” of the sentence “this is art.”¹⁵

Contemporary art has become an artistic expression of a *theory-about-art*, or it could be considered *Art as Idea*. Referring to the Hegelian definition of historicity, Danto regards this new art as “post-historical.” Following Duchamp, art has reached its autonomy, acquiring the capacity to explore any possible way of expression. This is what Danto understands

¹⁴ Arthur Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: a Philosophy of Art*, (Harvard University Press, 1981), *After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986) (P.D.A.); *Hegel's End-of-Art Thesis*, 1999, [www.wikipedia/arthurdanto/works/20dec.2011\(H.E.A.\)](http://www.wikipedia/arthurdanto/works/20dec.2011(H.E.A.)).

¹⁵ Thierry de Duve, *op.cit.* p. 321.

by “disenfranchisement” of art and Harold Rosenberg by “de-definition” of art.¹⁶ It has reached its *philosophical level*, becoming a philosophical artistic meditation on its own condition, in other words, it has reached its self-consciousness.

In the twentieth century, being an artist means to question the nature of art. It already implies an ontological approach. Marcel Broodthaers speaks also about a complete transformation of the artistic production into a branch of the culture industry. The role of the artist’s rational contribution is more important. Even the sensitive layer is reduced to its abstract dimension. Joseph Kosuth pointed out this process of reduction. The essence in its Greek meaning (*ousia*) has become a medium, a spiritual and abstract art material. Thus painting, both as creative process and finished work of art, was turned inside out, becoming, especially in conceptual art, “the generic category of art” according to Kosuth.¹⁷

The spectator is attracted or has an artistic satisfaction when contemplating that type of art. What would contemplation mean in this case? – Especially an intellectual comprehensive process.

Ted Cohen says that aesthetic satisfaction rises when the spectator discovers the artist’s idea, that regulative idea which is not demonstrable.¹⁸ It is obvious, in Cohen’s opinion, that the beauty of Duchamp’s *ready-mades* is given by his creative idea of exhibiting a bike wheel or a shovel. Hence, the creative idea is the fundamental contribution of the artist, the beauty of the work consisting especially in the intellectual satisfaction the spectator feels. It is a “phenomenological vector,” as R. Krauss names it, and implies an organizational and connective process. Through this process, the artist reveals a world of meanings waiting the spectator to discover it. Thus, contemporary art is rather “conceptual” than perceptive. We could say, in agreement with the opinions mentioned above, that contemporary art *has* its beauty, and it has an intellectual connotation. Duchamp’s *Fountain* is completely aesthetic being symbolically ethic and also artistically theoretic.

Let’s take two examples.

A. Jackson Pollock (1912-1956) made a significant contribution to the disenfranchisement of postwar art. He put a strong accent upon the creative gesture, not on its result, as in the past. A new relationship became evident between the artist’s body and the canvas. It generated a process of decentralization of the artist’s *ego*. In the same time his dripping method raised an important issue: the problem of horizontality in painting. Until then, the painting was created in a vertical position and the image of the

¹⁶ Harold Rosenberg, *The De-definition of art* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1972).

¹⁷ R. Krauss, *op.cit.*, p. 67.

¹⁸ Ted Cohen, “Notes on Metaphor,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 34, nr. 3, 1976, pp. 249-259.

painting was also vertical. The change of the painting position or its rotation had high implications.



J. Pollock – *Dripping action*



J. Pollock – *Untitled (Number Eight)*

In fact, verticality is a distinctive characteristic of the human being and it created, during the entire human evolution, a specific way of perceiving and understanding the world. It also generated a specific human representation of the world. In his *Three Essays on Sexuality* (1905) and *Civilization and its Discontinuity* (1930), Sigmund Freud analyzed the re-orientation process affecting our unconscious life as a consequence of the vertical position of the human being. Due to this position, the human being can get a full perspective on any living thing or object around him, by comparison with the animals, which have a partial view. Thus, a process of sublimation of the libidinal energy takes place, supposing a diversion from erotic purposes to art. Or, the option for horizontality in painting could be understood as a de-construction of the basic human characteristics in order to create the opportunity for a new and different construction. This idea belongs to Georges Batailles who wanted to point out the fact that Dada artists and their followers were looking for new meanings and ways of artistic content and expression as Rosalind Krauss mentioned.¹⁹

Before Pollock, there were some others who experienced the horizontal vision. Cézanne did this in his *Still Life with Fruit and Curtain*.

¹⁹Rosalind Krauss, "Horizontality" in *Formless* (New York: Zone Books, 1997), pp. 93-103.



P. Cézanne – *Still Life with Fruit and Curtain*



E. Degas – *Dancer on the Stage*

We can see that the level of the floor is courageously verticalized. The objects seem to glide. The separation line between wall and floor disappeared. Then, in some of Degas' paintings, we can see how the vision has changed. The woman having a bath is seen from an upper point, as well as the ballet dancer at the end of her performance. Paul Valéry was one of the critics who wrote about some of Degas' paintings in 1936. He thought that the purpose of this change was a new redistribution of light and thus, a study of light effects. A similar vision can be found in some of Matisse's paintings. The separation line between wall and floor almost doesn't exist anymore.



H. Matisse-*Still Life*



P. Picasso-*Still Life with Chair Canning*

In his *Still Life with Chair Canning* (1912) Picasso also changed the position of the objects. Their position is rotated as if the objects would be seen from above. Duchamp and Giacometti explored this new position too. Andy Warhol also showed a certain interest in the horizontality of footsteps, especially in his paintings of 1961.

Jackson Pollock explored horizontality, taking it to its limits. The creative process is strictly connected to horizontality and its consequences. The gestures are different and even gravity intervenes. It affects the way the

colors are sprayed on the canvas. The viscosity of the color also affects its spreading out and the quantity of color absorbed into the canvas. According to Krauss,²⁰ Pollock's intention was to oppose the *form* (which supposes order and thus culture, in a wider scope of understanding) to the *unconscious* level of our psychic life and thus, to oppose the vertical to the horizontal position, dominated by the lack of order and chaotic movements. Pollock lays his canvas on the floor. In his *Full Fathom Five* (1947), he creates a drip and encrusted surface, containing different types of garbage: sand, broken glass, burned matches, and tacks.



J. Pollock – *Full Fathom Five*



J. Pollock – *Time is Art*

The allusion to the lower existence of used and consumed objects is evident, all being now reduced to horizontality or the equality of the garbage. But these remains are revalorized and sublimated by the elegance of the title which comes directly from Shakespeare's *Tempest*.²¹ Robert Morris named this option for horizontality an *anti-form option*.²² If the vertical form is well built as it stands against gravity, horizontality supposes the un-constructed, the anti-form because gravity acts as a force that deconstructs any structure.

If we look at Pollock's paintings, they make a strong impression on our eyes. It is generated by the combination of colors and especially by the continuous and chaotic movement of the lines. In fact, Pollock seems to have set free the line and the color from any bondage. And due to this characteristic, Pollock could be considered a painter who developed Kandinsky's and Klee's ideas.

²⁰ R. Krauss, *Horizontality*, in *Formless*, pp. 93-103

²¹ William Shakespeare, *The Complete Works, The Tempest* (Glasgow: Geddes & Grosset, 2010); "*Full fathom five thy father lies/ Of his bones are coral made/ Those are pearls that were his eyes*" (Ariel's song in Act I, scene 2, verses 398-400).

²² According to R. Krauss, *op.cit.*, p. 97.

B. Joseph Beuys (1921-1986) is a German artist known for works belonging to a wide scope of contemporary artistic expressions: performance, installations, and graphics. He was one of the prestigious artists belonging to the Fluxus movement in Europe. Beuys was also a professor who taught the new artistic concepts. His theory was based on a humanistic approach, social philosophy and anthroposophy (especially, Rudolf Steiner's thought). Beuys developed an extended definition of art ("each human being is an artist") and used the idea of "social sculpture" or *social shaping* encouraging creativity: "power to imagination!" Thus he was considered an artist who perpetuated the old tradition of German Romanticism. He played a significant role in the development of a social way of thinking and in the shaping of the political thought of the German people between 1960 and 1980. He was the founder of the Organization for Direct Democracy (1972) and of the Student's Party in Dusseldorf in 1967. Many of his ideas have been developed, especially within American cultural life.

He wanted to make people understand the role of forms, and objects' appearance. Thus he organized artistic workshops where students were taught to think in a broad manner, perceiving the connection between art and life. He thought that the artist should have a wide experience of all types of forms. For one of his workshops, gathering students and non-specialized people interested in art, he used tree branches brought from the forest.²³ He put them onto the floor in various positions analyzing the optical effects resulting from those positionings and the relations connecting each element to the others (which branches of the composition acquired significance in certain positioning and which could be eliminated without affecting the entire composition). He discovered that the limitation to a minimum number of elements did not diminish the multitude of meanings of the entire work as a whole. On the contrary, he observed that the energy and the forces generated by the relations between the elements seemed to be more intense. And the forces seemed also to differ in intensity. Beuys admitted that this approach could be considered an application of Kandinsky's and Klee's writings on the study of fundamental forms and their polarity. He used these abstractionist theories in order to create compositions with commonplace objects (branches, sticks, iron sticks of different lengths and thicknesses, etc.), not with abstract, geometric elements.

The Shaping Problem

Beuys thought that art is a domain that belongs to all life phenomena. It is influenced by the *movement* that he perceived in its Aristotelian

²³ Harlan Volker, *Ce este arta? Discutie-atelier cu Joseph Beuys (What is Art? A Workshop-Discussion with Joseph Beuys)* (Cluj Napoca: Ideea Design & Print, 2003).

meanings. According to one of these meanings, movement is seen as a continuous becoming, a qualitative and quantitative process, positive or negative, evolutionary or destructive. The artist mentions that his “objects” (he doesn’t designate them as works of art) stimulate the desire to change – the significance of the word *plastics*. This word acquires, in his interpretation, various meanings. It comes from the Greek word *euplastia* meaning a correct and beautiful shaping. This notion helps us to understand how to shape our ideas and how to express them as harmonically as possible through words. Thus, even a social shaping process could be achieved, helping us to shape our world. It is obvious that it could be considered utopian in this meaning, for the process supposes an evolution. Through this process, *any man can become an artist*. But this process never ends as it supposes a permanent transformation. We can notice that Beuys proposes a new positioning of the art within the living world; he perceives art from a radically extended perspective. Even if the work of art reaches a final form, in Beuys opinion, it is only a temporary result. Beyond this form, there is a permanent development within living nature. According to Beuys, that is the reason why the *art is always moving toward something*, it cannot reach the final perfection, corresponding to all possible determinations of the universal spirit. We could consider this idea as a reply to the Hegelian notion of *end of art*. It is a vitalist vision. “Art is something alive, it is a fragmentary impulse,” according to Beuys.²⁴

The Honey Pump

This is one of Beuys’ installations. The work is composed of many elements and is situated in various locations. In a hall, there is the pump symbolizing the center of knowledge and thought, and also of the organic life – the heart. The system of cables and wires spreading from the center toward the other locations could symbolize the circulatory system in different meanings (blood circulation, knowledge circulation through *media*, and also, money circulation within the world’s economic system).



J. Beuys – Batteries and fat Honey pump and motors System of cables and wires

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

Another element of the installation is the fat. It is a symbol of the energetic substances. There are also two motors connected to a thick cylinder of copper where the fat is melted down. The heat generated by the two motors and the rotating movement of the fat mixing device insures its liquefaction. Thus, the process suggests, on one side, the idea of plasticity or well shaping is necessary to the production of a work of art, but, on the other hand, this process of energy production is necessary to any human activity. This action suggests not only the process of transformation but also the will to act. Thus, the work can be considered as a symbolic answer to the question: *What is a human being?*

We can see that the artist looks for the deepest universal meaning in any object or assembly he designs. The commonplace materials are articulated in such a manner that they could become revealing metaphors. Thinking in a vitalist way, the artist mentions the *necessity for polarities*. On one side, the form could be obtained through cooling or crystallization (chemical and physical processes) and, on the other side, through the dynamism of the inner transformations. Beuys remarks that, if we take nature into consideration, things evolve impelled by their inner sides, as the honey comb, the bird's nest, or the development of the tree trunk. The river stones are shaped from the outside by water, and quartz crystals have a certain regular disposition resulting from a process of crystallization. The artist thinks that, in the case of art works, there is a similar necessity to perceive them from the inner side of the creative process. This understanding is not limited to the disposition of its elements. It also assures a good communication between people and nature. That is why the agriculture should not be considered only a mere activity of subordinating nature to human purposes. It should be seen as an artistic issue, responsible for shaping the relations between people and nature. And the artist should fulfill the purposes of nature and should not damage it. This idea is also promoted by the *land art* artists.

We can see that *euplastia* (beautiful shaping) is a fundamental theme for Beuys. Its role is to achieve a spiritual shaping of the artist within the process of artistic creation and, at the same time, shape the medium he uses. In this way, the artist becomes a demiurge (*demiourgos*) but a different kind of demiurge than the Platonic Demiurgos from *Timaeus*. In Beuys' vision, the artist is a craftsman who gives shape not only to the works he creates but also to his spirit. Beuys seems here to apply the theory developed by Luigi Pareyson which we have already mentioned above.

There is another problem which the artist should be able to solve. When should the process of artistic creation end up? Or, when can the artist decide that he finished his work? Beuys says: "I should start from the object itself according to its dynamics;"²⁵ "I have to take into consideration the material and the process."²⁶ Thus, in Beuys' opinion, it is not the artist but

²⁵ *Op.cit.* p. 35.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

the material that decides when the artistic process is finished. "I try to understand what they want from themselves, the wood, or the stone."²⁷ The artist remarks that the Avant-gardes decided to abandon the Renaissance principle of *mimesis* in order to make possible the discovery of the fundamental *intention* of each material. It was thought that only in this way could the work of art reach its absolute beauty and value. "The table should be as beautiful as a temple because it should be a living thing. If it is not good, it is like a sick animal."²⁸ What could this mean? The material and the form should "fit," should "be in harmony with one another." Only in this way can the work be self-sufficient, according to the Kantian theory. This is precisely the characteristic of the Greek temple but also that of the olive tree near it, says Beuys, as this harmony implies a trans-figuration of nature into art, as well as the art reflects itself (in its very essence) on the entire surrounding nature.

This harmony is not only the prerogative of the ancient arts, according to Beuys. The Coca-Cola bottle can be an example of the same idea of harmony for the contemporary society and art. Beuys perceives in the shape of the bottle, in its ribs, its neck, its solid and elegant basis, in its thin wave-like writing, an assembly that should be considered a metaphor of vitality, of energies flowing upward and downward within a living organism. In the same way, the car, "the most beloved child of the twentieth century,"²⁹ is also "the most shaped and polished contemporary object." And Beuys adds with a certain melancholy: if a politic idea had been so much shaped and "polished," mankind would probably have an amazing evolution. Along the same lines, agriculture should be seen as a work of art. It should take into consideration the minerals that plants extract from the soil and store afterward in their vegetal structure. Similarly, art should understand the essence of the materials it uses.

The artist is convinced that art could contribute to a new culture. Unfortunately, nowadays, the meaning of freedom is distorted, according to each one's considerations, as everyone has a different perspective on it. In order to achieve true freedom, responsible freedom, it is necessary to understand its meaning. Free thinking implies will and responsibility. Thus the meaning of freedom refers to the creation of an entire world.

In our opinion, beauty, according to its aesthetic meanings, is still present in contemporary art, but has profoundly changed its characteristics. Aesthetic satisfaction is also still present, but it is based especially on the rational contribution, as the work of art seems to attract mostly by its intellectual allusions. This is, in fact, the beauty of our times, founded on a vast culture and civilization surrounding us through any object we use.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.41.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

Contemporary art *is indeed a new art* having wider meanings, as we tried to illustrate by the examples above. The beauty of this art should then correspond to this diversity of meanings. One could say that this might cause a sort of dissipation or evanescence of the artistic phenomena. In our opinion, on the contrary, this wide variety of artistic expressions is in fact the product of our contemporary mentality and it significantly contributes to a better understanding of the world in which we live.

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CHAPTER XIV

WHAT KITSCH TELLS US ABOUT OUR TIME

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Abstract: There has always been kitsch: things that were to sweeten bitter reality. But in modern societies, kitsch plays an additional role that it did not play before the nineteenth century. Theorists disagree whether kitsch indicates political decay. That it does was the prevailing view in the first half of the twentieth century, but today the stern critique of kitsch is considered rather pathological. Discussing views of Kulka, Kundera, Saul Friedlander, Adolf Loos, and Kant, I argue for the older evaluation. My first thesis is that kitsch is an illusionary form of autonomy preventing autonomy. It is the new opium for the people. It is not the product of manipulation, but satisfies a specifically modern demand.

My second thesis is that the way kitsch produces the illusion of autonomy consists in the fact that the buyer and user of kitsch objects is led in his choice by strong emotions. When he follows them he believes he is following authentic nature rather than uncivilized nature. Lack of judgment and civilization favor susceptibility to kitsch. This quality allows kitsch to become a global attitude uniting individuals in their undifferentiating responses to strong emotional stimuli.

Nonetheless, this is my third thesis: kitsch is not inescapable. Contemporary societies seduce individuals not only into using the opium of kitsch but also require of them initiative and creative activity, with which kitsch is incompatible. The more initiative individuals use, the less they are in need of kitsch, for they then have to attend more to stimuli, to differentiate between them, and to abandon the uncivilized responses that make them susceptible to kitsch.

The organizers of the Nazi movement knew well enough that they would thrive if they made the masses believe in their autonomy by staging mass mobilizing events that would underchallenge rational capabilities and yet suggest having the applause of all naturally feeling mankind. Contemporary election campaigns in Western democracies and mass events such as the Olympics or Church World Congresses do not differ in this respect. Kitsch has become a means of communication even for those who do not want to deceive. It would be a first success of reflection about kitsch if they stopped using kitsch.

By understanding kitsch as a political rather than an aesthetic phenomenon, we can explain two conspicuous facts about kitsch. First, a word to refer to the phenomenon came into use only in the 1860s, when art dealers and artists in Munich called the “cheap artistic stuff” bought by the

nouveaux riches “kitsch.”¹ Second, the phenomenon has become an all-pervading ideological culture soaking our feeling, thinking, and acting.

These facts cannot be explained by the prevailing aesthetic understanding of kitsch. According to the aesthetic understanding, kitsch is a reality sweetener rather than a reality contact reducer, or it is a product of bad taste. The aesthetic understanding can explain kitsch as a phenomenon that is shared by modern and pre-modern societies, but fails to explain the specifically modern role of kitsch.

Moreover, although it is an aesthetic understanding, it cannot solve problems of the aesthetics of music and architecture: how so-called serious music can be kitsch and why not all ornament is a crime. Yet surprisingly, the political understanding of kitsch I propose can solve these problems.

Keywords: kitsch, reality sweetener, aesthetic phenomenon, politic phenomenon, bad taste.

There has always been kitsch; things that were to sweeten bitter reality. Yet in the nineteenth century, kitsch began to play a new role. Without anyone’s intention it became a political tool used without regard to the consequences. Kitsch is no longer the innocent reality sweetener it may have been at earlier times. This is what I’ll argue for.

DEFINITIONS OF KITSCH

Kitsch has become too conspicuous not to become an object of analysis and controversy. It is controversial as to whether it indicates political and intellectual decay. This view prevailed in the first half of the twentieth century,² but today, the stern critique of kitsch is suspected of being pathological.³ Kitsch is defended as a reality sweetener not reducing reality contact, even as necessary to soften the inescapable hardship of modernity. I argue for the older evaluation. Modern kitsch is the new opium disabling the reality contact necessary for rational action.

¹ Matei Călinescu, *Faces of Modernity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), p. 234.

² Cp. Hermann Broch, *Geist and Zeitgeist: The Spirit in an Unspiritual Age* (Berkeley, CA.: Counterpoint, 2003); Theodor Adorno, *The Culture Industry* (London: Routledge, 2001); Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, in Hannah Arendt, ed., *Illuminations* (New York: Harcourt, 1968). This line lives on in Karlheinz Deschner, *Kitsch, Konvention und Kunst* (Frankfurt: Ullstein, 1991), pp. 23-38, and Hans-Dieter Gelfert, *Was ist Kitsch?* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 2000).

³ An example is Konrad Paul Ließmann, “Kitsch und Kult. Jenseits von Gut und Böse,” *Neue Zürcher Zeitung Folio* 12/03, diagnosing the critique of kitsch as a “pathological chromophobia”: “With kitsch we retrieve what modernism refuses us: the allure, the sentiment, the gaudy and the small happiness.” (My transl.)

It is uncontroversial that kitsch has become conspicuously rampant. As Tomas Kulka, the author of perhaps the most systematic essay on kitsch, states:

Whether kitsch began at some point in recent history, or whether it is as old as art itself, one thing is beyond dispute: Kitsch has become an integral part of our modern culture, and it is flourishing now more than ever before. You find it everywhere. It welcomes you to the restaurant, greets you in the bank, and smiles at you from advertising billboards, as well as from the walls of your dentist's waiting room. The phenomenal success of *Dallas* and *Dynasty* seems already to have vindicated Milan Kundera's prophetic dictum that the 'brotherhood of men on earth will be possible only on the base of kitsch'.⁴

As another author aptly remarked:

If Martians were to take a cool look at the world they might well re-name it Kitsch.⁵

This conspicuous fact provokes Kulka's question:

Milan Kundera exposed kitsch as a main instrument for the manipulation of the masses by Communist regimes, while Saul Friedländer showed how central a role it played in the mobilization of the masses in Hitler's Germany. However, the question of how kitsch performs such wonders, as well as the question of what its appeal consists of...has not been fully answered.⁶

Curiously though, Kulka claims the questions he points to are "essentially questions of aesthetics."⁷ True, if we call something kitsch we imply a negative aesthetic judgment, ascribing to the object's lover, whether or not she calls it kitsch, bad taste or a lack of aesthetic sense. Yet this does not imply that aesthetics can answer what the appeal of presently

⁴ Tomas Kulka, *Kitsch and Art* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), p. 16. The quote is from Kundera's novel *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (New York: Harper, 1984), p. 251.

⁵ Jacques Sternberg, *Kitsch* (London: Academy Ed., 1972); from Kulka loc.cit. p. 17. I could not find the quote in the book, which in fact indulges in porno kitsch.

⁶ Kulka loc.cit. p. 17. The reference to Kundera is to his *Unbearable Lightness*, p. 251; that to Friedländer to his *Reflections of Nazism: Essay on Kitsch and Death* (New York: Harper, 1984).

⁷ Kulka loc.cit., p. 7.

rampant kitsch consists of. The typical kitsch objects, however, do suggest the prevailing non-historical understanding of kitsch as innocent reality sweetener. As Kulka lists such objects, they are pictures of

puppies and kittens,...mothers with babies,...beaches with palms and colorful sunsets, pastoral Swiss villages,... pasturing deer,...wild horses,...cheerful beggars, sad clowns, sad faithful old dogs.⁸

No doubt, many kitsch objects do sweeten reality. There is also kitsch, such as flashy wear or gaudy makeup that presents something as not sweeter but rather more shocking or “sourer” than it is.⁹ Kulka would accept this. What he rejects is that to understand contemporary kitsch we need to go beyond aesthetics. In fact, kitsch objects, whether sweet or sour, look innocent. If the Nazis used them to manipulate the masses, it’s not the fault of kitsch, Kulka would say; kitsch results from bad taste, and we need to define good taste both to tell kitsch and art apart and to prevent its misuse. I call this understanding of kitsch its *soft* understanding:

(SK) Kitsch is nothing but a product of bad taste.

In contrast, I claim we need not know the difference between kitsch and art to understand what makes kitsch rampant today. We need to know the quality of kitsch, whether it is aesthetic or not, that allows social conditions to render it rampant. Yet let’s first look at Kulka’s approach.

Kulka uses the notions of unity, complexity, and intensity as the criteria of art and its quality to define good taste and to demarcate art from kitsch.¹⁰ His problem is whether the explicated notions of unity,

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁹ On sweet and sour (and more forms of) kitsch cp. Gelfert, *Was ist Kitsch?* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 2000); H.E. Holthusen, “Über den sauren Kitsch,” in *Ja und Nein* (Munich: Piper, 1954); Matei Calinescu, *Faces of Modernity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), p. 236.

¹⁰ Kulka *ibid.*, p. 46, draws “on the time-honored theories of Plato and Aristotle, which were refined by medieval church philosophers” and by Monroe Beardsley and George Dickie; M.C. Deardsley, *Aesthetics* (New York: Harcourt, 1958); G. Dickie, *Evaluating Art* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988). Kulka defines *unity* by the number *a* of alterations of a work *W* that cause “some aesthetic damage to *W*” minus the number *b* of alterations that “aesthetically (improve) *W*”; hence as *a-b*. He defines *complexity* by the additions of *a*, *b* and the number *c* of alterations that do “not aesthetically affect *W*”; hence as *a+b+c*; and *intensity* as the rate of improving and worsening alterations (*a+b*) to the number of alterations without any aesthetic effect (*c*); hence as $(a+b)/c$. Finally, he stipulates that the “overall aesthetic value of a work of art” is indicated by the multiplication of the values of unity, complexity and intensity; thus, the formula “ $(a-b) \times (a+b+c) \times (a+b)/c$ ” is the

complexity, and intensity do distinguish art from kitsch. He thinks they do, because he denies kitsch the quality of intensity. His explanation of intensity requires that a work is sensitive to alterations, such that the rate of worsening and improving alterations ($a+b$) to the number of alterations without aesthetic effect (c) is high. In contrast, "Kitsch pictures can be subjected to many alterations without turning out either better or worse."¹¹ He concludes:

In kitsch paintings, unlike in real art, what is represented is more important than how it is rendered. The *what* overshadows the *how*.¹²

However, kitsch paintings such as Disney figures are very sensitive to alterations. There is hardly a trait in them alterable without aesthetic effect; hence c is small and intensity high. As Kulka says himself, the painter of a kitsch work

should avoid all unpleasant or disturbing features of reality, leaving us only with those we can easily cope with and identify with.¹³

Paint the kitten a little too spiteful, the child a little too malicious, the garden gnome too ugly, and their kitsch quality sinks. Disney figures need hardly less craftsmanship than art works do.

Moreover, the *what* can be important in art too.¹⁴ Speaking of the *what* that overshadows the *how* in kitsch, Kulka may have thought of the fact that unlike art, kitsch produces feelings that do not allow differentiating, but if so, his description is misleading. The conclusion to draw is that we cannot distinguish kitsch from art by formal aesthetic qualities or by bad and good taste.

aesthetic value of a work of art (ibid., pp. 68-71). As Kulka emphasizes, "The proposed model should be seen as a suggestion for a *rational reconstruction* of our aesthetic value judgments," not implying that "that we actually do, or should, form our aesthetic judgments by making calculations" (ibid., p. 72, n. 34).

¹¹ Kulka *ibid.*, p. 73.

¹² Kulka *loc.cit.*, p. 80.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

¹⁴ In his assigning the *what* to kitsch and the *how* to art, Kulka seems to follow the most influential post-World War II art critic Clement Greenberg (who certainly expressed a general "pro-abstract" tendency of this time). This assignment is convincingly rejected by Noel Carroll, *A Philosophy of Mass Art* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), 31ff.

As an art critic remarked, “With regard to the norms of art there is nothing wrong with kitsch.”¹⁵ Kitsch requires skill and judgment no less than art. Yet they do require different kinds of skill and judgment. What makes the difference? Kulka has no answer to this question. However, rather than dropping SK we might drop Kulka’s explanation of bad taste and look for another defense. Here is an alternative.

Think of gaudy make-up; or of a souvenir such as Rodin’s *Thinker*, doubled, the backs flattened and used as bookends,¹⁶ or of a memory stick, marbled and in the form of a cross. They make us laugh, and why? Because they are cases of doing something at the wrong place which is right at the place where it belongs. Such misplacement is the essence of both bad taste and kitsch. The cross has its home at some higher place of a wall, not in a laptop; Rodin’s *Thinker* is for a public place, not for stabilizing book rows; gaudy make-up is fine in a circus, not at an ordinary public place; fluffy cat and wild horse pictures as well as Donald Duck are right for children, but wrong for adults; buying a plastic replica of the Cathedral of Florence is to remember our tour but not to present beauty. Bad taste is not a lack of knowledge or morality but a lack of a sense, loaded with experience, of when and where to apply one’s factual or moral knowledge. Thus we can also explain why kitsch is felt as pretense and ostentation, as fake, hypocrisy, and parasitic on art:¹⁷ it pretends that a misplaced behavior is right.

The big problem with this defense as with any other defense of SK is that it cannot explain why kitsch has become rampant. There has always been misplaced behavior, as there has always been bad taste, but these facts did not make kitsch the dominating phenomenon it is today.

Moreover, there are more problems with SK that show up if we have a closer look at kitsch objects. It seems obvious that what makes objects kitschy is their sweetening, or in another word, adulterating style of presenting reality and the implicit claim that reality is lovely, lively, or at least more interesting and acceptable than it is. If there are poverty and old age, cheerful beggars and faithful old dogs witness that basically reality is fine. The novelist Kundera follows this idea of kitsch when he ascribes to kitsch a “categorical agreement with being.” He even assimilates the conflict between kitsch friends and kitsch enemies to that between

those who believe that the world was created by God and those who think it came into being of its own accord...Kitsch is the

¹⁵ Harold Rosenberg, *The Tradition of the New* (New York: MacGraw-Hill 1965), p. 266.

¹⁶ I take this example and the following one of the plastic replica from Kulka 81f.

¹⁷ Cp. Gillo Dorfles, *Kitsch: The World of Bad Taste* (New York: Universe Books, 1969) (tr. from the 1968 Italian version, *Il Kitsch*), 12; Calinescu, 229, Kulka, p. 80.

absolute denial of shit, in both the literal and figurative sense of the word; kitsch excludes everything from its purview that is essentially unacceptable in human existence.¹⁸

Yet if believers believe in God, they do not necessarily agree with being, as they often also believe in the devil and do not agree with evil. And think of Alexander Pope's great verse:

And spite of Pride, in erring Reason's spite, One truth is clear,
*Whatever is, is right.*¹⁹

If something categorically agrees with being, these lines do; but I wonder if Kundera would call them kitsch. They are not. They show we can categorically agree with being without sweetening reality, as they imply the rigor of rejecting the human inclination to blame their own faults on the world. They would be kitschy only if they yielded to this inclination and ended with the words "*Whate'er we do, is right.*"

Can't we nonetheless stick to SK and argue that what makes something kitsch is not its sweetening or adulterating *any* part of reality but only our actions? The problem is that fluffy kitten pictures seem to imply not that whatever we do is right but that the kittens are right. Yet, as Pope declaring "whatever is, is right" shows, the mere presenting of something as right cannot become the kitsch factor. What then makes a presentation kitschy, if it is neither the presentation as right nor the presentation of our actions as right? What we are left with is a presentation that produces in us feelings we indulge in. In fact, whether we like it or not, if we look at kittens, they produce in us strong positive emotions. We can reject or indulge in them. If we indulge, it seems we use the kitten pictures as kitsch; if we reject the feeling the pictures trigger, we resist the attraction of kitsch. So can we say that kitsch is an object made to trigger emotions in which we may indulge?

No, since pornographic objects are also made to trigger feelings we indulge in and yet they are not necessarily kitsch. Worse, many if not all works of art are made to produce feelings in us that we indulge in without indulging in kitsch. Otherwise Sophocles' *Antigone*, which is said to have caused the Athenians to indulge in crying for a week, would be kitsch. It seems we need to qualify the feelings indulging in which is kitsch.

Here Kundera, despite his mistaken starting point, seems to hit on the right quality:

Kitsch causes two tears to flow in quick succession. The first tear says: How nice to see children running on the grass! The second tear says: How nice to be moved, together with all mankind, by

¹⁸ Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness*, 247f; from Kulka 95f.

¹⁹ Alexander Pope, *Essay on Man*, End of First Epistle.

children running on the grass! It is the second tear that makes kitsch kitsch.²⁰

Kitsch can cause not only two tears but also two laughs or smiles or admiring *wows*. Kundera's point is that a presentation is kitschy if and only if it is made to produce feelings we indulge in because we think we feel as all mankind does. First tears, or laughs, or wows, are right. Second tears are wrong because in them we feel not for the specific reason for which the feeling would be right, as when the Athenians admire Antigone's steadfastness, but for its presumed agreement with mankind. Second tears drown the first tears. Indulging in a feeling for its agreement with mankind prevents us from attending to the reasons of our first tears, and reduces us to enjoying only our feeling rather than responding, by our emotion, to the facts that deserve our emotion. Indulging in a feeling for the facts that deserve our emotion is a case of exploring reality by our feeling and of doing something for its sake. In contrast, indulging in a feeling for its agreement with mankind is a case of doing something only for our pleasure.²¹

Understanding kitsch as producing a second tear or emotion by which we think of our agreement with mankind allows us to understand some peculiarities of kitsch. We may wonder why the picture of fluffy kittens or a sunset is kitsch, while real fluffy kittens or a sunset that look exactly like the pictures are not. Similarly, a Gothic cathedral is often great art, but the same cathedral rebuilt in our time is felt to be kitschy. The reason is the picture or copy is made to trigger not only a first emotion but a second one that indulges in our agreement with mankind. Similarly, a child or youth who the first time sees a picture we regard as kitschy and enthuses over it is pardoned for his misjudgment, because we assume he indulges in it only for the first tear. However, we should add to or explicate Kundera's description of the second tear, stating that it is a reference not necessarily to a given in mankind, but to a presumed one that the kitsch producer may only feign. We might even describe rhetoric by its reference to a suggested feeling of mankind and thus explain why philosophers become kitschy when they use rhetoric rather than argument.

Recognizing the second-tear-triggering property as the constitutive property of kitsch allows us to explain another specificity of kitsch. Indulgence in kitsch is often felt as a protest against rules that check and channel our responses. Civilization channels our immediate responses, expecting us not to blurt them out but to have regard to the sensibilities of others. Unlike cattle and barbarians, we should know how to control ourselves. In contrast, kitsch objects invite us to respond uninhibitedly to

²⁰ Kundera, *Unbearable Lightness* loc. cit., p. 251; from Kulka, p. 27.

²¹ Kundera's "second tear" can distinguish kitsch from both mass art and Avant-garde art as defined by Noel Carroll, *Philosophy of Mass Art*, pp. 185-211.

strong feelings, such as rapture at the cuteness of kittens and the pathos of sunsets. We can be sure that everyone has such feelings; otherwise they would lack the strength that makes them the feelings that kitsch objects trigger. This is why indulging in them is also indulgence in our conformity to mankind, and why kitsch objects replace the rules of civilization with the authority of strong feelings that we believe are common to mankind. In contrast, by explaining kitsch as bad taste, we take account only of the failure of kitsch to meet the standards of taste, and not of its implicit claim to be superior to the conventions of civilization.

By its appeal to the natural feelings of mankind, kitsch unites people of the most different civilizations in a universal brotherhood. Yet it is a brotherhood only in the most primitive responses to blunt stimuli or raw nature, a brotherhood that can be as obtrusive as the uniting responses are elementary. Moreover, the raw nature that unites the global kitsch community is often only the pretense of human nature, since certain responses that in fact result from specific conditions, such as taking a cigarette or a drink after some strain, or taking offense at the behavior of a minority, can be hyped by kitsch producers so as to appear as the right response of all mankind.

The crucial element in the second-tear-triggering property of kitsch that explains the rampancy of kitsch is not only that it confirms us in feeling like all mankind, but also that it pardons and even applauds under-achievements and failures, such as that of the German bourgeoisie in 1848, if they are taken for a rebellion against the standards of art and civilization. Kitsch promises liberty for the price of abandoning standards of civilization. As we experience the tools' tyranny as civilization's tyranny, we are attracted to kitsch, taking it for a badge of liberation.

Thus, kitsch has become rampant today. The suffering from the tools' tyranny and the evasive response to it by muddling through, rather than taking up the challenge, cry for a confirmation by the agreement with mankind. They make us eager to look for things that allow us to enjoy ourselves rather than what merits admiration; for if we think of what merits admiration, we'll not come off well. On the other hand, those who profit from the given conditions, interested in the prevalent evasive response to the tools' tyranny rather than in an autonomous society, will produce such confirmation as much as they can. We can be sure that under the given conditions, kitsch spreads like fire in a parched forest, as something people cry for and minorities kindle.²²

²² As far as I see, except for Kundera, kitsch theorists have failed to understand this crucial property of kitsch and therefore end up with amazingly trivial or misleading descriptions of kitsch. Thus in explaining why kitsch is so popular, Adorno ("On Popular Music," *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science* 9, 1941, p. 38; from Calinescu, p. 242) desperately states: "People want to have fun. A fully concentrated and conscious experience of art is possible only to those whose lives do not put such a strain on them that in their spare

There are, however, more sophisticated forms of kitsch that attract just because they demonstrate that the chooser of this form of kitsch differs from the rest. We find them in particular in forms that combine with fashion. They are interesting because they indicate that kitsch can turn from an obstacle into a motor of autonomy. Yet they are still obstacles because their autonomy is no less illusionary than that of ordinary kitsch. If my goal is to be just different from the rest, I remain dependent on the rest. Rather than my telling myself what I must do, the rest now tells me what I must not do. I will not take account of these forms of kitsch here, though.

Now, am I (and Kundera) not moralistic and prejudiced against kitsch? Isn't what I depreciatingly call *raw* nature our *real* nature or a very important part of it? When I buy a poster of fluffy kittens, do I not follow *my* impulse rather than a rule of art or civilization that commands me to prefer a more artistic picture? Am I not entirely independent of what "all mankind" feels, as I follow only *my* impulse? So, isn't the claim of kitsch to liberate perfectly justified?

True, actions are autonomous only if they are *our* actions, chosen by us and suiting us. Yet another condition of autonomy is that we *deliberate* about our actions, look for alternatives, ponder the pros and cons, and only then decide. But deliberation is the very thing kitsch cuts off. Kitsch invites us to follow the first strong impulse we feel when looking at it. True, in young people kitsch can have an emancipatory effect, as it can push them to trusting their own feeling. However, if the young do not learn to add deliberation to their self-confidence, they stick with deciding by their strongest impulse. Rather than becoming autonomous they become objects of manipulation of kitsch producers, who offer them the stimuli to which they will respond the way most people do, just because they are the stimuli most people spontaneously respond to in the same way.

So they will judge their responses right because others are responding the same way. Their criterion of the rightness of a response is not whether it is adequate to the stimulus (they may even lose the concept of such adequacy) but whether it conforms to how other people respond.

We now have sufficient reason to formulate the following lengthy explanation K of kitsch:

time they want relief from both boredom and effort simultaneously. The whole sphere of cheap commercial entertainment reflects this dual desire." Why does this sphere produce just this special phenomenon of kitsch? There are many other ways to find relief from boredom without effort, such as riding a roller coaster or getting drunk. Calinescu, p. 244, even states: "Cheap or expensive, kitsch is sociologically and psychologically the expression of a life style, namely, the life style of the bourgeoisie or the middle class" and invents a "principle of mediocrity." Yet the bourgeoisie did not incline to kitsch at all before the 19th century, and since then the non-bourgeois classes were no less fond of kitsch.

(K) Kitsch is an object producing feelings indulged in because their strength invites us to enjoy ourselves in what seems to be an autonomously chosen agreement with an alleged mankind, but is only the indulgence in an unavoidable response to stimuli too blunt as to allow a differentiated attention to reality and therefore preventing the reality contact necessary for autonomy.

K does not exclude that kitsch sweetens reality or offends good taste, as the strong feelings a kitsch object triggers may *be* sweet and offending to good taste, but it contradicts SK, as it claims that kitsch is more than just a product of bad taste. K may define the kitsch of all times, but by describing the feelings kitsch produces, it allows explaining the historical role kitsch has acquired today; so we may call it a historical approach. Let's now have a look at its historical role.

THE HISTORICAL ROLE OF KITSCH

The word *kitsch* was introduced in the 1860s by art dealers and artists in Munich for "cheap artistic stuff" bought by the *nouveaux riches*.²³ This was the time when the German bourgeoisie stopped reflecting the failed 1848 revolutions and looked for new goals, allowing them to forget about their failure. The historical coincidence of the German bourgeoisie's desire to wipe out their historical failure and the beginning of the career of the word *kitsch* may be a mere accident. Yet it is not too implausible to guess, either, that the Germans' susceptibility to kitsch was an effect of, or favored by, the humiliating defeat of 1848.

Autonomy would have required of the German bourgeoisie to seize political power, as the English bourgeoisie had done two centuries earlier. The German bourgeoisie did have the power to impose its own order on Germany, but it submitted to a decaying aristocracy and its state institutions. While before 1848 it had cultivated the moderately authoritarian *Biedermeier*, this was no longer possible after its partial commitment to the 1848 revolutions. Now the bourgeois desired compensation for their 1848 failure by sticking to their ideal of autonomy, yet without risking another revolution. Enjoying kitsch allowed them to have an omelet without breaking an egg, to be radical in words and conservative in deeds. For kitsch invited them to follow their immediate strong and uncivilized impulses in responding to "artistic stuff" and to take their responses for acts of liberation by which they also showed their agreement with all true mankind not yet spoiled by the suppressing rules of feudal civilization. The artistic stuff of Munich art dealers found a fertile ground in novels, operas, dueling fraternities, and national celebrations

Yet the failure of the German bourgeoisie that triggered the career of kitsch was only the last straw that broke a camel's back burdened by the

²³ Călinescu, p. 234.

tools' tyranny. Since all modern societies suffer from the tools' tyranny, and the failure of the German bourgeoisie was followed by similar failures of other classes in most other nations, kitsch spread. The price to pay for the comfort of kitsch, for indulging in sentiments that provide the illusion of autonomy and distract from deliberate actions, was reduced reality contact. Friends of kitsch become blind to alternatives and to the dangers of their conformism. The costs were billed by World War I and its consequences.²⁴

If this explanation is true, we should expect that despite the prevalence of the soft understanding in theory, in practice kitsch is recognized as a means to assure us in our resignation into conditions that we criticize in words but accept in deeds. Kitsch could not become rampant without recognition of its function in practice. And it is thus recognized. Here is an example, a comment, titled *Kitsch Rather Than Crisis*, in a German weekly on the announcement that the English Prince William and his girlfriend Kate Middleton would marry in 2011:

The British government is said to have rapped the tables, overjoyed, for minutes...Hardly could there have been a better present in a year when Britain has to implement the strictest austerity plans of the recent past. In such a time some kitsch feels good. And since the crisis will be very hard indeed, some more kitsch will feel still better...Kitsch gilds the crisis, and we are beguiled.²⁵

Kitsch is here understood as a means that helps accept a life in need of "gilding." By causing second tears on a marriage, kitsch is expected to create a universal brotherhood that by its indulging in second tears accepts what deliberating people would not accept. The author of the comment certainly does not think that kitsch reduces reality contact, but his words imply such reduction nonetheless.

Kitsch has become a recognized tool to reduce us to a community of raw feelings, willing to follow feelings because they seem the feelings of mankind. In practice, it is recognized to be not just a reality sweetener but a tool to bend people's will in one direction that makes consent by argument superfluous. As such a tool, kitsch is used in politics and advertisement, religion and rhetoric. Making the masses believe in their autonomy by staging mass mobilizing events that underchallenge rational capabilities, yet suggest having the applause of all naturally feeling mankind, is common to totalitarian systems, election campaigns in Western democracies, and mass

²⁴ Sennett, *Fall of Public Man*, assigns similar importance to 1848, though he focuses on "personality" rather than on kitsch: "The revolution of 1848 was the first appearance of the dominance of a culture of personality" (262).

²⁵ *Die Zeit*, Nov 17, 2010. (My transl.) Yet in August 2011, commentators explained the reduction of Britain's economic growth down to 0.2 percent by the extra holidays introduced for the marriage celebrations.

events such as the Olympics or Church World Congresses. Even those who do not want to deceive use kitsch as a means to bend people's will as if it was legitimate.²⁶

As kitsch is an opiate, its spread indicates the spread of despair over the impotence in mastering the modern life. In his *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud analyzed the despair kitsch indicates, even though he does not mention kitsch. Rather soothingly, he calls the despair "uneasiness in civilization" and explains it as a result of a "disappointment," not by "an extraordinary advance in the natural sciences and in their technical application," but by the discipline that any civilization imposes on human desires to make peaceful coexistence possible.²⁷ Thus Freud provides an argument to defend kitsch as a necessary means to buffer the burdens of the tools' tyranny. Yet he recognizes the destructive potential of the uneasiness in civilization by adding to the instinct "of hunger and love," as he here calls libido, "an instinct of death or destruction."²⁸ He is probably wrong to assume such an instinct, but right to state a strong readiness to destroy in contemporary society feeding on the suffering from the tools' tyranny.

By stating such a readiness, Freud implies that kitsch, like other opiates, may stifle but cannot eradicate the aggression that responds to the tools' tyranny. The illusion of autonomy with which kitsch provides its adherent will turn into a "fury of destruction,"²⁹ when the illusion breaks down but reality contact is not resumed. This happened in Germany after World War I. The defeat smashed Germans' power fancy without improving their reality contact. The result was a rise of the readiness to destroy that found its expression in Nazism. As we may expect, also this readiness was wrapped in kitsch.

Saul Friedlander described the vicinity of kitsch and killing that appears in the kitschy glorification of death by the Nazis and by artists who felt attracted to death.³⁰ He illustrates the method of how to pass crime off as virtue by Himmler's speech to the SS generals who had to execute the decision to delete the Jewry of Europe. Himmler commands the generals to make sure that nothing is stolen from the Jews, "for the love of our people"

²⁶ Sennett, *Public Man*, describes the use of kitsch in politics by the concept of (inconspicuous) "narcotic charisma" (271). Yet he focuses on aspects of "personality" rather than of autonomy and its inhibition.

²⁷ Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (New York: Norton, 1962), 34f.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 64 and 66.

²⁹ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* § 589; *Philosophy of Right* § 5. Yet Hegel applies the term to abstract liberty.

³⁰ Saul Friedländer, *Reflections of Nazism: Essay on kitsch and Death* (New York: Harper, 1984), p. 135. Italicized in original.

and to prevent “any damage to our inner self, our soul and our character.”³¹ He presents genocide as an act of decency.

What Friedlander describes characterizes not only Nazi Germany but all contemporary societies, even if to a lower degree. Wars are a welcome way to make use of the economically superfluous, but they also meet a readiness that indicates an unbroken destructive potential. Today, Islamist leaders of terror organizations wrap their calls to murder in the language of religion that contains the accumulated kitsch of centuries. Western governments are not inferior to them. The American military doctrine of *Shock and awe*³² that aims at gaining rapid dominance over an enemy nation by a sudden destruction of its infrastructure was presented as minimizing “civilian casualties, loss of life, and collateral damage,” even though the more detailed description said the effect would be that of “dropping nuclear weapons on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.”³³

The use of kitsch for wrapping crime in virtue demonstrates the worst property of kitsch: it replaces rational deliberation, by which alone we can distinguish between true and false and right and wrong, with the criterion of conformity to mankind. Corruption, mafia blackmail, and government terror, all the horrors thrillers are detailing, are backed up in a civilization with reduced contact to what is and ought to be the case.

Ascribing so many vices to kitsch is not very credible if we think of our buying a pink plastic replica of the Cathedral of Florence or of kids convulsed with laughter about Donald Duck. Such behavior would be entirely innocent indeed if it did not contribute to the stupid kitsch of advertisement and movies, the nasty kitsch of mass mobilizations, and the subtle kitsch of administrative orders and scientific presentations. Understanding kitsch as reality sweetener or bad taste prevents us from recognizing the crimes kitsch makes possible. Still, we must not forget that by its appeal to what individuals strongly feel, kitsch opens up the chance that people will discover what else belongs to them: their power of deliberation, or reason, and their power of negation, or free will. Under the right conditions, kitsch can promote autonomy.

³¹ Friedlander loc.cit. 103. Himmler held his talk on October 4, 1943 in Posen.

³² The doctrine was developed by Harlan K. Ullman and James P. Wade, *Rapid Dominance: A Force for All Seasons*. Royal United Services Institute in Defense Studies, 1998. This publication was preceded by a report to the United States’ National Defense University in 1996. The next quotation is from the Introduction. Klein, *The Shock Doctrine*, p. 396, pp. 399-406, describes Rumsfeld’s part in the doctrine and its terrorist consequences.

³³ *Ibid.* Chapter 1. The use of shocking crises to produce “real change,” recommended by Milton Friedman and described by Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine* 2007, no longer needs wrapping in kitsch.

APPLICATION TO THE AESTHETICS OF MUSIC AND ARCHITECTURE

It comes as a surprise that we may apply the understanding of kitsch by definition K to aesthetical problems of music and architecture. Such an application confirms K.

There has been a dispute about whether there can be kitsch in music, or at least in so-called serious music. The dispute may seem bizarre, as it seems obvious that Wagner and other composers are sometimes kitschy.³⁴ Yet if we presuppose kitsch consists in sweetening reality or in bad taste, rather than in preventing differentiating responses to stimuli, we have a reason to claim music can never be kitschy, for music cannot do without producing emotions, and, in the end, enjoyable ones. To understand music we have to indulge in it to some extent. So if we cannot avoid indulging in enjoyable emotions when listening to music, understanding music is a case of indulging in sweetening reality; hence it is always kitsch. Yet obviously not all music is kitsch. So it seems best to deny music the possibility to be kitsch in the first place.

Obviously, too, we can apply this argument to literature and any other kind of art. Works of art, as *Antigone* shows, often require an immersion in the feelings they produce. If we follow the logic of the argument, either all art is kitsch or there can be no kitsch in art. Yet we can avoid this implausible conclusion if we understand kitsch as preventing differentiating responses. Then we can understand music and any other work of art are kitsch if and only if they lead to indulgence in powerful emotions that exclude differential attention. Wagner's music does produce such emotions; in particular emotions of an unconditional surrender to a power the listener identifies with, if only to the power of music. The surrender is of the kind enjoyed in mass mobilizations and masquerades as autonomy. No wonder Wagner's music is loved in such mobilizations.

Kitsch is a problem also in architecture. The Vienna architect Adolf Loos, famous for the the essay "Crime and Ornament,"³⁵ argued that ornament is crime. He regarded ornament as sweetening, hence as kitsch, hence as condemnable, and propagated functional architecture. Architects followed in flocks, wreaking havoc in most cities, making buildings bleak and boring. Yet unless functional architecture is witty, it is oppressive and a pretext for cheap production.

Like music theorists, architects ignored the fact that kitsch consists not just in using ornaments and other reality sweeteners, but in their use to

³⁴ Reported by Kulka 101; Susan Sontag, in Dorfles ed., *Kitsch*, loc. cit., p. 239, said that "as far as serious music is concerned, very little is called kitsch."

³⁵ In his *Sämtliche Schriften*, Wien (Herold) 1967; transl. in Ulrich Conrads, "Programs and Manifestoes on 20th Century Architecture" (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1964.)

produce illusionary feelings of autonomy, in particular to make the observer identify with the power represented. Such design was cultivated by the Nazi architect Albert Speer and by most Middle Eastern and Western empires, from ancient Egypt and Rome to the Soviet and the American Empires with their wedding-cake palaces and staggering business towers. Like Wagnerian music, it invites the subjects to rave about a power mistaken for autonomy. It demonstrates power that frightens the foe and fortifies the friend.

Yet building and composition cannot only use ornament and sweetness, but can demonstrate power, namely the power of intelligence in architecture and composition, without any kitschiness at all. Examples are an overwhelming mass of musical compositions³⁶ and Gothic cathedrals, Roman aqueducts, and modern bridges and dams, demonstrating the most developed construction technology of their time. Such works allow admiring technological or compositional power but do not invite to identifying with or dissolving in it.

Our historical approach to kitsch also provides an explanation as to why what has been art yesterday often is kitsch if imitated today. To build a house today in the Gothic style does not pass for art, however great art the same house has been in Gothic times. Similarly, to compose music in the style of a past epoch is not taken for real art. Remarkably, authors agree in this aesthetic view.³⁷ A house or a composition was art in their times only if it composed the elements then available so as to allow differentiating judgments and feelings in looking at and living in it or in playing or listening to it. But imitation is felt to promote indulging in something of which general admiration is presupposed, hence to exclude creating an object that allows differentiating responses. Moreover, if the artist renounces the use of means available in his or her time, he or she performs the very underachievement pretending to be an achievement that marks kitsch. In contrast, if a city recreates its historical buildings destroyed in war, the restored buildings will not be felt to be kitsch because there is no pretension of an artistic achievement.

For their condemnation of any ornament and not only those that aim at illusion, Loos and his adherents might appeal to Kant's aesthetic. Kant said:

³⁶ When Bach added to his compositions the words *Ad maiorem Dei gloriam*, (to the greater glory of God), he expressed that he did what he did not for his sake but for the sake of a work to which he felt subordinated.

³⁷ To escape this problem, Kulka 54ff distinguishes between the aesthetic and the artistic value of art, the latter taking account of the "art-historical value" of a work of art. This distinction can explain (as Kulka shows) the different judgments on a work such as Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger* but not the phenomenon mentioned.

