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# PHILOSOPHIA

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## SELFHOOD AT THE FRAGILE BORDER OF (AB)NORMALITY

ATTILA KOVÁCS\*

**ABSTRACT.** *Selfhood at the Fragile Border of (Ab)normality.* We will attempt to briefly examine the phenomenological aspects of the ontic and ontological appearance of normal selfhood and psychopathological manifestations. Behind the psychological, anthropological or hermeneutical and cultural philosophical concepts relating selfhood one can discover the phenomenal character of the appearance of our identity within the domain of experience. Furthermore, towards the end of our study, we will employ specific phenomenological concepts, which we try to apply to different psychopathological manifestations. Our goal is to present a paradigm shift pertaining to the interpretation of abnormality and especially schizophrenia, which is made possible precisely by the phenomenological approach presented above.

**Keywords:** *estrangement; normality/abnormality; phenomenology; selfhood; schizophrenia*

The exploration of the wider philosophical duality of normality/abnormality involves ethical, axiological, and even praxeological debates, the analysis of which does not belong to the scope of this essay. However, psychic normality and abnormality represent two fundamental modes of being of our ego. Thus, we will attempt to briefly examine the phenomenological aspects of the ontic and ontological appearance of normal selfhood and psychopathological manifestations.<sup>1</sup>

### 1. The Foucauldian theory of normality

Contemporary philosophy is as indebted to Michel Foucault and his sociographical and historical account of illness, asylums, and the pathological, along with their social representations, as contemporary psychoanalysis has the obligation to remember

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<sup>1</sup> In a world of the intense discussion of normality, in which health, convention, and harmonious togetherness obsessively recur from professional medical treatises to the pages of the tabloids, the topic of our essay is as actual as can be. Our selfhood, which constitutes itself in the sense of normality, implies problems that are also interesting from a metaphysical point of view, since the representation of the world is also dependent upon mental hygiene.

its founder, Sigmund Freud. Foucault defines mental disorder in the following way: in the early stages of western civilization, illness was viewed as a specific entity and an autonomous reality; however, in the modern age, it will acquire meaning in the context of the general behaviour and the dominant cultural perception related to the individual, and should be interpreted only in the context of these specific individual biographical narratives.

The Foucauldian theory of normality relativizes the once fixed concept of the pathological, which has erected rigid and atemporal boundaries between normality and abnormality. Foucault calls attention to the historical aspects of illness through detailing the historicity of the clinics and the power relationships between doctors and their patients; beyond its characteristics which manifest themselves through the symptoms, mental illness cannot be treated as an autonomous entity inserted between the sanity and the absolute abnormality of the individual – instead, it counts as an abstract phenomenon which forms an organic part of individual life.

Through his sociological and historical mapping of abnormality, Foucault has definitively suspended the modern, rigid and exclusivist, concept of normality. While at the rudimentary stage of medical science, in Descartes' times, it seemed logical to radically contrast mental illness with the logic of the exact sciences, the psychopathological experiences of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century have once and for all shaken the faith according to which normality would explicitly depend upon logicity, systematic and structured thought, and the almost mechanical control of emotions. The selfhood of late modernity does not think and feel anymore according to the exclusive categories of "normal" and "abnormal".

The mental state of this uncertain selfhood could also be called – somewhat metaphorically – the mirror image of a self-consciousness which has lost its optimistic naiveté, has a hybrid character and is constantly changing according to the different challenges it is facing, manifesting the symptoms of schizophrenia even in spite of its spectacular consistency and control, and is variously interpreted and re-interpreted. It has become rather outdated to relate the normality of our contemporary identity to some clinically established and abstract standards of normality. In the vortex of our flow of consciousness, our experiences structured according to the rhythm of our everyday life determine the standards of normality that are relevant to us.

According to the traditional approach to abnormality, illness represents an internal distortion of the personality, a system loss of the components, and the gradual change of their alteration can only be maintained within a structured self. The great psychopathological categories of the turn of the century (psychoses, neuroses, schizoid symptoms) are discussed within the framework of the dysfunctional character of a supposedly unified personality. The more rigorously we adhere to the conception of the unity of human nature, the more difficult it is to integrate in it the specifics of illness, and the greater the role of the specific attitude of the person who goes through

the experience. The position of the clinically diagnosed illness is taken by the consciously considered existential experience of the suffering subject, interpreted under the pressure of the personal experience. Furthermore, we can observe interesting associations between the clinical treatment, the ill individual, and his environment: during the last century, medical science witnessed the blurring of boundaries between normality and the pathological; it realized that the established diagnoses do not constitute unequivocally abnormal syndromes. They rather represent and depict isolated manifestations of normal mechanisms, which are difficult to categorize, and influence the specific adaptation of the organism to its environment.

No illness can be discussed separately from the dominant diagnoses, methods of isolation, and therapeutic interventions that are characteristic for that time.<sup>2</sup> In his work dedicated to the psychology of mental illness, Foucault wants to free the problem of mental pathology from the postulates of the former universalizing “meta-pathologies”, and thus establishes an image of man which can be interpreted somewhat differently from the suffering one and the categories of normality. The artificial unity of the “meta-pathologies” – established between the different categories of illness – is eliminated by the historical experiences that have become irrelevant. The essential consequence of this loss of credibility is that we can remedy the case of the suffering individual only at the expense of accepting the authenticity of his existence, in the context of which we try to interpret mental dysfunctions. Ultimately, normality is the semantic function of personal biographical narratives.

The categorisation system of the phenomenology of illness cannot be reduced to a few explanatory principles or superficial discussion. Rather, it has to be related to the historical fate of modern man, since it represents an organic part of the fate-altering event of the *homo psychologicus* in general. This is the only way in which the psychological discussion of historically processed abnormality can be revealed.

In this sense, the standard of the normality of selfhood lies within the quite impersonal, extra-individual social and historical context. Foucault approaches these ideas through the clarification of two issues:

- he explores the mental dimensions of insanity;
- he treats psychopathology as a fact of civilization.

## **2. Pathology and the experience of reality**

In the world of ill ego, boundaries structure themselves differently and there are other psychological laws at play. However, these are incommunicable because of the personal character of psychological experiences, discussed in association with

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<sup>2</sup> See Foucault’s relevant analysis in Foucault, *Boala mentală și psihologia*, 17ff.

the problem of consciousness, and thus, the existential experiences of pathological selfhood can only be guessed at. Although difficult to discuss, these confront us with the extreme borders of the representation of the conscious ego.

The insane person<sup>3</sup> is never completely separated from the real world. He or she lives within the real world and experiences its boundaries constantly, relying in a certain measure on their objectivity. Nonetheless, his psychological integrity is constantly endangered by the chaotic experience that bursts the limits of the faith of common sense, and usually confronts him with an imaginary world which is impossible to control and manifests itself as a deceptive reality during the altered state of consciousness. In this state, it would be absurd to expect objective answers to questions such as “who am I?” and “what kind of world do I inhabit”?

The mentally ill person is willing to admit his/her opposition to the external world, but under the effect of the hallucinations is always willing to ask other persons whether they also sense the same stimuli. It is difficult for him to accept that he is the sole perceiver of the unreal stimuli, which he finally turns into basic components of his imaginary world, and with his faith invested in their doubtless objectivity he is capable of calling into question the validity of the criticism directed at them, qualifying as hostile some of the sceptical and benevolent approaches. In other cases, on the contrary, he accepts the external opinions with childish naiveté and becomes dependent upon their truth.

The mental struggle with reality often leads to an uncertainty of the boundaries of the world and existential cues, to the orientation of the suffering individual toward his imaginary world and, as a result, to a living environment that is mentally structured according to the strictly personal imaginary world and in a solipsistic manner. The suffering consciousness, which subjectivizes in this way, entertains a special relationship with its illness. As an existential situation related to health, any illness carries within itself a specific awareness of the disease. According to the psychiatrists and social scientists who study schizophrenic states, in the final stages of schizophrenia, patients are virtually captive of their subjective world. They view the once familiar world, which they left behind during the process of mental disintegration, as a far removed and hidden reality. Their dream world is superimposed upon the empirical sphere, and the consciousness of illness is moved into the foreground, as in the permanent state of the illness the undeniable certainty of the troublesome

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<sup>3</sup> We have to refrain from attributing any negative, depreciative or pejorative connotation to this concept, because in its quality of a psychic reality which functions within the individual life it has an equivalent ontological relevance to normal psychological constitution. From the perspective of the phenomenology of illness, madness is “merely” another *mode of existence*, carrying existential experiences of a different kind and a particular way of experiencing being.

state can become the source of heightened suffering through its consciousness. As Foucault puts it, “the morbid world is never an absolute in which all reference to the normal is suppressed; on the contrary, the sick consciousness is always developed with, for itself, a double reference, either to the normal and the pathological, or to the familiar and strange, or to the particular and the universal, or to the waking and dream consciousness.”<sup>4</sup>

Before turning to the phenomenology of the ill consciousness, let us briefly examine the problems of the mental projection of the illness and its cultural and social experience. Beyond the consciousness of its own state, the ill consciousness also holds a certain representation of its personal, ill world. In his studies concerning schizophrenic states, E. Minkowski has found out that the joyful space is obscured within the opaque space, since the menacing proximity of terror pushes into the background the categories of normality, which appear seldom and almost at random. The space and time of the schizophrenic appears as the medium of limitless possibility. The coherent life world, which provides orientation, does not exist anymore.

As far as the space of the schizophrenic is concerned, we can hardly speak of measurable distances, since the mentally ill person places imaginary events and sounds at random points of space, without any particular logic. Space loses its coherence, and physical objects can be found virtually anywhere; physical structuring principles are replaced by the fantastic reality of the mentally ill person, which is illusory and prone to manipulating things. In other cases, space becomes insular and rigid. The things found in it lose their functionality, their “readiness-to-hand”, since the orientation based on mutually recognized semantic cues is eliminated. The semantic, physical degradation of the physical world also involves the destructuring of the normativity of the social sphere.

In the future, anything is possible; that which borders on the phantastic from the viewpoint of common logic, becomes natural, close to oneself, and even desirable within the world of the mentally ill person. Time is not projected, it does not flow, and it loses its continuity based on the units of past, present, and future; the past is a compressed medium of excruciating memories, and the future is hopeless and without perspective. It is a victim of the expanding and assimilating tendency of the morbid past.

There are few people who can imagine that we can also find the intuitive and speculative approach toward schizophrenic experiences many years prior to the clinical diagnosis of this state as an illness. E.g. L. Binswanger points out the particular kind of incoherence of our temporal experiences that are lived through as a Heraclitean

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<sup>4</sup> Foucault, *Mental Illness and Psychology*, 50.

flow.<sup>5</sup> Even in the case of normal thought, we can find a certain inclination toward self-enclosing, which especially in introspective moments leads to the circular self-structuring of consciousness, unsettling the coherence of our self-consciousness. The continuity of the ego can become the victim of a dangerously widening egocentrism, which projects our selfhood that has been removed from the temporal continuum into a temporal medium that is alien to measurable time. In this context, it is worth to consider the time and self-constituting effect of mystical experiences, which can be considered even as mental illness from a rigorously clinical perspective.

### 3. The self-image of the schizophrenic individual in our schizoid culture

The temporality of the schizophrenic is essentially unaware of a peaceful present, endowed with any extension.<sup>6</sup> The unstructured experience of temporality does not know any present. Time, as it is experienced, is the victim of the chaotic experiences that are impossible to structure from a logical perspective. Ludwig Binswanger uses the term “*Ideenflucht*” for the generation of the chaos of temporality by manic experiences. The segmented experience of time is incapable of constructing a healthy relationship with the past and the future, it closes into itself and is focused upon the given moments, proceeds either through leaps or by repetition. We can notice the “slip of ideas” in the foreground of the unstructured experience of temporality, which reaches its apex in uncontrolled repetitions and contradictory and absurd associations. The segmented temporality of the schizophrenic person is unforeseeable and unfolds in the terrible proximity of the menace of physical annihilation; it is divided between the disintegrating temporality of anxiety and the experiences of madness, devoid of any content, ecstatic, and open themselves up toward eternity.<sup>7</sup>

From a certain perspective, it is a conceptual contradiction to speak of schizophrenic consciousness. It is the *ego* that is in the schizophrenic state, but the unified human existence ceases to exist. In the case of the melancholic, mystical experiences, the situation is just the opposite: the depressing certainty of the *ego* is absorbed in Being. In the case heightened affective experiences, the suspended

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<sup>5</sup> Binswanger, *L'appréhension heraklitéenne de l'homme*.

<sup>6</sup> The quality of the schizophrenic experience of being is debatable. The scholarly literature lacks a unanimous conception. While clinical interpretations deny the possibility of the experience of the present in the case of the sick consciousness, the descriptions which use the attribute “schizophrenic” for our postmodern culture state that the selfhood subjected to consumer society lives in a perpetual present. For additional details, see my research report entitled *The Reinterpretation of an Ontological Relationship*.

<sup>7</sup> Binswanger, *Der Fall Jurg Zund*, *Schweizer Archiv f. Neur.*

consciousness of the self is associated with a fortunate loss of ego, which can occasionally verge on the border of self-knowledge. However, since the subject is threatened by a veritable loss of existence, the sick consciousness cannot “take possession of itself” in a durable manner. The mentally ill person becomes an ontologically emptied out, rigid subject, and sinks into his own uncontrollable subjectivism with his dissolved ego. He lives through very vividly the moral and existential crisis stemming from his internal disunion, which he considers to represent a punishment of fate, and senses that he is incapable to leave behind the temporality of the painful experiencing of existence.

At certain points, the schizophrenic state which closes upon itself shows formal kinship with the existential experiences of the solipsistic metaphysician. Both are characterized by the heightened individual experience of reality. The main difference is that the solipsistic thinker consciously assumes the thesis “I absolutely exist, and the world ceases with me” (which is sometimes a mere working hypothesis), in order to prove a more encompassing concept, while the ego-centredness of the sick consciousness is the result of a cognitive privation and can never represent a philosophical attitude, although it can be evaluated philosophically in certain respects.

It is almost impossible to paint a coherent picture of the psychological profile of a schizophrenic. The raising of incoherent, changing, and chaotic experiences that have opposing contents, at the level of irrefutable ideas leads to a syndrome that we could also use to characterize certain cultural manifestations. No wonder that theorists who have dealt with schizophrenic experiences in an encompassing manner noticed the immanent character of this illness as related to the concreteness of things within the world. To put it more simply: the encompassing analysis of schizophrenia also entails the axiological, cultural-critical, and phenomenological analysis of our current cultural state.

It would be absurd to put forward the hypothesis according to which the sick consciousness intentionally structures and categorizes its life world while it projects its schizophrenic representational world, in which it is imprisoned. At the same time, it would also be wrong to assume that the state of the schizophrenic is a consciously undertaken mode of existence in order to escape the constraining conditions of the external world. This state becomes dominant when the individual stands against his own ego as a stranger. A remark from Heidegger’s *Question Concerning Technology* also reflects a typical cultural assessment of the regrettable schizophrenia of our society: “precisely nowhere does man today any longer encounter himself”. Foucault’s interpretation is also not far from this idea; when we become unable to dominate our communication tools and social relationships, when we cannot recognize the humane dimension of our effort and cannot see the redeeming result

of our work, i.e. when we perceive ourselves as mere toy in the play of power relations, then we become the gradually devoured victims of a schizophrenic world. The selfhood that exists in an alien medium discovers the sole possibility of its existential protection in the flight into a personal universe in which objective cues are lacking.

#### **4. The cultural dimension of mental illness**

In time, the conception that emphatically promotes the idea of the cultural dimension of illness as the specific meaningfulness of abnormality has become established within the sociological and psychopathological scholarly literature. According to this view, illness does not have an autonomous reality, and it can only manifest its abnormal character within a cultural medium that is inclined to qualify the symptoms as pathological.

The evolutionist idea according to which manifestations which differ from “the majority” are considered unhealthy within a certain society and hint at decadent social phenomena, or on the contrary, are the harbingers of a developing culture, started to gain ground beginning with the sociology of Émile Durkheim, who mentions in his work, *The Rules of Sociological Method* that “a social fact is normal for a given social type, viewed at a given phase of its development, when it occurs in the average society of that species, considered at the corresponding phase of its evolution”.

Considering the value system of different cultures, we can observe that every culture interprets illness and abnormality on the basis of the generally accepted anthropological model. The dominant anthropological paradigms of the time period limit our view about the normality of our selfhood. That which is abnormal in certain historical contexts holds an exceptional status and function in certain primitive communities. Thus, for instance, a person who has visions can be treated as a schizophrenic or an epileptic according to western culture, while according to the interpretation paradigms prevalent in other civilizations, he could have counted as a visionary or a healing shaman.

Before the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the categorical conception of illness has not been developed yet; thus, people had a polymorphous experience of madness. Intolerable madness, which demands isolation and treatment, only appears in the discourse of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, one notices that – as Foucault repeatedly emphasizes – the emergence of dangerous, institutionalized abnormality coincides with the emergence and development of suppressive penal systems. In such a developmental context, what percentage of illnesses are actually pathological phenomena, and in what

measure the healing institutions contributed and still contribute to the worsening of the medical condition – whether they offer real diagnoses, while maintaining their objectivity along with their position of power, are questionable matters. However, these issues should be discussed in a separate study.

## 5. The metaphysical re-evaluation of abnormality

The disquieting problem of abnormality interpreted as a mode of being always resurfaces in the history of metaphysical thought as a hot topic. From Erasmus and his parody entitled *The Praise of Folly* to the evaluations of Schopenhauer, Goethe, and Nietzsche, madness is seen as a basic manifestation of the personality, a certain mood which suffuses the whole of existence and eventuates a specific experience of being. The metaphysics of folly – if there is such thing – stands for one of the special chapters of the history of ideas, and it can rather be discussed with a certain autonomy in association with the better known philosophical tropes and paradigms, since according to its function it completes and highlights the established conceptions about man.

First of all, we start from the hypothesis that, from a metaphysical and cultural point of view, the complete separation of psychological normality from abnormality leads to an unrealistic image of man. The separation of these two categories can exist, at best, within the naïve, everyday outlook on life or within abstract axiological reasoning. Concrete human existence is far from such exclusive disjunctions; we cannot structure our everyday life according to the separated categories of normality and abnormality, since we are changeable and unforeseeable according to our nature, and we sometimes react surprisingly even for ourselves. The categories of abnormality are very much characteristic for the healthy ego, as most insane people are also capable of behaving according to the norms. Besides, it would also be beneficial to check our dominant social conception of normality.<sup>8</sup>

In the following paragraphs, we will examine the observations and remarks Constantin Enăchescu made in his *Fenomenologia nebuniei* (“The Phenomenology of Madness”) and *Homo demens. O redefinire a nebuniei* (“Homo demens. Redefining

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<sup>8</sup> We consider a phenomenon as normal, if our experience is that the majority entertains a certain conception about it, and we qualify an act as normal if we see that it fits into the framework of social normativity, which is alien to the self. “Normality” has become normative, legally stated and sanctioned. It does not adapt itself anymore to the personality of the feeling and thinking individual, but to the normativity which manifests itself arrogantly as being objective, procrastinating the essential originality of our selfhood. Or, the latter cannot evolve itself under the strictures of the law; the rehabilitation of abnormality on this level naturally avoids even the appearance of anarchy.

Madness”), which are relevant for the phenomenology of abnormal selfhood. We will carefully avoid all evaluations regarding insanity; the phenomenology of abnormality does not evaluate, because it views abnormality as a possible mode of existence through the descriptive approach of the various psychological stances. We could quote L. Binswanger as a motto in order to describe our perspective on abnormality: “what we have to understand is not the structure of madness, but rather the nature of the madman, the structure of his new type of being-in-the-world”.<sup>9</sup>

The importance of the phenomenology of madness is rooted in the conviction that during our understanding of psychological abnormality we can gain insight into the world of Selfhood, because the anomalies shine a light directly upon hidden aspects of our identity and the potentials of our personality. Beyond its manifestations, as a phenomenon viewed in its entirety, madness is a particular mode of existence, which represents the double possibility of our existence: we can exist in a healthy, normal form, in a modality which affirms the challenges of existence, but we have to be conscious of the fact that the mode of existence which negates and unwillingly has to endure disintegration, lack, and lethargy, is also not foreign to man. Normality and abnormality are equally possible, and their normal aspects directly belong to our human integrity, as they simply express those psychological boundaries which can potentially “seize” anyone.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, the normality–abnormality duality is not exclusive, and the hyphen between the two dimensions does not presuppose either debate or consensus, but validates the two as complementary modes of existence, according to “the logic of complementary duality”.<sup>11</sup> In our reasoning, the conflict of healthy vs. pathological does not represent the conflict between two separate categories, but an existential experience which is activated in everyone according to the measure of existential challenges, manifesting itself in diverging configurations for each individual.

In our psychological dimensions, *affirmation* and *negation* are equally possible basic forms of expression, which simply manifest possibilities of being. Phenomenology is only concerned with *beingness*, describing the existential structure of the abnormal mode of being relating to our topic. The abnormal mode of existence, which negates the canonized relationships within the logic of the ontology of negativity and contradicts the general process of the world, or at least diverges from it in its reactions, introduces another level of human existence, substituting with pathological

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<sup>9</sup> Binswanger, “Introduction à l’analyse existentielle”, in C. Enăchescu, *Homo demens. O redefinire a nebuniei*, 7.

<sup>10</sup> It suffices to think of Freud’s thesis that the preponderance of the life instinct or the death instinct can bring socially dangerous manifestations to the surface in everyone.

<sup>11</sup> See Enăchescu, *Fenomenologia nebuniei*, 27.

stereotypes the discourse and order of life characteristic to normality. Primarily, the insane person turns upside down the nature-given rules of his internal reality and, secondly, he risks an ontological break between his *Ego* and Reality due to the negation of the normativity of the outside world. The insane selfhood lives within a negated, insane world. The sick consciousness feels as if the world would lie far from itself as something strange, although it is not worldless (we could even say that the insane person really has a world in excess), insofar as common sense constructs itself an exclusively personal world in parallel with the negation of all spheres of reality, which structure themselves as an unquestionable givenness.

The world of the insane person is a mentally constructed world of representations, which follows and reflects the visions and the seriousness of the illness. Its unreality is the result of the substitution of the unitary ontological – or, with a more up-to-date terminology, physical – structure with exclusively mental formations. Because, after all, everyone has a world.

As long as our normal self defines its selfhood through its qualitative distancing from the pathological, there will be no alternative within the world of the mentally ill person. The insane person does not know existence as otherness, since he himself represents the denied and altered human mode of existence, and if he would deny it, he would become normal; however, his illness prevents the negations which presuppose self-knowledge and self-criticism. Therefore, it is questionable whether we can speak about insane selfhood, insofar as the mentally ill person does not possess the capacity to question his existential state and subsists in an empty and one-dimensional existential captivity. The response is certainly negative, since the constant existential feeling of negativity cannot result in any unified identity.

Due to the quality of complete negativity, the radical denial of conventionality and normativity, the existential state of madness can be viewed as pure subjectivism. We can observe the most spectacular manifestation of solipsistic or Protagorean subjectivist stances at the mentally ill. They themselves exist and, at least within their own autistic closedness, everything else is null and void. Their existential moods have absolute value, and they do not accept any contradictions, alternatives, or negations. As we have already emphasized, existence as negation cannot itself be negated, since the double negation, which is equivalent to affirmation, would lead to the elimination of the abnormal state; if this would happen, it would establish the self-healing capacity of the mentally ill, which would not only contradict the essence of mental illness, but would also instantaneously place mentally ill people within the perspective of normality.

