



STUDIA UNIVERSITATIS  
BABEŞ-BOLYAI



# PHILOSOPHIA

---

Sp. Issue/2015

**STUDIA  
UNIVERSITATIS BABEȘ-BOLYAI  
PHILOSOPHIA**

**Special Issue/2015**

**December**

<https://studiaphilosophia.wordpress.com/>  
[http://studia.ubbcluj.ro/serii/philosophia/index\\_en.html](http://studia.ubbcluj.ro/serii/philosophia/index_en.html)  
Contact: copoeru@hotmail.com

## **EDITORIAL BOARD STUDIA UBB PHILOSOPHIA**

**CHIEF EDITOR:** Ion COPOERU (Babeş-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca)

### **EDITORIAL BOARD:**

Jeffrey Andrew BARASH (Université Amiens)  
Monique CASTILLO (Université Paris XII Val-de-Marne)  
Chan Fai CHEUNG (Chinese University of Hong Kong)  
Virgil CIOMOŞ (Babeş-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca)  
Aurel CODOBAN (Babeş-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca)  
Peter EGYED (Babeş-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca)  
Eliane ESCUBAS (Université Paris XII Val-de-Marne)  
Mircea FLONTA (University of Bucharest)  
Gyorgy GEREBY (CEU Budapest)  
Jad HATEM (USJ Beyrouth)  
Lester EMBREE (Florida Atlantic University)  
Marta PETREU-VARTIC (Babeş-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca)  
Eveline PINTO (Université Paris I)  
Anca VASILIU (CNRS Paris)  
Károly VERESS (Babeş-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca)  
Alexander BAUMGARTEN (Babeş-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca)  
Dan-Eugen RAŢIU (Babeş-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca)  
Lasse SCHERFFIG (Academy of Media Arts, Cologne)

### **EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:**

Tomas KACERAUSKAS (Technical University Vilnius)  
Dietmar KOCH (Eberhard-Karls Universität Tübingen)  
Alina NOVEANU (Babeş-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca / Eberhard-Karls Universität Tübingen)  
Attila SZIGETI (Babeş-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca)  
Tincuta HEINZEL (Academy of Media Arts, Cologne)  
Emilian CIOC (Babeş-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca)

YEAR  
MONTH

Volume 60 (LX) 2015  
DECEMBER  
SP. ISSUE

# STUDIA UNIVERSITATIS BABEȘ-BOLYAI PHILOSOPHIA

Special Issue

---

STUDIA UBB EDITORIAL OFFICE: B.P. Hasdeu no. 51, 400371 Cluj-Napoca, Romania,  
Phone + 40 264 405352

---

## CONTENT – SOMMAIRE – INHALT – CUPRINS

|  |    |
|--|----|
| ALEXANDRA BANEU, <i>The Ab auro Prologue of Pelbartus of Themeswar's Theological Encyclopaedia</i> .....   | 5  |
| ALINA CIRIC, <i>The Constitution of Time in Husserl</i> .....  | 19 |
| P. ALPÁR GERGELY, <i>John L. Austin's and John R. Searle's Conception of Truth</i> .....                   | 31 |
| ANTON CRIȘAN, <i>A Commentary upon Gadamer's Interpretation of Hegel</i> .....                             | 41 |
| OLEG GHILAS, <i>The Meaning of Russian Nihilism</i> .....  | 55 |
| SORIN ALIN SESERMAN, <i>The National Peasants' State in the vision of Constantin Rădulescu-Motru</i> ..... | 63 |
| ȘTEFAN VLAD, <i>Sacredness and Violence in the Juridico-disciplinary Dispositifs</i> .....                 | 75 |
| MARIA CIURCHEA BARBU, <i>Tolerance Between Vice and Virtue</i> .....                                       | 89 |

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| CIPRIAN RĂZVAN LICĂ, <i>The Legitimation Crisis of the Political and the Investiture of Technocracy Considered Through the Perspective of Giorgio Agamben's Theory</i> ..... | 101 |
| RALUCA MARINELA SILAGHI, <i>The Role of Alterity and Digital Media in the Outlining of Postmodern Individual's Identity</i> .....  | 117 |
| ANDRA MAVROPOL, <i>Photography as Necessity in Everyday Aesthetic Life</i> .....   | 131 |

**x x x**

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| VIRGIL CIOMOȘ, <i>De analogia entis au chiasme ontico-ontologique</i> .....         | 145 |
| KÁROLY VERESS, <i>Application and Philosophy within a Hermeneutical Horizon</i> ... | 159 |

**Issue Coordinator: Károly Veress**

**Publishing Date: December 2015**

## THE *AB AURO* PROLOGUE OF PELBARTUS OF THEMESWAR'S THEOLOGICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA\*

ALEXANDRA BANEU\*\*

**ABSTRACT.** The *Ab Auro* Prologue of Pelbartus of Themeswar's Theological Encyclopedia. Pelbartus of Themeswar is a 15<sup>th</sup> century observant Franciscan best known for his collections of model sermons. This article, however, treats one of the two prologues which accompany his work of systematic theology, the *Aureum sacrae theologiae rosarium*. The *Ab auro* prologue, which is discussed in detail in the present study, introduces the reader to the main intent of the work. It has a rich metaphoric style and is tacitly inspired by the "Primum principium" of William of Vaurouillon's commentary on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard.

**Keywords:** Pelbartus of Themeswar, William of Vaurouillon, the *Ab auro* prologue, the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard, exempla

In the 15<sup>th</sup> century there was an increased demand, in comparison with the previous two centuries, for encyclopedias<sup>1</sup> á texts which would incorporate almost all the information necessary for a science, ordered in such a manner that would make it easy to access. Such texts were compiled especially in the natural sciences,<sup>2</sup> but theology made no exception.

---

\* This research was financed through the project "Minerva – Cooperation for an elite career in PhD and post-doctoral research", the code of the contract: POSDRU/159/1.5/S/137832; the project is co-financed from the European Social Fond through the Operational Regional Program for the Development of Human Resources 2007-2013.

\*\* PhD student at the Doctoral School in Philosophy, Faculty of History and Philosophy, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania; Romanian Academy Cluj-Napoca Branch.  
E-mail: alexandra.baneu@yahoo.com

<sup>1</sup> When establishing the difference between dictionaries, repertoires and encyclopedias, Olga Weijers mentions the fact that the dictionaries and repertoires only send to other books whereas encyclopedias resume the knowledge of a period and are actually meant to be read. See: Olga Weijers, *Dictionnaires et repertoires au moyen age*, Brepols, Turnhout, 1991, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Stefan Swieżawski states that the need to have more and more compendiums and manuals that make study easier is a characteristic tendency of the époque. See: Stefan Swieżawski, *L'Univers- la philosophie de la nature au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle en Europe*, Editions de la Société des Sciences et des Lettres de Varsovie, Varsovie, 1999, p. 8–9.

As the need for such works which would be easy to consult grew, so did the popularity of the alphabetical order.<sup>3</sup> This order was used so as to organize a certain matter within the indexes added by the print houses<sup>4</sup> as well as by the authors themselves in *tabulae* situated either at the begging or at the end of a certain work. The alphabetical order as we know it was not really appropriated before the end of the Middle Ages, and, once it was, it already showed a different approach towards the text: it was no longer read linearly, but the important passages were to be found with a certain speed, read and re-read, but especially quoted in sermons.<sup>5</sup>

### **1. The *Aureum sacrae theologiae rosarium*: Pelbartus of Themeswar and his theological encyclopedia**

Pelbartus of Themeswar, a 15<sup>th</sup> century observant Franciscan, is the author of an alphabetically ordered theological encyclopedia. He was born in Timișoara (Themeswar), probably around 1435. The matriculation register at the University of Krakow mentions his enrollment in the Faculty of Arts in 1458<sup>6</sup> and the *Liber promotionum* has a mention of him as a graduate of that faculty, having become a *baccalaureus artium* in 1463.<sup>7</sup> The next source mentioning Pelbartus is the chronicle of the observant Franciscans of Buda, attributed to Blasius of Zalka, in which we find him as an established preacher, teaching at the *studium* of the Saint-John observant Franciscan convent in Buda in 1483.<sup>8</sup> The same chronicle mentions his death on the

---

<sup>3</sup> For a detailed presentation of the evolution of the alphabetical order, see: Olga Weijers, *Dictionnaires et répertoires au moyen âge*, Brepols, Turnhout, 1991. Another good presentation of the evolution of the alphabetical order in the context of the evolution of glossaries and dictionaries would be Donatella Nebbiai - Dalla Guarda, "Les glossaires et les dictionnaires dans les bibliothèques médiévales", in Jacqueline Hamesse (ed.), *Les manuscrits des lexiques et glossaires de l'antiquité à la fin du moyen âge* – actes du Colloque international organisé par le "Ettore Majorana Center for Scientific Culture" (Erice 23-30 septembre 1994), Fédération Internationale des Instituts d'Études Médiévales, Louvain-la-Neuve, 1996, p. 145–204.

<sup>4</sup> For how the first books were printed, see: Mark Bland, *A Guide to Early Printed Books and Manuscripts*, Blackwell, Oxford, 2010. Also, a very good presentation of how the first print shops worked can be found in: Andrew Pettegree, *The Book in the Renaissance*, Yale University Press, London and New Haven, 2010.

<sup>5</sup> Olga Weijers, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

<sup>6</sup> Antoni Gasiorowski (ed.), *Metryka Uniwersytetu Krakowskiego z lat 1400-1508*, Towarzystwo naukowe Societas Vistulana, Crakow, 2004, p. 272. His name was initially erroneously transcribed, by the editor of the *Album studiosorum*, as Gewardus. See: A. M. Kosterkiewicz (ed.), *Album studiosorum Universitatis Cracoviensis*, Tomus I, Typis et impensis Universitatis Jagellonicae, Cracoviae, 1887, p. 153.

<sup>7</sup> Antoni Gasiorowski (ed.), *Liber promotionum Facultatis Artium in Universitate Cracovensi saeculi decimi quinti*, Nakładem Polskiej Akademii Umieję, Krakow, 2000, p. 53.

<sup>8</sup> Ferenc Toldy (ed.), "Blasii de Zalka et continuatorum eius cronica fratrum minorum de observantia provinciae Boznae et Hungariae" in *Annalecta monumentorum Hungariae historicorum literariorum maximum inedita*, Biblioteka Academia Scientiarum, Pesta, 1867, pp. 213–215.

22<sup>nd</sup> of January 1504 and the fact that he is celebrated within the order on the 27<sup>th</sup> of May.<sup>9</sup>

Although Pelbartus is best known for his collections of sermons,<sup>10</sup> the last work of his life, a theological encyclopedia named *Aureum sacrae theologiae rosarium*, or by its full name *Aureum Rosarium Theologiae ad Sententiarum quatuor libros pariformiter quadripertitum ex doctrina Doctoris Subtilis suorumque sequacium, sanctorum etiam Thomae Aquinatis Bonaventuraeque ac multorum solidorum doctorum*, was conceived as a four volume compendium of systematic theology. Pelbartus only wrote the first two volumes by himself<sup>11</sup>. The third one is said to have been written in collaboration with his disciple Oswaldus de Lasko, though there is no definite proof of this fact,<sup>12</sup> while the last one was entirely written by Oswaldus,<sup>13</sup> The

<sup>9</sup> I have chosen to present a biography of Pelbartus based on what can be proven through direct historical sources. Given the fact that this author is an important figure of his time, much interest has been given to his biography, fact which has lead to much speculation. For other biographies see: Gabriel Adriányi, "Pelbart von Temesvár", in *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon*, vol. 7, Herzberg, 1994, p. 174–178; Zoltán Kosztolnyik, "Pelbártus of Temesvár: A Franciscan Preacher and Writer of the Late Middle Ages in Hungary", *Vivarium*, 5(1967), p. 100–110; Zoltán Kosztolnyik, "Some Hungarian Theologians in the Late Renaissance", *Church History*, 57 (1988), p. 5–18. For a critical discussion of such biographies see: Edina Ádám, *Pelbart of Temesvár and the Use of Images in Preaching*, MA Thesis in Medieval Studies, Central European University, 2008.

<sup>10</sup> Pelbartus wrote four works: *Stellarium coronae beatae virginis*, *Expositio psalmorum*, *Pomerium* and *Aureum sacrae theologiae rosarium*. The *Stellarium* is a treaty dedicated to the Virgin Mary, after Pelbartus had been saved by her from a terrible illness (in his own words, the pest). See: Pelbartus de Themeswar, *Stellarium coronae gloriosissimae virginis Mariae*, Venetiis apud Iohannem Antonium Bertanum, 1586, 1r; idem, *Stellarium*, liber I, pars V, articulus I, cap. III. In total it was edited in 21 different editions, especially in Germany and Italy. The *Expositio psalmorum* was edited only two times. The *Pomerium* is divided into three parts: *De sanctis*, *De tempore*, *Sermones quadragesimales*. The *De sanctis* was edited 19 times, *De tempore* 18 and The *Sermones quadragesimales* 20 times. Again, most of these editions were made in Germany and Italy. The *Aureum sacrae theologiae rosarium* knew only four editions: the first one between 1503-1507 at Hagenau, two Venetian editions and one Brescia edition (these were quite late: 1586, 1589 and 1590).