At any time, taste is still barbarian if it uses allures and emotions to please or even makes them the measure of applause.³⁸

Kant thus seems to deny any music and ornament aesthetic value, as there is no music or ornament that does not somehow use allures and emotions to please. Yet art may not only play with allures and emotions; often it ranks higher because of the deeper the emotion it produces. Not only music and architecture but all art is misunderstood if we understand kitsch as sweetening rather than as preventing differentiating responses; for a work of art turns into kitsch, not if it moves or pleases, but if it does so by preventing differentiation. Kant is right to warn us against the second tears kitsch literature tries to produce in the reader, but wrong if he condemns the first tear.

Yet we can also read Kant in a more favorable light. He did not prohibit all “allures and emotions,” but those that only serve to please, and thus stop art from following its intrinsic aim. Kant insisted on judging the value of a work of art by its inherent standard rather than by an external goal. Anyway, however we interpret Kant, if we understand kitsch by K, we have to agree that art may present its object in a pleasant form, but must not do so if pleasing is its only goal.

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³⁸ Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft* §13: “Der Geschmack ist jederzeit noch barbarisch, wo er die Beimischung der *Reize* und *Rührungen* zum Wohlgefallen bedarf, ja wohl gar diese zum Maßstabe seines Beifalls macht” (my tr.).

CHAPTER XV

GLOBALIZATION: MODERN MYTH OR IDEOLOGICAL PROJECT?

IULIA ANGHEL

Abstract: The present wears the visible tracks of a new and effervescent idea – the unification and symbiosis of identities. This type of vision over cultural values and geopolitical limitations tends to dissolve the previous picture of a world dominated by heterogenic and irreducible differences and raises some hard questions. Are we confronting a disguised ideological project or is it a new and modern form of myth? The main aim of this article is to explore the lines of struggle and tension regarding what we call today the phenomenon of globalization. The central hypothesis refers to a pre-existent background for this type of symbolic unification which made possible the concentration of human relations and interactions, considered to be a mark of a late modernity.

One of the core issues contained in this article will refer to an attempt of identification of the primary sources of the great change of paradigm generated by the secularization of the social sphere. On another level, this could also imply a short inquiry on the rise and extension of the very influential dimension of political mythology.

Another subject that I intend to present is linked to an analysis of the communist ideology defined as an intermediate stage for a specific type of globalization. At the same time, I will try to offer an interpretation of the communist mythology as a form of exploitation of the perennial collective aspirations and dreams.

The final part of this article will be focused on a discussion of the mythological dimension of globalization and will host an attempt to identify and de-construct its stereotypes and hidden structure. The study will evolve mainly through the reference frames designed by the writings of Alain Besançon, Katherine Verdery, and Lucien Sfez, but also will consider other possible visions. It is important to mention that even though this kind of global and very theoretical approach will necessarily involve some simplifications and generalizations, and could not exhaust the whole sum of significations and senses of the discussed terms, it could still be useful in designing a new space of debate.

Keywords: Globalization, human values, cleavage, identity, political myth, unity

INTRODUCTION

One of the major provocations of democratic theory is to offer answers about its main scope. Hard to accept or not, democracy tends to action and to influence political entities and historical epochs, without a clarifying justification¹. Often it is said that the democratic option is the best option for the majority of people. The question remains: What majority? Is it an eternal rule for every type of society and evolutionary moment? Is it suitable for every cultural pattern? The only answer is the silence. Interactions between the specific democratic model and the tendency of a particular structure of values are united today by the complex term of globalization. Its vocation is doubled by an implicit rule that proclaims it as the only possible option, which generates an illusory picture.

We are tempted to believe that the whole planet is included in this new, humanistic and progressive movement. The real sense of globalization is perhaps lost in this variety of implications. One of the central scopes of this article is to try an exploratory view over the real limits and shapes of globalization, as we face it today. Also, I will try to show some hidden aspects of this extremely provocative reality. First I have to mention that the term “globalization” is used in a specific way and is understood as a form of colonization of a particular model, the Western culture, with limits and edges often determined by very subtle political interests. Of course, globalization is much more than that, but we may accept that one of its important elements is this domination of a set of “core values” that tend to minimize other cultural alternatives. One important argument will be linked to the concept of the “extended border,” understood as a limitative line that arises between the space of the universal project and the rest of the world.

The central argument is that even if we tend to believe that globalization is a natural, progressive, and legitimate evolution of a universal and humanistic project, in fact we may suspect the intervention of an ideological frame. This way globalization becomes an expression of a silent dominance of a cultural pattern against diversity and not an “open model” that slowly evolves and includes new types of values. The term of “myth” placed also in the title is used in a metaphorical way and its target is to stress our vulnerability in front of the perennial ideal of a universal and borderless society.² Even if this type of very general and abstract exploration is exposed to some limitations and simplifications, it could still prove its utility in highlighting the hidden aspects of the globalization movement.

¹ Ed. Ian Shapiro, Casiano Hacker-Cordon, *Democracy's Edges* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

² J. J. Wunenburger, *Politics Imageries* (Bucharest: Paideia Publishing House, 2005).

GLOBALIZATION BETWEEN PAST AND FUTURE TIMES

The concept of globalization is controversial, multivalent, and hard to define in the light of its uncountable set of consequences. Involving a complicated range of symbolic, ideological, and economical perspectives, globalization tends to function as a unification vector for divergent phenomena such as: the free market extension, the invasion of the Western cultural model or the informational revolution. All these fragmentary elements are paradoxically chained by the idea of "boundary annihilation." One of the main features of this new vision is the problem of indetermination of limits. Compression of the space functions at the same time as an extension of identities. The domination (real or not) of a Western-originated model raises some deceitful questions in the field of classical problems of ethical and political philosophy.

An important part of the theoretical exploration of the problem of globalization is based on the idea that all these dissolving tendencies are in fact an exclusive mark of the contemporary world. Nevertheless, a short look at the history of ideas may bring to light some hidden roots of the globalization project. If we define this paradigm in terms of a unification project of cultural identities and at the same time as a dissolving vector for classical boundaries and limitations, we may discover that globalization is not such a new reality. One of the first cases with relevant similarities may be considered the Medieval structure of identities. Here, religious influence generated some interesting key points. The world was not yet a melting pot, but we recognize the presence of an extended border. The Enlightenment movement continued this unification of values and functioned as a primary stage of global identity. This first dissolving frame suffered in the end a fragmentation generated by the intervention of the Age of Nations, but its fundamental ideas survived in a cryptic form. These hidden tendencies were revealed again by the intervention of the ideological projects of the nineteenth century. Class identity and the new born proletarian values shattered the national limits and gave birth to a new type of global and universal project.

Marx's theory over the annihilation of space sustains the thought that the capitalist system generates an accumulation of resources and slowly destroys the old form of economic relations.³ This natural movement of historical evolution will bring, in the end, the pauperization of the proletarians, but also will raise their class consciousness, making revolution possible. It is interesting to mention that in Marx's approach, the unification of values and cosmopolitan world ideas are not surprising at all and they make sense for the future of the communist project. There is a complicated road trip between idea and reality, so this kind of ideological unification

³ K. Marx, "Manifesto of the Communist Party" in *Selected Works*, third edition, vol. 1 (Bucharest: Political Publishing House, 1966).

didn't last, and the universal and non-limited vision of the fathers of the communist project was replaced by a kaleidoscopic range of small systems. For Medieval unification there were two major types of main points, the religious identity and the intellectual bridge of the Latin language. The small informational revolution implied by Gutenberg's invention will be reproduced on a different scale by the informational era, opened through the interventions of the new technologies.

The ideological stage invented its extended borders through the complicated tool of the political culture. Proletarians from all types of societies were this way linked in a determinational chain. Karl Marx's prophecies were not respected and this world-spread revolution didn't generate a social heaven, but as a paradox it made possible today's globalization. From a general point of view, we could identify four major paradigms that fit globalization tendencies: The Medieval community of religion that had its elitist language, the Lights of modernity that used the cultural language centered on humane values, Marx's ideological project, which was linked with the class consciousness, and in the end, the present concentrations of the identities which are patronized by the informational revolution.

All these stages share some interesting similarities that make us accept as possible a cyclic-shaped model. The unification trends are supporting a dissolving element: the elitist Medieval community was brooked by the Illuminist vector, the Enlightenment lost its general aimed values by the interventions of the ideological culture, and the last one was proclaimed defeated through the installation of the informational era.

An important question remains about the essence of globalization: Is this a genuine contemporary reality, made possible by the interventions of a natural process that had its roots at the beginning of modernity, or are we discussing a recurrent pattern of compressing and extending identities, through a dynamic type of borders? It is difficult to raise an ultimate response, but it is quite obvious that today's globalization shares some provocative features with past similar projects. The expansion of a specific cultural pattern and its self-proclaimed universality also raises some specific questions about the domains of ethics, values, and politics.

THE PROBLEM OF THE EXTENDED BORDER: INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE "UNIVERSAL" PATTERN

All the previous attempts to create a universal, general, and uniform space of identity were paradoxically linked by the concept of borders. Extended or not, the border was a limitation line, between this pattern and the rest of the world. The "war line" was not placed in an evolutionary way, splitting the past from the future, the evolved visions from the retrograde ones. What makes this separation so interesting is its eliminatory vocation. The Medieval community was labeled as an elitist construct, its values and its language being quite non-accessible to regular people. Despite these

extremely restrictive conditions, we may consider it in a light of a universal project.

Supporting this thesis we could invoke three major aspects: the dissolving effect of the religious factor, the presence of new, specific, and unitary path of communication (Latin), and the alchemy of a new system of values. This way the evolution of the “Gutenberg’s code” began.⁴

The world placed outside their model was often ignored and treated as a “neglected part”⁵ of reality. Of course, it may be said that the universal communion of the Medieval project was not perfect, and this aspect will be resolved in the next stages. The Enlightenment movement induced the sensation of a change, but the border is still there, as a defining line and not as a temporary element. The aims of the Light’s Revolution are more general and more universal, but they are still trapped in a hermetic paradigm. This profound change that took place in the referential system didn’t affect all the people. The “good savage” was perceived as an ideal model of harmony between human and nature, but he didn’t know it, and because of that, the Enlightenment received some counterexamples quite late. These structures were repeated for most of the revolutions and manifestations of the “extended border” phenomena. The new and extremely militant ideological cultural paradigm is one of the clearest examples.

Marx’s revolutionary vision drastically excluded whole categories of social groups from the global and glorifying future. As an observation, we may conclude that all these revolutions and changes of paradigm that in a first stage had the appearance of universal and global projects are, in fact, dependent in a fundamental way on the concept of limit. There are other worlds outside the pattern that did not participate in its values, types of interactions, and internal rules. This exterior was in the past slowly included in the extended border. The main questions remains: is today’s project one that devoured the external space?

Is there nothing outside the influence and the systemic values of what we call today the “global village”? The previous theoretical and quite simplifying analysis proved its utility by revealing some interesting aspects. First, universal projects like the Enlightenment or the proletarian revolution had their own limits that eliminated the rest from the equation. The Lights epoch did it in an implicit manner and Marx’s revolution in an explicit and violent way. Secondly, the border line is not a temporary limitation of these types of projects, but a specific and constitutive feature. And in the end, global projects imply some eliminatory operations against other types of systems and values that did not fit the pattern.

⁴ M. McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002).

⁵ G. Bataille, *The Accursed Share* (Iași: European Institute Publishing House, 1994).

GLOBALIZATION OF VALUES: LIBERATION MOVEMENT OR “TOTALITARIAN MODEL”?

We already saw that an important variety of universal-aimed projects like the Marxist revolution or the Enlightenment were dependent on the concepts of limit and “rejected groups.” The problem of the extended border was not solved by the modern frame of globalization, and we can still perceive an “external reality” that refuses to fit into this model. The present expression of the “extended border” generates an acceleration process for some old conflicts and separation lines. The hermetic communities that functioned through the intervention of a self-regulatory mechanism must face unexpected influences in this new reality. The fate of distant countries and extremely different political structures is, in the present paradigm, linked by globalization’s chain. At first look, this extensional model could be considered as a liberation tool. There is a core of “good” values that are replacing some “dark paradigms” such as totalitarianism or archaic structures. But the real problem rests in the label that we apply to these specific values.

There is a sphere of interest where our attention is concentrated and there is another spatial dimension, very similar to the first, that rests in dark. The globalization model and its specific features didn’t extend quite naturally; its geography is a very well established one. What I am trying to highlight here is the non-legitimate tendency of selection of the interest spheres that must melt in the project. Also, it is important to mention that the cultural model of globalization has a very selective pattern of manifestation. There are places where the ideal of promoting democracy is not valid, and globalization acts only as a rejection force.

We fight for democracy and a free market in some places, and in other extremely similar contexts we choose to remain passive. Also, the silent dominance of the “European-American pattern” is labeled as the only possible model. But the question remains: is it about liberation, or we are witnesses to another pulsation of the limit? The philosophical approaches to these new challenges launched by globalization are divided in two major types of visions: an isolationist model that militates for preserving some kind of hermetic evolution, and the “open approach,” where the central aim is to promote and extend the model and the values of this type of globalization.

At first, it may seem that the two possible lines of evolution are extremely different and leave space for a real decision. But an important aspect remains hidden behind them. The whole debate is referring to one single and exclusive model: the Western system of values and significations, which is about being inside the border or not being at all.

The cultural dominance of this “Western made” universal project is often unnoticed inside the “extended border.” The real and quite violent consequences tend to become visible outside this symbolic line. The culture of globalization is defined in a stereotypical way as an obviously exclusive

way of evolution. If one specific society places itself in a different paradigm, the border refuses to extend anymore.

SOME PARTISAN CONCLUSIONS

An important part of the modern democracies is based on the principles of freedom and equality that are directly linked to the doctrine of human rights. The evolution and extension of this vision in the post-war world was extremely complex. Its unique role was to prevent abuse and oppression. Still, this humanistic and universal project, directly linked to a sort of "late Enlightenment," had its own limits and dark areas. Outside the border, there is a world defined by ethno-cultural diversity and with significant differences in the field of values.⁶ There are two kinds of visions over this failure to eliminate the limit line. Some voices maintain that the whole doctrine of human values is based on culture. It may be useful for one type of culture and dangerous for another. So, there are parts of the world that refuse to fit into this pattern. Another sort of explanation is based on the idea of a split between a majority culture, in this case "the Western model," and the minority's values, other possible visions, placed outside the border.

The cosmopolitan project appeared in history very often as forms of reactions generated against the privileges of a majority group. In this way, a sort of particular type of values was extended and replaced an old paradigm, which represented the most seductive image of the universalistic ideal.⁷

The battle between the small identity and the extended one is not new and not even specific for our contemporary crisis. Enlightenment cosmopolitanism accepted the possibility of creating a universal culture, but at the same time they were conscious of the danger of domination from one specific model. For these early prophets of globalization, the new dimension of identity could not be limited by a dominant culture that excluded the rest from its own universe. This intuition is more interesting in the light of its premonitory aspect; the Enlightenment was not confronted with the result of its own ideas, but in a strange manner its main voices put forth some guidelines regarding a possible corruption of the initial model.

Today's project of globalization is a very complex one that implies a combination of various ideological and political elements. Its seductive force tends to put in shadow the fundamental implications and promote the image of a universalistic idea. Maybe the Western cultural pattern is a good one and its extension is a sign of evolution, but the lack of permeability of this model and its monopolizing tendencies are the proofs of a profound

⁶ W. Kymlicka, *Politics in the Vernacular – Nationalism, Multiculturalism, and Citizenship* (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 2001).

⁷ A. Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity* (Stanford University Press, 1991).

internal crisis. Maybe the border will continue to extend, but its eliminatory propensity remains constant.

The solution is probably an “open model,” where values could be adapted, changed, hybridized. This way the border will be dissolved and transformed into a fluid line. But the question remains: is this possible? Could the internal structure of the globalization project support a plurality of systems of values? The answer is still uncertain and probably will be delivered in a quite distant future.

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PART II

NEW AXIOLOGICAL CHALLENGES IN TECHNOLOGIES AND SCIENTIFIC THINKING

CHAPTER XVI

HUMAN BEING: FROM SPIRITUAL VALUES TO TECHNOLOGICAL PROGRESS

CRISTIAN BERȚI

Abstract: This paper will discuss the meaning of the human being today, his role in the world, and his expectations concerning knowledge. We will discuss the opinions of three great thinkers of the last century: Constantin Noica, Werner Jaeger, and José Ortega Y Gasset, who debated the problems of the human being throughout history and presented an image of the man of the future (which begins about now) which, as we will see, is very close to our image today. This image has suffered a great many changes throughout history. It remains to be seen if those changes were good or bad for mankind as a whole. Our destiny is influenced by our past decisions and by the level of understanding of our past mistakes. Human values have always been the focus in many fields of study, but philosophy has taken an even greater interest in it because of the implications in the construction of a better world with man at its center. One of man's ideals was (and still is) finding the truth, if not as a whole, at least in part. For this purpose he continuously searched within himself and his surroundings, even as his knowledge of the world evolved. Therefore, we shall try to examine the implications of technological developments in molding human values.

Keywords: human being, ancient view, progress, ethics, values.

In this new age of endless possibilities, man is faced with many changes and new challenges. Technological developments represent a new way of living, and people have to adapt to these requirements. In order to do so, they have to understand themselves and comprehend their common fundamental issues. Therefore, man has to go back to the past to see how his ancestors saw themselves and their own essential values. For his foresight to be as accurate as possible, he has to be able to better understand his past. Looking into the past will help him to have a clear image of the stage of development he has reached. This is the method used by the three philosophers we will discuss in this paper. They tried to understand the way of life of the ancient Greeks, who were the most important and most developed people of ancient times. This was because of the great philosophers and thinkers who lived then: Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, among others.

The first philosopher we will consider is Constantin Noica. He is one of the greatest philosophers Romania has ever had. He wrote a substantial work about the human being and the becoming of Being. All his works are

centered on Man and the problems concerning him. He was very attached to the Greek philosophers, especially Plato, and their way of thinking.

According to Noica, today's man is preoccupied with his freedom and with his lawful rights, and therefore concentrates on what he feels he deserves, rather than respecting his obligations. Unlike the ancient Greeks, who were preoccupied with the community, modern man is concerned with himself only. This, in the Romanian philosopher's opinion, indicates that we are living in a world of egotism, like the world of Narcissus: the man who only loved himself, for which he was punished by the gods. By "automating his spiritual life," man "came to the point of not having the sense of sin at all,"¹ says Noica. Throughout his work, the Romanian philosopher appears to be very concerned about the moral issues brought about by new technological developments.

He considers knowledge to be one of the most important values of man, so he puts him right in the middle of that world: "the world of knowledge is not the world as it is, but the world as we make it to be."² He says that although the search for truth is beneficial, it cannot account for our knowledge. A simple correlation between the fact and its announcement (as believed by the Greeks) does not tell us much, because it cannot show us that what we know is actually the truth. So we need another level of discussion, which is called by Noica the "objectivity level," which means that knowledge will be valid anytime and anyplace: "in the act of knowledge not only the process of receiving – willingly or unwillingly – certainties is performed; there is at stake something much more than that: it is perhaps a destiny not set to appear in a world already finished, which man's mind could record, admire, and leave untouched, but rather one of participating in a relentless remaking of the world, or of enriching it, if one cannot remake it."³

Noica presents modern man as one who has to search, to uncover underlying truths, to find out new things in some way independent of his conscience. Truths exist in reality, and we just have to reveal them; this is the motto of the modern man. The sentiment that "everything is possible" is specific to the modern man, but then he also feels he loses face to technical advances, the product of his own work. Actually, he is scared he may not control its consequences, may not foresee its new developments.

Noica says that in Plato's dialogues, moral law prevails for man, and that the Greek philosopher affirms the atonement for and accountability of sin. The Romanian philosopher considers that when the world speaks of "the new man," it defines him as the negation of the old man. But for him this is just another illusion, because the new man actually is a sequel to the old one, with his principles and values. In the present, according to Noica, man is trapped between apathy and fear, and is agonizing about the future.

¹ Constantin Noica, *De caelo* (București: Ed. Humanitas, 1993), p. 110.

² *Ibid.*, p. 30.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

The individual experiences these two conditions because he is situated in a singular state. Today's man can escape from this situation only through morality and ethics, and this can only be achieved within the community, an idea in agreement with the Greeks. The best modern example, according to Noica, is Christianity.

Another philosopher preoccupied with the subject of modern man is Werner Jaeger. In his work *History and Classical Philology*, he is concerned with the values of modern man and with the level of education needed to achieve a higher standard of knowledge. The German philosopher says that the ideal of culture is that of the humanism of the Renaissance: free culture, with no exact purpose, achieved for and through man. So he pleads for a return to Antiquity, to the values of that period, now destroyed by modern technological progress. He says that humanism, and all of its values, was the highest form of Greek culture, and was successfully resumed in the Renaissance. The most important value was the famed *paideia* of the Greeks, understood as the culture of humanism. *Paideia* means education, and it contains all the forms of culture existing in Ancient Greece.

Jaeger proposes that molding the young – education in general – should be done by following the example of the humanist culture and its principles. The main principle of this culture focuses on the essences of things – on the bases, not on forms; on authentic ideas and their strengths. The Greeks formed the idea of man as a whole⁴ and not as a whole made of pieces, says Jaeger. That is to say, the pure image of man is that of the unity of the spiritual and the organic. The German philosopher offers a very beautiful definition for humanism: “humanism is nothing but man's journey to become man, and the way was first shown to us by the Greeks.”⁵ The whole idea of culture, in Jaeger's work, refers to education, to the Greek *paideia*; he agrees with the Greeks in seeing the total education of the body and the mind as essential and as the only thing that can bring the human being closer to himself, to his essence.

Jaeger's work is set with the same guidelines as other works from his time and earlier, like Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*, having the purpose of reviving German culture and spirituality through the appeal to Greek tradition, to that wonderful ancient culture which served as a model. This culture was the first one to have created itself through man and his essential values. Jaeger proposes that before we progress in the technological fields, we should return to the ancient Greek tradition and learn its language, so we can understand its greatness.

The third philosopher preoccupied with the state of modern man is José Ortega y Gasset. This Spanish philosopher writes about the impact that changes undergone by modern man have had on his way of living in

⁴ Werner Jaeger, *Istorie și filologie clasică*, trad. Alina Noveanu, (Cluj-Napoca: Ed. Grinta, 2008), p. 97.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

community and on his new ideals in comparison with those of the Greeks. He says that the most accomplished image of man is that of his projection into the future. In his opinion, the worst thing that could happen to man is to lose his future, to lose the hope of “what is about to come.”⁶ Man lives both with the past and the present through the perspective of the future.

Ortega y Gasset believes that in our day, the idea of nation has disappeared and has been replaced by the idea of Europe. The nation becomes a mere province, because it can no longer offer the idea of future. The Spanish philosopher tries to understand the concept of nation by comparing it to the Greek *polis*. The *polis* is built up as a simple society, as a union that doesn't look into the future, but lives in the present, while the nation is composed of a “dense population, a numerous one, which is why its social form is characterized by being essentially profound,”⁷ and, moreover, it is focused on the dimension of the future.

The Greek man lived a shallow life, according to Ortega y Gasset, because there was in his conscience the necessity of political involvement and a preoccupation with the existence of his city, while the modern man, reassured by the enduring existence of his nation, has none of those concerns, because he is sure of its continuous existence in the future. Ortega y Gasset sees the Greek man as an inertial being as opposed to the modern man, who is an active being, a man of action. The former is a traditional man while the latter is an enterprising man.

Like Noica and other great thinkers of the twentieth century, Ortega y Gasset feels compelled to discuss man's technological advancements in the past few centuries. He follows the guidelines of those who believe that this represents a danger for society, because it is a menace to morality: “Nations found themselves suddenly closer dynamically. And that is exactly the time when European nations have departed most from morality. Therefore, is not the danger of such circumstances clear?”⁸ Ortega y Gasset presents here a very well-organized chain of causality with the purpose of showing the paradox of technological developments. Man is closer and closer to his fellow man, thanks to new advancements, but it is exactly that progress that leads to a social rift between people, between communities. Ortega y Gasset believes that we cannot talk about modern man, because we don't know yet the nature of man in general, let alone that of the contemporary man.

The Spanish philosopher talks about the Greeks' idea of human nature, especially the ideas of Aristotle and the Stoics, which were narrowed down in time to the “postulate of the invariability of the laws of Nature.”⁹ Possession of such a fixed nature gives man the liberty of action, yet that liberty is limited by his boundaries.

⁶ José Ortega Y Gasset, *Europa și idea de națiune*, trad. S. Mărculescu (București: Ed. Humanitas, 2002), p. 13.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

Ortega y Gasset also talks about a theory of life, and about the fact that human life is a continuous equation of the past and the future. Thus, the present is an integrative synthesis of the other two times of our existence. But though they belong to us and to our history, we never live them as either memories or projections; they escape us because we are situated in their synthesis, which is the limit.

Continuing his discussions about the Greeks, Ortega y Gasset attacks Aristotle and says that he is in error when he claims that man is endowed with the occupation of knowledge, “first of all because most people perform a sufficient amount of intellectual activities and still aren’t engaged in knowledge. Secondly, because it could not be further from the truth that man could possess those activities capable to achieve what, by its lofty name, knowledge represents – our great promise.”¹⁰

Concerning contemporary man, Ortega y Gasset believes that he is in a poor situation, dominated by instability and uncertainty, because the factor that should ensure his stability, in this case, the past, is useless and unworthy of respect: “The past is like the tail of a comet; it is the factor that provides stability. Hence, the radical instability of our times. Well, ladies and gentlemen, this is, simply, the current human situation.”¹¹ Ortega y Gasset proclaims that the death of contemporary Western civilization occurred by itself, through the suppression of the principles that constitute its cornerstone, namely, science. The best example for the Spanish philosopher is the fact that it has been proven by Gödel that logic doesn’t exist as a science. But it doesn’t have to disappear; it can be reborn by itself, and Ortega y Gasset’s solution is the invention of new forms. He says there isn’t a will in man, but certain rules established by society determine his gestures, independent of his nature. The laws exert a pressure upon man that suffocates him, and so his relationship with society is not natural but artificial. Thus, the State with its hyperorganization is man’s biggest enemy, because it does not take him into account individually, but is concerned only with society as a whole. In order to maintain his identity and his essence, man today has to fight with all of his strength against the stifling force of the State.

Ortega y Gasset considered that with new technology, war is now only a threat that could hardly materialize, because weapons have a total destruction force. That is why the configuration of the world is about to change. We believe the Spanish philosopher to be wrong, as, indeed, there have been other wars since he wrote those thoughts. He believed that if in all previous wars the newest weapons were always used, that would have to be the case for future wars too, and one can be sure that humans wouldn’t be so stupid as to use lethal weapons in a future battle. But a war can be fought with less lethal weapons, and new conflicts emerged even after the discovery of the nuclear bomb. These lethal weapons have their own role in

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

the world, because given their destructive force, they represent a bargaining tool in the effort of maintaining peace.

While it doesn't strictly concern our study, we cannot ignore the position of the great philosopher Ernst Cassirer on the issue of man. He also tries to understand the meaning of the human being, and he says that we can do that if we follow the history of this concept. He believes that this concept has a history of its own that starts in the ancient period and continues to the modern era. By following its history, we can understand its evolution and its transformation, its problems, its struggles, its place, its role in the world, and everything else concerning the human being. Cassirer believes that as early as ancient times, humans' purpose was to seek the self: "The human being is considered to be that being which is constantly on the search for self – a being that at every moment should be examining and contemplating the conditions of its existence."¹² There is an entire history of man, starting from the Presocratics and on to our days, not formulated by anybody. What Cassirer is trying to do is present some general line of thinking and understanding as to how it developed. So he presents man's image in the history of thought, as provided by Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Marcus Aurelius, Augustine, Descartes, Pascal, Montaigne, Bruno, Darwin, and others. The reason he proposes this way of comprehending man and his actions is to target the real understanding "of the general character of human culture."¹³ Another new idea brought to the issue of man by the German philosopher is that of the existence of a third system of man (in addition to receptor and effector): the symbolic one. The German philosopher believes that "instead of defining man as an *animal rationale*, we should call him *animal symbolicum*."¹⁴ This new system opens up, in his opinion, the way to the civilization of the human being, because for him, symbolic thinking is one of the essential characteristics of human life.

The first step in establishing human nature is the separation of man from animal, and for Cassirer (as opposed to other philosophers) this is done at the level of language (not at the rational level) – that is, as the difference between the discursive language and the emotional language. The symbolic is essential for the problem of man, because, according to Cassirer, if there is a definition of man, it can only be a functional one and certainly not a substantial one, and what better way to render something functional than by symbols. Noica notes the distinction made by Cassirer regarding man's definition, but, unlike the German philosopher, Noica believes in the existence of a substantial definition, the functional one being just the first step to successfully finding a complete definition.

Man's creation is composed of a sum of elements which constitute the so-called circle of humanity: language, myth, religion, art, science, and

¹² Ernst Cassirer, *Eseu despre om* (București: Ed. Humanitas, 1994), p. 17.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.45.

history. Cassirer starts his analysis of the human being from the premise that man is always involved in a self-search, in the search for unity within himself, but, after getting through the phases of his creation, he discovers discontinuities, contradictions, multiple forms as opposed to one only, so he considers that human nature doesn't consist of the search for its unity, but rather of the discovery of new sides, of new ways of being, which, although conflicting at times, have a unity of their own.

The problem of the human being is a very complex one. It has concerned a lot of thinkers and scientists. We can't offer a solution for it, but what we could observe is that almost all discussions were conducted around the two big aspects that determine man's life: morality and knowledge. Greeks believed, in general, that man has to live his life according to moral values. Christians took the idea even further, saying that only through a completely moral life man can save his soul. In our time now, the concern raised by new technological advancements gives morality an even bigger role in the world. On the other hand, knowledge has changed its meaning and its position in the world from age to age. Greeks, especially Plato, believed it is the way to save your soul and that it's the only thing that could ensure a moral life. In Medieval times, Christianity changed the perspective and man was not interested in obtaining knowledge, because he was told faith is enough. In modern times, knowledge again plays a central part in human life, but now it has an inclination toward the scientific field and it means having as much information as possible.

Man is now at a crossroads in his existence because of all the changes in his life, but he is learning to adapt to them. It is the only way to survive in times like these. In his essence, he is still something great, and because of that, we are sure he will overcome all obstacles.

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CHAPTER XVII

HUMAN WORTH ON THE THRESHOLD OF ITS TECHNOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATION

ANA BAZAC

Abstract: In fact, this paper is about social philosophy: it questions the social consequences of the technological transformations of man and how they will be managed. The social significance results from and is emphasized by the ontological approach to man. AI (artificial intelligence) has such a predictable consequence upon the human being that it has to be conceived of from an ontological point of view.

I do not want to talk about what happens to humans as they are living longer, with lives improved and enhanced by medicine and bioengineering and about how they strive for a more capable, physically able body. I want to focus on the influence technology has on the human mind and classical human values, and whether old-style humans, as we knew them, are still going to be amongst us – are any classical human values going to be left to guide us or are we on the way to becoming super-intelligent humans guided by motives and ideals we do not yet fully comprehend? Is “technological singularity” upon us?

“Technological singularity” is a term which has been introduced by Vernon Vinge, and it refers to the point of no return, the threshold one passes over and breaks, leaving all other people behind. Is it possible that passing this threshold will change our assessment of global problems and turn us from pessimists into optimists? For the moment, it seems rather that the optimistic theory of engineered singularity seems rather to transfigure a deep social pessimism.

The result of the examination of both the consequences of AI on the human being and the social use of the present revolutionary science and engineering is the conscience of the contradictory state of man: from one standpoint, this state demonstrates the power of human reason, even though this reason would transform the human being as such, while from another point of view it shows the weakness of human reason and the social translation of this weakness, which generates a waste of human capabilities and lives.

Thus the problem here is not to answer the dilemma of using our better reason and pass over the threshold of technological singularity, nor is it caving in to our lesser reason and rejecting AI and the option of going past the point of no return, but to discuss the social stakes at this present moment of choosing.

The present era is on the threshold of the future transformation of the human into a technological singularity, but at the same time, it challenges

the future of mankind as such through the present social (political) use of scientific discoveries. Therefore, this paper questions how the worth of man at this moment of technological transition is manifesting, and we do have to accept that both the better/optimistic and lesser/pessimistic reasoning will have a say in our action about technological singularity.

Keywords: AI, Theory of Technological Singularity, philosophy, man, human person, kairos, science, technological risks, society, politics.

Warning

The person is the concrete expectation and prospect of the human being. The person is a *specific* human, and only from this concreteness do we conceive of the notion of person and personhood.

When we are worrying about the worth of man, that is, the manner in which any certain person is treated by his/her fellow creatures, we think first of all of how his/her dignity could be menaced by some inimical circumstances, leaving his/her esteem and merit less valued by others. Just as humankind is revealed through the real facts, thoughts, and lives of the specific persons forming this species, the real dignity of a person – namely his/her merit, appreciation, and the due he/she deserves – is the result of the consideration of other persons.

Philosophers have consistently emphasized that humans are creatures who freely shape their nature and evolution and that these “spiritual intelligence(s) think and decide “all possibilities.”¹ Thus, they have too optimistically suggested that human characteristics and human reason would be “the most evenly distributed thing in the world.”² In fact, although the will and choice exercised in order to attain self-esteem and self-realization belong to the individual, they reflect the social and historical circumstances where the consideration of others is crucial.

If this consideration were missing, and if the lack of human possibilities for the future erased opportunities, people would be far from the circumstances necessary to demonstrate their human dignity. If they are not dignified, if others no longer consider them as worthy of representing human dignity, they become *indignant*: in Latin, *in + dignatio* means just the opposite of dignity, and the awareness of the situation where others no longer treat a person with respect for his/her humanity, but treat him/her *indigne* – unjustly, with cruelty, shamefully.

Nowadays, we are facing waves of worldwide indignation against the disregard of the right to be considered, each of us, as a unique human person, because indignation is the natural human answer to undignified

¹ Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man (De hominis dignitate*, 1486), <http://www.cscs.umich.edu/~crshalizi/Mirandola/>

² Descartes, *Discourse on Method* (1637), Part 1, http://public.wsu.edu/~wldciv/world_civ_reader/world_civ_reader_2/descartes.html

behavior. Indignation belongs to the human person, not to the abstract man. And because the worth of the human person is jolted, the worth of man as such is jolted.

About Ontology, Humans, and Technology

The need to understand the trans-temporal essence of man – even though this essence and this understanding have a concrete and historical content – has for a long time generated the preoccupation of philosophy with the being and, within this preoccupation, with the ontology of the human.

However, there is no such a philosophical domain as the “ontology of the human.” The main object of philosophy is just the human. The human is both the mediating term and the object upon which the philosophical reflection practices. If ontology is the decrypting of what belongs to human existence (including human understanding and representations),³ the “ontology of the human” is rather a metaphor for the main analysis and object of philosophy. From this standpoint and in this broad sense, the ontology of the human means putting man first, that is, *philosophical humanism*. In a stricter sense, the ontology of the human configures what phenomenology, ethics, social philosophy, political philosophy, and the philosophy of knowledge elaborate. The metaphor of the ontology of the human presupposes an integrated representation of human complexity, composed of many fragments. According to this view, the ontology of the human highlights the features and specifics of man in his relationships with the world of objects as well as the world of subjects. An issue of these relationships is “the conscience of the present, when historical thinking and utopian thinking fuse.”⁴ An example of this fusion would be the theory of engineered singularity.

But there is also the ontology of the objects people create and use. Related to our problem, the ontology of technology researches the possibilities illustrated by technology through the externalization of “human capabilities through technique and technical devices,” and, at the same time, the internalization of “the way these machines work inside the human being (in both its mind and behavior).”⁵ But all these types of possibility belong

³ Jacques Derrida, “Le supplément de copule. La philosophie devant la linguistique” (1971), in Jacques Derrida, *Marges de la philosophie*, (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1972), p. 218: “Aristotle tended to re-conduct the analysis to the place of turning up, or to the common root of blended language and thinking. This place is of the ‘being’... But also how the *being* is said, how is said what is it, by the fact that it is, as it is”.

⁴ Jürgen Habermas, “La crise de l’État-providence” (1984), in Jürgen Habermas, *Écrits politiques* (Paris : Éditions du Cerf, 1990), p. 124.

⁵ Ionuț Isac, “The Ontology of Technology – Assumptions and Meanings,” in (eds. Viorel Guliciuc and Emilia Guliciuc), *Philosophy of*

just to the human (if *essentia* is *possibilitas* to exist, as Heidegger showed⁶), the two ontologies converging and overlapping.

One last word here is that this ontological and epistemological process of convergence and overlapping means that we cannot conceive of the human as separated from the technology he creates, which transforms him, contributing to the construction of his humanness: “We have always been, and therefore are, ‘cyborgs’ needing external prosthesis in order to act, think, create, and define ourselves.”⁷ If that is true, what are the consequences of the present development of technology upon the worth of man?

Theory of Engineered Singularity

As it was coined, “engineered singularity” is a technological discovery⁸ that changes in a rapid and radical way the state of things and the state of the world. In fact, it signifies the discovery of artificial intelligence that would transform, through different ways, the definition of man himself, of his singularity in the framework of natural and engineered things. Man becomes a new human being, formed by both traditional natural parts and artificial parts managed by artificial intelligence, and then,

Engineering and Artifact in the Digital Age (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), p. 115.

⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (1927) (Malden, MA., Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 55-57; but also M. Heidegger, Letter on Humanism (1946), Translated by Miles Groth, <http://wagner.edu/departments/psychology/sites/wagner.edu.departments.psychology/files/download/Martin%20Heidegger-%20Letter%20on%20'Humanism'.pdf>. *Possibilitas* means here conscience of risks, risk-assuming, but also prevention of humanly undesirable events.

⁷ F. Kaplan, “Intégration, incorporation, interface – l’évolution des systèmes techniques,” Association F Gonseth, *Cahiers de l’Institut de la Méthode*, 31 (Janvier 2009), St-Imier, Switzerland, p. 13, in the translation of Ionuț Isac, “The Ontology of Technology – Assumptions and Meanings,” p. 114.

⁸ The researchers who proposed the entire program of technological singularity insisted on the appearance of smarter-than-human intelligence (AI) as the main technological revolutionary event that would change the position of man in its even cosmic environment. See Vernor Vinge, *The Coming Technological Singularity: How to Survive in the Post-Human Era*, 1993, <http://www.aeph.se/Trans/Global/Singularity/sing.html>.

But there are other technologies of smarter-than-human intelligence, such as: direct brain-computer interfaces, biological augmentation of the brain (or “smarter minds creating still smarter minds,” (*Why Work Toward the Singularity*, <http://singinst.org/overview/whyworktowardthesingularity/>), genetic engineering, ultra-high-resolution scans of the brain followed by computer emulation. All of these are emerging technologies.

finally, since intelligence is what generated the crowning of man as the dominant and superior being on Earth, man himself is dethroned by AI.

There are three scenarios of engineered singularity: first, the more classical one – the rise of the intelligent robot surpassing the human brain and directing it onward; the second, which is the specific unification of AI and the human brain; and the third, the biomedical one, through nanotechnology and neuroscience. The first two scenarios are the basis of the new post-human entity. In the competition of these perspectives, even though the first seems to be the closest ideologically to the founding fathers of the theory as such, the second would be the most probable, at least as a step toward an absolute dethroning of the human brain by technology.

Thus, let us accept that the second scenario is the core of the theory of engineered singularity: the new mind – natural plus AI – will generate a new kind of *sapiens sapiens*,⁹ who is still named only as *post-human* or *trans-human*. In fact, he will name himself. If we support the first scenario, the most radical, then the post-human or trans-human being appears more clearly. Anyway, the theory points out the *consequences of the technological possible*: the emergence of a new superhuman being by whom the entire environment will be transformed and new significances of this environment and its clash with the new rational being will be grasped.

Engineered singularity challenges an *epistemological break* or *rupture*¹⁰ within “normal science”¹¹ and philosophy, for it poses not only the transformation of the means of man (the instruments and objects) but also the change of the *subject*, the man himself. In ancient times, the human conscience used to consider the *object* – whether material from the world outside him, or the products of his mind – as subordinated to it. The object was that on which man acted, while the *subject* was him, the actor, or his mind and spirit, although his life and will were influenced by the inimical environment: he was the one who chose the *kairos* of his action over this environment. At least, this was the common representation, including the common representation of philosophy. But engineered singularity is a concrete unity of object and subject, an artificial human being with artificial intelligence acting over his natural basis – an object has become subject and a subject has become object – this special subject is the new singularity, for it is/will be mastering the decision and is/will be the criterion of all criteria. As bio-integrated AI, or as AI and human intelligence synthesis, or only as AI, the new subject is overthrowing once more Aristotle’s *ὑποκείμενον*, since this time it could be considered to be subsistent to the attributes of existence. Thus it is transiting from “the closed world” of the old representation of the mind and the subject, to use Koyré’s expression.

⁹ *Sapiens sapiens* – entity conscious of his intelligence.

¹⁰ G. Bachelard, *La Formation de l’esprit scientifique* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1938), pp. 27, 74.

¹¹ Th. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962) (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 23.

The problem of engineered singularity has appeared in order to keep alive the conscience of the necessity to forecast the results of the technological developments on the entire society. The main aspects to be foreseen certainly belong to technology as such, but they are not the only ones. Although technological developments are moving within an uncertain and open space, the purpose of the research into technological singularity is to transform the unanticipated consequences into anticipated ones. In this respect, research into engineered singularity is situated under the sign of *Prometheus*. That is why it would be sad to take this research only as a cheap technophile tendency, not difficult to uncover.¹²

At the same time, the analysis of the imaginary background of a theory is important to understand its social motives and power within human activity.

The Worth of Man

As David Chalmers shows,¹³ the theory of engineered singularity as the evolution of super-intelligence poses some interesting analytical problems: whether this super-intelligence could constitute itself as an infinite artificial intelligence,¹⁴ and if this would ever be better from a human standpoint. But the theory is also important for a “continental” philosophical outlook: that which is preoccupied not only with the final result of the AI engineering facing the present common problems of mankind, but also with man as “residual” output within the process of AI engineering.

The premise of this approach takes into account that *logos* – the human reasoning, the human capacity to create the logical world of the understanding and its objects, its ideas – is that which differentiates man from the animal that is his origin. Man is, therefore, his own creature,¹⁵ by developing his ability to think and to articulate what he thinks, and by enjoying this ability and the colors of this new ideal world he configures. By doing so, he grows up as a special being within the terrestrial world of beings: as a being nurtured from the world of culture he creates.

¹² See N. Bøstrom, interviewed by Jean-Paul Baquiast, 15 octobre 2005, <http://www.automatesintelligents.com/interviews/2005/sept/bostrom.html>.

¹³ D.J. Chalmers, *The Singularity: A Philosophical Analysis*, 2010, <http://consc.net/papers/singularity.pdf>.

¹⁴ IT and sciences have been optimistic about the rapid rhythm of the evolution of intelligent machines creating more intelligent machines (this is the concept of “speed explosion”), but the practical process has so far shown that this rhythm is slower than was prefigured.

¹⁵ V. Gordon Childe, *Social Evolution*, N. Y., Henry Schuman, 1951, p. 169; but also T. Taylor, *The Artificial Ape: How Technology Changed the Course of Human Evolution* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

Man is a cultural being and important are the means by which he maintains and amplifies the human cultural characteristic of his existence. The world of culture as such reflects the contradictory tendencies of man as natural, artificial, and social being.

Consequently, there is continuity between AI research and what is essential in man as a “genuine” being, which appears following the transformation generated by the information technologies (IT). Indeed, the virtual world generated by the present IT does not change the culture-specific characteristics of man:¹⁶ “It is in being virtual that we are human: since it is human nature to experience life through the prism of culture, the human being has always been a virtual being. Culture is our ‘killer app’: we are virtually human.”¹⁷

At the same time, evolution means transformation, thus discontinuity: for we are not clever enough;¹⁸ with all the networks of scientists for responsibility,¹⁹ maybe the “virtual worlds do have significant consequences for social life...in virtual worlds we are not quite human – our humanity is thrown off balance, considered anew, and reconfigured through transformed possibilities for place-making, subjectivity, and community...the layers of contingency within the category of virtually human, rather than exiling such contingency into a category of the post-human and thereby retrenching the borders of the human itself.”²⁰

Finally, it is important to mention two aspects. The first is that another scenario is adding to the theory of engineered singularity: the “collective intelligence” resulting from the explosion of IT.²¹ The second is that there is a time overlap of the discoveries of AI and human bioengineering with the contradictions and shortcomings of the present civilization and relations of power. This is the reason for the problem of the adaptation of man to himself,²² through the emphasis of the ill-fated consequences of human

¹⁶ K. Lee, *The Natural and the Artefactual: The Implications of Deep Science and Deep Technology for Environmental Philosophy* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 1999), pp. 49-62, 123-148.

¹⁷ T. Boellstorff, *Coming of Age in Second Life: An Anthropologist Explores the Virtually Human* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2008), p. 5.

¹⁸ J. Lovelock: ‘*We Can’t Save the Planet*’, 2010, http://news.bbc.co.uk/today/hi/today/newsid_8594000/8594561.stm.

¹⁹ See INES (International Network of Engineers and Scientists for Global Responsibility) for Peace and Sustainability), <http://www.inesglobal.com/news-2010.phtml>.

²⁰ T. Boellstorff, *op. cit.*

²¹ This insistence on the collective intelligence could be joined to Marx’s *collective worker*. But see also *Could the Internet Become One Giant Evil Entity?* <http://www.environmentalgraffiti.com/sciencetech/internet-become-evil-entity/8678>.

²² F. Rebufat, *L’industrie humaine sera-t-elle la fin de l’homme ?*, 7 décembre 2010, <http://www.vivagora.org/spip.php?article789>.

industries and the means²³ to re-direct their evolution. At the same time, it seems most probable that the technological engineering of man will exceed present man's ability to control his industries.

Nevertheless, man is and will be the model of AI: because conscience is more than intelligence, the complex historical construction of man is and will be the pattern of the development of AI as conscience. The evidence that there is between man and machine a relationship closer than that supposed by some thinkers does not annul this source of AI: on the contrary, it supports both directions in the creation of engineered singularity.²⁴

However, following Pico's observation, and even though being the model of the new AI creature, man as such will not survive: technological singularity will not be human.²⁵

Therefore, theoretically, the worth of man seems to be at the same time denied and assured by engineered singularity: denied – because the new creature will exceed the human logical capabilities to solve the problems; assured – since the pattern, not only of logic, but also of goals, is human.

Intermezzo with the Problem of Risks

The agglomeration of the consequences of the modern and post-modern industrial revolutions – that is, of the modern and present technology and science – and the evidences of many bad, and even tragic, manifestations of the human civilization have been the basis, as we know, of a rich literature.

It is important to mention here the theory of risks as one of the main theories concerning both the ontology of technology and the ontology of the human. According to this theory,²⁶ modern society has developed the

²³ One is the research of the principle of precaution and its functioning. Another one could be an engineering of large consultations, see Gilbert Gouverneur, *L'« ingénierie de concertation » pour coller à la réalité sociale*, novembre 2007, <http://www.vivagora.org/spip.php?article174>, and S. Parkinson, *Science and Technology: Making a Difference*, 16 October 2010, <http://www.sgr.org.uk/sites/sgr.org.uk/files/Manchester-scitech-difference.pdf>.

²⁴ See H. Leggett, *Robot Teaches Itself to Smile*, July 9, 2009, <http://www.wired.com/wiredscience/2009/07/robotsmile/>, also the Psi-Theory (Dietrich Dörner) and the cognitive architectures.

²⁵ Pico della Mirandola, *ibid.*: "a pure contemplator, unmindful of the body, wholly withdrawn into the inner chambers of the mind, here indeed is neither a creature of earth nor a heavenly creature, but some higher divinity, clothed in human flesh".

²⁶ See Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society: Toward a New Modernity* (1986), (London: Sage, 1992); Ulrich Beck, *World Risk Society* (1991) (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998); Ulrich Beck, *World at Risk* (2007) (Cambridge: Polity

paradoxical coexistence of the progress of civilization through science and technology, and the risks of this progress have multiplied. Moreover, at present, the risks are not only systemic (confronting the entire world and resulting from the world development of R & D), but seem to be no more imputable to anyone (there would not be a concrete responsibility), and cannot be compensated through insurances. At the same time, the theory mixes the natural and human causes and catastrophes, by focusing only on their occurrences and denying the technical and social possibility to prevent serious human error.

This point of view illustrates rather a “pragmatic sociological fatalism:” “What we could do is to study, to prepare us, but...” Or, we have to remember that: 1) modern technological development has been integrated into a precise and specific social framework, so that the rhythm, paths, and objectives of technological development are not neutral and cannot be understood simply as resulting from the logic of knowledge, and 2) at least from the second half of the twentieth century on, scientists have taken into account that technological change could be anticipated, and that that anticipation allows the reduction of the possible negative consequences of discoveries, but that the final decisions do not belong to them. As long as the risks were not so high – or, rather, were pushed outside the countries hosting the scientific research – and obviously because of the ideology of political neutrality of scientists they embraced, most researchers did not focus on the social consequences of their deeds. (In a sense, one could say that the theory of engineered singularity is just reflecting the composed situation of aggravating global problems and ideological inertia of the intellectuals).

But the last years – and now Fukushima – send us to another approach. Obviously, and leaving aside the concrete partial preventing of risks inside the technological projects, one cannot neglect the fact that nuclear plants were constructed near the ocean in a high seismic risk region. No one expected a 9-degree earthquake and a tsunami, but the engineers knew very well that, in case of accident, the highly radioactive water in the pressure vessel of a boiling water reactor would leak out of the damaged reactors and that the contaminated water leaking from reactors would flow into the sea.

It is not here the place to discuss whether “the social needs of the population – including the need for a safe and environmentally sustainable energy system – are subordinated to the financial interests of the major corporations.”²⁷ Indeed, there are social and political regulations

Press, 2008). See also Ulrich Beck, « C'est le mythe du progrès et de la sécurité qui est en train de s'effondrer », *Le Monde*, 25.03.2011.

²⁷ Patrick O'Connor, *Nuclear Power, Private Ownership and the Profit System*, 24 March 2011, <http://www.wsws.org/articles/2011/mar2011/pers-m24.shtml>

constraining the technological treatment of risks.²⁸ But we should not forget that technological change is, or could be, anticipated from a technical standpoint. The replication of technique is predictable. If one does not give full scope to anticipation and predictability, it is because of non-technological reasons. The framework created by these reasons has damaging consequences on the lives of millions of human persons, and the ability of these persons to understand the real stakes of social facts and political decisions is weakened by the media and a handful of professionals, who inject scepticism about the warnings of scientists²⁹ and stir doubt concerning the scientific data and facts.³⁰

The result of such a civilization, where poverty coexists with a shameful waste³¹ and the ecological challenges could, at least to a certain extent, be integrated into the functioning of the profit system,³² is the contradiction between so many theories providing illusions about the worth of the human person as opposed to the real situation of so many persons. For the time being, some researchers offer the theories which counterpose the impersonal risks to the model of risk conscience society,³³ of sustainable economy beyond growth,³⁴ of eco-sufficiency and ecological economics,³⁵ of the common good,³⁶ or the French model of *décroissance*. In all of these models, present mainstream neo-classical economics is replaced with revised concepts of economy, society, and progress, subordinated to the worth of every human person as the only way to demonstrate the worth of man.

²⁸ Isabelle Stengers, *Au temps des catastrophes. Résister à la barbarie qui vient* (Paris: La Découverte, 2009).

²⁹ Jules Boykoff, *Reheating the Climate Change Story*, 30 January 2011, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/cifamerica/2011/jan/30/climate-change-climate-change-scepticism>

³⁰ Naomi Oreskes & Erik M. Conway, *Merchants of Doubt* (N.Y.: Bloomsbury Press, 2010).

³¹ Michel Rocard, Dominique Bourg et Floran Augagneur, « Le genre humain, menacé, » *Le Monde*, 2 avril 2011.

³² See the old observation of André Gorz, „Leur écologie et la notre,“ *Les Temps modernes*, mars 1974.

³³ Jean-Pierre Dupuy, *Pour un catastrophisme éclairé, Quand l'impossible est certain* (Paris: Seuil, 2004).

³⁴ Herman E. Daly, *Beyond Growth: The Economics of Sustainable Development* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1997).

³⁵ Tim Jackson, *Prosperity Without Growth: Economics for a Finite Planet* (London: Earthcan, 2009).

³⁶ Herman E. Daly and John B. Cobb Jr., *For the Common Good: Redirecting the Economy toward Community, the Environment, and a Sustainable Future* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1994).

Worth of the Human Person

The change of civilization realized by science and technology is not only a technological one; the change is out of the range of the “natural” order of things. In other words, the ontological change itself is sociological, because the power relations of the present society are framing the technological transformation: they are choosing its criteria, the rhythm of the changes, the domains of the preliminary application, the human persons selected as being able to face the challenges of the process, to conduct or manage it, to be considered as preferred models or disputable mirrors.