It is worth it to reflect upon the world of experiences of the healthy ego experiencing the horizons and possibilities of subjectivity and its innermost intimacy from the perspective of the autistic symptoms of the mode of existence which

closes upon itself.<sup>12</sup> The autistic self-closure means in fact a kind of openness toward oneself. The ill subject does not experience the psychological closedness as psychic determinism, because it converges in a certain measure with the egoistic narcissism of human nature in general.

We can even interpret the self-closure of the autistic person, alienated from the world and directed against reality, as a rebellious, negating and identity searching gesture of the normal ego. Alienation can be seen as a break within the vital relationship to the world, which turns into an unnatural and pathological self-closure. This ontological turn carries far-reaching consequences for our identity. Pathological self-closure leads to the extreme polarization of the psychological world of the individual. The autistic attitude leads to the global change of the personality, which bounds off the suffering subject both from the exteriority of the outside world and the closeness of his selfhood, projecting the victim into an illusory metaphysical dimension. However, this represents a fateful and hopeless closing off, which lacks any kind of transcendent possibility. As a result of the ontological break in its existence, the selfhood which has become isolated from the world postpones the factors representing the alternatives of the hermetically closing subjectivity.

The abnormal mode of existence develops itself in the form of absolute interiority. Its lifetime is structured according to a different rhythm and meaning. This internal duration contains the episodes of circular existential moods characteristic for autistic closedness, which start and return to himself. Meanwhile, in the captivity of the permanent present, the affected person is under the false impression that time has stopped, procrastinating the true structuring of past, present, and future. Closedness and isolation as existential characteristics cannot be understood either as neutral loneliness nor as the personal denial of community values, they rather count as existential qualities that determine the context of life. According its ontological aspect, the autistic mode of existence represents a radical closing-down, consisting in the elimination of the primarily social ties which connect us to the world. Thus, it carries existential meaning, and cannot be viewed as simple isolation. It expresses the possibly most radical affirming/denying attitude of the individual toward the world, through which he effectively attributes himself a certain place within the empirical horizons of the world. In this respect, it is more than a simple illness; it becomes a phenomenon with cultural connotations and consequences. In the case

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<sup>12</sup> The phenomenological review of the autistic world of experience, the intimacy of the personal can provide deeper insight. We can notice again that it is possible to successfully interpret our everyday self with reference to the extraordinary anthropological phenomenon, applying the logic of differentiation.

of individuals whose consciousness of reality is altered, we can observe a curious dichotomy of external possibilities and the subjective internal world, insofar as the withdrawn ego is unable to react to the challenges of the external dimension.

## 6. The dialectic of alienation

The problem of alienation, as it will become obvious from the later chapter of our essay, is a metaphysical question related to the essence of selfhood. The reason is that we cannot speak about alienation without first clarifying “who” the person is who becomes alienated, how his “essence” can be defined – if there is such a thing at all –, and “who” he becomes through the process of alienation.

We could call the last two centuries the age of alienation. The alienation of the person has been discussed in the context of the destiny of developing societies, which have become exiled from the agrarian world and lost themselves, or were forced into, the routines of industrialization (Weber, Durkheim), in the context of the capitalist relationship between the employer and the employee (Marx), and then with reference to the domination of technology and the endangered relationship between man and nature (Heidegger), or when speaking about the way of addressing the other based not on the ethics of “letting-be”, but on objectification (Levinas, Buber).

We have repeatedly employed this category in the previous chapters of our essay when speaking about the “state” outside the boundaries of normality, which is atypical (and incidentally, the state of the mentally ill). Thus, we might well ask the question: why can we view the abnormal state of consciousness as an alienated form of the conventional social consciousness? And why do we call the internal world of the mentally ill, “alienated”? To what extent does the autistic attitude represent a kind of social alienation? In our consumer society, the identity disorders of the individual, provoked by endless consumption, search for the new, and identification with false social values, are increasingly common, and call into question the continuity, self-identity, and internal coherence of the Ego. According to this interpretation, we could state that an incoherent Ego probably represents an existence alienated from itself.

By relating these questions to the phenomenological constitution of our selfhood, we will see how the faith invested in our unified identity, integrated into social normality, will falter. Thus, alienation would mean that we are no longer explicitly the person we have been: it is as if we would react differently – relative to our former reactions –, under alien influences which are most often independent from us, and our existential moods and thoughts would hardly characterize us anymore.

Alienation has to be viewed as a process that unfolds gradually, is hard to control, and can most often be seized in its result. The object of alienation is always our “inner being”. This interpretation is based on the hypothesis according to which there is something like “our innermost being”, an *unalienable* internal core, which is transformed into something else through the process of alienation. As a result of this process, our self-knowledge is confronted with a *different* selfhood, which is the result of the *alienation* process. In the process of alienation, the “foreign” Ego has provisionally or permanently replaced the “habitual” Self. At this point, we can enter into philosophical speculations, if we apply the alienation process to our inborn selfhood, since any change is also a kind of alienation, if we accept the premise that human “existence precedes essence”. A speculation of this kind, into which we cannot enter here, presupposes the cherishing of the basic human values, the coherence of human existence, and the consistency of social processes. Since alienation is always a “departure” from something, both the cause of alienation and the essence of that which the individual is alienated from represent the object of a previous evaluation. Furthermore, alienation represents a psychosocial problem only if and insofar as we have established the *what* individuals become alienated *from*.

It is important to establish the “what from” of alienation also because – as often seen in the modern age – masses of people become alienated from themselves without being conscious of or bothered by this fact.<sup>13</sup> Since they are incapable of reviewing their existential situation, they are involved in the practice of a groundless, scattered (according to the Heideggerian “das Man”), and irresponsible mode of existence, which applies “borrowed” identities based on imitation as costumes. For them, alienation has become normal. This shows that “alienation” is a markedly philosophical category, which sees the “what from” of this process in the moving away from the values of humanity, ethics, religion, and social normativity. Its result consists in a selfhood divided against itself, which has lost the ties to its “roots”.

## 7. The phenomenological revaluation of schizophrenia

It is precisely the above analysis of the concept of alienation that made it possible for us to turn within our analysis going beyond the phenomenal character of madness as it manifests itself in our experience, from the psychological, anthropological

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<sup>13</sup> Some people even seem to relish in their “alienated” state. The more intensely someone identifies with the alienating factors, the more inclined he becomes to regard his state as natural and healthy. Identifying himself with other, similarly alienated individuals, he presents his alienation as a virtue according to quantitative criteria.

or even hermeneutical and cultural philosophical conceptions, to the above Husserlian and Heideggerian conceptual pairs, and to relate these to the various psychopathological manifestations.

According to Husserl, consciousness processes have two roots. On one hand, there are mental processes which are actively generated by an agent whom Husserl calls the ego. For instance, the ideas which I am expressing now in writing are thoughts actively generated by my ego. These mental acts are of the kind which thematize, “pay attention” or “focus”. On the other hand, there also processes which are given in my consciousness without me generating them. For instance, the background, which I perceive during formulating these thoughts, is not a result of the activity of the ego, but is automatically and passively given to my consciousness.

From a historical and philosophical point of view, the Husserlian dichotomy goes back to the Aristotelian duality of the *nous pathetikos* and the *nous poietikos*. The latter duality has had a decisive influence on such phenomenological conceptual pairs as affection and self-affection, openness and closedness, possibility and susceptibility.

We can also encounter the schizophrenic aspects of our selfhood in Heidegger’s works. From a phenomenological perspective, any “ego setup” which contains a break of a certain measure between the ego and the alter ego, the world and conscience, my own past and the present, can count as schizophrenic identity. Whether these schism are natural and make up the ontic structure of our being, or take up a configuration of *Aufhebung* in a higher form of consciousness during the process of self-understanding, are questions with which we cannot deal extensively within the narrow confines of our essay. However, that which is relevant from the point of view of our analysis, is that along with the parallel between Aristotle and Husserl, there is also a parallel between the Heideggerian and the Husserlian conceptions, which, similarly, also stems from the above Aristotelian differentiation. This parallel manifests itself in the fact that both “being-there” (*Dasein*) and “consciousness” are characterized by a “double openness” which is, on one had, “poetical”, and on the other hand, “pathetic” in its nature.

Taking into account the aforementioned Aristotelian, Husserlian, and Heideggerian connections, the phenomenological definition of schizophrenia also presents a certain duality. According to the first interpretation, schizophrenia can be seen as the representation of a *secondary* rupture, otherness, and alienation, which is produced within the active process of the consciousness (*nous poietikos*) and the ontic-ontological fold of the *Dasein*.

This is the non-thematized assumption that psychological, anthropological, hermeneutical, and cultural philosophical conceptions of abnormality and theories of alienation take as their starting point. However, according to the second interpretation,

schizophrenia is the *original (primary)* non-differentiation, the lack of the break, and the impossibility of alienation, which manifests itself in the passive process of consciousness (*nous pathetikos*) and the proto-ontic/ontological “fold” of the *Dasein*.

Without entering too deeply into the Husserlian and Heideggerian concepts, since here we attempt merely to emphasize the relationships which are relevant from the perspective of our essay, we have to clarify the following aspects. Both the Husserlian consciousness and the Heideggerian *Dasein* is characterized by a double openness: the openness which can be circumscribed through the concepts of passive synthesis, affectivity, “thrownness into the world” (*Geworfenheit*), and “mood” (*Stimmung*), and the one characterized by active synthesis, self-affectivity, “projection” (*Entwurf*), and „care” (*Sorge*). H. Maldiney adds the concepts “possible” and “passible” to the relationships which present themselves within the abovementioned existential “fold” of the *Dasein*. The concept of “possibility” is related to the active process of consciousness and the self-realization of the *Dasein*, while the “passible” characterizes the passive process of consciousness and relates to its “thrownness into the world”.

Our essay calls for a paradigm shift in the interpretation of abnormality and especially schizophrenia, which we have so far interpreted as alienation and a break within the vital relationship to reality. Due to the ontological break within the selfhood of the autistic mode of existence, isolated from the world and closed into itself, the suffering subject delays the factors which represent alternatives to the subjectivity that closes itself down hermetically and is faced with the *existential drama of worldlessness*. Autistic self-closedown represents an openness toward oneself, which is stuck within the labyrinths of “self-realization” as “possibility”.

We can no longer view schizophrenia merely as a short-circuit in the active processes of consciousness and the self-realization process of the *Dasein*. Because of the basic character of our age, we have to look for the framework of interpretation for schizophrenia within the consciousness processes described by passive synthesis and the “thrownness into the world” of *Dasein*. In our times, the openness of consciousness and *Dasein* has become limitless: we are all too open to everything, and we live too close to everything, without any borders to delimit and define our selfhood.

The book *The Other by Himself (L'autre par lui-même)* by Jean Baudrillard expounds excellently the above idea: the need for novelty of spectral existence, the ecstasy of communication, and the dissolving in the chain processes of producibility is generally characteristic for the schizophrenic consciousnesses. “Perhaps in this case one should apply metaphors drawn from pathology. If hysteria was the pathology of the exacerbated staging of the subject – of the theatrical and operational conversion of the body – and if paranoia was the pathology of organization – of the structuring

of a rigid and jealous world – then today we have entered into a new form of schizophrenia – with the emergence of an immanent promiscuity and the perpetual interconnection of all information and communication networks. No more hysteria, or projective paranoia as such, but a state of terror which is characteristic for the schizophrenic, an over-proximity of all things, a foul promiscuity of all things which beleaguer and penetrate him, meeting with no resistance, and no halo, no aura, not even the aura of his own body protects him. In spite of himself the schizophrenic is open to everything and lives in the most extreme confusion. He is the obscene victim of the world's obscenity. The schizophrenic is not, as generally claimed, characterized by his loss of touch with reality, but by the absolute proximity to and total instantaneousness with things, this overexposure to the transparency of the world. Stripped of a stage and crossed over without the least obstacle, the schizophrenic cannot produce the limits of his very being, he can no longer produce himself as a mirror. He becomes a pure screen, a pure absorption and resorption surface of the influent networks.”<sup>14</sup>

If until now the problem consisted in alienation, today the problem lies in the fact that alienation is no longer possible: “we no longer partake of the drama of alienation, but are in the ecstasy of communication”.<sup>15</sup> The Wittgensteinian unsayable, according to which “whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent”, has transformed itself into the categorical imperative of the sayable.

In the age of communication, intrusive information has downgraded objectuality and otherness into the element of a network, and the individual is dependent upon a mental explosion. *The world, or more exactly, what's left of it*, has been degraded into the consequence of mental functions, having a heterogeneous content. In this “absolute proximity” and “total instantaneousness” of the world, the novel interpretation of schizophrenia can now be understood as *original non-differentiation*.<sup>16</sup> *We approach too closely everything*, while we constantly move farther away from ourselves. There is no value-carrying alterity, no objectuality, only stage, vision, space which incorporates the interdependent elements of the network, and, not least, the intrusive mass of images.

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<sup>14</sup> Baudrillard, *The Ecstasy of Communication*, 30.

<sup>15</sup> Baudrillard, *op. cit.*, 26.

<sup>16</sup> The use of the concept “original” seems somewhat strained here, since there is a difference between the original openness to the world made possible by disposition and the schizophrenic openness which stems from the specifics of our time. Although the former kind of openness can also be called schizophrenic, since it recognizes the existence of an effect, or “affection”, which takes place within ourselves, but is not initiated by ourselves, respectively, it also acknowledges our “confrontation” with that which simultaneously transcends us, the two concepts differ from each other from the perspective of originality.

We could amend these closing remarks, which could be accused of pessimism, with the following quote: “Formerly we were haunted by the fear of resembling others, of losing ourselves in a crowd; afraid of conformity, and obsessed with difference. Today, we need a solution to deliver us from resembling others. All that matters now is only to resemble oneself...”<sup>17</sup> *Our openness to the pre-individuality of being is no longer closed down through the post-individual “selfhood” of the Dasein. And self-realization in the sense of “possibility” cannot even be conceived of anymore.*

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<sup>17</sup> Baudrillard, *op. cit.*, 39.

## DIALECTIC AND ITS ROLE IN ARISTOTLE'S POLITICAL MORPHOLOGY. THE CASE OF DISTINGUISHING OLIGARCHY AND DEMOCRACY\*

IOVAN DREHE\*\*

**ABSTRACT.** *Dialectic and Its Role in Aristotle's Political Morphology. The Case of Distinguishing Oligarchy and Democracy.* Is the number of rulers an essential criterion in distinguishing democracy from oligarchy? This is an important issue tackled by Aristotle in two places from his *Politics* (III, 8 and IV, 4), an issue that seems to generate disagreement among scholars. Some believe that number is an essential criterion, i.e. a differentia, others that it is an accident. An attempt to solve this disagreement shall be considered from the perspective of Aristotle's views on dialectics. I will try to show that even if there is no sufficient proof to mandate the interpretation that the number of rulers is a differentia, this position can be defended to some point. In addition, that it is more likely that he considered number to be a particular type of accident.

**Keywords:** *Aristotle, democracy, oligarchy, dialectic, number, wealth, differentia, accident*

### 1. Introduction

Aristotle's best-known classification of political regimes seems clear enough and without any significant shortcomings. With its two criteria for classification, aim of the ruler or rulers and the number of rulers, it provides us with six kinds of political regimes: monarchy, aristocracy, constitutional government, democracy, oligarchy and, the worst, tyranny. However, paying more heed to what Aristotle has to say in detail about the way these regimes are to be considered distinct might puzzle some readers. One of these is related to the manner in which Aristotle operates a distinction between the two of the most common regimes of his day, democracy and oligarchy, and the role of the criterion of number of rulers in this particular case.

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To say that Aristotle's classification (or taxonomy) of political regimes has certain problems is not something new. For example, in a now classic scholarly work on the topic of political regimes, *Ideal Government and the Mixed Constitution in the Middle Ages*, James M. Blythe stresses some existing problems in Aristotle's discussion of political regime types (Blythe 1992, p. 11, 18, etc.): in the works where he classifies political regimes (*Nicomachean Ethics, Politics, Rhetoric*), he does so in several different ways – six-fold, four-fold or two-fold classifications. In addition, he “does not present a totally coherent analysis”. All this because the contradictory classifications he employs or because he makes use of terms with several meanings (as is the case of “best” having an absolute sense, a relative sense etc.). Of course, these are not the only problems and authors expressed their puzzlement regarding the cogency of Aristotle's treatment of the subject-matter since the 19<sup>th</sup> century (e.g. Newman 1887, 214). This actually is something that Aristotle also had to contend with: it is not uncommon that Aristotle starts from ‘something that seems to be the case’ and eventually it turns out to be incoherent or inconsistent because of some faulty element and then, by employing the tools of dialectic, he reaches that ‘what should be the case’.

If dialectic as a preferred method is ubiquitous in the works of Aristotle, then this should also be the case in the case of practical sciences such as politics. This is, of course, uncontroversial. For instance, when someone encounters a democracy and an oligarchy for the first time she or he tends to consider the number of the persons in power is one of the specific and defining features of the regime. This is what is ‘more knowable to man’ or ‘what seems to be the case’. However, Aristotle eventually observes that seeing things this way leads to difficulties (puzzles, problems, or *aporias*). After dealing with these problems dialectically, we observe that the number is no longer one of the essential features of these two regimes, but it is rather accidental; in the same time, wealth (or the lack of it) receives the status of essential feature (*Politics* III, 8). And this is what ‘is the case’. Nevertheless, the number of rulers seems to keep an important place in Aristotle's view on the matter in (*Politics* IV, 4) and this generates disagreement among scholars. Some (as P. Simpson, C. Rowe or A. Bereschi) maintained that the number of rulers is an accidental characteristic of a political regime, others (as W. L. Newman or R. Mulgan) considered that it is actually not the case that the number of rulers is an accident but, given the fact that Aristotle reintroduces it as an important characteristic of oligarchy or democracy (as he does in *Politics* IV, 4), it is actually a *differentia*.

Therefore, what exactly is this ‘number of rulers’? Is it an accident or a *differentia*? Normally, it cannot be both, since Aristotle obviously considers *differentia* (which is linked to definition) different from accident. In this paper, I will argue that

the number of rulers is actually a certain kind of accident that can be easily mistaken for an essential feature such as a differentia. Another reason, as I shall try to point out, is that one can build a strong case to consider 'number' a differentia.

To accomplish this, the paper shall have the following outline: 1. I will start by presenting the source of the problem and disagreement; 2. Then, I will formulate the problem and present the proposed solutions to it; 3. Following this, I will mention the two contexts, theoretical and methodological, that have to be considered in order to reach a resolution to the problem; 4. Then, I will discuss to what extent we can defend the position that maintains that number is a differentia; 5. Finally, I try will show that number is more likely a particular type of accident rather than a differentia.

## 2. The source of the problem

The problem in understanding I propose to address in this paper is related to the manner in which Aristotle is distinguishing between democracy and oligarchy, especially the status of 'number' as a criterion in doing so. This problem comes about because Aristotle seems to give contradictory accounts in the two places (*Politics* III, 8 and IV, 4). In short, the two accounts seem to contradict each other with regard to the relevance of the number of those who rule as a criterion to make a difference between democracy and oligarchy. In III, eight we are told that the number of rulers is accidental and it happens by chance that a few rule in an oligarchy and many rule in a democracy. We should rather distinguish between the two and define each based on 'wealth'. Later on, in IV, 4, Aristotle seems to suggest that the feature of number is, however, essential concerning the way we can define the two, democracy and oligarchy. If in this second case, the 'number of rulers' is to be considered an essential criterion in the definition, then it seems obvious that there is an inconsistency in Aristotle's account, since a feature of this sort, as Aristotle himself wrote in the *Topics*, not just that it cannot be both accidental and essential at the same time, but that it can neither transform from an accidental feature into an essential one or the other way around. However, we will see about this later. Before that, I should present the texts that are at the origin of the mentioned inconsistency.

*Politics* III, 8 begins by stating that there are problems or difficulties (ἀπορίας; 1279b11) regarding the classification of forms of government. Two of these are about the way oligarchy and democracy are defined and distinguished from one another, which seems to bring about unwanted implications.

His discussion of the distinction (*Politics* III, 8, 1279b20-34) can be presented thus:

1. There are only six forms of government, three correct, three corrupt (from III, 7).

2. Oligarchy is different from democracy (from III, 7).

First, we have four views resulting from 'what was said before' (III, 7):

3. If the rich rule, then we have oligarchy.

4. If the poor rule, then we have democracy.

5. If the majority rules, then we have democracy.

6. If a minority rules, then we have an oligarchy.

Having all these in mind, Aristotle produces two possible cases to challenge these views:

7. Case 1: A state in which the rich majority rules.

8. Case 2: A state in which the poor minority rules.

If both three and five were the case, then seven would imply that we have states that are democracies and oligarchies at the same time. If both four and six were the case, then eight would imply the same, that a state is an oligarchy and a democracy at the same time. Nevertheless, this is not something acceptable, since it is obvious that democracy and oligarchy are two different things (challenges assumption 2 from above – meaning that in the accepted accounts there is something that generates inconsistencies). Another way in which Aristotle indicates the problem is by taking both criteria as relevant, but then the list is not complete, there being more forms than the six mentioned (the six being: monarchy, aristocracy, constitutional government, democracy, oligarchy, tyranny. Therefore, at least one criterion is problematic and it should be eliminated. Aristotle opts to keep the criterion of wealth, meaning that the criterion of number is the one that generates the difficulties.

Why is number problematic and it is not fit to be part of the definition? The reason is that number is an accident (συμβεβηκός ἐστίν – 1279b36) and, being an accident, it cannot be part of a definition. From Aristotle's account of the predicables in the *Topics*, it results that accident is not a definition and it is not part of the definition. This can be seen in the way he presents accident in *Topics* I, 5 (102b4-26), first in a negative way, as something that is neither genus, nor definition nor property, and then in a positive manner, as something that may belong or not to a thing. Number is accidental in this case because, as Aristotle points out, it is only by accident that in the context of his day rich people are fewer than poor ones. Thus, the criterion of number should be eliminated from the account.

However, in what follows next, we will observe that in another place he seems to think otherwise because he seems to consider number still a criterion. The other account about the place of number in the definition appears in *Politics* IV, 4.

This chapter is to some point the same as III, eight, but then we observe that wealth is no longer enough to distinguish between democracy and oligarchy. Here he introduces freedom and number as necessary. The chapter starts by clearly stating that we should not consent to two views held by some people and this is in the same vein with III, 8:

1. Where the many rule, we have democracy.
2. Where the few rule, we have oligarchy.

Aristotle gives two obvious examples:

3. If we have a majority of rich people who rule while the rest, the poor, do not share in office, we do not have a democracy.
4. If the poor are few and strong and they do not share the offices with the many rich, we do not have an oligarchy.

So, Aristotle concludes:

5. Oligarchy is where the rich are in power.
6. Democracy is where the free are in power.

As in III, 8, the fact that the rich are few and the poor are many is accidental and if we choose to take number as a standard for a regime, then we can have offices distributed based on other accidental features such as height, beauty etc. So far, the account is the same as in III, 8.