<sup>11</sup> The colophons of the two volumes mention him as author. See: Pelbartus de Themeswar, *Aureum sacrae theologiae rosarium*, I, Hagenau, ex officina Henrici Gran, expensis Joannis Rynman de Oringaw, 1503, 156vb, for the colophon of the first volume. And Pelbartus de Themeswar, *Aureum sacrae theologiae rosarium*, II, Hagenau, ex officina Henrici Gran, impensis Joannis Rynman de Oringaw, 1504, 417rb for the colophon of the second volume.

<sup>12</sup> The colophon of the third volume does not mention Oswaldus as co-author, nor does the title. See: Pelbartus de Themeswar, *Aureum sacrae theologiae rosarium*, III, Hagenau, ex officina Henrici Gran, impensis Joannis Rynman de Oringaw, 1507, 164vb.

<sup>13</sup> *Rosarii theologiae sapientiae aurei quartus liber, pro elucidatione 'Sententiarum' libri quarti per fratrem Oswaldum de Lasko, divi ordinis sancti Francisci de observantia, tunc provinciae Hungariae vicarum, fratre Pelbarto defuncto, consummatus in regia civitate Budensi impressusque impensis circumspecti viri archibibliopole Iohannis Rynmann de Oringaw, in officina industrii Henrici Gran, civis in opido imperiali Hagenaw, finit feliciter anno salutis nostrae millesimo quingentesimo octavo, II die Decembris*. Oswaldus de Lasko, *Aureum sacrae theologiae rosarium*, IV, Hagenau, ex officina Henrici Gran, impensis Joannis Rynman de Oringaw, 1508.



*Rosarium aureum* follows the order of Peter Lombard's four books of the *Sentences*: a first volume on the Trinity, a second on creation, a third on Christology and a fourth on the sacraments. Each of these books has an internal alphabetical order.<sup>14</sup> The idea of writing a theological encyclopedia which is alphabetically ordered was not original. Such an endeavor was most probably inspired by Raynerius de Pisis and his *Pantheologia*. The element of novelty that Pelbartus of Themeswar brings is that he organizes the four volumes following the structure of the Lombard's text.

In this article I shall discuss the first part of the prologue to this book, entitled 'Ab auro'. It is in this short fragment that Pelbartus explains the title of the book and presents his reasons for having written it.

This first entry to the encyclopedia plays the role of a prologue, but of a special type, given that it is followed by another prologue which discusses the nature theology, the subject matter of the four volumes.<sup>15</sup> Prologues such as the second one are quite common for commentaries on Peter Lombard's *Senteneces*, whereas the first entry is not all that common. The second prologue constitutes a separate entry in this alphabetically organized encyclopedia. It is introduced under the title 'Abyssus' and begins with an enumeration of the meanings that the word 'abyss' can have. The last meaning is that of 'abyssus theologicae sapientiae'<sup>16</sup> which constitutes a pretext to introduce 8 questions concerning theology. These 8 questions are inspired by John Duns Scotus' commentary on the *Sentences* and are quite typical for such a work.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> This order, however, is not perfectly alphabetical in the way in which we understand such an order in the contemporary world. There are situations which seem to defy the alphabetical order. Some such instances, which can be explained by the different graphic form that a word can have in Medieval Latin, can be found in the first volume of the *Aureum sacrae theologiae rosarium*. For example, the word 'Idea' is treated near the end of the book probably because it would be written with a 'y' in most situations. Also, the last word of the first volume of this vast theological encyclopedia is 'Hypostas'. Given that this word comes from Greek, the 'h' is treated as a spirit and not as a letter, so the last entrance begins, as it should, with a 'y' and not with an 'h'.

<sup>15</sup> I have begun the edition and translation into Romanian of the two prologues. The edition of first one, 'Ab auro' can be found at the end of this article. For the second one, see: Pelbartus de Themeswar, *Aureum sacrae theologiae rosarium*, I, Hagenau, ex officina Henrici Gran, expensis Joannis Rynman de Oringaw, 1503, f. 1va- 6va.

<sup>16</sup> Pelbartus de Themeswar, *Aureum sacrae theologiae rosarium*, I, Hagenau, ex officina Henrici Gran, expensis Joannis Rynman de Oringaw, 1503, f. 1vb.

<sup>17</sup> Although there have been great variations in the structure of the *Sentences* commentaries throughout the centuries, there are certain traits which are common. The discussion of the nature of theology is one of those instances. I am not asserting that it can be found in all of them, but I dare say that it is at least common to find such a text in the majority of cases, starting from the 13<sup>th</sup> century onward. For a presentation of the evolution of commentaries on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard see: Philipp W. Rosemann, *The Story of a Great Medieval Book: Peter Lombard's Sentences*, Broadviewpress, Toronto, 2007. For a discussion concerning this kind of writings in the late 15<sup>th</sup> and early 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, see Philipp W. Rosemann (ed.), *Mediaeval Commentaries on the Sentences of Peter Lombard*, vol. 3, Brill, Leiden- Boston, 2015.

In fact, from the four editions of the *Aureum sacrae theologiae rosarium* only two contain the 'Ab auro' entry, whereas the other two begin directly with the definition of the term 'abyss' and 8 questions that concern the nature of theology. The two editions which have this prologue are Hagenau 1503 and Brixia 1590. The other two, the Venetian ones from 1586 and 1589, are both missing this entry.

One can divide the text gathered under the title 'Ab auro' into two parts: a first part, which in the Hagenau 1503 edition occupies one column, that explains the title and the reasons that Pelbartus had for writing such a text and a second part, occupying the same amount of space, and which is meant to be an encouragement towards study.<sup>18</sup>

## 2. The first part of the 'Ab auro' prologue

In the first part of the 'Ab auro' Pelbartus explains the two main elements of the title: 'aureum' and 'rosarium'. This part of the text makes use of poetic language and the choice of the two words is explained with the aid of two similes.

After having mentioned that this work is organized in an alphabetical order and that it is the result of his love for the Divine Trinity, Pelbartus proceeds to explain why the name 'aureum' had been chosen: just as gold is of a reddish hue when it is first dug out of the earth and becomes precious only after having been melted down by fire, so do the questions and subtle arguments, extracted by theologians from the depth of theological wisdom, become valuable only after having been melted down by the fire of charity. By this metaphor he is actually saying that the thoughts of the most esteemed theologians become truly valuable only in his compilation.

The choice of the word 'rosarium' for the title is also explained by a simile: just as for a bouquet of roses one chooses those roses which have blossomed, so in this book the most clear, efficient and useful arguments of the theological truth have been gathered in a concise manner.<sup>19</sup>

The explanation given for the choice of these two words for the title already gives us an insight into why Pelbartus wanted to write such a book: in order to have the most important arguments of theology presented concisely, organized alphabetically, in just one place.<sup>20</sup> This must have seemed very important to a preacher, as Pelbartus

<sup>18</sup> Pelbartus de Themeswar, *Aureum sacrae theologiae rosarium*, I, Hagenau, ex officina Henrici Gran, expensis Joannis Rynman de Oringaw, 1503, f. 1ra–1rb.

<sup>19</sup> See: Pelbartus of Themeswar, *Aureum sacrae theologiae rosarium*, I, Hagenau, ex officina Henrici Gran, expensis Joannis Rynman de Oringaw, 1503, f. 1ra. This fragment is also edited at the end of the article.

<sup>20</sup> The fact of wanting to organize a vast material in just one book is also mentioned by Pelbartus of Themeswar in the introduction to the *Pomerium de tempore*: (...) *hoc opus laboriosum in sermonibus colligendis et conscribendis aggredi, et ex multis et variis, scilicet aliorum editionibus unum summarium volume utcunque contexere*. See: Pelbartus of Themeswar, *Sermones Pomerii de tempore*, Hagenau, ex officina Henrici Gran, 1501, a1 v.

himself was, who wanted to be able to find all the necessary materials for writing his sermons in just one work. And this is the case with the *Aureum sacrae theologiae rosarium* where one can find discussions concerning subjects such as theology,<sup>21</sup> Divine Trinity,<sup>22</sup> angels,<sup>23</sup> birds,<sup>24</sup> the names of the winds<sup>25</sup> and the functions of certain prepositions in relation with the Divine Trinity.<sup>26</sup>

After having described these two aspects of the title, Pelbartus presents in more detail the importance of brevity, the theme having only been suggested up to that point. To explain why he is going to insist on brevity throughout the work, Pelbartus gives three authoritative arguments.

The two authorities cited explicitly in favor of brevity are Hippocrates and Cicero. The citation from Hippocrates belongs to his book of aphorisms and sounds as follows: *ars longa, vita brevis et experimentum fallax*<sup>27</sup> (art is long, life is short and experience deceiving). The second one invokes Cicero's statement that the only way that one can have good listeners is by summing up subject matter.<sup>28</sup>

The third argument states the following: *brevitate gaudent moderni secundum proverbium*<sup>29</sup> (according to the proverbs moderns rejoice in brevity). It is not clear to what proverbs Pelbartus is referring to. However there is at least one such saying in a text written by Robert of Handlo.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>21</sup> See, for instance, Pelbartus of Themeswar, *Aureum sacrae theologiae rosarium*, I, Hagenau, ex officina Henrici Gran, expensis Joannis Rynman de Oringaw, 1503, f. 1va—6va and f. 141vb—142ra.

<sup>22</sup> See, for instance, Pelbartus of Themeswar, *Aureum sacrae theologiae rosarium*, I, Hagenau, ex officina Henrici Gran, expensis Joannis Rynman de Oringaw, 1503, f. 142va—143rb

<sup>23</sup> See, for instance, Pelbartus of Themeswar, *Aureum sacrae theologiae rosarium*, II, Hagenau, ex officina Henrici Gran, impensis Joannis Rynman de Oringaw, 1504, 'Angelica natura'—'Angeli XI'

<sup>24</sup> See, for instance, Pelbartus of Themeswar, *Aureum sacrae theologiae rosarium*, II, Hagenau, ex officina Henrici Gran, impensis Joannis Rynman de Oringaw 1504, 'Avis I'—'Avis III'

<sup>25</sup> See, for instance, Pelbartus of Themeswar, *Aureum sacrae theologiae rosarium*, II, Hagenau, ex officina Henrici Gran, impensis Joannis Rynman de Oringaw, 1504, 'Venti nomina'

<sup>26</sup> See, for instance, Pelbartus of Themeswar, *Aureum sacrae theologiae rosarium*, I, Hagenau, ex officina Henrici Gran, expensis Joannis Rynman de Oringaw, 1503, f. 110vb.

<sup>27</sup> Hippocrates, *Aforisms, from the latin version of Verhoofd, with a literal translation on the opposite page and explanatory notes* by Elias Marks, Collins & co, New York, 1817, I, 1, p. 28.

<sup>28</sup> Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De inventione*, lib. I, c. 16, p. 21, l. 10: *Dociles auditores faciemus, si aperte et breviter summam causae exponemus, hoc est, in quo consistat controversia.*

<sup>29</sup> The very same citation is given by Pelbartus of Themeswar when he explains the short length of the sermons of the *Pomerium quadragesimale*: *Circa partem autem istam praemitto quod pro ferialibus diebus breviores sermones faciam, tum quia pro illis diebus populus minori numero confluit quam diebus festivis vel dominicis, tum quia gaudent brevitate moderni (...)*. See Pelbartus de Themeswar, *Sermones quadragesimales*, Hagenau, ex officina Henrici Gran, 1499, sermo I, a2.

<sup>30</sup> Robertus de Handlo, "Regulae, cum maximis Magistri Franconi, cum additionibus aliorum musicorum" in Peter M. Lefferts (ed.), *Robertus de Handlo The rules and Johannes Hanboys The Summa*, University of Nebraska Press, 1991, maxima 1.

The explanation and argument for brevity are followed by a short mention of the structure of his work. Pelbartus states that he is going to organize the work alphabetically, so that those interested in a certain subject might find what they are looking for in a short amount of time. He also intends to divide it into four volumes so that the ligature might not be a problem for those who use his work.<sup>31</sup> These two statements are a clear illustration of a somewhat interesting relationship of the reader and author to the text. They both are concerned by the speed with which one can navigate through a thick volume in order to find his precise subject of interest. Furthermore, the author is also preoccupied by the material part of the book Pelbartus implies that if too many pages are tied together in the same volume, it becomes difficult to read.

The first part of this prologue ends with answers to two possible criticisms: that of being superfluous and that of committing heresy.

Pelbartus does not explicitly answer the first criticism, but rather gives a simile which re-invokes the theme of gold: just as gold is necessary to the poor, but superfluous for those who are rich, so his work is necessary to those, such as himself, who are less educated all the while being superfluous to those who have received a better education.<sup>32</sup>

To the second possible criticism he answers as any good Christian would: if he is to state anything against the Church he is more than willing to consider it unsaid. However, he does leave place for such things to be said as part of the scholastic exercise.<sup>33</sup>

The first simile of the book, where the author states that just as fire melts the gold extracted in its brute form from the earth thus rendering it valuable, his work melts together the statements of many saint and powerful doctors, contradicts these last two paragraphs which seem to be the proof of great modesty. In fact, there is no such contradiction: these last two paragraphs of the first part are a necessary rhetorical element; one has to explain why he is writing, and, in the case of a medieval writer, make sure he cannot be accused of heresy. The legal language used in the part where Pelbartus states that he is willing to retract what he has said if somebody finds it to be against the determination of the Church proves this exact point.

---

<sup>31</sup> Pelbartus of Themeswar, *Aureum sacrae theologiae rosarium*, Hagenau, I, ex officina Henrici Gran, expensis Joannis Rynman de Oringaw, 1503, f. 1ra.