The change under discussion takes place on a large scale, from the present chemical, biological, nano-technological manipulation of the human mind to the explicit intention of connecting the “natural” human mind with AI, and finally to the creation of what is called engineered singularity. Consequently, one could affirm that there is not only a logical discontinuity in the treatment and evolution of man – discontinuity realized through engineered singularity – but also continuity, as in sequential chemical, biological, nano-technological procedures participating in the ontological construction of man and the ontological transformation of the human being. This aspect of continuity is, again, not only the result of scientific and technological discoveries, but it goes on as part of political intentionality from inside “late modernity” (Mandel, Habermas).

From a philosophical standpoint, the importance of this double determinism, technological and political, has to be highlighted. The worth of man is obviously challenged when confronting the concept and extension of possibility. Technologically, if something can be done, it will be: the guiding marks of the possibility of man would belong only to the inner logic of technology. But even this logic is legitimized by the traditional concept about the world of man: the return of the acceleration of scientific and technological discoveries³⁷ are conceived of as aiming at the increase of consumption and profits, all human values being subordinated to the implicit reasoning that if something can be bought, then it will be beneficial.

In fact, the technological transformation of man, and especially of his mind, follows the social logic of power relations. This phenomenon suggests that keeping the worth of man is manifold, and the intertwining contradictions faced by this desire to keep the worth of man cannot be ignored.

One example is the precedent of the industrialization of health care. Leaving aside the excessive interpretation of both the author and the reader, we should not forget that Ivan Illich³⁸ showed that the result of the

³⁷ Ray Kurzweil, *The Law of Accelerating Returns*, 2001, <http://www.kurzweilai.net/the-law-of-accelerating-returns>

³⁸ Ivan Illich, *Limits to Medicine. Medical Nemesis: The Expropriation of Health* (1976) (London: Marion Boyars Publisher, 2000).

industrialization of health care is pain and sickness, and restricts the vital autonomy of people. This result is iatrogenesis: the transformation of man into a dependent being and, at the same time, impregnated by illness induced by industrialized medicine and pharmacy. This is a social phenomenon generated not by the mere logic of medical discoveries, but one of the social frameworks within which these discoveries take place. "Iatrogenesis cannot be understood unless it is seen as the specifically medical manifestation of specific counterproductivity. Specific or paradoxical counterproductivity is a negative social indicator for a diseconomy which remains locked within the system that produces it... The recovery from a society-wide iatrogenic disease is a political task, not a professional one."³⁹

By using this pattern of understanding – which is consonant with Gödel's theory that the last explanation of a system lies outside it –, we could obviously extrapolate it to many fields. One is, for example, the industrialization of food and distribution of food. The counter-productivity of these processes has to be considered when we speak about the worth of man and the values involved and supported by a being whose worth is cherished.

But let us pass to the present chemical, biological, and nanotechnological manipulation of the human mind. This manipulation is related to both military and consumerist economic interests,⁴⁰ and following its procedures, not only are cures developing, but also deeper dependencies. If the former example was sketched in Plato's systemic prefigure⁴¹ of man as having to develop moderation and prudence as main values supporting the harmony of mind and body, warnings linked to the technological manipulation of the human mind are related to modern theories from Francis Bacon to post-Freudism.

At a general level, the result of these processes is the first transformation of man as *possibilitas* to exist as such.⁴² Leaving Heidegger aside, the processes point out the consequences of technological possibilities: the emergence of a new superhuman being according to which the entire environment will be transformed, and new significances of this environment and its clash with the new rational being will be grasped. The

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 8, 6.

⁴⁰ While Nicolas Georgescu-Roegen, "Energy and Economic Myths," *Southern Economic Journal*, 41, no. 3, January 1975, <http://dieoff.org/page148.htm>, wrote that from the standpoint of power economy, "the production of all instruments of war, not only of war itself, should be prohibited completely."

⁴¹ See Plato, *Gorgias*, 464d, 456a-b, 518c-d, and *Republic*, 376e, 404b-c, 372a, 372c-d, 373b-c, 373d, 373e, 425e, 426a.

⁴² *Logos* meaning what-is-made-to-be-seen, the essence of being, and what we see is always the same – the being – and different, as possibility to exist as such, see Martin Heidegger, *ibid.*.

direction of nanotechnology and neuroscience constitutes one scenario leading to the rise of engineered singularity.

By again coming back to Heidegger, the action over the *possibilitas* of man changes this *possibilitas* itself: man, that is, his subjectivity, becomes the object of manipulation, thus no longer seeming to be its subject.

This scenario is obviously the application of scientific principles to the structures with which man is dealing. The scientific principles are the result of man's research and discoveries, and to apply them intelligently (with *ingenium*, generated by *ingenium*) means to create new entities using physical laws. The development of engineering concerning the human being generates not only an improved body by replacing ill or non-functioning parts with artificial devices – thus illustrating Descartes' metaphor of the human body as a machine⁴³ – but also an improved mind. In its simplest model, the mind itself proves to be a machine – a set of reactions to parameters of inputs – and thus it could be accorded with artificial models of human intelligence. The artificial intelligence (AI) created first in the world of computational devices, external to the human person, comes to be engrafted to the natural mind. Human reason receives the unlimited capabilities of AI, and, since conscience is the *differentia specifica* of man in the family of animals (he is *sapiens sapiens*), the new combination of the genuine human mind and AI gives birth to a new kind of "man": the engineered one. This engineered man – rather, this engineered mind – becomes a new singularity,⁴⁴ as the vector of the future of all the discoveries and transformations of *kosmos* and *logos*.

But concretely speaking about every human person, and surpassing the level of theories, it would be worth noting that the social conditions of the realization and generalization of the discoveries related to engineered singularity are intertwined with the hierarchy of the social conditions of the realization and generalization of a dignified life for a larger and larger number of human persons. As these last conditions are contradictory, excluding millions from the realization of humanness "in the comparatively humble sense of pleasure and freedom from pain, and in the higher meaning of rendering life – not what it now is almost universally, puerile and insignificant – but such as human beings with highly developed faculties can care to have,"⁴⁵ as the imagined realization and generalization of the

⁴³ See Ana Bazac, "The machine motif in Descartes," *Noesis*, XXXV, 2010, pp. 71-87.

⁴⁴ This new singularity could become immortal for the time being by uploading the brain's contents to a silicon support and then download it again into a new body. See Terrence Aym, <http://www.helium.com/items/2029699-mind-uploading-immortality?page=2>. Also The Digital Immortality Institute (DII).

⁴⁵ J. Stuart Mill, *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, Volume VIII, "A System of Logic Ratiocinative and Inductive, Being a Connected View of the Principles of Evidence and the Methods of Scientific Investigation (Books

discoveries related to engineered singularity – the destiny of a large number of anonymous human persons.

Concretely, some scientific discoveries would have been helpful to the life of the human person worldwide, if these discoveries had not been treated economically from a short term private profit standpoint. We should not forget that, through the mediation of financing, many discoveries were postponed, and many even annulled; and that, by the agency of the same financing, some discoveries are channelled into an irrational and wasting use.

The worth of the human person is quite low when the scientists' warning about the necessity of bio-economic economy while seeing to the industrial comfort of the present generations by also seeing to the survival of the future by a pollution-free and rational use of energy and resources is neglected. The simple analysis of the financial funding of alternative energy research counter-posed to the armament and war expenditure⁴⁶ illustrates this conclusion. For this reason, to discuss it only in terms of old benevolent intentions and theories concerning the human person is no longer sufficient. A theory which sets off the difference of phase between theory and practice is needed.

Time

Singularity research shows that the anticipation of unpredictable facts is related to the problem of time, mainly to the propitious interval to question and develop singularity. In the Greek tradition, the opportune moment, *kairos*, is the only propitious interval to act, specifically, to act

IV-VI and Appendices),” ed. J. M. Robson, Introduction by R.F. McRae, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), Book VI, Chapter XII, http://oll.libertyfund.org/index.php?option=com_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=247&layout=html#chapter_40043

⁴⁶ *Global military spending hits high but growth slows*, April 10, 2011, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/04/10/military-spending-idUSLDE73322820110410>: “Worldwide military spending edged up in 2010 to a record \$1.6 trillion... Global spending rose 1.3 percent in real terms, a slowdown from 5.9 percent the year before as the economic downturn caused by the 2008 financial crisis hit military spending... U.S. spending +2.8 percent, European spending 2.8 percent...The Unites States, with costly military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, increased spending by 2.8 percent to \$698 billion – about six times as much as China, the second-biggest spender, ahead of Britain, France and Russia. In 2009, U.S. spending grew 7.7 percent...The United States has increased its military spending by 81 percent since 2001...At 4.8 percent of gross domestic product, U.S. military spending in 2010 represents the largest economic burden outside the Middle East.”

efficiently. If one loses time by delaying the realization of big discoveries,⁴⁷ one loses human lives and humanly-lived lives.⁴⁸

The decision concerning the *kairos*, rhythm, and content of developing singularity does not depend only on scientists (thus on the specific logic of science), but on politicians taking part in the power relations. Regardless of how they are persuaded by visionary researchers, politicians reflect the short term political criteria to judge the efficiency of the development of big discoveries and post-human state of man. This observation, based on the coexistence in the last 30 years of an exponential rhythm of apex science combined with the increase of wars, suffering, social diseases, and troubles, the ecological crisis, and the quest for natural resources, aims only to put a precautionary brake on the dreams concerning singularity.

The scientific and technological revolution is real, but depends ultimately on political interests: what kind of discoveries and where they are to be implemented. For this reason, the attitudes of common people, their education and enlargement of horizon, (including the political one), and thus the development of their rationalism “all the way,” are important factors to counter-press the interests of domination and to realize singularity. The scientific revolution is not the only one in our society. But “a revolution may be ripe, and yet the forces of its creators may prove insufficient to carry it out, in which case society decays, and this process of decay sometimes drags on for very many years.”⁴⁹ Constructed from a social viewpoint, this representation is somehow similar to Bøstrom’s possible trajectory of the future development of technology as “a stasis at (or close to) the current status quo.”⁵⁰ But, as this trajectory would be improbable according to singularity theorists, a huge problem for philosophy still remains: why does the explosion of knowledge and technological realizations coexist with so many signs of social decay, suffering, and injustice? And would the paradigm of engineered singularity be sufficient for the future representation of man? What kind of society is

⁴⁷ See Nick Bøstrom, *Astronomical Waste: The Opportunity Cost of Delayed Technological Development*, 2003, <http://www.nickbostrom.com/astromical/waste.html>

⁴⁸ I doubt that this humanly lived life would mean to be happy (only) through “safe and effective methods of controlling the brain circuitry responsible for subjective well-being”, Nick Bostrom, “The Future of Humanity,” in Jan Kyrre Berg Olsen, Evan Selinger, and Søren Riis (Eds.), *New Waves in Philosophy of Technology* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), see <http://www.nickbostrom.com/papers/future.pdf>, p. 16, quoting David Pearce, *The Hedonistic Imperative*, 2004, <http://www.hedweb.com/hedab.htm>. Besides this aspect, I agree with Pearce on many points.

⁴⁹ Lenin, “The Latest in *Iskra* Tactics, or Mock Elections as a New Incentive to an Uprising”, 1905, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/oct/17b.htm>.

⁵⁰ Nick Bøstrom, *The Future of Humanity*, 2007, <http://www.nickbostrom.com/papers/future.pdf>, p. 15.

allowed by technological singularity? What is the luddite tendency⁵¹ within the futurist literature, which is quite different from the man's lack of power to control and manage his technological results? Does the popular concern about technology and human power not superpose the academic one? Are they not surprisingly similar? And do we not need a social view as a *meta* one (as the technological one is)?

Indeed, "transhumanism offers (what one might call) the safest unsafe passage into the future, that is, compared to the alternatives specified" (for it attacks the epistemic or cognitive obstacles against the stopping of the trend toward the extinction of humanity).⁵² In this respect, it is a necessary warning that our society has not yet attained the Type 1 civilization in the Kardashev scale. But it has to do with less waste and human suffering.

The Threshold Upon Which We Find Ourselves

Taking into account the present social conditions worldwide, the starting point is the predominance of capital as the unique manager of the right to existence of whoever and whatever, thus of whatever possible future: every possible fact has either to adapt to this condition or disappear. Consequently, the engineering of man has to consider this social framework and, obviously, to question it.

This attitude is necessary in order to efficiently navigate between the Scylla of pessimism⁵³ and the Charybdis of technological optimism. Indeed, engineered singularity implicitly presupposes the old model of "human evil by nature." Since the present society is at least contradictory, if not difficultly flattering for a rational being, only a post-human status would solve the problems issued from the former irrational status (but would it?). To surpass this pessimism and not to fall down in technophile imagery⁵⁴ is

⁵¹ See Bill Joy, *Why the Future Doesn't Need Us*, <http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/8.04/joy.html>

⁵² Philippe Verdoux, "Transhumanism, Progress and the Future", *Journal of Evolution & Technology*, 20 (2), 2009, p. 60 (<http://jetpress.org/v20/verdoux.htm>).

⁵³ A form of pessimism is the *retro* prescription – renunciation to the technological progress; another one – paternalism, where the control of technologies belongs to a limited number of decision-makers; see the critique of pessimism in David Brin, *Singularities and Nightmares: Extremes of Optimism and Pessimism about the Human Future*, <http://lifeboat.com/ex/singularities.and.nightmares>.

⁵⁴ Technophilia is the ideological trend which asserts that the progress of technology would somehow solve automatically the social problems of humankind. We have to note that Marx's theory about the determinism of the productive forces over the productive relations is not at all technophile. Let us remember the feed-back of the productive relations and the principle that "No social order is ever destroyed before all the productive forces for which it is sufficient have been developed, and new superior relations of production never

possible through the social standpoint. Otherwise, technological optimism without questioning the social framework of the implementation of such a revolutionary technology is a *deus ex machina* type of reasoning. Indeed, science would be the last messianic hope in a secularized society.

The literary trope *deus ex machina* is, however, a kind of laic deviation from religion as such. It consists in putting forward an improbable event to intervene in the evolution of facts, but the author, and the spectators as well, know perfectly that this deed is a fiction, and that they have to admit this fiction only for the sake of the drama as such. Unfortunately, real life is not equivalent to a play; therefore people know that they have to strain their efforts in order to become themselves the “machine”⁵⁵ ordering the course of life. From this standpoint (and secondly), technophile optimism by those who do not join the technical aspects to the social ones is a mixture between a religious impulse and a *deus ex machina* symptom: it suggests a kind of hope that a fragmentary approach, as necessary as it is at a first level of science, would solve a unitary or total problem; and also a kind of postponement within one’s own

replace older ones before the material conditions for their existence have matured within the framework of the old society”, Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, Preface*, 1859, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1859/critique-pol-economy/preface.htm>.

Abundance, thus the suppression of rarity, is the result of technological development. But, if rarity is the ontological figure of mankind (Sartre), abundance does not follow automatically from the technological development: rather, it is mediated by the social relations and institutions. This is the reason why Marx was not preoccupied with rarity and abundance, but with their causes and conditions.

Concerning the above-mentioned capital as the main social condition of the forging of the future, it is noteworthy that the model of salvation from the dangers menacing mankind is, in literature or movies, copying the capitalist model of relations and mentalities.

⁵⁵ The Greek *μηχανή* – ingenious invention, machine of theatre, with stopgap, slyness, artifice. *Μή* is the root signifying a negation in a hypothetical sense, meaning that the thing one speaks about would be uncertain, presumed, and even inadmissible. From this root, an entire family of words emerged: *μηχανάω* – to imagine, to arrange with art, to combine for a precise purpose, whence to produce, to cause, to occasion (as well as in negative senses: to conspire; *μηχανεύς* – invention, ingenuity; *μηχάνευσις* – apparatus, device; *μηχάνησις* – machine; *μηχάνημα* – ingenious invention, mechanism, machinery; *μηχάνητικος* – able to invent; *μηχανικός* – able to work, constructed by the art of the mechanic (engineer), the art to construct a machine.

In this sense, Irving John Good, *Speculations Concerning the First Ultraintelligent Machine*, 1965, http://www.stat.vt.edu/tech_reports/2005/GoodTechReport.pdf, wrote that man would construct within his own mind the principles which form the architecture of the new super-intelligent machine: “man will construct the *deus ex machina* in his own image”.

conscience of the necessity to frontally surpass the fragmentary. In fact, technophile optimism is only a characteristic of thinking, far from a lack of respectability. It has different consequences, and the problem is to maximize the good ones, by completing the foresight of big technological discoveries with social features.

The idea assumed here is that present trends in the development of technology are opposing the political structure of society, and this contradictory coexistence prepares a contradictory future. Consequently, political responsibility is as important as scientific and technological competence.

If so, the questions and answers have to transgress a somehow abstract level which deals with man as an individual. In this respect, a major problem is the representation of future relationships between engineered singularity and its engineered fellows; between engineered singularity and society (what kind of society could issue from the historical bifurcation that will be engineered singularity?); between engineered singularity and culture. Another question is how engineered singularities will master their sentiments, how strong these will be, and, if it ever constitutes itself, which form of belonging to community/society/world it will have. And because domination/submission has not only been the fundamental social relationship but also the means to taming people and to accord them to the level of civilization, will engineered singularity ever be more tamed? If this taming does not mean subordination and disciplined atomization, then the application of (post)human rights has to be observed. Consequently, the present relationships between the dominant ends of private property and the model of man have to be considered. Do we imagine future engineered singularity on the mass level as mentally impoverished as many of the present average people because of the restrictions imposed by the intellectual property on free and high standard information? And, because present individuals feel they would be passive objects of the macro-processes exceeding them,⁵⁶ how will future engineered singularities surpass this situation, if ever?

The acute awareness of the threshold we are on does not follow from an idealistic view about intelligence shared by the researchers of singularity,⁵⁷ but from a very pragmatic interest: that of giving the effort to control the evolution of technological singularity as much creativity as humankind can manifest and offer. Any loss or waste of human lives and possible human creativity weakens to a great extent the human answer to

⁵⁶ Miguel Benasayag, « Information, réflexion, discussion », La Revue mensuelle n° 86 *Robotique, vie artificielle, réalité virtuelle*, <http://www.admir-outes.asso.fr/larevue/2007/86/chroniquebbl.htm>.

⁵⁷ See *Why Work Toward the Singularity*, <http://singinst.org/overview/-Whyworktowardthesingularity/>: the “transition of intelligent life on Earth to a smarter and rapidly improving civilization with an enormously higher standard of living”.

engineered singularity and seems to repeat the kind of primitive attitude manifested until now and even at present: the attitude of those who lead the destiny of society without counting the suffering and death of the ruled, or who consider this suffering and death as inherent and “collateral damage,” “compensated” by the “general progress of civilization.” But could we accept this type of judgment, at the present level of technological evolution and scientific conscience? From its techno-centric perspective, the theory and, moreover, the movement of technological singularity seems to counterpose to this judgment a humanistic preoccupation, care, and confidence.

In which direction, then, would the human be transformed? Which are the ethical, practical, and technological aspects of this transformation? And would this process contribute to man’s rising on superior levels of intelligence and humanism, or, on the contrary, to his descending to lower-than-human stages? What global catastrophes are possible through AI technological developments and how could they be avoided? What will the future of intelligent life be? Which methods and compulsions would this intelligent life face, and what kinds of solutions will the new AI and nanotechnologies need to find?

But now we are only in the waiting-room of the possible end of man’s own creation. This situation only pushes us toward the deeper understanding of the significance, both positive and negative, of the actions about which human is wondering.

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CHAPTER XVIII

SOCIAL NETWORK SITES: A MICROANALYSIS OF THE INVOLVEMENT OF YOUNG EUROPEANS

SEBASTIAN CHIRIMBU

Abstract: The present study examines the issue of European youth's social involvement in relation to the same generation's deep relationship with communication technology and furthermore with the social network sites supported by this fast developing technology. It is a fact that young Europeans are showing a profound lack of interest in civic and social issues. What we are trying to examine is whether communication technology and social network sites might be used as a tool for increasing young Europeans' involvement in the "life of the city."

Keywords: changing European society, social and political involvement, Generation Y, networking, online civic actions.

Motto: "European youth is the Union's most valuable resource."

Globalization and the Internet

The most outstanding technological and social event of the twentieth century was the invention of the internet. The development of the internet depended obviously on technology, but not only that. It was equally influenced by social factors, which merged with the technological ones so that the internet became what it is today. Once installed in the fibers of society, the internet has been continually producing new consequences on society. The most important of them is the process of globalization, and we can state without question that this has been supported and accelerated by the internet. The informational society is an internet-based society, and therefore it comes as a logical consequence to say that globalization is a phenomenon specific to the informational society. Due to the link between globalization and the informational society, which is an ever-developing process, globalization also appears as a developing, unstoppable phenomenon.

The internet is also the result of social interaction among specialists, institutions, states, and a large number of individual users all over the world; it is only in this context that its tremendous development can be conceived, as a technological and social invention, and globalization will in its turn be a phenomenon involving participants from all over the world. This is the lesson taught by the internet, which has proven to be a great success in the technological and social history of mankind, showing the path to be followed by the globalization process, which is everybody's

participation in ways that are to be generated to a great extent by the users of globalization themselves.

Just like the internet, globalization cannot be strictly hierarchical; both phenomena should be ruled by general forms of coordination, unanimously accepted, which might become possible only in a society of knowledge and maybe of consciousness. The facts that two forms of intellectual attitudes have already occurred, Davos and Porto Alegre, and a third one is also manifested as street protests against globalization, show us that the process of globalization has not yet found its balance, although it is pushed forward by the development of the internet and its massive utilization in the economic, cultural, and social life of the globe.

The Internet and the Social Networks

From a specialized platform destined to be used by specialists in narrow areas, the internet has become the most important and widespread communication service in the world. We can speak about real time interconnectivity at a level hard to imagine a decade ago, and this is only the beginning. Practically speaking, the social networks hosted by the internet represent a global way of communication, offering at the same time a good control over the content over the messages which are sent.

What do all the social networks have in common? There are a few dominant characteristics: they co-exist in an environment with an enormous communication potential; their use is friendly and creative; they offer fast interaction with high efficiency; physical borders become irrelevant; linguistic barriers become less important as users tend to accept an international language as a code for transmitting their messages. There are hundreds of relevant active networks in this moment to which other small or medium-sized networks add. Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, Netlog, LinkedIn, Hi5, Neogen, and, of course, blogs, are just a few examples of such networks among the hundreds of important ones which offer opportunities in the fields of business, head hunting, personal development, leadership, new relationships, games, etc. Social networks appear thus to be interaction structures among actors in an exchange relationship, the type of network being given by the nature of the relationship.¹

Among the potential benefits of network sites we can mention the following:² professional success; business development; access to knowledge; information; a larger number of opportunities; network development; personal development; debates; the building of communities

¹ Mircea Mitruțiu (2005, p. 9), *Analysis of social networks / Analiza rețelelor sociale*, Banat Bussines, [online], available at: http://www.banatbusiness.ro/files/edit_texte/fisiere/Analiza_retelelor_sociale.pdf [accessed on Nov. 24, 2010].

² *Ibid.*, p. 125.

brought together by a common interest; and cheap and easy communication. We cannot end the present section of the paper without mentioning that there are, of course, possible shortcomings of social networks as well, such as limitations of the digital platform, stolen identities, spams, and problems of adaptation to the real environment.

Facebook – an Agent of Globalization?

In an interdisciplinary approach, the Facebook social network exercises deep implications on the economic, political, and social life of the globalized world in which we live. In the context of the new forms of communication, which have become highly relevant in contemporary society, the Facebook phenomenon is a distinct chapter.

Besides being anything else, Facebook is an agent of globalization and due to it, the global village we live in becomes virtually coherent in the infosphere. In other words, Facebook is a mental map of globalization, maybe the most eloquent one. No other online initiative has enjoyed such a global impact as Mark Zuckerberg's Facebook.

The process of globalization cannot be conceived in the absence of the internet in general and of Facebook in particular. Facebook becomes a virtual place where we are permanently in contact with our friends all over the world, with personalities, and with different organizations. We are their neighbors, at a click's distance from them.

Facebook is an indispensable instrument for bloggers and journalists, for artists and writers, for those involved in political actions or in actions of the civil society for certain public institutions or companies. Many domains of activity nowadays would not be possible in the absence of Facebook.

The way young people spend their free time has changed radically in the last decades; books, sports, and television no longer enjoy the same public fan base. However, the use of Facebook as part of the global communication process has tended to become a way of living in itself, influencing our behavior, decisions, feelings, etc.

Human beings cannot live their lives without expressing themselves, and from this point of view Facebook offers numerous possibilities. The pictures, the music we display, the articles we comment upon, all speak about our personality and our desire to share these experiences with other people.

Facebook also means knowledge as part of an euristic process. Our virtual presence offers us the opportunity – once inconceivable – of an interaction with a very large number of persons all at once. An opinion expressed on Facebook or a question we ask can receive fast and easy feedback from a lawyer, professor, writer, a professional, from a liberal, a conservative, or a socialist, be him/her Chinese or Canadian, etc. Based on these criteria the feedback differs and can help us understand aspects of a situation we had not thought of until then.

Of course, the network is still young and we cannot know for sure if it is just a passing trend, a momentary fashion, or a lasting phenomenon.

A Microanalysis – European Youth’s Social Involvement

In this part we try to examine the issue of European youth’s social involvement in relation to the same generation’s deep relationship with communication technology and with the social network sites supported by this fast-developing technology.

The theoretical background we use will be supported by a research study conducted in the period May-June 2011 on a sample group made up of 100 young people (undergraduate and graduate students) aged 18-26.

Two main characteristics of today’s young generation depicted by numerous social, cultural, political, and anthropological studies are their special relationship with communication technology and their new communicational features on one hand; their low involvement in the “life of the city,” with weak political and societal interests on the other. Whether there is a connection, a cause-effect relationship between the two realities is what we are going to discuss in the following lines.

The first step in our attempt is to define the target group making up the object of the present study. The contemporary young generation has been given various names, such as “Generation Y,” the “Millennials,” “Generation Next,” or the “Facebook Generation,” in an attempt to enter and decode their world to the benefit of the whole society. They are the generation born between the late 1970s and early 1990s, although this time interval varies from one country to another, from the USA to Romania and the rest of Europe. This is the digital generation, whose representatives have grown along with the computer and the other technological developments about which they are so expert and to which they are so addicted. But while the computer was a common item in the early 90s in Western Europe and the USA, in Romania only the children born after 1990 have had the opportunity of benefiting from modern technology in their first decade of life.

The European young generation has witnessed and has been living in a fast-changing, fast-developing environment; the double nature of this process of change – political and economic on one hand and communicational on the other – has certainly been influencing the way the young generation conceives of social and political action and involvement.

The democratization process has faced many obstacles in countries from South-Eastern Europe, where many changes have taken place at different levels: political, economic, institutional, and in everyday life, where a slight change regarding the mentality and civic and political behavior has been noticed. Therefore, one of the main targets of many EU policies and funded programs is to lead young people to become active citizens, to play an active role in society.

Social and political transformations, produced in many European Union countries (including Romania) in the last decades, have generated various problems, which the younger generation faces. But notwithstanding the changes and emerging opportunities in the development of pluralist democracy, the level of youth participation in public life and politics is not very high. Today we are eyewitnesses to what we could call a crisis in European society, namely its members' – especially the young ones – lack of involvement in European or national politics.

The great potential the young generation has would allow them to develop themselves and contribute to society's development, successfully including the leading of their own destiny, but most of European young people seem not to have full confidence in their own powers. However, young people, through their positive thinking, dynamism and energy, ambitions and aspirations to a more prosperous future, should be the driving force in a changing European society (a dynamic, complex society).

If we analyze the surveys performed by EU countries, we notice that 30% of young people say that they do not know what the future holds, 10% confess that they live only for today, 20% of them believe that the future will not be good, 16% believe that the future will be more depressing than the present, and only 24% of young respondents hope the future will bring them a better life than the present one.

Most European young people seem to have lost their hope for a prosperous life. They do not believe in promises, nor do they feel they have the power to change anything, although the European policy encourages decision-making processes and participation in various debates. This position is shown by the data of a Public Opinion Barometer (POB), where 32.6% to 35.2% of young people aged between 18-29 years answered the question "How do you think people like you can influence important decisions taken at national level?" using "to a small extent," "to a very small extent," and "not at all."

The distance between the young people, public institutions, and the democratic process is probably due to the lack the tradition of youth participation in some EU countries regarding the building of a democratic and prosperous society. Young people eventually become indifferent to social and political life. For example, most young people in Romania's academic environment distance themselves from policy more and more, and they are not interested in political or economic events taking place in the country, although Romania needs the involvement of civil society now, and particularly of young people.

Despite the very different situations, young people share similar values and difficulties, and they often speak with one voice: they want their dreams and expectations to come true.

"The colossal World Values Survey shows that only one-third of young people across Europe are interested in politics, and three-quarters said they did not think politics are important for their lives. Only a minority of young people were shown to have actually engaged in politics – 28% had

signed a petition, 22% had attended a demonstration, and 9% had joined boycotts. Only 6% belonged to a political party, a trade union, an environmental organization, or a professional association” (Kaila Krayewski, *Generation Y and Why They Matter*, 2009). There has been widespread fear that they are disengaging from politics, instead tending to focus on their own immediate surroundings while blocking out seemingly distant problems. It seems that only a rather small part of this generation, born during the economic boom, but struggling to make a way during the economic crisis, is eager to be involved in the community life. That is why the main target of many EU policies and funded programs is to train young people to become active citizens, to play an active role in society because they have something to offer. As compared to their predecessors, the young generation can not only listen and execute, but can force a change in the contents of things.

As far as the young generation’s relationship with communication technology and social network sites is concerned, existing research (Valenzuela: 2008) points out that young people are motivated to join such sites to keep a strong relationship with friends and equally to strengthen relationships with acquaintances and ultimately, but less importantly, to meet new people online.

Social networks or social communities such as Facebook, Hi5.com, YouTube, MySpace, Xing, or Friendster are currently the most popular ways of meeting people. These networks meet the young people’s need for communication; help them develop/find their identity, (re)present themselves, and practice peer-group experiences; offer them spaces of freedom and experimentation, crossing any boundaries. The popularity of these communities could be explained by children’s and young people’s needs to be noticed, recognized, and to become popular. They want to be seen and, in the same time, to see how appreciated and sympathetic they are – or how they seem to be.

We have conducted a practical research study among a target group of 100 young Romanians aged between 18-26, all of them undergraduate (73) or graduate (27) students, in order to find out more information on the way they integrate social network sites in their involvement into public life and in the civic action they take.

The main criteria for choosing the respondents were: their age and their membership to a social network site. The questions we asked the respondents were:

- Q1: Do you use the social network to comment on / discuss public issues or you use it only for discussing private issues?
- Q2: Are you a member of any civic organization / NGO (Non-Government Organization) having a profile on the social network site(s) whose member you are?

- Q3: Do you participate in the actions organized by such civic organizations / NGOs a) on the social network site(s); b) in the non-virtual environment (meetings, actions with various purposes)?

The answers we have received were as follows:

- Q1: 62 respondents (62%) answered that they use a social network site to comment on public issues as well as on private issues, while the other 38% use the social network sites only for discussing private issues. Of the two categories, 42 undergraduate respondents and 20 graduate students gave a positive answer.

- Q2: 5 respondents (5%) (2 undergraduates and 3 graduates) answered that they were members of a civic organization / NGO.

- Q3: 46 respondents answered that they participate in actions³ / debates organized by civic organizations / NGO on the social network site (28 undergraduates and respectively 18 graduates) and 1 undergraduate respectively 2 graduate students answered that they participate in actions⁴ organized by civic organizations / NGOs in the non-virtual environment.

Question (Q)	Total number of positive answers	Undergraduates	Graduates
Q1	62 / 100 (62%)	42 / 73 (57.5%)	20 / 27 (74%)
Q2	5 / 100 (5%)	2 / 73 (2.7%)	3 / 27 (11.1%)
Q3a	46 / 100 (46%)	28 / 73 (38.3%)	18 / 27 (66.6%)
Q3b	3 / 100 (3%)	1 / 73 (1.3%)	2 / 27 (7.4%)

It becomes obvious from the above-mentioned figures that age and the degree of maturity play an important role in the way the young generation gets involved in public issues.

As far as the topic of our study is concerned, we believe that the figures demonstrate that although public involvement is indeed low among young people, social network sites are a useful environment for creating civic consciousness and increasing public involvement among young people.

It is a generation whose thinking patterns are fundamentally different from those of the previous generations, mostly due to the different way of thinking and processing information due to a technological boom. Their learning preferences, their motivation, and their expectations from education are different, and while they are seen as “growing without values,” they have something new to offer: directness, pragmatic goals, high expectations, fast achievements. Organizations fighting for a public cause should reshape and redesign their strategies for reaching those goals if they want to attract the young generation and gain their support.

³ Voting, signing petitions, supporting a public cause financially / non-financially etc.

⁴ Voluntary activities, support or protest meetings/ marches etc.

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CHAPTER XIX

PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTION ON THE ETHICS OF NETWORK INFORMATION

GONG QUN

Abstract: We are living in an era of network information and the coming of this era has changed man's living and communicating styles. The anonymity of the world of network information has changed the character of human ethical life, paving the way for net crime. With maximum self-interest, people participate in the construction and development of the world of network information, but unrestricted pursuit of maximum self-interest will eventually lead to the sufferings brought on by this behavior – thus, restrictive pursuit is the best choice. The Contractarianism of Hobbes and Gauthier offers the philosophical premise for the ethics of network information. Seen on the horizon, Contractarianism, the equal and freedom-restrictive pursuit of the right to self-interest, is the basic principle of citizens of the society of network information, and respecting this right is the most fundamental principle of the ethics of network information.

Keywords: ethic of network information, prisoner's dilemma, Contractarianism

I. It is said that the twenty-first century is one supported by cyberspace. We are now living in an era of information and the Net; an era based on the creation and allocation of information; an era of World Wide Web when the holistic survival state of mankind is experiencing fundamental change. Network information has enlarged our living space, dissolved the obstacles brought about by distance, and gathered people far from each other all over the globe together. The Internet has changed our lives as well as our life styles, and it has also brought change to our ethical life.

We are now living in double worlds. With the appearance of the Net era, there appears a world of network information which joins our real world. Are the two worlds, then, identical? The existence of the Net World is objective which, nevertheless, is different from the actual objective world, being one of multiple information and fictitiousness. Such a fictitious world blended with one of information is also an important part of human life-world, just like the actual human social world.

The Net World is, first and foremost, a world of information. With an unimaginably vast capacity, the Internet contains the information of the human world far more than any other carrier. It offers an unprecedented availability of information to people, and the world thus has entered into an information explosion. Secondly, the high speed of the communication of

network information has accelerated the pace of globalization. It can even be said that network information has contributed to the coming of the era of globalization. Thirdly, the Net World is fictitious. This so-called fictitiousness refers to its being able to invent a lively world by way of images and animations. Fourthly, the Net World is also one where people interact and communicate with one another. Mutual communication is strengthened via the Net. The Internet has changed man's way of communication in that it has changed people's communicating style and, simultaneously, produced a new type of human communication: that between human and computer. Fifthly, the Net World is a commercial one. Internet qua the platform for commodity exchange has changed the traditional exchanging mode, having greatly facilitated the exchange of commodities and widened the market space.

Where there is human life-world, there are human crimes and issues of human ethics and morals. Similarly, at the same time network information has changed human life and brought great convenience and happiness therewith, it has also created unprecedented problems regarding human crime and ethics. The human ethical and moral system gradually formed over the past several millenniums is suffering great conflicts and seems to have lost its meaning in view of the world of network information. An overview of the current world shows that such immoral, even criminal, phenomena such as net crime, network information fraud and piracy, digital destruction, the rampant spread of computer viruses, the overflowing of net sex information, the infestation of hackers, privacy suffering outrageous infringement, and other such crimes are trampling the moral boundaries of people. These have made the problems of information ethics a crisis and challenge we cannot but face. It has become a special ethical task of people today to construct a system of information ethics and maintain a healthy and ordered Net world.

II. The phenomenon of human ethics and morals is so common that moral evaluations can and must be made as to good and evil in all fields of endeavor. Seen in the sense of sociological description, information ethics refers to the study of ethics and morals in the sphere of network information; seen in the theoretical sense of the normative applied ethics, on the other hand, it refers to how man should act and what principles and norms he should follow in the sphere of network information. Put on the level of philosophy, the study focuses on the philosophical premises of norms and principles in the reign of network information, asking why such principles should be used to instruct people's behavior. Rather than making an anthropological description of the ethical and moral phenomena in the sphere of network information, this article aims to present some theoretical discussions regarding the philosophical premises and relevant principles of the ethics of network information.

To begin with, as we have seen, the world of network information is different than the actual social world. As a multiple world of human life, the

world of network information has another important trait: it is anonymous. Any human participant on the Net is engaged in direct human-computer communication, and communicates with others merely by means of computers. Every participant may enter the giant Net world invisibly with an anonymous identity when taking part in the fictitious world of network activities. In the sense of entering the Net world invisibly, all of us are partaking in a masque which, of course, differs from the actual one on the final emergence – participants in an actual masque will show their true appearance at the end, whereas the anonyms are hard to trace with regard to their true identity.

In *Republic*, Plato tells a story of Gyges, the ancestor of the Lydians, as follows: According to the tradition, Gyges was a shepherd in the service of the King of Lydia. One day there was a great storm, and an earthquake made an opening where he was feeding his flock. Amazed at the sight, he descended into the opening, where, among other marvels, he beheld a hollow brazen horse, having doors, in which he, stooping and looking in, saw a dead body of stature, as appeared to him, more than human and having nothing on but a gold ring. He took the ring from the finger of the dead man and re-ascended. Now the shepherds met together, as they did every month, to send the king of state an accounting of his flocks, Gyges came wearing the ring, As he was sitting among them he chanced to turn the cullet of the ring inside his hand, and instantly, he became invisible to the rest of company, and they began to speak of him as if he were no longer present. He was astonished at this, and again touching the ring he turned the cullet outward and reappeared; he made several trials of the ring, and always with the same result – when he turned the cullet he became invisible, and when it faced outward, he reappeared. He contrived to be chosen one of the messengers who were sent to the court. As soon as he arrived, he seduced the Queen, and with her help conspired against the king, slew him and took the kingdom.¹ Plato says, “Now suppose there were two such magic rings, and one were given to the just man, the other to the unjust. No one, it is commonly believed, would have such iron strength of mind as to stand fast in doing right or keep his hands off other men’s goods, when he could go to the market-place and fearlessly help himself to anything he wanted, enter houses and sleep with any woman he chose, set prisoners free and kill men at his pleasure, and in a word go about men with the power of a god. He would behave no better than the other; both would take the same course.”² Here Plato means that if a man could do anything evil as he will without being punished, he would do every unjust thing for the sake of his self-interest. Isn’t the invisibility on the Net the same as the ring of Gyges?

¹ Plato, *The Republic*, 359D-360D, Loeb Classical Library (Oxford: Jowett & Campbell, 1914).

² *Ibid.*, 360D.

The coming of the era of network information contributes to the development of human society in a process of three stages: rural society, urban society, and network information society. In an ethical sense, the arrival of the society of network information can be considered a change of great significance in that it has changed traits of human social activities. The rural society is one of acquaintances, and urban society has strangers, but network information society has anonyms. Such kind of social evolution can be seen as increasingly omitting the identity of behaviors. The consequence of this sort of de-identification is of great significance to human morals. The morality of the society of acquaintances is the morality of a society of people who are face to face. In such a society, people behave in the mutually familiar horizon of acquaintances, and acquaintance brings a kind of restrictive mechanism of morality. The idea that acquaintance acts as a morally protecting mechanism lies in the fact that among acquaintances there are relatively steady social relations and social liaisons, which form the social background for actions amid acquaintances. In addition, after long-term cooperation or communication among acquaintances, certain relatively stable emotional relations are easily produced, and these are a prerequisite for their moral acts. Even so, the rural society of acquaintances has changed with the coming of urbanization in this modern time. When people come to the city from countryside, what they see in the street are strange faces in lieu of familiar ones. The crime ratio in cities is higher than that in the countryside primarily because among strangers, there is no background restrictive mechanism whatsoever except for the law and one's own conscience. This being the case, however, the stranger is still an actual existent in urban society compared with the society of network information. The stranger becomes a symbol, one source of information. Man as an actual existent has disappeared somewhere outside the computer. When people conceal their real identity, the restriction of law and conscience may not exist, as in the case of the hero in Plato's story.

The significant change of the identity of the doer is the ontological premise of our ethical reflection on network information. We can see, however, that the source of any informational symbol in the world of network information can be traced back to a human behavioral subject. The severity of human criminal phenomena rises along with the increase of the extent of the lack of human contact, and this has revealed the seamy side of human nature. To study the ethics of network information, the basic evil in human nature must be put under the microscope instead of being ignored. As in the traditions from Sophists to Hobbes in Western ethical thoughts, we may as well call such a person 'natural man,' a wolf entering the masque without being in sheep's clothing. He is also a selfish man, as was mentioned by us, merely seeking his self-interest. On the other hand, it should be seen that the individual who takes part in the Net society and lives in the world of network information is always in quest of some interest or hope, just or unjust. What we would like to ask now is: can such a selfish man always gain his purpose from the Net? He may make it once

or twice, but never more. Be that as it may, he still can accomplish his purpose in that others believe that he is a good man or a benign one, so they trust him too readily, leading to the fulfillment of his Net fraud. If all people practiced deception on the Net like him, there would be no one trusting anyone else. In this case, the credibility of this world of network information would cease to exist. It's like the case of a world in which every one is telling a lie. Language's function of conveying real information would disappear when nobody was telling the truth. If, furthermore, such a basic function disappeared, people could never use language; some other communicating tools would have to be developed instead. In the same vein, if the information we can get from the terminal of the Net were false, nothing but misfortune would be brought about as the result of Net communication, and the consequence would be people abandoning the Net platform. This was the case of some web sites: since only false information was released there, and they disappeared from the Net. No one trusted them.

Let us presume that someone who would like to achieve his goal for interest via network information hopes to obtain his maximum interest in this way. What we'd like to ask is this: can he maximize his interest without any legal or moral restriction? Insofar as this point is concerned, due to the nature of the world of network information, law and morality are not enough. Corresponding system construction of the society of network information is a must. One suggestion is to build the system of identity via real name, logging online by means of real name, so that any one who releases information will feel that he/she is under some invisible supervision. Nevertheless, even if such a system can be built, it's hard to guarantee that all the websites of the country can live up to it, nor can it be insured that the participants in the world of network information are using their real identity. This is because you cannot assure that the operator sitting before the computer is the very person who has registered with his identity. What is more, we can only carry out such kind of program in some country with a strong supervising mechanism. We can never achieve the system of real-name identity all over the globe. The Net is borderless, and it is an information community shared by the whole planet. It has become a common phenomenon in the society of network information that the hackers of one country attack the Network of another. In this regard, this sort of system itself is, undoubtedly, defective. We need, nevertheless, some kind of reasonable restrictive mechanism. Without any constraint mechanism, all those presumed men seeking for maximum self-interest are just like the natural men in their natural states mentioned by Hobbes. In such an anonymous space, every one is free and equal, and no one will ever balk at hurting others for the maximization of his self-interest. Even Hobbes, however, realized that such a natural state could not last permanently, because the state of war between men caused thereby would deprive all the people of safety and happiness. Therefore, the pursuit of maximization of self-interest without restriction will result in the pursuer's

damage and even destruction. Hobbes contends that human reason is capable of instructing people out of the natural state; that is, people will realize that in regard to self-interest, peace and harmony are far superior to mutual hurt.

Be that as it may, considering the selfishness of human nature and the nature of the society of network information, we need to construct the ethics of information on the basis of Contractarianism. To put it in another way, Contractarianism is the philosophical premise of the ethics of information.³

III. Contractarianism is a kind of contract theory represented by Hobbes and Gauthier. This sort of contract theory stresses that everyone is entitled to seek their self-interest. But pursuing self-interest should take morality as the premise. It has been seen by Contractarianism that without the protection of a moral code, people's pursuit of self-interest would be in vain, and would even become an activity of self-destruction. Consequently, everyone's pursuit of self-interest should be restricted by a moral code. It has also been seen that man's pursuit of self-interest is a kind of social behavior within interpersonal relations rather than being individual and irrelevant to others. With regard to the image of the prisoner's dilemma, Contractarianism clearly shows what the consequence would be if the seeker for self-interest went outside moral restrictions.

The setup of the prisoner's dilemma has highlighted the issue of interactions between self-interested men. Suppose that A and B prepare to co-commit an offense with guns, but are detected and arrested by the police, who suspect that they have committed more severe crimes but need to get sufficient evidence. The two suspects are interrogated separately. Each of them is told that if he confesses, the punishment may be elevated; if he refuses to confess whereas the other one confesses, the punishment will be increased; if both of them confess, they both will be severely punished, but to an extent a little lighter than the former condition. Due to respective interrogation, neither of them knows whether the other one will protect him and keep silent, or cooperate with the police and give him up. The prisoner's dilemma may lead to the following four choices as the consequence:

First, if A refuses to confess but B confesses, B goes free and A will receive a 10-year sentence for his refusing to cooperate with the police.

Second, as above, if A confesses but B refuses to do so, the police will set A free and B will receive the 10-year penalty.

Third, if both confess, they will receive a 5-year sentence respectively.

³[英]霍布斯：《利维坦》，第十四章，97-108页，商务印书馆，1985年版。Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Molesworth edition (1839), XIV.

Fourth, if neither of the two confesses, the police can only sentence them to 1 year penalty for lack of sufficient evidence.

The police tell the consequences to A and B, neither of whom know what choice the other one will make, being incapable of communicating. Let's assume again, if two of them intend to get the best interest, their penalty will only be slightly lighter than the heavy one. Only when neither of them confesses, can they receive the lightest punishment. Neither however knows whether the other one will testify for the prosecution against him for the freedom of being acquitted. In consequence, both of them will risk the severest penalty when making decisions. To cooperate with the police for acquittal is, undoubtedly, reasonable to both of them, this sort of rational pursuit nevertheless will lead to worse consequence than refusing to cooperate with the police.

What choice would you make if, under such circumstances, A or B were you? The assumption here is that each of the two suspects is selfish by nature, and will choose to confess for his own best interest albeit the result is a 5-year sentence. Nevertheless, if one of them is very selfish, the other being more in favor of maintaining their common interest, chances are that the selfish one gets the benefit whereas the sacrificing one ends up in the worst possible position. The prisoners' dilemma is a dilemma just because the act most reasonable to the individual might turn out to be his worst choice. The setup of the prisoners' dilemma is, without doubt, an experiment about man's thought process which also portrays the act in actual social life. The paradox of this experiment is: the most reasonable individual act of seeking for self-interest usually leads to the collectively unreasonable, as in the tragedies of common land and open sea, etc. The so-called tragedy of common land is of such reference that every shepherd in the common land is of the reason of self-interest, and hopes that he can breed more livestock, never thinking of breeding less than others. As the result, the limited common land is over-consumed so that none of the shepherds can graze their livestock. That which is reproduced by the prisoners' dilemma is the natural state by Hobbes wherein every one seeks for the maximization of his self-interest, only resulting in a tragic human condition. The prisoners' dilemma tells us that an individual's act of seeking self-interest is not unrelated to others, nor is it isolated, but it is carried on in a sort of mutual influence, and is interactive or collective. That which is turned out by the unlimited individual pursuit of self-interest is a sort of holistic influence, in that none, including the agent, can achieve the maximization of his self-interest, and even might be harmed.

The escape of the prisoners' dilemma lies in the following: first, seen from the individual pursuit of self-interest, all of us should cease seeking for the maximum self-interest in favor of restrictive pursuit. Second, we should choose to seek for self-interest within restriction for the sake of others' existence and interests. This kind of pursuit is thus choosing to cooperate with others, resulting in the self-interest being bigger and better

than what might be obtained by refusing to cooperate with others in hopes of seeking maximum self-interest. This is the so-called “cooperation surplus.”⁴ The interest obtained by each individual via cooperating with others is by far bigger than that gained without cooperation.

The man of self-interest in the prisoners’ dilemma resembles the one in the society of network information. If people maximize their self-interest, knowing no bounds, mutual hurt will be the only result; on the other hand, if people show respect for and cooperate with others, what they will gain is bigger than if they refuse to cooperate. The appearance of the world of network information puts forward the issue of collective acts by people, telling us that if we maximize our self-interest without limitation, regardless of others’ interests and needs, chances are we will fail to effectively achieve our selfish goals, and everyone’s life will get worse and worse, leading to the failure of network information to exert the expected value and effect. The prisoners’ dilemma tells us that holistically seen, cooperation will produce a better result than non-cooperation. How, then, can people better cooperate with each other or follow the contract? The answer is the necessary restriction from reason that makes people follow rules.

However, even when most people follow the cooperative protocol, being moral citizens in the society of network information, there are still a few who refuse to do so; instead, they take advantage of others’ following the protocol. How, then, should we deal with this problem? According to the contract theory of Hobbes and Gauthier, such people are fools.

Gauthier argues that “the Fool” has made double mistakes. In the first place, intending to make use of another’s contract so as to reach his own benefit, he nevertheless fails to understand that moral practices like keeping one’s promise and telling the truth can really only be carried out among those who are inclined to follow them. If you only follow the contract where you can benefit, while refusing to follow it when your own benefit is tied into the benefits of others, the opportunity of reciprocity will not be left to you when it is known to others. Worse still, people will refuse to cooperate with you for your breaking your word.

Gauthier suggests that people take the following instance into account: the farms of Jones and Smith are adjoining. Although they are not enemies, they are not friends either; thus neither will benefit from the other’s help. They both have realized, nevertheless, that if they help one another on harvesting crops, both of them will benefit. As is known to us, the harvest needs to race against time. Jones will be ready to harvest next week and Smith will be ready two weeks later. After the period of harvest, Jones will retire, sell the farm, and move to Florida where will be impossible for him to see members in this community. Jones has promised Smith that if the latter helps him, he will return the favor next week. Both of them, however, know that to Jones, helping Smith two weeks later is purely paying lip

⁴ David Gauthier, “Morality and Advantage”, *Philosophical Reviews*, vol. 76, 1976.

service; even if Smith has been offered help, he will not receive that help because Jones will be gone. On this ground, since Smith understands Jones's character orientation, he knows that even if he helped Jones, the latter would not help him when necessary. As the result, Smith will not offer help to Jones even when Jones promises to help him as the reward. By means of this example, Gauthier intends to let people understand that if they cannot set up a sort of credit relationship, the long-term credit and cooperation surplus brought by mutual trust will not be achieved in interpersonal communication.

The second mistake is the succession of the previous one. Those who are really inclined to strictly follow moral practice rather than merely seek for self-interest can benefit more than those without such inclination in that the pursuers of maximum self-interest within restrictions will be the most welcome partners in reciprocal cooperation whence every one relies on the other's voluntary compliance, whereas the pursuers of unlimited maximum self-interest will be excluded.⁵

That contract theory is taken as the basis of the ethics of network information consists in our assumption that all the participants in the world of network information are of identical purpose of self-interest when partaking of the activities and construction of this world. Like Plato, we imagine that people gather together with an expectation of maximizing their self-interests. Mutual hurt, however, makes people reason that only when we seek for self-interest within restriction can we achieve the coexistence and win-win situation in the world of network information we have created. Nevertheless, the prerequisite of this assumption is that human nature is completely self-interest-oriented in lieu of other-interest-oriented, although we never doubt that there are people who care for others and even sacrifice themselves for others. Those caring people must have the capacity for better realizing self-restraint. But our ethical theories should not be set on the foundation that everyone is of such a high moral stature. Our only expectation of human nature is that many or most people can set up a reasonable conception as to self-good during the process of interpersonal communication and games. We do not even expect that they will have this quality in the beginning, nor that they have the idea of justice by nature, as was expected by Rawls. As long as people have a reasonable conception of self-good, we may construct a better world of information than that composed of people seeking for self-interest knowing no bounds.

The construction of network ethics on the basis of restrictive pursuit of self-interest begins with a social contract among Netizens. This world of network information is made to appear thanks to the participation of the Netizens all over the globe, albeit with the prerequisite of the maturity of the conditions of human science and technology. Individuals and social

⁵ David Gauthier, "Why Contractarianism?", seen in *Contractarianism / Contractualism*, edited by Stephen Darwall (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Company, 2003), pp. 99-101.

organizations need network information because of the interest it brings to people's lives and work. People join in this world of network information to share this interest, and every participant is a member of it, acting in it as a symbol. In this sense, all the statuses and positions in the actual world lose their value and significance, replaced by figures and symbols. Every participant is thus a citizen of freedom as well as equality. On this premise, we present that the basic principle of the ethics of network information is the right to seek one's self-interest freely and equally, as is stipulated in the first principle of equality and justice by Rawls.⁶ In the world of network information, the pursuit of self-interest by each individual is compatible with the system of the freedom of the whole, and with the interest of social security. The equality and freedom of each one takes the other's freedom, as well as the supreme good of mankind, as the main limitation – thus, individual freedom is restricted only for the sake of universal freedom and the goal of good, and individual rights must be compatible with the rights of others, restricted only by that and by the interest of social security. What needs to be interpreted here is this: unlike in actual society, in the society of network information, it is inadequate to merely stress the pursuit of interest on the premise of individual equality and freedom being compatible with other's freedom. This is because the safety of network information is an issue of fundamental interest to any actual country or society. The security of websites of national defense and military affairs, national financial and banking systems, etc., is an important part of national as well as social security. In the modern world, this has also constituted a no less important part of human good.