Nevertheless, the problem arises when Aristotle says that it is not enough to distinguish democracy on grounds of wealth and freedom and he concludes:

- Democracy = where the free and the poor *many* (οἱ ἐλεύθεροι καὶ ἄποροι πλείους) rule (1290b17-19).

- Oligarchy = where the rich and the well-born *few* (οἱ πλούσιοι καὶ εὐγενέστεροι ὀλίγοι) rule (1290b19-20).

### 3. The problem

Two main positions seem to have emerged in relation to the status of number as criterion: 1. One that maintains that number is not an accident, but a differentia (represented here by Newman 1902, 158-59; Mulgan 1991, 316-317); 2. The other, which considers that number is indeed an accident (Simpson 1998, 296-299; Rowe 2005, 379; Bereschi 2009, 12-14). The arguments for these options are as follows.

In his four-volume edition of Aristotle's *Politics*, published at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, W. L. Newman is more inclined to consider the number of rulers as being a differentia. For him, the purpose of Aristotle is to avoid the error of reducing

all the constitutions to two forms, democracy, and oligarchy. Thus we should avoid to define democracy and oligarchy by a single criterion, i.e. only by number or only by wealth or freedom. For W. L. Newman at least two things should be taken together in order to have one specific regime: freedom and superior numbers, with poverty optional, for democracy, respectively wealth and inferior numbers, with high birth as optional, for oligarchy. This way, we avoid saying that polity is a kind of democracy or aristocracy is a kind of oligarchy.

About a century later, in a companion work on Aristotle's political theory (Keyt & Miller 1991), Richard Mulgan maintains a similar position. He distinguishes two possible types of equality: 'geometric equality' or equality based on wealth, and 'arithmetic equality' or equality based on freedom. The type of equality the ruling class is characterized by implies the necessity of numbers, more or less, in relation to it. Thus, if one criterion is 'arithmetic equality' then this implies that government can emerge only if the free are a majority. This way, in R. Mulgan's opinion, Aristotle admits that the size or number of rulers is "essential, not accidental"<sup>1</sup> and he adds that the counter-examples are anomalous cases of mixtures. Also, the meanings of the words themselves, *oligoi* and *demos*, indicate numbers, i.e. few and many.

Of a different opinion in this matter is Peter L. Phillips Simpson in his book *A Philosophical Commentary on the Politics of Aristotle* (1998). According to him, Aristotle attacks the commonly held views on what democracy and oligarchy are (rule by many and rule by few) and shows that these views bring about falsities and absurdities. In the context of this criticism of the common view, it is pointed out in the commentary that the reader needs to be careful regarding the status of freedom in the equation. Wealth is sufficient when we define an oligarchy, but if we consider freedom as essential in the case of a democracy then we should surely see that this is insufficient (because the oligarchs are free too). It is obvious that Aristotle does not consider number as essential but rather 'incidental' (I read this as accidental) given the fact that Aristotle himself insists on it both in *Politics* III, 8 and in the first part of IV, 4. In conclusion, Aristotle prefers to distinguish oligarchy and democracy by the criterion of wealth (or poverty) and not by the criteria of freedom and number<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> I read here "essential" to be equivalent to "being a differentia" since it is fairly obvious that size or number is neither the definition of the specific mentioned regimes nor their genus.

<sup>2</sup> A curious thing should be mentioned at this point: P. Simpson writes (1998, 296, n.2) that he follows W. L. Newman in his commentary. However, as it seems, not to the end. Also, P. Simpson does not seem to be eager to consider what Aristotle has to say about the two regimes in IV, 4 as something to be considered a general definition, but he considers Aristotle's account to be adapted to the examples he gives in the chapter (i.e. Apollonia, Thera, Colophon) (Simpson 1998, 298).

The same opinion, that number is accidental, is held by Christopher Rowe in one of his contributions to *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Political Thought* (2005). For C. Rowe, Plato and Aristotle considered the two most commonly existing forms of constitution, democracy, and oligarchy, as opposed, and people actually had the tendency to reduce the other government forms, as aristocracy for instance, to one of these two. Aristotle does not follow the etymological suggestion of the names that here we have a rule by the many or a rule by the few, but actually indicates that number is not essential here; and “the real essence of oligarchy (...) is that the rich have the power and the real essence of democracy is that the poor have it.” (Rowe 2005, 379).

Taking number as accident is also the option backed in a paper written by Andrei Bereschi, “La theorie des formes politiques dans l’antiquité grecque (Platon, Aristote et Polybe)” (2009). The main idea here is that the root of the problem can be found in the denominational instability (*l’instabilité de la dénomination*) of the two structural genera existent besides the genus of monarchy (which contains regality and tyranny as species). This instability is caused by the two aporias of criterion (*aporiai pros ton diorismenon*) present in *Politics* III, 8 (1279b20, 31) which exist because of the problems caused by the criterion of number. If we keep this criterion, then we would have examples of states that would not fit in the accepted taxonomy. Thereby, this criterion should be dropped. And this is why, in A. Bereschi’s view, Aristotle considers the criterion of number as accidental<sup>3</sup>.

This disagreement is, however, solvable if we consider the problem carefully from the perspective of the relevant contexts to be had in mind, especially the methodological context.

#### 4. Two contexts

Hence, before endeavoring in discussing Aristotle’s account of the difference between democracy and oligarchy, I should present the two relevant contexts: 1. The theoretical context – Aristotle’s political morphology; 2. The methodological context – Aristotle’s dialectical approach to the study of politics.

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<sup>3</sup> In order to avoid confusion, A. Bereschi suggests that we should change the names of democracy and oligarchy into ‘penioarchy’, respectively into ‘plutoarchy’. One additional specification here: in contrast with W. L. Newman, A. Bereschi considers that the result of this clarification of criterion is not the avoidance of reducing the other government forms to democracy and oligarchy, but the emergence of two structural genera which contains as species both the right form and the degenerated form (e.g. plutoarchy as a genus contains aristocracy and oligarchy) (Bereschi 2009, 13).

*Theoretical context:* The theoretical context that has to be considered when tackling an issue related to one or more types of political regimes is what I will call Aristotle's *political morphology*<sup>4</sup>, i.e. Aristotle's theory of the forms of government. Aristotle is not singular in ancient times to propose a political morphology since we can identify similar classifications in Herodotus, Plato or Polybius etc.<sup>5</sup> However, his six-fold classification of forms of government was arguably more influential<sup>6</sup>.

At the beginning of the third book of the *Politics*, we find that the purpose is to "inquire into the essence and attributes of various kind of government" (*Politics* III, 1, 1274b32-33). But in order to do this, one must first know what a city-state is, and then, to know what a city-state is, one must know what a citizen is. At the end of the first chapter of *Politics* III we get the following relevant definitions: "He who has the power to take part in the deliberative or judicial administration of any state is said by us to be a citizen of the state; and, speaking generally, a state is a body of citizens sufficing for the purposes of life." (*Politics* III, 1, 1275b19-22).

Thus, a state is composed of citizens and these organize themselves in different ways and these ways determine the type of the state they are citizens of, e.g. a democracy, an aristocracy etc. Aristotle states explicitly that 'citizen' means one thing in a democracy and another thing in an oligarchy (*Politics* III, 1, 1275a4-5; and this is so by necessity -ἀναγκαῖον- 1275b4-5). Aristotle also gives a working definition of a citizen (best suited for democracy – 1275b5-6): a citizen is he who "shares in the administration of justice and in offices" (*Politics* III, 1, 1275a23 sqq. 2, 1276a3-5), but in the end he modifies it so that it can apply to the citizens of other kinds of states as well: "He who has the power to take part in the deliberative or judicial administration of any state is said by us to be citizen of that state" (*Politics* III, 1, 1275b17-20). And qualifications for office can differ accordingly to the form of government:

"Since there are many forms of government there must be many varieties of citizens, and especially of citizens who are subjects; so that under some government the mechanic and the labourer will be citizens, but not in others, as, for example, in so-called aristocracies, if there are any, in which honours are given according to excellence or merit; for no man can practice excellence who is living the life of a

<sup>4</sup> I derive the present usage from (Bereschi 2009).

<sup>5</sup> For example in Herodotus, *Histories* III, 80-83 we read a discussion employing for and against arguments about monarchy, oligarchy and democracy. In *Republic* VIII, Plato discusses aristocracy, timocracy, oligarchy, democracy and tyranny; in the *Statesman* -291d-292a – he distinguishes two kinds of monarchy, the tyrannical and the kingly, two kinds of rule by the few, aristocracy and oligarchy.

<sup>6</sup> Of course, taking into account factors such as textual transmission and reception. Also, it was already mentioned at the beginning what J. M. Blythe observed, i.e. that Aristotle seems to have in mind many different ways to classify constitutions: two-fold, four-fold, and six-fold.

mechanic or a labourer. In oligarchies the qualification for office is high, and therefore no labourer can ever be a citizen; but a mechanic may, for an actual majority of them are rich. (...)" (*Politics* III, 5, 1278a15-25)

A state being an arrangement of citizens, it follows that a specific regime is a specific arrangement of citizens and basically this is discussed in *Politics* III, 3: each citizen should fulfill a contract being part of the arrangement and he does so by having certain characteristics. If he is the citizen of a democracy, he will consider fulfilling his office obligations in a manner specific to that democracy and this should be based on his convictions. If his convictions change, then from a citizen of a democracy he will become, say, a citizen of aristocracy and he will refuse to fulfill his contract in the context of democracy; this can then lead to regime change (depending on the quantity of such citizens who refuse to fulfill contracts). But it is not my purpose in this article to dwell on matters relating to citizenship, to state or to the relation between the two.

The citizens, as elements of the state, can have different properties or, better said, attributes. Some of these citizens are in power and the attributes of this ruling class determine the type of regime. There are many possible attributes that a citizen in power can have and these count as criteria to classify government kinds:

"Now every city is composed of quality (ποιότης) and quantity (ποσότης). By quality I mean freedom (ἐλευθερίαν), wealth (πλοῦτον), education (παιδείαν), good birth (εὐγένειαν), and by quantity, superiority of numbers (πλήθους ὑπεροχήν)." (*Politics* IV, 12, 1296b17-18)<sup>7</sup>

In *Politics* III, 6, Aristotle states his purpose: considering how many forms of government there are and their respective differences (διαφοραί; 1278b8). All these differences will be used in the subsequent discussions on the nature of the different regimes. However, the best-known classification is the one that appears in *Politics* III, 7, 1279a6-1279b10 (cf. *Nicomachean Ethics* VI, 10, 1160a32-b22):

True form	Perverted form
Monarchy - one ruler - best man - regards common interest	Tyranny - one ruler - self-interest of the monarch
Aristocracy - few rulers	Oligarchy - few rulers

<sup>7</sup> It should be kept in mind that these criteria are already considered as candidates at least since Plato: "one, few and many, wealth and poverty, force and consent, (...) written laws or without laws" (*Statesman* 292a).

True form	Perverted form
- best men - regard to common interest	- self-interest of the wealthy
Constitution - many rulers - best men (military excellence) - regard to common interest	Democracy - many rulers - self-interest of the needy

This seems to be a classification that was given a significant deal of attention by Aristotle and it is also the one that is most challenged, as we can observe in the present case when distinguishing oligarchy and democracy. Next, I will say a few words about the methodological context.

*Methodological context:* The aim of Aristotle is quite clear in this respect: his interest is to start from what can be considered as common knowledge about regimes and to make the classification better; he tries to do this either by eliminating anything that hinders clear understanding or by adding anything that promotes it. In its core, Aristotle's method is dialectical and he strongly recommends the use of it (e.g. *Topics* I, 2, 101a25-101b4). Starting with G.E.L. Owen's paper, *Tithenai ta Phainomena*, a significant number of scholarly works have been published on this issue. In short, Aristotle's method is *aporetic* in the way that he tries to work through difficulties or puzzles which he first identifies in what he has initially at his disposal regarding a subject-matter. Then he tries to solve those difficulties by employing things said by others (*endoxa*) or observations (*phainomena*) in order to clarify the issue at hand. The *Politics*, being a work dedicated to a science, better said a practical science, is also written with the help of at least some underlying dialectical methodology and it was already observed that this is the case (Reeve 1998, p. xviii-xxv; etc.).

When dealing with the classification of government forms, we need to keep in mind its *endoxical* character, i.e. Aristotle does not necessarily break entirely new ground in the study of political regimes, but rather discusses views already held by someone else<sup>8</sup>. J. M. Blythe observes (1992, p. 18-19) that Aristotle uses most often variants of the six-fold classification of regime types already found in Plato or, earlier, in Herodotus. But his work as a political scientist does not stop at the point where he provides a classification borrowed to some extent from his predecessors; on the contrary, it just begins, because now he will observe the insufficiency of that classificatory scheme; following this, he will try to identify the cause and he will attempt to solve the issue.

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<sup>8</sup> As mentioned above, we can already find variants of this classification in Plato.

As *phainomena* we can consider the information gathered about existing constitutions, for which Aristotle's school was renowned in antiquity (e.g. see Diogenes Laertius V, 1, 27). This information, it seems, was actually used in his critical discussions. For instance, in the case that is of interest to us in this paper, while in *Politics*. III, 8, Aristotle offers mentally conceived counter-examples (what if the rich people are in majority etc.), in *Politics*. IV, 4, he already shows not just that the counter-examples are more developed ("Suppose the whole population of a city to be 1300, and that of these 1000 are rich...") but that he also has information about real constitutions (Appolonia, Colophon, Thera)<sup>9</sup>.

The problems are called by Aristotle *aporias* and their occurrence signals something that needs special care on the part of the scientist. The *aporetic* method, mentioned above, is at work when Aristotle deals with matters pertaining to government forms and related issues. This can be observed at a quick browsing through the Aristotelian corpus: one can note that the term *ἀπορία* (or cognates) occurs about 30 times in the *Politics*, which seems to indicate that the dialectical method of working through puzzles (or *aporias*) is employed here<sup>10</sup>. Also, related technical terminology appears: variants of *διαπορεύειν* (to go through all the *aporias*) or *εὐπορεύειν* (to solve the *aporias*, to find a way). The problem that the present paper addresses arises, as observed, from *aporias* of criterion. It is to be expected, then, that the explanation of what Aristotle does when he tries to do away with the problems should appeal to dialectic and to relevant passages from his writings on dialectic, especially the *Topics*.

Since the discussion is about what is specific to a regime, about how we can define a government form or what is an essential or accidental attribute of it, it is obvious that a knowledge of what the predicables (definition, property, genus – incl. differentia, - and accident) are is needed. Also, detailed knowledge of the varieties of some of these predicables and their relation to specific categories is important, and this in order to understand the manner in which the different criteria proposed by Aristotle fit in.

## 5. Number: differentia or accident?

Hence, to start with the first of the mentioned options, the question is the following: can we consider number, following W. L. Newman and R. Mulgan, a differentia? To do this, at least two kinds of conditions should be met, textual and co-textual. The co-textual conditions are the following two: 1. A thing should be able to be defined

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<sup>9</sup> We could be inclined to consider this something that hints a later date of composition for IV, 4 than for III, 8. But I would not venture here into developmental and chronological issues.

<sup>10</sup> For comparison: the term or its cognates occur about 60 times in the *Metaphysics*, about 30 times in the *Physics*, about 15 times in the *De anima* and the *De generatione animalium*, about half this in the *De caelo* and the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

by more than one differentia (being obvious that number cannot be the only differentia that a political regime has); 2. It should be possible for a quantity (since number is a quantity) to be a differentia (given that usually the differentiae seem to belong to the category of quality). If we find evidence for this in the Aristotelian corpus, then we can say that these two co-textual conditions are met. However, in addition to these, this interpretation needs one more condition fulfilled: direct textual evidence that Aristotle considers number a differentia in *Politics IV, 4*.

We are usually inclined to think that the process of defining needs to involve one genus and one differentia, the same as in the case of “Man” defined as a “rational animal”. In the same venue, one might be inclined to define democracy as the rule of majority for their own benefit or oligarchy as the rule of a minority for their own benefit. But, as Aristotle himself thought, this account is incomplete.

In the fourth book of the *Politics*, where Aristotle discusses the topic of his classification of forms of government (what here is called *political morphology*), he is presenting his choice of classification in analogy with his biological works:

“I have said that there are many forms of government, and have explained to what causes the variety is due. Why there are more than those already mentioned and what they are, and whence they arise, I will now proceed to consider, starting from the principle already admitted, which is that every state consists, not of one, but of many parts. If we were going to speak of the different species of animals, we should first of all determine the organs which are indispensable to every animal, as for example some organs of sense and the instruments of receiving and digesting food, such as the mouth and the stomach, besides organs of locomotion. Assuming now that there are only so many kinds of organs, but that there may be differences in them – I mean different kinds of mouths, and stomachs, and perceptive and locomotive organs – the possible combinations of these differences will furnish many varieties of animals. (For animals cannot be the same which have different kinds of mouths or of ears.) And when all the combinations are exhausted, there will be as many sorts of animals as there are combinations of the necessary organs. The same, then, is true of the forms of government which have been described; states, as I have repeatedly said, are composed, not of one, but of many elements.” (*Politics IV, 4, 1290b21-1291b13*)

It is common knowledge that when trying to classify animals Aristotle has in mind more than one differentia. The work of P. Pellegrin is very helpful in this respect. P. Pellegrin underlines the fact that Aristotle was not satisfied with the ‘dichotomous’ (or ‘binary’) division model of the Platonicians (e.g. Pellegrin 1986, 21 sqq.) since it could not supply him with a proper explanation for diversity. Aristotle’s way of ‘dividing’ things is more likely ‘multidimensional’ (Pellegrin 1986, 31, 154, 172). The above-quoted fragment should be taken under consideration along these lines.

And, even more, we have evidence towards this in the *Topics*. In several places, Aristotle talks about *differentiae* and not one *differentia*. For instance, in the first book (I, 8, 103b15-16) we are told that a definition results from genus and *differentiae* (ἐκ γένους καὶ διαφορῶν). Or, in the context of talking about the relevance of discovering *differentiae*:

“The discovery of differences helps us both in deductions about sameness and difference, and also in recognizing what a particular thing is. That it helps us in deductions about sameness and difference is clear; for when we have discovered a difference of any kind whatever between the objects before us, we shall already have proved that they are not the same; while it helps us in recognizing what a thing is, because we usually distinguish the account that is proper to the substance of each particular thing by means of *differentiae* (διαφοραῖς) that are appropriate to it.” (*Topics* I, 18, 108a38-b6<sup>11</sup>)

Of course, Aristotle also uses the singular, but this alternate use of singular and plural indicates what is fairly obvious, that a thing has *at least* one *differentia*. So, at this point, we can say that the first co-textual condition is met.

In the *Metaphysics* Aristotle says that only qualities can be *differentiae* (1024b3-6). But he does not seem to hold this view ubiquitously in his work. We have just seen that a thing can take more than one *differentia*, but the following question is this: can quantity count as a *differentia*? It seems so, since Aristotle writes the following in the sixth book of the *Topics*:

“... see in some cases if he [i.e. the opponent] has failed to distinguish the quantity (τὸ πόσου) or quality or place or other *differentiae* of an object; e.g. the quality and quantity of the honour he striving for which makes a man ambitious – for all men strive for honour, so that it is not enough to define the ambitious man as him who strives for honour, but the aforesaid *differentiae* must be added. Likewise, also, in defining the covetous man the quantity of money he aims at, or in the case of the incontinent man the quality of the pleasures, should be stated. For it is not the man who gives way to any sort of pleasure whatever is called incontinent, but only he who gives way to a certain kind of pleasure. Or again, people sometimes define night as a shadow on the earth, or an earthquake as a movement of earth, or a cloud as a condensation of the air, or a wind as a movement of the air; whereas they ought to specify as well quantity, quality, place, and cause. Likewise, also, in other cases of the kind; for by omitting any *differentiae* whatever he fails to state the essence. One should always attack deficiency. For a movement of the earth does not constitute an earthquake, nor a movement of the air a wind, irrespective of its manner and the amount involved.” (*Topics* VI, 8, 146b20-35)

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<sup>11</sup> *Topics* VI, 4, 141b26; VI, 6, 143a31 etc.

At this point, we can say that the two co-textual conditions are met: a thing can take more than one differentia and quantity can be a differentia. Now, let us pass to the textual condition.

One interpretation that would do justice to both fragments would be that Aristotle thinks that an accident may become an essential feature as a differentia. But, can this happen according to Aristotle? Replying to this question would explain if number, as a quantity and an accident, can become at some point a property or a differentia. But this does not seem to be the case, since Aristotle states clearly that: “there is nothing to prevent accident from becoming both a relative and a temporary property; but a property absolutely it will never be.” (*Topics* I, 5, 102b24-26).

Considering all this, there is no textual evidence that in his discussions from *Politics* III, 8 or IV, 4 Aristotle uses a terminology that indicates him considering number a differentia. The most one can do with the discussion from the second part of IV, 4 is to argue for a view that Aristotle stopped considering number an accident, but to say that he automatically considered it a differentia is a *non sequitur* with no textual basis. So, we could consider this line of inquiry. Instead of arguing that ‘number’ is a differentia, we can argue that it is not an accident. First, we should keep in mind that while an argument that number is a differentia clearly makes it not an accident, the argument that it is not an accident does not automatically make it a differentia. It can make it a property, a genus, a definition, or an accident of another kind. For obvious reasons, it is clear that it cannot be a definition or a genus. So, the only candidates that remain here are accident ‘of another kind’ and property. First, it should be clarified what is meant by ‘accident of another kind’: in the *Topics* and in the *Metaphysics* Aristotle seems to have in mind more than one kind of accident. For example in the *Topics* we have particular and universal accidents (e.g. in *Topics* VII, 5; cf. *Categories* 2) and in the *Metaphysics* we have temporary and permanent accidents. I will continue with the latter.

So, we can ask ourselves, whether for a state the attribute of ‘having a number x of rulers’ is to be considered a temporary attribute or a permanent one? Without giving way to utopian speculation, we can say that for Aristotle the latter seems to be the case. But why, then, accident? An explanation can be obtained if we refer to the fifth book of the *Metaphysics*. There, in the last chapter, Aristotle considers that there are two types of accidents:

(1) “We call an accident that which usually attaches to something and can be truly asserted, but neither of necessity nor usually, e.g. if one is digging a hole for a plant found treasure. This – the finding of treasure – happens by accident to the man who digs the hole; for neither does the one come of necessity from the other or after the other, nor, if a man plants, does he usually find treasure.” (*Metaphysics* V, 30, 1025a14-17)

(2) “ ‘Accident’ has also another meaning, i.e. what attaches to each thing in virtue of itself but is not in its substance, as having its angles equal to two right angles attaches to the triangle. And accidents of this sort may be eternal, but no accident of the other sort is. This is explained elsewhere.” (*Metaphysics* V, 30, 1025a30-b2)

The difference between the two kinds of accident has been already observed. For example, J. Barnes shows that in Aristotle (in the *Analytics* and in the *Metaphysics* especially) we find two senses for ‘accident’, a ‘narrow’ sense and a ‘broad’ sense. The accident in the narrow sense is contingent, while the one in the broad sense is not. The one in the narrow sense cannot be subject to science, while the one taken in the broad sense can (Barnes 2003, 221-222). This might count as an explanation as to why Aristotle does not do away entirely with the number of rulers from his *Politics*. Another scholar who observed this was P. Pellegrin, in his *Aristotle's Classification of animals* (1986, 42-45; and this might be another clear indication of the fact that Aristotle's view on classifications in politics draws inspiration from his views on biological subjects).