<sup>32</sup> Pelbartus of Themeswar, *Aureum sacrae theologiae rosarium*, Hagenau, I, ex officina Henrici Gran, expensis Joannis Rynman de Oringaw, 1503, f. 1ra.

<sup>33</sup> Pelbartus of Themeswar, *Aureum sacrae theologiae rosarium*, Hagenau, I, ex officina Henrici Gran, expensis Joannis Rynman de Oringaw, 1503, f. 1ra.

### 3. The second part of the 'Ab auro' prologue

The second part of this prologue occupies an entire column in the Haguenau 1503 edition and is conceived as a collection of *exempla* meant to incite people towards study. Pelbartus cites Jerome's prologue to the *Book of kings*, the *Prologus galeatus* (Defensive prologue)<sup>34</sup> as the origin of the examples of pagan men and for the story of Origen's life he explicitly cites Jerome's letter to Oceanus.<sup>35</sup>

Before presenting these *exempla*, Pelbartus tries to argue for the importance of learning and does so by showing its connection to the nature of the human being itself. He cites three different sources in his favor: Gregory the Great, Aristotle and Averroes.

Gregory the Great is mentioned saying that any human being deprived of the knowledge of his Creator is an animal: *omnis homo sine conditoris et divinorum cognitione pecus est*.<sup>36</sup> Aristotle is mentioned with two different citations concerning this aspect. The first one belongs to book VII of the *Nicomachean Ethics*:<sup>37</sup> *homo, inquit, bestialis centies millesies peior est omni bestia, quia operationes bestiae pravae sunt ex natura, sed hominis ex malitia* (the human being, he says, is a hundred thousand times more savage than any beast because the beast's operations are bad out of nature whereas a human's are bad out of evilness); the second one, to the first book of the *Metaphysics*<sup>38</sup> and states that humans are primarily their intellect. The third authority cited is Averroes who is said to have asserted:<sup>39</sup> *Vae vobis, qui in sortem bestiarum computati estis, cum illud divinum quod in vobis est, scilicet intellectum, dereliquistis videlicet negligendo quod scire debuistis* (Woe to you who are counted in the lots of the beasts because you have denied that what is divine in you, i.e the intellect, by neglecting what you were supposed to know).

<sup>34</sup> Sanctus Eusebius Hieronymus, *Epistulae*, pars I epistulae I–LXX, Isidorus Hilberg (ed.), Viena, 1996, epistula LII, *Ad Nepotianum Presbyterum*, p. 417–18, par. 3, l. 5–15.

<sup>35</sup> Actually, the text has its origin in Saint's Jerome letter to Pammachius and Oceanus, a letter that he writes as a reply to a letter written by the two, after having read Origen's *Peri archon* in which they had found several heretic points. Jerome's letter focuses on the fact that although Origen does have heretical opinions he is not to be completely dismissed. For the context that I have just presented see: Sanctus Eusebius Hieronymus, *Epistulae*, pars II epistulae LXXI–CXX, Isidorus Hilberg (ed.), Viena, 1996, epistula LXXXIII *Pammachii et Oceani ad Hieronymum* and Sanctus Eusebius Hieronymus, *Epistulae*, pars II epistulae LXXI–CXX, Isidorus Hilberg (ed.), Viena, 1996, epistula LXXXIV *Ad Pammachium et Oceanum*. For the precise reference to the text cited, see: Sanctus Eusebius Hieronymus, *Epistulae*, pars II epistulae LXXI–CXX, Isidorus Hilberg (ed.), Viena, 1996, epistula LXXXIV *Ad Pammachium et Oceanum*, p. 130, par. 8, l. 22.

<sup>36</sup> Most probably this citation does not belong to Gregory, but I have not yet managed to find its source.

<sup>37</sup> Aristoteles, *Ethica Nicomachea*, VII, 7, 1150a.

<sup>38</sup> It is not found in the first book of the *Metaphysics*, but in: Aristoteles, *Ethica Nicomachea*, I, 8, 1168b; also it is to be found in the *Auctoritates Aristotelis*, Super IX libri Ethicorum Aristotelis, p. 246, l. 62.

<sup>39</sup> Unfortunately, I have not yet managed to find the precise source of this citation.

The text continues with the *exempla* of certain learned men from the past. There is a comparison to be made between the *exempla* of studious men of the past that both Pelbartus and William and Vauouillon,<sup>40</sup> an author who represents a very important source for the *Rosarium*, invoke. The origin of these examples, which are to be found in Pelbartus's 'Ab auro' prologue and in Guillaume de Vauouillon's first *Principium*,<sup>41</sup> is Jerome. Pelbartus cites the *Prologus galeatus* (*The defensive prologue*)<sup>42</sup> á the prologue to the book of Kings as the main source of his examples of pagan wise men, as mentioned above, whereas Vauouillon cites Jerome's 52<sup>nd</sup> letter to Nepotianus.<sup>43</sup> They, both, however, also mention, Jerome's letter to Oceanus<sup>44</sup> as their source for the *exemplum* of Origen's life.

The first *vir studiosus* mentioned by Pelbartus is Plato about whom he says that, although he was a very famous master in Athens, he went to foreign countries following the letters (and by letters, he means sciences). Vauouillon too presents a version in which Plato goes to the lands of different peoples in order to get initiated in the sciences. In Vauouillon's version he learns the mathematical sciences whereas in Pelbartus's version he gets initiated in the sciences of the *trivium* (also called the letters or the literal sciences). What they have in common, expressed in almost the same wording, is the fact that in his 81<sup>st</sup> year of life, Plato dedicated his last strengths to study.

---

<sup>40</sup> William of Vauouillon composes a *Sentences* commentary which takes into account all the distinctions of the book of the Lombard. There is a very big difference between how one used to comment on the *Sentences* in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century in Paris and how Vauouillon (15<sup>th</sup> century) proceeds. There is also a great difference between the way that Vauouillon and Pelbartus relate to the text of the *Sentences*. Pelbartus has almost no regard for the structure of the book, except for his organizing the four books of the *Rosarium* following the four books of Peter Lombard's text, whereas Vauouillon carefully follows all the distinctions. For a very good presentation of the structure and sources of William of Vauouillon's commentary, see: Ueli Zahnd, "Easy-Going Scholars Lecturing *Secundum Alium*? Notes on Some Franch Franciscan *Sentences* Commentaries of the Fifteenth Century" in Rosemann (ed.), *Medieval Commentaries on the 'Sentences' of Peter Lombard*, vol. 3, Brill, Leiden – Boston, 2015, p. 267–290.

<sup>41</sup> See: Guillelmus Vorillonus, *Super quattuor libris Sententiarum*, Venetia, per Iacobum de Leucho, impensis Lazari de Soardis, 1496, Primum Principium primi *Sententiarum*, 2rb–1va. The modern editions of William of Vauouillon's *Sentences* commentaries only have parts of his *pricipia*.

<sup>42</sup> Actually the same information can be found in Jerome's 52<sup>nd</sup> letter addressed to Nepotianus. See: Sanctus Eusebius Hieronymus, *Epistulae*, pars I epistulae I–LXX, Isidorus Hilberg (ed.), Viena, 1996, epistula LII, *Ad Nepotianum Presbyterum*, p. 417–18, par. 3, l. 5–15.

<sup>43</sup> Sanctus Eusebius Hieronymus, *Epistulae*, pars I epistulae I–LXX, Isidorus Hilberg (ed.), Viena, 1996, epistula LII, *Ad Nepotianum Presbyterum*, p. 417–18, par. 3, l. 5–15.

<sup>44</sup> Sanctus Eusebius Hieronymus, *Epistulae*, pars II epistulae LXXI–CXX, Isidorus Hilberg (ed.), Viena, 1996, epistula LXXXIV *Ad Pammachium et Oceanum*, p. 130, par. 8, l. 22.

|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| Pelbartus de Themeswar, <i>Aureum sacrae theologiae rosarium</i> , Hagenau, 1503, f. 1rb   | Guillelmus Vorillongus, <i>Super quattuor libris, Sententiarum</i> , Venetia, 1496, Primum Principium, f. 2rb; f. 2va.   | Sanctus Eusebius Hieronymus, <i>Epistulae</i> , pars I epistulae lā LXX, Isidorus Hilberg (ed.), Viena, 1996, epistula LII, <i>Ad Nepotianum Presbyterum</i> , p. 417á18, par. 3, l. 5á15.                                |
| <b>Plato</b> <sup>45</sup> cum esset magister in Athenis famosus amore studii <i>quasi toto orbe fugientes persequabatur litteras subiiciens se aliorum disciplinae</i> . Et tandem senio confectus <b>81 anno artus ultimos studio subiecit</b> . | Plato <i>memphicos et ignotos adivit populos ut matheseos imbueretur disciplinis</i> ; (...) <b>Plato</b> velud quoddam <i>lumen terris missum octogesimario primo anno</i> senio confectus, <b>artus ultimos studio supposuit</b> , quem annorum numerum antiqui consecraverunt philosophi: octoginta quippe unum novem novies faciunt. | Unde et sapientes Graeciae, cum expletis centum et septem annis se mori cerneret dixisse fertur dolere, quod tunc egrederetur e vita, quando sapere coepisset; <b>Plato octogesimo et uno anno scribens est mortuus</b> . |

The second exemplary life is that of Pythagoras. Pelbartus is satisfied to just say that he roamed through the lands of other peoples and crossed seas, whereas Vaurouillon names the peoples visited by Pythagoras:

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Pelbartus de Themeswar, <i>Aureum sacrae theologiae rosarium</i> , Hagenau, 1503, f. 1rb                                | Guillelmus Vorillongus, <i>Super quattuor libris, Sententiarum</i> , Venetia, 1496, Primum Principium, f. 2rbá2va. |
| Sic <b>Pythagoram</b> et <i>quosdam alios lustrasse provincias</i> , novos adiisse populos, maria transisse commemorat. | <b>Pictagoras</b> <i>creticos (scr. certicos) et lacedemonios, minois atque ligurgi</i> leges inspecturus;         |

The third example is that of Parmenides. In Pelbartus of Themeswar's text this comes just after Pythagoras, whereas in Vaurouillon's the example of Socrates and his dedication to study is interposed. They both tell the story of Parmenides hiding in a cave for 15 years:

<sup>45</sup> I have used italics in order to indicate what is only similar, whereas the situations in which the exact same wording is used by the two authors are indicated in bold.

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Pelbartus de Themeswar, <i>Aureum sacrae theologiae rosarium</i> , Hagenau, 1503, f. 1rb | Guillelmus Vorillongus, <i>Super quattuor libris "Sententiarum"</i> , Venetia, 1496, Primum principium, f. 2vaá2vb. |
| <b>Parmenides prae amore studii in antris latitavit 15 annis.</b>                        | <b>Parmenides</b> (scr. Permenides) quem italorum germen seminavit <b>XV annis prae studio in antris latitat.</b>   |

The fourth example of a pagan philosopher invoked by Pelbartus is that of Socrates. Both Vaurillon and Pelbartus say that he wrote his books when he was 90 and they both call him 'Thebanus'. The error of a scribe is most probably at the origin of this appellative. In the original, that is in Jerome's texts, there is no mention of a 'Socrates Thebanus' but only of a 'Crates Thebanus'.<sup>46</sup>

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Pelbartus de Themeswar, <i>Aureum sacrae theologiae rosarium</i> , Hagenau, 1503, f. 1rb   | Guillelmus Vorillongus, <i>Super quattuor libris "Sententiarum"</i> , Venetia, 1496, Primum principium, f. 2va. |
| <b>Socrates</b> quoque <b>thebanus</b> tanto amore philosophiae flagravat ut <b>90</b> annorum senex <i>libros conderet</i> et cunctas opes abdicaret. | <b>Socrates</b> ille <b>thebanus nonagenarius</b> <i>librum condidisse</i> refertur.                            |

These are the examples of pagan sages that Pelbartus and Vaurouillon have in common. Vaurouillon has a much more detailed and long list of pagan *virii studiosi* which Pelbartus doesn't even mention.