The contract amid citizens of the society of network information cannot guarantee that there is no ticket evader whatsoever, so it is inadequate to have ethical and moral norms only with respect to the construction of the society of network information. The protection of the law must form an order of law and ethics. As the result of seeking for self-interest but knowing no bounds, the Netizens will not get the protection of law and morals and hence will become the very victims of it. Netizens seeking for unjust interests in the world of the network must receive corresponding punishment, because without this justice, the order of the Net world will be hard to maintain. The world of network information is a world without boundaries and Netizens are real citizens of the globe. The happiness of all the citizens of the Net society all around the globe is the ultimate aim of the existence and development of the world of network information. This ultimate aim calls for the healthy and active participation of all the citizens in the society of network information and the joint constructing of the governments of every country. The world of network information is the product of the development of modernized science and technology and, simultaneously, the product of man's pursuit of a better,

⁶ John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Harvard University Press, 1971).

more perfect life. We believe that man has the wisdom as well as moral ability to build the society of network information into a perfect one.

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CHAPTER XX

THE DISUNITY OF ANTHROPOLOGY: REFLECTIONS FROM A PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE PERSPECTIVE¹

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Abstract: Inspired by the recent debate between anthropologists that place anthropology among humanities and the more scientifically oriented ones, I address the issue of the unity of the discipline, for the topic of the unity of the sciences was a major one in the classical neopositivist conception of science. After presenting the traditional view and assessing its inadequacy for the question of unity in anthropological fields, I will explore some recent modalities of approaching the issue. Local integration will be considered as a plausible form and ways to articulate it will be discussed. The role of models and modeling processes will also be emphasized as a frame to implement a pertinent approach to local integration.

Keywords: unity of sciences, anthropology, types of integration, models

The proximal motivation for this paper was given by the recent debate among anthropologists triggered by the redefinition of the long term objective of the American Association of Anthropologists. While the old status stated as a long term objective “to advance anthropology as the science that studies humankind in all its aspects,” a recent restatement says the association seeks “to advance *public understanding* of humankind in all its aspects.” This change triggered a series of reactions from the anthropologists involved in scientific areas of the discipline and reactivated deeper splits existing in the scientific community. A recent issue of the journal *Nature* published a commentary by A. Kuper and J. Marks (2011) on this situation, taking a stance on the media announcement of the crisis of anthropology, and trying to identify the real reason for the debate. By going beyond the parties’ positions and the anti-science conspiracy accusations around which much of the debate dwelled, the authors claimed from the beginning that “the real shocker” emerging from the debate is the fact that “anthropologists cannot agree on what the discipline is about.”

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One can define anthropology in general as an umbrella type of discipline that comprises subdisciplines from the different registers of both the natural and the social/human sciences. As Kuper and Marks (2011) also emphasize, the main subdisciplines from the distinct registers have in general ignored each other during the history of the discipline. The 1980s were set apart by being characterized by a radicalization and an open conflict between the different orientations. This radicalization was driven especially by developments within the frameworks of two movements: sociobiology and cultural theory, which polarized the reductionist attitudes by placing the ultimate study of human behavior either in the biological realm or in the realm of humanities. The consequence of this radicalization was centrifugal movement of the constitutive disciplines of anthropology toward the domains that legitimize their identity.

Leaving aside the radical approaches from different particular tendencies, the need for a comprehensive investigation from different perspectives of human phenomenon made interdisciplinarity a premier concern at the educational and administrative level in academic life and research. Despite this, as the two mentioned authors also emphasize, anthropologists seldom collaborate on research projects that breach their disciplinary specialties. Nevertheless, the real worry the authors address is the fact that one cannot find any major preoccupation in actual anthropology for understanding human nature as a whole, nor for understanding the connections between its biological, social, and cultural forms. Their conclusion points to an acute need for a truly comparative science of human beings and their history all over the world.

The above conclusion and the situation discussed raise the issue of the relationship between the biological and social approaches to human nature, and, implicitly, the issue of the unity of anthropological enterprises. The aim of this paper is to address these issues from the perspective of philosophy and methodology of science. I will address therefore the problem of how the quest for the unity of anthropological fields can be posed nowadays. I'll also discuss the means through which the integration of the different approaches is explored and how it emerges in actual scientific practice. Following this path, I'll discuss my support of a position that appears to be pertinent in the actual context of research, and I will argue for understanding the important role a modelistic frame would have in such an investigation.

Now, regarding the epistemological and methodological reflection on anthropological research, one might say that the philosophy of science was, in general, guided and dominated (not unjustifiably) by the reference to fundamental sciences, especially fundamental physics. Anthropology was completely ignored as a reference science and the potential philosophical subjects relevant to anthropological investigation made their way into topics from the philosophies of the social or biological sciences. One might

suggest that the situation is a consequence of the multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary character of the field. Another reason for its neglect might be found in the fact that philosophers placed anthropology more in the camp of social sciences or even in the humanities register, and in the frame of these disciplines it was seen as a discipline of secondary interest.

Whatever the reasons for its neglect, it does not seem to be justifiable to place anthropology into the context of actual preoccupations in philosophy of science. The dismissal of the classical concept of science that promoted a unified view built through reductive relations between scientific disciplines opened the possibility of adopting a more flexible view that makes room for a variety of scientific modalities that engage various relations beside reductive ones. Taking this context into consideration, we can say that anthropology, due to its inherent multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary nature, represents a very interesting case, insufficiently explored and rich in consequences.

THE CLASSICAL PHILOSOPHICAL VIEW ON UNITY OF THE SCIENCES

From the point of view of the philosophy of science, the relevant preoccupation in our discussion is regarding the topic of unity of the sciences and the relations between the different scientific disciplines. The subject of the unity of the sciences was one of the major entries on the working agenda of the neopositivistic concept of science in general. It is linked to the names of such prominent adherents of this orientation as O. Neurath and R. Carnap, who were behind the project of an encyclopedia of the unified sciences. The two authors held two different views on how this unity should be conceived. The Carnap variant is a stronger reductive model – the pyramidal model. It is characterized by logical constructions from basic concepts and reductive connections between the concepts from different levels. The laws from different sciences are connected and reduced to the genuine fundamental laws of physics. Carnap's approach stresses a conceptual precision, deductive systematization, and logical rigor.

The other variant, promoted by Neurath, is less reductive. His model adopts the image of the encyclopedia as a metaphor for the way he sees the unity of the sciences. Instead of a single rigorous language, he acknowledges the existence in science of imprecise terms from ordinary language. He rejects a strong physicalistic reductionism and makes room for the "soft sciences," such as the social and human sciences. His unity of the sciences is meant to promote conversations and interactions across existing domains through local exchanges and cross-fertilizations. Taking into account the recent directions of research in the philosophy of science, Neurath's view proves to be relevant for the actual existing research agenda. It also proves to be relevant for our discussion, as will become clear later in my paper.

In the postwar neopositivistic landscape, we can identify two major moments that reflect the subject of the unity of the sciences. The first one is related to Hempel's model of scientific explanation – a general model that is meant to be a universal model of scientific explanation valid for any scientific field. The second moment is related to the classical model of inter-theoretical reduction developed by E. Nagel in his influential book *The Structure of Science* (1979). I'll first briefly discuss the two models starting with the second, since it bears directly on the relationships between different scientific disciplines.

According to Nagel's account, the reduction relation between two theories, T1 and T2, implies two fundamental requirements. The first requirement refers to the connectivity of the terms belonging to the two different theories and reflects the need for the continuity of the meaning of the theoretical terms from T1 and T2. It is a condition for the preservation of the reference for the concepts in the two theories. The second requirement refers to the relation of derivability between the laws of the two theories. The laws of the reducible theory are to be derived from the laws of the basic theory from which the reduction is done.

The first condition proved to be problematic and generated numerous counterarguments. One of the strongest challenges makes reference to the multiple realizing of the predicates of the reducible sciences. In the classical example of the reduction of psychology to neurobiology, a predicate such as pain specific to a psychological theory can be realized by multiple neuronal states in the brain. The argument from multirealizing inhibits the possibility of a biunivocal relationship between the semantics of the two involved theories. Meanwhile, the second condition is also problematic. A strict deductive relationship between the laws of the two theories, such as Nagel proposes, is of too restrictive a nature. As many examples from science show, including the classical reduction of thermodynamics to statistical mechanics, there are many additional assumptions that are involved in the process of getting the laws of the reducible theory from the main one.

Regarding the other important model of unity, Hempel's model of scientific explanation is a general unifying schema intended to account for all scientific explanations, each one independent of the particular scientific domain in which it was developed. It construes the explanation as a deductive (or inductive, in the case of statistical explanation) inference forming laws and boundary conditions. The subsequent critique showed its limitation when applied in social and historical disciplines. The schema discloses its limitations also through the fact that it bans any influence of pragmatic factors in the explanatory processes.

The reactions against the two models intensified with the critique of the neopositivistic conception of science. Even after the dismissal of the "received view" of science, the models marked the working agenda of the two topics of scientific explanation and theoretical reduction in subsequent debates.

The reactions against Nagel's model took various forms, covering a large spectrum of antireductionism. A radical sort of antireductionism could be found in the well-known works of Thomas Kuhn (1996) and Paul Feyerabend (1975). The consequences of their type of position bring about an isolationism and an extreme form of relativism between scientific theories. The main drawback of such an isolationism is the fact that it cannot account for the interactions and the fertile exchanges that exist between the different scientific theories. More moderate forms of reductionism were also advanced in different variants² but they were disputed in their generality and ran into insoluble difficulties.³

The preoccupation with the topic of unity in the last decades of the twentieth century diversified and took particular forms. Once the received view of science was dismissed, the centrality of units as laws or theories was challenged, along with their exclusive roles in approaching the unity of the sciences. Alternative units and modes of knowledge were taken into more serious consideration for the unity issue. The inquiry became also more focused on specific fields of science. Taking into account the limitation of the reductionist program in the study of unity, the possibility of non-reductive sorts of unification caught the attention of the philosophers.

CHARACTERISTICS OF ANTHROPOLOGICAL RESEARCH

The inadequacies of a pure reductive relationship among the subdisciplines of anthropology and of the radical antireductionist view could be easily seen in the case of the anthropological disciplines. As anthropological research spans a wide spectrum of explanatory registers, from the molecular level of biochemical and biological research up to the social investigation of institutions and cultures, we would need a stronger version of unity by reduction. The reductionist view on such a large scale would have affinities with the initial neopositivist intention of the grand unification. It certainly does not make sense to put the unity question into these terms anymore.

Reductionism is implausible on a global scale, but it might be quite workable on a smaller one. Reductive relationships might appear and operate in limited areas between different, more restricted domains of research. In more particular cases of anthropological research, for example, one might encounter reductive explanations that will try to biologically explain certain social behaviors. The issue of reduction has to be tackled in this particular setting with an eye to the specific context of scientific inquiry in which the claim takes place.

² A widely discussed one uses the concept of supervenience adapted from philosophy of mind.

³ For a updated review see Jordi Cat's article in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

Anthropology clearly forces a pluralistic view upon us. In a time when the influence of neopositivism was still great, there were authors who recognized the plurality of the explanatory forms in anthropological research. S.T. Goh (1971) offers us such an analysis. He identifies and compares three different positions regarding explanation in anthropology. The first one places in a Hempelian frame, regarding anthropology as a homothetic science. Such anthropologists as Radcliffe-Brown and Marvin Harris saw the aim of anthropology in discovering scientific laws. The second one takes into account the historicist reaction to the DN model and sees anthropology as mainly dealing with particular sorts of statements, without aiming at discovering general laws. According to this view, "Anthropology is history, simply because as a matter of brute fact, anthropologists are interested in historical-idiographic problems." (Goh 1971, 342) The works of many classical anthropologists including Boas, Lowie, Radin, Kroeber, and Evans-Pritchard are oriented to particular analyses and descriptions. The third orientation draws on the ideas of the philosopher P. Winch, for whom the understanding of the social sciences is different from the one of the natural sciences. The task of the anthropologist is to make sense of the behavior of individuals by contextualizing the behavior within the frame of the purposes, motives, beliefs, and norms of behavior of that people.

For Goh, none of the above approaches exhaust the multiplicity of anthropological explanatory forms. Anthropology is both science and history, and we can find endeavors belonging to both types of inquiry. The explanatory practice reveals that anthropologists use a plethora of explanations and Goh suggests, therefore, that the best way to account for explanation in anthropology is a methodological eclecticism.

Due to the complexity of the biological and social systems investigated, anthropological research engages a large variety of scientific representations. Different representations capture some aspects of the systems from specific perspectives under various theoretical settings. As Mitchell (1997, 2003) also emphasized (and I'll discuss her ideas in a further section), it is improbable that these representations enter into the relationships of derivability and translatability that the classical reductive view requires. They constitute rather different descriptions from distinct registers of investigations that could be best integrating on a local scale.

GLOBAL VERSUS LOCAL APPROACHES

The traditional approaches to the unity of the sciences can be characterized as being of a global sort. They look at unification on the large scale, involving theories of whole scientific fields or scientific disciplines. This is in a straight sense the legacy of the neopositivistic view on science, trying to describe and subsume in one universal language (using formal means) the variety of scientific forms belonging to different disciplines. The

goal was to make explicit a single valid methodology of scientific thinking and a unique valid structure of science.

Despite the rejection of the neopositivistic conception of science, due mainly to the historical critique from the 1960s, the influence of the older agenda can be identified in the subsequent period. We can see it in the topic of scientific explanation that was driven by the general search for types of explanations in all disciplines even after the dismissal of Hempel's model. Such are the important accounts proposed by Friedman (1974) or Kitcher (1989) – defining the unificationist approach as well as Salmon's causalist approach (1998). It can be detected also in the projects that sought to provide a general analysis of the structure of science that could account for any sort of scientific theory. Such is the semantic conception of theories that rejected the neopositivist syntactic view, or the "received view," and intended to provide a more adequate analysis of the nature of scientific theories.

Starting with the last two decades of the twentieth century, one can detect a move toward a different way of philosophical investigation. Nick Huggett (2000) described this tendency as "localism" with reference to the positions articulated in the realism-antirealism debate. The articulation of local philosophies that characterize it indicates that the way problems are raised and solved involves the recourse to specific scientific programs using local resources and elements in the frame of these programs. It rejects the appeal to prior determined views on science and scientific knowledge that should determine and guide philosophical inquiry.

Localism is also linked to the rise of a more radical position in regard to the issue of the unity of the sciences – the one arguing for the disunity of the sciences. In this sense, Jan Hacking argues for the disunity of the sciences in terms of local unities. (Hacking 1996) The local sort of unity becomes a more plausible and workable solution than the global and more formal accounts of unity.

The local tendency in philosophical research intensified in the last decade and stimulated new insights into older problems. Such an expression can be found in the philosophical research that reconsidered scientific models and modeling practices as important elements in the production of scientific knowledge.

In another text (David-Rus 2009, 2011) dealing with this topic, I was arguing for a local type of solution that I saw as a plausible one, taking into account actual philosophical tendencies. In the same text, I argued for a specific setting that provides consistency to such a local approach. This was a modelistic setting, in which models are taken as reference units, as bearers of explanatory processes. As I suggested above, a local perspective on unity is a plausible one under which a fruitful investigation could be engaged. In a following section, I will also take into consideration a modeling frame, and the ways the unity problem can be addressed within such a frame.

FORMS OF PLURALISM

Localism brings with it a pluralistic perspective on unity. Pluralism can be of many forms and shapes involving different registers: metaphysical, ontological, epistemic, methodological, etc. I will be especially concerned with the one involving explanations.

First, a distinction has to be introduced into the discussion.⁴ It is one between the plurality and pluralism. The first one is a characteristic of the state of scientific inquiry in the sciences today. The second is the view about this state when considering whether it is or is not eliminable from the very nature of scientific knowledge.

The antireductionist reaction already prepares the way for a pluralistic view. The most usual form of this is the one we encounter relative to theoretical frames and conceptual schema. Nevertheless, in its most radical form we saw it lead to the unproductive form of isolationism.

One widely spread form of the pluralistic view is the “levels of organization” schema. According to it, the world is stratified on different registers (that we might regard from an ontological or an epistemological angle) starting with the microlevel entities up to the macrolevel ones. So in the biological realm we have at the bottom the particle’s level on which the next level, the one of molecules, builds. The level of cells is the next one and organism and populations are the higher ones. We find research at these levels in the disciplines of biochemistry and molecular biology. If we are to regard social phenomena, we can start with the levels of individuals or we can go lower to the psychological states level and could build up to the social institutions and whole societies’ or cultures’ levels.

One straight type of pluralism can be conceived of as a competitive one, implying a competition between different explanatory descriptions and then the elimination of the less useful explanation. But this does not represent in an adequate way the scientific practice. As other authors also emphasized,⁵ there is no certainty that the best explanation at a given moment will remain the best in the future. So alternative explanations are not all dismissed and eliminated; on the contrary, it is reasonable to develop such alternatives if they are to have a chance to succeed in the future.

So some of the explanations and models are in direct competition, but there are also others that are not actually mutually exclusive, showing a sort of compatibility. We encounter here another kind of pluralism, a compatible sort of pluralism. Under this view, different explanations coexist in a area of research without any pretence of an integration.

According to one view, the different strata from the organizational schema are also levels of different analysis that are pretty much autonomous. We might see in this way distinct registers of explanations that

⁴ Introduced also in the volume *Scientific Pluralism* edited by Kellert *et al.*

⁵ For example, Kitcher, 1991.

do not intersect. Hypotheses can compete only within specific levels and not inter-level. Sherman (1988) develops such a view reviving the classical classification proposed by Tinbergen (1963) on different types of questions.

But this proved to be wrong. Sandra Mitchell (2002) challenged Sherman's account and showed that his view fails to capture adequately the relationships between alternative explanations. She shows that solutions to questions at one level (e.g. developmental) influence and have impact on the possible solutions on another level (e.g. evolutionary). The other point is that competitions that occur at different levels do not necessarily imply mutually exclusive alternatives. We often do see intralevel competition among hypotheses that do not exclude each other.

A pertinent option is given by the sort of integrative pluralism promoted by Mitchell (1997, 2002, and 2003). Such a view admits the coexistence of different areas of investigation, as in compatible pluralism, but makes a point of emphasizing also an integrative tendency of investigation. In order to explain her position, we have to make reference to the way phenomena are represented in different modalities. Though Mitchell seems to reduce explanation to the causal sort and to take causal mechanisms as the goal of our representation, her position can be claimed with more generality to include other types of explanatory forms, such as the functional ones that are so common in biological disciplines.

The main point hinges on the fact that our representations are capturing only some features of the complex phenomena under investigation. The representations deployed in science are the products of simplification, idealization, and approximation, which makes them apt to describe and treat the features of interest. The complex biological or social phenomena are partially described in such representation. In fact, a system can be seen from different views, such as an individual human being as a biological system can be at the same time "a host to a parasite, a consumer in an ecosystem, a phenotypic expression of a set of genotypes, a mammalian organism" (Mitchell 2003, 182), etc. Of course, the social register will multiply these representations. These target different causal registers that could be seen as complementary and partially overlapping.

LOCAL INTEGRATION, MODELS, AND EXPLANATIONS

The integration backed by Mitchell is one involving models that target such different causal mechanisms. The integration is of a local sort that implies local unification in contradistinction to the global sort, as advocated by Friedman and Kitcher. The local theoretically unifies some of the models without making reference to a general overall unified corpus of knowledge or to any strictly reductionist relationship between representations. On the contrary, it makes evident the existence of a variety of strategies through which interdisciplinary interaction takes place.

Pluralism is reflected also in the many types of integration taking place at different levels of abstraction and in different modalities. Previous

research already revealed such sorts of integration. Such is the work of Darden and Maull (1977), who investigated different forms of “interfiled relations” such as physical localization and part-whole relations, identifying a structure underlying a function, identifying a cause in one field and the effect in another field, etc. Bechtel and Richardson (2010) also investigated such integrative modalities, especially in connection to different levels of organization and the transfer of conceptual frames to new domains. Mitchell (1997) also identifies three types of integration: one involving mechanical rules that “determine the joint effects of independent additive causal processes;” a second concerning local theoretical unification, through which we jointly model more features of complex systems; and the third, concerning explanatory concrete integration in highly complex cases. This type makes integration specific to the situation or only to a narrow class of situations.

With particular reference to the study of human nature from both biological and social perspectives, Mitchell and collaborators (1997) identify three major strategies that are at work in case of such integrations. A first strategy is characterized by the attempts to build a common language between the different scientific registers. A good example is the anthropomorphic discourse that is used in disciplines like ethology and primatology. A second strategy can be identified through the metaphoric transfer of models between the biological and the social disciplines. A good illustration is given by the populational models developed by some authors (like Boyd and Richerson) for the study of cultural evolution. A last strategy is given in the use of mathematical techniques of probabilistic and statistical inference. These techniques are used in both biological and social investigations.

The second strategy suggests engaging a modeling view for approaching the issues of unification. I will further discuss in more detail some aspects related to such a perspective.

In order to understand the modelistic view, we must recall the fact that the philosophy of science in its classical form is mainly determined by the logical empiricism, and its legacy centered on the concept of scientific theory. Many of the main topics of philosophy of science (such as confirmation, progress, etc.) are closely linked to the clarification of the nature of scientific theories. Among the different ways to react to the limitations of this view is to hold the idea that a major move is constituted by the reconsideration of the role and importance models play in scientific knowledge. As the recent trend of this type of move shows, this frame opens the possibility of a reconfiguration and restatement of old problems, and thus the possibility of overcoming the old deadlocks.

We can see the contribution of models of the unity problem at different levels of scientific inquiry. Mitchell and collaborators (1997) mention them in connection to the metaphorical transfer of concepts among

biological disciplines, and from them to social and cultural studies. This is a way of seeking a more general unification and less strictly local one, targeting, for example, in Boyd and Richerson (2005), populational studies on culture and the complex phenomena of culture.

But besides the above strategy, Mitchell's types of integration could be put in a modeling frame, gaining in this way more consistency in the investigation. Her local theoretical unification sort of integration would, in many cases, involve building a more comprising model that integrates the more specific causal mechanism. It is a characteristic of the theoretical models to bring together submodels, mechanisms, or representations of some features of the phenomena that were described previously. By focusing on such types of models in specific scientific modeling episodes, one might identify more clearly the modalities through which the different submodels and representations are merged and pieced together. The modeling frame provides a setting that better identifies the units at work and the relations between them in the process of integration.

The other type of integration that Mitchell identifies could be also illuminated in a modeling context. It is the integration through explanation of "concrete phenomena," an integration that targets a highly complex system in which many factors are at work. The modeling process proposed to account for the situation would be of a very particular sort specific to the situation and to contextual factors, which would make it inadequate for applications to other systems or for the extraction of a more general algorithm. In fact, "the actual configuration of complex processes resulting from biological and sociological causal mechanisms will be determined on a case to-case basis." (Mitchell et al. 1997, 124)

Both types of integration discussed above, the local theoretical unification one and that of the explanation of concrete phenomena, could be addressed in a frame that represents explanation through modeling processes. In my previous work (David-Rus 2009, 2011) I argued for the plausibility of an approach that articulates the explanatory processes in the modeling processes, and I have suggested a particular schema developed by Hartmann and Frigg (2005) as a good starting point.

The schema, also called the LOOP schema, involves four main processes taking in the model and the area between the model and the represented system. The first two steps are called identification steps. In the first one, we identify the occurrence in the target (OIT as they call it), that is, the behavior of interest in the target system that has to be explained. In the second identifying step, the occurrence in the model (OIM) is identified, or the element in the model that corresponds to the occurrence in the target that we wish to explain. The next two steps are called the explanatory steps. In the first one, called *explanation_1*, we have to reproduce the OIM in the model, meaning that the OIM has to follow from the basic assumptions of the model. 'Follow' is not made more explicit in any way but is not reducible to deduction as in the DN model. The fourth and last step, called *explanation_2*, involves the translation of knowledge obtained in the model

(and about the model) to the target system. This way, what holds true in the model approximately carries over to the real system.

The LOOP schema is a general, empty schema that makes sense only if applied to particular modeling episodes. Approaching such episodes that are illustrations of the types of integration previously discussed, we can better illuminate the articulation of the integration process and its more general characteristics.

FINAL REMARKS

In order to draw my discussion to an end, I will wrap up the main points and morals of my discussion. Conceiving of the unity of the sciences was an important goal in the classical philosophy of science. Inspired by scientific progress at the beginning of the twentieth century, philosophers envisioned an ideal image of a hierarchical order and reductive relations that would bring together the way science explains reality through its fundamental theories. Anthropology was in a delicate position due to its particular object of study: human nature and its implications. From the unified methodological perspective, this unity could be seen as a more local problem concerning the reduction of the social sciences to the biological ones. Nevertheless, as research advanced in these domains, especially in the second half of the last century, unveiling the complexity of the systems studied and the autonomy from the physicalist sciences, it became clear that such a grand unification picture has no correspondence in reality. Philosophical research focused on more local approaches, and unveiled a plethora of interesting aspects of scientific knowledge. The disunity of the sciences became a more plausible idea to represent the actual situation.

Regarding anthropological investigation, the actual situation does not imply that questions regarding human nature should no longer be asked. It is quite justified to raise them, but the obsessive seeking for a unique answer might not be justified. Instead, science offers us a patchwork of solutions from which one can choose. It makes for a rich and stimulating perspective, in my view.

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CHAPTER XXI

THE CONCEPT OF DIGNITY IN THE CAPABILITY APPROACH: A PERSONALIST PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: My intent in this paper is to develop a conceptual account of human dignity that does not exclude persons with mental disabilities. On one hand I share Martha Nussbaum's critic on the rationalistic reductionism of the dominant concept of dignity; a reductionism that consists in the grounding of human dignity in the concepts of free will, individual autonomy, and the ability to be a party to the social contract. On the other hand, however, I think that Nussbaum's conception of dignity is a tautological one. That is why I will elaborate on this concept further by referring to the approach of personalist philosophy, and especially to the very fruitful attempt of Gabriel Marcel to conceptualize dignity by first contrasting it to its opposite, which is, according to Marcel, the "spirit of abstraction." On the ground of Marcel's philosophy, I argue that human dignity consists in the very basic capability to resist to one's own stigmatization and reification by others, as well as to struggle for one's own recognition as a valuable individual person.

Keywords: dignity, capability, approach-foundational issues, personalism

My intent in this paper is to develop an account of human dignity which can grasp and include conceptually the normative status of persons with mental disabilities. It is obvious that this account must avoid the rationalistic reductionism of the common concepts of dignity. The exclusion of persons with mental disabilities is one of the three central problems of justice, identified by Martha Nussbaum as unsolved problems of several rationalistic social contract theories. However, since the concept of dignity plays a key role as a foundational issue in the capability approach to social justice, developed by Nussbaum herself, I cannot agree with her that it is enough just to use our intuitive understandings of what human dignity means.

That is why I shall first systematize the implicit and explicit uses of the concept of dignity in Nussbaum's version of the capability approach. Then I shall turn my attention to alternative perspectives on dignity, and especially to the philosophical tradition of personalism, where 'human

dignity' is a central and constant theme. In particular, I shall focus here on Gabriel Marcel's essay *Human Dignity*.¹

Finally, on a base of the analyses of the uses of the concept in question in the personalist tradition, I shall sketch out a way to develop a new account of the concept of dignity that could serve as a philosophical foundation of Nussbaum's capability approach.

RECONSTRUCTING THE CONCEPT OF DIGNITY IN THE CAPABILITY APPROACH

In recent years Nussbaum developed an innovative approach to social justice that departs from the classical social contract paradigm, but remains both critical and supplemental to it. Nussbaum's starting point is the understanding that the interrelated problems of gender inequalities, poverty, and religion² on one hand, and many of the problems of people with disabilities³ on the other, are problems of justice that cannot be adequately approached if we only understand personhood and citizenship in terms of rationality, that is, in terms of free, equal, and independent persons who get together in social cooperation for the purpose of their mutual advantage. The conditions of justice as they have been described in classical theories of social contracts are no more plausible when we take into consideration the situation of persons with physical and mental disabilities, or the situation of citizens of poor nations, whose life-chances and opportunities to practice their rights are not equal with the chances and opportunities of the citizens of wealthy countries. With regard to these situations, Nussbaum reexamines critically the interrelated questions of what could be the purpose of social cooperation and who can qualify as a citizen. Generally speaking, she questions the priority of the distributive paradigm of justice as an adequate perspective for catching and solving these questions.

The capability approach is her alternative framework for the topics of justice. She claims that when one starts from the premise that many different types of dignity are worthy of respect, then the capacity to function as a party of social contracts, having the abilities that practices of mutual advantage presuppose, is not necessarily a condition of being a citizen who has dignity and who deserves to be treated with respect as an equal with regard to the plurality of his or her life-activities.⁴

The central philosophical claim of a capability-centered theory of justice is that there are different types of dignity. To accept this claim

¹ See Gabriel Marcel, *Human Dignity, The Existential Background of Human Dignity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1963).

² Martha Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

³ Martha Nussbaum, *Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, Species Membership* (Harvard University Press, 2006).

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

implies that rationality and language lose their status as the central characteristics of humanity. Rather, they are to be understood simply as life-activities that exist among many other expressions of humanity. According to this pluralistic notion of humanity, the purpose of justice becomes this: to secure a minimal threshold of developing various human capabilities which a life of dignity presupposes.

Nussbaum's project is a normative and evaluative one, since, according to her, not every capability should be supported, but only the ones which refer to the intuitive notion of a life of dignity. She presents a list of ten basic human capabilities⁵ and claims that they must be pursued politically for each and every person, because they are intuitively inherent to the notion of a truly human life, or of a dignified life.⁶

However, it seems to me that Nussbaum's intuitive justification of the capability approach to dignity is insufficient. It is always possible that someone might not share her intuition of what dignity is. This trivial possibility is a serious argument against the attempt to justify Nussbaum's universalistic theory. Keeping in mind the status of the dignity concept as the foundational point of reference for all the central claims of Nussbaum's philosophical project, we should not neglect the lack of a systematical and exhaustible account of what human dignity precisely means.

In my attempt to overcome that deficit, I will first try to explicate those aspects in the usual philosophical accounts on dignity, from which Nussbaum tries to distance her own concept. On first sight, this attempt seems not that difficult. In Nussbaum's book on the philosophical foundation of capability approach, *Frontiers of Justice*, there is only one short chapter on dignity, with the title "Dignity: Aristotelian, not Kantian."⁷ Despite this title, we should be aware that at one point Nussbaum fully shares the Kantian notion of dignity: that dignity is the demand of respect for each person as an end in him/herself. For Nussbaum, like for Kant, every person deserves respect simply because he/she belongs to the human race. This common view of Kant and Nussbaum is the first analytical key to the concept of dignity. The demand to treat each person as an end in him/herself is also the leading principle of personalistic philosophy, which I will consider in the second part of my paper. Here, the notion of dignity comes close to the idea of "things" that have an inherent value – and not an instrumental one. This aspect of the Kantian concept of dignity supports Nussbaum's critics on the notion that mutual advantage is the only possible aim of social cooperation: for example, if we think of society only as a joint venture for mutual advantage, we would not acknowledge the dignity of persons with mental disabilities. But according to Kant, persons have their own inestimable worth in themselves – and according to Nussbaum, it is

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 76-78.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

not their productivity that makes persons human. However, the differences between Kant's and Nussbaum's accounts of dignity become clear when one puts to them the following question: Of what does the inherent value of persons that is not exhaustible from any price or from any utility consist?

According to Kant, that inherent value consists in the free will of the reasonable man, who acts in accordance with universal moral law – and who is also an author of that law. Kant's principle of respect involved in the formulation of the categorical imperative presupposes the ability of moral judgment, which requires the capacity of abstract thinking. That implies a high level autonomy from empirical or social dependency. So the dignity of man, his inherent value, consists in the ability to ignore the imperatives of needs, desires, and habits, and to act only with accordance to the primary moral duty of reason.

But what about the dignity of persons with mental disabilities? Kant would probably say that this is an empirical problem, and not a philosophical one. But it could also be a problem of the theoretical framework within which we define who is a person, and what constitutes personal dignity. At any rate, Nussbaum thinks that we face a structural problem here – and not just an empirical one.⁸ The Aristotelian and Marxian, that is, the non-Kantian, notion of dignity, which she defends, is based on the understanding of the human not primarily as a rational being, but as a political animal. This is an idea that Nussbaum shares with Aristotle. She states: "It (the Capability Approach – A. M.) sees the rational as simply one aspect of the animal, and, at that, not the only one that is pertinent to a notion of truly human functioning."⁹ According to her, there are different kinds of animal dignity that deserve respect, so that with regard to humans, we should not construct an opposition between animality and rationality.

The second distinction of Nussbaum from the Kantian perspective comes from Marx. This is the notion that the human is a creature "in need of plurality of life-activities."¹⁰ To dignify different capabilities as having equal status to rationality is a crucial move in a theory of justice that tries to include also the particular fate of persons with mental disabilities. That move at first glance simply reminds us that there are very different reasons and ways to value human life. However, Nussbaum links this understanding of humanity only in a selective way to the concept of dignity, by discriminating between certain human activities that should be treated as sources of dignity and other activities that do not deserve such treatment. What is valuable in itself for Nussbaum is not simply the plurality of life-activities; rather, the list of capabilities that grounds her concept of dignity is normatively selected.¹¹ Nussbaum asserts: "Of course human beings have

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

all sorts of capabilities, meaning activities from which to choose and act. The items of my list, however, are the result of an evaluative argument that asks the question: What opportunities are entailed by the idea of a life worthy of human dignity? The approach then, does not read capabilities from the factual observation of human nature as it is. Many capacities in our nature are bad (such as the capacity for cruelty) and many are too trivial to be inherent in the idea of a life worthy of human dignity. My approach, then, does not value capabilities as such, or freedom as such. Some freedoms or opportunities to act are good and some bad, some important and some trivial.”¹² I quote this long passage because it seems to me that if we cannot formulate the concept of dignity independently of the definitions of capabilities, we also cannot (except intuitively) figure out which capabilities are specifically human, which are good, which are bad, which are trivial, and which are linked to the idea of respect for each human being as an end in itself. In this central point, the definition of Nussbaum seems to be a tautological one: to live in dignity means to have the list of capabilities which a life worthy of dignity presupposes. This tautological argumentation is the main weakness of Nussbaum’s conception of dignity. That is why in the following part of my paper I will turn my attention to alternative and more systematic concepts of dignity in order to provide an answer to the question of whether the fulfillment of Nussbaum’s list of ten capabilities is really a necessary and sufficient condition of a life in dignity.

THE CONCEPT OF DIGNITY FROM GABRIEL MARCEL’S PERSONALISTIC PERSPECTIVE

The concept of human dignity has been investigated in its various forms and conceptual relations in the book *The Existential Background of Human Dignity*¹³ by the philosopher and playwright Gabriel Marcel. In this paragraph, I shall distinguish the central features of Marcel’s concept of dignity as they can be found in his essay “Human Dignity.” What makes this text so interesting and fruitful for my aim in this paper is that the conceptualization of dignity as inherent to every person from the fact of his/her birth is here approached by first explicating the antithesis of dignity. According to Marcel, the opposite of dignity is not its absence, but the guilty conscience or the affected dignity. He also introduces a concept of so-called “decorative dignity.” There is a relation between these three

¹² Marta Nussbaum, “Capabilities, Entitlements, Rights: Supplementation and Critique” in *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities*, vol.12, №1 (2011):23.

See also: Martha Nussbaum, “Capabilities as Fundamental Entitlements”, *Feminist Economics* №9, pp. 33-59.

¹³ Gabriel Marcel, *The Existential Background of Human Dignity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1963).

negative concepts of dignity which now I will attempt to reconstruct systematically.

Affected Dignity and the Spirit of Abstraction

In a first approach to the understanding of what the opposite of dignity is, Marcel refers to one of his dramatic works, *Le Dard*.¹⁴ Through the structure of the actions of his hero, he describes dramatically how a certain kind of personal success becomes a source of resentment, and so causes a kind of ideological conscience and pathological conduct. Marcel describes ideology by the term “spirit of abstraction”: in the drama he quotes, the spirit of abstraction appears in the compensatory efforts of the hero to justify his life and career advances, which he won by marrying into a rich family. The bitterness and resentment in the hero come from the notion that by this marriage, he has betrayed the class to which he belonged. This notion becomes a pathological and totalitarian one, because every opinion and every judgment of the hero are inspired by his desire to remain in line with a certain class ideology. For example, as his friend states, our hero likes Beethoven not for his music, but because he ascribes to Beethoven an ideology very similar to his own. His friend also accuses the hero of often judging others not on the basis of their intrinsic qualities, but on categories under which he subsumes them. The pathological character of the guilty conscience on which the concept of the spirit of abstraction or of ideology is based becomes even more obvious by the unjust and hateful behavior of the hero to the people he actually loves.

In order to elaborate analytically on the phenomenon that in the drama is signified as the “spirit of abstraction,” which is the opposite of human dignity, I shall highlight one crucial point: obviously, for Marcel, there is a link between the totalitarian character of the ideological conscience and the practice of depersonalization, a link that makes us unable to see and to treat human beings as human beings instead of subordinating each and every individual under abstract designations.

According to Marcel, the totalitarian character of ideology has something in common with the inability to make distinctions between different kinds of rules and principles that ground different ways of dealing with different kinds of “objects.” This inability expresses itself in cases in which one conducts all one’s own actions and judgments on the basis of a single or solitary principle, thus neglecting every kind of difference. When this neglect regards the ability to see the difference between persons and objects (in this case we can use the term “reification”), or between persons and ideas, this phenomenon should not be seen simply as “wrong judgment,” because it is also a pathological judgment.

¹⁴ Gabriel Marcel, *Le Dard, pièce en trois actes* (Paris: impr.-édit. Plon, 1936).

It is worth noting that when Marcel considers this kind of pathological behavior by his hero in *Le Dard* to persons who are close to him, he asserts that the most important feature of that behavior is the lack of love.¹⁵ It seems that according to Marcel, his ideology consists basically in the lack of love, or more precisely, in the destruction of love and of sensitivity for others in their inherent and specific values by resentment and guilty conscience. The concept of love is used here in the very common sense of valuable relation to a concrete person, and the opposite of the principle of love is the practice of bad abstraction. But why should this practice also be the opposite of dignity? It is obvious that we do not feel humiliated if not everyone loves us. While we demand legitimately that everyone should respect our dignity, we could not expect that everyone should love us.

Let us link this distinctive interrelation between love and dignity to the main questions of this paper, namely: 1) How can we develop a conceptual account of dignity that does not exclude persons with mental disabilities, and 2) How can we overcome the rationalistic reductionism of the dominant concepts of dignity?

In light of Marcel's considerations on dignity, the second appears as nothing else but the ability to resist the ideological treatment of oneself as a "thing," a treatment that stands in contradiction to the ways one learns to know and value oneself by one's relationships of love with one's significant others. If we do not lose the sense of our dignity, we intuitively resist forms of bad abstraction in our everyday practices – and we are quite sensitive to them in cases in which they oppress our own personality or the personalities of our close relatives and friends.

The described practice of resistance seems to have a clear moral impact in a Kantian sense. However, unlike in Kantian thinking, the ability for abstract thinking does not play a central role here. Rather, to have the ability to resist against a false or disturbed construction of oneself depends on having a basic sense of who one is (and who one is not), as well as on one's pre-cognitive conviction that one is a valuable person. Probably, at the very basic level of that self-awareness, we should not insist that it entails a developed moral consciousness, but it does entail a sense of dignity. We should consider that even one's aggressive and destructive resistance against subordinating under abstract humiliating categorizations – for example one's labeling in racist terms, or, say, as having "mental retardation" – are, in fact, expressions of and attempts to keep one's own human dignity.

As Marcel notes, in the constant desire of his hero not to betray the social milieu of his birth, something noble may appear as well.¹⁶ Guilty conscience is, first of all, an attempt to compensate, to correct – but it is a pathological attempt. Marcel seems to endorse the notion that the guilty conscience (or the antithesis of dignity) is, paradoxically, a perverted

¹⁵ Marcel, *The Existential Background of Human Dignity*, p.123.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.119.

derivation of a kind of essential dignity, which is inherent to every human being. However, in accordance with what was said here about the role of resistance in the concept of dignity, the term “inherent” must be clarified: instead of asserting, like Marcel, that human dignity is inherent to every human person from the very fact of his/her birth, it would be better to turn our attention to the conditions that make possible the development of self-awareness and self-esteem, as well as the ability for non-pathological forms of resistance against reification and ideological treatment. Understanding these conditions will enable us also to understand how one could, in the sense of Marcel, lose his/her real dignity and substitute pathological forms of affected or decorative dignity, forms which build themselves on the grounds of ideology.

CONCLUSION

The moral of the story I tried to tell here is that dignity consists basically in the ability of the person to resist attempts to subordinate him/herself to abstract and ideological categories and forms of oppression, whose basic feature is that they destroy moral thresholds that are necessary conditions for us to feel ourselves to be persons, and not mere instruments, objects, or animals. Such attempts are not only acts of humiliation, but also acts of dehumanization. To put it in the terminology of Nussbaum: the ability to resist dehumanization is the very fundamental capability that makes human life worth living and that should be ascribed to every human being who participates in relationships of love. Hence, the answer to the question of whether or not the capabilities in Nussbaum’s list necessarily belong to the concept of dignity depends on the further question of whether or not these capabilities contribute to the development of the central capability to resist against one’s own subordination to abstract, impersonal terms and schemes, and to affirm oneself as a person who deserves to be respected in his/her concrete features.

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CHAPTER XXII

UNDERSTANDING MENTAL HEALTH: EXISTENTIAL SITUATION AND SOCIAL ATTITUDE¹

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Abstract: Mental health is more than a specific field of medicine; it involves a cultural understanding of what constitutes a good human. According to this cultural understanding, social attitudes toward people with mental health problems may range from stigmatization to acceptance or even adulation (Plato, Phaidros). We ask what type of understanding mental health professionals have toward these persons in terms of how they conceptualize mental health in present day Romania.

The purpose of our work is to introduce a new perspective to the classical philosophical debates with empirical data collected from some in-depth interviews with mental health professionals. We are interested in their understanding of mentally ill persons and the way the image of the mentally ill person is reflected in and outside the clinic.

The frame theories we will use to analyze this topic are existential analysis, phenomenology (Heidegger: *Being and Time*, 1927) and post-structuralism (Foucault: *The History of Madness*, 1961 and *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*, 1963).

Keywords: Mental health, mentally ill persons, phenomenology, post-structuralism

Why Mental Health and Philosophy?

First, for thousands of years “the mind” was the main issue for philosophical reflection in order to describe, to understand, and to normalize our rationality. Second, through the definition of our rationality, we show how we understand non-rationality or irrationality. To be irrational means either not to accept the common norms of rationality or to act in a way that ignores the effects and the logical norms of thinking.

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Rational behavior that is opposed to irrational behavior can start with expressing emotions in an exaggerated way, and with paranoia. The concept of rationality is not a descriptive one; we think that it is a very strong *normative* concept. But rationality is, as are all human things, subject to historical experience, so the meaning of rationality and irrationality may change with time. Often, we need a little bit of irrationality to break or to critique conventions.

When something goes wrong with the mind of a person, as when the expected rational behavior is not accomplished, this can be labeled as mental illness, but we must not forget that “mental health” is a concept we *invented* and *agreed on* in order to describe someone’s mental functioning or reasoning capacities. It implies an understanding of a normally functioning mind and a healthy person. So, the persons experiencing mental health problems are not only ill, but are also prevented from sharing with the community one of the most dignifying qualities of a human being, that of “being rational.” The existential dimension of people affected is very complex and far too dramatic to be ignored.

Mental Health as Seen in Different Historical Paradigms

Throughout the ages, the study of mental health and, in opposition, mental illness, has focused upon different characteristics of persons (physical, emotional, spiritual) according to the predominant paradigm at a specific historical time.

For Plato (*Phaedrus* 244a-245c) madness was seen as a gift given by the gods. He shows a very positive attitude toward madness: madness can give us some of the best things we have. There are four kinds of divine madness: 1. the gift of prophecy (from Apollo); 2. Mystic rites (from Dionysus); 3. Poetry (from the Muses); and 4. Love (from Aphrodite). Whether or not we believe that the madness of love is sent by a god to benefit the lover and the beloved, we should agree that love and madness are, as concepts, very closely related.

In his archaeology, Michael Foucault analyzed different aspects of rationality in different periods of time. The philosophy of the Renaissance, for example, changed the relationship between rationality and madness present in the Middle Ages into a reflection on rationality and wisdom. Madness started to be regarded as a complementary form of knowledge. Furthermore, madness could now be used as a tool to critique rationality itself. Another strange situation is present in the Christian way of thinking, which agreed on two paradoxical forms of rationality: human reason and divine reason. For human reason, the divine one sometimes appears to be madness. In conclusion: madness seems to be perceived as being a part of rationality, and only a third perspective, wisdom, can discern between rationality and madness.

Modernity has experienced, in the vision of Foucault, the classical experience of madness in two major notes: “mad people” are

institutionalized, and rationality and madness are in *opposition*, as two contradictory concepts. This point of view still seems to be widely accepted today in understanding madness. We share with the modern experience of madness the fact that madness is objectified and transformed into an object of study; it is a *positum* opposed to *ratio*.

In order to underline the existential dimension of people experiencing mental illnesses, we will ask in Heidegger's manner: in what way does the mentally ill person *ek-sists*? "To exist" means for Heidegger to be open to other people, to allow others to come to you, to be in the world, to appear, or to become. Literally, it means "to stand out." Are those people really opening to others or are they rather closing into themselves? If they are feeling rejected or constantly under suspicion from the others, their world will be reconstructed on certain grounds. Can we really understand the grounds of their world? On what basis? We can suspect their perceptions of "reality," but do they or do they not have the right to construct that reality? To what extent could this reality be really dangerous for us? How afraid are we of alternative ways of defining or understanding "reality"? Is our reality itself so fragile that we have to protect it from alternative ways of description and re-definition?

Today's Definition of Mental Health

The current conceptualization of mental health describes either a level of cognitive (or emotional) well-being or an absence of a mental disorder. In fact, mental health is more than the absence of mental illness. This concept may include, from the perspective of positive psychology, multiple facets: the individual's ability to enjoy life (and the right balance between living in the past, present, and future), resilience (seen as the process of interaction between one person and the environment, appealing to protective factors which reduce the action of risk factors) (Ionescu S., Blanchet A., 2009), a balance between different activities in someone's life, flexibility (emotional as well as cognitive) as opposed to rigidity, and self-actualization (the process of actualizing the inner potential).

The World Health Organization defines mental health as "a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community." (WHO 2005)

Nowadays, even if there is no one "official" definition of mental health, this concept can be understood without restricting its interpretation across cultures. However, cultural differences, subjective assessments, and competing professional theories all affect how "mental health" is defined. (WHO 2001)

Normality and Abnormality, and the Boundaries Between Them

Madness – understood as the otherness of a person – and normality

represent, as mentioned, an invention and a discovery necessary for a knowing intellect to understand the complexity of mental phenomena of the inner life. In other words, “madness” was invented, paradoxically, to explain and justify the normal (Enăchescu C., 2008, p.80). But the human person includes them both in potentiality, and these two facets are inseparable and must be analyzed together. If we separate madness from normality to better understand the human person, we will separate the parts of a whole, thus abolishing the subject of psychology, which is the pure subject (Enăchescu C., 2006), the correspondent of the “inner sense” of which Maine de Biran spoke.

The characteristics of normality are the state of sintonicity (in its relations with the external world) and equithymia (balance and internal order), representing the fact of “being in accordance with the world,” “to be consistent with others,” and “to be in correlation with the norms of the world.”

In contrast, madness is dysthymic and brings a fracture of what is intelligible between the knowing intellect and the object of knowledge; epistemic medical and psychiatric discourse, based on observations and statistics, serves to diagnose and introduce drug treatment for insanity, but it cannot express, ontologically and axiologically speaking, what defines a mad person. This task is taken over by philosophy and psychology.

Philosophy is the one that reinstated madness – mental illness – in the sphere of human sciences, thus providing a path of understanding on which psychiatry has advanced very little so far. If we try to give an answer to the fundamental question “What is madness?”, we must first define the field of the normal: where the normal ends and madness begins. Formally, all that is not in conformity with the norm is abnormal and, thus, opposed to normal. But what is the “norm”? The norm is a standard model identified by a group that establishes and manages the specific conduct of that group (Enăchescu C., 2008, p.103- 104). Moreover, the norm is a value, because the fact of “being” and “not being” is evaluated in relation to an internalized value.

Concerning the etymology of the word, “norm” in Latin means a right angle, something that does not fluctuate to the right or the left, something that is squarely in the middle.

“Omalos,” from which the word “anomaly” stems, is a Greek term, and it means something equal, regular, and smooth. Anomaly is the opposite of regularity. In this case, regularity would be the quality of something without anomalies. “Normal,” as a term, is, on one hand, qualifying, implying applying a value to, a goal an individual wants to achieve, and on the other hand, descriptive, indicating an average, something that, in a way, is everyone.

Establishing Norms

To put a rule in a certain context is somewhat compelling: it puts a certain exigency on an existence, which by its variability may seem strange

or hostile to others. So the multitude of ways in which something can occur is limited, resulting in few clear categories that sometimes have sharp boundaries between them. This is not the case regarding the delimitations between “normal” and “abnormal.”

A rule is a convention widely shared by a community of people. Axiologically speaking, the norm is a value, but a value turned into an imperative: “you must be X, you must be Y, and, ultimately, you must be normal.”

Psychiatry

The main object of psychiatry would be activity on the borderline between normal and pathological. We could even refer to the contact boundary between what is meant by “normal” on one hand, and “abnormal” on the other, because only by defining this transitional state one can understand the content of the concept of the “abnormal.”

M. Lăzărescu (1994) stresses that when talking about the issue of “normal-abnormal,” we are considering more the statistical approach. The rules and laws and the issue of “disease” are correlated more to the casuistry and to the concrete case, which are less susceptible to the statistics.

Approaches of Mental Health

Tudose F., Tudose Cătălina, and Dobranici Letiția (2002) consider that mental health can be regarded in four different and complementary ways.

First, the mentally healthy person can be placed on a continuum. If we were to score behavior on a scale, normality is the major part of a continuum, that of the middle of this continuum, and the extremes are the abnormality. Health is the complex product of several parameters of organic and social life, all in dynamic equilibrium, resulting in a realistic-logical vision of the world, a psychological and social discipline on the background of the joy of living and of the balance between introversion and extroversion. H. Ey considers that the mentally ill person lacks both outer and inner freedom. (However, the person with a mental disorder is not considered today, in the light of new psychiatrists, ill or sick.) G. Ionescu (1995) believes that health is an ideal state and disease is an imbalance at all levels of the organism.

Second, mental health is a result of a statistical process, where the average is equivalent to normality. The classic bell-shaped distribution, the “normalized” Gauss curve, compels us to enter under this bell and to respect the definitions of the terms “mean” and “standard deviation” for each phenomenon of mental life, from IQ to the meaning of the term “normal.” The extreme is thus deviant from the mean. The phenomena that occur often are normal; those that are rare are considered anomalies. So, if we have to make the decision whether I am normal or not, the answer to

this question stands only in a given socio-economic and historical community, the community to which I belong.

Usually, we consider that someone is normal if he or she is acting like all the others who make up the majority of people in his/her society, and if this person can carry on with familiar cultural traditions learned from his or her parents, doing the same activities in the same manner as his or her parents.

The symptoms of mental illness are always opposed, in one way or another, to the social norms: the choice of the symptom is negatively determined by the social norms. François Laplantine considers that “you are not becoming mad as you want; culture foresaw everything. In the core itself of the development of neurosis and psychosis, by which we try to free ourselves from it, culture joins us again to tell us what changed type of personality we need to adopt.” (quoted by R. Jaccard, p.16)

Third, perfect mental health, or a person with perfect mental health, is a utopia. It is established as an ideal for normality, for both the individual and the entire community. It is not only important how someone is manifest in a given culture, but also how he or she would ideally like to be. Balanced and harmonious functioning of the mind and body leads to an optimal level which, most of the time, is unattainable. The ideal normal is relative to the culture that describes it in terms of certain values, according to F. Cloutier (Tudose *et al.*, 2002). Beginning with Freud, who said “normality is an ideal fiction,” moving to E. Erikson's stating that “normality is the ability to master your periods of life,” the authors conclude with R.E. Money-Kryle that “Normality is the ability to achieve full self-consciousness, which is never actually fully achieved.”

Fourth, mental health can be viewed as a process. Normal behavior is the final result of subsystems that interact with each other, so changes and processes are essential for normality, rather than the transversal defining of normality.