So, to conclude, for a city, the number of rulers seems more likely to be an ‘accident in the broad sense’ rather than a ‘differentia’<sup>12</sup>.

## 6. Concluding remarks

In this paper, I attempted to address the question of whether the number of rulers is an essential criterion for distinguishing between two of the most common regime types in Aristotle's day: oligarchy and democracy. This question and the underlying problem was prompted by Aristotle's reserved attitude towards number as a criterion given its accidental nature. In this respect two views emerged in scholarly

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<sup>12</sup> A supplementary point: some scholars were inclined to consider the accident in the broad sense, or the ‘per se accident’ as it was called sometimes, the same thing as the ‘proprium’ (or ‘property’), one of the four predicables. For instance, even though Alexander of Aphrodisias does not state that he considers the ‘per se accident’ a ‘proprium’, the scholars who translated and commented his *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics* did (Dooley 1994, 126-127, 183, n. 593). It is also considered to be the same thing as property by Sir David Ross (Ross 1924, vol. 1, p. 349). However, I am reserved at this point to accept this, given the fact that in the *Topics* VII we can find a clear distinction between accidents of two kinds, particular and universal, on one side, and properties, on another. Of course, this still is a more plausible account of the nature of number than saying that number is a differentia. However, given the spatial constraints, a discussion in this respect should be developed in a future study.

literature: the view that number, considering the fact that Aristotle reintroduces it in the description of democracy and oligarchy found at *Politics* IV, 4, is actually a differentia (held by scholars such as W. L. Newman and R. Mulgan), and the view that number is, as Aristotle clearly states in *Politics* III, 8, an accident (P. Simpson, C. Rowe and A. Bereschi). It was underlined that the problem should be considered under a double context, theoretical and methodological, i.e. the context of Aristotle's political morphology and the context of Aristotle's views on dialectic. In the light of these, I have shown that the interpretation of number as differentia is plausible to a point, but it lacks the most important feature: textual confirmation. On the other hand, in the case of number seen as accident the situation is obvious. Following this, I tried to show where the root of the misunderstanding lies. This was the case because number does not seem to be any kind of accident and to understand this we had to turn to the *Metaphysics* and the *Topics*. We can say at this point that number is evidently not a differentia, but rather a permanent accident (or what has been called above 'accident in the broad sense') or, depending on the interpretative options, a property.

The issue of differentiation between political regimes is a quite interesting one and the influential taxonomy present in *Politics* III, 7, where regimes are distinguished by two criteria, number and just rule, should be reconsidered by focalized discussions on each of the possible criteria proposed by Aristotle (and Plato before him) from the perspective of his dialectical methodology.

### **Edition of Aristotle's works used**

*The Complete Works of Aristotle: The revised Oxford Translation*, edited by Jonathan Barnes, 2 volumes, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984. All the quoted fragments are from the translations found in this edition.

### **Edition of Plato's works used**

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## MODERN PREREQUISITES OF THE CONCEPT OF CLASS. THE TRANSITION TOWARDS THE CLASS OF WAGE-LABORERS

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**ABSTRACT.** This article discusses the Western modern prerequisites of class, namely, on the one side a presentation of the social forces and political conjectures that have lead to the formation of modern class. On the other a discussion of some of the elements of Modern political philosophy that have served as an apology or theoretical support to the asymmetric social structures determined by the revolution of the mode of production, namely the transition to capitalism. Modern class is the social expression of an abstraction that has the concrete historical determination of being abstract, such as it is built on the basis of abstract labor (the historically determinate feature of labor of being abstract). Our article has the objective of retracing the intricate relation between the origin of capitalism (the positing of its own condition of possibility and the real subjection of this conditions under the regulative idea of capital, of the law of value) and the social and philosophical movement of troupes that made possible the birth of capitalism, more precisely the co-determination of capital and class. The prolegomena of the concept of class can serve as means for a larger reflection on the nature of social composition and the dialectical relations that bind it to the mode of production.

**Keywords:** *class, genealogy, Western political theory, property, poverty, capitalism*

The concept of class seems to be making a comeback in the field of critical theory and political philosophy. It has been coined as a sort of 'return of the repressed', by Slavoj Žižek and other critical theorists, as if the political economy of class is something that haunts the collective social unconscious. Our hypothesis is that it was never gone as the social reality it points to has always been there since the beginning of modern capitalism. This paper will examine exactly the social and theoretical formations of Western modernity such as to bring forth the social processes

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and the political theory that contributed to the elaboration of the modern concept of class. In this sense, the return of class is justified by the scholarly endeavour of addressing the blind spot that the demise of class has left behind. Discussing this theoretical 'lapsus', Theodor Adorno links the disappearance of class with the massification of contemporary society - "mass society versus class society"<sup>1</sup> - where social hermeneutics regards the analysis of uniformization, conformism, grouping processes and individual and collective identity constitution.

This mass society or culture industry, as later Adorno will re-frame his concept, represents merely the cultural dissemination of the profit motive, where "the entire practice of the culture industry transfers it naked onto cultural forms"<sup>2</sup>. As discourses on class left the arena of political science, class continued to exist, but as an anonymous "objective form of class"<sup>3</sup>. Although our societies have always been stratified, class divisions as the main structuring principle of society is a modern phenomenon, class itself being not only one of the effects of capitalist organization, but also a prerequisite for the capitalist system itself. The class system is not identical with social stratification, although class can be the expression of a specific type of stratification, but one that is grounded on the concept of inter and infra-class relations rather than merely focusing on hierarchies, differences and inequalities.

The theory of social stratification is complementary to the theory of class, but the two must not be confused, moreover, "such categories of stratification may render class invisible altogether"<sup>4</sup>. The form of categorization that class describes and criticizes has a specific historical and systemic determination, being traversed by and overlapping occasionally with other categories of social stratification and social differentiation, while retaining its particular specificity. Our approach to class is not a 'gradational' one, but a structural and historical one, "the definition of class meant to be objective, independent of indices derived directly from the lives of their subjects, however, much such indices may express a series of objective social realities"<sup>5</sup>. Although differences in income, education, status, property can function as an indication of the heterogeneity between classes, but also inside the same class, they tell us very little about the *form* of class as such and about *historical* determination of this form.

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<sup>1</sup> Theodor Adorno, *Reflections on Class Theory*, in *Can One Live After Auschwitz? A Philosophical Reader*, Stanford University Press, 2003, p. 99

<sup>2</sup> Theodor Adorno, *The Culture Industry. Selected Essays on Mass Culture*, Routledge Press, London & New York 1991, p. 98

<sup>3</sup> Theodor Adorno, *Reflections on Class Theory*, in *Can One Live After Auschwitz? A Philosophical Reader*, Stanford University Press, 2003, p. 97

<sup>4</sup> Ellen Meiksins Wood, *The Politics of Theory and the Concept of Class: E. P. Thompson and His Critics*, in *Studies in Political Economy*, Vol. 9, 1982, p. 60

<sup>5</sup> Theodor Adorno, *Late Capitalism Or Industrial Society?*, in *Can One Live After Auschwitz? A Philosophical Reader*, Stanford University Press, 2003, p. 112

As relevant empirical indicators, they are “generalizations of findings about single individuals and in this sense subjective”<sup>6</sup>, whereas the conceptual force of class derives from its structural-objective characteristics. The importance of such grounding lies in the social models that is taken as a general reference point. The political economy of class is founded on a structural approach to society itself, which can be translated as the critique of the structural laws that regulate and limit, historically, the (contradictory) development of society. For Marx, in the interpretation of the Frankfurt School, the three main laws were the law of value, the law of accumulation and the law of the recurrence of economic crises an effect of the well-known Marxist law of the tendency of the falling rate of profit. In this sense, at a structural level the theory of class merges with the theory of surplus value, thus coming into its truth as a social form-effect of the law of value, with the consequent “prohibitive difficulties of explaining the formation of classes objectively in the absence of a theory of surplus value”<sup>7</sup>.

Unlike gender, ethnicity, religious orientation, etc., class is not an identity and cannot be treated starting from cultural formations or various politics of difference. The political economy of class represents an inquiry into the process of class formation, the social objective factors of class situation and class condition, and later through the medium of political praxis a reflection on class representation, problematically defined as class consciousness. The distinction between class situation and class is tributary to the research of E. P. Thomson that distinguishes the two in order to account for the “contradictory historical process by which in determinate historical conditions, the former (class situation) gives rise to the latter (class)”<sup>8</sup>. Class cannot be confused with the relations of production, as it cannot be conceived as an effect of the mere relations of distribution. We use the concept of class as a dialectical one in which the historically material conditions of existence are determined by the structural laws of the capitalist system. We understand class as a concrete *abstraction*, class as a *thing*, “as an abstraction (scientific idealization, but also a lived abstraction as well)”<sup>9</sup> - a categorical and relational form of representation that articulates a concrete social reality, one which allows a critical reflection on the structural and historical causes of socioeconomic inequality, the origins and determinants of social conflict and injustice<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Theodor Adorno, *Late Capitalism Or Industrial Society?*, in *Can One Live After Auschwitz? A Philosophical Reader*, Stanford University Press, 2003, p. 112

<sup>7</sup> Theodor Adorno, *Late Capitalism Or Industrial Society?*, in *Can One Live After Auschwitz? A Philosophical Reader*, Stanford University Press, 2003, p. 115

<sup>8</sup> Apud., Ellen Meiksins Wood, *The Politics of Theory and the Concept of Class: E. P. Thompson and His Critics*, in *Studies in Political Economy*, Vol. 9, 1982, p. 52

<sup>9</sup> G. M. Tamas, *Telling the Truth About Class*, in ed. Leo Panich and Colin Leys, *Socialist Register: Telling the Truth*, MR press, 2006, p. 16

<sup>10</sup> Apud., James J. Carrier and Don Kalb ed., *Anthropologies of Class. Power, Practice and Inequality*, Cambridge University Press, 2015, pp. 37-38

The emphasis is on both these terms, concrete and abstract at the same time, but also objectivity and subjective (mis)representation. Abstraction, because it is an objective category, a form of conceptualization, a syllogism that links the relational antagonism that constitutes class with economic exploitation and profit extraction and creation. Concrete because it is a real existing social form that although has the determination of being abstract, generates and determines class-related subjective (mis)representations. A purely abstract concept of class would be merely a metaphysical concept of class. Being a dialectical concept, class expresses the real historically existent relations of power, domination and inequality, as Adorno puts it discussing the relationship between class and facts, it is “the concept of their relation to the present state of exploitation, which is contained in all factual material and determines it”<sup>11</sup>.

Class determines and is determined by socioeconomic conditions, by means of a prior capitalist class structure that produces and reproduces this classification. As it concept it holds a trap: indeed, it represents for critical theory a valuable vantage point from which a critique of capitalist society can be uttered, but this critique is not complete unless class itself becomes an object of critique. Concretely, the use of class for social science must not convert into a naturalization or an unhistorical approach to class itself. Being an expression of a structural injustice, class can be used to render this injustice visible, but must not become an obstacle in the way of its critique.

In the case of class, the genealogy of the concept can offer the best indication of its critical force and object, therefore a prerequisite of its systemic and social constitution should be relevant to the ongoing debate regarding this contested concept. Moreover, such an inquiry would shed light on the historical and theoretical foundations of the concept of class, as it would later be theorized by Marx and other political philosophers or political economists. The contemporary uses of the concept of class are tributary to a modern framework of constitution, simultaneously in a historical, but also analytic sense. Modern enlightened class societies were born out of the negation of estates, corporations and all the other pre-modern forms of social division and classification, at least in the Western world. The origin of this process is the specific revolutionary change of paradigm starting in the English countryside as early as the sixteenth century and in the Dutch commercial-port cities that took place and came to be known as the birth of capitalism and modern class, “class is unique to capitalist society; a structural feature of the system; belonging to a class being a condition legally and socially, open to anybody”<sup>12</sup>. Social classes, as we will see in this paper, rest on different social and economic foundations than the ones that permitted the constitution of estates, corporations, relations of vassalage or sovereignty.

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<sup>11</sup> Theodor Adorno, *Reflections on Class Theory*, in *Can One Live After Auschwitz? A Philosophical Reader*, Stanford University Press, 2003, p. 101

<sup>12</sup> G. M. Tamas, *Telling the Truth About Class*, in ed. Leo Panich and Colin Leys, *Socialist Register: Telling the Truth*, MR press, 2006, p. 17

In a certain sense and especially in the Western world modern class was also the negation of the pre-modern types of relations of power, subordination and exploitation. A specific set of social relationships – class relations, determined by a particular form of social mediation – commodity form, became the surface expression of a deeper structural configuration. A new form of systemic contradiction determines and fuels social conflict, as the discourse upon inequality concentrates upon the polarizing force of capital and class and the social and historical effects of this polarization. Modern theory can help us understand why class is not an interchangeable concept easily replaceable with any other according to philosophical fashions *du jour*, why it is not that simple to just get rid of it. It also explains why larger reflections upon modernity come to impact class as much as failed experiments of socialism in Eastern Europe do, for example. Postmodernist rejections of class walk hand in hand with many ado-s about the end of modernity as post-structuralisms, post-foundationalism, post-modernisms dispute over new beginnings of history that proved to be just as many returns of the same old. A prerequisite of class imposes itself out of both theoretical cautiousness, but also out of the necessity of understanding not only theoretically, but also historically the conceptualization and the social mediation that class expresses. The common ground for understanding modernity gravitates around a few core points that seem to be shared by all, modernists, antimodernists and postmodernists alike. In this common narrative modernity represents a “composite of economic, political, and cultural characteristics, uniting capitalism (what classical political economist liked to call a 'commercial society'), legal rational political authority (perhaps, but not necessarily, with a preference for its liberal democratic form), and technological progress – or 'rationalization' in its various aspects as manifest in markets, states, secularism and scientific knowledge”<sup>13</sup>.

However, the actual realization of modernity, in terms of causes, the various processes of transitions and transformation of social modes of production forms a continuous object of quarrel among various philosophical and historical schools. Given our conceptual purpose, namely the genealogy of class, we will employ the historical reconstructions of modernity put forward by the school of contemporary historical political Marxism: Ellen Meiskins Wood, Robert Brenner and others. With their help, we'll show how class is in fact a modern problem, as the reality it predicates about was born out of the modern advent of capitalism and the relations and forces of production that it has liberated, negating the feudal

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<sup>13</sup> Ellen Meiskins Wood, *Liberty and Property. A Social History of Western Political Thought from Renaissance to Enlightenment*, Verso, London 2012, p. 2

*parcellization of sovereignty*<sup>14</sup> and the use of extra-economical modes for extracting surplus-labour. Moreover, the historical reconstruction of the birth of class can also shed light on the typically modern process of the separation between the political sphere and the economic one, between the state and the market.

This idea will receive one of its first philosophical expression in Locke's writings about government and liberty, where liberal conceived liberty is foremost understood as "freedom from the intervention of government into private affairs, especially concerning property, unless citizens consent to it"<sup>15</sup>. Although, we speak of Western modernity, we must always keep in mind that this term designates a process that did not happen simultaneously and in the same way for the European states. The situation complicates further as we can accept the existence of various *Enlightenments* as so many forms of political articulations of specific historic conditions as far as the European diversity goes: "we may speak with caution about a 'European Enlightenment' ranging from Portugal to Russia, and from Ireland to Sicily [...], but even if we allow for an inclusive 'European' culture of Enlightenment, this cannot dispose of major contextual differences, such as those between French absolutism and English capitalism, which engendered different conceptions of equality and liberty and left very different political legacies"<sup>16</sup>.

As the scope of our inquiry regards the constitution of class, we will concentrate more on the rise of capitalism and class in England, while addressing the impacts this transformation has had upon other European states. Moreover, the emphasis on class and the specific historical character of capitalism, will rest on a refutation of linear maturation of various stages of European modes of production that wish to establish a continuity line that starts with the earliest Florentine merchant passing through the medieval burgher, the enlightened bourgeois to arrive finally at the industrial capitalist. What gets lost in this narrative is "a perception of the capitalist

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<sup>14</sup> Parcellization of sovereignty is a phrase usually used by historians in order to describe a specific feudal configuration of power and privilege and property, an indistinctness of all social spheres from the political one, concisely explained as a: "network of competing jurisdictions, bound together – when not in open conflict – by a complex apparatus of legal and contractual relations, meant that the the boundaries of the 'political' were ill-defined and fluid. The main political agent was not the individual citizen, but the possessor of some kind of secular or ecclesiastical jurisdiction, or a corporate entity with its own legal rights, a degree of autonomy and often a charter defining its relations to other corporations and superior powers" ( Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Liberty and Property. A Social History of Western Political Thought from Renaissance to Enlightenment*, Verso, London 2012, p. 19)

<sup>15</sup> Mark Blyth, *Austerity. The History of a Dangerous Idea*, Oxford University Press, New York 2013, p. 106

<sup>16</sup> Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Liberty and Property. A Social History of Western Political Thought from Renaissance to Enlightenment*, Verso, London 2012, p. 292

market as a specific social form, the product of a dramatic historical rupture [...] the imperative of accumulation and profit maximization, which is rooted in the very specific social-property relations and which creates its own very specific drive to improve labour-productivity by technical means”<sup>17</sup>.

There is a historically significant rupture between capitalist and non-capitalist societies and the theories that point towards a natural and quasi-teleological advent of capitalism are not only historically inaccurate, but also complicit to naturalizing unhistorical accounts of capitalism. For this exact reason, we can neither speak of a historical, linear, non-contradictory, simply progressive maturation of class (societies). Progress is of course undeniable, but what is contested is the linear continuous character of this social and economic progress, a narrative that absconds the antagonist, discontinuous and contradictory nature of social and economic transformation through a long series of revolutions of the social structure and classes.

Because (agrarian) capitalism and its specific class structure<sup>18</sup> were born in England we will try to offer a concise account of the development of this process and the way it differentiated itself from other versions of modern theory, state-practice and philosophy across the continent.

It was no historical oddity that classical political economy was primarily an English affair, moreover, political economy as a theoretical edifice both sustained and defended the needs of a new mode of production – the capitalist one, as it is argued also by the reputed historian scholar E. M. Wood: “where French science in the eighteenth century typically answered the needs of the state, English science, even a century earlier, was already answering the needs of property, and property in an

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<sup>17</sup> Ed. Larry Patriquin, *The Ellen Meiksins Wood Reader*, Haymarket Books, Chicago 2013, p. 227

<sup>18</sup> The transition from feudalism to capitalism has been always the object of heated debate between historians, political economists, but also political philosophers. In the 1950, the American journal *Science and Society* was the starting point of a discussion about this transition between Paul Sweezy and Maurice Dobb. In the issue no. 70 of the *Past and Present* Journal, Robert Brenner picks up this prior debate and publishes an article entitled “Agrarian Class-Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe”. This article will spark a heated debate, that came to be known as the Brenner debate, in the journal *New Left Review* in 1977. Immanuel Wallerstein and Andre Gunder Frank were the opponents of Brenner’s thesis that argued in favor of an agrarian pre-industrial English capitalism and its specific class structure and imperative for productivity as the origin of capitalism, whereas Frank put forward his theory of the development of underdevelopment and Wallerstein a sort of critique of globalization and global systemic approach to capitalism. Brenner’s arguments are convincing and so were his counter-arguments against Wallerstein and Gunder. For a detailed discussion of the topic see T. H. Aston (ed.), *The Brenner Debate. Agrarian Class-Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe*, Cambridge University Press 1985 and Robert Brenner, *The Origins of Capitalist Development. A critique of Neo-Smithian Marxism*, in *New Left Review*, 1/104, July-August 1977

increasingly capitalist form”<sup>19</sup>.

However, the philosophical issues raised by the modern interest in equality and liberty, reflections crystallized in various treaties about the just form of government and social organization, together with theories of individual forms of liberty and rights - the birth of modern citizen - posed great difficulties along the road of adapting dutifully to the specific set of economic inequalities, later translated as social injustices, that formed a part of the capitalist culture and organization. A series of antinomies haunted the English treaties about natural right and natural equality, as again E. M. Wood ironically remarks: “the English were especially creative in constructing a theoretical justification of inequality on a foundation of natural equality”<sup>20</sup>. How exactly was (working) class born in England?

In the seventeenth century, the English situation regarding the property of lands displayed a large concentration of land in the hand of a few wealthy proprietors, which relied on the purely economic appropriation of profit upon the labour of their *tenant* farmers. The search for new means of increasing productivity in agriculture was driven by market-economic competitiveness in the empire.

The structure of English agrarian capitalism resembled a triad of hierarchical relations of appropriating profit upon labour involving solely economic means of profit extraction and appropriation. The dissolution of serfdom and entrenched peasant property in England paved the way towards “application of fixed capital and cooperative labour (especially in agriculture), in the presence of already favourable social-productive class relations”<sup>21</sup>.

At the top of the economic hierarchy, we have the large landowners, in the middle, the capitalist *free* farmer tenants and on the lower strata, the *free* working men these tenants employed. The economic agrarian structure was central for the development of English capitalism that profited by both the introduction of productivity standards in agricultural practice and the market-orientated production of these practices, but also from the steady industrial growth throughout the period. Moreover, the increases of productivity in agriculture have managed to insure the support of larger number of people off land and their subsequent employment in manufacturing and the new industries, free all as they were from land and other properties. The

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<sup>19</sup> Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Liberty and Property. A Social History of Western Political Thought from Renaissance to Enlightenment*, Verso, London 2012, p. 300

<sup>20</sup> Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Liberty and Property. A Social History of Western Political Thought from Renaissance to Enlightenment*, Verso, London 2012, p. 307

<sup>21</sup> Robert Brenner, *The Origins of Capitalist Development. A critique of Neo-Smithian Marxism*, in *New Left Review*, 1/104, July-August 1977, p. 76

first proletarians were actually free peasants without land and money, having only their labour force to sell. As Perry Anderson states, the process of modern class formation regarded precisely the “whole historical process whereby heterogeneous groups of artisans, small holders, agricultural labourers, domestic workers and casual poor were gradually assembled, distributed and reduced to the condition of labour subsumed to capital, first in the formal dependence of the wage-contract, ultimately in the real dependence of integration into mechanized means of production”<sup>22</sup>. The social and economic configuration of class has changed significantly since then, but class itself still remains a valid category for social research.

Going back to early modern England, the relations between the landed gentry and the crown were shaped by the mutual warranty of the domain of power, a bargain that offered military sovereign power to the crown, in exchange of protection of private property rights. However, the situation was not without conflicts as “the more the propertied classes came to depend on economic exploitation, the less they could tolerate a state that continued to act in the traditional ways of a feudal monarchy”<sup>23</sup>. In this context, for example, the Cromwellian (counter) revolution was possible. The English civil war 1642 – 1651 that culminated with a parliamentary victory settled a new balance between Parliament and Crown on the one side, and the labouring multitude of property-less people on the other. Out of the turmoil of the civil war came out few political theories ranging from English republicanism to the radicalism of Levellers political activism. In 1645, the pamphlet's *England's Miserie and Remedie* message was that “the people were sovereign – not Parliament, not some other representatives of the people, not the 'people' in the mythical corporate form, but the people as popular multitude”<sup>24</sup>. The question of property and lack of was heavily debated and contested, especially under the aspect of associating private property with political and social privilege.