After these four pagan examples taken from Jerome's texts, the life of Jerome himself is given as an example by Pelbartus. Vaurouillon intersects the example of Origen's life, which Pelbartus only presents afterwards. They both tell the story of Jerome leaving Rome and his riches in order to better write and read. Pelbartus also adds pray and teach. This mention could be important if we think about the intention with which the *Rosarium* was written:

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Pelbartus de Themeswar, <i>Aureum sacrae theologiae rosarium</i> , Hagenau, 1503, f. 1rb | Guillelmus Vorillongus, <i>Super quattuor libris "Sententiarum"</i> , Venetia, 1496, Primum principium, f. 2vb. |
|--|---|

<sup>46</sup> Sanctus Eusebius Hieronymus, *Epistulae*, pars I epistulae I–LXX, Isidorus Hilberg (ed.), Viena, 1996, epistula LXVI *Ad Pammachium de dormitione Paulinae*, p. 657, par.8, l. 12.



|   |   |
|---|---|
| Denique maxime nos sanctorum exempla provocant ad studia, nam gloriosus <b>Hieronymus patriam</b> , divitias, Romam et <b>omne humanum deservit negotium ut iugiter aut scriberet aut legeret</b> aut doceret aut oraret, qui et omnibus persuadens ait: ama scientiam scripturarum et carnis vicia non amabis. | <b>Hieronymus</b> , non solum <b>divitias</b> , sed <b>patriam omneque humanum, dereliquit negotium ut iugiter aut scriberet aut legeret.</b> |
|---|---|

The next example taken into consideration is that of the life led by Origen. Both Vaurouillon and Pelbartus insist on the value his self- castration in order to be more focused on study. The difference is that Pelbartus also mentions that this act of Origen permitted him to teach studious women more freely. This observation becomes interesting if one is to consider that it comes from somebody who is first and foremost a sermon writer, concerned with the difficulties that a Christian community might encounter:

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| Pelbartus de Themeswar, <i>Aureum sacrae theologiae rosarium</i> , Hagenau, 1503, f. 1rb  | Guillelmus Vorillongus, <i>Super quattuor libris ‚Sententiarum‘</i> , Venetia, 1496, Primum Principium, f. 2vb.  | Sanctus Eusebius Hieronymus, <i>Epistulae</i> , pars II epistulae LXXIáCXX, Isidorus Hilberg (ed.), Viena, 1996, epistula LXXXIV <i>Ad Pammachium et Oceanum</i> , p. 130, par. 8, ll. 20á24.                              |
| Quid dicam de <b>Origene</b> famosissimo qui <b>amore tanto</b> fuit <i>detentus sapientiae</i> ut <i>seipsum castrasse dicatur quo firmius mente esset in hoc occupatus et feminas studiosas liberius doceret <i>prout scribit Hieronymus ipse ad Oceanum</i>.</i> | <b>Origene</b> , <i>ad Oceanum scribens</i> refert <b>Hieronymus, tanto</b> huius <i>sophiae amore detentum</i> ut <i>se castrasse dicatur, quo firmius mente esset in hac occupatus</i> . | Voluptates in tanto fugiit, ut zelo Dei, sed non secundum scientiam ferro <i>truncaret genitalia</i> ; calcavit avaritiam; <i>scriptura memoriter tenuit et in studio explanationis earum diebus sudavit ac noctibus</i> . |

Both authors continue by the enumeration of the names of different wise Christians who had dedicated their life to study. As I feel I have shown the connection between Vaurouillon and Pelbartus in the choice of these *exempla* sufficiently, I choose to not copy that list of names. The only mention which imposes itself is that Vaurouillon has a longer enumeration of names of Christian *virī studiosi* alongside with a far more detailed presentation of their lives.

## Conclusions

The 'Ab auro' prologue is a very good introduction to the *Aureum sacrae theologiae rosarium*: it explains the title as well as the reason for which it was written- in a metaphorical language- and it defends its contents from a possible accusation of heresy, in a typical legal language.

It can be divided into two parts: the explanation of the title and other such introductory elements constitute the first part; the second part is composed as an encouragement towards study. This second part has a series of *exempla* which are common with those invoked by William of Vaurouillon in the *Primum Principium* of his commentary on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard.

The present study has analyzed both parts trying, in the meantime, to introduce this text into the larger context of *Sentences* commentaries as well as in the larger historical context by which Pelbartus of Themeswar was influenced.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Primary Sources

- Aristoteles Latinus, *Ethica Nicomachea*, Brepols, Turnhout, 1973 (ed. R. A. Gauthier).
- Cicero, Marcus Tullius, *De inventione*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1949, (ed. Hubbell, Harry Mortimer).
- de Handlo, Robertus, "Regulae, cum maximis Magistri Franconi, cum additionibus aliorum musicorum" in Lefferts, M. Peter, (ed.), *Robertus de Handlo The rules and Johannes Hanboys The Summa*, University of Nebraska Press, 1991.
- de Lasko, Oswaldus, *Aureum sacrae theologiae rosarium*, IV, Hagenau, ex officina Henrici Gran, impensis Joannis Rynman de Oringaw, 1508.
- de Themeswar, Pelbartus *Sermones quadagesimales*, Hagenau, ex officina Henrici Gran, 1499, b a2.
- de Themeswar, Pelbartus, *Sermones Pomerii de tempore*, Hagenau, ex officina Henrici Gran, 1501.
- de Themeswar, Pelbartus, *Aureum sacrae theologiae rosarium*, I, Hagenau, ex officina Henrici Gran, expensis Joannis Rynman de Oringaw, 1503.
- de Themeswar, Pelbartus, *Aureum sacrae theologiae rosarium*, II, Hagenau, ex officina Henrici Gran, impensis, Joannis Rynman de Oringaw, 1504.
- de Themeswar, Pelbartus, *Aureum sacrae theologiae rosarium*, III, Hagenau, ex officina Henrici Gran, impensis Joannes Rynman de Oringaw, 1507.
- de Themeswar, Pelbartus, *Stellarium coronae gloriosissimae virginis Mariae*, Venetiis apud Iohannem Antonium Bertanum, 1586.
- Gasiorowski, Antoni (ed.), *Liber promotionum Facultatis Artium in Universitate Cracovensi saeculi decimi quinti*, Nakladem Polskiej Akademii Umieje, Krakow, 2000.

- Gasiorowski, Antoni (ed.), *Metryka Uniwersytetu Krakowskiego z lat 1400-1508*, Towarzystwo naukowe Societas Vistulana, Crakow, 2004.
- Hamesse, Jacqueline (ed), *Les Auctoritates Aristotelis á un florilège médiéval*, Publications Universitaires, Louvain, Béatrice- Nauwelaerts, Paris, 1974.
- Hieronymus, Eusebius Sanctus, *Epistulae*, pars I epistulae lálXX, Isidorus Hilberg (ed.), Viena, 1996.
- Hieronymus, Eusebius Sanctus, *Epistulae*, pars II epistulae LXXI- CXX, Isidorus Hilberg (ed.), Viena, 1996.
- Hippocrates, *Aforisms, from the latin version of Verhoofd, with a literal translation on the opposite page and explanatory notes* by Elias Marks, Collins & co, New York, 1817.
- Kosterkiewicz, A. M. (ed.), *Album studiosorum Universitatis Cracoviensis*, Tomus I, Typis et impensis Universitatis Jagellonicae, Cracoviae, 1887.
- Toldy, Ferenc (ed.), “Blasii de Zalka et continuatorum eius cronica fratrum minorum de observantia provinciae Boznae et Hungariae” in *Annalecta monumentorum Hungariae historicorum literariorum maximum inedita*, Bibliotheca Academia Scientiarum, Pesta, 1867.
- Vorillon, Guillelmus, *Super quattuor libris Sententiarum*, per Iacobum de Leucho, impensis Lazari de Soardis, Venetia, 1496.

## Secondary literature

- Ádám, Edina, *Pelbart of Temesvár and the Use of Images in Preaching*, MA Thesis in Medieval Studies, Central European University, 2008.
- Adriányi, Gabriel, “Pelbart von Temesvár”, in *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon*, vol. 7, Herzberg, 1994, pp. 174á178.
- Bland, Mark, *A Guide to Early Printed Books and Manuscripts*, Blackwell, Oxford, 2010.
- Kosztolnyik, Zoltán, “Pelbártus of Temesvár: A Franciscan Preacher and Writer of the Late Middle Ages in Hungary”, *Vivarium*, 5(1967), p. 100á110;
- Kosztolnyik, Zoltán, “Some Hungarian Theologians in the Late Renaissance”, *Church History*, 57(1988), p. 5á18.
- Nebbiai-Dalla Guarda, Donatella, “Les glossaires et les dictionnaires dans les bibliothèques médiévales”, in Hamesse, Jacqueline (ed), *Les manuscrits des lexiques et glossaires de l’antiquité á la fin du moyen age- actes du Colloque international organisé par le “Ettore Majorana Center for Scientific Culture”* (Erice 23-30 septembre 1994), Fédération Internationale des Instituts d’Études Médiévales, Louvain- la- Neuve, 1996, p. 145 á 204.
- Pettegree, Andrew, *The Book in the Renaissance*, Yale University Press, London and New Haven, 2010.
- Rosemann, W. Philipp, *The Story of a Great Medieval Book: Peter Lombard’s Sentences*, Broadviewpress, Toronto, 2007.
- Rosemann W. Philipp (ed.), *Mediaeval Commentaries on the Sentences of Peter Lombard*, vol. 3, Brill, Leiden á Boston, 2015.
- Swieżawski, Stefan, *L’Univers á la philosophie de la nature au XV<sup>e</sup>siècle en Europe*, Editions de la Société des Sciences et des Lettres de Varsovie, Varsovie, 1999.
- Weijers, Olga, *Dictionnaires et repertoires au moyen age*, Brepols, Turnhout, 1991.

## THE CONSTITUTION OF TIME IN HUSSERL\*

ALINA CIRIC\*\*

**ABSTRACT. The Constitution of Time in Husserl.** One of Husserl's fundamental idea is that time is not an object and is not given to knowledge as a simple object. Being involved in the constitution of the flow of consciousness, time cannot be analysed like other objects of knowledge. Consciousness itself is structured in a temporal way. In the absolute flow of consciousness, this temporality has a synthetic unity with the rest of the intentional features of consciousness. It represents for Husserl a passive synthesis that characterizes the intentional life of the transcendental subjectivity.<sup>1</sup> This specific form of temporality that characterizes the transcendental life of the subject has a constitutive dimension that we will discuss.

**Keywords:** *time, constitution, consciousness, intentionality, retention, protention, transcendental phenomenology, Husserl*

### Introduction

The husserlian perspective on time, consciousness and the relation between them has been for the first time presented in his lectures from 1904/1905 (*Courses on the internal consciousness of time*), being later further developed and explained at different levels and in different stages in other texts, reaching an almost definite form in his *Manuscripts from Bernau* (1917/1918) and *Manuscripts C lectures*.

Transcendental phenomenology studies the relation between pure consciousness and her noematic correlations, the objects that our intentionality addresses and the modality in which they appear to consciousness and give themselves through the acts of consciousness. Even though they are linked to acts of consciousness, they still keep

---

\* This paper was published with the financial support of "MINERVA – Cooperation for elite career in doctoral and postdoctoral research", initiated by the Romanian Academy, Cluj-Napoca Branch, Contract Code: POSDRU/ 159/ 1.5/ S/ 137832, project co-financed by the European Social Fund through the Sectorial Operational Program Human Resources Development 2007-2013.

\*\* Doctoral candidate at the Doctoral School in Philosophy, Faculty of History and Philosophy, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania; Romanian Academy Cluj-Napoca Branch. E-mail: ciricalina@gmail.com

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Al. Schnell, *Husserl et les fondements de la phénoménologie constructive*, col. Krisis, Ed. Milon, 2005.

their transcendental character. This is shown by the fact that one objects it is still the same in the diverse succession of the acts of consciousness that are reported to it. This succession introduces the problem of temporality, where temporality is the temporal character in which the objects are given to consciousness.

Consciousness manifests itself as a continuous stream of intentional acts that are succeeding one after the other but remaining closely related due to the fact that what is now present passes in the next immediate moment (as a form of the past) and its immediately anticipated as a form of the future. Thus, the consciousness of the present, of the past and of the future is in a state of interdependence. For Husserl, time is not something that comes from outside and joins consciousness, rather is something that belongs to the most intimate relation that consciousness has with the objects. The transcendental consciousness is through his given nature a temporal one: it is permanently temporalizing itself. That is why objects are always giving themselves in a temporal manner to consciousness.

In Husserl, the problem of time will follow two different directions, even though both of them are targeting consciousness. One will focus on how the objective time is constituted through consciousness and also the modality in which objects are temporally constituted. The second one is preoccupied with the origin of time, localized in what Husserl calls absolute consciousness: the internal consciousness accompanying the temporal fulfilment of the intentional acts.

This consciousness corresponds to a form of temporality that is different from the first one, a temporality that is specific to the immanent components of consciousness. Regarding the first direction of analysis that Husserl proposes, we have to notice that also with the constitutive analysis of the temporal determinations of the objects it is also discussed their identity. We arrived at their identity by relating this objects to objects that are apperceived in the same time, simultaneously, or successively (before or after), meaning a temporal identity. In the analyses that Husserl dedicated to the constitution of temporality at the immanent level of consciousness, we have learned that immanent temporality is constituted also at the pre-immanent level of consciousness, in a pre-immanent temporality.

The necessity to arrive at a different level of the transcendental consciousness in order to explain temporality shows the impossibility to give an account on how immanent time (in which temporal objects are constituted (*zeitliche Objekte*) is constituted at the level of immanent consciousness. But we cannot avoid the necessity to explain the temporal character of the components of the immanent sphere (original impression, retention and protention). In order to do this, it is necessary to overpass a simple description of the immanent consciousness of time in terms of retention, original impression, and protention. Even though this sort of description shows a specific

intentionality, this is not sufficient to demonstrate the temporal character of the immanent components in which temporal objects are constituted. Husserl speaks of a phenomenological time in which a different meaning and a different temporality are constituted. Furthermore, Husserl introduces the concept of *Zeitobjekte* (object-time or time-objects) that he opposes to the concept of temporal objects (*zeitliche Objekte* sau *zeitliche Gegenstände*). In his writings about the internal consciousness of time, Husserl defines objects-time as objects that contain in themselves temporal extension.