In fact, these four approaches are overlapping and can be used simultaneously or successively when we want to emphasize one side or another of mental normality. This demarche is intuitively done by mental health specialists, and also by philosophers and those without previous medical training.

Contemporary Approaches and Understanding of Mental Health in Romania

The purpose of our study is to correlate classical philosophical debates with the contemporary view of mental health professionals. In order to understand their opinions about the concept of mental health today in Romania, we collected nine indepth interviews, eight with psychiatrists and one with a psychiatric nurse who is also a psychologist, in a psychiatric hospital in the city of Iasi, Iasi County, over a period of two months (May-June 2011).

Usually, in-depth interviews are a useful qualitative data collection technique that can be used for a variety of purposes, including motivation and needs assessment, the holistic understanding of the interviewee's point of view or situation, and exploring interesting areas for further investigation. In our case, we wanted to explore in depth the modality of understanding a concept and of putting it into practice. This type of interview is most appropriate for situations in which the researcher wants to ask open-ended questions that elicit depth of information from relatively few people. Researchers engage with participants by posing questions in a neutral manner, listening attentively to participants' responses, sometimes asking follow-up questions and probes based on those responses. They do not lead participants according to any preconceived notions, nor do they encourage participants to provide particular answers by expressing approval or disapproval of answers given. (Mack N. et al., 2005, p.29). This last aspect is very important in our study, because we focused on the definition of a concept subject to all sorts of interpretations and for which people are strongly inclined to theorize and generalize.

In our interviews, we highlighted the following major themes: the concept of normality; the definition of mental health from the perspective of professionals, and respectively in the opinion of psychiatric patients as seen also by the professionals; and the image of the mentally ill person, reflected in and outside the clinic.

The responses obtained from our interlocutors can be largely integrated in the four approaches mentioned above. Usually, the respondents submitted responses in more than one approach, and offered examples from both the clinic in which they work and life outside the hospital.

Seeing mental health as a continuum and a result of a statistical process, one participant said that "Madness should be redefined. There is not a clear definition. Is the Gaussian curve, normality, the extreme? You can go to one side or another."

The interlocutor feels the need to redefine insanity because he does not find the right place for it on the Gaussian curve (insanity is not a "discrete" concept, with "0" or "1" values, but is of a continuous type): normality should be in the midst of it, and extremes (which are generally called "abnormality" without any further explanation) are dangerous, because one can "fall into" them.

Situating himself in the second and the third approach, another psychiatrist says that "Mental health is something dictated by the majority. Like me? Like me and my colleagues? I haven't found a definition...maybe a statistical one. As a functioning member of society, a person is healthy if he is doing what most people are doing: having a job, a family, respecting the cultural norms of the society in which he is born – but I don't think this is a definition of health. Outsiders see the mentally ill person as we see him: he is healthy if he's doing the same things as I am doing. For example, what a Roma person is doing in his own community is normal, but for anyone

outside his culture, maybe it is not. The same for the Hezbollah terrorist. The concept of mental health is singular, not like the one for blood pressure, where if you have 120 over 80 you are healthy. There are exceptions: normality for someone for blood pressure can be of 180 over 100 all his life. Also, blood pressure is palpable, and can be measured, but with mental health we have sensitive criteria.”

Mental normality cannot benefit from “norms”: a concept considered by cardiologists, and widely recognized by them, as “good (or normal, or standard) blood pressure” cannot be translated easily into the mental health field. If we continue the above example, psychiatrists cannot use for comparison the concept of “120 over 80” in mental health. Especially since this “120 over 80”-type norm, even if this concept could exist, would be different from one socio-cultural group to another. Thus, for each given community in a specific historical moment, there should exist a working definition of mental health that would make possible the communication and cooperation between specialists.

Considering that mental health is the result of a process developed in time, we have the following answer: “Mental health, as well as somatic health, is a balance that someone possesses or not: the psychic balance. I am referring to the equilibrium state felt by each person. “I am healthy” equals “all works well.” The balance within you, with the outside world...there are some types of people who feel good about themselves, but there is an imbalance with the outside world, and some have no consciousness of illness, but others perceive him as being different. The balance within oneself and with the outside world, if it’s not perceived by the person, is perceived by others. At an intuitive level, yes, the man in the street believes the same thing. Mental balance equals the harmonious state between you and others. I think we all perceive this harmony.”

In this case, the psychiatrist puts great emphasis on the equilibrium state, the balance of the person within him- or herself (the balance between the various psychological components) and the balance of the person with others and with the environment. In terms of balance between individual and environment, what matters is the consciousness of disease; if a person doesn’t have that consciousness, he/she can feel mentally healthy, even if others consider him/her as being sick (unbalanced). This doctor gave the example of a person who received a diagnosis of schizophrenia, but didn’t recognize himself as having an illness; that is why he didn’t accept medical treatment. This situation bothered his family members, who declared to the doctor that the person concerned was agitated, aggressive with others, and used violent language “during the crisis” (when he suffered from auditory hallucinations and delusions), facts which, of course, were not recognized by the patient as real. In psychiatric language, this is called “lack of criticism.” Even if the person is considered to be in good internal balance, family members declared implicitly that the external balance, the “harmony,” was destroyed. This situation is very well known by all mental health professionals.

The next psychiatrist began his discourse doubting the existence of a single kind of mental health. Then he referred to a famous psychiatric manual defining mental disorders and its discussion of the metaphor of madness: "Mental health...it exists, it does not exist...[Asked if there are differences of definition of this concept] Yes, it's pretty well covered! The palette, the symptomatic range in depression grows and grows..see DSM IV². Basically, now it's very easy to give a diagnosis of depression, for everyone can be included in that range. The man on the street thinks that mental health..means...the more you see that your reality comes close to the reality of others, the more you can say you're not crazy. If our realities are different, this means the other is crazy. These metaphors are thus created in a meaningful way. Crazy = [psychiatric hospital's name] = psychiatrist.

Different realities? Different concepts: so I've got [the doing of a thing in a specific way], why are you not doing things like me? Each comes into a relationship with his or her own baggage. These differences make us consider the other as being crazy. He who has a different mentality will hardly accept yours."

We come here to describe a situation that some psychiatrists foresaw a long time ago: if the symptomatology of some mental illnesses becomes richer, more detailed, and more expanded from one edition to another of the DSM manual, the result would be that all, or at least, almost all, people suffer, have suffered, or will suffer from a mental illness at some point during their lifetime. From this point of view, to be "normal," psychically speaking, requires a definition tailored to a specific temporal moment. Moreover, my mental health is defined in relation to the mental health of my neighbor, who is part of the same community: this view has been expressed by other mental health professionals (medical doctors, psychologists, social workers, and even priests) who all state that the decision-making process about a person's mental health is taken gradually, in small steps, through continuous comparisons to the significant others in his/her environment, to those with whom the person shares his "baggage."

In another conversation with a psychiatrist (held separately from this study) we were given the idea that "There are over one hundred diagnostics in psychiatry. During your life span you will suffer from at least one." This idea had not been expressed with pessimism, but with precision and safety: the statement was based on real, recent statistics, according to which any of us, including the people involved in that dialogue, are likely to receive a

² "The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders" (DSM) is a comprehensive classification of officially recognized psychiatric disorders. The fourth version, DSM-IV, was issued in 1994. The most recent version is the "Text Revision" of the DSM-IV, also known as the DSM-IV-TR, published in 2000. The DSM-IV organizes each psychiatric diagnosis into five dimensions (axes) relating to different aspects of disorder or disability, depression being included among the most common axis 1 disorders. The next version DSM-V is due for publication in May 2013.

diagnosis of a mental disorder and thus to experience “from the inside” the changes in the meaning of the concept of “mental health.”

A psychiatrist offered us a comprehensive approach to mental health, both in terms of the officially recognized definition of the World Health Organization, and from his perspective as a practitioner who dealt with this issue even through the eyes of an outsider to the hospital.

“A general definition of health, a state of well-being, from the physical, mental, and social point of view, I think, is a comprehensive definition of what I know, and the World Health Organization uses these parameters.

Asked if he adheres to this definition, he answered: Yes. Regarding mental health, there are some norms by which it is estimated. It may be a statistical norm, in which the person should fall within a certain range, like most people; it can be a norm accepted by others, but a genius who is not in that scale does not necessarily suffer from a mental disorder... quite the contrary. So it's a statistical aspect, one accepted by others, one in terms of employer or society, one measuring whether the person can perform correctly his tasks at work and can relate properly in society. If we are talking about criteria for mental illness, other discussions occur; we can open a manual and take a look.

Asked how he thinks this concept is put into practice: A person's state of wellbeing is compatible with others' wellbeing, others who accept and value the person, and consider him as normal in all respects. These two aspects go together. As a person, he feels good, and others feel good with him as well.

So one aspect is not enough? No. Maybe the depressive persons hide themselves. They seem normal. But when they remain alone, they are overwhelmed with doubts, thoughts. They dissimulate.

Or vice versa, the person feels good about himself, but not the others with him – could we say that? Yes, for example: in the manic episode, the person feels very good about himself. He feels like a flower, he blooms, it's powerful, but the others discern some problems. Yes, you need a balance.

Beyond the issues already discussed about some other parts of the interviews, such as the relationship between internal wellbeing and openness to the environment, what is being presented here is an idea worthy of note, namely, that we have to avoid the tendency to consider the extremes of the Gaussian curve as being automatic signs of mental abnormality. A brilliant person (a genius of mathematics or music, for example) is not mentally “normal” in Gaussian terms, because genius, being a rare phenomenon, is statistically “abnormal.” However, we could not put a sign of equivalence between genius and mental abnormality on the basis of frequency of occurrence of the phenomenon only; there must also be considered the criterion of utility, or what that person brings to the community, his/her degree of integration. We could mention here the famous example of van Gogh, the gifted Dutch Post-Impressionist artist,

who had his life shattered by mental illness. Vincent van Gogh suffered from Bipolar I Disorder at a time in history when there was no treatment for this common disorder. Tragically, van Gogh died of suicide. Today van Gogh is considered a genius, his contribution to universal culture is indisputable, and his “abnormality” saved him, on one hand, from the anonymity of history, while on the other hand it pushed him to death.

Reporting himself, as a specialist, to the perspective of the average people:

- What does the common person understand from this concept?

He would probably define it just from the external point of view. He would refer to others and would say that the respective person should fit in certain norms and that one shouldn't find in that person items that can be included in a mental illness. From the information he has, from what was written in press, TV, Internet, or from family information about societal norms, he shouldn't be able to associate or to notice anything different or disturbing in the overall behavior of an individual.

- So it's more a matter of efficiency in the relationships with others.

Yes, he should not change the behavior that he has always had. I am speaking now as someone who is not in the medical field. If someone was mainly concerned about racing until that moment, he shouldn't suddenly go to the monastery – it's a sharp change. I gave an example that is perhaps exaggerated. He should be able to have a decent conversation, to respond to my requests, and I should be able to respond to his; that means he could provide and offer answers and questions, and to behave decently in society, having a presence. (Behavior) He may change it, but within a longer period, because life or school intervene; but not a major change in a period of days or weeks. Then we should seek answers. “

In this fragment, the psychiatrist focuses on the continuity of behavior as a criterion for defining a person as being mentally healthy. It's not the behavior itself that counts, but its qualitative continuity (same type of behavior for a longer period of time). In other words, a person is normal if, being in a monastery for some time (thus being more of an introvert), he will continue to do so in the future. He will be predictable for others, who will feel safe because they can foresee his behavior. If he decides that, from the monastery, an environment that conventionally favors introversion, he goes directly to participate in racing, where he has to behave in an extroverted manner, and this change occurs suddenly (within a few days or weeks), then his behavior is no longer predictable, so the people in his environment might feel insecure. So my good mental health brings help to the structure and continuity of relations over time in the socio-cultural environment in which I am situated; my mental imbalance affects, in a systemic way, all others, so that they can not relate to me and to one another in the same manner as before; thus it asks them to make a permanent readjustment, which requires time and effort. Not everyone is able or willing to make these efforts, and hence appear the difficulties of integration into society by persons with mental disorders.

Another psychiatrist says the mental health concept holds multiple specialties: “The concept of mental health...For me it's a vague concept. Mental health is a combination of multiple specialties. You can have something organic that triggers in you a mental disorder. But the organic part is not our prerogative. Or the mental disorder is developing something organic. So the endocrinologist or neurologist has to combine their treatment with ours. Mental illness, for people nowadays, equals madness. For them it is normal or abnormal, disease or no disease; in the middle there is nothing. They don't know there is a state of remission or plateau. They perceive mental illness as being different from any organic disease. So it has always been. Psychiatry is a border discipline. It is in part psychology and in part medicine; each has to give something. Psychiatry needs the contribution of all. The mentality of all people must change.”

For this interlocutor, psychiatry consists of more than diagnosing and treating so-called “psychiatric” disorders; this discipline relates to other medical fields, exactly because the human being is a whole, which suffers, simultaneously or in turn, from mental or somatic illnesses, and sometimes the border between them is difficult to detect. One example would be the conversion disorders.

The idea raised by this psychiatrist, partly related to a topic previously mentioned by another interlocutor (genius and its place on the Gaussian curve), is that the person with an average medical education tends to push any behavior deviant from the norm to one extreme, and to the other extreme of the scale is normality. The person is thinking without awareness of the infinitesimal gradations of the conditions that mental health may take on its way from normality to abnormality in a particular person at a given moment in time. Mental illness is thus sent to the extreme of abnormality, but not in a way so categorically as in the past. M. Foucault mentioned what happened to fool people, from the middle of the seventeenth century until the late nineteenth century: the “alienated” throughout Europe, were closed into so-called general hospitals, along with other categories of people – beggars, poor persons, individuals with physical handicaps or suffering from sexually transmitted diseases, the elderly, exiled priests, unemployed – in short, all those located “outside” the social norms established in that historical moment.

Today, of course, we stand far from this vision. To change our common mentality, the development of social and human sciences and the social, cultural, economic, and political changes in the last three centuries have all brought their contribution. The working definitions of mental health and, respectively, of mental disorders, that serve as a basis for discussion and as a starting point for any scientific discourse in the fields of psychiatry and clinical psychology stand as proof of the efforts of objectification of these concepts. The definition of mental health focuses not only on the lack of symptoms and clinical signs, but on the general wellbeing of the person, thus attracting attention to his/her totality, as a unitary individual, and implicitly on the necessity of his/her membership

and integration into a social group; each person feels good in his or her way. Sometimes we all have problems, some benefit from what Plato called divine madness, and we all ek-syst (in the sense of Heidegger's term), having the right to create our own reality. And it is the society that deals, in general, with the rightness of this reality, as seen in the philosophical theories and debates mentioned in this study. Chronologically, the specific social context is the first to give the right of veto on this inner reality, and only in a second moment should the physicians recognize, describe, and offer a diagnostic for persons with mental problems.

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CHAPTER XXIII

CHANGES AND CHALLENGES IN STATEMENTS ON THE QUALITY OF DYING¹

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Abstract: Understanding end-of-life care quality has been a priority for many researchers for the past few decades. It may vary, according to the patients', caregivers', and health care professionals' perspectives. The aim of this paper is to determine the perception of the meanings of a "good death," by reviewing changing patterns of the quality of death statement in the traditional and contemporary Romanian communities, paying particular attention to differences between the past and the present. For the past, the investigation of the ethnographic material, narrative folklore, and ecclesiastical art has disclosed that we may "categorize" good death as having a social, psychological, and spiritual character, a time, and a spatial aspect. Nowadays, we often talk about the quality of dying in the context of palliative care system, but the determination of death quality is limited to medical, philosophical, legal, and ethical issues. Medical responses to symptom management appear, in this context, to offer a routinized response to the uncertainty of dying rather than the psychological, social, and spiritual counselling needed to help facilitate a good death. A real difficulty in talking about making a good death is evident not just in the palliative care community, but in broader Western society, and that is also analyzed in this study.

Keywords: good death, traditional community, ethics, palliative care, terminal patient.

INTRODUCTION

The influencing aspect of consciousness of death is active over the entire life cycle and it is not restricted to the sick or aged. The meaning of death is multidimensional and varies not only between individuals, but within the same person.² Dying and death have psychological, spiritual, and social features and are not merely biological events.

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² Herman Feifel, "Attitudes Toward Death: A Psychological Perspective" in *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 33 (1969), 3, p. 292.

What do we mean when we say that someone had a good death? Talking about a person's death focuses upon its perceived "goodness" or "naturalness." The aim of this study is to focus attention on the values of the human person, considered under the changes of the contemporary process of globalization. Paradoxically, the continuous qualitative increase of the quality of life causes more and more fragmentation in the human being's understanding of himself and his own cultural and social environment. Within this perspective we identified new challenges addressed to the present role of the humanities, medicine, and technology, which entail a diagnosis of classical, modern, and postmodern models of thinking related to the problems of a good death. In the Romanian area, the *Thanatos* continues to be dominated by archetypal symbols, superstitions, and rites, in a dramatic confrontation between archaic and modern mentality. Finally, the study will provide the special opportunity to discuss the extent to which medical and scientific measures erode traditional religious consolations for the problems involved in dying and bereavement.³

ROMANIAN FOLK TRADITION OF PENDING DEATH

"Death itself cannot be more than an indifferent reality; just the way we look at and understand it is unable to give it some sense, negative or positive."⁴ In the world of the Romanian village, people treated death as something to fear, but in some respects also as something to be welcomed.

In the collective mind, the fate of man is guided from above, by the Supreme Being, not in the sense of a protestant predestination, but of a divine prescience. The belief that all unhappy events are from God and are the natural consequence of a violation of moral precepts is often expressed as "the Lord's rebuke," and used as a means of understanding these events. Death, the event of the last human route, occurs under the sign of this divine acceptance. As a result, the Romanian peasant's preparation for death can take on a rigorous character of self-examination, repentance, and a final submission to the will of God.

The stigma of sudden death, horrifying in the West during the Middle Ages, did not decisively influence the Romanian mentality, which felt no need to explain it in terms of the dichotomous scheme good death/bad death.⁵ In the Medieval concept, a dignified death should offer respite and warning. Accepting unavoidable aging or suffering may be an opportunity

³ Clive Seale, "Changing Patterns of Death and Dying" in *Social Science & Medicine*, 51 (2000), 6, p. 917.

⁴ Cristian Bădiliță, *Călugărul și moartea. Eseu despre imaginea și faptul morții în monahismul egiptean*, translate by Ingrid Ilinca (Iași: Polirom, 1998), p. 196.

⁵ Cristina Dobre-Bogdan, *Imago mortis în cultura română veche (sec. XVII-XIX)* (București: Ed. Universității, 2002), p. 148.

for spiritual growth through humble submission.⁶ This kind of premonition was perceived as positive and natural. Unnatural was the sudden death (*mors repentina*), that would deprive the man of the rites of passage.

In various parts of the country, people believe that the man who is long tormented by earthly diseases or trials until he dies has committed serious sins, or that he has been cursed by someone or has cursed himself. A violent or painful death indicates some fault and is seen as punishment. Instead, the good death is always serene and, if it happens to still have a long struggle, it is because of the sins of relatives. From the Christian perspective, these categorizations are unsubstantiated or even false, because the judgments on others never belong to people, but are God's decision.

An extraordinary world is revealed in the ethnographic account of traditional mortuary practices. The traditions, situated at the confluence of the religious point of view on death and the folkloric perspective, are relatively more folkloric, although the ideas descend from the religious arena. Our approach would be incomplete without an analysis that is based on popular piety and the role that Christian tradition has had in shaping the collective mind.

"The key to mental preparation for death," notes I. Ghinoiu, "is the three legacy systems: biological (birth of children), material (fortune left behind) and spiritual (cultural). Of these, the most valuable heritage that one can leave is the extending of his genealogy by children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren."⁷ Perpetuation of genealogical lineage was tantamount to the defeat of death. In Wallachian iconography, we can find scenes of Samson's fight with the lion⁸ and the motif of the stork (a symbol of the regeneration of life), interpreted by A. Paleologu as defeats of death: "The exterior painting of the monuments of Wallachia proposes a comprehensive program of philosophizing, not so much on the precariousness of existence, but on the theme of life and the value of hope."⁹

Another interesting scene is the meeting between the Old Man and Death, according to an Aesop's fable, which narrates the return of an old man from the forest with a heavy load of firewood in his back. Exhausted, he calls for his Death, but when Death comes, the old man says he called it out just to settle the wood better on his back. The amusing character of the old man's reply sent to the motif of the *tricked Death*, frequently encountered in folklore and processed by Ion Creanga in the tale "Ivan

⁶ Hugo Tristram Engelhardt Jr, Ana Smith Iltis, "End-of-Life: the Traditional Christian View," in *Lancet*, 366 (2005), p. 1046.

⁷ Ion Ghinoiu, *Lumea de aici, lumea de dincolo : ipostaze românești ale nemuririi* (Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărții de Știință, 1999), p. 182.

⁸ Maria Golescu, "Prea puternicul Samson" in *Buletinul Comisiunii Monumentelor Istorice*, XXXIII (1940), fasc. 104, pp. 86-87.

⁹ Andrei Paleolog, *Pictura exterioară în Țara Românească (sec. XVIII-XIX)* (București: Meridiane, 1984), p. 59.

Turbincă.”¹⁰ Not incidentally, in the center of the scene depicting the wheel of life at the Păpușa hermitage (county of Vâlcea), one can read the words: “I was born to live,”¹¹ a reflection of a vehement denial of death.

Through his offspring, one that passes away feels that somehow he stays here, the children being not just followers of the family’s name and fate, but also a guarantee for the deceased that they will fulfill all the rituals required by tradition.

The man was early in preparing for death, living with the thought of passing away, preparing the grave or coffin, the funeral clothes, the drink for the funeral ceremony, the alms or even giving alms during his lifetime. The will – written or verbal – usually included the wishes of the dying man regarding his own funeral and on religious duties of almsgiving. These customs – also currently certified in the world of the Romanian village, but naturalized in the city – are due to the human desire to lessen the burden on survivors and the wish to be sure that traditions will be scrupulously fulfilled after his death.¹²

“Passing into forgetfulness” was more painful than death itself, a fact proven by the existence of documents from princes or boyars expressing the desire to be remembered, along with their entire family, in exchange for donations to the Church.¹³ Also, in the secular context, there was the desire of perpetuating the name of a hero through his acts of bravery, his fame proving stronger than death. The effect of perpetuating the memory beyond the threshold of death may create good deeds, as the saying “The horse dies, its saddle remains, man dies, his name remains” emphasizes. Such phraseological sayings, which refer to “good death,” might reflect the former reality of Romanian traditional community, preserving archaic extra-linguistic information.

Connection with the generations, both the preceding and the following, is an important element of a good death. This way of perceiving death, specific to the traditional-folkloric model, shows that death does not cause a gap in the relationship with life, but it is a part of life in the natural order of things and is also a form of affirmation of the group’s continuity and community. Death is also seen in terms of solidarity with predecessors, of continuity in relation to ancestors, as in the expression “to add to his ancestors” in the Old Testament (Genesis 25: 7, 35, 29). Burial is often described as “going to the ancestors” or being “gathered to his people.” The common way to be related to one’s ancestors is the criterion of kinship,

¹⁰ C. Dobre-Bogdan, *Imago mortis în cultura română veche (sec. XVII-XIX)*, p. 56.

¹¹ A. Paleolog, *Pictura exterioară în Țara Românească (sec. XVIII-XIX)*, p. 58.

¹² I. Ghinoiu, *Lumea de aici, lumea de dincolo: ipostaze românești ale nemuririi*, pp. 212–214, 216.

¹³ Iolanda Țighiliu, *Societate și mentalitate în Țara Românească și Moldova. Secolele XV-XVII* (București: Paideia, 1997), p. 264.

strongly affirmed by the village cemeteries organization. It reveals that between the two worlds there is a certain social homology, established by continuous relationship.¹⁴

I. Ghinoiu underlines the difference between the Medieval Western world and Romanian society regarding the right of inheritance. While in the West the house was inherited by the firstborn, which assumed the military duties of the deceased, in the Romanian territory the house was inherited by the last born, so the worship of ancestors will be perpetuated for longer.¹⁵

The firm establishment of Christianity in Romanian society has made its impact on the experience of good and bad death. The assessment of death quality can be made using the varied inventories of preaching or painted images, which can be viewed as the creuset of the mentality of an era.¹⁶ For the Romanian peasant, who was a regular churchgoer, a good death is seen as a natural consequence of a Christian life, in accordance with the liturgical litany: “For a Christian end to our life, painless, blameless, peaceful, and for a good defense at the dread judgment-seat of Christ, let us ask the Lord.”¹⁷

This soothing definition of a good death may be applied only to persons whose life is in accordance with the rules and rigors of Christian thought. Perception of death – as an instrument with an ethical function, involving the rules of a life without excesses – can be found in iconographic representations, where the images of Death are part of the paradigm of “monstrous” with hermeneutical function. The unseen things are “coded” by the visible ones, tending through their symbolism to make tangible the idea of a good death, especially for the vast number of illiterates. The church tried to make man conscious of the devouring nature of Time and of the hour when the balance of Judgment will show the new, and that this new time, the eternal ontological status, is acquired following a way of living on earth. The idea of the facts of future rewards depending on the positive or negative register in which they were framed is reflected in

¹⁴ Corina Mihaela Bejenariu, *Moartea și murirea – de la paradigme tradiționale la forme contemporane adaptate (Death and dying – from the traditional paradigms to adapted contemporary forms)*, Abstract of the Ph.D. Thesis, scientific coordinator Professor University Dr. Ion Cuceu, Faculty of European Studies, “Babeș-Bolyai” University (Cluj-Napoca, 2010), p. 9. Full text available for download at http://doctorat.ibbcluj.ro/sustinerea_publica/rezumate/rezumate/2010/filologie/BEJINARIU_CORINA_RO.pdf [accessed on May 30, 2011].

¹⁵ I. Ghinoiu, *Lumea de aici, lumea de dincolo : ipostaze românești ale nemuririi* (Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărții de Știință, 1999), pp. 214–215.

¹⁶ Al. Dușu, *Literatura comparată și istoria mentalităților* (București: Univers, 1982), p. 11.

¹⁷ “Dumnezeiasca Liturghie a Sf. Ioan Gură de Aur” (The Divine Liturgy). In: *Liturghier (The Liturgikon)* (București: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune a Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 2007), p. 131.

the painting of the Last Judgment Scene, where the death of the righteous versus the sinner's death are represented. The image of these antithetical deaths was alive in the mind of the viewers, becoming an instrument to tune the behavioral code. Providing antithetical models of existential paths at the end of which someone can find salvation, or, conversely, damnation, it is also commonplace for the Romanian funeral oratory.

Knowledge of one's imminent death provides a final chance to become reconciled with those whom one has harmed, to ask for God's forgiveness, or to call the priest to fulfill the last Christian duties by performing the Sacraments. These are the rites of passage, involving separation rituals from this world, and rites of aggregation at the world beyond, of which the most important, in Christian thought, is the final communion.¹⁸ Some families are reluctant to call the priest because they think the sick might be frightened by the closeness of death.

Seriously ill persons, especially the rich, often demanded the administration of the Unction, believing that this service helps for a speedy death or healing.¹⁹ S. Fl. Marian stresses an important financial issue in Transylvania: money for the Unction was traditionally gathered at the church or in the community (even if the sacrament was administered to a rich man), with the conviction that this contribution is pleasing to God. However, people should not be allowed to believe in an automatism of this gesture, nor encouraged to ask for it superstitiously, with the conviction that it will provide the recovery or easy death. In such a case, the belief related to the effects of prayers or the effect of Unction is distorted. Again, any charitable gesture of the Christian community is encouraged, but not when it has in view a determined result.

Another practice was the gesture of forgiveness to those near and known, especially in circumstances where there had been conflicts. This sequence was highly valued as the last expression of emotional ties with the deceased, the last form of honoring, but also as a form of separation through forgiveness. The people are confident that one who fulfills this gesture dies easily, while one who refuses dies struggling. The gesture is compatible with the Christian principle regarding the need for reconciliation between people or the repair of evil committed.

Traditionally, when a man was about to die, the family took care to light a candle at the bedside or in the hands of the dying. The Christian meaning of the gesture – the light is the symbol of Jesus Christ, Light of the world – alternates with the belief that darkness reigns in the other world, and therefore the dead need light so as not to "lose the soul." For those

¹⁸ H. Tristram Engelhardt Jr, Ana Smith Iltis, "End-of-Life: The Traditional Christian View", p. 1047.

¹⁹ Simion Florea Marian, *Înmormântarea la români. Studiu etnografic* (Bucharest: « Grai și suflet – Cultura Națională » Publishing, 1995), pp. 7–11; I. Ghinoiu, *Lumea de aici, lumea de dincolo*, pp. 198–204.

whose death was not accompanied by light, the offspring provided a big candle burning for them during the church services.

Death was good, or at least acceptable, after a long life. In the case of a young person's death, when it happened before his or her being wed, the funeral ritual was designed as a marriage ritual.²⁰ This symbolic wedding is illustrated by the ritual of the fir tree accompanying unmarried young people's funerals in Bukovine.²¹

Another aspect of peacefulness is to die in a place which holds the highest degree of peace: home. Dying at home implies being surrounded by relatives and family. "The time of death is highly valued, contributing to strengthening social ties, to solidarity between generations, and between earthly life and the world beyond."²² Dying in loneliness, away from home, away from relatives and dear ones, is by definition "bad," and can only be partially repaired by bringing the dead body home.

"Life is nothing else than separation from the bowels of the earth; death is reduced to a return home...so frequent desire to be buried in the soil of the homeland is only a secular form of the mystical autochthonism, the need to return to his own house," writes Eliade, marking, in the symbolism of privacy, the isomorphism of return, of death, and of housing.²³ Being properly buried in one's own land makes death good, or at least acceptable, as a funeral ritual sequence that occurs during the removal of the dead body from a dwelling suggests: breaking a cup or a pot. The gesture refers to the biblical verse: "You are dust and to dust you shall return." (Genesis 3: 19)

In traditional Romanian society, death was a private affair. Funerals are public events, but the sickbed and death occur in the seclusion of the house. Death remains "confidential" until it is announced and preparations can start for the funeral. Death, indeed, is eclipsed by the funerals in many ways. Sometimes, people may not know about someone's poor physical condition and sickness until it is all over.

Summing up, the definition of good death, (and bad – a sudden and unprovided death) does not imply that it is a fixed category. People in Romania regard a peaceful death as a good death. "Peaceful" refers to the dying person having finished all business and made peace with others before his/her death, and implies being at peace with his/her own death. It further refers to the manner of dying: not by violence, an accident, or a fearsome disease, and without much pain. A good and peaceful death comes naturally after a long and well-spent life. Such a death preferably takes

²⁰ Petru Caraman, "Alegoria morții în poezia populară, la poloniși la români", *Studii de folclor*, 2nd vol. (București: Minerva, 1988), pp. 69-75.

²¹ S. Fl. Marian, *Înmormântarea la români. Studiu etnografic*, p. 68.

²² Lucian Boia, *Mitul longevității. Cum să trăim 200 de ani*, transl. Walter Fotescu (București: Humanitas, 1999), p. 146.

²³ Gilbert Durand, *Structurile antropologice ale imaginarului. Introducere în arhetipologia generală*, transl. Marcel Aderca (București: Univers Enciclopedic, 1998), p. 231.

place at home, surrounded by children and grandchildren. Finally, a good death is a death which is accepted by the relatives. To summarize, we may categorize five features accompanying the event of a good death:

- a social character (being at peace with others, mutually),
- a psychological character (being at peace with one's own life and soul),
- a spiritual character (being at peace with God, being prepared for the world beyond)
- a chronological aspect (dying in the fullness of time), and
- a spatial aspect (dying at home, surrounded by relatives).

The determination of a good death has historically been based on community criteria. The enormous influence exerted by this traditional model of the statement of the quality of a death can be found also in the present. The mental universe of the archaic world has been preserved, and persists in Romanian society; nowadays, it can still be identified in rural locations, where the memory and the connection with ancestors is still alive.

PHYSICAL COMFORT AND EMOTIONAL SUPPORT FOR A GOOD ENOUGH DEATH

Palliative care is a disciplinary area where contested ideas focus on a principally moral question – what is the best way to die? The multivocality of responses shows that the focus has shifted from the question of dying well to the problem of living well, even until death. Not only should patients live well while dying, they should also be given reign to choose or refuse certain treatments and therapies that may improve their lives and, ultimately, their deaths. An ideological framework is constructed to maintain the value of a *good enough death*. Just as members of contemporary society are expected to age well with the aid of medical technology and a youthful spirit, dying people are expected to live well until they die and make their own choices in this process.

Palliative care operates with the philosophy of a “good enough” death and a hierarchy of care which prioritizes the physical management of symptoms for alleviating the patients’ pain and physical discomfort.²⁴ Despite the good intentions of practitioners, *good death* for patients is often not achievable, so many practitioners now accept a *good enough* ethic. This ethic may be thought of as patient-centered and empowering.²⁵ It brings us

²⁴ Beverley McNamara, “Good Enough Death: Autonomy and Choice in Australian Palliative Care” in *Social Science & Medicine* 58 (2004), p. 929.

²⁵ Cristina Gavrilovici, Beatrice Ioan, Vasile Astărăstoae, “Paternalism și autonomie în practica medicală a unei societăți în tranziție. Modele temporale și geografice ale relației medic-pacient.” in: Bogdan Olaru (ed.), *Controverse*

firmly into the world of advanced directives, participatory medical decision-making, and civic law. There is a shifting of responsibility from the social collective to the individual who is dying, bringing a tension between individual choice and communal tradition.

What makes death a psychologically appropriate phenomenon?²⁶ Trying to operationalize this concept and to determine a precise definition of a good death can be challenging for the ill persons, family, friends, and health care providers. Steihauser *et al.*²⁷ identified six major components of a good death:

1. Pain and Symptom Management;
2. Clear Decision Making (to participate in decisions about treatment options or plans);
3. Preparation for Death (to plan the events that follow their deaths);
4. Completion (finding meaningfulness at the end of life);
5. Contribution to others (discovering that personal relationships are more important than professional or monetary gains, and wanting to share these significant insights about life with others);
6. Affirmation of the Whole Person (being recognized as a unique, whole, and complete person, considered in the context of his/her life, his/her values and personal preferences, and not just as a disease or a case).

These six themes add to the overall knowledge about what people believe to be a good death, helping healthcare professionals in this challenging area of medicine.

In the study “Good Death Inventory,” Mitsunori Miyashita *et al.*²⁸ identify some core domains: environmental comfort (living in calm circumstances); life completion (having no regrets, feeling that one’s life was fulfilling); dying in a favorite place; maintaining hope and pleasure (having some pleasure in daily life); independence (in moving or waking up, with excretion); physical and psychological comfort (being free from pain, free from emotional distress); good relationships with medical staff (trusting the physician, having people who listen); not being a burden to

etice în epoca biotehnologiilor (Iași: University “Al. I. Cuza” Publishing, 2008), p. 56.

²⁶ Donald Lester, “Psychological Issues in Euthanasia, Suicide and Assisted Suicide,” in *Journal of Social Issues*, 52 (1996), 2, pp. 51-62.

²⁷ Karen E. Steihauser, Elizabeth C. Clipp, Maya McNeilly *et al.*, “In Search of a Good Death: Observations of Patients, Families, and Providers,” in *Annals of Internal Medicine*. 132 (2000), 10: 825-832. Retrieved May 29, 2011, from <<http://www.annals.org/cgi/reprint/132/10/825.pdf>>.

²⁸ Mitsunori Miyashita, Tatsuya Morita, Kazuki Sato *et al.*, “Good Death Inventory: A Measure for Evaluating Good Death from the Bereaved Family Member’s Perspective” in *Journal of Pain and Symptom Management*, 35 (2008), 5, pp. 486-498.

others (having no financial worries); good relationships with family (having family to whom one can express one's feelings); being respected as an individual (not being treated as an object or a child); religious and spiritual comfort (having faith and feeling that one is protected by a higher power beyond oneself); receiving enough treatment (fighting against disease until one's last moment); control over the future (knowing what to expect about one's condition in the future and participating in decisions about treatment strategy); feeling that one's life is worth living (maintaining one's role in family or occupation); unawareness of death (living as usual without thinking about death); pride and beauty (not exposing one's physical and mental weakness to family, not receiving pity from others); natural death (not receiving excessive treatment, not being connected to medical instruments or tubes); and preparation for death (seeing people whom one wants to see, saying what one wants to say to dear people).²⁹

The World Health Organization defines a good death as occurring in the absence of stress and unnecessary suffering for the patient, family, and for those providing them with care; considering and applying the wishes of the patient and his/her family; and presenting the consensus in a reasonable degree of clinical, cultural, and ethical standards.³⁰

In Romania, palliative care is a relatively new and developing speciality. Usually, terminally ill patients are discharged into the care of family members at home with little support, so the care is usually provided by the family.³¹ Moşoiu, Andrews, and Perolls typified some of the cultural and ethical issues which must be taken into account in the assessment of palliative care in Romania: "Romanian society has traditionally been one in which family ties are very strong. The extended family often lives in close proximity. For this reason, home care seems to be more appropriate. Approximately 80% of Romanians belong to the Romanian Orthodox Church. In the Orthodox tradition, there are special rituals surrounding death and bereavement that are concerned with the outward show of grief and remembering the dead. In rural areas, where death is seen as a natural process and communities are stronger, these traditions are better preserved. Conversely, in urban society, the subject of death is seen as somewhat taboo. It continues to be common practice for health care professionals to inform the family of the diagnosis and prognosis before discussing this with the patient, and in some cases the patient is not even told of his or her condition. However, experience has

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 491-492.

³⁰ Harvey Max Chochinov, "Psychiatry and Terminal Illness" in *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, 45 (2000), pp. 143-150.

³¹ Luminița Dumitrescu, Wim J. A. van den Heuvel, Marinela van den Heuvel-Olaroiu, "Experiences, Knowledge, and Opinions on Palliative Care among Romanian General Practitioners" in *Croatian Medical Journal*, 47 (2006), p. 144.

suggested that many patients suspect their diagnoses and welcome the opportunity to discuss it.”³²

Both poor education and the bias of health-care professionals against opioids and analgesics in Romania are reflected in statistics that show Romania's annual medical consumption of morphine as being among the lowest in Eastern Europe.³³ The country has a very complicated, restrictive, and burdensome system for prescribing opioids that makes it difficult and sometimes impossible for outpatients to receive pain medication. Because the administering of morphine is very often postponed until the last days, the result is unnecessary suffering.

Lack of pain control has not challenged the desire to hasten death or the contemplation of assisted suicide. However, in June 2005, the Orthodox Church in Romania expressed its stance on euthanasia: “Human life is an unrepeatable reality, so it must be defended and cared for every moment and in whatever situation a person finds him or herself.”³⁴

Because life comes from God, it is intrinsically good, for it is the relationship with the Divinity and with other people that give a human being the status of “person,” not only of an “individual.” In this way, the person's life has a value in itself and the person, even in suffering, is invaluable.³⁵ “The person does not empty himself or herself during the biological life, nor does he or she achieve fullness of life solely in the earthly condition, but life in the biological sense of the word is the fundamental condition to prepare the human person for the Kingdom of God.”

The same conciliar act states: “Our task, in particular for doctors, is to serve life until its end. The man lives even when he is in the terminal stage of physical life.” In an era when the emphasis is on the biological and the material, it is desirable to understand and experience suffering through the filter of faith.

From another perspective, discussing suffering brings the necessity of love and compassion to those who are lonely and dying. The same act provides: “For this, the patient should be guaranteed freedom to decide on the treatment of terminal stage disease, to be shown solidarity and compassion by others (family, friends, medical staff), and to be given

³² Daniela Moşoiu, C. Andrews, Graham Perolls, “Palliative care in Romania” in *Palliative Medicine* 14 (2000), 1, p. 65.

³³ Daniela Moşoiu, Kevin M. Ryan, David E. Joranson *et al.* “Reform of Drug Control Policy for Palliative Care in Romania” in *Lancet* 367 (2006), 9528, p. 2114.

³⁴ Resolution elaborated by the National Bioethics Commission of the Romanian Orthodox Church, http://www.patriarhia.ro/ro/oper_social_filantropica/bioetica_2.html [accessed May 30, 2011].

³⁵ Ştefan Iloaie, “Morală şi viaţă. Documentele Bisericii Ortodoxe Române referitoare la bioetică” in *Revista Română de Bioetică*, 7 (2009), 2, p. 24.

appropriate medication to alleviate physical and emotional pain, which may become unbearable and even “dehumanizing,” as the patient dies with a maximum of conscience and a minimum of pain.”

So what can be done to ease the distress of the patient confronting death? The quality of death depends on a deep understanding of patients’ distress in facing death. Death and grief are normal life experiences,³⁶ although there are periods often filled with fear and anger in the framework of the stages so eloquently defined by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross (denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance).³⁷ By truly understanding these stages, someone could look for the opportunity to understand the terminal patient’s needs during this frightening and vulnerable period.

Based on data from the literature, Pool³⁸ summarizes three characteristics of good death: to die easily, (painless, quiet, dignified, quickly); family involvement in patient care; and good interpersonal relationships, with appropriate communication and conflict resolution. The author noted that all these involve the patient’s ability to participate actively in social interactions as evidence of the dying person’s control and autonomy in the process of death.

The same author believes that we can admit to a consensus on good death as a peaceful end, which occurs at the end of a long and fulfilled life, while death due to accidents, violence, or disease affecting a young person is considered to be unnatural. Ultimately, only the individual in question can determine whether death is good or not. A good death seems to be a death that one would choose if he or she could do so.

Dying can also be viewed as a social relationship.³⁹ A person is not simply a “being,” but “personhood” is a quality attributed to someone by others. Identity is created in the minds of others by a perceived history of social reciprocity, a history of relationships. People become attached to others because of their social relationship to those persons. Many of the recent views from medicine, bioethics, and philosophy in general have emerged because of the desire to engage in discussions with the social and medical sciences about the social nature of dying.

Most people who discover they have an incurable disease live with a certain degree of social isolation, whose main cause must be found in discomfort, fear, and the threat felt by healthy individuals in contact with

³⁶ Julia Neuberger, *Dying Well: A Guide to Enabling a Good Death*, 2nd edition (Oxford: Radcliffe Medical Press, 2004), p. 176.

³⁷ Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, *Despre moarte și a muri* [On Death and Dying], transl. Mihail Pirușcă (București, Elena Francisc Publishing, 2008).

³⁸ Robert Pool, “You’re Not Going to Dehydrate Mom, Are You? Euthanasia, Versterving, and Good Death in the Netherlands,” in *Social Science and Medicine* 58 (2004), 5, pp. 955-966.

³⁹ Allan Kellehear, “Dying as a Social Relationship: A Sociological Review of Debates on the Determination of Death,” in *Social Science & Medicine* 66 (2008), p. 1533.

them.⁴⁰ The consequence is an early mourning and a withdrawing into themselves.

“Living a life received as a gift, waiting for pointless visits, with visitors longing, looking out the window, hoping for the emergence of a nurse who would have little time for a discussion...this is how they spend their time, most incurable patients,”⁴¹ in a world that believes that the good death is the sudden one, as much as possible unconscious, but in any case quiet.⁴²

Dying people’s positive reaction to the chance of communication is due to man’s need to leave behind something of himself, maybe to have the illusion of immortality.⁴³ Before death, everybody tries to share something about the essence of his own person to those who are with him in his last days or hours. McCoy *et al.* talk about the concept of immortality as a positive illusion⁴⁴ and Becker shows that one of the possible ways to mitigate the anxiety of death is leaving behind some cultural good that transcends the individual, promising him a symbolic immortality.⁴⁵

After the death, relationships continue to evolve in memorial practices in the home or during traditional graveyard visits, where “talking” with one’s dead is historically and sociologically widespread. Furthermore, contemporary people widely report “interactions” with their dead relatives in dreams.⁴⁶ Such interactions with the dead are believed to be reciprocal, and are seen as evidence of this broader human context of dying and death as ongoing social relationships.

Therefore, in the assessment of death, the emphasis should be on the inseparable relationship between biology and culture. In other words, any criteria for good death must draw on or consult with cultural sources and ideas wider than merely those from the professions. Ignoring this fact about dying will indeed bring physicians, inevitably, predictably, and unnecessarily into conflict with families of terminally patients.

⁴⁰ Janice R. Ellis, Elisabeth Ann Nowlis, “Psychosocial Needs of The Person” in *Nursing. A Human Needs Approach* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1989), p. 408.

⁴¹ E. Kubler-Ross, *Despre moarte și a muri*, p. 41.

⁴² Eniko Skolka, *Aspecte ale asistenței bolnavului aflat în stadiul terminal : posibilități, limite și dileme* (Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărții de Știință, 2004), p. 206.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 190.

⁴⁴ Shannon K. McCoy, Tom Pyszczynski, Sheldon Solomon, Jeff Greenberg, “Transcending the Self: A Terror Management Perspective on Successful Aging” in Adrian Tomer (ed.), *Death Attitudes and the Older Adult: Theories, Concepts, and Applications* (Philadelphia: Routledge, 2001), p. 39, available at <http://books.google.com>, accessed May 30, 2011.

⁴⁵ Ernest Becker. *The Denial of Death* (New York: Free Press, 1973), p. 69, says that the dynamic behind the creation and maintenance of civilization is the repression of our awareness of death.

⁴⁶ Corina Mihaela Bejenariu, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-13.

TOWARD A DEATH-DENYING SOCIETY

We found it extremely useful to attempt an extension of our approach in contemporary society, in order to capture any changes in attitude, perception, and representation to a problem that seems obsolete in a world where aspiring to eternal youth is the main goal.

The eighteenth century brought a change of mentality, with the relationship between the individual and death gradually emerging from the religious influence, adding secular (philosophical, scientific, or civic) connotations.⁴⁷ In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as medical progress allowed an extension of life, the rhythms of life, especially in large cities, favored an increasing censorship over death. From the beginning of Modernism, death and the dying have been pushed from the center of the family and community to the edges of society.

In the industrial world of Europe and North America, death was “gerontologized,” becoming distant and distanced.⁴⁸ People avoid this subject and certainly do not discuss it in public. Changes in religious beliefs and practices have turned society into a “death-denying” one.⁴⁹ The public display of mourning is seen as a form of weakness and indecency, though the public mourning and posthumous deification of celebrities (e.g. Michael Jackson), seems to have taken the place of privacy. Mourning in these cases has become a public spectacle, accessible to all via TV or Youtube.

The increasingly technological society potentiates the feeling of isolation and non-communication, making the patient become more vulnerable when facing death, more alone and helpless. Even medical technology pushes the moment of death ever further away; when ill people die, it is likely this will occur in the company of more machinery than people.⁵⁰ Hospitals and morgues have replaced the intimacy of the house. According to Kubler-Ross, “nowadays, agony is more terrible from several points of view, more lonely, more mechanical, and devoid of humanity” than during the times when medicine had no actual knowledge and resources. Patients may cry for rest, peace, and dignity, but they get infusions, transfusions, and life-support devices to assist the body’s vital functions. They get invasive interventions, especially from some specialists

⁴⁷ Michel Vovelle, *La mort et l’Occident, de 1300 à nos jours* (Paris: Gallimard, 1983), p. 421.

⁴⁸ Carol Komaromy, Jenny Hockey, “Naturalizing Death Among Older Adults in Residential Care” in Jenny Hockey (ed.), *Grief, Mourning, and Death Ritual* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2001), pp. 73–74.

⁴⁹ Allan Kellehear, “Are We a ‘Death-Denying’ Society? A Sociological Review” in *Social Science & Medicine*, 18 (1984), 9, p. 713.

⁵⁰ Robert L. Rubinstein, “Narratives of Elder Parental Death. A Structural and Cultural Analysis” in *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, 9 (1995), 2, pp. 257–276, emphasizes that the narratives of middle-aged American women about the death of one of their parents interfere with medical reports.

who are concerned about their heart rhythm, their pulse, their electrocardiogram, their secretions, but not about their person, their humanity. Unfortunately, dying alone is becoming more common as people grow older and “social death” makes its entry before physical death.

How great is the fear of death! So great is the fear that the dying are not allowed to die.⁵¹ The dependence on their own body is prolonged by the dependence on apparatus, and also by the dependence on specialists who can decide whether or not to accept the request for ending the prolonging of one’s life under such conditions. Medical apparatus now allows us to keep a body alive and prolong physical existence even after the brain has died – but what then does it mean to be human, and how can someone die in a human way? The medicalization of death means that the pre-twentieth century notion of a good death – surrounded by family, comforted by familiar voices – now belongs to the nostalgic past.

The place of death is often considered as an indicator of quality of the end of life.⁵² If the patient is allowed to spend the last period of life in a beloved and familiar place, then he needs less adaptation efforts.⁵³ Hospital death, although preferred by a few patients and sometimes clinically inevitable, is often considered as suboptimal,⁵⁴ compared with home care and home death, because the latter are more in accordance with the wishes of the patients, their caregivers, and their health professionals.⁵⁵

Although most people in Western societies prefer to die at home,⁵⁶ a study in six European countries showed that of all deaths, from 33.9% (in the Netherlands) to 62.8% (in Wales) occurred in a hospital. The phenomenon is explained by the weakening of religious faith that has led to

⁵¹ Alaine Polcz, *Ideje a meghalásnak* (Budapest: Pont Publishing, 1998), quoted by Eniko Skolka, *Aspecte ale asistenței bolnavului aflat în stadiul terminal*, p. 205.

⁵² David Clark, “Between Hope and Acceptance: the Medicalisation of Dying” in *British Medical Journal* 324 (2002), p. 907. Karen E. Steinhauser, Nicholas A. Christakis, Elisabeth C. Clipp *et al.*, “Factors Considered Important at the End of Life by Patients, Family, Physicians, and Other Care Providers” in *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, 284 (2000), pp. 2476-2482.

⁵³ E. Kubler-Ross, *Despre moarte și a muri*, p. 128.

⁵⁴ Lisa Barbera, Lawrence Paszat, Carole Chartier, “Death in Hospital for Cancer Patients: an Indicator of Quality of End-of-Life Care,” in *Palliative Medicine* 19 (2005), pp. 435-436.

⁵⁵ Joan M. Teno, Brian R. Clarridge, Virginia Casey *et al.*, “Family Perspectives on End-of-Life Care at the Last Place of Care” in *The Journal of the American Medical Association* 291 (2004), pp. 88-93.

⁵⁶ Siew Tzuh Tang, “When Death is Imminent Where Terminally Ill Patients with Cancer Prefer to Die and Why,” in *Cancer Nursing* 26 (2003): 249; Siew Tzuh Tang, Ruth McCorkle, “Determinants of Congruence Between the Preferred and Actual Place of Death for Terminally Ill Cancer Patients,” in *Journal of Palliative Care* 19 (2003), p. 236.

an increased anxiety about death, contributing to the banishment of the death event from the family to within the walls of institutions.⁵⁷

Progress in medical science has led to an increase in life expectancy in Western society, accompanied by the desire for discovering a remedy against forthcoming death. Some findings can increase the quality of life and help those in distress. There are also intentions and promises that go beyond this medical intervention aspect: eradication of old age, prolonged youth, or eliminating death. Moreover, the offers promise/exhibit, inevitably, economic potential and a guaranteed market success. And, as expected, there emerges a specific vision of life, which increasingly emphasizes the right to a life free of aging, which can be extended as much as the opportunities offered by medicine will allow. The so-called “transhumanist current” foresees radical changes in human life. These achievements will help people to have improved capacity, intelligence, health, beauty, and life span, as they earn the label of the “posthuman species.” Transhumanism has developed in recent years, with several arguments supporting the fight against aging and suffering, claiming priority of youth and the indefinite extension of life.

Ray Kurzveil, for example, identifies the next major step in achieving biological immortality, offered by nanotechnologies and artificial intelligence. He foresees within twenty years the creation of nanobots to be placed in the human body, in order to locate and restore the areas affected by disease.⁵⁸ In developed countries, antiageing advances would increase life expectancy by a year for each year of the decades from 2010 to 2030. Life spans are going to be so long that people will have no real idea how to plan it. The result would be a huge explosion in older people and vast changes in how people live their lives. “Current institutions are really not equipped at the moment to deal with such long lives.”⁵⁹

Aubrey de Grey, a leader in gerontological engineering, proposed arguments to support the ethics of an indefinite extension of life using medical technology. He argues that refusing to prolong life and its quality by considering and using the remarkable progress achieved so far by science is equivalent to taking action for shortening human life. Nowadays, he says, medicine is obligated to extend the right to life: everyone’s right to live as long as he or she wants is guaranteed by the existing technology.⁶⁰

Ethical considerations concerning these aspects make us suspect the morality that supports these projects. Current scientific knowledge for

⁵⁷ Joachim Cohen, Johan Bilsen, Julia Addington-Hall *et al.*, “Population-Based Study of Dying in Hospital in Six European countries,” in *Palliative Medicine*, 22 (2008), 6, pp. 702-710.

⁵⁸ Thomas D. Kenedy, “Anti-Aging, Rights and Human Nature,” in *Ethics & Medicine*, 25 (2009), 1, pp. 21-22.