The main problem that these debates put forward was the dangerous social inequality that the right of property could engender and its incompatibility with the theory of natural rights of self-government relying on a notion of freedom centred on the self-property of every man of its person. The two main intellectual figures associated with the historical epoch under discussion are Thomas Hobbes and John Locke. We will mainly refer to the latter, as his ideas laid the foundations for the English

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<sup>22</sup> Perry Anderson, *Arguments Within English Marxism*, NLB& Verso Press, London 1980, p. 33

<sup>23</sup> Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Liberty and Property. A Social History of Western Political Thought from Renaissance to Enlightenment*, Verso, London 2012, p. 220

<sup>24</sup> Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Liberty and Property. A Social History of Western Political Thought from Renaissance to Enlightenment*, Verso, London 2012, p. 233

apology of private property – as “not *things* but *rights*, right in or to things”<sup>25</sup> - and the social inequality that it produced: “Locke sets out to demonstrate that property itself does indeed exist by right of nature, and he not only denies that the notion of natural right represents a threat to the existence of social order, but even finds a way of turning the concept on natural right to the defence of property and inequality”<sup>26</sup>. All of this is relevant in the larger context of the creation of (working class) as any social structure of inequality and domination must be backed by a political theory that prepares its defence and justification.

All the subsequent theories of class, even the most contemporary ones, refer to determination of a class position by means of property, and the juridical edifice that holds just such a form of social classification. To understand the power

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<sup>25</sup> C. B. MacPherson, *Property. Mainstream and Critical Positions*, Basil Blackwell Oxford Press, 1978, p. 2 The text also offers a concise account of the shifting meaning of property and the conceptual confusions it has created. We must first of all understand that property makes reference to a right or a claim upon a thing and it is not a mere possession of a thing. Moreover, there are various types of properties that either overlap or exclude themselves according to social laws and customs in different historical periods. We may identify three major types of property: private, common and corporate. MacPherson defines property as “a right in the sense of an enforceable claim to some use or benefit of something, whether it is a right to share in some common resource, or an individual right in some particular things; what distinguishes property from mere momentarily possession is that property is a claim that will be enforced by society or the state, by custom or convention or law” (C. B. MacPherson, *Property. Mainstream and Critical Positions*, Basil Blackwell Oxford Press, 1978, p. 3). Property is not the same thing with private property. It is a right that must not be conceived as a morally just right. Moreover, MacPherson makes also evident the political foundation of the right of property as an enforceable claim that politicized the relations between the member of the society. Property works as a mechanism of either exclusion as in the case of private property or as a right of non-exclusion in the case of the common one. A special case is corporate private property that rests on the same mechanism of exclusion. The significant rupture in the history of understanding property is brought about by the extension and the creation of the capitalist market, “the more freely and pervasively the market operated, it appears that things themselves, not just rights to them, that were exchanged on the market. In fact, the difference was not that things rather than right in things were exchanged, but that previously unsaleable rights *in* things were now saleable; [...] limited and not saleable right to things were being replaced by virtually unlimited and saleable rights *to* things” (Idem., pp. 7-8). The thesis of MacPherson is very strong as it implies that the capitalist market needs to maintain this confusion between property as right and property as a thing. His observations serve also as an argument in the favor of the discontinuity thesis between pre-modern non-capitalist modes of production and modern capitalist mode of production, which we are also relying on in constructing the case for the specificity of class as a social capitalist classification form. For a longer discussion about the relation between property and market-capitalism, but also its connection to liberalism, see also the essay *Liberal Democracy and Property*, pp. 199-207 from the already quoted text, but also C. B. MacPherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism (Hobbes to Locke)*, Oxford University Press 1962

<sup>26</sup> Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Liberty and Property. A Social History of Western Political Thought from Renaissance to Enlightenment*, Verso, London 2012, p. 263

relations that class relations engender, a reflection on the nature of property is required. In this sense, the work of John Locke weight heavily in the history of class constitution, given also the fact that a class situation the first expression of differences in property, in both a quantitative and qualitative sense.

Locke operates with a chain of premises and conclusions in order to sustain the constitution of property and its subsequent implication upon civil society and social order in general, his theory representing the first occurrence of a case for “and individual right for (un)limited appropriation”<sup>27</sup>. The first modern presupposition, a principle of civil society grounded in the doctrine of natural right, is the propriety upon one's person. This makes one's labour the subjective grounded source of any other type of property, more precisely, property over things, that translates as a private use of things, limited by the Lockean rule of “every man should have as much as he can make use of”<sup>28</sup>. One's labour acts as a social rightful claim to 'laboured' private property by an individual. Labour creates property on the ground of a sort of ontological *dictum* of industriousness and common good, “[God] gave [land] to the use of the industrious and rational (and labour was his title to it), not to the fancy or covetousness of the quarrelsome and contentious”<sup>29</sup>. This particular choice of words attests to a utilitarian and, *avant la lettre* instrumental, model of reason and rational social behaviour, which tries to combine an original natural state of commonly hold property over land and goods with private property, thus amounting to a juridical apology of individual appropriation of the commons and the subsequent enclosure of the latter.

There is an initial duality in Locke's understanding in the original natural state that starts from the presupposition of two divine gifts to mankind: earth and reason. The problem that arises is how to divide and allow the creation of the institution of property on that which is held in common, all this without the consent of the community. The mediation of labour serves and solves this first predicament, as “the labour of his body, and the work of his hands are properly his; whatsoever he removes out of the state that nature hath provided, he hath mixed his labour with, and joined it to something that is his own, and thereby makes it his property”<sup>30</sup>. The second clause is aided by the social use of reason to the best advantage of life and convenience, thus in *productive* and non-wasteful manner. The limits of property are bound by enjoyment, or the interdiction of waste. No man can posses more than he has need for, because

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<sup>27</sup> C. B. MacPherson, *Property. Mainstream and Critical Positions*, Basil Blackwell Oxford Press, 1978, p. 13

<sup>28</sup> John Locke, *Two Treaties of Government and A Letter Concerning Toleration*, Ian Shapiro ed., Yale University Press, New Haven 2003, p. 115

<sup>29</sup> John Locke, *Two Treaties of Government and A Letter Concerning Toleration*, Ian Shapiro ed., Yale University Press, New Haven 2003, p. 114

<sup>30</sup> John Locke, *Two Treaties of Government and A Letter Concerning Toleration*, Ian Shapiro ed., Yale University Press, New Haven 2003, pp. 111-112

otherwise things would go to waste and he would violate the principle of social rational use of things. Inside the limits of this rule, no consent from other fellow individual is needed in order to claim a property over something, once one's labour hath been mixed with it.

However, modern society and modern capitalist accumulation will later rest, and it already did, in (early) England on accumulation of capital or money hoarding a particular form of property that needs a specific justification. At this point Locke's theory of money comes into play, as money hoarding does not violate the principle of waste, having no negative impact upon the lives of other individuals, "the invention of money, and the tacit agreement of men to put value on it, introduced (by consent) larger possessions, and a right to them"<sup>31</sup>. Money do not go to waste, nor do they rot or deteriorate. With the creation of money, the construction of the theory of private property upon the basis of a natural common property reaches its apex. Moreover, once the difference in property that money introduces becomes established the initial grounding of property into labour becomes superfluous, as money can command more right to property than labour ever could. At the same time both forms of possession have acquired a legal status that makes socially equivalent the exchange of labour with money and the consequent buying of one's private labour in exchange of a market price that will later allow for the appropriation of this labour by the private proprietor of money and not of labour. *Avant la lettre*, Locke writes the sentence of Capital "for it is labour indeed that puts the difference of value on everything"<sup>32</sup>.

The contradictions of this situation will gain a central exposition in Marx's theory and in the social grounding of the concept of class as it will traverse the entire social theory of class until the present time. In this particular optic, the Lockean theory is of importance not only to modern classical political theory, but also for the current understanding of social inequality and the juridical foundations of property. Once Locke has established that money offer a way out of the limits of the rule of property, by allowing a harmless hoarding of wealth, an expression of "partage of things in an inequality of private possessions"<sup>33</sup>, compatible with the limits of society and acceptable as a derivation of consensus of bestowing values upon gold and silver, he concludes prophetically "for in governments, the laws regulate the right to property and the possession of land is determined by positive constitution"<sup>34</sup>.

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<sup>31</sup> John Locke, *Two Treaties of Government and A Letter Concerning Toleration*, Ian Shapiro ed., Yale University Press, New Haven 2003, p. 115

<sup>32</sup> John Locke, *Two Treaties of Government and A Letter Concerning Toleration*, Ian Shapiro ed., Yale University Press, New Haven 2003, p. 117

<sup>33</sup> John Locke, *Two Treaties of Government and A Letter Concerning Toleration*, Ian Shapiro ed., Yale University Press, New Haven 2003, p. 121

<sup>34</sup> John Locke, *Two Treaties of Government and A Letter Concerning Toleration*, Ian Shapiro ed., Yale University Press, New Haven 2003, p. 121

One main problem with the Lockean argument of justifying property is that it starts from an apology of property inside a 'things of consumption' related argument and it finishes with the justification of private property over capital and labour, two registers that should be kept separate as the two domains of validity do not overlap: "Locke was the prime offender in this respect. [...] His influence was so considerable that the illogic of his position had still to be pointed out, in the twentieth century by Morris Cohen, though earlier writers, from Rousseau on, had made the point that property is power and so it is at the heart of political question"<sup>35</sup>. The debate upon the conceptual and social genealogy of property does not end in the with the classical authors of modernity, as it still enjoys a privileged place in the current debates around poverty and the role of the state, but also on the class nature of state and legal system. However, although property is a constitutive element of class and class position, it does not immediately imply that class revolves merely around the difference of property over the means of production, as most of the Marxist Orthodox scholars hold. Lack of property or negation of claims or rights over the means of production is an objective fact pertaining to the condition of wage-labourers, but class does not overlap completely with this statement of fact, as its critical and analytic sphere goes beyond the limits of property by which it is in fact juridically constituted.

We will continue our discussion on Locke with some considerations regarding a less known essay of his, namely *On the Poor Law and the Working Schools* dating from 1697, where he engages in a discussion of poverty providing us with one of the first moral condemnation of poverty and reconfirming his principles of industriousness as a moral value not only an economic one. Poverty and the poor are treated as a burden on the society, an evil that must be dealt with, "His majesty having been pleased by his commission to require us particularly to consider of some proper methods for setting on work and employing the poor of this kingdom, and making them useful to the public, and thereby easing others of that burden"<sup>36</sup>. The rich classes are described as virtuous and productive, while on the side of poverty we have "relaxation of discipline and corruption of manners [...] [constant companions] vice and idleness"<sup>37</sup>. One of the solution for the redemption of poverty, proposed by Locke, was also the creation of working schools where children from three to fourteen years should be put to work, in order for the labour not to be wasted and thus becoming useful for society. An inquiry in the real social and economic causes of this inequality gap is completely absent from the above quoted essay that resembles more a condemnation

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<sup>35</sup> C. B. MacPherson, *Property. Mainstream and Critical Positions*, Basil Blackwell Oxford Press, 1978, p. 12

<sup>36</sup> John Locke, *Political Essays in Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1997, 'An Essay on The Poor Law', p. 183

<sup>37</sup> John Locke, *Political Essays in Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1997, 'An Essay on The Poor Law', p. 184

than a plea for a new social policy. Locke's theory of property remains a landmark in political thought, because it also entails a "redefinition of the political sphere"<sup>38</sup>. It marked a transition of the relations of domination from the political sphere to the political one, after the landed propertied classes in England have managed to push for the creation and the protection of a juridical system that guarantees the right to private property over capital and land.

This is how it happened that by the time the civil and political rights got extended the non-egalitarian economic relations were also fully constituted and legally enforced. Later, this differentiation between the economic and the political sphere within capitalism will amount to a comprehensive and holistic view of society arranged according to sets of norms covering two distinct normative regimes, one that regarded the citizen and the other that concerned the proprietor: "the 'laws' of supply and demand, the production and the distribution of goods, or the formation of wages and prices, could for the purpose of economic science be treated as impersonal mechanisms; and human beings in the economic sphere could be perceived as abstract factors of production, whose relations to each other very different from the relations of power, domination and subordination that defined the political sphere"<sup>39</sup>. Egalitarian political doctrines have since walked hand in hand with the reality of unequal distribution and production of wealth, serving as a critique of this reality from a normative standpoint or acting as a justification.

Central to Locke's theory of property was his principle of 'improvement', as labour improves the things it finds in nature rendering them with socially useful, a higher productivity that benefits the owner, but also society in general. The discourse about productivity that starts with Locke, but it can also be found in other English political theorists and political economists, was a part of a larger trend that was found its culmination in "the explosion in the seventeenth century of a body of literature devoted to improving agricultural practices"<sup>40</sup>. The stakes were far from being merely intellectual as some theories were engaged in offering a response to the needs of a new economic system in the making. The importance of increases in productivity for market capitalist competition relates to the quest, initially in the form of English agrarian practices, of lower production cost and hence the augmentation of the relative extraction of surplus value, or profit: "under capitalism, surplus is systematically achieved for the first time through increases of labour productivity, leading to the cheapening of goods and a greater total output from a given labour force (with a given working day,

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<sup>38</sup> Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Liberty and Property. A Social History of Western Political Thought from Renaissance to Enlightenment*, Verso, London 2012, p. 315

<sup>39</sup> Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Liberty and Property. A Social History of Western Political Thought from Renaissance to Enlightenment*, Verso, London 2012, p. 316

<sup>40</sup> Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Liberty and Property. A Social History of Western Political Thought from Renaissance to Enlightenment*, Verso, London 2012, p. 299

intensity of labour and real wage)"<sup>41</sup>. The Lockean concept of improvement came later to have a very specific sense, namely productivity for profit, or a profitable use of property through labour, that ultimately came to "turn even the most egalitarian ideas into justification of dispossession"<sup>42</sup>, thus finally amounting to a division of society into classes of proprietors and classes of the propertyless.

On these foundations the English idea of progress was born and it had very little to do with, for example, the ideals of French Condorcian progress and emancipation of humanity. In this context, we need not be surprised by Adam Ferguson's (*Essay on the history of Civil Society*, 1767) historical division between a 'rude' stage of a nation that predates the creation of the institution of property and the subsequent division of labour - "by the separation of arts and professions, the sources of wealth are laid open; every species of material is wrought up to the greatest perfection, and every commodity is produced in the greatest abundance"<sup>43</sup> - in its path to refinement, culminating in the possibility of sustaining progress only through the realization of the commercial society. The commercial society, although for the Scottish author the highest stage of development, is not without internal and external threats, as these societies are ravaged by inequality a structural effect of commerce: "the principal objections to democratic or popular government are taken from the inequalities which arise among men in the result of commercial art"<sup>44</sup>.

The poor classes, are not only on the outskirts of society, but they represent, for Adam Ferguson, a species pertaining to a prior stage of social development - "we refer to such *classes* as to an image of what our species must have been in its rude and uncultivated state"<sup>45</sup>. In this case, the establishment of property represent a form of exclusion not only social, but also human, marking a difference between two stages of human development, as a sort of natural selection, whose conventional character has been conveniently and complicity forgotten. The poor live merely for subsistence and preservation hence being excluded on this ground from any legitimate claim of the right to participate in the political life, their situation and social position attesting merely the fact that "the exaltation of the few must depress the many"<sup>46</sup>. We discussed Adam Ferguson's view of social class only to

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<sup>41</sup> Robert Brenner, *The Origins of Capitalist Development. A critique of Neo-Smithian Marxism*, in *New Left Review*, 1/104, July-August 1977, p. 30

<sup>42</sup> Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Liberty and Property. A Social History of Western Political Thought from Renaissance to Enlightenment*, Verso, London 2012, p. 308

<sup>43</sup> Adam Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*, ed. By Fania Oz-Salzberger for Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1995, p. 173

<sup>44</sup> Adam Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*, ed. By Fania Oz-Salzberger for Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1995, p. 178

<sup>45</sup> Adam Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*, ed. By Fania Oz-Salzberger for Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1995, p. 177

<sup>46</sup> Adam Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*, ed. By Fania Oz-Salzberger for Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1995, p. 177

point the violent and the stigmatic character that this classification has had since its origin, a sort of moral condemnation, but also to reveal its structural connection with the rise of a new economic system, a specific apologetic rhetoric that defended the upper strata of society, while accusing and condemning the lower strata. The relevance of these modern authors goes beyond the sphere of political philosophy, as their writings attest also the birth of a new economic system and a new web of social relations and social mediation. The contemporary concept of class is partially tributary and partly a reaction to modern theories both of political economy and political philosophy.

As early as the seventeenth century, both French and English political economist constructed various forms of social division into classes, using as a criteria the economic role played by these classes. In the context, for example, the Physiocrats based their argumentation on large-scale agricultural capitalism and the social structure that backed it. Thus, Quesnay acknowledges the existence of three major social classes, constituted and relevant exactly in relation to their economic function, namely the class of landowners, the productive class (the farmers), both counter-posed by the urban industrial commercial population (*sterile* in the Physiocrat doctrine, that gave precedence to production realized in agriculture, that completely backed and sustained any development in the industry). Quesnay's classification is completed by Turgot's who recognized five relevant social classes: proprietors, capitalist farmers, agricultural workmen, industrial capitalists and industrial workmen.<sup>47</sup> The work of mapping and fully explaining the social and economic determination of the industrial proletariat will fall on the shoulders of later political economists that will have dealt primarily with the industrial working class in the aftermath of the advent of the Industrial Revolution. However, even in the Early Modern political economy we can clearly notice a new mechanism of social division constituted by the apparition of wage-labour and the prior separation of large masses of people from the rural means of their subsistence.

As we stated in the beginning of this paper, the birth of *modern* class is cogent with the birth and development of capitalism. Understanding the true nature of class will shed some light on the way we can use it to criticize social injustice, but it will also show why it must also be turned into an object of critique. Class analysis rests on a structural model of analysing social and economic dynamics. The reason for this is that class it has never been merely a form of social division, nor does it simply represent a new category for classifying groups of people starting from differences in income, shares in profit, relation to the means of production or subaltern relations of power and domination. To put it concisely, and following Robert Brenner's research, we can argue that the class-system represents the social deployment of capitalistic conditions of development, classes being the social backbone of the economic system, class relations and the relation between labour and capital sustain the economic model

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<sup>47</sup> Isaac Ilich Rubin, *A History of Economic Thought*, Ink Link Press, New York 1979, pp. 117-118

that created them, as much as the later reproduces them for its own survival. The general commodification of labour and capital and the class system that sustains it gain analytic primacy in relation to mercantile or market-centred approaches to capitalist analysis “the class-structured system of reproduction in which labour power is a commodity lies behind the capitalist development, while 'production for profit in the market' cannot in itself determine the development of productive forces”<sup>48</sup>.

This approach that differs significantly from Wallerstein's, Sweezy's or Gunther's perspective (all three indebted to a neo-Smithian approach to economics), but also previously Smithian theory of market forces determination powers, does not only offer an account of capitalism's origin, but also connects historically and analytically the problem of class with the apparition and the development of this system. Class thus exits the domain of critical sociology or anthropology, becoming a category of (critical) political economy and political philosophy: “the historical problems of the origins of capitalist economic development in relation to pre-capitalist modes of production becomes that of the origin of the property/surplus extraction system (*class system*) of free wage labour – the historical process by which labour power and the means of production become commodities”<sup>49</sup>.

In this historical account, the role of class situation and structure relates to the social mapping of economic opening or foreclosure of economic development and social mobility, “by conditioning the structure of income distribution and social demand and thereby the distribution of labour-power and the means of production”<sup>50</sup>. In this sense class is not only a form of social classification, but also an economic form of leverage that adjusts capital's needs of valorisation and increased productivity. Class structure cannot be reduced or explained away by mechanisms of economic determination of society, thus as an inherent capitalist mechanism that serves purely economic ends, because while sustaining the social reproduction of capitalist conditions, class structure is a “direct and necessary (social) expression of the economy as a whole”<sup>51</sup>.

We retained relevant the discussion of this early modern process of class-making and the political theories that accompanied this process, firstly because it serves as a good starting point for understanding the re-conceptualization of class in Marx's or Weber's writings (as in fact the entire tradition of the classical elaboration of class in a way or another makes reference to the social processes and political theory

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<sup>48</sup> Robert Brenner, *The Origins of Capitalist Development. A critique of Neo-Smithian Marxism*, in *New Left Review*, 1/104, July-August 1977, p. 33

<sup>49</sup> Robert Brenner, *The Origins of Capitalist Development. A critique of Neo-Smithian Marxism*, in *New Left Review*, 1/104, July-August 1977, p. 33

<sup>50</sup> Robert Brenner, *The Origins of Capitalist Development. A critique of Neo-Smithian Marxism*, in *New Left Review*, 1/104, July-August 1977, p. 38

<sup>51</sup> Robert Brenner, *The Origins of Capitalist Development. A critique of Neo-Smithian Marxism*, in *New Left Review*, 1/104, July-August 1977, p. 51

discussed above ), and secondly, because it represents a historical perspective of the modern specificity of class, beyond narratives of purely economic determinism. Also, such a historical account of the creation of modern class renders intelligible the fact that class is intrinsically something that it was *made or made up by*, rather than a simple *is*, thus immediately shifting the perspective away from any forms of essential-ism or substantial-ism, towards a structural or categorical approach within a specific historical context. As E. P. Thompson argues: “making, because it is a study in an active process, which owes as much to agency as to conditioning. The working class did not rise like the sun at an appointed time. It was present at its own making”<sup>52</sup>.

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<sup>52</sup> E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, Vintage Books, New York 1966, p. 9

## MEANING IN LIFE AND SOURCES OF MEANING, DEPRESSION AND QUALITY OF LIFE IN PATIENTS ON HEMODIALYSIS

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**ABSTRACT.** *Meaning in Life and Sources of Meaning, Depression and Quality of Life in Patients on Haemodialysis.* *Objectives:* The study aims to emphasize the connections between meaning in life, sources of meaning profiles, depression and quality of life in patients on haemodialysis (HD), as well as the hierarchy of sources of meaning in life of HD patients. *Material and methods:* The research was conducted on 70 HD patients ( $M = 54.55 \pm 11.70$ ). The instruments used were the Meaning in Life Questionnaire, Sources of Meaning Profile-Revised, Short Form 36 Health Survey Questionnaire and Beck's Depression Inventory. The data were processed using SPSS 17.00. *Results:* Negative correlations were identified between depression and the following variables: quality of life ( $r = -0.490$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), physical health ( $r = -0.373$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ) and mental health ( $r = -0.531$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ); collectivism ( $r = -0.296$ ,  $p = 0.013$ ). A positive correlation was identified between individualism and physical health ( $r = 0.337$ ,  $p = 0.004$ ). Satisfying one's daily needs, engaging in personal relationships and one's relationship with nature are the most representative sources of meaning in life of HD patients. The results emphasize that HD patients with a high level of depression have significantly lower quality of life ( $p = 0.009$ ) compared to patients with low and moderate values of depression. *Conclusion:* The results of this research highlight the fact that low scores of depression increase quality of life in HD patients, while meaning in life, gender and the environment are not influential. Although specific to the subjects who were part of the research lot, the results obtained can enrich scientific literature and trace future research directions.

**Keywords:** *meaning in life, haemodialysis, patient, quality of life, depression, coping behaviour*

### Introduction

As defined by the WHO, quality of life is a multidimensional concept, covering dimensions like physical, psychological and social well-being (WHO). Quality of life in patients on haemodialysis was investigated especially from the point of view of

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factors related to physical health. It was proved that the quality of physical life is strongly influenced by psychological aspects, but also by the social support received by the patient from the ones around.