If the temporal objects (*zeitliche Objekte*) are supposing the temporal change and can be defined only through transformation, change or movement, objects-time contain in themselves a temporal extension, which is nothing else than the temporal duration (*zeitliche Dauer*) of the temporal objects themselves. Through the idea of object-time, Husserl tries to reveal the original dimension of the transcendental consciousness of time, the pre-immanent dimension that is beyond any split between subjective time and objective time. This dimension is the condition of possibility for both versions of time. These objects-time are not objects in the common sense of objects, because they suppose only a strict temporal dimension and not a spatial one. For Schnell, the original process and his structure is developed through what he calls “constructive processes”. In consequence, we are dealing here with a constructive side of phenomenology, generated by the incapacity that the descriptive method has in order to explain the origin of time. Only this pre-immanent level of the constitution of time can make possible the distinction between subjective and objective time. At this pre-immanent level, we are dealing with a new noetico-noematic correlation, different from the one that is presented at the immanent level of consciousness. When he is analysing the noetic part of this correlation, Husserl appeals to constructive processes. By appealing to these processes in order to explain the temporal character of the immanent temporal objects, meaning their temporal duration, Husserl gives up on using the apperception-content of apperception schema.

At this pre-immanent level of consciousness, we are dealing with an original process, which is a continuum of phases named *Grundreihe*, fundamental series, each series supposing a retentive and a protentive continuum. The phases of the fundamental series are constituted from an unmodified nucleus, which is fulfilled at his maximum and other modified kernels, where the fulfilment degree varies. The unmodified nucleus, being fulfilled at his maximum, is also named by Husserl “saturated consciousness” and the modified nucleus that is characterized by a lower degree of fulfilment is named lessened phenomena. Those phenomenon suppose noetico-noematic correlations: in their cases, we can analytically attach two characteristics, one noetic and one noematic that correspond to shape and to content. The shape that remains identical addresses the shape of *now* and the content that permanently changes addresses the

sense and the degree of fulfilment of this sense. The degree of fulfilment can permanently change, but he can never reach a null point, because then the temporality that is specific to these phenomena can never be perceived.

The idea of the double intentionality that characterizes the stream of consciousness is connected with the problem of the absolute flux, the manner in which it appears to itself. The double intentionality of the stream of consciousness regards two types of objects. Husserl calls them primary objects (*primäre Gegenstände*) and secondary objects (*sekundäre Gegenstände*). The manner in which the first donate themselves supposes the fulfilment modes and the rest of them supposes the modalities in which consciousness appears to itself. A first intentionality orients itself to the primary objects, the second different intentionality considers the secondary objects and corresponds to a consciousness that is becoming more and more aware of her own intentional process. This double intentionality that overcomes any objective intentionality, this double continuum of intentions is what makes the original process to appear and to become aware of itself. This is generated inside the absolute flux through the way in which the retentive and protentive nucleus of this flux are manifesting. This self-appearance is possible because the original process is a double retentive and protentive continuum, which has his own consciousness, but in the mean time being is also aware of the object-time that it is instituting. Regarding the noematic aspect of the original process, we have to underline two important aspects. First, we have to be aware of the fact that for the pre-immanent sphere of consciousness, Husserl introduces a new meaning to the concept of noema. Secondly, what Husserl names form of a phase that belongs to the original process and the content that corresponds to it is establishing a new relation, which differs from that existing between noema and noesis at the immanent level of consciousness.

This relation is different because the content of the original phase that belongs to the original process is not a noematic content in the sense of the noema at the immanent level, but an intentional character (*ein intentionaler Charakter*), that he makes possible through a special process of fulfilment (*Erfüllen*) and emptiness (*Entleeren*) any type of approach to a common content. This intentional character corresponds to the unity between what is given in an original manner and the manner in which this content presents itself. This intentional character corresponds to the nucleus which are given in the "original experiences".<sup>2</sup> At the level of this analyses Husserl talks about the noematic forms (*noematische Formen*) and the noematic forms of sense (*noematische Sinnes-Formen*). This concept of noematic forms has an important role in overcoming the duality between the noetic part (the subjective one) and the noematic part (the objective content) regarding the original process itself.

---

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, ed. cit. p. 176.

What is specific to the noetic side of the original process it's his structure in nucleus and degree of fulfilment (*Erfüllen*) and drain (*Entleeren*), regarding the noematic side of the original process, Husserl uses different terms: growing, lifting, descend (*graduelle Steigung, graduelle Minderung* or *Sinken*). Those terms are referring to the phenomenon of between retention and protention, at the pre-immanent level, phenomenon that becomes constitutive for the immanent sphere of temporality inside consciousness and that is conceived by Husserl under the character of modification.<sup>3</sup> At this pre-immanent level of consciousness separating the two parts, the noetic and the noematic, it's just an analytic procedure and we have to remember that the two of them are always colliding but also the fact that the consciousness of phases its one. What is specific to both the original process and the noematic movements it's a certain identical nucleus of sense (*Sinneskern*). This remains identical no matter how the object-time gives him. A sense-nucleus it's actually the time-noema, the noema considered from the phenomenological point of view of time. The time-noema corresponds to the content of the intentional nucleus and to the temporal modalities. The phenomena that ultimately constitute the immanent temporality are presenting a certain hyletic character that does not belong to the object as such but to the intentional consciousness, that is originally constitutive of object-time. This means that we are dealing with some sort of disconnection between objectification and temporalization, specific to both noematic and noetic level of the original process.

The constitution of time is a spontaneous process in which the central role is played by the continuous self-temporalization of the stream of consciousness. The main characteristic of the constitution of time in Husserl is the fact that it overcomes the diacrony between objective and subjective. Time is not subjective or objective in a traditional sense; it is constituted at a pre-immanent level. At this level, he is continuously self-generating as a perpetual movement of the absolute consciousness. We leave aside here the question if this consciousness is subjective consciousness and in what sense it can be independent from what constitutes remains an open question as it is not the place here to discuss it.

In Husserl, a specific pre-immanent temporality characterizes the consciousness of time. In the 6th *Logical Investigation*, Husserl describes the perception of the transcendent object. First, for Husserl, we should ignore what is temporal in perception, meaning we should eliminate everything that transcends the sphere of the actual donation. Secondly, Husserl eliminates also the rapport with the ego, because he always remains the same, either in perception or phantasy. In the first case, we are talking about the rapport between perception and the intentional object. What is characteristic for this rapport it is what Husserl calls *selbs da*, the fact that the object is being given in person. In order to understand this original rapport, Husserl distinguishes between the real

---

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Ed. Husserl, *Leçons pour une phénoménologie de la conscience intime du temps*. PUF, 1996.



content of perception (*Abschattung*) and the intentional content. He will consider as phenomenological donation only the immanent content of perception. As we shall see the constitutive phenomena of time brings new conclusion regarding the structure of intentionality. Husserl introduces the notion of nucleus or kern in order to show that the specific character of the constitution of time is a direct characteristic of the fact that the constitutive phenomena of time has a formal status as a result of the distinction between a phenomenology of temporal objects *zeitliche Objekte* and of a phenomenology of time-object *Zeitobjekte*.

This formal character requires going beyond the sphere of temporal objects in order to arrive to the last constitutive structure of the immanent temporality and also to the last structure of intentionality. This type of phenomena, time-phenomena, that are different from immanent temporal objects, have also a temporal status. In order for them to be described, Husserl introduces the concept of *original process*. This descent in the pre-immanent sphere reveals the fact that the constitutive consciousness of time is a stream. The original process appears for Husserl as the flow in which the immanent temporality is constituted. In this case in Husserl, the pre-immanent sphere represents the flow in which the immanent temporality is constituted. This original process is formed of an infinite flow of intuition and filling. Regarding this process, the fundamental thesis of Husserl is that the last constitutive level of the consciousness of time is characterized by a type of intentionality that is no longer characterized by retention or protention, this being specific to an act that belongs to the immanent sphere. This type of intentionality makes the pre-immanent temporality possible.

### **The problem of time in *Ideas I***

The internal consciousness of time (*das innere Zeitbewusstsein*) is the general structure of the transcendental consciousness.<sup>4</sup> In *Ideen 1*, Husserl claims that there is an original generation (*Erzeugung*) of what we call *Erlebnis* and that it represents a continuum stream of retentions and protentions that are mediated by a process of originality. We have to ask ourselves if this original generation (*ursprüngliche Erzeugung*) is triggered by something that is exterior to consciousness, by all the events that are coming from outside and are affecting consciousness in a manner that we can no more speak about self-generation. A critique addressed to this husserlian perspective is that the whole process of retentions and protentions is activated by something that is beyond itself, by an event that comes unexpectedly and is independent of consciousness as such.

---

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Ed., Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a pure phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy I, General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology*, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1983.

I can analyse the stream of consciousness or every single experience that I have and the manner in which it appears to me through the retentive or protentive process, this reflexive act is a self-generated one, an act that I'm aware of. The question here is how this stream of consciousness and the temporal process itself (based on retention-original impression-retention schema) is self-generating and how the consciousness is involved. We ask ourselves if this generation is created by something that belongs to unintentional transcendence, that type of transcendence that is still not an object of my own consciousness. An event that affects consciousness is not taken into account, in a primary moment, as a noema. We have to clearly understand here that the problem of the origin of time is not the modality in which the constitution of time is described, in and through consciousness, but rather the fact that Husserl identifies this origin of time *only* at the level of consciousness.

In *Ideas I*, Husserl stresses the fact that time belongs to the stream of consciousness and that there exists a difference between cosmic or subjective time and phenomenological time. As the general characteristic of the stream of consciousness, phenomenological time results after epoché, after separating consciousness from the natural.<sup>5</sup> Only after applying reduction, consciousness is no longer marked by *mundane* temporality (*das Weltzeitliche*) or cosmic time and no longer understood as simultaneity and succession. At this point, we have to ask ourselves if there is any difference at an ontological level between phenomenological time and cosmic time or are the two only perceived different by us. *Ideen I* is not offering a clarification on this matter. According to Husserl, time is more than the essential characteristic of any *Erlebnis*, it's a necessary form that binds two experiences between them.<sup>6</sup> Every single experience that belongs to consciousness has a corresponding duration in time. Through this duration, experiences can be connected one with the other. This makes that all the experiences are interconnected and inscribed in a continuous flow of consciousness. Every single experience that the ego has appears in a temporal way. This temporal way in which it appears constitutes a new experience. When the ego reflects on the manner in which this experience appears he observes that every single experience is followed by a new one.<sup>7</sup> This is the way in which time is perceived from a phenomenological point of view at an immanent level, based on the retention-original impression-protention schema. Every single experience of the ego supposes a triple horizon that corresponds to the known temporal *ecstasies* (present, past and future). For Husserl, the actual now of every single experience represents a form through which a new content manifests itself.

---

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, ed. cit., p. 189.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 156.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 163.

## The formation of temporality at an immanent level

### 1.1 Retention and retentional intentionality

The idea of retention knows in Husserl different meanings along the years. In the lectures given in 1904/1905, analysing the relationship between apperception and the content of apperception, Husserl said that the constitution of time is created by a difference that exists in the acts of perception and a special type of intentionality that this acts develops. This intentionality corresponds to a non-objective intention and is meant to explain how we can pass from perception to a special type of memory, named primary memory. There are two clearly differences between the two terms, retention and self-differentiation of an act of apperception: regarding retention, there are the successive phases of the retentional consciousness (the retention of retention) and then the synthetic character of the retentional intentionality.

We already know that all the husserlian theory of retention comes as a critic answer to the idea that the past is given to consciousness through imagination. The past arises from an alteration of the original impression given in perception. Thus, every perception undergoes modification, a modification later called perception. Every single retentional modification is a retentional consciousness of the previous retention. By distinguishing retention from original impression, a succession of retentional phases are created. In retention, the original impression it's not present, because the original impression was already given in the past. Because retention is the immediate consciousness of something that had just passed, it remains that only retentional intentionality can create an original relation with the past, a relation that is not realized through imagination or representation.

This type of intentionality actually represents the consciousness of what had passed in the manner of not being present.<sup>8</sup> Retention, as a way of presenting the past, it's based on perception. If we analyse the problem of perception regarding the relationship between original impression and what has just passed, retention, we will observe that we are dealing with two types of consciousness: the impressional consciousness and the retentional one. However, because what is essential to the perceived moment is being temporal, precisely passing into retention, then we must admit as Husserl does, that the moment of perception that we refer to when we speak of impression is somehow an ideal limit.<sup>9</sup> Every single original impression will become equivalent with his own passing, that belongs to retention. We see now that retention and protention are two faces of the same monad, they always give

---

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Barbaras Renaud, *Introduction a la philosophie de Husserl*, Vrin, 2003.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Ed. Husserl, *On the phenomenology of the consciousness of Internal time*, Kluwer, 2010.

themselves together, forming an unity: there is a pure *now* only at an abstract level, because the initial *now* gives himself as a temporal *now* in his immediate passing in a “just passed” or just-finished. Those two forms or the retentional phase cannot be given without an initial moment, in the absence of a pure now, even if this is conceived as an ideal limit of a content that permanently changes. If what is perceived at the retentional phase level has the character of a presence, then, when it becomes retention, what was initially present will develop the character of something non-present.

This character of non-presence still supposes perception, the perception of the past. This is how we can demonstrate the connection between perception and the temporal object. As Husserl says, we might conclude that originality cannot be distinguished from non-originality and because of this what is perceived now remains only as an ideal limit. We can see now that Urimpression is not a content or something that we can associate with experience, but rather an event that occurs and that makes possible the apparition and manifestation of both being and consciousness. Original impression is also the moment of a spontaneous and continue occurrence of a new *now*, a moment that reveals to us the constitutive consciousness of time. This constitutive consciousness that Husserl refers to as “the constitutive stream of time” (*der zeitkonstituierende Fluss*), which does not have the same temporal dimension as the temporal object, it’s a unity of passivity and activity, because we can’t speak of consciousness without speaking of an Urimpression that affects consciousness and through which consciousness becomes aware of itself. Also, we cannot speak of an original impression as something that continuously gives itself as new, without speaking of the consciousness of this original impression: only by affecting consciousness, Urimpression can be perceived as impression.