⁵⁹ Leslie M. Thompson, “The Future of Death: Death in the Hands of Science,” in *Nursing Outlook*, 42 (1994), 4, pp. 175-180.

⁶⁰ Thomas D. Kennedy, “Anti-Aging, Rights and Human nature”, p. 23.

abolishing death leads to some social and psychological implications that the hysterical search for eternal life presents.⁶¹ How could we ensure people's right to live as they wish by the achievements of science as long as billions of our fellow men cannot even survive?

CONCLUSION

This paper has focused on making several observations about past and recent biomedical, spiritual, psychological, sociological, and anthropological features of the quality of death. We may more clearly speak about the syncretism of a few good death peculiarities in our society when both older and newer concepts of death coexist in the minds of people.

Is the survey of traditional Romanian society about death relevant to our understanding of modern approaches to this subject? One may note that Romanian peasants seem to react to death in a "modern" way, especially in their sober acceptance of death as a reality. Characteristic of the traditional view is that death is the door to a life after death, and that the quality of life before death is decisive for seeing death as good or bad. The determination of death quality is not simply a technical problem, but it depends on the experiences of mortality, mediated by the social understanding of death and dying. This means understanding death and dying at the place where biology and biography meet at their intersections with society and history.

Nowadays, a lack of control and a lack of language to talk about making deaths good is evident, not just in the palliative care community, but in broader modern society. Prominence is given to the physical care of patients and to medical responses to suffering and death. The dying person's uncertainty does not need a routinized response to symptom management, but psychological, social, and spiritual counselling to help facilitate a good death.

As dying patients are increasingly encouraged to make their own choices, palliative care practitioners find fewer opportunities to lead their patients through a journey toward a good death. The element of individual choice is a reflection of a broader "postmodern condition," and within this context, "postmodern deaths." But, "as society becomes 'postmodern,' it also becomes vulnerable to the attenuation or loss of beliefs, values, and communication patterns that traditionally provided its sense of identity and continuity."⁶²

The palliative care philosophy, giving credence to the multiplicity of beliefs and communication patterns evident in the collective of dying

⁶¹ Basil W. McDermott, "On the Uncertain Future of Death" in *Futures*, 19 (1987), 6, pp. 686-701.

⁶² Robert Kastenbaum, "Reconstructing Death in Postmodern Society," in *Omega*, 27 (1993), 1, p. 76, quoted by Beverley McNamara, "Good Enough Death: Autonomy and Choice in Australian Palliative Care" in *Social Science & Medicine* 58 (2004), p. 936.

patients, is seen in the articulation of a “good enough” ethic. Health-care providers are often unprepared to assist patients and families during the dying process. And not only them – members of contemporary Western societies do not know what to say to people who are dying. In postmodernizing society, persistent change has dislodged people from the past while the decline in faith, in rationality, and its promise of continual progress toward a brighter future threatens their ability to link themselves with that future. This suggests that individuals in the postmodern era view themselves only as part of the present. In addition, with the absence of the ability to draw on the overarching, transcendent meanings of death traditionally provided by religion, individuals have only their immediate environment in which to find meaning for death.

From the Christian perspective, other spiritual meanings emerge simultaneously with the pragmatic intentions of using the concept of good death. At the core of the consumerist era, when technology favors progress and welfare, the earth is, for many citizens of developed countries, a place of abundance, meant to forget the “Abraham's side.” From this perspective, utopian projects, aimed at complete eradication of illness and senescence, could be understood as the intention of introducing a human realm of eternity on earth, a victory over death through science, a kind of salvation through technology.

Focusing on the notions of good and bad death in Romania, dying after a long and well-spent life, in the company of dear ones, without pain, while at peace with one's one death, are all features which, in Romanian culture, would contribute to a good death. However, extension of this research could produce useful policy prescriptions. For future policy development, it will be important to include the communities that are directly affected by this concept.

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PART III

CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL PERSONALITIES: POSSIBLE ANSWERS TO OUR CONTEMPORARY CHANGES

CHAPTER XXIV

ROUSSEAU'S "CIVIL RELIGION" RECONSIDERED

JOHN FARINA

Abstract: Jean-Jacques Rousseau's understanding of religion and civil society was perhaps more nuanced than many of his liberal disciples acknowledge. In its complexities may lay hints for the reformulation of theories of citizenship and religious identity for the twenty-first century.

Keywords: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, civil society, civil religion, theory of citizenship, religious identity.

In this paper I shall consider the role religion might play in post-secular liberal Western societies. Each of those identifiers requires some clarification. By "post-secular" I mean that society has not followed the projection of secularist theorists in any kind of simplistic way. More likely, religion has differentiated itself in multiple forms. Or perhaps modernity itself was not as monolithic as was once thought. The sacred abided alongside the modern in many societies, not only in the much-publicized case of the United States. By "liberal," I mean that which is generally understood as a society in which the government is limited, often by written constitutions, the rights of the individual are maximized, and the role of the church or other religious institutions is structurally separated from the governing power of the state. By "Western," I mean nothing uncommon, but even that distinction is perhaps too simple. This dynamic of religion in the twenty-first century shows amazing resilience across cultures. Religion, like globality, has long had a transnational quality, especially with the religions of what Eliade called "the sky gods."¹

My contention is that to understand the role of religion in the post-secular twenty-first century, one must reevaluate its place in the history of liberal society. Starting at the time of the liberal revolutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, there grew up in Europe a tendency to write religion out of the story, that is, to embrace a model of liberalism that banished religion to the margins of life, or at least of public life. Paradoxically, at the same time many European societies retained a culture deeply influenced most predominantly by Christianity. But the public rhetoric was stripped of references to religion, especially as seen in the narrative of the anticlerical, often anti-religious left. That narrative was a tendentious one that simplified the role of religion in culture. At no time has

¹ Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: the Nature of Religion*, trans. from French by Willard Trask (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1959).

Europe been post-Christian, unless by that we mean simply that the church has been removed from a privileged place in the political structure. But at no time have even the most secular communist states been without the powerful influence of religion on their cultures.

Remarkably, the secularist narrative defied the ways that seminal liberal thinkers actually talked about religion. I will illustrate this by looking at the thought of Jean Jacques Rousseau, whose ideas undoubtedly had a major impact in shaping liberal Europe. He insisted that religion play a crucial role in the new societies they heralded. It was not precisely the religion of the day, however, but a new religion he saw coming along with the new liberal societies. Perhaps for that reason, some of his followers took only the negative part of what he said about religion and forgot about the positive part. This is an important observation, because the place of religion in society today may necessitate a rethinking of the assumptions of the past. We might well ask whether an accommodation of religion is essential for the health of liberal societies in the new Europe and indeed in the global twenty-first century, and what Rousseau's insights might contribute to such a new accommodation.

Contemporary critics of Rousseau have called attention to his egotism, his criminal neglect of his five children, his misanthropic behavior toward women, his betrayal of friends like Hume, Grimm, and hosts like Madame de Warens, and his paranoia over an international conspiracy to silence him.² Yet his brilliance as a writer and the massive impact of his thought on the modern mind are undeniable. His influence is perhaps greatest on political philosophy with his *Social Contract* and *Second Discourse*. His widely read *Emile* not only shaped educational theory but played a role in the development of Romanticism.

When it comes to religion and Rousseau, his thought is hard to sort out. On one hand, he is bitterly critical of the Church, of priests, of dogma. On the other, he shows a great religious sensibility when speaking of a kind of fundamental religious sentiment basic to human nature, which he calls by different names: at times, "the religion of nature;" at other times, "true religion" or "the religion of man." He defends religion against its naturalist critics, the skeptics, and the atheists like Voltaire. Most importantly for our purposes, he insists on the role of religion in civil society.

THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

"Man is born free yet everywhere he is in chains."³ So Rousseau

² See for example, Paul Johnson, *Intellectuals* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), pp. 1-27; J.H. Huizinga, *The Making of a Saint: The Tragi-Comedy of Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (London: Harnish Hamilton, 1976).

³ *The Social Contract*, Book 1, Ch. 1, p. 1 in Cress, English translation by Donald Cress (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987) based on *Oeuvres Completes de Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, vol. III (Paris: Pleiade, 1964).

began his most famous work on politics, *The Social Contract*. Men are in chains, for they have alienated their freedom. Such a renunciation is incompatible with man's nature. How could persons form associations for their defense in which the individual remained free? By putting themselves under the supreme direction of the general will. In our corporate capacity, each member is an indivisible part of the whole. This corporation is the city, the republic, the body politic, the state, the sovereign, the power. Those associated with it are the people, citizens, subjects.

What role does religion play in all of this? Rousseau deals with this in Book 4 of *The Social Contract* with his own version of the history of religions, reflecting the encyclopedist bent of his age and, indeed, the method to which Rousseau returned repeatedly in his writings. Throughout his life, Rousseau was a storyteller, a lyrical composer of opera and poetry, a novelist, and only then a political writer. Unlike a Guiseppe Mazzini, who lived for political struggle and intrigue, Rousseau said he was not cut out for such strife and claimed with some sincerity that he was only thrust into politics after his essay that became his *First Discourse* won a prize and gained him the public eye. One is tempted to think that if he were alive today, he would be living in Hollywood making movies. Like any good storyteller, he begins his stories, "Once upon a time..." That "time" is a mythical past he imagines. Although his works contain references to current scientific discoveries, he is most interested in stories about first peoples, like the Carib Indians, who opened a window into pre-historic life. His Savage is indeed a Noble Savage, one who shares many traits with other animals save one: humans contain an irrepressible urge to improve: "perfectibility." That urge can lead to the development of good things like language, agriculture, and the family. But it also can subject humans to the risk of going astray and of losing the original freedom and equalities given them by nature and subjecting themselves, often unwittingly, to bondage.

In his *Second Discourse*, entitled *Discourse on the Origin and the Foundations of Inequality among Men*, he tells the tale of how inequality came to be. As a bard setting the scene for the first act, he begins with an invocation:

Oh man, whatever land you may be from, whatever may be your opinions, listen. Here is your history such as I believe I read, not in the books by your kind, who are liars, but in nature, which never lies. Everything that will come from it will be true. Nothing will be false but what I will unintentionally have introduced of my own. The times of which I speak are very remote. How much you have changed from what you were! It is, so to speak, the life of your species that I've described to you in the terms of the

quality you received, which your education and your habits can deprave, but which they could not destroy.⁴

This is a mythical age of innocence now lost, a pure source, nature, which has tragically been lost. Rousseau's language evokes the fundamental creation myth of the West, shared by all the Abrahamic faiths. The prophetic quality of his work is sustained throughout as he talks of innocence lost with hints that a pure, perfectible nature, not thoroughly effaced by civil society, still exists in each of us. Rousseau, the former seminarian who left his native Geneva and for a time converted to Catholicism while living in Turino, never denounces religion. Rather, his work consistently shows a spiritual sensitivity that blends easily with his artistic and moralizing bent.

The Fall, according to Rousseau, occurred when, after man had developed language and had begun to cluster in communities, someone one day claimed that part of the land was his. This birth of private property was the root of inequality: "How many crimes, wars, murders; how much misery and horror mankind would have been spared if someone had pulled up the stakes and filled in the ditch and cried out to his fellows: "Beware of listening to this imposter; you are lost if you forget that the fruits of the earth are everyone's and the Earth itself is no one's."⁵

"Lost," because people had become enervated by the conveniences of civil society and had given themselves over to leisure. The things they once welcomed as improvements came to be required as necessities. Not having them produced more unhappiness than having them produced pleasure. People became aware of what others possessed and this necessitated that they control their *amour propre*. But most persons could not do so. To acquire more things, some relied on violence or deceit. The bourgeoisie became increasingly identified by what they had, not by what they were. Civility became an obligation and brought with it numerous occasions for offense. In their alienation and weakness, men ran to the protection of civil society and gladly gave their masters more power over them in the mistaken belief that it would advance their peace and security.

The final phase of this decline is the complete distortion of the social order. "The times preceding this last change would be times of troubles and calamities. But in the end everything would be swallowed up by the

⁴ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Second Discourse. Discourse on the Origin and the Foundations of Inequality among Men* (1754). In *Rousseau: The Discourses and Other Early Political Writings*, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought, Victor Gourevitch, ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 133:7, p. 133. All quotations to the *Second Discourse* are from this edition.

⁵ Par. 164, p. 161.

monster, and peoples would no longer have chiefs or laws but only tyrants."⁶

RELIGION IN CIVIL SOCIETY

What role did religion play in the society brought about by *amour propre*? To explain this, Rousseau crafts another mythical history, this time of religion.

At first, men had no kings save the gods. There were as many gods as peoples. But after a long time, men made other men their masters. National divisions led to polytheism. And this in turn gave rise to theological and civil intolerance, which Rousseau thinks were the same. When each state had its own cult, there were no wars of religion, because there was no distinction between its gods and its laws. The provinces of the gods were, so to speak, fixed by the boundaries of the nations. The gods of the pagans were not jealous gods; they shared the dominion of the world.⁷

In those times, there were no proselytizing or converting peoples. You had to conquer them. The Romans allowed the vanquished their gods, but required they worship Roman gods as well. Polytheism and paganism thus became a universal religion. However, the Jews refused to recognize the gods of their conquerors. This principle was the origin of religious war.

Then Jesus changed things. He set up a spiritual kingdom separating temporal and spiritual powers. This made the state no longer sovereign. As a result, Rome never fully trusted Christians, regarding them as rebels whose obedience was feigned. Christians then took power, and everything changed. "The humble Christians changed their language and saw the so-called Kingdom of the other world turned, under a visible leader, into the most violent of earthly despotisms."⁸ The result was a conflict whether to obey the priest or Caesar. That made all good polity impossible in Christian states.

Several people tried to restore the old system. The Kings of England tried to remedy this by becoming heads of the church. But the title made them more the conservatives of Christianity than its rulers.

Thomas Hobbes tried to remedy this problem but, Rousseau thought, should have seen that Christian insistence on sovereign spiritual power is incompatible with his system. Christianity does more harm by weakening than good by strengthening the state.

There are three types of religions for Rousseau: the Religion of Man; the Religion of Citizens, and the Religion of the Priest.⁹

⁶ Par. 191, p. 185.

⁷ *The Social Contract*, Book IV, Ch. VIII, p. 96 in Cress.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p.98 in Cress.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 98-103 in Cress.

The Religion of Man

Here there are no temples or altars. Its truth is the religion of the Gospel pure and simple. It is nature. It is the divine right of law.

The Religion of Citizens

This religion is a codified system. It is a national entity, with a visible cultic head. It treats all outsiders as infidels and barbarians, which, for Rousseau, amount to the same thing.

The Religion of the Priest

This system gives persons two loyalties. It is premised on the idea that there exist two societies, one heavenly, the other earthly. It creates in its followers contradictory obligations and, as such, is an antisocial concept. The best examples are Roman Catholicism and Buddhism.

The Religion of the Priest is worthless and bad for society. The Religion of the Citizens is good, in that it unites civil law and cult as a form of theocracy. But it is bad, because it is founded on lies, error, and superstitions.

The Religion of Man, however, is good both for the society and the individual. It teaches the individual virtue, an indispensable trait for citizens in free societies. It is compatible both with individual freedom and with the claims of society.

What is the Religion of Man? For Rousseau, it is what he calls "Christianity," but by this he means not the Christianity of his day, but that of the Gospels. At times he uses "Christianity" to refer to the Religion of the Priest, but most often he reserves the term for the pure teachings of Jesus, before his followers perverted them into a repressive system. This "Christianity" is the "holy, sublime, real religion of all men." It recognizes we are all the children of God and members of the common society that endures even beyond death.

But this religion has no relation to a civil law that takes men's minds off of earthly things. It is not contrary to the social spirit. Rousseau contrasts this with a society of Christians following the Religion of the Priest. The society of such Christians would be other-worldly and would disregard temporal welfare. Rousseau disliked this "Christianity" and saw it as too susceptible to manipulation and to usurpation of freedom in the name of God. It preached "only servitude and attendance." "True Christians are made to be slaves and they know it and do not mind much."¹⁰

Rousseau goes on to justify the dominion of the state over religion. Citizens owe their sovereign an account of their actions only to the extent that those actions matter to the community. But religion matters very much

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 101 in Cress.

to the community, insofar as its dogmas teach morality and social duties. Therefore, the sovereign is justified in fixing the articles of a purely civil profession of faith without which a man cannot be a good citizen. The sovereign cannot compel belief in those articles, but can punish anyone who publically endorses antisocial behavior and impiety. "If anyone, after publically recognizing these dogmas, behaves as if he does not believe them, let them be punished by death."¹¹

The dogmas of civil religion ought to be few, simple, and exactly worded:

The existence of a mighty, intelligent divinity.

The life to come.

The happiness of the just.

The punishment of the wicked.

The social contract of the law.

The proscription of intolerance of religious difference. "Tolerance should be given to all religions that tolerate others, so long as their doctrines contain nothing contrary to the duties of citizenship."¹² This toleration did not extend to atheists, however, who had no right to publically practice their atheism.¹³

Rousseau's denunciation of the Religion of the Priest was used by some liberals to justify destroying the church and ignoring the rights of religious people. While sometimes difficult, it is necessary to distinguish Rousseau's vehement denunciations from his positive affirmations about the Religion of Man. One might criticize Rousseau's Religion of Man as the creation of the state, one that is nothing more than an archetype of the social. Rousseau's insistence that religious citizens should not be able to call upon a higher power is crucial and argues for the triumph of the state, through the mechanism of the general will, over religious freedom. A religion thus restricted is a civil religion, stripped of its appeal to transcendence, unless that transcendence is purely a horizontal transcendence that represents society as a whole, rather than a vertical transcendence that implies the existence of an order outside of the control of the state.

Yet the vertical transcendence in Rousseau's Religion of Man may be supplied by his conception of nature and the liberty that comes from nature. The state's ability to dominate the Religion of Man may be limited by that transcendence. The Religion of Man may be re-examined and Rousseau's conception of the place of religion in society modified by seeing it in the

¹¹ *Ibid.* p. 102 in Cress.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Rousseau's distrust of atheists as immoral and hence not due the solicitude of the state was shared by the author of the famous *Letter on Toleration*, John Locke.

context of his broader discussion of religion. A key to this is Rousseau's "Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar" in *Emile*, published in 1762, the same year as *The Social Contract*.

By way of illustrating how to educate the young Emile, Rousseau tells the story of how, some thirty years in the past, a "young expatriate" found himself in an Italian city, reduced to poverty. After several pages, Rousseau reveals that he is speaking autobiographically about his days in Torino, where he sought asylum in a Catholic house and converted to Catholicism, only to soon flee and question his conversion. He then met a simple priest, whom he calls the Vicar of Savoyard, who took him into his home and looked after him with great solicitude and gentleness. After many days observing the priest's sincerity and holiness, the young lad asks him the secret to his happiness. The response is a long discourse by the Vicar on his faith, which outlines what the Vicar calls "natural religion." Natural religion is a rejection of skepticism, for it can be known by man, and in fact is known to man by way of his reason and his experience of the world and of himself. There is no question about God's existence; in fact, God is "the only absolute being, the only one that is truly active, sensing, thinking, willing by itself, and from which we get thought, sentiment, activity, will, freedom, and being."¹⁴ Freedom has its ultimate source in God, for we are free only because God wills it.

Some contemporary scholars have argued that Rousseau himself was more the skeptic than the Savoyard Vicar.¹⁵ The problem with such comments is that they interpret "skepticism" differently than Rousseau does in the "Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar." The Vicar says specifically he is not a skeptic, by which he means that the existence of God can be known by reason, without the aid of supernatural revelation. He praises English theologian Samuel Clarke's 1732 edition of *Being and Attributes of God, and the Obligations of Natural Reason, and the Truth and Certainty of the Christian Revelation, in Opposition to Hobbes, Spinoza, and the Author of the Oracles of Reason, and Other Deniers of Natural and Revealed Religion*. Clarke's book is a specific refutation of skepticism and naturalism. It adds the standard Christian claim that revelation provides what reason cannot; in Thomistic language, grace supposes and perfects nature and makes known to us the verities of the Christian faith. Rousseau's Vicar stops short of this, and that was one of the reasons *Emile* was condemned by both Catholics in Paris and Protestants in Geneva. The Vicar and Rousseau are "skeptical" about some peculiar doctrines of Christianity that seem to confound reason, but not skeptical

¹⁴ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile: Or On Education*, in *The Collected Writings of Rousseau*, vol. 13, trans. and ed. by Christopher Kelly and Allan Bloom (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2010), p. 447. All quotations from *Emile* are from this volume.

¹⁵ See, for example, Christopher Kelly's "Introduction," where he claims Rousseau himself was more the skeptic than the Savoyard Vicar, *Ibid.* xv-xxxi.

about the essential elements of Christianity, nor of the spiritual nature of God and the soul. Rousseau makes this even more specific in his response to Beaumont, published in 1763. The profession of faith of the Vicar, he says, has two parts: the first and most important is "intended to combat modern materialism, to establish the existence of God and natural Religion with all the force of which the Author is capable."¹⁶

The second part, less important by Rousseau's account, "raises doubts and difficulties about revelations in general."¹⁷ The skepticism of the Vicar is involuntary, because it stems from the limits of reason. With regard to those doctrines that defy reason, the Vicar "respects them in silence without either understanding or rejecting them, and humbles himself before the great Being who alone knows the truth."¹⁸ The practical effect of this is not apostasy, but "to make each more circumspect from within his own Religion about accusing others of bad faith from theirs."¹⁹

The nature-grace issue and its implications for his ideas about religion and civil society are further elucidated in the exchange with the Archbishop of Paris, Christophe de Beaumont, which we have been sampling. In his 1762 condemnation of *Emile*, Beaumont cast Rousseau as a false prophet, just the kind against which St. Paul warned. The "frivolous" style of Rousseau is a guise behind which hides a confused mix of "great truth with great errors." None of this is innocent or sincere in the Archbishop's eyes, but sinister and typical of an age of growing disbelief and sensuality. When Beaumont leaves aside the *ad hominem*s, he focuses on the issue of nature and grace, which indeed is at the heart of Rousseau's novel view of education. Beaumont takes issue with Rousseau's claim that "there is no original perversity in the human heart."²⁰

Rousseau's long response to Beaumont illustrates just what he thought about this claim that he was a naturalist and an enemy of Christianity. For Rousseau and many of the Christian Romantics he inspired, the rethinking of traditional notions of original sin did not represent an apostasy but an embrace of a more progressive view of human nature's perfectibility.

He is genuinely disturbed that Beaumont questions his faith and even suggests that were Beaumont a peer, he would take him to court and accuse him of slander. All the histrionics aside, he is particularly disturbed because he sees himself as a defender of faith in the face of the naturalists and

¹⁶ *Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Citizen of Geneva, to Christophe de Beaumont, Archbishop of Paris, Duke of St. Cloud, Peer of France, Commander of the Order of the Holy Spirit, Patron of the Sorbonne, etc.* (Amsterdam: Marc Michael Ray, 1763) in Christophe Kelly and Eve Grace, eds. *The Collected Writings of Rousseau*, Vol. 9 (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2001), p. 75.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

atheists like Spinoza, who deny the existence of the soul and of God. Rousseau then turns to his main critique of Beaumont's indictment of his educational philosophy on the basis of original sin.²¹

Rousseau admits that he substitutes a doctrine of original goodness for Augustine's concept of original sin. But he rejects Beaumont's assertions that this is unquestionably outside the pale of Christian theology. As he shows in his *Second Discourse* and in his *Social Contract*, man undoubtedly becomes evil. On that much he and Beaumont agree. Rousseau questions just how useful the doctrine of original sin is, if it does not explain how persons become bad, once they are cleansed of the taint of original sin through Baptism. Even if the effects of original sin linger, that does not explain the psychological and social mechanisms by which persons become inclined to vice. It merely states that persons sin because they are sinners; and they are sinners because they are persons. That is just not satisfying to Rousseau. He has a much more detailed and, he thinks, compelling account of how this happens.

In the state of nature before men come into close contact through civil society, the pure nature of persons remains unsullied. But as soon as they enter into society, they begin to observe one another and compare themselves to one another. The society soon develops preferences for certain traits. Persons experience the growth of *amour propre*, the vanity and self-consciousness that breeds envy, competition, and even violence.²²

In *Emile*, Rousseau speaks of how to educate a child. Beaumont accuses him of a philosophy that allows the child to indulge his evil propensities. But for Rousseau, there is distinction between positive education and negative education. Positive education attempts to inculcate adult virtues in children. The problem is, however, that children are not ready for them. As a result, the virtues remain external, distorted, or embraced in less than authentic ways. The result is that the child learns vice rather than virtue. Negative education, by contrast, attempts only to prevent the child from being spoiled, rather than to inculcate particular virtues. It stresses developing a child's natural propensities, which, Rousseau believes, can then at a later age be used to embrace virtue. Negative education is far from idle. It protects against vice and prepares a child for everything that can lead him to the truth when he is capable of understanding it.²³

Rousseau plainly considers himself a Christian and assumes Christian virtues as the basis for all good morality. He even suggests that he intended *Emile* to apply primarily to persons living in a state of grace after having received the sacrament of Baptism. His rejection of a certain understanding of the doctrine of original sin he describes this way: "seeking to nourish my heart with the spirit of the Gospel without torturing my reason with what appears to me obscure in it: persuaded, finally, that whoever loves God

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

above all things and his neighbor as himself is a true Christian. I shall strive to be one, leaving aside all these doctrinal subtleties, all this important gibberish with which the Pharisees muddle our duties and obfuscate our faith; along with St. Paul placing faith itself beneath charity."²⁴

By the time of the *Letter to Beaumont*, Rousseau had long since renounced Catholicism and returned to his native Calvinism in which he rejoiced, even though many of his fellow Genevans had their own troubles with *Emile*. He tells Beaumont that he was most fortunate to be born a Calvinist who takes Scripture and reason as the unique rules of faith. Like them, he challenges the authority of men and agrees to submit to them only to the extent he perceives their truth.

It is very hard to see in Rousseau's language anything but the confessions of a person who struggles with faith, but who clearly embraces Christianity and strives to live according to its precepts. "I join in my heart with the true servants of Jesus Christ and the true adorers of God, to offer him the homages of his Church in the communion of the faithful."²⁵ These are not the words of one who denies the existence of God and the soul, not the words of a naturalist, but the words of a Christian humanist, intent on the perfectibility of human nature and on his own right to proclaim his understanding of faith in an original way. In that regard, Rousseau is a prototype for the faith of millions today who reject premodern understandings of religious authority that stifle inquiry in the name of orthodoxy. He does not reduce religion to his own sentiments, does not reject Scripture or tradition, does not shun Christian communion, does not question the existence of God or any of the essential doctrines of the faith. He simply cannot be seen as the model of an educational system that leaves out God or a civil society that rejects the role of religion.

Nature, then, for Rousseau is a nature bathed in the divine and containing within itself God-given potential. Within it is a transcendent element that relativizes the secular. With regard to civil society, it functions as a check against the tyranny of the general will. That transcendent element prevents the general will from becoming, in the old joke about Rousseau's political theory, the General's will, a reference to Napoleon's distortion of the Rousseau-inspired French revolutionaries.

Another way to speak about this is in terms of natural rights. Here we recall Leo Strauss' discussion of the importance of natural rights as a bulwark against tyranny. According to Strauss, modern democracies have rejected natural law, which is tantamount to saying that all life is positive right. This means that what is right is determined exclusively by the legislators and the courts. Only the will to power and ultimately nihilism remain in such a regime.

Liberals sometimes welcome this abandonment of natural right as an expansion of individual freedom and toleration, because the society cannot

²⁴ *Ibid.* p. 47.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

determine what is intrinsically right or wrong. There is a tension between respect for diversity and recognition of natural right.

Strauss insists that the basis for natural right must be non-teleological, rejecting the Catholic tradition of natural law that sees natural law as the subject's participation by reason in the divine law. On this point, Rousseau would differ, claiming that God is the basis of natural right.²⁶

Although there remains a problem reconciling Rousseau's rhapsodic praises of the Religion of Man and nature with his insistence that the Religion of the Priest creates an untenable duality that society cannot allow, his thought, nevertheless, opens the possibility for seeing religion as vital to civil society. The "Religion of Man," "true religion," or "natural religion," he thinks, should be acknowledged by society, because it provides the pre-political basis of the values on which the legitimacy of the regime depends. God is the source of human freedom. As such, that freedom is never entirely subjugated to the general will in civil society. Despite the warrants some of Rousseau's famous disciples, like Marx and Pol Pot, found in his thinking to suppress religion in their societies, it appears that Rousseau himself offered a more nuanced view of the role of religion in civil society. Rousseau knew the power of religion to form solidarity and to shape social identity as well as personal identity. Religion shapes a deep personal identity that is by definition transcendent and social.

Traditional notions of citizenship are based on exclusion. In some liberal states the Religion of Citizens has become the official religion of the state, what people like Robert Bellah call "civil religion."²⁷ All outsiders are in one sense nonbelievers, barbarians, the Other that must be excluded in some way. But as Levinas has shown us, the Other creates in us a responsibility to acknowledge the limits of our power over the Other.²⁸ It challenges our act of exclusion. While Rousseau's Religion of the Priest and his Religion of Citizens define both the act of transcendence in their prescriptions and insistence on the experience of solidarity in their embodiment of public order, the face of the Other denies both claims. Rousseau's Religion of Man, by contrast, provides a basis for acknowledging in the Other what we experience in ourselves.

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²⁶ Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), pp. 2-7.

²⁷ Robert Bellah, *The Broken Covenant: American Civil Religion in a Time of Trial* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975).

²⁸ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totalité et infini: essai sur l'extériorité* (La Hayne: M. Nijhoff, 1961).

CHAPTER XXV

THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE HUMAN BEING IN CHRISTIAN EXISTENTIALISM AND PHENOMENOLOGY: S. KIERKEGAARD AND J. TISCHNER

MAREK JAN PYTKO

Abstract: What does it mean to be an authentic human being in the sense of S. Kierkegaard and J. Tischner? How do those ideas refer to the contemporary human condition, to the challenges one has to face in today's civilization? Why is it worthwhile to be an authentic human being?

This paper addresses the importance and meaning of the problem of being authentic as a human being. Kierkegaard (a representative of Christian existentialism) formulates that problem as one of the most important in his whole work in confrontation with everyday life. He claims that:

- Man is a dialectical being that is in a concrete existence of eternity and finitude, time and eternity, possibility and necessity, a synthesis of soul (the hard nucleus), body and spirit, in short – the synthesis.

- One of the most fundamental, crucial determinants of human existence is “time.” This element is of key importance for the description of human existence, of whether a human being lives in an authentic or inauthentic way. In the horizon of “past,” “present,” and “future,” especially in the perspective of the future, the human being continuously transcends himself, becoming himself – or not. This is strictly related to eternity that encounters man at the moment of “now.”

Every “moment,” every “while,” and their sum, and eventually the process of their sequence, or of human decision, always happen as related to eternity. The human being becomes authentic when, in this process of “time” and “eternity” coming together, he opens up and changes his life, and develops toward authentic existence. The human synthesis and dialectical character become more and more a unity, approaching harmony, completeness, or, in short – authentic existence.

What is it that best determines one's authentic existence? It is his “spirit” and the necessity to decide upon choice. The human being must consciously choose a choice, decide to make decisions, always in the horizon of the present that is becoming eternity or its negation, which would be the perspective of inauthentic existence.

Tischner (a phenomenologist) perceives the authenticity problem – which is one of the basic keys to understanding his philosophy – from a different angle. He claims that the problem of authenticity of the human being begins at the moment of encounter with another human being. The

encounter with another human being is more fundamental and original than the way man is with objects. The word “face” epitomizes the authenticity of the encounter and the truth of being – the truth that can be masked at the cost of hiding the “face.” Dialogue is necessary to discover the difference between mask and face, that is, between falsehood and the truth, illusion and authenticity.

Tischner writes: “The choice of one’s own authenticity is the choice to ‘be oneself’ and the choice of everything that this ‘being oneself’ entails. If, however, ‘being oneself’ is an object of choice, it means that one is not oneself. A paradoxical situation – something is and is not at the same time. One can become ‘oneself,’ but one can also lose ‘oneself.’ Freedom is the possibility of doing either the former or the latter.” The immediate sense of freedom is authenticity. Nothingness is a characteristic of freedom “in itself.” Another meaning of freedom, an erroneous meaning, is a depersonalized non-descriptness of a creature lost in the world. This is also a meaning, though a tragic one.

We are ready to fight at barricades to expand the limits of our freedom, yet we have completely lost the sense of what authentic love (the highest level of authenticity) means. But there is no freedom without love, just as there is no love without freedom. In order to solve this problem Tischner compares two characters: Abraham and Adam. What does Adam do when God calls him by name? – He runs away and hides. What does Abraham do in an analogous situation? He says: “Here I am, Lord!” They show two different attitudes: Adam runs away to find a place on earth where he could hide from God. Abraham meets the challenge and says: “Here I am.” To a choice, Abraham responds with a choice, revealing the essence of the Biblical image of love. To love means to choose. Tischner says: “God chooses, man responds to the choice, choosing God.” What is the faculty that makes the choice? It is the human will. A bond called fidelity is also born here. What does it mean to be faithful? It means to carry within oneself the choice once made. To have decided once and forever means to make decisions every moment of one’s life. Thus love means fidelity.

Some conclusions: 1. The fundamental problem of the human being – which is also the problem of the contemporary person – is that of the human drama born of inauthentic existence. 2. The drama is particularly enhanced by mass media (aesthetic existence), which weakens the human ability to decide, “stealing” the human “now,” and – in consequence – depriving man of his identity and authenticity. 3. One of the main dramas of our times is considering love and fidelity as if they were fire and water. The fundamental schizophrenia of the contemporary person is the schizophrenia of fidelity. This leads to inauthentic existence and destruction of one’s identity, to not being oneself. And so on.

Keywords: authenticity, now, choice, man as a dramatic being, fidelity

Two great philosophers and theologians, living in different times, in a different epoch: Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855, born in Copenhagen, Denmark) and Józef Tischner (1931-2000, born in Krakow, Poland), were thinkers who placed man and the values that constitute him, surround him, and define him, at the center of philosophizing. One of the key values in their philosophy was the authenticity of the human being. What does it mean to be authentic regardless of the passing time, changing fashions, and tides of events? What is this harbor that reveals the truth about man despite the changing times and cultures? What makes it fresh and radiant today, in the context of contemporary civilization, in the era of mass communication and globalization? Why is it still worthwhile to be an authentic person and to look for the essence of authenticity? These are the questions that I would like to answer by following, in your company, the thought of those two learned men who, although separated by time (about a century), language, and culture, were led – through the honesty of their approach to the questions of value, meaning, and the mystery of man – to the same essential issue: that of man's authenticity.

In order to tackle this issue, first of all we have to answer the question: Who is man, according to Kierkegaard? What are man's characteristics? According to the Danish philosopher, man is a dialectical being that is a concrete existence of eternity and finiteness, time and eternity, possibility and necessity, a synthesis of soul, body, and spirit – in short, the synthesis. This definition of man confirms that, according to Kierkegaard, one of the fundamental and decisive determinants of the human existence is "time." For him, as for many other existentialists, this factor is particularly important, as it constitutes the starting point for the description of the authentic or inauthentic mode of human existence. When analyzing the common understanding of "time" ("past," "present," and "future"), the philosopher claims that the future has a greater meaning than the two others, because existence is always a "going by," a continuation of the way and a projection toward the future.¹ Existence toward the future is meaningful for life and brings about its own self-restoration. This possibility is connected, in a particular way, to the perspective of "eternity." Going even further, Kierkegaard observes that if we define time as "infinite succession," it seems that in its very essence it contains definitions of present, past, and future. Actually, it is not so, because "if, in the infinite succession of time, one could, in fact, find a foothold that would serve as a dividing point, then this division would be quite correct. But precisely because every moment, like the sum of the moments, is a process (a going-by), no moment is present, and in the same sense there is neither past nor present nor future."² What, in fact, does the Danish philosopher say? Kierkegaard claims that eternity is the present! Eternity and time touch us

¹ Cf. S. Kierkegaard, *Concetto dell'Angoscia*, a cura di C. Fabro (Milano: Opere, Sansoni Editor, 1993), p. 157.

² *Ibid.*, p. 154 (translated by MJP).

every moment and it is exactly in man that they find their privileged meeting point. Kierkegaard's is the concept of temporality, where time constantly cuts through eternity and eternity continually penetrates time.³

We are, however, interested in the question: What has this synthesis of time and eternity to do with the authenticity of the existence of man as an individual? The answer is: very much, as every human being is in the center of the process of the encounter of time and eternity. When man consciously opens up to this process of the encounter of time with eternity, when in his spirit he opens up to eternity, he changes his own life, gradually evolving toward authentic existence. Man as the synthesis and his dialectical character become a unity, increasing in harmony and fullness, and, in two words: authentic existence. In this perspective, Kierkegaard would say, the synthesis of time and eternity is not another synthesis, but an expression, according to which man is the synthesis of body and soul guided by the spirit. What is it then that in the existence of this individual determines his being authentic or inauthentic? Is it his spirit that must decide about choosing, or choose choosing (choice), and subsequently, along with the conscious act of choosing the choice, must choose *what* to choose? An individual human being, with his psychophysical structure, in the horizon of time and eternity, faces unlimited possibilities of choice. Theoretically, the number of possibilities is infinite; in practice, however, facing the decision, man must give preference to one of them. Each decision to choose contains, on one hand, a risk, and on the other hand, an opportunity, a chance, and its cost for man is, and must be, at least the consequence of his choice. The decisions made by man at every moment of his life may become increasingly "his decision," and in this way, every moment of his life, he is offered the chance to become increasingly himself. In this sense, decision becomes the first factor of the challenge leading toward the authenticity of human existence. According to Kierkegaard, this results from the principle of combining "possibility" with "necessity," with unceasing actualization of existence in temporality. Man must choose – but what is his main choice? It is the choice between good and evil, truth and falsehood. In consequence of these choices, man enters various stages of existence: aesthetic, ethical, religious, and Christian. Climbing this ladder, man does not always choose justly and correctly. It frequently happens that wishing to choose something better, he actually chooses worse. What are the consequences of such choices – or of the decision not to choose (typical acts of aesthetic existence).

A man who flees from the necessity to make conscious and responsible decisions in his life initially experiences anxiety, next melancholy (sadness, depression), and in consequence gradually moves away from the authenticity of his own existence, which leads to degradation of the spirit and, in time, also of the body. Mozart's character Don Giovanni, with all his sexuality, is a typical example of this process.

³ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 156.

Conversely, man approaches the authenticity of his existence when he focuses on and takes up his own spiritual development without losing himself in the limitless drama of possibilities. This direction results from the process of actualization through which anxiety and melancholy can be overcome and eliminated. In such a process, and only through a true and authentic effort of existence, man can form absolutely, if he chooses his way of existence by rising to the challenge of living an ethical-religious life. Human life consists in continuously transcending oneself, and it is never given to man once and for all. This fact results simply from the human condition, and, in particular, from its temporality. Speaking about the inauthentic attitude toward oneself, Kierkegaard observes that it would be just a waste of time to struggle to become what one already is, that is, oneself; but this is exactly why the task is so very difficult, most difficult of all, because man (an individual) cannot just be himself as he must be constantly becoming. The most tragic state, that of despair, consists for Kierkegaard in the paradox of being unable to flee from oneself and, at the same time, to possess oneself – this is the extreme consequence of inauthentic existence. Despair is the destruction of the relationship of man with himself. In contrast, an authentic man strives to possess himself, or to become united with himself, never completely reaching this goal in time.

As we have said, in the process of becoming, man actualizes himself at various stages. In this going-by, man can progress or move backwards, but making decisions to strive toward the highest dimension of religious existence, the Christian existence, man is led to full existence. The outcomes of this evolution are, for Kierkegaard, closely related to another factor that strongly affects the authenticity of existence – or the absence of authenticity – and precipitates it in a particular way: it is repetition. What is repetition?

Along with decision, it is another fundamental category of existence that builds up authenticity in a particular way. It is the way of recovering oneself anew. How, in what way? *Repetition* is, in a way, a synthesis of the memory of past experiences with what is potentially coming with a new existential situation. Repetition recalls in our memory the past, which, dominated by the fidelity to repetition, determines the sense of continuing to make appropriate, authentic choices, which unites and unifies man in himself. The unceasing continuation of repetitions makes fundamental and auto-affirmative choices complete themselves. Such repetitions, according to Kierkegaard, lead to living the true and authentic life. Such a person is not like a boy chasing butterflies, does not imbibe in the glory of the world, is not like an old woman sitting and spinning memories of the past, but in a quiet, concrete, and determined way strides toward the future. By repetition, man is able to collect his past to use it in his present situation. In this way, time may become a platform for his projects, may create a human “continuum,” where past actions anticipate actualization of the future. With repetition, man returns to himself, begins to live, becomes himself again, possesses himself. Repetition enables him to come back to himself from the

limitless drama of possibilities that may provoke the mentioned anxiety and melancholy of existence. With repetition, in Kierkegaard's vision, authenticity appears as an act of going-by, as rebirth and return to existence chosen in a deep way, akin to artistic or religious creation.

Existence and the process of becoming always need something more than pure reflection on them. The authenticity of existence cannot be adopted only by thought – on the contrary, by virtue of the very definition of existence, openness, choice, creating projects, and accepting responsibility for one's own life would result in the full existence of the subject. Therefore, one element is still needed: it is determination, or the passion of commitment, which – along with reflection, repetition, decision, and action – is an element of inner completion, the factor that comes from within the subject.⁴ Why is it so important for living the fullness of authentic existence? With passion “man cuts himself off from mere possibilities and identifies with thought in order to exist in himself.”⁵ “Passion is the continuation of the moment that at the same time takes on movement and is its impulse.”⁶ With passion, uniting all his strength and psychophysical powers, man discovers new energies of life that make it easier for him to reach various mountaintops, to achieve what he desires.

Passion so understood is the motor of all human existence; it supports man's determination and makes the process of his perfection faster and more precise. Obviously, we do not mean here the *world's* passion, by which an individual engages in an absolute relationship with the relative, which may lead to vanity, cunning, jealousy, etc.⁷ No, that type of passion does not let the authenticity of human existence grow; on the contrary, it weakens and belittles it. There is, however, a different type of passion that leads toward moral and spiritual values. The image of this challenge (this direction) is Socrates, so often quoted by Kierkegaard. Socrates, with an admirable passion and being exceptionally honest toward himself and others, never stopped in his efforts to find the truth and authentic existence. With an extraordinary passion, knowing no compromise, he preferred more difficult and risky decisions to becoming unfaithful to what he believed in and what was the object of his deepest devotion.

There is, however, along with this passion, a passion of a higher nature – the passion that, according to Kierkegaard, is related to faith and gives the authenticity of existence an even higher and stronger impulse. Yes, the existence of a believer is even more passionate and ardent than the Socratic one. That is so because existence combined with the paradox of faith yields from itself the maximum passion.⁸ With the knowledge of God in a

⁴ Cf. S. Kierkegaard, *Postilla conclusiva non scientifica*, a cura di C. Fabro (Milano: Sansoni Editor, 1993), p. 327.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 445 (translated by MJP).

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 430 (translated by MJP).

⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 492.

⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 454.

personal relationship, this passion can lead man to the highest levels of existence. In it, man confronts in the deepest way all the elements of tension and contradictions coming from his nature. Here man, as an individual, experiences in an extreme way that he really is the embodiment of infinity and finiteness, a synthesis of soul, body, and spirit. In such a limitless passion, the subject is ready for the greatest things, including the sacrifice of himself, because he has a lot to win and a lot to lose. The price is immense: not only eternal life, but above all, eternal salvation. Therefore, the passion that refers to eternity strives to be taken on from within, without jealousy, envy, or the lack of hope. This passion does not want to manifest itself in a polemic as something important for existence, because it could lose its intensity.⁹ Kierkegaard speaks about the necessity of possessing this passion when he interprets the famous parable of five wise and five foolish virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom (Mt 25:1-12). The foolish virgins, says Kierkegaard, went to a shop to buy new oil for their lamps, having previously forgotten about the oil that should have been an expression of their preparedness and infinite passion in their desire to meet the Bridegroom any moment.¹⁰ To lose oil means, according to the Danish thinker, to lose the infinite passion, to be unable to see the truth of authentic existence understood as the time of being in love and as an attitude of lively enthusiasm for the Bridegroom. This passion is, for Kierkegaard, the highest and the greatest one.

Thus, in Kierkegaard's thought, the most important elements of authenticity, which is the fundamental challenge of human existence, may be traced back to three: decision, repetition, and passion. From the lowest level of existence, which would be the stage of aesthetic existence, to its highest level, which is the Christian existence, man experiences one of the greatest challenges of his life: the authenticity of his existence. In order to respond to it, man needs to know himself, to become himself, but along with this, it is also necessary to open up – with commitment and passion – toward relationships with others. In particular, man can reach the fullness of existence thanks to the openness toward and the constant relationship with eternity, with God-Man. Kierkegaard says that "I" becomes completely transparent, that is, authentic, only in God.¹¹

Józef Tischner (phenomenologist) – with whom the problem of authenticity is also one of the main elements necessary to understand his philosophy – approaches this issue from a slightly different angle. In order to grasp it, one must ask an analogous question: How does Tischner see Man? Who is Man? What reveals the authentic, or inauthentic, truth of his existence? Taking Hegel as his starting point, Tischner says that "the person is a being 'for himself.' Man was given a task for himself. His life is his

⁹ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 488.

¹⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 269.

¹¹ Cf. S. Kierkegaard, *La malattia mortale*, a cura di C. Fabro, (Milano: Opere, Sansoni Editore, 1993), p. 634.

becoming. Therefore, like no other being he can be, *per se*, 'through himself.' Man responds to the call of values, and in this way not only does he transform the world, but he also creates himself as value in this world. In Man value has become person."¹² What values in relation to the person has Tischner in mind here? In order to solve this problem, we must start with the fundamental claim made by Tischner. He asserts that man is a dramatic being. What does it mean that man is a dramatic being? It means that he partakes in a drama. It is in the drama and through the drama that man reveals who he really is. "To be a dramatic being means to live through a given time surrounded by other people and with the earth as the stage under one's feet. Man would not be in a dramatic existence without those three factors: openness to the other man, openness to the stage of the drama, and openness to the passing time."¹³

Let us begin with the concept of time, which for Tischner, as for Kierkegaard, plays an important role, although its meaning is different. For Tischner, time means dramatic time, different than the objective time known from natural sciences: the time of physical and chemical processes. However, "it is the time that is happening *between us* as participants of one and the same drama. (...) It is not – strictly speaking – within me or within you, but just between us. It has its own logic – proper only to itself – that governs its continuity and irreversibility. (...) Under our feet there is our world – the stage of the drama. We walk on it, see it and hear it, touch it with our hands. Representations of the stage may be different. For Aristotle, the stage is the totality of existing things, of substances; for George Berkeley, it is a representation common for human beings, a dream induced in their souls by God himself. But for people involved in living through the drama, the stage of life is primarily the plane of meetings and partings."¹⁴ The real drama of man begins the very moment a human being meets another human being, which may lead to their parting. The stage and space are the background for the drama, the background against which Tischner distinguishes two relationships: the relationship of man with other man and the relationship of man with the world that is the stage of his drama. The relationship with other man is that of mutual responsibility, of the most profoundly understood dialogue, whereas the relationship of man to the stage is an intentional relationship – one of objectification. It may happen that not only does man commit an error, but he may also consciously take the other for the stage, and the stage for the other. In both cases the person is reduced to the role of an object. Tischner calls it an ontological illusion.

¹² J. Tischner, *Etyka wartości i nadziei*, in: *Wobec wartości*, joint work, D. von Hildebrand, J.A. Kłoczowski, J. Paściak and J. Tischner (Poznań, 1982), p. 86 (translated by MJP).

¹³ J. Tischner, *Filozofia dramatu* (Kraków: Znak, 2006), p. 5 (translated by MJP).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 6 (translated by MJP).

We have said that the problem of the authenticity of man is revealed with a particular strength at the moment of one human being meeting the other. Such an encounter is of a fundamental character and it is more original than an encounter of man with objects. Following the erring ways of the encounters of man with the other, we can come close to – or move away from – the proper way that leads toward the authentic choice and authentic existence of man. In this perspective, man is capable of three kinds of erring ways:

- a) going astray in the element of beauty;
- b) going astray in the element of truth;
- c) going astray in the element of goodness.

a) Going astray in the element of beauty: The beauty of objects, landscapes, and particularly of the other person, enchants and deludes. Beauty transports, elates, enraptures, but may also mislead, tempt, and deceive. Sometimes beauty may lead to cruelty when the enchanted is driven to insanity.¹⁵ Beauty is lyrical and musical – that is why it is so easy to surrender to it, let oneself be taken to heaven, and sometimes go seriously astray. It is so fragile, and this very fragility forebodes tragedy, the more so that it is not bound to fidelity.¹⁶ Tischner says that beauty – like in Kierkegaard – “is not a dead appearance of an object, but the light that gives life and takes life, the flame that gives warmth but also burns, and it is the value with which the drama of man starts. The point of this drama is not ‘to be enraptured or not to be enraptured,’ but to save oneself or to perish.”¹⁷ Thus the end may be tragic; beauty may be substituted for goodness.

b) Going astray in the element of truth: Two examples show the relationship of man to truth and its twofold consequences. The first is the apology of Socrates, who defends himself from mendacious accusations, the second – the defense of Raskolnikov, from Fyodor Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment*, who commits murder, is detained, and is interrogated. For the former, truth is the way of saving life, for the latter – the way of saving life is the lie. The former tells the truth, although he is accused of lies, the latter tells lies presenting falsehood as truth. “Presenting falsehood as truth, the liar strives for consolidating falsehood in the thus created system of illusions. It is not illusion that stands at the origin of the falsehood of speech, but the falsehood of speech stands at the origin of illusion.”¹⁸ Who is the true killer and who perishes, who is the ultimate victim? The liar! As the consequence of killing the truth that previously lived in him, he kills himself spiritually, from within. As a result, his existence becomes particularly inauthentic.

¹⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 91.

¹⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 95.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 94 (translated by MJP).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 105 (translated by MJP).

c) Going astray in the element of goodness: The central interest of the philosophy of drama is the experience of the other human being which, as Emmanuel Levinas will say (Tischner observes), is originally given through the experience of his face. Objects are given to us through their appearance, while man is given through the face. A revelation of the face is always a revelation of the truth of the other person. The experience of the face has an ethical character. The face of the other is the face of a foreigner, a widow, or an orphan, says Tischner, referring to the Bible. The face is given to us with this person's misery – that of a foreigner who, in a country that is not his own, asks the way; of a widow who has lost her husband; of an orphan who has lost his parents. They all feel that in some way they are strangers in this world. Like them, every man, claims Tischner, is constantly exposed to the danger of humiliation, contempt, death. Therefore, the face – that is naked – continually says: You will not kill, you will not commit murder! You will not kill me physically or spiritually; you will not make me physically lose my freedom; you will not betray me! Therefore, the fundamental experience of man is agathological¹⁹. In the word “face,” the authenticity of the encounter with the other and with the truth of one's own being is established. This truth may be masked at the cost of hiding the “face.” Man is man not only because he builds cities, roads, and creates technology and metaphysics, but because he is a creature capable of understanding the good and of experiencing the good, in relation to other men. If he becomes being-for-others, in consequence he also becomes being-for-himself, becomes himself. He needs to open to others, to enter a dialogue with them in order to discover the difference between the mask and the face, falsehood and truth, illusion and the authenticity of his own face. And here man is a dynamic being, not in the biological, but in the spiritual sense. Therefore, man constitutes himself in the horizon of good and evil, values and anti-values, becoming an authentic or inauthentic being. Man himself plays the most important role in this drama, at its very foundation, building up or degrading himself. In all three kinds of going astray, the human being becomes himself only when he has first been a man of dialogue and becomes a responsible actor in his own drama – this is exactly the moment when he becomes authentic. For Tischner, as for Kierkegaard, one cannot say that man “is,” but that he is constantly becoming – man is process. Freedom is a particular value for Tischner in the perspective of the authenticity of the human being. Tischner analyzes it under two classical aspects of the Hegelian theory of contraries: “freedom from” and “freedom to.” “Freedom from” is the human capacity and power to say “no,” it is human rebellion against the past or the future. A protester always protests in the name of a hope, which is also related to a risk. “Freedom to” is directed toward something, toward a value. But “freedom to” is also a form of creativity, inner freedom, and ability of self-determination, thanks to which man creates himself from within. Man

¹⁹ Greek word “AGATHON” means goodness.

creates himself even when he is unable to create anything in the external world.