A unanimously accepted definition for the concept of quality of life is difficult to achieve, as this concept covers multiple dimensions, starting from the state of physical well-being and going through cognitive skills, establishing satisfactory interpersonal relationships and having enough financial resources to explore the world beyond what is necessary to secure biological survival. When we consider health, quality of life refers to the perception of the effect of a disease and/or its treatment on personal health. Thus, quality of life includes the physical, psychological and social dimension, as assessed by the patient.

It is a proved fact that quality of life is correlated with factors related to the HD patient's mental health (such as depression and anxiety) and with other variables such as marital status, number of children, level of education, relationships with medical staff, adherence to treatment or to medical imposed restrictions (Vasilopoulou et al., 2016; Ng et al., 2015). Sociodemographic factors such as gender (female), age (older patients), job (unemployed) and a high number of hospitalizations, and psychological factors like anxiety, depression and comorbidities should be treated as predictors for quality of life. Psychosocial therapies should be oriented to these potentially modifiable factors, in order to improve QOL in some HD patients (Vazquez et al., 2003).

Depression was identified as the most frequent psychiatric disorder among patients suffering from end-stage chronic kidney disease (Kimmel & Peterson, 2006; Mie Rye Suk et al., 2002; Sun et al., 2008).

The effectiveness of haemodialysis should not be measured only by physical parameters (the rate of survival, satisfaction regarding one's physical state, independence or the number of comorbidities). An additional objective must take into account psychological, social, emotional or spiritual dimensions, which represent predictor of well-being.

Spiritual and religious aspects were identified as closely connected with the level of psychological distress – linked to fewer depressive symptoms and better quality of life and serving as a source of strength (Ramirez et al., 2012; Lucchetti et al., 2012). Spirituality refers to an attempt to understand the meaning and purpose of life; it does not refer to the organized practice of religion. The correlation between spirituality and health was proved by numerous studies aiming to design strategies to help HD patients cope with stress (Finkelstein et al., 2007). In many cases, the spiritual factor becomes crucial for the patient's adaptation to the stress caused by the disease. Very few studies considered researches on mechanisms for coping with stress related to the sources of meaning in life or of spirituality in the case of HD patients (Tanyi & Werner, 2003; Tanyi et al., 2006).

Frank considers that meaning in life is a vital element, giving coherence to a person's worldview and an important factor for one's quality of life and well-being. If one does not strive to find meaning in life, then eventually that person will lose the necessary well-being and psychological comfort (Frank, 1967, 1969). The absence of meaning in life causes a situation called "existential vacuum". This state can manifest itself by symptoms of depression or aggressive behaviour.

The objectives of research are the following:

1. Identifying the connections between meaning in life, sources of meaning profiles, depression and quality of life in patients on haemodialysis.
2. Studying the effect of depression on quality of life, as well as on meaning in life.
3. Ranking sources of meaning by their presence, during the evaluation, in the life of HD patients.

### Material and Methods

A number of 70 patients participated in this study; 38.6% of them were men and 61.4% were women, with a mean age of  $54.55 \pm 11.70$  years. The selection criteria for including subject into this research were the following:

- the subjects were diagnosed with stage 5 chronic kidney disease and were on haemodialysis as a treatment;
- the subjects were at least 18 years old;
- the subjects had the cognitive skills needed to understand the meaning of the items used by the research instruments and to offer an answer according to their subjective experiences.

The research was conducted for 6 months (March – September 2014). Patients were informed about the protocol and signed the informed consent form. They had been previously informed regarding: the purpose of the research, how to fill in the questionnaires, confidentiality and data privacy, the possibility to withdraw from the study at any moment. The questionnaires were self-administered during HD sessions and the patients were assisted while filling in the tests (in case they had trouble understanding the meaning of certain sentences).

Four instruments were used:

1. The **Short Form 36** (SF-36) questionnaire is a generic instrument for measuring quality of life. It consists of 36 items. Its 8 scales contain items referring to the physical function, physical role, somatic pain, overall health, vitality, social

function, emotional role, mental health and two generic concepts aggregating the scales (physical health and mental health). The value of Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the 36 items was 0.82; for both the physical and mental health dimension, we obtained Cronbach's alpha coefficient 0.72.

2. The **Beck Depression Inventory** (BDI) is a self-assessment instrument consisting of 21 items, built to measure the severity of depression, Cronbach's alpha coefficient = .868.

3. The **Meaning in Life Questionnaire** (MIQ) has the purpose of assessing the presence and search for meaning in life, being an instrument made of 10 items, with scoring on a 7-step Likert scale. Cronbach's alpha coefficient = .758.

4. The **Sources of Meaning Profile-Revised** (SOMP-R) consists of 17 items which may be grouped in four sources of meaning profiles: self-transcendence (items 4, 7, 9, 10, 17), collectivism (items 8, 11, 12, 14), individualism (items 1, 3, 5, 6) and self-preoccupation (items 2, 13, 15, 16). Cronbach's alpha coefficient = .833.

The data collected included sociodemographic characteristics like age, gender, environment, marital status and educational level. The data were processed by SPSS 17.00 for Windows. To emphasize correlations we used the Pearson correlation and to identify the influence of certain variables we used the One-way ANOVA.

## **Results and Discussions**

### **1. Descriptive analysis**

#### *Sociodemographic data*

A number of 70 patients have been included in the study. 38.6% of these are men and 61.4% are women. The mean age is  $54.55 \pm 11.70$  years (with a minimum of 19 years and a maximum of 76 years).

With respect to the inclusion in the haemodialysis program, the mean duration is 8 years and 3 months (with a minimum of 1 year and a maximum of 23 years).

A total of 49.2% of patients live in the countryside. By level of education, 14.3% are secondary school graduates, 14.3% are college graduates and 30% are university graduates.

A total of 14.3% of patients are single and 85.7% have a partner.

#### *General scores*

The general scores obtained by the lot of subjects for the 4 instruments applied are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** The results for SF-36, BDI, MIQ, SOMP-R

Instrument	General (M ± SD)	Women (M ± SD)	Men (M ± SD)
<b>SF-36</b>	90.70 ± 18.33	89.72 ± 17.07	92.25 ± 20.42
Physical health	90.70 ± 9.40	43.13 ± 9.04	43.62 ± 10.13
Mental health	43.32 ± 9.81	43.34 ± 8.96	45.48 ± 11.09
<b>BDI</b>	36.18 ± 9.37	36.44 ± 10.09	35.77 ± 8.27
<b>MIQ</b>	53.47 ± 9.10	52.95 ± 9.99	54.29 ± 7.56
Presence of meaning in life	27.85 ± 4.58	28.04 ± 4.94	27.55 ± 4.01
Searching for meaning in life	25.61 ± 6.59	24.90 ± 7.23	26.74 ± 5.36
<b>SOMP-R</b>			
self-transcendence	5.80 ± 0.84	5.98 ± 0.76	5.53 ± 0.91
collectivism	5.32 ± 1.25	5.24 ± 1.23	5.46 ± 1.29
individualism	5.20 ± 1.21	5.29 ± 1.04	5.06 ± 1.46
self-preoccupation	4.61 ± 1.05	4.55 ± 1.05	4.71 ± 1.07

### *The sources of meaning in life profile*

In the hierarchy of sources of meaning profiles according to their presence in the life of HD patients, we found that the first place was taken by self-transcendence ( $M = 5.80 \pm 0.84$ ), followed by collectivism ( $M = 5.32 \pm 1.25$ ), individualism ( $M = 5.20 \pm 1.21$ ) and self-preoccupation ( $M = 4.61 \pm 1.05$ ).

### *Hierarchy of the sources of meaning in life*

Calculating the mean and standard deviation for the 17 items of instrument Sources of Meaning Profile-Revised, we could achieve the hierarchy of the sources of meaning in life according to their presence in the life of the HD patients included in this research lot. The results obtained are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Hierarchy of the sources of meaning in life

	Sources of meaning	M	DS
1.	Meeting basic, daily needs	6.27	0.96
2.	Engaging in personal relationships with family and/or friends	6.27	1.20
3.	Relationship with nature	6.20	1.12
4.	Offering help and support to others	6.17	1.07
5.	Ensuring financial security	5.74	1.45
6.	Awareness of personal achievements	5.72	1.39
7.	Promoting human values and ideals	5.44	1.56
8.	Promoting culture and tradition	5.44	1.57

	Sources of meaning	M	DS
9.	Involvement in personal development	5.42	1.62
10.	Interest in human rights	5.38	1.58
11.	Ensuring a legacy for the next generation	5.37	1.78
12.	Participating in recreational activities	5.15	1.76
13.	Interest in social causes	5.11	1.77
14.	Participating in religious activities	4.95	1.86
15.	Participating in creative activities	4.51	1.94
16.	Obtaining material possessions to secure a better life	4.15	2.01
17.	Participating in hedonistic activities (bets, parties)	2.28	1.76

Meeting basic, daily needs ( $M = 6.27 \pm 0.96$ ), engaging in personal relationships with family and/or friends ( $M = 6.27 \pm 1.20$ ) and one's relationship with nature ( $M = 6.20 \pm 1.12$ ) are the most representative sources of meaning in the life of HD patients, participating in hedonistic activities ( $M = 2.28 \pm 1.76$ ) ranking last.

## **2. Correlational analysis**

The correlations between meaning in life, sources of meaning profiles, depression and quality of life in patients on haemodialysis emphasized statistically significant correlations. Positive correlations were identified between depression and physical health ( $r = -0.373$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ), mental health ( $r = -0.531$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ); negative correlations were identified between depression and quality of life ( $r = -0.490$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), collectivism ( $r = -0.296$ ,  $p = 0.013$ ) and individualism ( $r = -0.300$ ,  $p = 0.012$ ). Positive correlations were also identified between individualism and physical health ( $r = 0.337$ ,  $p = 0.004$ ) and quality of life ( $r = 0.302$ ,  $p = 0.110$ ).

## **3. The influence of depression on quality of life and mental health**

The patients have to follow all medical indications (diminished physical activity, food and liquid restrictions to maintain a comfortable bodyweight) and to avoid the adverse effects of comorbidities (diabetes mellitus). They cope with their psychological distress determined by the new lifestyle and include haemodialysis sessions in their weekly activities. The disease itself and its effects on the patient's personal, professional and social life also have effects at a psychological level. The many effects have been researched and depression has been identified as having

the highest frequency rates among the psychological problems of patients suffering from chronic kidney diseases and being treated by the haemodialysis procedure (Finkelstein & Finkelstein, 2000). A study of Lopes et al. (2002) which included chronic kidney disease patients from the USA and a few European countries found that the prevalence of depression was nearly 20%. The study also included the questioning of patients regarding self-reported depression; thus, a positive correlation was identified between the level of depression and the mortality rate, as well as the number of hospitalizations. Previous studies identified that the rate of depression among HD patients was as high as 15%, and for self-reported depression, this percentage went up to 30% - 50%. According to DSM diagnoses, the rates of major depression are considerably lower than 15% (Kimmel et al., 1996).

The results regarding the effects of depression on quality of life and mental health are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.** The influence of depression on quality of life and mental health

Quality of life				Multiple comparative analysis		
depression	M	F (2. 69)	Sig	depression		Sig
low	93.227	5.059	<b>0.009</b>	Low major	16.30	<b>0.027</b>
moderate	94.228			Moderate major	17.305	<b>0.009</b>
major	76.923			Moderate Low	1.001	1.000
Mental health				Multiple comparative analysis		
depression	M	F (2. 69)	Sig	depression		Sig
Low	46.22	6.990	<b>0.002</b>	Low major	10.53	<b>0.004</b>
Moderate	46.02			Moderate Major	10.33	<b>0.002</b>
Major	35.69			Moderate Low	- 0.19	1.000

Most studies reported similar findings. Strong correlations between depression and poor quality of life were identified in different countries and in different decades. The rapid increase in the number of patients on haemodialysis, paralleled by the significant increase in the lifespan of these patients, has improved the possibility of monitoring patients on haemodialysis both from a medical and from a psychological perspective.

Our study has not identified influences of depression on physical health ( $p = 0.114$ ) and on meaning in life ( $p = 0.105$ ), which means that depression does not considerably affect physical aspects of life and does not determine considerable changes of meaning in life.

**This study has some limitations.** Firstly, the generalization of results is limited by the size of the lot, as well as by the characteristics of participants in the research. Secondly, the transversal nature of the study limits the results obtained only to the moment of the assessment. Thirdly, the intrusive nature of the items and the delicate subject could cause resonances at an emotional and cognitive level, possibly with significant implications for the results. Fourthly, the subjects' tendency to show a façade must be taken into account when it comes to subjects filling in questionnaires. Fifthly, the study was conducted on a small number of subjects; thus, the results cannot be generalized.

## Conclusions

The study emphasizes the fact that patients on haemodialysis find meaning in life from sources included in the profile of those transcending the self. Significant connections have been highlighted between depression, quality of life, physical health and mental health. HD patients' quality of life and mental health are influenced by their level of depression. These data support the need to implement in practice intervention strategies aimed at reducing or even eliminating patients' depressive symptoms, the ultimate purpose being to improve HD patients' quality of life.

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## DOCTRINAL RESEARCH AS A MEANS TO RECOVER NORMATIVE THINKING IN ACCOUNTING

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**ABSTRACT.** *Doctrinal Research as a Means to Recover Normative Thinking in Accounting.* The article debates whether legal doctrinal research could be applied in contemporary accounting research to bring back the prescriptive nature of normative research and whether, by applying doctrinal research, a new focus could be created in accounting research. The article found that the main difference between doctrinal research and traditional scientific and social research is that the focus of doctrinal research is not on the development of theories, but on the underlying doctrines, concepts, rules and principles on which practice and the practical system are based. A shift in accounting research from traditional research that creates theory to research that focuses on the underlying doctrines of the accounting discipline would create an insider perspective in accounting research, which could bring accounting research closer to accounting practice. Doctrinal research could bring normative and prescriptive aspects back to accounting research, but such normative aspects will not necessarily be similar to traditional normative research.

**Keywords:** *Accounting research, doctrinal research, normative research*

### 1. Introduction

The application of the scientific method in accounting research has changed its landscape with accounting researchers moving from *prescribing* accounting practice (normative research) to *describing* accounting practice by using the tenets of the scientific method (Deegan and Unerman 2011; Jeanjean and Ramirez 2009; Chau 1986). Through this movement, contemporary accounting research's focus has changed from

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asking questions around what accounting practices should be, to describing what the current accounting practices are. The result of this movement is that accounting as a practice-oriented discipline is more developed, wrongly or not, by accounting practitioners than accounting academia (Coetsee 2010; Singleton-Green 2009; Inangaand Schneider 2005). Singleton-Green (2009) specifically states that there is a perception that accounting research fails to significantly influence accounting developments. A further contemporary development in accounting research is towards interpretative and critical research focusing more on broader social issues within the accounting discipline (Deegan and Unerman 2011), and therefore also not specifically on the concepts, principles and rules on which accounting practice in itself is based.

The above views initiate the question whether accounting research should not focus more on the core developments in accounting practice. As such, research could focus on the appropriateness of the concepts, principles and rules on which accounting practice is based. Although accepting that all research approaches in any discipline are important (including research that focuses on the role of accounting within the social environment), the issue is whether sufficient research is being done on the accounting discipline itself with regard to its core concepts and principles.

In supporting such an approach in accounting research, one could consider the relationship between legal research and legal practice as a point of reference. The literature supports the notion that both legal research and legal practice are focusing on the core of their discipline (Singal and Malik 2012; Burns and Hutchinson 2009). A reason why both legal academia and practice are focusing on the core of the legal discipline is that both are using the same research methodology (Hutchinson 2008), i.e. the so-called *doctrinal* research approach. De Jong, van Arensbergen, Daemen, van der Meulen and van der Besselaar (2011) specifically state that the objective of such legal research is the *law* and the *legal system*, as well as its norms and rules, which are created through human actions.

Interestingly, Biglan (1973) classified both the accounting and legal disciplines as part of the applied professional-oriented disciplines that use soft skills to develop their practice, which stands in contrast with the so-called pure research found in the hard natural sciences. Virgo (2011) specifically states that laws are artificially constructed and issues therein cannot therefore be resolved through scientific ways. Similarly, Inanga and Schneider (2005) hold that accounting *per se* is not a science and that the use of scientific methodologies in accounting does not change that fact. Since both the accounting and legal disciplines are classified as *applied and soft scientific* disciplines, it raises the question as to why the research culture therein has developed differently in these disciplines, and why doctrinal research is not an important research approach in accounting research.

## **2. Research objective, question and structure**

In light of the above, this article reviews the nature of doctrinal research and considers whether doctrinal research could be applicable in contemporary accounting research to resurrect the prescriptive nature of normative research to the accounting discipline. The article starts a debate as to whether doctrinal research could create a means for a changed focus in contemporary accounting research that questions the appropriateness of the underlying concepts and principles of accounting practice and thereby bringing aspects of contemporary accounting research closer to contemporary accounting practice.

Therefore, the research question under consideration is whether a doctrinal research approach could potentially be applied in contemporary accounting research to create a focus on the core accounting concepts and principles on which the accounting practice is based, and therefore bringing normative aspects back into accounting research.

To achieve this goal, the article follows a structured process of discussing different aspects of doctrinal research and interpreting how these various key aspects could potentially relate to the accounting discipline, including accounting research and practice. In this structured process, the article firstly identifies the nature of doctrinal research, including its scope and insider approach, with some accounting perspectives thereon, which is then followed by a contextualisation of normative research against doctrinal research. The literature on different classifications of legal research is also assessed to see whether such classifications could also be used in accounting research. The nature of the doctrinal research process and the skills needed in the doctrinal research process are finally discussed to assess the applicability to accounting before the article is concluded with a concluding discussion and final remarks.

## **3. Nature of doctrinal research**

### ***3.1 Basic doctrinal research as applied in the legal field***

Doctrinal research forms the core of legal practice, judicial systems and legal academia (Hutchinson and Duncan 2012; Vick 2004). Hutchinson and Duncan (2012) also believe that doctrinal research establishes the nature and parameters of the law, while Westerman (2011) states that through the doctrinal research process

order is kept in the legal process. Legal practice and legal academia are therefore regarded as gatekeepers of the legal system (Van Gestel and Micklitz 2014; Von Bogdandy 2012; Burns and Hutchinson 2009). Doctrinal research therefore plays an important role in developing and keeping the overall legal system intact.

In understanding doctrinal research, however, the concept of *doctrine* has to be understood. Hutchinson and Duncan (2012) explain the word doctrine as being derived from the Latin 'doctrina', which means instruction, knowledge or learning. The concept of doctrine has also been defined as "[a] synthesis of various rules, principles, norms, interpretative guidance and values. It explains, makes coherent suggestions or justifies a segment of law as part of a larger system of law. Doctrines can be more or less abstract, binding or non-binding" (Hutchinson and Duncan 2012, 84). McKerchar (2008, 18) similarly defines doctrinal research as the systematic process of identifying, analysing, organising and synthesising statutes, judicial decisions and commentary. The legal doctrines assessed in the systematic process of doctrinal research are the rules, principles, norms and values on which the legal practice and legal system are based (Hutchinson and Duncan 2012; De Jong et al. 2011). In light of the above, Chynoweth (2008, 30) explains the nature of doctrinal research as a research approach that is concerned with the discovery and development of doctrines for publication in textbooks or journal articles and its research questions take the form of asking 'what is the law?' within particular contexts. It can therefore be stated that *assessing* the legal doctrines is the reason why it is referred to as doctrinal research.

### **3.2 The scope of doctrinal research**

This systematic process of doctrinal research can vary in nature and depth (Singhal and Malik 2012); for example, in its simplistic form, doctrinal research asks questions about what the law is on specific practical issues (Burns and Hutchinson 2009; McKerchar 2008), while deeper doctrinal research, in turn, analyses the underlying legal doctrines behind legal rules and principles (Siems and Sithigh 2012). From these viewpoints, two perspectives, in turn, can be developed:

- On the one hand, the *narrower* perspective is referred to as the 'black-letter' law (Vick 2004; Burns and Hutchinson 2009; McKerchar 2008), and focuses on what the law is for specific issues and how it should be applied in practice (Singhal and Malik 2012). The narrower perspective is therefore practical and descriptive, and interprets the law applicable to any given fact pattern.
- On the other hand, the *broader* perspective assesses the appropriateness of the legal doctrines to prescribe what changes should be made to the legal doctrines. In this regard, Chynoweth (2008) states that doctrinal research

is concerned with the discovery and development of legal doctrines, while Siems and Sithigh (2012) specifically state that doctrinal research criticises, explains, corrects and directs legal doctrine. This perspective is more prescriptive in nature and focuses on what the law should be and is therefore normative in nature.

Both the above perspectives on doctrinal research differ from conventional scientific and social research in that the focus is not on developing theory, but rather on interpreting(or assessing)the appropriateness of the underlying doctrines on which the system (including academic and practice aspects thereof)is based (Hutchinson and Duncan 2012; Chynowith 2008). Westerman (2011) specifically states that the theoretical framework of doctrinal research is the (legal) system itself and that it has a dual function of both the subject matter and theoretical framework. The need to develop theory on which practice could be based is not evident in doctrinal research *per se*. The doctrines become the theory on which (legal) research is based, although this is not theory that is developed through the normal scientific and social research processes. The focus of doctrinal research is therefore not on developing theory through an independent process from practice, but to critically assess the doctrines behind practice, the underlying rule, principles and concepts and therefore there is a much more direct link to practice and its governing rules in legal research.

### ***3.3 An insider perspective of doctrinal research***

The literature refers to the *insider* perspective of legal research (Kazmierski 2014). The scholar who only focuses on doctrinal research is considered an insider who is living in the legal development process and is therefore integrated in the legal development of thought. Currently, legal training and legal academic journals are mainly focusing on the insider approach (Burns and Hutchinson 2009; McKerchar 2008). In contrast, an outsider perspective proposes to look outside the conventional structure of the doctrinal research process and focusing on the social implications of legal developments (Van Gestel and Micklitz 2014; Hutchinson and Duncan 2012).

It is within these insider/outsider perspectives that the normative research movement in accounting research differs from doctrinal research. The normative researchers in accounting distance themselves from the user of knowledge (i.e. accounting practice) to create an independent knowledge base (Jeanjean and Ramirez 2009), with the objective to create a more outsider approach in normative research.

#### 4. An accounting perspective on reviewing doctrines

Many accounting scholars agree that there are problems with the creation of theory in accounting research through the scientific method. According to Gaffikin (2008), knowledge is created through a consensus of beliefs and not necessarily through the application of the scientific research method, while Inanga and Schneider (2005) conclude that accounting researchers do not create sufficient theory on which accounting research could be based, while also stating that accounting researchers are focusing on correlation analysis rather than testing theories and related hypotheses. Furthermore, Reither and Williams (2002) are of the opinion that accounting researchers are also more interested in becoming *experts of research methods* rather than *resolvers of accounting problems*. Chau (1986) declares that the scientific method restricts the range of problems that could be studied in accounting and also the research methods that could be used. Within the context hereof, it may be asked whether research that focuses on *accounting doctrines*, and not on the attempts to create *accounting theory* through scientific or social science processes, should be incorporated in contemporary accounting research.