A characteristic of this absolute stream of consciousness is the fact that it is not a constituted temporal object; but it does fit the temporal schema of simultaneity and succession (retention-original impression-protention). Because the original impression is the birth of something always new, we can conclude that the original impression it is itself its own overtaking. On the other hand, because it is always given with retention, is in the same time also withdrawing in herself; she presupposes already that something that precedes her. The impressional consciousness that corresponds to it, it’s a consciousness of her own trace, thus a consciousness of her own past: that is why she withdraws in itself, because she is her own excess. Thus being her own past, she is a consciousness of the past.<sup>10</sup> The idea of a retentional intentionality is strictly connected with the idea of pre-immanent level of temporality, as we will see in the second part of our essay.

---

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Barbaras, ed.cit, p. 80.

### **1.2 Protention and protentional intentionality**

Alongside with the retentional modification of the original impression, we are dealing also, at the level of immanent temporality, with a protentional modification, a modification of what is still to come. The protentional intentionality supposes a horizon in which successive phases can be fulfilled by an original datum without this exhausting the horizon as such. Because it realizes an intentional continuity, protention never reaches a full fulfilment, that sort of fulfilment without rest. We remember that such an intentional continuity was realized by retention also, but not from the original impression to what will manifest itself, but from original impression to what was already manifested, to the past. Even though there is symmetry between retention and protention, as we have showed, there are also some asymmetries between them.

One of the most important points is that in the case of protention, we can speak of a different type of fulfilment than in the case of retention. In the case of protention, the posterior protentions are the ones who are fulfilling the anterior ones, which is not also valuable for retention. In the case of retention, to be able to speak of a fulfilment realized by the posterior retentions for the anterior retentions, we have to be aware of the difference between presentation and presentification (*Gegenwärtigung* și *Vergegenwärtigung*). Only through an act of presentification, the posterior retentions can fulfil the anterior retentions, this recollection (*Wiedererinnerung*) leads to a disconnection regarding how the consciousness of the past is given. This is not happening in the case of protentional modification. After showing this important difference between retention and protention, Husserl moves on and shows the importance that protentional intentionality has in constituting the consciousness of time. In the case of protention, we are dealing also not only with a protentional modification of the original impression, but also of the retentions. In the end, this will lead to a mixing of the two of them.

Husserl has reached the conclusion that the immanent temporality is constituted in a different form of consciousness, more original than the immanent one and revealed by the schema retention-original impression-protention. This is what Husserl calls the pre-immanent consciousness or absolute-consciousness. At first, Husserl introduced this term in order to explain how the stream of consciousness becomes aware of itself. Another reason is the desire to show more clearly the difference between perception and recollection (and then between perception and phantasy). Yet another reason is the fact that the immanent temporality itself, in which the empirical or objective time is constituted, needs also to be constituted. The original stream of consciousness has a phase-based structure that forms an intentional

field within which this process becomes aware of itself without this necessitating a distancing of consciousness to itself. We have to ask ourselves here, if at this level of pre-immanent temporality, we can still apply a descriptive analyse of we need another process to understand how time is constituted and to understand the auto-constitution of the stream of the absolute consciousness. For Al Schnell,<sup>11</sup> at this level, we are dealing more with a constructive phenomenological process than with a descriptive analysis. The phenomenological or descriptive method leaves the problem of the constitution of time to a standstill. That is why the husserlian analysis proceeds to some techniques that bear on what some commentators called a constructive phenomenology.<sup>12</sup>

## Conclusion

The question of time in Husserl reveals two central characteristics of the pure transcendental consciousness: intentionality and internal time consciousness, where time defines all inner experiences that characterize consciousness.

In Husserl's phenomenology, a fundamental idea is that consciousness represents the origin of time, depicted and explained by following only a descriptive line of analysis. The specific structure of internal time consciousness makes it a condition for the constitution of the objectivity of the world. A complete intentional analyse cannot be operated without taking into account the dimension of time. Because time is given in an immanent form, Husserl will use the method of epoch like a reductive method in order to describe it (*Ausschaltung*). At this level we will leave aside the manner in which we commonly speak about time and also time understood in the sense of nature science.

The phenomenological analyses will focus on the subjective dimension of time, as it appears and manifests itself at the level of our consciousness (*als solche*). We leave aside the objective time that can be measurable and quantified and focus only on the time that appears, the duration taken as absolute datum. We do not talk here about the world of experience but rather we focus on the specific temporality that characterizes the stream of consciousness.

---

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Al. Schnell, *Le temps*, Vrin, 2007.

<sup>12</sup> R. Bernet, *Conscience et existence. Perspectives phénoménologiques*, Paris, PUF, 2004.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bernet, R, *Conscience et existence. Perspectives phénoménologiques*, Paris, PUF, 2004.
- Husserl, Ed., *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy I, General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology*, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1983.
- Husserl, Ed., *Leçons pour une phénoménologie de la conscience intime du temps*, PUF, 1996.
- Husserl, Ed., *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time*, Kluwer, 2010.
- Renaud, Barbaras, *Introduction à la philosophie de Husserl*, Vrin, 2003.
- Schnell, Al., *Husserl et les fondaments de la phénoménologie constructive*, col. Krisis, Ed. Milon, 2005.
- Schnell, Al., *Le temps*, Vrin, 2007.

## L. AUSTIN'S AND JOHN R. SEARLE'S CONCEPTION OF TRUTH\*

P. ALPÁR GERGELY\*

**ABSTRACT.** *John L. Austin's and John R. Searle's Conception of Truth.* One of the oldest and most accepted theories of truth is the correspondence theory of truth. I argue that both John L. Austin and John R. Searle accept the correspondence theory of truth, and I present the theory accepted by them. I also present the implications of the acceptance of this theory of truth in relation to their philosophy of language.

**Keywords:** *truth, theories of truth, the correspondence theory of truth, philosophy of language*

### Introduction

Two conditions have to be fulfilled in the case of a valid inference: a formal and a material one. The formal condition is defined as the correctness of the inference as a process; the material condition refers to the truth of the premises. Merely considering this quasi-definition of a valid inference, we find ourselves in the midst of the problem of truth.

Charles W. Morris differentiates between three dimensions of semiosis: the syntactical, the semantical and the pragmatological dimension<sup>1</sup>. Since we define language as a particular example of a sign system, we also differentiate among these three dimensions. We tend to believe that the problem of truth is a question which concerns logic. This view, however, is false. Logic is not concerned with truth; it focuses on the logical inference, more precisely, on the validity of the logical inference. Although we speak about logical truth, we do this in a formal sense. Logical truth is true regarding its form;<sup>2</sup> hence the denomination: formal logic. Following Morris's division, in the case of

---

\* The Hungarian version of this paper appeared in *Erdélyi Múzeum*, 2014. 3. 78–84.

\* *Doctoral candidate at the Doctoral School in Philosophy, Faculty of History and Philosophy, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania. E-mail: gergelyalpar@gmail.com*

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Charles W. Morris, "Foundations of the Theory of Signs", in Otto Neurath, *International Encyclopedia of Unified Science*, Vol. I, No. 2, The University of Chicago Press, 1944, 6.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Theodore Sider, *Logic for Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, 2010, 2.



logical investigations we are in the field of syntax, that is, we examine the relations among signs. The relations among signs are based merely on form. They lack content. Bertrand Russell underscores the lack of content in formal sciences when talking about mathematics as a formal science. (Formal logic is considered to be the substratum of mathematics.) He claims that mathematics is a science, in the case of which we don't know what we are speaking about, and whether that particular object that we speak about is true or not.<sup>3</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, in his *Tractatus*, – sentences 4.461<sup>4</sup> and 5.142<sup>5</sup> – also draws our attention to the lack of content in formal logic.

Let us consider Noam Chomsky's famous sentence: "Colorless green ideas sleep furiously."<sup>6</sup> From a grammatical, that is, a syntactical point of view, the sentence is well-formed. According to the rules of grammar, the words are in their places, in a grammatically correct relation with each other. Still, there is a problem: we do not understand the sentence. The sentence does not have a meaning. But when speaking about meaning we are not concerned with syntax anymore, but rather with semantics. In this latter case, the form is filled with content. In the case of a semantical approach, the main issue considered is the relation between the signs and the things denominated by the signs. To quote Ch. W. Morris: "Semantics deals with the relation of signs to their designata and so to the objects which they may or do denote."<sup>7</sup>

Graham Priest, making a reference to Gottlob Frege, affirms: "At the heart of a theory of meaning for language is a theory of truth. This claim is not contentious. It arises from Frege's observation that to give the meaning of a sentence is to give its truth conditions."<sup>8</sup>

Among the theories of truth, the correspondence theory of truth is the most widely accepted one. The traditional version of the theory can be traced back as far as Plato<sup>9</sup> and Aristotle.<sup>10</sup> The essence of the correspondence theory of truth can be epitomized as the correspondence between the world and those statements describing the world. Thus, according to the adherents of the correspondence theory of truth a statement is

---

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Bertrand Russell, "Mathematics and the Metaphysicians", in Bertrand Russell, *Mysticism and Logic*, George Allen & Unwin, 1959, 75.

<sup>4</sup> "Propositions show what they say: tautologies and contradictions show that they say nothing. A tautology has no truth-conditions, since it is unconditionally true: and a contradiction is true on no condition. Tautologies and contradictions lack sense. [...]" Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Routledge, 2002, 41.

<sup>5</sup> "A tautology follows from all propositions: it says nothing." *Ibid.* 47.

<sup>6</sup> Noam Chomsky, *Syntactic Structures*, Mouton de Gruyter, 2002, 15.

<sup>7</sup> Charles W. Morris, *op. cit.*, 21.

<sup>8</sup> Graham Priest, *In Contradiction*, Oxford University Press, 2006, 56–57.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Plato, *Sophist*, 262e–263d.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1011b.

true, if and only if the things asserted in the statement correspond to a certain fact. For example: the statement 'Snow is white' is true, if and only if snow is white.\*

The two most illustrious representatives of the correspondence theory of truth in the twentieth century were the aforementioned Bertrand Russell and Ludwig Wittgenstein. For Russell and Wittgenstein the basis of the correspondence theory of truth was the structural isomorphism between the world and the language. The standpoint of the structural isomorphism theory presupposes that the structure of the world and that of the language is identical. Therefore, the relation between the world and the language is characterized by a one-to-one correspondence: an element of the language corresponds to an element of the world. In a Wittgensteinian style, we could say that the language maps the world similarly as a map maps or represents the geographical reality corresponding to it. According to this theory, deciding on the truth of a statement supposes, on the one hand, that we analyse the statement (a linguistic entity); on the other hand, that we analyse the facts corresponding to the statement (a non-linguistic entity). As a third step, we compare these two entities. A statement will be true, if and only if the statement describes the facts as they are in the world. We can thus say, that a statement will be true, if those asserted in the statement correspond to the facts. By accepting the structural identity of the language and the world on the one hand, and the role of the language to represent reality on the other hand, both Russell and Wittgenstein set out such a theory of correspondence, in which the correspondence between the statements and the facts almost excluded the possibility to err. This type of correspondence made it impossible for a fact not to correspond to a statement.<sup>11</sup>

Besides Bertrand Russell and Ludwig Wittgenstein, in his article entitled *Truth* John L. Austin also argues for the correspondence theory of truth. However, Austin's correspondence theory of truth differs from the theory of truth accepted by the logical atomists. Austin does not explain the correspondence between the world and the language with the help of structural isomorphism, but with that of convention.

At the very beginning of his article, Austin makes it clear that truth relates solely to statements or assertions. Although it is widespread to consider sentences as true, according to Austin, only statements can be said to be true or false. For Austin, sentences are the media, through which we formulate our statements; he defines statements as historic events which are said by a speaker to a listener, making reference to certain historic state of affairs. The term 'historic' does not have to confuse us. Austin does not want to suggest that we cannot formulate such statements which refer to the future.

---

\* Single quotation marks are used to differentiate between quotations and words/expressions/sentences of the object language. The latter are enclosed in single quotation marks.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Susan Haack, *Philosophy of Logic*, Cambridge University Press, 1978, 93–94.

He uses the term in its logical sense: to make the time of the utterance of the statement explicit.

According to Austin, linguistic communication presupposes symbols (the speaker communicates with the hearer by means of these); a world (the speaker formulates statements about this world); and similarities and differences between things (these similarities and differences make communication possible between the speaker and the hearer). In addition to these, there are two conventions:

*Descriptive* conventions correlating the words (= sentences) with the *types* of situation, thing, event, &c., to be found in the world.

*Demonstrative* conventions correlating the words (= statements) with the *historic* situations, &c., to be found in the world.<sup>12</sup>

The core of Austin's theory of truth is the descriptive convention and the demonstrative convention. These two conventions lead us to Austin's definition of truth. According to this definition "[a] statement is said to be true when the historic state of affairs to which it is correlated by the demonstrative conventions (the one to which it 'refers') is of a type with which the sentence used in making it is correlated by the descriptive conventions."<sup>13</sup>

According to Austin's theory, if we consider the statement "The cat is on the mat", we can say the following: the descriptive convention will mark out those types of situation in which a cat is on the mat, while the demonstrative convention will set out that particular situation, in which a certain cat – the one that we can point at, if we need to – is on the mat. So, the descriptive convention determines the frame, or the type of situation, the demonstrative convention determines the particular, or as Austin would put it, the historic situation.