Following Hegel, Tischner explains “external freedom” and “internal freedom” by describing the condition of a slave who has two ways out of his slavery: either to kill his master and free himself from oppression, or to accept slavery. None of these choices is really an act of freedom.²⁰ The slave – that is, the man deprived of freedom – not only does not do what he wants, but he also is not the person he can and should be – actually, he IS NOT. Tischner says that the loss of freedom means falling into what Heidegger calls an inauthentic way of being. What act then would be the act of freedom? According to Hegel, the act of freedom is assuming the third attitude – rising above the contraries. Freedom does not consist in going to either to the right or to the left, but upward.²¹ True freedom consists in creating oneself anew, in surpassing the contraries in the dramatic situation. This way upward is an inner creation, a constitution of the “thinking I.” This Hegelian aspect of freedom as a value would determine Tischner’s philosophical thought in this aspect. The essence of liberation lies in the experience contributed by Stoicism and Christianity. Both Stoics and Christians rose above the situations where slavery could exist – and actually did exist. As a matter of fact, without this inner experience, without this step upward, it is impossible, claims Tischner, to speak about authentic freedom. In sum, the proper expression of freedom is no longer man’s choice of values that are in front of him, but also – and perhaps even in the first place – making the chosen values “his own.” Tischner writes: “The choice of one’s own authenticity is the choice to ‘be oneself’ and the choice of everything that this ‘being oneself’ entails. If, however, ‘being oneself’ is an object of choice, it means that one is not oneself. A paradoxical situation – something is and is not at the same time. One can become ‘oneself,’ but one can also lose ‘oneself.’ Freedom is the possibility of doing either the former or the latter.” The immediate sense of freedom is authenticity. Nothingness is a characteristic of freedom “in itself.” Another meaning of freedom, though a tragic one, is a depersonalized nondescriptness of a creature lost in the world.

There is still one more step to make. Along with beauty, goodness, and freedom, love is a value of particular importance for Tischner. In this context, it can be observed that we are ready to fight at barricades to expand the limits of our freedom, yet we have completely lost the sense of what authentic love (the highest level of authenticity) means. But there is no freedom without love, just as there is no love without freedom. In order to solve this problem, Tischner compares two characters: Abraham and Adam. What does Adam do when God calls him by name? He runs away and hides. What does Abraham do in an analogous situation? He says: “Here I am, Lord!” They show two different attitudes: Adam runs away to find a

²⁰ Cf. J. Tischner, *Filozofia dramatu*, p. 154.

²¹ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 159.

place on earth where he could hide from God. Abraham meets the challenge and says: “Here I am.” To a choice, Abraham responds with a choice, revealing the essence of the Biblical image of love. To love means to choose. Tischner says: “God chooses, man responds to the choice, choosing God.”²² What is the faculty that makes the choice? It is the human will. A bond called fidelity is also born here. What does it mean to be faithful? It means to carry within oneself the choice once made. A poet says: “To have decided once and forever means to make decisions every moment of one’s life.”²³ Thus love would mean fidelity, and fidelity is at the same time a condition of authenticity. To love truly means first of all to be truly authentic.

CONCLUSION

Why have I chosen these two philosophers for this study entitled “Values of the Human Person|: Contemporary Challenges”? I believe that the fundamental problem in contemporary culture, civilization, and mentality is the problem of man’s being lost as an individual in the mass. This concerns not only man but also society; being lost, we suffer from the sickness of inauthentic existence. In mass pop-culture and the global sale of ideas, services, and products, we are given – as though on a plate (for breakfast, lunch, and dinner) – an ideal of life that usually leads to aesthetic existence – a chain of sensual pleasures, intellectual pride, power, the cult of money. Mass media, because it is, at the moment, the main channel through which we are provided with an infinite number of offers, does not teach what and how to choose in order to live deeply, consciously, and with passion. Instead, it involves man in a virtual existence, steals his “now,” softens his capacity for decision-making, and turns him into an object in the name of wrongly understood freedom. Then, man has no strength to change, to make Kierkegaard’s “repetition,” and even if he succeeds in it, given four to five hours of watching television a day (not to mention other media), those “repetitions” often lead toward dehumanization, addictions, and the breaking up of one’s identity, to the lack of being oneself. The chance to exit this loop is to come back to the roots, to what man is, where he comes from, where he is going, and what the meaning is of his being. Yet in order to change this, one must choose the choice, must want to be an authentic person – in the encounter with himself, others, and God.

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²² J. Tischner, *Wiara ze słuchania* (Kraków: Znak, 2009), p. 97 (translated by MJP).

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 97 (translated by MJP).

CHAPTER XXVI

THE VALUE OF THE HUMAN PERSON: RABINDRANATH TAGORE'S RELEVANCE TO THE CHALLENGES OF TODAY'S WORLD

SEEMA BOSE

Abstract: Rabindranath Tagore was a Bengali poet, and the first Asian to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature. 'Man' occupies a vital position in Tagore's thinking. Creation through art, poetry, music, dance, and philosophy all stem from what he calls "the surplus in man." Creativity elevates man from a mere physical being to a complete man. In his capacity for creativity, man realizes the divine within himself. Tagore's love of nature and for natural beauty, cannot be overlooked. According to him, human personality cannot develop if there is a division between the human individual and nature or the world in general. In the human person nature becomes articulated, articulated in living. Love is the root of all relationships. Love is superior to knowledge. Fulfillment is achieved within interpersonal relationships in spite of pain, suffering, and death. At a time when violence plagues our world and when human beings are so often treated as tools in a world of objects, it is good to be reminded by Tagore that in reality our being is concrete, that is, not to be reduced to any kind of abstraction. Though people belong to different cultures, no one should be exploited at the cost of another. Tagore's great emphasis on the dignity of the human person needs to be remembered in the midst of our tendency to think in terms of globalizing powers, in relation to which we usually feel that we are helpless pawns.

Keywords: Rabindranath Tagore, creativity, "the surplus in man," humanism, multicultural education.

Rabindranath Tagore was a Bengali poet, the first Asian to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature. The year 2011 being the one hundred fiftieth birth anniversary of Tagore, it is an appropriate time to pay tribute to the ideas of this great man and reassess their validity in the contemporary situation. Tagore was influenced by Chandidas, a Medieval poet. Chandidas said that there is nothing above man. "...The truth of man is the highest truth, there is no other truth above it."¹ Tagore writes, "Man has a fund of emotional energy that is not all occupied with his self-preservation. This surplus seeks its outlet in the creation of Art, for man's civilization is built

Diacritical marks have not been used.

¹ Rabindranath Tagore, *The Religion of Man* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1958), p. 113.

upon this surplus.”² Creation through art, poetry, music, dance, and philosophy all stem from what he calls “the surplus in man.” Creativity and self-expression elevate man from a mere physical being to a complete man. In his capacity for creativity man realizes the divinity within himself. Personal development depends upon the realization of the innate potentiality of the self. Our endeavors should be directed toward the actualization of this potential. Art enriches our lives. Not only are music, painting, and drama sources of relaxation and enjoyment, they are equally important as academic disciplines. Keeping this in mind, Tagore included arts in the curriculum of Visva-Bharati in Santiniketan. Tagore encouraged teachers and pupils to have direct contact with the community around them, and emphasized community singing and community service. He believed that this would help in developing social sensibility.

Tagore’s ideas were based on his lived experience. In this connection, the Baul singers of his village had a great impact on him. Bauls did not follow any formality. Wandering from village to village they sang, danced, and rejoiced in everyday life. In tune with this spirit, Tagore discarded conventional religious beliefs and practices, believing that rigid religious beliefs and practices are obstacles to progress. For example, he found nothing wrong in a Brahmin girl marrying a Muslim boy. “Eternal religion of heart is greater truth than society.”³ Tagore said, “I do not put my faith in institutions, but in the individuals all over the world who think clearly, feel nobly, and act rightly. They are the channel of moral truth.”⁴ God is immanent in man and each individual man is sacred. This is perhaps the most important of the messages Tagore has for us.

Tagore’s love of nature and natural beauty must be stressed. Tagore once wrote, “Don’t arrange a meeting, if you want to remember me after my death, but come under the shades of the shal trees.”⁵ Men and women are the creations of nature. In this connection, Tagore appreciated the work of Dadu. Like Dadu, he held the same idea of the formless seeking form and form seeking the formless. We have come from the infinite and we

² Rabindranath Tagore, *Personality* (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1959), p. 11.

³As referred to in S.A. Masud, “Tagore on Human Values,” in Bhudeb Chaudhuri and K.G. Subramanyam (eds.), *Rabindranath Tagore and the Challenges of Today* (Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1988), pp. 74-75.

⁴As referred to in Andrew Robinson, “Introduction,” in Rabindranath Tagore, *My Reminiscences* PAPERMAC (London and Basingstoke: a division of Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 1991), p. 11.

⁵As referred to in Sisir Kumar Das, “Keynote Address,” in Bhudeb Chaudhuri and K.G. Subramanyam (eds.), *Rabindranath Tagore and the Challenges of Today* (Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1988), p. 14.

must return to the infinite.⁶ Human personality cannot develop if there is a division between the human individual and nature or the world in general. "If this world were taken away, our personality would lose all its content."⁷ In the human person, nature becomes articulate, articulate in living. Man, in knowing the world, knows himself. "We should have the gift to be natural with nature and human with human society."⁸ Tagore was a close observer of nature and his surroundings. He always rejoiced in the rising of the sun, the chirping of the birds, the blossoming of flowers, the fall of leaves, the deep blue sky, and dark grey clouds. Using the metaphor of a tree, which draws food from its surroundings, Tagore felt that for healthy growth, a child should first study and love nature. He felt that a child must have personal experience of trees before he studied botany as a science. Science is, no doubt, useful, but scientific laws are man's creations.

According to Tagore, love is the root of all relationships, binding us all. Love is superior to knowledge. Human existence is being-with-others. We are essential to one another. As Tagore puts it, "that I become more in my union with others is not a simple fact of arithmetic. We have known that when different personalities combine in love, which is the complete union, then it is not like adding to the horse power of efficiency, but it is that what was imperfect finds its perfection in truth, and therefore in joy."⁹ "Human society is the best expression of man, and that expression, according to its perfection, leads him to the full realization of the divine in humanity."¹⁰ Fulfillment is achieved in interpersonal relationships in spite of pain, suffering, and death.

Tagore's own experience combined knowledge and action, work and joy. He wrote plays and acted in them, composing songs, which he sang, and danced with his students. In their enjoyment he experienced joy himself.

Tagore emphasized that mankind must realize unity in diversity and established Visva-Bharati in Santiniketan with the hope that this University would help in achieving this goal. Tagore's *Jana Gana Mana (Mind of the People, 1912)*, which became India's national anthem, emphasized India's

⁶As referred to in Margaret Chatterjee, "Closing Remarks," in Bhudeb Chaudhuri and K.G. Subramanyam (eds.), *Rabindranath Tagore and the Challenges of Today* (Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1988), p. 338.

⁷ Rabindranath Tagore, *Personality* (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1959), p. 14.

⁸ Rabindranath Tagore, "A Poet's School," in *Visva -Bharati and Its Institutions* (Calcutta, 1961), p. 8.

⁹ Rabindranath Tagore, *Personality* (London: Macmillan, Pocket Tagore Edition, 1985), p. 83.

¹⁰ Rabindranath Tagore, *Creative Unity* (London: Macmillan, Pocket Tagore Edition, 1980), p. 23.

achievement in maintaining unity amid diversity. The true meaning of education lay in the discovery of the self.

“The first step toward that realization is revealing the different peoples to one another.... We must find some meeting ground where there can be no question of conflicting interest.... One such place is the university, where we can work together in a common pursuit of truth, share together our common heritage, and realize that artists in all parts of the world have created forms of beauty; scientists have discovered secrets of the universe; philosophers the problems of existence; saints made the truth of the spiritual organic in their own lives, not merely for some particular race to which they belonged but for all mankind.”¹¹

“The spirit of democracy, of humanism, is Tagore’s greatest contribution to multicultural education.”¹² He emphasized the need for harmony among all human races. Though people belong to different cultures, no one should be exploited at the cost of another. No one should be a victim of fear, oppression, exploitation, slavery, or superstition. Tagore wrote strongly against these evils in his poem *Questions*. Tagore stood for freedom and social justice as supreme human values. He even renounced Knighthood as a protest against the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre in 1919. Expressing himself as a humanist, he considered this as an insult to mankind. In his novel *Gora*, written in 1907, he emphasized universal humanism as above nationalism.

At a time when violence plagues our world, and when human beings are so often regarded as tools in the objective world, it is good to be reminded by Tagore that our being is concrete, that is, not to be reduced to any kind of abstraction in a world of objects. In *Sadhana*, written in 1913, Tagore reiterated the philosophy of the wholeness of existence. Tagore observes, “in modern society, the ideal of wholeness has lost its force.”¹³ Tagore wrote to Andrews from New York, “The complete man must never be sacrificed to the patriotic man, or even to the merely moral man. To me, humanity is rich and large and many-sided.”¹⁴ “What Tagore loved and

¹¹ As referred to in David Kopf, “The Bengali Prophet of Mass Genocide : Rabindranath Tagore and the Menace of Twentieth Century Nationalism,” in Mary Lago and Ronald Warwick (eds.), *Rabindranath Tagore : Perspectives in Time* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1989), p. 61.

¹² As referred to in Ranjana Ash, “Introducing Tagore in Multicultural Education in Britain,” in Mary Lago and Ronald Warwick (eds.), *Rabindranath Tagore: Perspectives in Time* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1989), p. 155.

¹³ As referred to in Sisir Kumar Das, “Keynote Address,” in Bhudeb Chaudhuri and K.G.Subramanyam (eds.), *Rabindranath Tagore and the Challenges of Today* (Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1988), p. 21.

¹⁴ As referred to in Krishna Kripalani, *Tagore – A Life*, published by the author (New Delhi, Calcutta, Bombay, Madras: Orient Longman Ltd. As sole distributors, 1971), p. 168.

admired was the man in man, irrespective of his status in society, be the status common or uncommon, low or high.”¹⁵ Realization of the “mahamanav,” or “the superman,” in every individual is an important facet of his philosophy in his book *The Religion of Man*. He was a man who loved human beings. He himself said: “My heart is with the menders on the roadside, with the breakers of stone, with those who lay the bricks, and with those who fetch the water and the mud...”¹⁶

Tagore’s great emphasis on the dignity of the human person needs to be remembered in the midst of our tendency to think in terms of globalizing powers, in relation to which we tend to feel that we are helpless pawns. Bengali novels *Nashtanir (The Broken Nest)* and *Chitrangada* highlight the quality of self-determination in Tagore’s female protagonists. Tagore noticed that the treatment meted out to women in the traditional Hindu household left a lot to be desired. While he conceded the fact that as mothers and wives, women achieved a high degree of satisfaction, this did not prevent him from realizing the loneliness that they so often experience. He felt its impact when his sister-in-law committed suicide. He was sensitive to the crisis of feminine identity. The heroine of Tagore’s *Strir Patra (A Wife’s Letter, 1914)* went on to say: “In your joint family, I am known as the second daughter-in-law. All these years, as I stand alone by the sea, I know that I have another identity, which is my relationship with the universe and its creator. That gives me the courage to write this letter as myself, not as the second daughter-in-law of your family... I am not one to die easily. That is what I want to say in this letter.” Tagore was no doubt a poet who championed the cause of women, insisting that men must restore the dignity and honor of women, both within and outside the home.

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¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 250.

¹⁶ As referred to in Mulk Raj Anand, Tagore’s *Religion of Man: An Essay on Rabindranath Tagore’s Humanism*, in Bhudeb Chaudhuri and K.G. Subramanyam (eds.), *Rabindranath Tagore and the Challenges of Today* (Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1988), p. 92.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE ACTING PERSON AND THE EXPERIENCE OF VERTICAL TRANSCENDENCE IN KAROL WOJTYLA'S WRITINGS

WILHELM DANCĂ

Abstract: This presentation is a critical consideration of the merits and limitations of the phenomenological analysis of the acting person, based on philosopher Karol Wojtyła's chief oeuvre, *The Acting Person*. Following a short introduction to Karol Wojtyła's methodology and anthropology, I will point out the peculiarity of his philosophical endeavor which, as it is well known, starts not from the ontological structure of person, but from human action as such, based on the intuition that the person is revealed in and through action. I will also show that, to be understood and explained adequately, the phenomenology of the experience of human acts requires a perspective capable of taking it beyond simple morphological description.

Such a perspective may well manifest itself at the level of conscience, which *The Acting Person* examines from more than one viewpoint. In this presentation, I only examine the free acts of man, his decisions and choices, as related to the analysis of the fundamental experience of the "I can, but am not constrained to do this," and to the presentation of the person as the effective cause of its own actions.

Following Karol Wojtyła, I will attempt to bring together phenomenology and metaphysics, and to this end I will address the experience of the vertical transcendence of person, with a focus on the spiritual nature of person. In the end, the unity of the person's being relies on the spiritual being. As *suppositum metaphysicum*, the spirit constitutes the person's wealth and that of its acts.

Keywords: Karol Wojtyła, acting person, vertical experience, transcendence, phenomenology of human action

One of the reasons I decided to address this conference is the recent beatification of Pope John Paul II. The ensuing discussions and debates have brought to the fore the multiple facets of his personality, including the personalist character of his thinking, as evidenced by an analysis of a number of studies with a marked anthropological character, which he authored when he was the Bishop of Krakow and a professor of Philosophical Ethics. He wrote *Love and Responsibility*¹ and *The Acting*

¹ Cf. Karol Wojtyła, "Amore e responsabilità. Morale sessuale e vita interpersonale" in: Karol Wojtyła, *Metafisica della persona. Tutte le opere*

Person,² as well his writings as Pope, particularly his encyclicals. I would like to draw special attention to the encyclicals *Redemptor hominis*, *Veritatis splendor*, and *Fides et ratio*. All of these studies show that Karol Wojtyła's personalism is deeply theocentric or theological; a fact which should not cause raised eyebrows among philosophers, because in the history of ideas, the understanding of man as person first appeared in Christianity, as a result of Conciliar and Patristic debates on the divine persons of the Holy Trinity.

The approach and methodology of my presentation, as well as the meaning of the concept of *person*, lie at the confluence of faith and reason, or philosophy and theology. My presentation consists of (1) a synthesis of the roots of Wojtyła's personalism, followed by (2) a presentation of several dimensions of the person as revealed by the phenomenological analysis of the person in action, and finally, (3) a reading of one of these dimensions of the person in the framework of contemporary cultural challenges.

THE ROOTS OF KAROL WOJTYŁA'S PERSONALISM

The foreword of the English Edition of *The Acting Person*, Wojtyła's chief philosophical *oeuvre*, contains a philosophical confession concerning his debt to Thomism and phenomenology: "The author of the present study owes everything to the systems of metaphysics, of anthropology, and of Aristotelian-Thomistic ethics on one hand, and through Max Scheler's critique, also to Kant, on the other hand."³ The influence of Thomistic thinking first appeared in Wojtyła's reflections when he was an undergraduate pursuing a degree in theology in Krakow, only to become established later, during his doctoral studies in Rome, at the Angelicum University, where, on June 19, 1948, under the guidance of the Dominican Father Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, the most influential Catholic theologian of the first half of the twentieth century, he defended his doctoral thesis on "Faith According to Saint John of the Cross." From a philosophical viewpoint, Garrigou-Lagrange criticized the immanence of modern philosophy while upholding the perceived truth of gnoseological realism, arguing in favor of the intentional character and objectivity of human knowledge. According to Garrigou-Lagrange, when human intelligence steps out of itself, it does not encounter ideas, but things, or rather the things' existence. In supreme acts, humans have absolute pre-eminence, as argued by Saint Thomas Aquinas, for whom existence is an

filosofiche e saggi integrativi (a cura di Giovanni Reale e Tadeusz Styczeń) (Milano: Editrice Bompiani, 2003), pp. 461-778.

² Cf. Cardinal Karol Wojtyła, *The Acting Person* (translated from the Polish by Andrezej Potocki), (Dordrecht, Holland; Boston, U.S.A.; London, England: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1979).

³ Cardinal Karol Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, p. xiv.

act, formal in the highest degree, absolute perfection, or maximal actuality.

Wojtyła adopted such philosophical viewpoints in his doctoral thesis from his mentor; nevertheless, the starting point for his research was neither intelligence nor understanding, but the experience of faith. In a 1979 article, Wojtyła synthesized the humanism of Saint John of the Cross while emphasizing the empirical character of man's subjective supernaturalism. Here is the conclusion of this study: "the supernatural sphere of man manifests itself as a super-subjective and, at the same time, super-psychological fact. With Saint John of the Cross, what we find compelling are not so much those reasonings which rely on an abstract view of man and his nature, but the concrete itself, which pulsates with supernatural life in its empirical development and becomes self-conscious in the context of experience."⁴

Therefore, it was from Saint John of the Cross and the Roman school of philosophy (Garrigou-Lagrange) in general that Wojtyła adopted a number of key philosophical notions, and he then returned to Poland with the conviction that the phenomenology of experience can shed light on the divine roots of man's mystery, and that the experience of faith with its accompanying mystical experience of the "night" and its emotional void, make the human person an unobjectifiable subject that can only find fulfillment in the transformation resulting from the interpersonal love of the communion with God as Person. By adopting this interpretation of man from Saint John of the Cross, Wojtyła saw humans as persons, that is, beings created in the image and likeness of God, intelligent beings endowed with spirituality, freedom, and subjective feelings – an "imago Dei." In other words, both God and humans are persons. However, Saint Thomas Aquinas does not provide an adequate account of the way in which humans are persons. Such an account is made possible by the fact that humans are the only beings of which we have internal knowledge.

The influence of Scheler on Wojtyła's thinking is debatable, for several reasons.⁵ First, Wojtyła's encounter with phenomenology was mediated by one of Edmund Husserl's disciples, Roman Ingarden, who failed to share the idealist predisposition of his mentor's philosophy, but argued in favor of a realist phenomenology. Back then, despite Ingarden's distancing himself from religion, he was nevertheless an influence not only on Wojtyła, but also on many of Wojtyła's disciples in terms of a realist approach to phenomenology. It can be argued that through Ingarden, Scheler came to be known in Poland as it was invaded by Marxist ideology.

Wojtyła dealt with Scheler's writings, though not all of them, in his habilitation thesis that he defended in Krakow in 1954, entitled *An*

⁴ Apud Alfred Wierzbicki, "La barca interiore. Affinità spirituale del pensiero di Karol Wojtyła con il pensiero di San Giovanni della Croce" in: Karol Wojtyła, *Metafisica della persona*, pp. 10-11.

⁵ Cf. Rocco Buttiglione, *Il pensiero di Karol Wojtyła* (Milano: Editrice Jaca Book, 1982), pp. 69-78.

*Evaluation of the Possibility of Devising a Christian Ethic Based on Max Scheler's System.*⁶ Of Scheler's works, he took particular interest in *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die material Wertethik*, a discussion of Immanuel Kant's views on ethics. In the conclusion to this thesis, Wojtyła rejects Scheler's system because of its emotional suppositions and the elimination of the normative moment from moral experience (as against Kant), while preserving the phenomenological approach, thus sharing Scheler's idea that ethics should rely on experience.

Several key notions of personal philosophy from his best-known and most philosophical book, *The Acting Person*, can actually be identified in his habilitation thesis. The first of these is *the concept of act*, which, for Wojtyła, becomes a sort of window to the person's inner person: indeed, it can be argued that through his/her act, a person shows *who he/she is*, while at the same time *finding fulfillment*. Secondly, Wojtyła held the conviction that the phenomenological method can be employed to adequately reveal precisely how humans are persons, an aspect neglected in Saint Thomas' metaphysics. This is how Wojtyła's postulate of uniting metaphysics and phenomenology first appeared, to be later developed in *The Acting Person*.

THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE PERSON IN ACTION

The Acting Person was authored for a better understanding of man as person, Wojtyła's avowed aim. However, the study fails to prove that man is a person and that his actions are acts as such elements appear in the context of experience; consequently, it is not so much an instance of speculative, but rather empirical and existential exposition. In other words, what this book examines in the context of man's totality of experience is the moment when his personal character is revealed, that is, the moment when his action is transformed into that act by which man becomes good or bad in accordance with the values implicated in his action.

From a methodological perspective, phenomenological analysis involves the following stages: 1. Identification of the common element, the basis or determiner of the action from among the dynamic components present in a particular domain of human activity; 2. once identified, the element is not to be examined in itself, but rather in the recurrences where it initially belonged and where its presence can be attested. Thus, experience serves two functions, as it is both the starting point of the analysis and verification instance for the reasoning. After reporting the data of experience, the author concludes that "the act reveals the person, by means of the experience which verifies it."

⁶ Karol Wojtyła, "Valutazioni sulla possibilità di costruire l'etica cristiana sulle basi del sistema di Max Schele" in: Karol Wojtyła, *Metafisica della persona*, pp. 263-449.

From the beginning, the book points to knowledge and experience in a close relationship. Knowledge relies on experience, but experience transcends all knowledge, and by this, it establishes itself as the first constant appeal that reality makes to man's cognitive faculties. Indeed, experience is the only place where reality reveals itself to our cognitive faculties; thus the ensuing question is: of what, exactly, am I meant to have direct knowledge? Starting from this question, Wojtyła's phenomenological analysis reaches the level of conscience only to revert to experience, which reflects and internalizes the data of the conscience. This in turn leads to another question: what is the relationship between outer and inner experience? By means of experience, man experiences himself as "I"; thus man is meant for himself, and in this relationship lays a singular unrepeatable cognitive relationship. No external relationship with another human being can replace the inner relationship the "I" has with self. Inner experience is so profound that it cannot be entirely communicated to others. Man as "I" stands alone and is thus irreplaceable.

After an analysis of man's original loneliness, viewed in the framework of inner experience, Wojtyła goes on to consider outer experience where, by means of knowledge, only "man" is experienced. Such experience involves two subjects: the former is represented by the others who look at me and get to know me through experience, from the outside; the latter is my "I" who, even for me, is an external somebody, an object of self-knowledge. Outer experience involves discovering the other as an inner somebody, and in this way the two sides of experience come together.

The concept of evidence is closely allied to that of experience. The reference of the concept of evidence lies within the confines of lived experience, where understanding of man as person takes place as well. As a starting point in the phenomenological analysis of person, lived experience disproves the old *dictum operari sequitur esse*, as action and act are meant to approach the human being in order to reveal and understand it. Thus Wojtyła's understanding of the concept of person is a gnoseological but nevertheless dynamic one,⁷ since it makes sense of the acting person. In this way, Wojtyła argued that the person includes an irreducible something, which sets it apart from other entities, which for us are *something*, whereas a person is *someone*. The human person's specific character, as expressed by the semantic epitome "someone," conditions and determines all of its activity and action, while distinguishing the person not only from things, but also from the other animates, which likewise act. Moreover, it should be noted that the distinction between "something" and "someone" is epitomized by the adjective "rational," which specifies the nature of the human person.

⁷ Cf. Giovanni Reale, "Saggio introduttivo" in: Karol Wojtyła, *Metafisica della persona*, pp. LIII-LV.

The analysis of the human act leads Wojtyła to argue that the human person's rationality manifests itself mainly as the faculty of understanding the truth about good, to which human will is naturally predisposed. Evaluation of the truth about good as presented to the intelligence by the will allows man to be in constant touch with knowable reality, which, on one hand, remains with the human subject intentionally, and, on the other, allows man to distance himself from all things.

CONTEMPORARY CULTURAL CHALLENGES

Globalization and other forms of ideological or commercial dictatorship result in the cancelation of the distinctions between things, and even between persons and things, paving the way for the impoverishment of world cultures and local traditions.

In view of Wojtyła's argument concerning man as person, I would argue in turn that by means of reason, human beings are capable of transcending the limits of the reality of which they are a part, and indeed the impending one. Such transcendence is of two kinds: a horizontal one, as when, by means of will and intelligence, the knowledgeable subject directs his attention toward the object and intentionally assimilates it and so transcends it, and a vertical one, as when the human person transcends itself. This latter type of transcendence is the result of self-determination, and implies the human person transcends itself not so much in the direction of truth as inside truth.

Also, the concept of self-determination is related to the idea of freedom. Thus, if the person manifests itself through its will, that person's every act will confirm and instate the will as the person's property, while the person as a dynamic reality is constituted by its will. Consequently, as conscious action, which exists in lived experience, and is different from that peculiar dynamic termed "something taking place in the man," a person's roots lie in his will, which, in turn, manifests itself in freedom, as when a man says, "Yes, I can do this, because I am not constrained."

Wojtyła's phenomenological analysis of the acting person includes a remarkable insight: the volitive aspect, or the moment of freedom, reveals the human person, because it is the basis of its self-determination.

To conclude, if the human person reveals itself as such in human action, that is, in acts of free will, then man increasingly becomes person to the extent that he chooses the good. Nevertheless, choosing the good is never an improvisation; rather, it takes time to prepare, patiently and gradually, so that the will, as educated freedom, which specifies the human person, implies not only the absence of constraint, but also the option for values.

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CHAPTER XXVIII

DEFINING HUMAN DIGNITY: LANDMARKS IN THE THOUGHT OF POPE BENEDICT XVI

TARCIZIU ȘERBAN

Abstract: It is well known that the Catholic Church has constantly declared its interest in man, in his dignity and fulfillment. In the midst of the mutations that have been taking place in the post-modern era, in the field of gnoseology as well as in that of ethics, concerning man and his dignity, the Catholic Church has brought its contribution, appreciating the positive aspects and denouncing what it considers to be factors of degradation. Pope Benedict XVI had several major interventions in this respect in his encyclicals or in books such as *The Salt of the Earth* (1996) and *The Light of the World* (2010). I am proposing hereby a synthesis of this vision of Pope Benedict XVI, which I want to offer as a set of guide rules for Romanian society, which appears to be more and more influenced by post-modernism.

Keywords: human dignity, Pope Benedict XVI's thought, philosophical perspective, theological meanings.

INTRODUCTION

The theme of this symposium is an invitation for us to reflect on the value of the human person in the context of our world. To state the obvious, today's world context is, in many ways, defined by globalization. Despite the many undeniable advantages globalization has brought to mankind, the process is not without its shortcomings, such as those which manifest themselves in the form of numerous convulsions and crises. Such instances have been predominantly visible in the political order of things, mostly in the abrupt changes that took place at the end of the twentieth century in Eastern Europe, or those currently happening in the Arab world with explosions of violence. On one hand, the limits and dysfunctions of today's economic order are visible in the current crisis of the world economy. Such limits and crises appear to demand a forceful tackling of the very basis of the world economy in the context of globalization. These drawbacks are patent in many of the facets of the world's social order, where institutions meant to serve the common good and the human person seem more inclined to use the human person as an instrument, instead of serving its basic needs in keeping with the human person's God-given dignity. Last but not least, this trend is mostly visible in the globalization of culture. Romania being part of this global process, our symposium is a most welcome contribution to the process of pondering the state of the matter, defining concepts,

assessing hierarchies of values, comparing and challenging various fronts of ideas and practical experiences. All of these come from a variety of spheres of reflection, including those that pertain to the domain of philosophical and theological thought. To this end, it is particularly important that structural values be identified and defined: indeed, it is based on such foundations that any project of life can be built. It is obvious that one of these structural values is the value of human dignity. Notwithstanding the sometimes diverging positions at the heart of the matter under discussion, our debate is ultimately centered on ourselves as persons, as persons and human beings: all of us concrete people, flesh and bone human beings, each with one's unique unrepeatable destiny.

My purpose here is to briefly touch on some of the ways in which human dignity is being assessed from a contemporary philosophical perspective, and then to focus as faithfully as I possibly can on the Catholic Church's understanding and vision of the subject, and on ways in which its teachings take part in this current process of reflection. In this respect, the most authoritative voice, of course, is the voice and pronouncements of Pope Benedict XVI.

ASSESSING AND DEFINING HUMAN DIGNITY FROM A PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

The issue of human dignity is at the very heart of all philosophical reflection, because it is naturally in its own area of exploration, in which the foundations of morals and ethics are generally defined. But how is one to define human dignity today, given the fact that at the dawn of this new century we have to deal with a situation in which "the blurring of the truths proposed by various systems of contemporary thought demand a minimal, universally valid, and unique agreement centered on a principle common to the whole of mankind, while on the other hand, the recognition of the plurality of creeds and the respect due to all cultures seem to create an inescapable challenge"? Moreover, the horrors of totalitarianism keep reminding us of the fact that "the conditions of co-habitation are never to be taken as a definitive given." That was the grave question posed, among others, by Thomas De Koninck and Gilbert Larochelle in the opening thoughts of their book *Human Dignity – Philosophy, Law, Politics, Economy, Medical Practice*.¹

In the chapter dealing with the "Archeology of the Notion of Human Dignity," De Koninck gives a very suggestive bird's eye view on the subject. The author underscores the fact that the very term "dignity" suffers from a kind of semantic inflation, which in certain cases either obliterates or

¹ Thomas De Koninck & Gilbert Larochelle, *La Dignité humaine – Philosophie, droit, politique, économie, médecine* (Paris: PUF, 2005).

emphasizes a certain ambiguity already visible in its etymon.² There appears to be also a slight problem of interpretation in fitting the concept of human dignity into the context and wording of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The latter declares that the unanimity of nations recognize the fact that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.” However, where does the unanimity of the signatory countries come from, given the fact that there are so many divergences amongst them? The best answer may be the one given by Paul Ricoeur, who observes that, despite all differences, in all cultures, no matter how far back in time we go, the same exigency exists: that “something is due to all human beings for the simple reason of their being human.” De Koninck goes on to underscore the fact that in all civilizations, an increasingly central place has been given across time to the dignity of the weak and underprivileged. Such a particular notion is to be found both in the thought of Confucius and in the Quran, just as in the writings of the Ancient Greeks.

Gleaning from acknowledgments made by more recent authors – Emmanuel Levinas, George Steiner, and Schopenhauer, among others – De Koninck emphasizes the fact that the dignity of the person is a human attribute that applies regardless of rank, most revealingly to those less endowed with power. Confirmation of this defining feature can also be found in the thinking of such great precursors as Sophocles, Aristotle, Plato, the Aquinate, Pico della Mirandola, and Pascal, all of whose interpretations boil down to the basic truth that “all our dignity resides in the fact that man alone is a thinking being”; and, by way of consequence, that man alone is endowed with the conscience of individual death. To the same sphere of the human capacity to think belongs the person’s capacity to decide, as there is no action without its counterpart: to act or not to act. Hence the link between dignity on one hand and the liberty to choose between different courses of action on the other, both rooted in the faculty to ponder and think. De Koninck also mentions Immanuel Kant, with possibly the best definition given to dignity in the modern era: the human person is infinitely priceless, superior to all other possible values in the world, as he said it. The value of the person, according to Kant’s definition, is absolute. The logical consequence of this premise points to the absolute respect due to each and every human being; and, by way of consequence, the same leads to a new and essential conceptual link: the human person’s natural aspiration for due recognition.

Paradoxically, despite such positive premises, as we all know, the twentieth century has been one of rationally organized unspeakable atrocities, which should lead us to acknowledge the reverse concept: that of human indignity. Taking a look back at the historical development of

² *Dignus* is connected to *decet*, i.e., “should”, “must”, “it is proper”, “it behooves”, another root-connection sends us to *decus*, which suggests such kindred notions as “decency” and “dignity”; and last but not least, *decor*, akin to the notions of “honor” and “beauty”.

mankind, one can see that, as a rule, barbarity and savagery begins when man makes bold choices to ignore the dignity of his own person, the age-old commandment – know thyself – and thus to end up ignoring the dignity of his own fellow beings. It begins the moment one forgets that doing harm to someone else also means doing harm to oneself. This is the position where a fundamental solidarity concept usually comes into play: Do to others as you would have them do to you; or, to put it another way: What you don't like, don't do to your fellow beings.

Unfortunately, as we all too frequently have occasion to notice, such tenets are more often than not distorted; they are either turned into moralizing assumptions or else into secular ideologies which blatantly turn their back on the gist of what such sayings predicate. Such positions throw into ever bolder relief the huge gap between certain statements that have been integrated into a Universal Declaration and “the social realities of the violence to which many of our fellow beings are being exposed.”

The book I have been quoting from examines a number of areas in which human dignity is being denied or trampled on nowadays. Here are the relevant chapter titles: *La dignité de mourir: un défi pour le droit* (Dignity in Dying: a Challenge to Law); *Le défi politique* (Political Challenge); *Repenser l'économie* (Rethinking the Economy), and *Fragments sur la médecine* (Fragments on Medical Practice).

DEFINING HUMAN DIGNITY IN THE PRONOUNCEMENTS OF VATICAN II

The Second Vatican Council was the occasion when the Catholic Church expressed with full lucidity and responsibility its position in adapting itself to the new challenges posed in our era to the human person, to human society, and to the direction in which the world is evolving. The most important pronouncements in this sense are those contained in the pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*.

According to the almost unanimous opinion of believers and unbelievers alike, all things on earth should be related to man as their center and crown.

But what is man? About himself he has expressed, and continues to express, many divergent and even contradictory opinions. In these he often exalts himself as the absolute measure of all things or debases himself to the point of despair. The result is doubt and anxiety. The Church certainly understands these problems. Endowed with light from God, she can offer solutions to them, so that man's true situation can be portrayed and his defects explained, while at the same time his dignity and destiny are justly acknowledged.

For Sacred Scripture teaches that man was created “to the image of God,” is capable of knowing and loving his Creator, and was appointed by Him as master of all earthly creatures that he might subdue them and use them to God's glory... man abused his liberty... set himself against God

and sought to attain his goal apart from God... What divine revelation makes known to us agrees with experience. Examining his heart, man finds that he has inclinations toward evil too... Indeed, man finds that by himself he is incapable of battling the assaults of evil successfully... (GS 12.13)

The truth is that only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light... Christ, the final Adam, by the revelation of the mystery of the Father and His love, fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear... He Who is “the image of the invisible God” (Col 1:15), is Himself the perfect man. To the sons of Adam He restores the divine likeness which had been disfigured from the first sin onward...

The Christian man, conformed to the likeness of that Son Who is the firstborn of many brothers, received “the first-fruits of the Spirit” (Rm 8:23) by which he becomes capable of discharging the new law of love. Through this Spirit, who is “the pledge of our inheritance” (Eph 1:14), the whole man is renewed from within, even to the achievement of “the redemption of the body.” All this holds true not only for Christians, but for all men of good will in whose hearts grace works in an unseen way. (GS 22)

FROM THEORETICAL PRONOUNCEMENT TO CONCRETE ACTION

Pope Benedict XVI wholly embraced the vision of Vatican II on human dignity, a vision which one can see transposed in many of his own pronouncements, especially in those dealing with situations in which human dignity has been at stake because of infringements. Such pronouncements have taken shape either in the form of ample documents, such as three Encyclical letters – *Deus caritas est*, *Spe salvi*, and *Caritas in veritate*, or in messages broadcast on various occasions. In the following, I would like to offer some quotes gleaned from these documents. They might be taken as landmarks to be taken into account in philosophical reflections on the current situation of human dignity in the age of globalization, and also in the context of the world challenges posed to human dignity by current socio-political and economy-related developments.

Speaking to the Council of the Europe Parliamentary Assembly, the Pope had the following to say on the occasion of the 60-year Anniversary of The European Convention on Human Rights:³

Keeping in mind the context of today’s society in which different peoples and cultures come together, it is imperative to develop the universal validity of these rights as well as their inviolability, inalienability, and indivisibility.

On different occasions, I have pointed out the risks associated with relativism in the area of values, rights, and duties. If these were to lack an objective rational foundation, common to all peoples, and were based

³ Vatican, September 8th, 2010.

exclusively on particular cultures, legislative decisions, or court judgments, how could they offer a solid and long-lasting ground for supranational institutions such as the Council of Europe, and for your own task within that prestigious institution? How could a fruitful dialogue among cultures take place without common values, rights, and stable, universal principles understood in the same way by all Member States of the Council of Europe? These values, rights, and duties are rooted in the natural dignity of each person, something which is accessible to human reasoning. The Christian faith does not impede, but favors this search, and is an invitation to seek a supernatural basis for this dignity.

His Holiness the Pope's remarks concluded laying special stress on the importance of specific situations in which these principles bear on the essentials of human life – from the moment of conception to death, with special emphasis on marriage, seen as an exclusive reciprocal gift of life between man and woman; last but not least on religious freedom and education. All of these are seen as compulsory conditions to be respected if one is to respond in a correct, responsible manner to the circumstances and challenges of history.

On another occasion, addressing the participants to a Seminar on European Higher Education,⁴ Pope Benedict XVI had the following to say:

With a quick glance at the “old” Continent, it is easy to see the cultural challenges that Europe faces today, since it is committed to rediscovering its own identity, which is not exclusively economic or political. The basic question today, as in the past, remains the anthropological question: What is man? Where does he come from? Where must he go? How must he go?

In other words, it is a matter of clarifying the conception of the human being on which new projects are based. And you are rightly asking yourselves which human being, which image of man, does the university intend to serve: an individual withdrawn into the defense of his own interests, a single perspective of interests, a materialistic perspective, or a person who is open to solidarity with others in the search for the true meaning of existence, which must be a common meaning that transcends the individual?

We also wonder what the relationship between the human person, science, and technology is. If in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, technology made amazing progress, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, further steps were taken: technology also took charge, thanks to computer science, of part of our mental processes, with consequences that involve our way of thinking and can condition our very freedom.

⁴ Vatican, April 1th, 2006.

It must be forcefully stated that the human being cannot and must not ever be sacrificed to the success of science and technology: this is why the so-called “anthropological question” assumes its full importance.

For us, the heirs of the humanist tradition founded on Christian values, this question should be faced in the light of the inspiring principles of our civilization, to be found in European universities: authentic laboratories for research and for deepening knowledge.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, I would like to quote from some particularly well-focused remarks made by Pope Benedict in response to a speech of Romania’s new Ambassador to the Holy See, Tătaru-Cazaban, in October last year, at the time of the presentation of his credential letters. It is true that the weight and tone of the Pope’s remarks seem to carry a mostly political connotation. However, I find them pertinent in that they bear on the whole idea of reform in this country in the context of globalization. I find them also to be apposite and relevant in the context of the challenges the participants to this symposium are facing in their own constructive endeavors, as they try to respond the best they can to the great challenges posed by globalization to the society of today’s Romania. Here is the Pope speaking to Romania:

Twenty years ago, Romania decided to write a new page of its history. However, so many years lived under the yoke of a totalitarian ideology have deeply affected the attitude of individuals in political and economic life. After the period of the euphoria of freedom, your nation undertook with determination a process of rebuilding and healing...

To pursue this renewal in depth, a number of new challenges need to be met in order... Dealing with the heritage left by Communism is difficult because of the disintegration of society and of the individual that it fostered. The authentic values, in fact, were overshadowed to the advantage of false theories that were idolized for reasons of State...

Today, therefore, it is a question of engaging in the difficult task of the just ordering of human affairs by making good use of freedom. True freedom implies the search for truth and goodness, and it is achieved, precisely, by knowing and doing what is appropriate and right.

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CHAPTER XXIX

ANTHONY DE MELLO'S LIFELONG SPIRITUAL PEDAGOGY: AWAKENING AND AWARENESS

MAGDALENA DUMITRANA

Abstract: Anthony de Mello was one of the most known and appreciated, but also controversial, personalities of the Catholic world. Courageous and motivated by a profound and genuine belief, by the honest aspiration for helping people, and acting in a way that could not have been met by a positive reaction from the common people, he broke the patterns of fundamental theology, exclusively addressing his words to the spiritual zone that exists in any human being. Unlike other theologians and philosophers, one could say that de Mello's life and writings constitute one single body of expression.

Lacking the calling for dogma and of a fanatical narration, de Mello directly enters the subject of daily living which, in his eyes, loses the banality of the common place. Daily life constitutes the space and time within which every human being meets every moment, the most profound spirituality. The understanding of this reality is obstructed by a barrier that is insurmountable for the great majority of people- it is the barrier of the 'sleep.' The object of de Mello's discourse is precisely to awaken man from the obnubilation of his consciousness and to prepare and guide him psychologically and spiritually, in order to make him willing to assume his own genuine identity.

The central concept in de Mello's writings and conferences is, therefore, that of awareness. The emphasis on this awakening state has its source in Indian spirituality, which de Mello has known well. At the same time, the Christian ground furnishes another important source in what concerns the essence of the message. The nucleus of the two types of spirituality is the same: awareness and self-awareness, which is the same thing as understanding – an understanding that transcends both the cognition and the feeling, both the philosophy and theology, reinstalling man in his own nature. On this basis, de Mello sketches his "program of life," which is, in fact, a pedagogical way of helping people to discover and develop their own spirituality. As a spiritual teacher, de Mello explains what Reality is and indicates in his discourse the path and the instruments for reaching it.

Keywords: delusion, spirituality, consciousness, freedom, truth.

THE LIFE PURPOSE

A man found an eagle's egg and put it in a nest of a barnyard hen. The eaglet hatched with a brood of chicks and grew up with them. All his life, the eagle did what the barnyard chicks did, thinking that he was a barnyard chicken. He scratched the earth for worms and insects. He clucked and cackled. And he would thrash his wings and fly a few feet into the air.

Years passed and the eagle grew very old. One day he saw a magnificent bird above him in the cloudless sky. It glided in graceful majesty among the powerful wind currents, with scarcely a beat of its strong golden wings.

The old eagle looked up in awe. "Who's that?" he asked.

"That's the eagle, the king of the birds," said his neighbor. "He belongs to the sky. We belong to the earth—we're chickens." So the eagle lived and died a chicken, for that's what he thought he was. (*Song of the Bird*)

Out of Anthony de Mello's little stories, perhaps this is the most known. It summarizes in its content the entire tragedy of humanity – a blind and unconscious humanity, of which members live, each of them, a life-illusion. It is a story full of humor, a strong and real story; but also a tragic story. More than that, one can find in this little story another meaning, too. In it can be seen the huge task undertaken by de Mello: to "force" human individuals to know their real nature and live according to it. De Mello attempts to force, to break the barriers of the spiritual sleep, compelling people to understand, together with their own essence, the source of evil in everybody's life and also, the way of changing the sleep slavery. In short, de Mello was, and still is, by his writings, an Awakener, *par excellence*.

Very well known within the Catholic world, de Mello is almost completely ignored by the Orthodox part of Christianity. There, where his name is familiar, his spirit has remained hidden.¹

De Mello is perhaps one of the rare cases of the modern world where philosophy, belief, and the life-style constitute a single entity, impossible to be fragmented. As a priest, following Thomas d'Aquino in his affirmations toward the end of his life, he understood the lack of substance of dogmatism. As a philosopher, he kept himself far from theoretical constructions, considering them as being mostly devoid of reality. As a human being, however, he could not but live in full authenticity, within which belief, philosophy and breathing cannot exist separately, not even in a theoretical framework.

One might say that de Mello *is* the answer to the question: "What is the usefulness of philosophy?" or to the similar one: "What is the utility of belief?" The answer is simple: to know how to live in full consciousness.

¹ In Romania, only few years ago, some of his volumes of stories were translated. Unfortunately, in the public conscience, they were perceived as being so called "therapeutical stories".

And de Mello presents also the technique by which the human individual can awaken to life.

ATTACHMENTS

The fundamental feature of life, as lived by the most people, is the lack of freedom – an accepted, consensual, and normalized lack of freedom. This lack of freedom is the principle that governs social life; it is the insurer of happiness. Relationships, the observance of regulations of any kind; the trust that what is said by the “professionals” of any category is right and good; the appreciation of one’s own value through external confirmations; to no longer speak of the importance of financial and social status; all these ingredients fill the jar of human happiness. What de Mello does is to take this jar and he breaks it down to the ground. Once the illusions are dispelled, only the truth remains.

Life as Sleep

“Life is a dream” – here is a statement which is familiar to the Occidentals.² It seems to belong to the arts, to aesthetics, and therefore, it finds the emotional gate open. Dreams belong to sleep; therefore it can be pleasant to sleep – to take a rest, to feel comfortable, enter another reality, becoming somebody else in some other place, where the conflicts and discontents are extinguished or solved, places where one feels safe. A safe dream – this is the rule for the majority of people, even a definition of happiness.

But for someone adept in Oriental wisdom, the affirmation that people live a sleeping life does not contain anything aesthetic, anything philosophical or pleasure provoking. It is only a realistic, palpable description of human existence. This second meaning is the one in which de Mello places his discourse, a natural thing, since his native country is India (a fact that he never ceases to mention). The theme of ‘life as sleep’ is typical for Indian spirituality, but the way de Mello approaches this topic is actually appropriate to the Western spirit: direct, often with hardness, apparently with cynicism. Let us not be deceived by this language that, in fact, expresses a profound concern. What would happen if, reading this passage, we suspected the speaker of cruelty: “And if thy hand offends thee, cut it off...”? (Mark, 9: 43-47). Cutting off illusion is the specialty of de Mello’s “humorous” philosophy: “Most people, even though they don’t know it, are asleep. They’re born asleep, they live asleep, they marry in

² “La vida es sueño” (Life is a dream), a play by Pedro Calderón de la Barca (sec. XVII).

their sleep, they breed children in their sleep, they die in their sleep, without ever waking up.”³

The state of life-sleep has many advantages: firstly, it is claimed that this state is the way of obtaining happiness. Are not all people chasing after happiness? Do not all the philosophies proclaim that human nature’s essence is the pursuit of happiness? But what does happiness mean in this case? In short – the lack of worries and nice, warm feelings. It means to sleep/live cozy; to sleep safely through all the socially institutionalized illusions; it means to react “rightly” as an obedient organism, waiting for its gratification. “Normally, the way it goes, I press a button and you’re up; I press another button and you’re down. And you like that. How many people do you know who are unaffected by praise or blame? That isn’t human, we say. Human means that you have to be a little monkey, so everybody can twist your tail and you do whatever you *ought* to be doing... We are so mechanical, so controlled. We write books about being controlled, and how wonderful it is to be controlled, and how necessary it is that people tell you you’re okay. Then, you’ll have a good feeling about yourself.”⁴ In this state, everything a man thinks that is real, that belongs to that reality, that he wants to have because it is worthy, is nothing in fact but the effect of mist characterizing this unconscious condition.

At the basis of this life-sleep lies an element that we used to consider as normal-selfishness. Selfishness in its pure state is easy to identify, as it is defined by the possessive pronoun: *my* wish, *my* object, *my* family, *my* misery, *my* happiness. The second kind of selfishness, however, is more difficult to seize, on account of its renouncing of external attributes and specific verbal expressions. The label utilized is “devotion.” This is the self-love called “charity.” But human egoisms do not stop here: “There are three types of selfishness. The first type is the one where I give myself the pleasure of pleasing myself. That’s what we generally call self-centeredness. The second is when I give myself the pleasure of pleasing others. That would be a more refined kind of selfishness... Then you’ve got the third type, which is the worst: when you do something good so that you won’t get a bad feeling... We don’t want to do the hurting ourselves because we’ll get hurt! Ah, there it is. If we do the hurting, others will have a bad opinion of us. They won’t like us, they’ll talk against us, and we don’t like that.”⁵

Self-enteredness as a need to seek the well-being condition for oneself is built on a series of ideas – illusions which consider the comfortable state as a criterion of evaluation for social and individual progress. In fact, these ideas are simple dependencies that do not reach in any way the essence of

³ Anthony de Mello, *Awareness. A. de Mello Spirituality Conference in His Own Words*, Edited by J. Francis Stroud, S.J. (London: Fount Paperbacks, 1990), p. 5.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.19; 24; 26.

human existence, but which actually prevent human beings from grasping it.

Beside egoism, one of the important features of the life-sleep is the wish for happiness. But happiness, in the way the common man understands it, is one of his many illusions, says de Mello. At the level of common understanding, happiness is a conditioned state. It is conditioned by another being, thing, or situation. Happiness is a conditioned reflex, in which the reinforcing stimulus is social comfort. Man cannot be simply happy; he must be connected to something.

In another words, although he wishes and acts for the acquisition of *his own* happiness, man is convinced that happiness can be obtained only by his attachment to *something else*, outside of his Self. So, he thinks that happiness can be obtained only by renouncing his own freedom. Consequently, it can be asserted in this flow of thinking that slavery is the bearer of happiness or at least, the most accessible form of happiness.

Attachment in the adult life is not the same principle that helps (or hinders) a child to develop a balanced personality. In adulthood, this bond appears as a weakness of slavery. The unconditioned, uncritical obedience to norms, to the structures of ideas, to ideologies, becomes the positive principle of social behavior, the criterion of good and evil. External regulation is the cognitive and moral norm which destroys the faintest attempt at thinking. In this respect, there is a little story by de Mello about a "...fellow in London after the war. He's sitting with a parcel wrapped in brown paper in his lap. It's a big, heavy object. The bus conductor comes up to him and says, 'What do you have on your lap there?' And the man says, 'This is an unexploded bomb. We dug it out of the garden and I'm taking it to the police station.' The conductor says, 'You don't want to carry that on your lap. Put it under the seat.'"⁶ Obviously, the driver is not interested in the content of the message, but only in behavior regulation.