The movement to the scientific method and later to interpretive and critical research in accounting has clearly established an outsider perspective in accounting research, which is important in any discipline. However, these movements in accounting research have resulted in a neglect of the core insider doctrines of accounting in accounting research. The view expressed in this article is that an insider approach is also important in accounting research. To this aim, it is believed that doctrinal research could make a significant contribution and the doctrines assessed could also form a theoretical foundation for broader accounting research.

Therefore, similar to legal academics, the view expressed in this article is that accounting academics should continuously question new developments in the broader accounting practice, such as financial reporting standards, sustainability and integrated reporting, auditing, managerial accounting techniques and even taxation developments. In order to do so, however, accounting academics should understand what doctrinal research is doing for the legal discipline and how it could potentially be extrapolated into the accounting discipline.

The legal research focus is practice oriented and problem based in that real-life problems are being resolved by academics, practitioners and judges (Hutchinson and Duncan 2012; De Jong et al. 2011). Legal practitioners therefore understand the core of legal research and could easily apply legal research in their practices. The legal discipline is, therefore, in contrast to accounting, a discipline where practice and

academia are working together and publishing in the same academic journals (Van Gestel and Micklitz 2014; Hutchinson 2008). The gatekeeper role of accounting researchers is not explicitly present in the accounting discipline.

## 5. The normative versus doctrinal research approach

### 5.1 *Basic description*

In the accounting literature, it is generally understood that normative research either questions the existing theoretical bases of practice by asking questions about what the theoretical bases should be, or investigates the application in practice in order to prescribe what the practice should be by asking questions about what the practice should be (Riahi-Belkaoui 2004; Hendriksen 1982). Specifically then, from an accounting perspective, normative research asks questions regarding what the appropriate accounting principles and guidelines should be (Deegan and Unerman 2011). As such, it may be argued that normative research is therefore prescriptive in nature.

The nature of doctrinal research, however, is more than only this in that it is (1) descriptive in that it describes what the 'current law' is and (2) prescriptive in that it identifies issues with the 'current law' and suggests possible changes. This is, however, an integrated process in which both practitioners and academics are continuously asking 'what is the law?' and what 'should the law' be? (Singhal and Malik 2012; Chynoweth 2008; Hutchinson 2008). The legal literature refers to the normative character of doctrinal research in general (Chynoweth 2008). Westerman (2011), for instance, states that legal principles are (1) *contestable* because the legal principles are continuously questioned and (2) *normative* in that legal principles create norms by which people live. For purposes of this article, the normative character of doctrinal research is therefore based on two premises, namely a consensus premise and a prescriptive premise.

### 5.2 *The consensus premise*

Within the context of legal research, the *consensus* premise is that practitioners and academics, even if they are only describing aspects thereof, are asking questions about the appropriateness of the law. Regarding the contestable nature of doctrinal research, Chynoweth (2008:30) specifically states that the normative character of the law means that the validity of doctrinal research must inevitably rest on the development of consensus within the scholastic community, rather

than appealing to any external party. The validity of applicable and relevant principles is therefore created by consensus and not by scientific or social science norms and in this respect doctrinal research is a means by which the consensus is debated in academic journals. The debate is based on doctrinal analysis (Hutchinson and Duncan 2012) and critical thinking, which should form part of the training of students (McKerchar 2008). Kazmierski (2014) refers hereto as the critical engagement with all the role players.

This confirms that the consensus premises in legal research differ from the traditional normative research in accounting, which focused on developing normative theory (Jeanjean and Ramirez 2009). Jeanjean and Ramirez (2009, 121) specifically state that the normative theorist, who disappeared from accounting research in the 1960s and 1970s, distance themselves from practice to create “*legitimation of research completely detached from practice, in that it consider this practice and its governing rules as a sign of specific interest that are not converge with the researcher’s scientific interest*”. The contestable character of doctrinal research therefore differs from traditional normative (accounting) research in that doctrinal research is not detached from practice and does not focus on theory creation. The disappearance and detachment of traditional normative accounting researchers from accounting practice resulted in a reduction in the critical assessments of the concepts, principles and rules on which accounting practice is based in contemporary accounting research.

As mentioned earlier, there is a movement in contemporary accounting research towards critical research and several accounting journals such as *Critical Perspectives in Accounting* and even *Contemporary Accounting Research* cater for this. This movement in accounting, however, is based on the critical framework as created in the social sciences (Roslender 2006; Deegan and Unerman 2010) and not on a doctrinal analysis approach. Deegan and Unerman (2010) specifically state that such critical accounting theory is a wider concept than questioning particular applications in accounting and focuses more on the role of accounting in society. Therefore, despite the movement to towards critical research, the debating and assessment of the underlying concepts, principles and rules of accounting are still in essence absent in contemporary accounting research.

### **5.3 Prescriptive premises**

Alternatively, within the context of legal research, this premise is that ‘law’ in itself is prescriptive and that one of the aims of legal systems is to guide the behaviour of people (Kazmierski, 2014). This is where the gatekeeper role of

academics is an important aspect in that they uphold and protect the integrity of the system (Van Gestel and Micklitz 2014; Hutchinson and Duncan 2012; Von Bogdandy 2012), or then the particular discipline. Similar to the legal systems, the financial reporting standards and other accounting-related reporting guidelines created through a regulatory process also prescribe the rules and principles that accounting practice should follow.

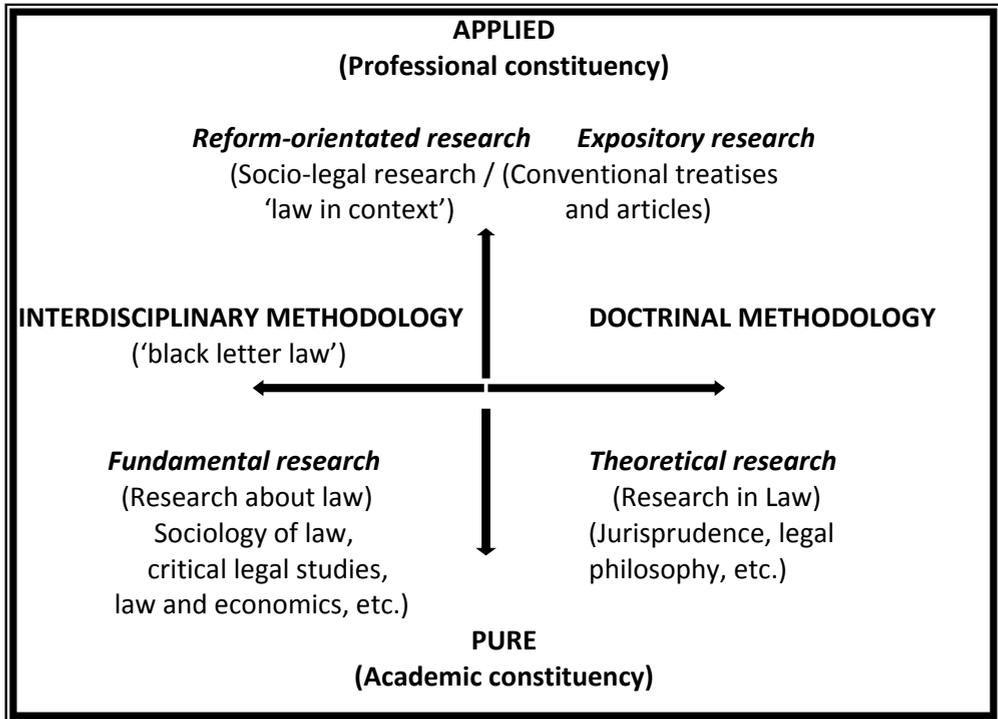
It is also important to understand how the prescriptive nature of doctrinal research differs from how research is conducted in the social sciences (and perhaps even the natural sciences) where the research approaches are typically empirical in nature and evidence based (Kazmierski 2014). In contrast to these approaches, doctrinal research is more seen as a critical analysis and differs epistemologically from empirical investigations. Chynoweth (2008) explains that doctrinal research requires an interpretative and qualitative analysis under which no empirical data is collected to create or test theory. Chynoweth further states that the validity of doctrinal research is created differently. Rather, the validity of doctrinal research is created by the appropriateness of the doctrinal (or critical) analysis and the consensus reached in the discussion (Kazmierski 2014; Van Gestel and Micklitz 2014) and not on the independent theory building or critical stance of the normative researcher (Jeanjean and Ramirez 2009).

Considering all the above, the article proposes that a critical analysis of accounting doctrines should also be present in contemporary accounting research. A critical doctrinal analysis could bring the focus of accounting research back to its fundamental concepts, principles and rules, and could potentially create underlying accounting doctrines on which the standard-setting process could be based. The doctrines could then also be a substitute for the lack of accounting-specific theory in contemporary accounting research.

## **6. Research classification in law**

### ***6.1 The basis of the classification***

To foster a changed focus in contemporary accounting research by using a (legal) doctrinal approach, it is important to understand how legal research is classified and how each classification could be applied in accounting research. The Arthurs Report published in 1983 in Canada (as identified in Chynoweth 2008:29) divides legal research systematically in the four categories identified in Figure 1:



**Figure 1: Classification of legal research** (Adapted from Chynoweth, 2008: 29)

The above matrix classifies legal research into four classifications based on the distinction of applied and pure research, as well as doctrinal and interdisciplinary research. The four classifications are considered in more detail below:

### **6.2 Expository research**

Within the context of the above classification, the first classification of expository research<sup>1</sup> is defined by Pearse, Campbell and Harding, known as the Pearse Committee from Australia, as research that provides a systematic exposition of the rules governing a particular legal category, analyses the relationships between

<sup>1</sup> The Pearse Committee’s report published in 1987 defined the first category as doctrinal research based on the narrow perspective of doctrinal research. However, the Arthur Report of 1983 named the first category expository research to cater for a broader perspective of doctrinal research. Doctrinal research is therefore much broader than only expository research.

rules, explains areas of difficulty and, perhaps, predicts future developments (Hutchinson and Duncan 2012, 101). This category includes all research that focuses on the application of legal rules in practice from an insider approach (Kazmierski 2014; Singhal and Malik 2012). This category basically describes the current rules and interprets how the rules should be applied in practice. Therefore, expository research can be seen as applied research through a doctrinal methodology (Burns and Hutchinson 2009; Chynoweth 2008; Mc Kerchar 2008).

From a contemporary accounting research perspective, the question is whether research that only focuses on interpreting the application of the rules and principles in practice to assess the application to specific fact patterns is indeed research or only a practical application. In the legal discipline, this research philosophy is regarded as valid and consequently opens the door to include more practice-oriented investigations in academic research in general.

### ***6.3 Theoretical research***

The second classification of theoretical research is defined by the Pearse Committee as research that fosters a more complete understanding of the conceptual bases of legal principles and of the combination effects of a range of rules and procedures that touch on a particular area of activity (Hutchinson and Duncan 2012, 101). By classifying theoretical research as part of a doctrinal methodology, an assumption is made that theoretical research in the legal discipline is based on doctrinal thinking. The issue is whether such research should be classified as applied research and not as pure research as it is based on underlying doctrines and not theories. Doctrinal research, as stated before, is conducted in practice and in academia and therefore has a distinct professional focus constituent. Legal theory research, however, is regarded as a deeper research of legal doctrines than expository research is (Hutchinson and Duncan 2012; Kazmierski 2014), and refers to a conceptual approach, which is an extension of practice (Inanga and Schneider 2005). A conceptual basis would in this case focus more on the underlying concepts on which rules and principles are based, than the theory.

In contemporary accounting research, theory is typically developed through a positivistic or normative research process (Deegan and Unerman 2011; Inanga and Schneider 2005), which differs from doctrinal research. Notwithstanding, many debates in contemporary accounting research have questioned the appropriateness of the standard-setters' conceptual frameworks (Gaffikin 2008; Dean and Clarke 2003; Lotus 2003) without specifically referring to doctrinal research. The financial reporting standards applied in accounting practice are based on the conceptual frameworks

of the accounting standard-setters, and forms the conceptual basis on which financial reporting standards are based (Bullen and Crook 2005). The benefit of applying doctrinal research from a conceptual basis in contemporary accounting research is that it provides a basis to assess the appropriateness of the standard-setters' conceptual frameworks, assesses whether the concepts in the conceptual frameworks are developed sufficiently and whether other doctrines exist in the accounting literature that are not incorporated in the conceptual frameworks.

#### **6.4 Reform-oriented research**

The third classification of reform-oriented research is defined by the Pearse Committee as research that intensively evaluates the adequacy of existing rules and that recommends changes to any rules found wanting (Hutchinson and Duncan 2012,101), while the Arthurs Report classifies it as interdisciplinary legal research (an outsider perspective). However, according to Kazmierski (2014), Burns and Hutchinson (2008) and Chynoweth (2008), a great deal of reform-oriented research in the legal discipline is also being conducted from an in-law perspective (the insider approach), and therefore many legal scholars are classifying reform-oriented research as part of doctrinal research. The Arthurs Report also extends their definition by classifying reform-oriented research as applied research, which is true if the reform-oriented research is done through a doctrinal methodology. The question is whether broader social reform-oriented research could be regarded as applied research. On the one hand, the one argument is that the aim of reform-oriented research is to change practice, and therefore is *applied*; while on the other hand, the argument is that reform-oriented research through a critical social research framework could be regarded as more *pure* research. Nevertheless, it evaluates the adequacy of the existing rules and is more prescriptive and provides a basis to do prescriptive research from both an insider and outsider perspective (Chynoweth 2008). Reform-oriented research could therefore provide a basis to do normative research in contemporary accounting research from both an insider and outsider perspective and could also form a basis to bring normative aspects back to accounting research, whether from a doctrinal or non-doctrinal perspective.

#### **6.5 Fundamental research**

The fourth classification is the so-called fundamental research approach and is defined as research designed to secure a deeper understanding of law as a social phenomenon, including research on the historical, philosophical, linguistic,

economic, social or political implications of law (Hutchinson and Duncan 2012, 102). Fundamental research includes social and interdisciplinary research (Kazmierski 2014) and typically falls outside the scope of doctrinal research, since it is based on scientific and social science norms and an outsider approach (Van Gestel and Micklitz 2014). Since this research is based on the methodologies of scientific and social sciences, the legal literature agrees that fundamental research is *pure research* and forms part of an interdisciplinary methodology (Kazmierski 2014; Van Gestel and Micklitz 2014).

### **6.6 Accounting perspective on the classifications**

The aforementioned classifications are very important from an accounting research perspective. The moves in accounting to the scientific method (Parker 2012; Jeanjean and Ramirez 2009) and later to more interpretative and critical social research (Baker and Bettner 1997; Boland and Gordon 1992) have cemented accounting research in interdisciplinary methodologies and therefore in the realm of fundamental research (as part of the above classification). Doctrinal expository, theoretical and reform-oriented research, however, creates an opportunity to do research in contemporary accounting research outside the scope of fundamental research. Gaffikin (2008) questions the theoretical understanding of accounting and states that knowledge also emerges from the application of consensus of beliefs. Expository, reform-oriented and theoretical research based on a doctrinal methodology creates a means to establish theoretical understanding in a discipline without going through the scientific and social sciences processes. Doctrinal research may also create potential vehicles to debate the appropriateness of the theoretical understanding of accounting. One problem with such a proposal is that the methodology and research design for doctrinal research are not clearly and appropriately defined in the legal literature (McKerchar, 2008) and ideally need to be clarified before it could be sufficiently applied in accounting research.

## **7. The intellectual doctrinal research process**

Validity in social interpretative and critical research is created through the appropriateness of the identification and the application of the process that is followed to conduct such research (Coetsee 2011), especially since such research does not always follow the normal structure of the scientific research method. Since doctrinal research is not based on the scientific method, understanding its fundamentals is important.

Basic expository doctrinal research is based on two processes, namely (1) establishing the facts of the case, and (2) establishing the authority on which the interpretation of the case should be based (Hutchinson and Duncan 2012; Chynoweth 2008). Even though this is typically what accounting practitioners are doing when they provide technical opinions on reporting standards or tax law interpretations, legal students are comprehensively trained herein as part of the core of legal education and is applied in legal opinions and in the courts (Van Gestel and Michlitz 2014; Hutchinson and Duncan 2012; Siems and Sithigh 2012). This is not necessarily the case in the training and education of prospective accounting professionals. Furthermore, Chynoweth (2008) declares that the doctrinal research process of applying the rules of law to factual situations is based on deductive logic and clarifies the use thereof in doctrinal research by stating that the major premise is the rule of law and the minor premise is the factual situation. It is evident that the authority (or the rule of law) is the basis on which most legal research is being conducted, and that doctrines are the foundation on which the authority is based.

In broader doctrinal research approaches, such as theoretical and reform-oriented research, Chynoweth's major premises of the rule of law and the minor premises of the factual situation are also applicable. Theoretical research will look at the conceptual basis or doctrines behind the rules of law for a given situation, while reform-oriented research will question the appropriateness of the rule of law to foster change to these rules. Clear normative characteristics based on deductive logic are established.

Since accounting is considered as an applied and soft skill discipline (Biglan 1973), doctrinal research could also be a valid approach in contemporary accounting research. In this regard, the legal student is more privileged than the accounting student in that he/she is thoroughly trained in the process of doctrinal research (Burns and Hutchinson 2009; Chynoweth 2008). Doctrinal research is a deductive process based on doctrinal thinking and doctrinal analysis and is a skill that is instilled in a subconscious or intuitive level in legal students (Chynoweth 2008). Some literature refers to the interpretative and critical thinking skills of not only legal practitioners, but also legal academics, and that it forms part of their daily life (Kazmierski 2014; Hutchinson and Duncan 2012; Mckerchar 2008). Kazmierski (2014) refers hereto as the skill of *critical analysis and moral reasoning*. To be proficient in this type of research and reasoning, Hutchinson and Duncan (2012) refer to a combined requisite set of skills that include precise judgment, detail description, depth of thought and accuracy, which, according to Hutchinson (2008), require scholars to be trained in effective reading, critique, analysis, electronic research and research ethics.

Postner (in Van Gestel and Michlitz 2014) states that legal (academic) reasoning is intellectually demanding and not only requires vast knowledge, but also the ability to synthesise fragmented material. To synthesise fragmented material, Vick (2004) states that effective reasoning uses practical interpretation tools and critical techniques in order to systemise and evaluate rules and generate recommendations on what the rules should be. Hutchinson and Duncan (2012, 104) referred to the “the sophisticated higher level thinking which is the hallmark of doctrinal work and permeates all quality legal research”. It is therefore obvious that doctrinal research is intellectually demanding and requires high levels of intellectual thinking, which is also the hallmark of good quality scientific and social research.

Through the process of doctrinal research, new interpretations and perspectives of discovery are created. This is not only created through fundamental research and the message is that there are intellectual processes outside the norm of scientific and social sciences that could academically be equally rewarding and that are very important in professional disciplines, such as accounting. The argument is that the skill development that is part and parcel of the doctrinal research process should also form part of the training of accounting students and academics, with clear crystallisation effects in accounting research. Gaffikin (2008), for instance, states that accounting has lost vital intellectual thinkers who question the intellectual appropriateness of accounting. Doctrinal research could create a career for intellectual thinkers in contemporary accounting research.

## **8. Concluding discussion**

The article debates whether legal doctrinal research could be applied in accounting research to bring back the prescriptive nature of normative research and whether the application of doctrinal research in contemporary accounting research could bring accounting research closer to accounting practice. The debate followed a structured process of discussing different facets of doctrinal research and how each facet applies to accounting research.

The article found that doctrinal research does not focus on theory or the development of theory, but rather on the concepts, principles and rules, collectively referred to as the doctrines, on which practice and related systems are based. The purpose of doctrinal research is to assess the appropriateness of the concepts, principles and rules on which practice is based and varies from research that asks what the rule or principle is for a specific case to deeper research that questions the doctrines behind the rules and principles. Doctrinal research therefore has a distinct pragmatic focus and helps to maintain the standards of the (legal) system.

The specific focus of doctrinal research on the underlying doctrines and not on the development of theory creates a means to bridge the gap between practice and traditional research in that doctrinal research is much more practice oriented. In this regard, the literature refers to the insider perspective of doctrinal research. Validity of the research design is not created by the independent process of the researcher, but by the appropriateness of the arguments of the researcher through the use of doctrinal or critical analyses. Doctrinal analysis is an intellectual process in which especially legal students are educated. Legal academia and practice equally grasp and understand the essence of the doctrinal process. Sufficient consensus exists in legal literature that doctrinal research forms the core of legal research and legal practice. In contemporary accounting research, social and interdisciplinary research is being conducted from a traditional research perspective and is not specifically based on the underlying doctrines of the accounting discipline. In this regard, doctrinal research could create an alternative and valid research approach.

In contemporary accounting research, the movement to the scientific method and later to interpretative and critical research has established an outsider approach in accounting research. Even before the move to the scientific method in accounting, when normative research was the norm, the validity of the normative research was based on the independence of the normative researcher. Therefore, the normative researchers distance themselves from practice to create an outsider independent perspective with the aim of creating knowledge through the establishment of normative theories. In contrast, the main perspective of the legal researchers is that they are insiders and that their main purpose is to function as gatekeepers of the legal system. In the quest to be scientific and socially correct, accounting researchers have lost the focus of the core of their discipline, the underlying concepts, principles and rules, which doctrinal research could retrieve. A focus shift from creating theory through traditional research norms to assessing the underlying doctrines on which accounting practice are based, could bring accounting research closer to accounting practice.

Doctrinal research has normative characteristics in that legal scholars are trained to question the appropriateness of the underlying legal concepts, principles and rules. Critical thinking therefore forms part of legal scholarship and legal practice. Doctrinal research is not a revival of traditional normative research that must adhere to certain research norms in which theory development plays an important role. Doctrinal research is a revival of normative thinking outside the norms of social positivistic, interpretative and critical research. Doctrinal research is in essence a different way of looking at research from an insider perspective in

which the focus is on the doctrines developed by practice. The application of doctrinal research is therefore important for a professional and practice-oriented discipline such as accounting. Broader scientific, social and interdisciplinary research is equally important in any discipline. The problem with accounting research is that these broader research approaches have been done in neglect of the underlying doctrines on which accounting practice is based.

However, an issue is the establishment of validity for doctrinal research in the traditional structures of the academic world. Therefore, it is important that the ontology, epistemology and research methodology of doctrinal research be further investigated in further research to create a place for doctrinal research among more traditional social research outside the legal discipline.

The legal literature differentiates between four research classifications: expository, reform-oriented, theoretical and fundamental research, of which only fundamental research falls in the ambit of traditional scientific and social research. The question to be resolved in future research is how expository, reform-oriented and theoretical research, by using doctrinal thinking, could be incorporated into accounting research.

One of the benefits of doctrinal thinking is that it teaches the learner to understand the legal process of establishing the appropriate authority to resolve legal issues. The legal literature refers to higher-level thinking that is the hallmark of legal reasoning. This requires deductive and critical skills that are demanding on a level that is compatible with traditional scientific and social research and therefore doctrinal research should be explored as an alternative to traditional scholarly activities and norms, especially in the field of accounting as an applied professional discipline.