At first sight Austin's theory of truth seems quite clear. After a more thorough examination however, the theory does not appear solid enough; it can be too easily criticized. Benson Mates for example is one of the critics, who underscores the problematic feature of the theory.<sup>14</sup> If we go beyond Austin's example, he says, we will face certain problems concerning the definition of the descriptive convention, i.e. the reckoning of certain situations among certain types of situations. This way, for example, it can be problematic whether a rainfall is already or still considered a rainfall. It is not clear, what is considered the standard situation in case of a rainfall. Of course, the difficulty of defining the descriptive convention entails the difficulty of deciding whether a certain

---

<sup>12</sup> Cf. John L. Austin, "Truth", in J. O. Urmson and G. J. Warnock, *Philosophical Papers (by the Late) J. L. Austin*, Oxford University Press, 1961, 89–90.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* 90.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Benson Mates, "Austin, Strawson, Tarski, and Truth" in Leon Henkin, *Proceedings of the Tarski Symposium*, American Mathematical Society, 1974, 394.

statement is true or false. The definition of the standard situations itself already poses difficulty. While a clear-cut definition of the standard situations would be necessary in order to decide on the truth of the particular historic events, this latter decision seems virtually impossible to make. Considering all these, the criticism of Benson Mates seems relevant in respect to the obscurity of Austin's theory of truth.<sup>15</sup> But these are not the only problems that Austin's theory has to deal with. Austin's theory can neither handle the problem of negations, nor the problem of quantified sentences, and it cannot decide about the truth of sentences describing past events. The problem is similar in all three situations: the demonstrative convention cannot be used, because we cannot point out a specific situation in these cases. Austin's theory of truth can only account for indexical sentences.

After a short presentation and criticism of Austin's theory of truth, we have to mention its strengths, too. The positive point of his theory of truth lies in the thought that sets him apart from the logical positivists. It seems, that because Austin rejects the idea of a structural identity between the world and the language that describes the world, he also eliminates the criticism that Russell's and Wittgenstein's theories of truth encounter. Austin explains the relation between the world and the language with the help of convention. According to him, while analysing the problem of truth, the choice of our word with which we refer to the things in the world is irrelevant. What is relevant is the following: a sentence is considered to be true, if according to the descriptive and the demonstrative conventions the language describes the world as it appears. The view of the structural isomorphism assumes so tight a bond between the language and the world that it almost makes it impossible to err. The weaknesses of Austin's theory of truth on the other hand show that it is quite possible to make errors. The possibility of making a mistake first occurred when trying to define the standard situations with the help of the descriptive conventions. And the situation becomes even more complicated, when trying to apply the demonstrative convention, thus reckoning concrete situations among standard situations.

At the end of his article, Austin draws our attention to a mistake. Because of logic's too big of an influence, the view that a statement can either be true or false has too long prevailed in the history of philosophy. Because of this, philosophers thought, that to every statement one of the truth values can be assigned. In other words: statements were only considered to be descriptive. Austin has challenged this view. He argued that not every statement is descriptive. There are statements in case of which the question of truth and falsity does not even arise. Such examples are: mathematical formulae, value judgements, sentences of fiction or the performatives. In the case of

---

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* 395.

these sentences – let us call these sentences utterances – the requirement of being true cannot be imposed on. As a result of this, he concluded, that not all statements are descriptive statements. By recognizing this fact, Austin initiated the *speech-act theory*.

The initiator of the speech-act theory was John L. Austin, but John R. Searle elaborated on it. In his work entitled *Speech Acts* Searle formulates the following thesis: “[...] speaking a language is performing speech acts, acts such as making statements, giving commands, asking questions, making promises, and so on; and more abstractly, acts such as referring and predicating [...]”<sup>16</sup> Searle’s thesis outgrows from Austinian roots. Like Austin, Searle also differentiates between non-descriptive and descriptive utterances.

We define descriptive utterances as utterances which describe the state of the world. Descriptive sentences have a single aim: to describe the state of the world according to reality. This is called the teleological view of sentences. According to this view, whenever we formulate a sentence, our purpose is to produce a true sentence. But what does it mean to formulate a sentence? And what makes a sentence to be true?

Searle’s standpoint about the truth is clear. I will try to present a short version of his theory, part of which grew out from his critical analysis of the Austin–Strawson debate about the nature of truth.<sup>17</sup> Basically Searle accepts Austin’s theory of truth, nevertheless, he makes minor changes to it. In the 1950s a debate about the obscurity of the correspondence theory of truth took place between John L. Austin and Peter F. Strawson. Strawson criticized the main points of the Austinian correspondence theory and concluded that “[t]he correspondence theory requires, not purification, but elimination.”<sup>18</sup> Although Searle accepted Strawson’s criticism, he did not think that the correspondence theory needed to be eliminated. Instead, he tried to reinterpret the theory, and reveal and clarify the original meaning of the words ‘true’, ‘fact’ and ‘correspondence’, words which had been heavily criticized by Strawson.

In Searle’s argument, the disquotational theory of truth (often regarded as one of the rival theories of the correspondence theory of truth) plays a central role. For Searle believes that the classical formulation of the correspondence theory of truth is in fact identical with the disquotational theory’s definition of truth. According to the disquotational theory an *S* sentence is considered to be true, if and only if *p*. This definition requires that *S*’s input value be a certain statement enclosed in quotation marks, and *p*’s input value be the same exact statement, but this time without the quotation marks. For

---

<sup>16</sup> John R. Searle, *Speech Acts. An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*, Cambridge University Press, 1969, 16.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. John R. Searle, “Truth and Correspondence”, in John R. Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality*, The Free Press, 1995, 199–226.

<sup>18</sup> Peter F. Strawson, “Truth”, in Peter F. Strawson, *Logico-Linguistic Papers*, Methuen, 1971, 190.

example, according to the disquotational theory the statement 'Snow is white' is true if and only if snow is white. The disquotational theory's definition of truth claims the same as the correspondence theory's definition of truth: a statement is true, if the things asserted in the statement correspond to the facts. As a conclusion we can assert, that the criteria of truth are the same in both the case of the correspondence theory and that of the disquotational theory: the things stated in a certain statement have to correspond to the facts.

Searle further argues that the final definition of truth cannot be grasped by the correspondence theory of truth. In order to be able to define the truth, we first have to define 'true' with the help of other semantically charged terms. In order to do this, we need the definitions of such terms as 'fact' and 'correspondence'.<sup>19</sup>

Considering Strawson's criticism presented against Austin's correspondence theory of truth, Searle admits, that the Austinian definition of truth treats true statements and the facts that these true statements correspond to, as if they were two radically different entities. The problem occurs, when the correspondence theory links these two different entities without further explaining the nature of their linking. The theory thus supposes that a linguistic entity can be linked with a non-linguistic entity. This supposition, however, is absurd in absence of a further explanation, because the two aforementioned entities are different in their essence.

Strawson's apparently overwhelming criticism urged Searle to formulate some arguments of his own, in order to defend the correspondence theory of truth. The elaboration of his standpoint led him to the etymological analysis of the terms 'true' and 'fact'. The etymology of the word 'true' revealed that the word is in strong connection with trustworthiness. A statement is considered to be true, if we do not doubt in its trustworthiness. A sentence which presents things in a certain way is said to be trustworthy, if the things presented are thus and thus, that is if the sentence presents things as they are. This view is in fact the corroboration of the disquotational theory of truth. Searle reaches the conclusion, that we needed the term 'true' to be able to determine the trustworthiness of a certain statement. The term 'true' serves exactly this purpose: with its help we can decide whether a statement is trustworthy or not. In the light of all these it is relevant to say, that the disquotational criterion of truth is in fact the criterion of the trustworthiness of a sentence.

In the case of 'fact' – the word being a noun – we tend to think that the word denominates an object. This is not the case, however. In case of the word 'fact' we also needed a word, to name the things according to which we declare a sentence to be true.

---

<sup>19</sup> Cf. John R. Searle, "Truth and Correspondence", in John R. Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality*, The Free Press, 1995, 203.

The disquotational criterion already defines these things, according to which we say, that a certain statement is true. We then needed a word which would do this in a general way. This word became 'fact'. Facts, then, denote those conditions, that if being fulfilled, make a statement true. Searle puts it this way: "[a]nything sufficient to make a statement true is a fact."<sup>20</sup>

It seems that Searle has a plausible explanation for the correspondence theory of truth. He argues convincingly enough, that the correspondence theory of truth can cope with the requirements of the scientific context, thus denying Strawson's argument, according to which the correspondence theory should be eliminated. Searle's long time goal however, is not to enumerate a list of arguments for the acceptance of the correspondence theory, but to formulate scientific observations about the world. In this sense he wants to contribute to the Enlightenment vision, according to which the systematic cognition of the world is possible.<sup>21</sup>

Searle thinks, that while discussing about basic questions – like questions asked by the sciences – we already find ourselves in so-called default positions. These default positions are in fact presuppositions that are unquestioned, and these constitute the background of our thinking and our language. Such default positions are for example, that "[t]here is a real world that exists independently of us, independently of our experiences, our thoughts, our language",<sup>22</sup> or that "[o]ur statements are typically true or false depending on whether they correspond to how things are, that is, to the facts in the world."<sup>23</sup> The first position is often called the position of a mind independent external realism, while the second position is referred to as the correspondence theory of truth. Searle identifies these two positions or presuppositions as the principles of the Western Rationalistic Tradition.<sup>24</sup>

To question these principles is to question the basis of the Western Rationalistic Tradition, on which science is based, and which constitutes the condition of possibility for every branch of science. The reason why Searle argues for the acceptance of the correspondence theory of truth is that of avoiding a paradoxical situation. For in case we would not accept the correspondence theory of truth, we would basically find ourselves in the paradoxical situation of trying to have a rational dispute, while querying one of the constitutive elements of rationality. And this would be absurd.

---

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* 212.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. John R. Searle, *Mind, Language and Society. Philosophy in the Real World*, Basic Books, 1999, 1–6.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* 10.

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

<sup>24</sup> Cf. John R. Searle, "Rationality and Realism, What is at Stake?", in *Daedalus*, Fall 1993, 122, 4, MIT Press, 60.

Both Austin and Searle argue for the acceptance of the correspondence theory of truth. In Austin's case the result of rethinking the problem of truth led to the distinction between the descriptive and the performative utterances. The aim of the descriptive utterances is to describe the facts. If these utterances succeed in describing the facts, we speak about true sentences. However, not every utterance's aim is to describe the facts. A group of these utterances is called performative utterances, and by uttering these, we in fact perform actions. The explicit recognition of these performative utterances is linked to Austin, and his recognition of this type of utterances roots in his thinking about the truth. Thus, in Austin's case the investigations about the correspondence theory of truth indirectly led to the sketching and later developing of the speech-act theory.

In Searle's case the correspondence theory of truth presents itself as an elemental part of the Western Rationalistic Tradition, and thus no sceptical approach can be taken seriously in reference to the correspondence theory of truth. The rejection of the correspondence theory would count as doubting the grounds of the Western Rationalistic Tradition, based on which the problem of truth can emerge, and the question concerning the truth can be framed at all. And, although Searle presents us certain arguments in favour of the acceptance of the correspondence theory of truth, he does not do this because he thinks that the rejection of the correspondence theory is possible, but rather because he wants to fulfil the requirement of the Western Rationalistic Tradition: that of giving an explanation to every problem. According to Searle, the enumeration of the possible arguments that can be presented for the acceptance of the correspondence theory of truth is as paradoxical as the questioning of the correspondence theory. The correspondence theory of truth cannot become a question under debate: it is always presupposed, that is, given.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Penguin Books, 1998.
- Austin, John L., "Truth", in J. O. Urmson and G. J. Warnock, *Philosophical Papers (by the Late) J. L. Austin*, Oxford University Press, 1961, 85–101.
- Chomsky, Noam, *Syntactic Structures*, Mouton de Gruyter, 2002.
- Haack, Susan, *Philosophy of Logic*, Cambridge University Press, 1978.
- Mates, Benson, "Austin, Strawson, Tarski, and Truth", in Leon Henkin, *Proceedings of the Tarski Symposium*, American Mathematical Society, 1974, 385–396.
- Morris, Charles W., "Foundations of the Theory of Signs", in Otto Neurath, *International Encyclopedia of Unified Science*, Vol. I, No. 2, The University of Chicago Press, 1944, 1–59.
- Plato, *Sophist*, Hackett Publishing Company, 1993.



- Priest, Graham, *In Contradiction*, Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Russell, Bertrand, "Mathematics and the Metaphysicians", in Bertrand Russell, *Mysticism and Logic*, George Allen & Unwin, 1959, 74–96.
- Searle, John R., *Speech Acts. An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*, Cambridge University Press, 1969.
- Searle, John R., "Rationality and Realism, What is at Stake?", in *Daedalus*, Fall 1993, 122, 4, MIT Press, 55–83.
- Searle, John R., "Truth and Correspondence", in John R. Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality*, The Free Press, 1995, 199–226.
- Searle, John R., *Mind, Language and Society. Philosophy in the Real World*, Basic Books, 1999.
- Sider, Theodore, *Logic for Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Strawson, Peter F., "Truth", in Peter F. Strawson, *Logico-Linguistic Papers*, Methuen, 1971, 190–213.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Routledge, 2002.