But the rules are expressed by words and from here, a new slavery. The words are carriers of personal experiences; therefore, here there is a new link in the chain of attachments. Through the instrumentality of words are expressed all the cultural conditionings. These attachments are not necessarily negative. They become, however, a burden when an individual defines himself by these word attachments, and when blinded by what he believes, is no more able to see the real phenomena: "I need to talk about words and concepts because I must explain to you why it is, when we look at a tree, we really don't see. We think we do, but we don't. When we look at a person, we really don't see that person, we only think we do. What we're seeing is something that we fixed in our mind. We get an impression and we hold on to that impression, and we keep looking at the person through that impression. And we do this with almost everything."⁷ Let us listen to another story, shocking by the simplicity of its truth. The man just

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 41-42.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

does not want to change his ideas, even if reality slaps him in the face: “Henry, how you’ve changed! You were so tall and you’ve grown so short. You were so well built and you’ve grown so thin. You were so fair and you’ve become so dark. What happened to you, Henry?” Henry says, “I’m not Henry. I’m John.” “Oh, you changed your name too!”⁸

Indiscriminate attachment to norms determines also an urgent need for reward. One is able to appreciate his life as ‘normal’ and ‘good’ only through external signals: it is important to be respectable, to be loved and appreciated; otherwise, you are not “recognized” as a worthy human being. But all of these are only illusion, says the Indian Catholic priest, illusion and self-imprisonment. The life composed by different social dependencies is a life impregnated with fear and anger.

There is only one evil in the world, affirms de Mello, and this is fear: the fear of failure, the fear of not getting, the fear of not loosing, the fear of not being appreciated. The fear of not seeing fulfilled your own desires makes you aggressive: “It’s only when you are afraid that you become angry. Think of the last time you were angry and search for the fear behind it. What were you afraid of seeing? What were you afraid of losing? What were you afraid would be taken from you? That’s where the anger comes from.”⁹

None of these attachments is real. But we must understand what reality actually means for de Mello. What is real is perceived and understood in the full wakeful state, with a full consciousness; real is only the truth. Neither the external norms nor the external appreciation, neither fear nor anger are real; they do not belong to the human essence. They are only delusions born by the sleepy-life, by the system of dependencies that an individual considers as being the basic condition for a normal life. This conditioning serves as a substitute for reality, distorting it and enclaving it in the ghetto of counterfeit ideas.

RELIGION

As long as the psychologist and philosopher de Mello focuses on the discussion about social and moral regulations and on the knowledge and self-knowledge of the psychological mechanisms determining human behavior, things seem to develop in a regular way. But Father de Mello does not stop there; he provokes agitation and indignation when he approaches the delicate subject of religion. It seems, by its affirmations, that he overturns the entire scaffolding of religious ideology – of all religions, equally. Thus, he says:

- Spirituality is a reality much broader than one religion or another; there is no equivalence between these two: “...I want you to understand

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

something right at the beginning, that religion is not – I repeat: *not* – necessarily connected with spirituality.”¹⁰

- The excess of ritualism and the obligation of observing church regulations darken the Reality on which faith and spiritual truth is based: “You know that there are times...when the Blessed Sacrament becomes more important than Jesus Christ, when worship becomes more important than love, when the Church becomes more important than life, when God becomes more important than the neighbor. And so it goes on. That’s the danger. To my mind this is what Jesus was evidently calling us to – first things first! The human being is much more important than the Sabbath.”¹¹

- Excessive regulations divide and separate people from spiritual reality, leading to phenomena similar to idolatry. For example: “There was a group of a thousand people who went on a pilgrimage to Mexico City to venerate the shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe. They sat down before the statue in protest because the Bishop of the Diocese had declared Our Lady of Lourdes patroness of the diocese! They were sure that Our Lady of Guadalupe felt this very much, so they were doing the protest in *reparation* for the offense.”¹²

- Religion is not only a conglomerate of dogmas, but also one of vanities; any religion that considers it knows everything about God raises a barrier between individuals and God, forcing its believers to an unconditional trust in a doctrine. Instead of a spiritual reality, religion presents a bag of words: “The fact is that you’re surrounded by God and you don’t see God, because you “know” about God. The final barrier to the vision of God is your God concept. You miss God because you think you know. That’s the terrible thing about religion. That’s what the gospels were saying, that religious people ‘knew,’ so they got rid of Jesus. The highest knowledge of God is to know God as unknowable. There is far too much God talk; the world is sick of it... All revelations, however divine, are never any more than a finger pointing to the moon. As we say in the East, when the sage points to the moon, all the idiot sees is the finger.”¹³

De Mello’s assertions about religion could appear to a superficial mind as attacks on Christianity and further, at Catholicism. Nothing is more false. A more attentive mind or rather, a *detached* mind, to use one of de Mello’s dear words, understands that, in fact, it is not about religion in itself. De Mello, a Catholic priest, has not disowned his vocation; not for a second. What he criticizes in this context is the people’s illusions, their opinions toward the unseen reality, the hubris of a limited mind to explain what is limitless. De Mello’s intention is only to shake the structure of the cognitive illusions that form religious dogmas; from (any) Church point of view, these dogmas constitute the required glasses for any follower, glasses

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 66-67.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

without which his belief cannot be “right.” The thick sieve of religious dogmatism is the target of de Mello’s attack in his striving to free people from ideological slavery. The corseting in rituals of belief, the consideration of events only on the basis of religious ideology, leads people in precisely the opposite direction than that of the one declared.

The result of this fight has a double aspect: one is the echo in people’s consciousness and the other is the echo in the Church, as the administrator of religion. The first aspect is related to each person’s individuality and cannot actually be evaluated. The second is easy to assess, as being represented by a dogmatic document presented by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.¹⁴ Obviously, there is a strong desynchronizing

¹⁴ Here is the “Notification,” very well known by Catholics but still unknown by the Orthodox Christians:

Congregation For The Doctrine Of The Faith. Notification Concerning. The Writings Of Father Anthony De Mello, S.J. The Indian Jesuit priest, Father Anthony de Mello, (1931-1987) is well known due to his numerous publications which, translated into various languages, have been widely circulated in many countries of the world, though not all of these texts were authorized by him for publication. His works, which almost always take the form of brief stories, contain some valid elements of Oriental wisdom. These can be helpful in achieving self-mastery, in breaking the bonds and feelings that keep us from being free, and in approaching with serenity the various vicissitudes of life. Especially in his early writings, Father de Mello, while revealing the influence of Buddhist and Taoist spiritual currents, remained within the lines of Christian spirituality. In these books, he treats the different kinds of prayer: petition, intercession, and praise, as well as contemplation of the mysteries of the life of Christ, etc. But already in certain passages in these early works and to a greater degree in his later publications, one notices a progressive distancing from the essential contents of the Christian faith. In place of the revelation which has come in the person of Jesus Christ, he substitutes an intuition of God without form or image, to the point of speaking of God as a pure void. To see God it is enough to look directly at the world. Nothing can be said about God; the only knowing is unknowing. To pose the question of his existence is already nonsense. This radical apophaticism leads even to a denial that the Bible contains valid statements about God. The words of Scripture are indications which serve only to lead a person to silence. In other passages, the judgment on sacred religious texts, not excluding the Bible, becomes even more severe: they are said to prevent people from following their own common sense and cause them to become obtuse and cruel. Religions, including Christianity, are one of the major obstacles to the discovery of truth. This truth, however, is never defined by the author in its precise contents. For him, to think that the God of one's own religion as the

between the levels of the discussion, which are determined by completely different objectives. While Father de Mello refers to the criterion of Truth, the *Notification of the Congregation* refers to the doctrine. Interesting to note, the "verdict" was pronounced only eleven years after de Mello's death, and was signed by one Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger. And even more interesting, the act was signed on the day of the commemoration of St. John the Baptizer celebration, a great spiritual revolutionary, in whose footsteps followed Anthony de Mello.

only one is simply fanaticism. "God" is considered as a cosmic reality, vague and omnipresent; the personal nature of God is ignored and in practice denied. Father de Mello demonstrates an appreciation for Jesus, of whom he declares himself to be a "disciple." But he considers Jesus as a master alongside others. The only difference from other men is that Jesus is "awake" and fully free, while others are not. Jesus is not recognized as the Son of God, but simply as the one who teaches us that all people are children of God. In addition, the author's statements on the final destiny of man give rise to perplexity. At one point, he speaks of a "dissolving" into the impersonal God, as salt dissolves in water. On various occasions, the question of destiny after death is declared to be irrelevant; only the present life should be of interest. With respect to this life, since evil is simply ignorance, there are no objective rules of morality. Good and evil are simply mental evaluations imposed upon reality. Consistent with what has been presented, one can understand how, according to the author, any belief or profession of faith whether in God or in Christ cannot but impede one's personal access to truth. The Church, making the word of God in Holy Scripture into an idol, has ended up banishing God from the temple. She has consequently lost the authority to teach in the name of Christ. With the present Notification, in order to protect the good of the Christian faithful, this Congregation declares that the above-mentioned positions are incompatible with the Catholic faith and can cause grave harm. The Sovereign Pontiff John Paul II, at the Audience granted to the undersigned Cardinal Prefect, approved the present Notification, adopted in the Ordinary Session of this Congregation, and ordered its publication. Rome, from the offices of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, June 24, 1998.

The Solemnity of the Birth of John the Baptist. + Joseph Card. Ratzinger Prefect + Tarcisio Bertone, S.D.B. Archbishop Emeritus of Vercelli Secretary www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/demello; http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19980624_demello_en.html

AWARENESS – AWAKENING – AWARENESS

Father de Mello's message is difficult to understand, as in fact, are all spiritual messages, though, paradoxically, the linguistic form is more than accessible. The same for the literary form: stories, personal memories, others' memories, direct and shocking words suddenly sweetened by a good laugh, after which, again, the thunder startles the audience. A series of dramatic ingredients gives flavor to the common man's daily life: routines, regulations, necessary obediences, are all approached both with irony and gravity. But none of these is too serious from the point of view of spiritual reality except one: the offense of mental routine. The uncritical acceptance imposed by institutionalized constructions; the acceptance of thinking coming from outside; the thought of being proved "good" by the immediate effects of comfort; the voluntary renunciation of any attempt at personal judgment; self-repudiation in the case of any weak sign of courage of asking "why?"; the unquestioning obedience of the external control of one's feelings, thoughts, and attitudes; the acceptance with gratitude of small rewards for good behavior, the right opinion, the right emotions – all of these constitute, beyond all kinds of ideologies, the greatest sin of the human being: the sin of abandoning one's own essence, one's own genuine nature, the dignity of one's spiritual species. And for what? For a comfortable life in a fake psychological and social construction.

So what about this message of Anthony de Mello? Being firmly rejected by religious dogma, it does not belong, for sure, to any kind of institutionalized religion, though its spirit is surely fitted to Christianity. Some people accept the existence of this message only because it is introduced in a literary shape; however, this literature aims farther than it appears at first sight. But could one call this message of de Mello a philosophy? No doubt, one could rightly affirm that: a special kind of philosophy, which shakes, breaks, destroys the dreams of death, dissipates the delusions that do not mean anything else but a despairing flight from reality and an accepted incapability to face the social tornados – tornados which twist relationships, ideologies, survival; ideological manipulations having as a main goal keeping the individual from understanding reality and living in it.

What Father de Mello's effort is in the first place is to stimulate this awareness of the state of the somnolence, of the collective hypnosis inducing in people the illusion of an existence outside of the Existence, together with the negation of any other non-dreamy reality. What is absolutely special in his message is that, though he speaks about general phenomena of society, he aims at each and every individual, and each person equally perceives the message as addressed directly and exclusively to him. This is, one can say, an action of a spiritual pedagogy, where the Professor can be identified as the Master from de Mello's stories, a spiritual master, who is not recruited by any ideology; he indicates to his disciple, by the touch of his awakening word, a scintilla of truth. This touch is the

impulse that any spiritual master gives to his followers to show them the path.

In receiving this gift, somehow, outside his own decision, the common individual finds himself on the first step of consciousness, which brings out the understanding of his own condition and also, an attempt to look at it with detachment. Here, one can make a comparison with some night-dreams, when the dreamer becomes conscious, not letting himself be dragged any more by the unreal action of the dream.

Evidently, a simple consciousness of a dream state does not lead too far. Again, the spiritual philosophy or, let us say, the spiritual pedagogy of Anthony de Mello intervenes almost with brutality, saying, "Wake up!" It is a resonant shake, but de Mello's voice, far from being one of religious revolt, as interpreted by dogmatic minds, does nothing more than to remind the sleepy one, using the call addressed by the Lord to his disciples, through all the world's holy texts and religious traditions.

The awakening is the fundamental act of simultaneous understanding of the present condition and the atemporal human nature. Here, indeed, is situated the anteroom of the will and action toward Awareness, the leap from the artificial sleepy world to Reality. In other words, the condition asserted by the "world is a dream" is killed together with the dreamer inside: "I've often said to people that the way to really live is to die."¹⁵ But what is so scandalous in this affirmation? Why should we not agree with it when we accept the same affirmation from the eremites of Philokalia? As a matter of fact, it is the same message, common to both Oriental and Occidental mystics – to be dead to the world. The only difference is that they were somewhere, sometime, far away and a long time ago, and this allows us refer to them with detachment and no obligation on our part, while de Mello lives here and now, forcing the truth to spring out in the light of the conscience, a painful process for which no one else is responsible but oneself, whether in fulfillment or failure. The principle of the life-dream is precisely this one: to not have obligations, to not feel any guilt for anything, to not have the responsibility of one's own life – somebody else lives me, lives my life, with the declared aim to make me feel well. A mass of somnolent people – this is the triumph toward which all ideologies aspire.

Returning to a previous assertion, we notice that de Mello speaks about two kinds of death, two totally different essences being hidden under the same name. The first type, common among people, refers to the spiritual beggar, fearing for his petite wealth: "If I can't get you to peep out of your narrow beliefs and convictions and look at another world, you're dead; you're completely dead; life has passed by you. You're sitting in your little prison, where you're frightened; you're going to lose your God, your

¹⁵Anthony de Mello, *Awareness. A. de Mello Spirituality Conference in His Own Words*, edited by J. Francis Stroud, S.J. (London: Fount Paperbacks, 1990), p. 169.

religion, your friends, all kinds of things. Life is for the gambler, it really is. That's what Jesus was saying."¹⁶ But what does this risk mean, after all? De Mello tells us: it is the courage to wake up, to get out from comfort, to come out from hypnosis, to come out from fear. Awakening is the only way to freedom – and freedom means, “to see at last with a vision that is clear and unclouded by fear or desire...You will see, you will know beyond concepts and conditioning, addictions and attachments.”¹⁷

De Mello stops here with the outline of his program for life. His objective is not to “redeem” people, but to convince people – Western ones – to undertake a transformation, to become aware of their condition of death-sleep, and to change themselves by Awakening. He cannot ask more from the common man. His mission is to indicate the way and to tell something about what is going to happen afterward. Once awakened, man becomes able to understand his own free nature and, therefore, to choose in full consciousness. But “when you awaken, when you understand, when you see, the world becomes right”¹⁸ – in other words, inside the new condition, to think about a choice is useless, because the choice presupposes duality, conflict, tension. Paradoxically, the state of liberty obtained by awakening reduces the possibility and the desire to choose, because when “you finally awake, you don't try to make good things happen; they just happen. You understand suddenly that everything that happens to you is good.”¹⁹ It is the affirmation of a man who *knows*, who does not need any argument for the evidence, nor the proof of what *exists*.

We are used to considering philosophy as something addressed exclusively to the intellect, to the mind, to the reason; only the language, in its quality of the cognitive process is allowed in this closed kingdom. The effects of these regulations are seen in modern times – philosophy is a product of the limitations of the conceited human mind pretending to explain the inexplicable. Now, philosophy is just another ideological category.

To avoid this effect and also in a new awareness of its mission, philosophy directed its preoccupations to “generally more specific” fields, approaching particular sectors of human life. Therefore, one could situate Anthony de Mello's philosophy, as well as his spiritual pedagogy, within this field of specific interest. On the other side, Father de Mello cannot be assimilated to any present philosophical trend, not by the language used and even less by his objectives. Interestingly enough, however, one can find an affiliation with a certain pedagogical ray still functional today. In the seventeenth century, Jan Amos Comenius, was building a theological conception from which a philosophical conception was derived; in its turn, its philosophy supported an educational theory and practice which has

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 734.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

changed the world in the field of pedagogy. This spirit was continued by some European pedagogues; in India, Sri Aurobindo has delineated a type of integral education aiming to facilitate spiritual growth.

But Anthony de Mello is not a pedagogue in the ideological sense of the word. First of all, he is a mystic; a mystic who teaches, not preaches; a mystic hard to recognize in a modern world that places this kind of person between the pages of old books, rather than in a real life. A mystic has, necessarily, a philosophical conception and also an educational one – a starting point and a way of becoming. But these conceptions have no correspondence with what we know about these activities, and an analogy would not present interest or clarifying effects.

The third phase of de Mello's spiritual pedagogy is not clearly expressed or even sketched in his speeches or writings. It can be realized only by the efforts of awakening as a process of striving for change. Awareness, in its highest form, can be explained only in the way de Mello explains love: "...love is not something that you have; love is something that *has* you!"²⁰ or perhaps by one of his little stories scattering the road of knowledge:

"- Help us to discover God./- Nobody can help you with this./- Why not?/- For the same reason that nobody can help the fish to discover the ocean."²¹

A VERY SHORT CONCLUSION

At first sight, Anthony de Mello's spiritual philosophy is based on negative truths. In Hinduism, in Jnana Yoga this cognitive attitude could be called a "neti, neti" search (neither this, nor that); it is no wonder, if taking into consideration not only de Mello's native country but even more, his vocation for truth. But for the Occidental man, to whom it is addressed, de Mello's discourse is much simplified. The aspects approached are one by one negated – as reality, as authenticity. It seems that this method is the most appropriate for human understanding. A mind judging with partiality could stop here in its comprehension; this mind is, usually, a rational mind, looking for palpable evidence. But there is a difference in knowing as a process and direct knowledge as such. The logical mind is in a continuous movement in its desire for knowing. This mind knows "in part." De Mello's discourse is related to the second acceptance. He does not need anymore to look to discover something, for he has already discovered it; and in this way, he is much closer to the whole than reasoning can be. That is why his words are addressed to intuition rather than to logic.

The ideological fanatic, however, cannot appeal either to logic or intuition, so, his handy instrument is the "anathema," an effect foreseen by

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

²¹ *Id.*, *Înțelepciune la minut*, (One Minute Wisdom) (Braşov: Editura Mix, 2004), p. 91

Father de Mello, who sees himself surrounded by: "...dead people running governments, dead people running big business, dead people educating others."²²

Still, his philosophy – his life program, as he likes to say – is addressed precisely to these sleepers in their sleep of death. The metaphysical "why" has no purport here; it has no meaning either as question or as answer. It is just one among many other mental illusions. The only method is to wake up, to live aware of what is happening to you, to understand reality as it is. The only state of non-illusion is the consciousness which in its higher plane, the plane of Awareness, is identical with freedom, truth, and ultimately with God.

By his program of awakening and awareness, Anthony de Mello does not establish a philosophical construct, but delineates a philosophical experience, indicating also a method for reaching it. Undoubtedly, this ought to be the meaning of philosophy today.

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²² Anthony de Mello, *Awareness. A. de Mello Spirituality Conference in His Own Words*, edited by J. Francis Stroud, S.J. (London: Fount Paperbacks, 1990), p. 177.

CHAPTER XXX

THE HUMAN PERSON BETWEEN TRANSCENDENCE AND FAULT: A PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE¹

CĂTĂLIN BOBB

Abstract: “What would we know about contrivance, hatred, or deception, were it not for the confession of novels and stories?” Paul Ricoeur asks himself. Although the present question, within the context in which it is stated, has a profoundly rhetorical character, it can be stated directly by shifting the emphasis. What would we know about the human being were it not for contrivance, hatred, and deception? In other words, my task is to search within this text, in the footsteps of Paul Ricoeur, for what might be called a philosophical anthropology of the negative; a philosophy centered on elements excluded by default from an axiological theory but which, as we shall see, are fundamental to any axiological theory. *Freedom and Nature*, Paul Ricoeur’s doctoral thesis, begins with a sentence that will never be explicitly closed and which Paul Ricoeur will exploit in all of his subsequent works, but never directly. It is about two fundamental concepts which offer the totality of human subjectivity: fault and transcendence. More explicitly, in Ricoeur’s own words, fault as the absolute deficiency of the human being and transcendence as the absolute origin of subjectivity. Thus, I suggest, following Ricoeur, that a philosophy that forces itself to analyze the fundamental deficiencies of the human being fails, as long as it remains within the strict boundaries of philosophy, as long as it refuses to open toward a mythological, theological, or religious form. The reasoning is this: pure will tells us nothing of morality; understanding morality and fundamentally human values stems from within human passions; understanding passions and a possible solution regarding them surpasses the possibilities of philosophy.

Keywords: Paul Ricoeur, transcendence, fault, will, epoché, poetics of the will

THE LIMITS OF WILL: TRANSCENDENCE AND FAULT

The project of *Philosophy of the Will*,² opened by the hinge volume

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The Voluntary and the Involuntary, lets us know from the start that what is outside phenomenological analysis should not be of interest to us, because the core of the analyses will be a “pure description and a pure understanding of the voluntary and the involuntary”³ as fundamental structures of will. To be able to reach these fundamental structures, we have to operate from the beginning with an abstraction, a bracketing, an *epoché* of fault and transcendence. This means that *The Voluntary and the Involuntary* opens with a closure. More explicitly, there is no phenomenology of *transcendence* and *fault*⁴ just to be able to later state that the ultimate purpose of this work will be the direct analysis of fault and transcendence. When we speak of the ultimate purpose of *Philosophy of the Will*, we must necessarily bear in mind all three volumes. The impossibility of building a phenomenology of transcendence and fault is, in the first volume, relative to the condition of being human, however prosaic this may be. The two concepts are denied a phenomenological analysis because they are the absolute marginal points: in the case of the fault, “*which profoundly alters man’s intelligibility*,” and respectively, in the case of transcendence, “*which hides within it the ultimate origin of subjectivity*.”⁵ Denying from the start the access of phenomenology to the “ultimate origin of subjectivity,” as well as to the “specific something” that “profoundly alters man’s intelligibility,” it would seem that phenomenology is condemned to discuss everything but the “things in themselves.”

It is truly important to understand well what Ricoeur means by abstracting fault and transcendence. The French philosopher openly states: “The fundamental structures of the voluntary and the involuntary which we shall seek to describe and understand acquire their full significance only when the abstraction which enables us to elaborate them is removed.”⁶ In fact, we cannot fully understand the fundamental structures of will (the voluntary and the involuntary) nor the fundamental structures of the voluntary and involuntary in a pure description, because we will only be able to analyze their true significance when description and pure understanding are dissolved, thus, only when abstraction, which gives us the possibility to purely describe and purely understand the voluntary and the involuntary, will be suppressed. This game where we use abstraction in a phenomenological paradigm, abandoning it and then moving to another

² *Philosophy of the Will* is composed of three volumes: *Freedom and Nature* (1950), *Fallible Man* (1960) and *The Symbolism of Evil* (1960). French originals: *Philosophie de la volonté 1. Le volontaire et l’involontaire* (Paris: Aubier, 1950), *Philosophie de la volonté 2. Finitude et culpabilité. Livre I. L’homme faillible. Livre II. La symbolique du mal* (Paris: Aubier, 1960).

³ Paul Ricoeur, *Freedom and Nature*, translated by Erazim V. Kohak (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2007), p. 3.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.* (my emphasis).

⁶ *Ibid.*

paradigm we do not yet know, produces real difficulties to an adequate understanding of the role of this concept. This is why it is inevitable to go back to Husserl through Ricoeur.

EPOCHÉ

Beyond the differences marked by the entire Ricoeurian exegesis, there are differences that Ricoeur himself points out, and they are easy to notice. Ricoeur transforms and remodels, with honesty and without any excessively destructive demands, purely Husserlian concepts, to give them a new meaning, one that no longer complies with the initial trajectory it is supposed to have. Ricoeur operates such a turning (to avoid using distortion) at the level of the concept of *abstraction*, or, even better, over the very debated concept of “phenomenological reduction.” Ricoeur tells us that abstraction helps us to bracket fault and transcendence. Although things are clear, that transcendence and fault must be eliminated from the horizon of intentionality when we are attempting a pure description of the voluntary and involuntary as fundamental structures of will. Ricoeur almost completely misappropriates the epoché’s initial meaning.

This evacuation is justified for more than one reason, and we will try to discern them at the level of fault and transcendence, but it must be stated now that the Ricoeurian epoché functions, or is supposed to function, as a method completely under Husserlian protection: “This abstraction is in some respects akin to what Husserl calls eidetic reduction, that is, bracketing of the fact and elaborating on the idea of meaning.”⁷ Thus, it is inevitably mandatory to inquire as to which regard is the abstraction similar to Husserl’s and to which it isn’t, so we must inquire in regard to the differences between the Husserlian epoché⁸ and the Ricoeurian epoché. The difficulties of such an approach are relative to the obvious ambiguities Ricoeur’s text manifests. Ricoeur is not completely clear when he tells us how the abstraction is similar to what Husserl calls “eidetic reduction.” It is up to us to grasp what Ricoeur wishes to suggest through the abstraction of fault and transcendence. Nonetheless, to approach a central problem of Husserl’s phenomenology, only to distinguish a similar, but not central, problem of Ricoeur’s phenomenology seems a risky task; risky because abstraction in Ricoeur functions just as an intermediary momentum, a methodological precaution, and in the end as forbearance, maybe even an

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

⁸ We are relatively aware of the major difficulties that we open with this attempt, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “the most famous phenomenologist,” as Ricoeur calls him, only confirms this fact: “...no doubt that there hasn’t existed a problem to which Husserl dedicated more time to understand himself, no other problem to which he returned more often.” *Fenomenologia Percepției*, translated by Ilieș Câmpeanu and Georgiana Vătăjelu (Oradea: Aion, 1999), p. 9.

impossibility to directly analyze the concepts it suspends. At the same time, some similarities between the two concepts cannot be doubted. If Husserlian reduction primarily aims at suspending the natural attitude of naivete, where our knowledge lives with us, then we may state that Ricoeurian reduction functions as suspending the naive attitude that our knowledge has regarding the concepts of fault and transcendence. But what kind of naivete are we talking about in regard to Ricoeur? Should we understand that there is a natural knowledge, a psychological naivete that speaks of fault and transcendence? What kind of knowledge is this about, the theological one, the philosophical one, or both? We cannot know; Ricoeur does not mention anything in relation to this. Another step: for Husserl, the eidetic reduction offers the beginning philosopher access to the origin of pure, transcendental subjectivity,⁹ and, on the contrary, this functions for Ricoeur the opposite way, in the very precise sense that access to the ultimate origin of subjectivity is suspended, bracketed, and inaccessible. That which is fundamental for Husserl is marginal for Ricoeur, although both philosophers only aim to understand and describe human subjectivity. It is obvious that for Husserl this is not the ultimate aim, but transcendental subjectivity functions as an indispensable pendant of a radically scientific philosophy. For Ricoeur, to understand and describe human subjectivity is the key to understanding the human person as such. An explanation must be provided immediately. The separation from Husserl is completely visible by now. Phenomenology does not provide the key to adequately understand subjectivity, but it does offer the key to adequately understand the fundamental structures of subjectivity: the voluntary and the involuntary. But of what kind of pure, transcendental description may we talk when the sublayer that supports this description is by no means pure and transcendental? More specifically, if the voluntary and the involuntary are the ultimate/primary structures of human will, and human will defines, however imperfectly, human subjectivity, then pure description should totally function over all the elements that compound human subjectivity, as well as over subjectivity as such. This does not happen in the case of Ricoeurian philosophy, and the reasons for such a “deliberate failure” of phenomenology still require explaining.

The radicalism of the Husserlian task that we merely state here actually supposes a kind of absolute radicalism of the cogitant subject; that is, specifically, a subject that constitutes itself through itself in itself in the

⁹ “Pure and/or transcendental phenomenology [...]; this science refers to a new *field of experience*, one belonging only to it, and that is transcendental subjectivity. [...] transcendental experience is possible only in a radical change [...] a change of attitude, which, as method of access to the transcendental-phenomenological scheme is called ‘phenomenological reduction,’” Edmund Husserl, *Postfața la Idei pentru o fenomenologie pură și o filosofie fenomenologică* (1930) in *Criza umanității europene și filosofia*, translated by Alexandru Boboc (București: Paideia, 2003), p. 110.

world, so that “the objective world that exists for me, that has existed and will exist for me, this world together with all the objects within it, creates [...] its entire meaning and the whole validity of existence that it has in every moment for me from my very self, from myself as a transcendental ego that appears for the first time together with the transcendental phenomenological epoché.”¹⁰ We are not interested in the incrimination regarding Husserlian solipsism, – in the end, even Husserl reacts¹¹ rather brutally against his critics – but our interest exclusively regards the similarities between this constitutive reduction of the phenomenological transcendental subject and Ricoeur’s reduction applied to transcendence and fault. It is useless to mark here Ricoeur’s drama, that is, the obvious excluding of transcendence and fault in applying the Husserlian epoché, which never makes room for his central philosophical concepts. What Ricoeur produces by excluding from the beginning transcendence and fault is a bracketing, not of transcendence and fault, but of the ultimate origin of subjectivity as well as that particular something that profoundly alters subjectivity. Once more, Ricoeur does not exclude from the field of phenomenological analysis transcendence and fault, but excludes, in the end, human subjectivity with its two extremes: origin and alteration. The reasons for this exclusion are not in the least unclear; they are not even philosophical, but pertain to what the Christian Ricoeur feels “inside his heart.” We should not misunderstand this – Ricoeur does not confess to this, for it would be a philosophical disaster – but it is the only way we can understand the motives of the true excluding of fault and transcendence from the field of phenomenological analysis. But this does not mean that Ricoeur would have been completely aware that by giving up phenomenology, he would open up hermeneutics. The dangers that a purely phenomenological analysis would pose to the philosopher are much more important than the necessity of a new method.

Thus, we may ask ourselves, without seeming to lack understanding, why is Ricoeur weary of phenomenologically attacking transcendence and fault? Why must we, from the beginning, bracket, eliminate, or abstract transcendence and fault? Can all this be about a methodological necessity, or, more likely, that the method produces harmful side effects to the concepts it wishes to analyze? Phenomenology, in its primary intention, wants nothing more than to scientifically substantiate sciences,¹² that is, to humanly objectify – using a little word game – the objective. Such a wish must not be easily overlooked. We can find nothing more beneficial than

¹⁰ Edmund Husserl, *Meditații carteziente*, translated by Aurelian Crăiuțu (București: Humanitas, 1994), p. 57.

¹¹ Edmund Husserl, *Postfața la Idei pentru o fenomenologie pură și o filosofie fenomenologică*, p. 108.

¹² Let us listen to Husserl here: “The idea that guides our meditations is that of a science that must be founded in a radical authenticity and, in the end, the idea of a universal science,” *Meditații carteziene*, p. 37.

objectifying fault and transcendence. Let us imagine we have at hand a method through which we can objectify “the ultimate origin of subjectivity” as well as that particular something “which profoundly alters man’s intelligibility.” Could this be an unexpected chance that philosophy receives? No, on the contrary, Ricoeur tells us this exactly the place of the necessity to bracket, especially because of the fact that phenomenology has as its justifying pretension the *objectivization*. We are not talking about the shortcomings of Husserlian phenomenology (intersubjectivity, ontology, etc.) and the whole post-Husserlian tradition as Ricoeur understands it, but the fact that the fundamental intention of phenomenology must not be taken into consideration. We should not endlessly speculate in regard to Ricoeur’s decision that phenomenology cannot work its primary intention, and this we must understand as such. But there are precautions again, and we may ask ourselves why. What are the phenomenological motives, causes, and reasoning that impose such a decision? Unfortunately, Ricoeur does not offer answers for these questions, and our own interpretation cannot be presently put into application. We shall cautiously wait for the second part of this paper.

FAULT

Erazim V. Kohak, famous Czech phenomenologist and the translator of *Freedom and Nature* into English, writes an introduction entitled *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*. And truly, we are faced with more than a simple introduction; it is an almost exhaustive explanation of the mechanisms (as an index) that build the philosophy of will (Kohak does not stop here; he also integrates *Fallible Man* and *The Symbolism of Evil*). For Kohak, *transcendence* and *fault* remain central concepts in *Freedom and Nature*. Nonetheless, it seems odd to state that the central concepts of a work are concepts that are not discussed much at all. In fact, they occupy a central role through their marginality, not in the sense that they are being evacuated, which actually happens, but that they are the extreme margins that frame the entire philosophy of will; between transcendence and fault, will is manifesting. The multiple versants that human will must pass over are framed, limited as ultimate margins by transcendence and fault. Will remains entrapped in a perpetual road that cannot surpass its own limits, within a phenomenological analysis, given by transcendence and fault. To go beyond, to aim a *beyond* intentionality, means to go outside of phenomenology to be able to bring into discussion exactly what phenomenology cannot talk about. It means, in lesser and much simpler words, telling phenomenology that it fails exactly where things are essential,¹³ slightly forcing things, we might say, exactly where things are

¹³ We offer here Merleau-Ponty’s answer to his own question: “What is phenomenology? [...] Phenomenology is the study of essences and, according to it, the entire problem pertains to defining essences; the essence of perception,

eidetic. It may seem absurd to bring into debate the central concepts of *Freedom and Nature*, as long as they are central through their absence. But what stops us from seeing them working where they are not? This is not a word game. If the *index* of will (the fundamental structures) may be analyzed only by disregarding transcendence and fault, it means that the movements within will, either voluntary or involuntary, are movements determined exactly by the limits that transcendence and fault impose.

When Kohak speaks of fault, he insists on telling us that “this term reflects Ricoeur’s basic intuition of a world out of kilter, of basic disruption marking all existence. In conversation, Ricoeur has stated that he had sought the most neutral term which would express this sense of radical disruption.”¹⁴ The process of translation, Kohak confesses, obligates him to remove from the concept of fault “any theological connotation” that may be there. Here we encounter a delicate problem of Ricoeur’s philosophy: where do philosophy and theology meet, and where do they separate? If we are to take into account the version Kohak unveils for us, we will say that “the theological connotation of ‘fall’ proves unsupportable.”¹⁵ Fault here is not imbued with any theological fragrance. Thus, Kohak tells us, we may use the concepts of *fall*, *disruption*, *corruption*, and *rupture*, and all of them, in different ways, would be synonymous to the concept of fault. The exacerbated care that Kohak shows while trying to convince us of the theological impossibility of the concept of fault makes us think. The text itself (*Freedom and Nature*) is not as convincing as Kohak! There are enough elements that would disagree with Kohak when listening (in conversation!) – over-piously, we may add – to Ricoeur. Of course, as in the case of any philosophical work, it is to be avoided by any means to be engaged in any theologically-favorable discussion, but, under the principle of textual honesty, we have to admit that things are not really as clear as Kohak sees them.

POETICS OF THE WILL

Eliminating passions from the phenomenological description of will actually acts as a recoil. The abstraction (elimination) of fault and transcendence functions only as a procedure chosen by Ricoeur for reasons unclear. In fact, the limit of analysis suggested by Ricoeur encounters passions (fault) exactly at the heart, if we may call it that, of an ontological project. The main reason Ricoeur asks for ontology of will is human existence as “meaning.” The meaning to which we refer is represented by the human subject, which, through its fundamental acts (I want, decide, and

the essence of conscience for example,” in Merleau-Ponty, *Fenomenologia Perceptiei*, p. 5.

¹⁴ Erazim V. Kohak, “The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur” in Paul Ricoeur, *Freedom and Nature*, xxxix.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

consent) constitutes itself. Unfortunately, the distortions that constantly attack the consistency of a transcendental self are always up and ready to dissolve the radicalism of the self. Ricoeur calls these distortions *passions* (ambition, gluttony, hatred, vanity, etc). An ontological project that would therefore start in reverse – not from the fundamental structures of the self, but from the fundamental passions – is a pat answer that seems at least promising. In the end, Ricoeur gives up his attempt to place his analysis in nobody's will and attempts to create, on the basis of an empirical will, an ontology.

At this point, Ricoeur's project becomes at least unnatural. In *Freedom and Nature*, Ricoeur warns us from the very beginning that his research on will shall not include a study of ambition or hatred. This is not because these are not part of the mechanism through which, for example, we hate, but precisely because these entities are "ordinary," "concrete," and "real." The relentless reality of hatred, the fact that it exists in everyone's daily life precisely through its objectivity, dismisses the possibility of an eidetic analysis. In fact, these *passions*, as Ricoeur calls them, cannot be analyzed because they *corrupt* the neutral (pure) mode of the existence of the voluntary and the involuntary aspects of our freedom.¹⁶ Moreover, the necessity to ignore these passions is required by the fundamental structures of the human will (to act, choose, and consent). Of course, this is about a philosophy of the *yes* against the originary and obscure negativity that dwells within us. It is an ontology lacking the elementary deficiencies of our nature. Against these barbaric negativities (hatred, ambition, etc.) that are inscribed in the reality of our existence, a philosophy of *originary affirmation* eidetically described is required. Such a task seems to be against existentialist philosophy, which found negativity to be the distinctive marker of our existence. Against the existentialist *no* – the Ricoeurian *yes*. The problem is that this "yes" is placed outside of experience, outside the concrete possibilities of human action. How is that?

Ricoeur tells us that the possibility of a discussion on will outside the law-morality scheme exists. "The will is, fundamentally, the ability to receive and approve values. But the willing-value nexus remains an abstraction and does not introduce us to concrete moral reality (...) it provides only a basis for the possibility of a principle of morality in general. *Real, concrete understanding of morality begins with passions.*"¹⁷ The elimination of passions as founding events of concrete morality in a phenomenological description of will does nothing more than subscribe to the same logic of the abstraction of fault. Will, in this scheme, belongs to nobody, but it is a significant, essential, fundamental nobody.

¹⁶ Paul Ricoeur, *Freedom and Nature*, p. 20.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

Paradoxically, a while later, Ricoeur changes the registry: “Secondary reflection¹⁸ assures passage from a transcendental phenomenology to a ontological phenomenology.¹⁹ In this case, our problem is to show the mere possibilities of a phenomenology of a will which transforms itself into an ontology of will...thru passions.”²⁰ Introducing these passions as elements that open a possible ontological phenomenology cannot at this time do anything more than amaze. Of course, it won’t be long until he publishes *Fallible Man* (1960), but this article produces not only the stupefaction of contradiction, but also the path to a new method. If eliminating passions (ambition, hatred, gluttony, etc.) seemed the ultimate condition to open the path toward an ontology of will, because these elements corrupt the pure mode of being of will, the total inversion of the analysis seems unnatural. But the area where freedom moved even prior to history, as Ricoeur describes it in *Freedom and Nature*, is ineffable; ineffable in the sense of action, not utterableness, which means an action that has no equivalent in reality. Of course, the necessity to create fundamental structures of the human will requires such ineffability. But this retrieving ontology situated at the edge of reality must open up toward a phenomenology of passions to be able to function. But, as a principle, a phenomenology of passions that excludes fault is impossible.

In spite of this, Ricoeur tells us that a phenomenology of passions can exist as a “philosophical reflection on culpability.”²¹ Let us see how ambition, gluttony, hatred, etc., can work as openers for a phenomenological ontology. Proximity with the elements excluded from a phenomenological description is produced precisely by the reality of our existence, “the human *ethos* in its whole,” expressed through literature and history: “do passions not represent the ordinary figure of will, regarding which the functions of the voluntary and the involuntary are nothing more than abstractions, like a skeleton, a bone structure without meat?” Ricoeur rhetorically asks. That is, of course, true, but the multiplicity of figures that ambition, gluttony, hatred, etc., presents annihilates the possibility of a unifying principle so dear to a phenomenological description. The only way to talk about these elements of nonentity, or existential precariousness, as Ricoeur calls them, is the myth. It is true that the engine of literature and history may function fueled by ambition, gluttony, and hatred, but only

¹⁸ Secondary reflection walks in the shadow of secondary naivete. If there is a naive philosophy completely tributary to natural sciences that Husserl was trying to overcome, there is a second naivete of Husserlian philosophy against which Ricoeur builds his task. Paul Ricoeur, *La școală fenomenologică*, translated by Paul Marinescu (București: Humanitas, 2007), p. 190.

¹⁹At the moment Ricoeur speaks about a phenomenological ontology against transcendental phenomenology, he has in mind overcoming Husserl’s egology with what he calls an ontology of will.

²⁰ Paul Ricoeur, *La școală fenomenologică*, p. 90.

²¹ *Ibid.*

myth can account for their unity in the rational explanation that philosophical thought requires. This is how the myth is in game – the exponential myth, the unifying of passion is the myth of the Fall. The transition from the impossibility of unification to a structure of signification of passions such as ambition, gluttony, and hatred from a phenomenological description to a mythical description due to the lack of a unifying principle that only the myth of the Fall possesses makes us think.

For Ricoeur, “passion” is formed around an “intentional nothing” that can be also found in “suspicion,” “reproach,” “insult,” “wrath,” etc. The name of this “particular nothing” is represented in the myth by the images of “darkness,” “profound abyss,” “perversion,” “and enslavement.” It is about an intentional nothing that phenomenology cannot comprehend, so this task is exclusively assigned to the myth. The problem appears when Ricoeur admits that this particular nothing “revives the movement of history, projecting man toward welfare and power, setting the basis of economy and politics.” Thus, the task of phenomenology, as a description of the ultimate structures of the human, is seriously threatened: threatened to describe something lacking reality, lacking, in Ricoeur’s words, “meat.” The requirement is the simultaneous elaboration of an empirical theory and a mythical theory of will. But before we get to an empirical description, and respectively to a mythical description, let us remain enwrapped in the intention that moves phenomenological ontology.

The elimination of passions produces an advantage as well as a disadvantage: advantage, “because it emphasizes will and human existence in general as *that which gives meaning*;²² disadvantage, because there is “an ontological loss” provided by the negative access to the being of will through passion. So there is a reverse way, a way that should bracket “the fundamental structures” of will, a negative way which, through its negativity, would discover the ontological structure of will. The passion that Ricoeur offers as an example is vanity: vanity as an accessway, while, at the same time, as a distortion. “The omission of being seems connected to the dissimulation that enslaved freedom oozes; the ego’s vanity is spread like a veil over the very being of its existence.”²³ Is it an enslaved, subdued freedom? Why would that be? Because pure freedom does not exist; freedom is completely the creation of passions. Once the path to freedom is opened by vanity, we can access the being of freedom (of will).

But the question remains, how can we access the “being of will,” the “being of man,” through vanity? The answer is: through a “poetic of the will.” More specifically, the answer through and against ambition, gluttony, vanity, etc., is in the power of a poetic of the will. What such a poetic means and how it can be described remains without answer. Ricoeur will never return to this topic.

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²² *Ibid.*, p. 94.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

CHAPTER XXXI

FOUCAULT'S CASE AGAINST HUMANISM

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Abstract: Like many of the “-ism” words, humanism is a concept which is as widely used as it is indeterminate. In the English-speaking world, it is often associated with an optimistic and secular view of the world, and asserts the privilege of human beings over non-organic (or organic but nonhuman) entities, defending the rights of human beings to happiness and to the development of their individual potential. Yet in France and Germany, at the time of the “death of man,” humanism was seen by many as a dirty word, partly because of its implied anthropocentrism, and partly due to some dubious political associations. Although you can't find much uniformity in the anti-humanist camp (such as Foucault, Levi-Strauss, Althusser, and Lacan), they all denied the primacy of man, be it as an epistemological starting point (the subject as the foundation of all possible knowledge, as in Husserlian phenomenology) or as a practical agent (as in Hegelian history). Correlatively, they emphasized the part played by unconscious structures in the determination of thought and behavior. For example, the “author” was redefined by Foucault as a function of texts rather than their source; Althusser redescribed human agents as bearers of historical determination, not as the actors of history, etc.

Throughout this paper I will focus on Michel Foucault's understanding and use of the term. We can distinguish (as Alexander Fraser does) between three possible grounds for Foucault's rejection of humanism: 1) conceptual or philosophical (humanism as too entangled in Western subject-focused metaphysics); 2) strategic (the appeal to humanist values as covering up strategies of domination); or 3) normative (humanism as being intrinsically objectionable, on the grounds that subjection is per se a form of subjugation). These three possibilities are supposed to correspond to three main stages of Foucault's philosophical development (archaeology, genealogy, and the history of subjectivity). The strongest point in Foucault's rejection of humanism is conceptual: it was motivated by his philosophical analyses of the aporia of the anthropological turn and the analytic of finitude. But if Foucault entails that there is no human essence which is ahistorical and universal, does that mean that he rejects the possibility of human rights?

In this paper, I will summarize Foucault's arguments against humanism, and I will try to place them into the contemporary debate about the human essence. The purpose of my paper is to show that Foucault doesn't advocate against human rights as some critics have argued. No, Foucault's anti-humanism is entirely consistent with an orientation to human rights that does not tend to supply them a metaphysical ground. I think that Foucault has a pragmatic approach to the human rights problem. He does

not deny them and does not reject the necessity of them, but says that human rights need to be historically and pragmatically determined. In other words, Foucault is saying that we can not supply a metaphysical ground for human rights, because there is no human essence; but they are good, for those human values help us fight the power of governments, so let us use them. In this way, we should read a remark he made in an interview: “There exists today an international citizenship that has its rights and duties.” So we should see Foucault’s anti-humanism as undercutting only the modernist notion of the subject, but much of the core of humanist values can be retained.

Keywords: human rights, Foucault, humanism, Kant, biopower.

We can distinguish (as Alexander Fraser does) three possible grounds for Michel Foucault’s rejection of humanism:

- 1) conceptual or philosophical (humanism as too entangled in Western subject-focused metaphysics);
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These three possibilities are supposed to correspond to three main stages of Foucault’s philosophical development (archaeology, genealogy, and the history of subjectivity). The strongest point in Foucault’s rejection of humanism is conceptual: it was motivated by his philosophical analyses of the aporia of the anthropological turn and the analytic of finitude.

Humanism is strictly linked to the birth of man, which appeared at the start of modernity. The birth of man is due to the Copernican turn, whereby the focus shifted from representations to the representing subject. In Immanuel Kant’s work, “man appeared as an object of possible knowledge...and at the same time as the being through which all knowledge is possible.”¹ The possibility of anthropology (the study of man) was brought up by Kant, who, in his *Anthropology*, focused on finitude, rather than on the the infinite. “From Kant onward there is nothing but finitude, and it is in this sense that Kantian critique carried with it the possibility of anthropology.”² Foucault points out that during the Classical Age, the notion of the infinite was both central and primary; thus, for René Descartes, one can prove the existence of God by the presence of the idea of the infinite in the finite. The underlying assumption is that the infinite has ontological preeminence over the finite. So, during the Classical Age, the finite stands in a relationship of ontological subordination to and logical

¹ M. Foucault, *Introduction to Kant's Anthropology* (Los Angeles, CA.: Semiotext, 2008), p. 110.

² *Ibid.*, p. 100.

derivation from the infinite. By contrast, for Foucault, the hallmark of the anthropological turn is that human finitude, instead being subordinated to God's infinity, becomes self-foundational: "Modern culture can conceive of man because it conceives of the finite on the basis of itself."³

But, although Kant's "analytic of finitude" made possible the sciences of man as well as humanism, man was placed in an unstable position as both the subject and object of knowledge. Hence, man emerges in the "analytic of finitude" introduced by Kant as a "strange empirico-transcendental doublet,"⁴ because he is both the object of knowledge (that about which knowledge seeks to know) and the subject of knowledge (that which strives after such knowledge). Such a humanism introduces radical instabilities into the human sciences. This is leading Foucault to think that there are fundamental incompatibilities in the concepts of what man is and in the nature of modernist knowledge. Humanism, as Foucault understood it, exhausts itself in an endless back and forth from one side to the other of man and his doubles: from man as the condition for the possibility of knowledge to man as himself an object in the empirical field; from man's attempt to become intelligible to himself by making accessible the unthought that always eludes him because it is that which makes thought possible; from man's curious relationship with his history as historical and what makes history possible in which his origin always retreats. Humanism, or the analytic of finitude, then, is "warped and twisted forms of reflection," and all those forms of reflection that take man as the starting point, that talk of man's liberation, and that attempt to reach the truth about man are caught in the futility of the doubles.

Humanism claims that man exists at the center of the universe as a finite being who can reason within limits, and beyond which limits he cannot go. Such a notion generates insoluble contradictions for the human sciences because it is based on incompatible conceptions of what man, his history, and mind are. Foucault⁵ traces the play of these contradictions as they have emerged alongside the empirical human sciences. Hence on one hand, our knowledge must be limited, as man knows himself as a finite being, as an objective of nature; on the other hand, that finitude which establishes the limits of human understanding is claimed to be the condition that makes knowledge of this finitude possible. Hence the possibility of knowledge is established on limits to reason which deny it.

This is not the only problem that Foucault sees in the humanist conception. Humanism refers to the philosophical centrality or priority of the subject whose rational capacities, which are asocial and ahistorical, serve as a foundation anchoring objectivity and truth. As Alexander Fraser states, humanism "is the project of making the subject pole triumph over

³ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

⁵ M. Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1970), pp. 216-230.

the object pole,”⁶ representing man as constitutor, as free, as all-knowing, and as master of his fate and destiny. Foucault's conception of the subject, influenced by Friedrich Nietzsche, sees it as having no unity, essence, or integral identity. For Foucault, the unresolved tension of Kant's philosophical project is that he fails to appreciate the contingent and historically contextualized character of all truth-claims, (that is, to advocate a notion of critique which claims to transcend specific historical conditions through the exercise of cognitive faculties – of understanding, reason, and judgment – deduced *a priori* as timeless structures). The transcendental character of Kant's argument resides in positing *a priori* categories, which are deduced to constitute the consciousness of the human subject as that which organizes perception as a timeless and universal structure. In this sense, Foucault rejects Kant's claims to have established the universal grounds for the conditions of possibility of human knowledge, and Kant's claims for transcendental reason are replaced for Foucault by a principle of permanent contingency. By extension, Foucault disputes Kant's claim to have established a secure foundation by which to differentiate different types of knowledge claims, relating to science, practical reason, or aesthetics. The objective is to switch from a conception of critique as being transcendently grounded to a conception of critique which conceives of itself as practical and historically specific. Thus Foucault says: “Criticism is no longer going to be practiced in the search for formal structures with universal value, but rather as an historical investigation into the events that have led us to constitute ourselves and to recognize ourselves as subjects of what we are doing, thinking, and saying.”⁷

Next, Foucault adapts Kant to support his socio-historical concept, through which individuals are constituted in relation to a world of already-given practices of a determinate historical terrain. This is one of Foucault's central points: the human being has nothing which is essential or ahistorical, but everything is produced in the limits of an episteme (the total set of relations that unite, at a given period, the discursive practices that give rise to epistemological figures, sciences, and possibly formalized systems of knowledge). For example, man is a central figure only in our episteme, which is no more than two centuries old, so we can say that he is only a recent invention. We tend to see man as originary to all things because the structures of our episteme are entailing this view, but that does not mean that he is fundamental; being a mere concept derived from the structures of our episteme, man will disappear together with our episteme. This can be seen already with the dissolution of subject, which characterizes the present.

⁶ N. Fraser, *Foucault on Modern Power: Empirical Insights and Normative Confusions*, Cambridge Companion to Foucault (Cambridge: Cambridge Press, 2005), p. 191.

⁷ M. Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1970), p. 302.

The third argument and final against humanism is that it represents a mode of indirect domination. This point is based on Foucault's theory about power. The slogan of humanism is: "Even though you do not exercise power, you can still be a ruler." In the humanist view, the more you deny yourself the exercise of power, the more you submit to those in power, and then the more this increases your sovereignty. Humanism invented a whole series of subjected sovereignties: the soul (ruling the body, but subjected to God), consciousness (sovereign in a contest of judgment, but subjected to the necessities of truth), the individual (a titular control of personal rights subjected to the laws of nature and society), basic freedom (sovereign within, but accepting the demands of an outside world and "aligned with destiny"). In short, humanism is everything in Western civilization that restricts the desire for power: it prohibits the desire for power and excludes the possibility of power being seized. This view makes possible autocratic governments and tyranny in the Western world. Instead of this diminishment of human being, Foucault proposes a thoroughly contingent human, one which is always open to reinterpretation: "Men have never ceased to construct themselves...to continually displace their subjectivity, to constitute themselves in an infinite, multiple series of different subjectivities that will never have an end and will never bring us into the presence of something that would be "man."⁸

But, if Foucault entails that there is no human essence which is ahistorical and universal, does that mean that he rejects the possibility of human rights? No, Foucault's anti-humanism is entirely consistent with an orientation to human rights that does not tend to provide them with a metaphysical ground. I think that Foucault has a pragmatic approach to the human rights problem. He does not deny them and does not reject their necessity, but says that human rights need to be historically and pragmatically determined. In other words, Foucault is saying that we can not supply a metaphysical ground to human rights because there is no human essence; but they are good, and those human values help us fight the power of governments, so let us use them. In this way, we should read a remark he made in an interview: "There exists today an international citizenship that has its rights and duties."⁹ So, we should see Foucault's anti-humanism as undercutting only the modernist notion of the subject, while much of the core of humanist values can be retained.

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⁸ Foucault, M., *Power: Essential works of Foucault 1954-1984* (NY: The New Press, 2000), p. 274.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 405.

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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 Studies 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 crosscultural 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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