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## THE CORPORATE GOVERNANCE CONUNDRUM: PERSPECTIVES FROM DANTE'S *INFERNO*

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**ABSTRACT.** *The Corporate Governance Conundrum: Perspectives from Dante's Inferno.* Corporate sustainability reporting, renowned as an instrument for businesses to communicate how they function more efficiently and responsibly within the social and physical environment, while simultaneously remaining profitable, has evolved in an up-and-coming trend by businesses. Recent corporate history saw much contrast in ethical behaviour in the global corporate environment. On the one hand, Dante's deadly sin of avarice was running amok, which resulted in spectacular corporate demises. On the other hand, there was the rise of the concept of sustainable development, which describes an organisational culture change aiming to ensure that routine business decisions are made within an economically, socially and environmentally responsible framework. However, given the realities of the modern business environment, intangible ethical philosophies and lip-service codes of ethical conduct may often not be sufficient to ensure responsible and sustainable corporate, environmental and social development.

This article reflects on how corporate sin potentially contributes to the contemporary corporate governance conundrum as well as on whether ethics codes can change ethical behaviour.

**Keywords:** *Business ethics, corporate culture, corporate social responsibility, corporate sustainability*

**JEL Classification:** M10 (General), M14 (Corporate Culture; Social Responsibility)

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## 1. Introduction

The contemporary business environment is characterised by radical changes in corporate reporting practices. With the demise of several major global corporations in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, rocking the corporate establishment (Cronjé, 2014), the issues of corporate social *accountability* and *responsibility* rose to the top of many corporate governance and regulatory agendas (Buys *et al.*, 2011; Jooste, 2010). The historic focus of many corporate managers has typically been on a *financially-centred* bottom line (Jones III & Jonas, 2011), while the advent of social accountability and social responsibility realised a growing appreciation that business success and sustainability are not solely attributable to financial performances, but rather to an integration of financial, social and environmental performances (Nikolaou *et al.*, 2012). This paradigm shift demonstrates a shift from a *profit-driven* single-bottom-line approach to a *socially responsible-driven* triple-bottom-line approach in respect of *stakeholder* reporting (Buys *et al.*, 2011; Jones III & Jonas, 2011) and as such it describes a corporate *culture change* aiming to ensure that business decisions are made with cognisance of the potential social and environmental aspects.

*Contemporary corporate social responsibility* (CSR) represents those actions a business initiates to promote some social good other than merely its own interests (Demirag, 2005; Jones III & Jonas, 2011), i.e. going beyond mere regulatory compliance and to drive evolving (perhaps even revolutionary) corporate attitudes and responsibilities in terms of social, environmental and ethical matters. When considering the major ethical failures in the corporate arena as alluded to earlier, it is seemingly indicative of the doctrine of sin. As an introduction to this paper, an understanding of the concept of sin is important. From a Christian perspective, it is argued that, since the fall from grace in the Garden of Eden, people have always acted in sinful and evil ways. Within this context, Ramm (1985) defines sin as an act (or the absence of an act) that displeases God and deserves blame. One may think that sin is a uniquely Christian concept, thought out to keep people in line. In this regard, one finds somewhat different worldviews, from the Abrahamic-founded belief systems (such as Christianity, Judaism and Islam), to Asian belief systems (such as Hinduism and Buddhism), to the non-belief systems in the contemporary secular society, the concept of sin and/or evil is found almost universally. In non-Christian belief systems, the concept of sin and evil is found as a wrong in the eyes of a higher being, i.e. Judaism's Yahweh (Tauber, 2004) and Islam's Allah (Zwemer: 2016); or in Hinduism the committing of evil against Karma (de Albatrus, 2016) and

Buddhism's negating of enlightenment and causing of suffering for oneself and others (O'Brien, 2014). Even in the atheistic secular mind-set, the concept of *sin* is found in the breaking of rules and regulations, a lack of care and harming the greater good (de Albatrus, 2016). Extrapolating this concept deeper into the focus of this article, *corporate sin* may then be defined as such a corporate act (or absence of an act) committed on a larger scale by a corporation. As an entity made up of several individual human beings committing a wrong, Ramm (1985) refers to this aspect of sin as group, communal or social sin. The Bible illustrates this concept with the well-known Old Testament account of Israel (as a nation) committing various sins, and their subsequent punishment and forgiveness. At the core of this sin classification is the absence of moral and ethical aspects that should take cognisance of the broader societal and environmental dependences on corporate responsibilities.

## **2. Research objective and methodology**

Considering the above, the primary research question under consideration for this article can be defined as to how the concept of corporate sin (as a communal sin) can potentially contribute to the corporate governance conundrum found in so many ethically failures in the contemporary business society. Flowing from this, the secondary research question is whether the so-called *compliance approach* in corporate social reporting can result in actual ethical behavioural changes.

In addressing these questions, the first objective is to reflect on how corporate sin could potentially contribute to the contemporary corporate governance conundrum, from a perspective illustrated by the writings of Dante; and secondly, to consider whether a compliance approach could result in deep-rooted positive ethical behavioural changes.

In aiming to achieve these objectives, this article is based on a philosophical study research method utilising an ontological, reflective-based approach. Firstly, the article starts off by considering the concept of corporate governance within the context of the agency theory and social responsibility reporting; secondly, consideration is given to the potentially deadly sins of corporate governance; thirdly, ethical fundamentals for governance are reflected upon; and finally, a concluding discussion and comments are provided.

### **3. Corporate governance defined**

#### **3.1. Background**

The well-known and well-researched agency theory concept attempts to explain the essential relationship between a company, its management and shareholders, perhaps even further by incorporating other broader stakeholder groups. According to Hilt (2008), agency theory's origins can be found in economists of the 1960s and 1970s' attempts to explain the risk-sharing between various corporate stakeholders, and argued that the so-called agency problem comes to the fore when (related) stakeholders have different goals. This expectation gap (or perhaps needs gap) leads to a need for *governance*, which occurs anytime a (diverse) group of people come together to achieve some (related) objective. However, whereas the historic governance objective(s) was (were) centred on the *corporate* objectives, it is often argued that *contemporary* corporate objectives include a broader more comprehensive stakeholder approach.

The application of sound governance principles in the contemporary corporate environment should help to realise both internal organisational and external societal and environmental objectives. As such, governance rests on three pillars, namely i) authority, ii) decision-making, and iii) accountability. It is argued that a failure in governance (or the occurrence of corporate sin) is the result of questionable practices in one or more of these pillars. It is also true that governance as such is neither simple nor neat, but is by nature faltering, unpredictable and fluid; complicated by the fact that it involves multiple stakeholders, which influences not only *how* decisions are made, but also *who* the decision-makers are and *what* decisions are taken.

#### **3.2. Governance and sustainability**

The evolving CSR concept continues to be a key topic in discussions about the relationship between business entities and society. Found in the essence of the social responsibility and governance agendas, is the argument that in order to achieve sustainability, the organisation must integrate all stakeholders' expectations. This is emphasised by Roselle (2005) and Doane and MacGillivray (2001) when they argue that ignoring non-financial stakeholders in favour of financial stakeholders will be to the detriment of corporate sustainability initiatives. In support of such sustainability initiatives is the sustainability *reporting* concept (Verschoor, 2011; Dilling, 2010), which the GRI (2011) describes

as the practice of measuring, disclosing and being accountable to internal *and* external stakeholders. As from May 2010, the South African-based JSE Ltd stock exchange required the provision of an *integrated report* as opposed to the conventional annual report as a listing requirement (Rensburg & Botha, 2013). There have been three key 'documents' in the evolution of the South African corporate governance scene giving rise to the concept of integrated reporting, namely i) the King I Code on Governance of 1994 that marked the institutionalisation of *corporate governance*, ii) the King II Code on Governance of 2002 that stressed the importance of *corporate citizenship and integrated sustainability*, and iii) the King III Code on Governance of 2009 underlining sustainability, and then especially the fact that the corporate directors (as *agents* per the agency theory) are accountable to the stakeholders.

Notwithstanding its initial objective of providing a holistic and useable report of a corporation's social responsibility, and communicating the relevant financial and non-financial information, research by Rensburg and Botha (2013) and Watson (2012) has indicated that integrated reports (almost without exception) still seem to be aimed at investors and credit providers, with the broader non-financial stakeholders being relegated to *second-class citizens*. The question therefore begs as to what has actually changed in the corporate governance and reporting environments? Do the corporations truly embrace higher moral and ethical values, or are these social responsibility reports merely compliance window-dressing efforts to create an illusion of sin averseness, while still serving the sinful masters of the past.

#### **4. The deadly sins of corporate governance**

##### **4.1. Dante's *The Divine Comedy***

The key objective of this paper is to delve deeper into the concept of corporate sin, not from a focus on sins that necessarily lead to corporate failure, but rather on how corporate sin potentially impacts on the broader stakeholder community. This is done from the perspectives of Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) who, as a Roman Catholic layman, penned "*The Divine Comedy*," which consists of the three poems entitled *Inferno* (hell), *Purgatorio* (purgatory) and *Paradiso* (heaven). Within these poems, Dante provides a moral structure between the realms of heaven and hell. According to Wenzel (1965), there seems to be consensus that although it seems that Dante developed the moral structure

explored within these poems himself, he has used some common philosophies of Aristotle, Cicero, St Augustine and other pedagogic theologians as its basis. According to Dante, all virtuous *and* sinful acts originate in love; with sin being the resultant outcome when this love goes awry and is misdirected to either an evil or a good object (Wenzel, 1965). In *Inferno*, Dante provides a (descending) hierarchical order of severity of sins, which can be contextualised as follows in Figure 1 below.

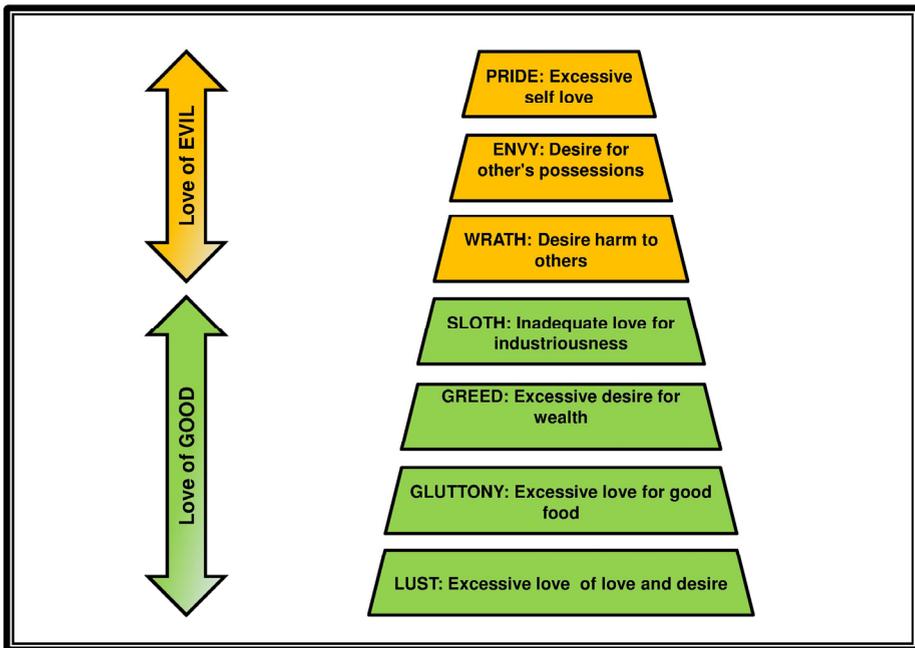


Figure 1. Dante's hierarchical order of sins (Source: Adapted from Wenzel, 1965)

In consideration of the figure above, sin may be manifested in i) the need to be important, ii) depriving others of their possessions, iii) feelings of loathing and antagonism, iv) laziness and indifference, v) an excessive desire for material wealth, vi) overindulgence, and vii) obsessive and excessive desire.

#### 4.2. *From Dante to governance*

Some may argue that extrapolating Dante's seven deadly sins into a contemporary corporate governance environment might be stretching the bounds of corporate academic (philosophical) reasoning. In countering such arguments, reference needs again to be made to the concept of communal sin as highlighted earlier in the paper. It may be argued that as a group of human beings striving for a common (related) goal, the concept of communal sin is potentially very applicable to a corporate entity. Society at large is made up of individuals, including corporate individuals. Furthermore, as corporations are *legal entities* in their own right, they have many of the (collective) abilities, rights and obligations of natural persons. We would therefore be well advised to delineate the core of good and evil characteristics of *human beings* to *corporate entities* (via corporate management and/or employees per the agency theory concept).

In extrapolating Dante's first misdirected love classifications into a corporate governance context, the **love of evil** leads to the following:

- **Corporate pride**, which as a concept may have both good and evil connotations. The former connotation represents corporate dignity and self-respect, whereas the latter reeks of corporate superiority, conceit and arrogance. Pride is often considered as the original and most severe of the sins, as often illustrated with the example of Lucifer's pride that caused him to fall from heaven. Pride is actually an excessive belief in one's own abilities and is also known as vanity. Within this context, corporate pride is all about the corporation itself and its drive for recognition in the eyes of society. An obvious way for a corporation to do this is via its corporate reporting (especially its social responsibility reporting practices) and corporate branding initiatives. Koehn (2000) is of the opinion that hypocrisy is rampant in the contemporary business environment with many business entities claiming to be more responsible than in actuality. Granted, there may be a thin line between the truthful communication of corporate performances and a corporate attitude of superiority. However, when appearance seems to become an overarching aspect, the corporation stands the risk of joining the hypocrites in the *Fifth Circle of Hell* (per Dante's *Circles of Hell* in *Inferno*).

- **Corporate envy** occurs when the corporation desires another's downfall because of some resource itself does not have. A desire for others' abilities, position, status or traits occurs. The 'other' may be another entity or even an individual, which then becomes the potential target of unscrupulous business tactics. Perhaps a more *evil* manifestation of corporate envy may be found in either an obvious or inconspicuous disregard of an entrenched socially

responsible corporate culture. Such a corporation would therefore leave no stone unturned to obtain the resources it desires to ensure its selfish corporate objectives are attained. Within this context, *lying* also becomes a major part of corporate envy. These include not only the so-called flatterers who, according to Koehn (2000), “only tells us the sh\*t we want to hear”, thereby condemning various stakeholders to act on falsehoods, but also the so-called diviners, or those who presume to know and foretell the future. Although a fixation with the prediction of the future shifts the focus from what really matters, it is important to distinguish between i) strategists committed to responsible planning and scenario planning, and ii) forecasters advising on how to expect disaster and foresee only doom and gloom.

- **Corporate wrath**(which can also be described as corporate fury) which occurs when the corporation desires harm to others through avenging a grievance (real or imaginary), may be manifested by actions motivated by hatred and anger. Within a corporate governance context, wrath can then very often result in a division between stakeholders, whether it is within the organisation itself, or with external stakeholders, which may result in unbridgeable schisms. In doing so, they will join other schismatics in the *Seventh Circle of Hell* by intentionally sowing discord and hatred to reap some advantage themselves.

Within the context of Dante’s second misdirected love classification within a corporate governance context, the **love of good** leads to the following vices:

- **Corporate sloth** occurs when loving the highest good of industriousness and diligence with *less intensity* than it deserves. Although sloth is typically associated with laziness, there is more to corporate sloth than mere laziness. It may also be manifested in a corporate indifference towards contemporary social and environmental issues and concerns, and perhaps even unwillingness to act or care about the potential impact of corporate decisions and actions on broader stakeholder communities and concerns. In a related aspect, the term sloth is often equated to the Latin term *accidia*, which is seen as a spiritual apathy, or more specifically not being concerned with one’s own position (or even that of others) in this world.

- **Corporate greed** (also called avarice or covetousness) occurs when loving the temporal good of wealth with *more intensity* than it deserves. The sin of greed is probably the driving force of many of the ethical downfalls in contemporary society (including the corporate environment). It is manifested in lying, a culture of ‘favours for favours’ and corruption. Very much in the news are

instances of awarding an office to someone on the basis of favour rather than on merit, be it the award of a major sporting event by a sporting governing body or the awarding of government contracts to *friends and family*. Barrating also threatens to bring down whole systems as people start losing trust in officials and see only the greed-driven actions. As such, the barraters will suffer the torments of the *Tenth Circle of Hell*. Furthermore, in the same spirit of greed, Koehn (2000) states that a business that pays bribes to grease the wheels of commerce, may often find that future demands may escalate and that extortionists may, in turn, also become vulnerable to blackmail, as they have been exposed as being corrupt. Although greed is seen as the excessive desire for material wealth, *avarice* may also be used to describe disloyalty, deliberate betrayal and treason.

- **Corporate gluttony** occurs when loving the temporal good of food with *more intensity* than it deserves, leading to overindulgence, and withholding it from the needy to the point of waste. It is therefore a desire to consume more than is reasonable. Within a corporate context, gluttony may then be seen as the unethical withholding (waste) of resources from stakeholders that may be dependent thereupon. Gluttony within this context may even lead to theft, which has two perspectives. On the one hand, it is about illegally acquiring the property of others, but then also causing the victim to live in fear and insecurity. In light hereof, many business people may be guilty of theft through their actions that take away others' ability to live a reasonably secure existence. This is done by i) the actual theft (legal or otherwise) of their resources that results in ii) imposing on them a fear of not being able to provide for themselves or their loved ones, i.e. both material and spiritual theft.

- **Corporate lust** occurs when loving the temporal good of love and desire with *more intensity* than it deserves, leading to obsessive and excessive love of others, thereby putting love for God second. The lust aspect within a corporate context may have both literal and figurative perspectives. The former is manifested when actual sexual relations (or the offer thereof) are used as an enticement to conclude business deals, be that in a *consenting adult* manner (i.e. escort service scenarios) or a *non-consenting* manner (i.e. rape or statutory rape scenarios). The latter perspective may also be manifested in a figurative *raping of resources*, i.e. of land, culture or even an abuse of employees and other stakeholders in the name of business.

It is very easy to see that, within a corporate context, the above sin classifications may very often be closely related, with one type of sin giving rise to another.

## 5. Ethical fundamentals for governance

Ethics is seen as a broader concept than legislative compliance when Gellerman (2003) and Rossouw (2002) state that it is a moral duty to society. In this light, moral philosophers, in keeping up with contemporary natural sciences, formulated moral laws such as Kant's categorical imperative, or Mills' greatest happiness principle (Rossouw, 2008). Fundamental to all interpretations of the ethics concept, Buys (2009) is of the opinion that it is based on the principle that any party in the group carries some responsibility for the well-being of others. Within the corporate context, business ethics refers to those ethical values that determine the interaction between an organisation and its stakeholders (Institute of Directors in Southern Africa, 2009). Within the context of corporate *governance*, however, it is possible to formulate further ethical approaches, namely i) consequentialism (including utilitarianism), which finds its basis of moral distinctions in the utility of actions, or then the ability to find contentment for the majority (Sellers & Arrigo, 2009; Buys, 2009), ii) formalism, which finds its basis in adherence to rules (Hole & Hawker, 2004) or observance of form (Sellers & Arrigo, 2009; Buys, 2009), and iii) virtue ethics, which emphasises the moral character of the individual (Hursthouse, 2012). The latter approach regards virtues, such as justice, courage and temperance, as complex rational, emotional and social skills, from which Kraut (2010) and Hursthouse (2012) derive three more specific concepts, namely i) *arête* (excellence or virtue), or character traits that are well deep-rooted in its possessor, ii) *phronesis* (practical or moral wisdom), which is acquired through careful practice, and iii) *eudaimonia*, which may be translated into the concepts happiness or flourishing.

Building hereon, Rossouw (2008) and Fisher (2003) argue that it often happens that corporations make public announcements regarding ethical practice and develop codes of ethical conduct. It is, however, important to distinguish between the rhetoric concerning ethics and actual business practices, and Fisher (2003) identifies the following two generic approaches in terms of business ethics:

- Fundamental to the so-called **superficial approach** is the attitude that ethical behaviour is good for business. Ethics is therefore merely a means to an end and the focus thereon is required to attain some *ophelimitic* benefit. Even though it may be argued that self-centred ethics is better than no ethics, the superficial character may not result in deep-rooted and broad-based ethical behaviour, should the ethical lines become blurred.

- In contrast to the above, ethical behaviour under the so-called **entrenched approach** becomes an intrinsic inspiration, because it is *the right thing* to do, and self-interest is not the key motivating factor. Management supporting this approach must implicitly and explicitly communicate it throughout the corporation and all stakeholders.

Aristotle believed that ethical behaviour is premised upon a process of intra-personal character information and that one needs to develop certain virtuous character traits that will serve to promote consistent ethical behaviour in all domains of life (Rossouw, 2008). At the early stages of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the world is facing a sustainability crisis and many predictions are made about the world's population doubling in the foreseeable future, which, in turn, would result in a radical increase in production demand and delivery of goods and services just to provide in the basic amenity requirements. The question should therefore be asked if economic growth should have preference over environmental conservation and social development. Considering the recent highly visible ethical corporate failures, it can be argued that a compliance mentality (along the lines of a superficial formalistic mindset) often does not result in actual ethical behavioural changes. Ultimately, ethics should never just be a list of procedures or a set of rules (Buys & Cronjé, 2013), but should rather be a state of mind, or perhaps within the corporate governance context, an inherent corporate culture mindset.

## 6. Concluding comments

Even though (business) ethics is often considered as having evolved out of human behaviour philosophy, business professionals and philosophers have different approaches to ethical issues. The former may measure ethical claims against the pragmatic realities of the marketplace, whereas the latter may be oblivious to the realities and tend to reflect more on the intangible. Furthermore, it may be argued that there is no foundational ethic in the contemporary corporate environment. Therefore, if the corporate reports are to be of any value to stakeholders – any stakeholder – such stakeholders must have confidence in the fairness of the disclosed information. These stakeholders may have confidence therein if they know that the preparers thereof are required to meet certain ethical and competency standards.

The research problem centred on how corporate sin potentially contributes to the contemporary corporate governance conundrum, and whether

a compliance approach to corporate ethics could result in positive ethical behavioural changes. In achieving these objectives, this article was based on a philosophical study research method utilising an ontological, reflective-based approach in considering the contemporary corporate governance conundrum and the possibility as to whether a compliance approach could result in actual behavioural changes. In considering the deadly (corporate) sins, it was seen that such sins may have far reaching implications for a wide variety of stakeholder groups. Although it may be argued that *money is the root of all evil* (i.e. corporate greed), corporate governance sins are very much interlinked with one failure, often leading to further failures (the proverbial snowball effect). In a perfect world, we would not have to worry about ethical failures and all stakeholders would be happy with whatever a business scenario presents. However, we very much live in a broken world, and corporate sin and ethical failures are a reality. In this broken world, we may be approaching the perfect world if all are able to attain an entrenched approach to corporate ethics, but again, we live in a broken world. Nevertheless, compliance requirements, as per codes of ethics and corporate social responsibility reporting, may therefore be a reasonable second prize in striving for sustainable and socially responsible corporations.

In light of the above, the contribution of the article is therefore found in the fact that it directs us to further delve into those aspects that potentially contribute to the corporate governance conundrum.

## **7. Limitations and future research**

The result of this study is limited by the fact that philosophical and reflective studies do not often provide positive outcomes to the research problems that are explored. However, studies such as this serve to contextualise contemporary issues and to get a constructive debate going (Cronjé & Buys, 2015:824). This, in turn, may lead to better informed and *well thought-through* business decisions. Furthermore, reflective studies may be hindered by subjectivity and personal bias, and readers should therefore take notice of such possibilities.

Future research opportunities may include coming up with a holistic ethical framework that could address ethical issues of corporations in such a way that concrete different foundational ethical aspects are identified and reflected upon.

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