## A COMMENTARY UPON GADAMER'S INTERPRETATION OF HEGEL\*

ANTON CRIȘAN\*

**ABSTRACT.** *A Commentary upon Gadamer's Interpretation of Hegel.* In light of a renewed scholarly undertaking of the Hegel–Gadamer connection, the purpose of the present paper is to carry further this much needed re-approach of the issue by stressing yet another one of its aspects. I am referring to the scholarly insights that Gadamer himself provides us with in his interpretation of Hegel. Since many of Gadamer's essays on Hegel are actually studies originally meant as contributions to major journals dealing with Hegel's work, my claim is that we can retrieve from them answers to many ongoing debates in the Hegel scholarship. I will insist on only one of these issues, namely Gadamer's account of Hegel's relation to metaphysics.

**Keywords:** *Hegel, Gadamer, speculative, metaphysics, self-understanding, dialogical*

### Introduction

Up until recently there was virtually no scholarly interest concerning the way in which Gadamer's critical engagement with German Idealism and especially with Hegel might actually be integral to his elaboration of a philosophical hermeneutics. When it came to the topic of the main influences on Gadamer, commentators primarily focused on Gadamer's relationship with Plato and Aristotle, his well acknowledged indebtedness to Heidegger and at best his critique of Schleiermacher and Dilthey. As far as Hegel is concerned, the widespread consensus was that Hegel constituted the paradigmatic counterexample, the way that Gadamer actively avoids. Gadamer's attitude towards Hegel was usually seen as being in line with Heidegger's up-front rejection of the author of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

---

\* This research was financed through the project „Minerva – Cooperation for an elite career in Phd and post-doctoral research, the code of the contract: POSDRU/159/1.5/S/137832; the project is co-financed by the European Social Fond through the Operational Regional Program for the Development of Human Resources 2007-2013.

\* PhD student at the Doctoral School in Philosophy, Faculty of History and Philosophy, Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania; Romanian Academy Cluj-Napoca Branch. E-mail: crisananton@yahoo.com

This is surprising for at least two clusters of reasons. In the first place we can undoubtedly find in Gadamer numerous explicit remarks that it was Hegel who first and foremost offered him the way out from what he perceived to be the deadlock of modern hermeneutics as it was theorized by Schleiermacher: *And so I had to decide—between the alternatives of the “psychological reconstruction of past thought” and the “integration of past thought into one’s own thought”—against Schleiermacher and in favour of Hegel.*<sup>1</sup> Secondly there is Gadamer’s sustained, almost scholarly engagement with central Hegelian texts and themes. Moreover Gadamer’s essays on Hegel were originally intended as contributions to important journals dedicated to the study of Hegel’s work, as papers to be presented in conferences regarding various topics in connection to Hegel’s philosophy, and in addition to this we have Gadamer’s rich teaching on Hegel.<sup>2</sup> However this omission could easily be explained. Gadamer does not offer any systematic account of his use of Hegel, as he proceeds with other authors, we have no Hegel chapter in *Truth and Method*, and his book-length study

---

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Heritage of Hegel*, in Richard E. Palmer, *The Gadamer Reader – A Bouquet of the Later Writings*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Illinois, 2007, p. 329 (hereafter Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Heritage of Hegel*). Gadamer acknowledges his indebtedness to Hegel in several other respects as well. For instance, Hegel is seen as a forerunner in recuperating the philosophical relevance of the ancient philosophers, a constant preoccupation for Gadamer: *Already very early, and on the same basis, I had taken an interest in Hegel, so far as I understood him, and precisely because I only understood him that far. Above all, his Logic really possessed, for me, something of Greek innocence; also his genial Lectures on the History of Philosophy (unfortunately poorly edited) provided a bridge to a non-historical but truly speculative understanding of Platonic and Aristotelian thinking.* Cf. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Autobiographical Reflections*, Richard E. Palmer, *The Gadamer Reader – a Bouquet of the Later Writings*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Illinois, 2007, p. 12 (hereafter Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Autobiographical Reflections*). Hegel is also seen as the first one to provide a way of breaking out from modern subjectivism. Gadamer identifies Hegel as the one concerned with the embedding of the human subject in time and also the first to have seen beyond the naive picture of language and concepts as merely means deployed by subjects irrespective of their having a *life* on their own. Hegel understood the necessity of all this while at the same time taking into account the danger of falling into a purely sociological frame or into historical relativism. Hegel envisaged a purely philosophical undertaking of all this. For a more detailed account see: Robert B. Pippin: *The Persistence of Subjectivity: On the Kantian Aftermath*, part II, chapter 4 *Gadamer’s Hegel: Subjectivity and Reflection*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2005, p. 79–97.

<sup>2</sup> For instance, *Hegel und die Antike Dialektik*, on which I will heavily draw in this paper, appeared for the first time in *Hegel-Studien*, I, Bouvier, Bonn, 1961, *Hegel – Die verkehrte Welt* appeared in *Hegel-Studien*, supplement 3, Bouvier, Bonn, 1964, *Hegels Dialektik die Selbstbewusstseins*, appeared together with a republication on the latter in Hans Friedrich Fulda, Dieter Heinrich (ed.), *Materialien zu Hegels Phänomenologie des Geistes*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt, 1973. All of these are still acknowledged Hegel scholarly instruments. Also Gadamer’s book-length study on Hegel, *Das Erbe Hegels*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt, 1979, was initially a paper that he presented a year before in a congress in Naples. Subsequently after being awarded the Hegel prize from the city of Stuttgart he presented it again in the same year as the publication as a book. For the purpose of being published as a book Gadamer added an introduction. As far as the teaching goes, one should only mention the 1965 lecture series entitled *From Hegel to Heidegger* that Gadamer held at the University of Heidelberg. Heidegger himself participated in the last meeting of this lecture series.

of Hegel, *Das Erbe Hegels*, is as much an account of Hegel's influence as it is a presentation and a justification of his own philosophical hermeneutics in general.

Fortunately a series of excellent and much needed recent studies<sup>3</sup> has revealed the deep affinity – as one would certainly expect without losing sight of the many and crucial differences<sup>4</sup> – between the two seemingly opposed endeavors mentioned above. Keeping in line with these refreshing re-approaches of the Hegel–Gadamer connection, I would like to bring to light another side of this matter that to my knowledge has not yet been sufficiently stressed. I am referring to the scholarly insights that Gadamer provides us with in his commentaries on Hegel.<sup>5</sup>

My straightforward claim is that we can find in Gadamer's interpretation of Hegel pertinent answers to some of the most puzzling dilemmas that Hegel scholars still struggle with. This is not to say that we can find in Gadamer definitive resolutions to our concerns but that much of what Gadamer had to say about Hegel can be read as valuable and up to date scholarly contributions. Given the confinements of the present article I will be able to attend only to one aspect of this complex issue, namely Gadamer's account of Hegel's relation to the philosophical tradition. More precisely I will argue that what Gadamer has to say about Hegel's relationship to the philosophical tradition can be read as an answer to the question regarding the status of metaphysics in Hegel's philosophy. The core of Gadamer's interpretation lies in his explanation of what, the much discussed and certainly peculiar Hegelian speculative logic entails. As it is well known the purpose of the *Science of Logic*<sup>6</sup> is to derive and clarify the basic categories of thought. But Hegel also claims to reveal the

<sup>3</sup> I refer especially to the Kristin Gjesdal, *Gadamer and the Legacy of German Idealism*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2009; Michael N. Forster, *Hegel and Hermeneutics*, in Beiser C. Frederick (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel and Nineteenth Century Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2008, p. 174–203, Paul Redding, *Hegel's Hermeneutics*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1996.

<sup>4</sup> Ultimately Gadamer's attitude towards Hegel remains ambivalent. On the one hand he praises Hegel for reasons detailed above; on the other hand he dissociates himself categorically from Hegel in other respects, mainly in what concerns the Hegelian account of reflection. However this does not amount to a dismissal of the validity of the underlying claim set forward in this paper, namely that Gadamer's engagement with Hegel is integral to his hermeneutics. For a detailed discussion see: Robert B. Pippin, *Gadamer's Hegel*, in Malpas Jeff, Arnschuld Ulrich, Kertscher Jens (eds.), *Gadamer's Century: Essays in Honor of Hans Georg Gadamer*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 2002, p. 217–238.

<sup>5</sup> The story of Gadamer's essays dedicated to Hegel is not easy to tell. All of them are articles and studies published throughout the '60 and '70 (although there are a few during the '80 and '90 as well) in different journals and volumes dedicated to the study of Hegel's philosophy. The first collected edition of these essays appeared in 1971 entitled *Hegels Dialektik: fünf hermeneutische studien*, J.C.B. Mohr, Tübingen. Another modified version appeared seven years later *Hegels Dialektik: sechs hermeneutische studien*, J.C.B. Mohr, Tübingen, 1980. For the purpose of this paper I use the English version translated by P. Cristopher Smith: *Hegel's Dialectic: five hermeneutical studies*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1976; the five essays contained in the edition translated by Smith can also be found in the German critical edition of Gadamer's work: Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Gesammelte Werke, Band 3, Neuere Philosophie I Hegel – Husserl – Heidegger*, J.C.B. Mohr, Tübingen, 1987.

<sup>6</sup> Hegel's conception of logic is set forward in a greater work, see: *Hegel's Science of Logic*, Amherst, New York, 1999, as well as a shorter version the see Hegel, *The Encyclopedia Logic*, Indianapolis, Hackett, 1991.

basic structure of being, thus the science of logic is at once logic and ontology. What Hegel proposes is a *speculative* or dialectical logic as opposed to the logic of the Understanding. The Understanding strives to think in terms of rigid, monolithic pairs of opposites. Speculative thinking by contrast goes beyond dichotomies and tries to reconcile oppositions. Speculative thinking is not, in Gadamer's account of Hegel a dialectic of our thinking alone, nor is it a system of categories from which Hegel *subsequently constructs the system of the world as all-encompassing system of conceptual relationships*.<sup>7</sup> It is rather a dialectic of the concept that can only be realized *as the concept of the concept, the concept of spirit itself*. In pursuing such a goal, Hegel, in Gadamer's interpretation, leans on the Ancient account of dialectic. Accordingly, I will divide my paper into two argumentative steps. First, I will offer an overview of the Hegel-Gadamer relationship. In the second part, I will detail Gadamer's Hegel interpretation emphasizing the problem of metaphysics.

### 1. Reconstruction vs. Integration – An Overview of the Hegel–Gadamer Connection

As mentioned in the Introduction, Gadamer finds in Hegel the way to avoid what he considers to be the dead-end of modern hermeneutics as one can find it in Schleiermacher. Even though he praises Schleiermacher for universalizing the task of hermeneutics he none the less disapproves of the general direction that the former ascribed to it. For Schleiermacher, in Gadamer's opinion the objective reconstruction of the original meaning the works of the past<sup>8</sup> is the task of hermeneutics. Our relation with tradition is thus conceived in Schleiermacher as the restoration of the original circumstances that produced the work in question:

Hence all the various means of historical reconstruction – re-establishing the “world” to which it belongs, re-establishing the original situation which the creative artist “had in mind”, performing in the original style, and so on – can claim to reveal the true meaning of a work of art and guard against misunderstanding and anachronistic interpretation. This is, in fact, Schleiermacher's conception and the tacit premise of his entire hermeneutics.<sup>9</sup>

There are two dimensions that constitute the methodological core of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics according to Gadamer.<sup>10</sup> They concern the linguistic and cultural resources the speaker has at his or her disposal, as well as his or her individual application of these

---

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Hegel's Dialectic Five Hermeneutical Studies*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, p. 8–9 (hereafter Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Hegel's Dialectic*).

<sup>8</sup> I will resume my presentation to the issue of the relationship of the interpreter to the great works of the past.

<sup>9</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, Continuum, London and New York, 2004 (hereafter Hans-Georg Gadamer *Truth and Method*).

<sup>10</sup> I take the account of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics from Kristin Gjesdal, *op.cit.*

shared resources. Schleiermacher calls the reflection on the common resources of language grammatical interpretation. Grammatical interpretation investigates the relation between the particular text and the "language area" in which it emerges. Reflection on how language forms itself in an individual expression is the task of technical or psychological interpretation. This appropriation of the inner core of a work is necessary because Schleiermacher, in Gadamer's account, sees the linguistic expression as falling back to individual, aesthetic feeling. Like artistic genius, the individual language user is able to transcend the limitations of grammatical correctness and semantic conventions. According to Gadamer, Schleiermacher's hermeneutics should be understood as being oriented towards understanding individual thought as nothing but a free construct and a free expression of an individual being. In order to grasp this free expression belonging to an individual being Schleiermacher makes use of the idea of a hermeneutic circle.

In Schleiermacher's hermeneutics, according to Gadamer, the hermeneutic circle is meant to render explicit the relation between individual language-user and original audience, and its ultimate goal is to achieve what Gadamer takes to be the conclusive unlocking of its meaning. This, in Gadamer's opinion, culminates in Schleiermacher's insistence that the aim of hermeneutics is to understand a writer better than he or she understood him or herself. Gadamer does not deny or a priori reject the importance of the reconstruction of the original conditions in which a work passed down to us as a useful tool of understanding it. What Gadamer questions is the very result of such an account of hermeneutics. Gadamer asks himself if what we truly obtain is the much desired original meaning of the respective work.<sup>11</sup> For Gadamer any act of restoration of past life remains futile given the basic historicity of our being.<sup>12</sup> Gadamer provides in this sense an illuminating example. If we take, for instance, a painting out from the museum and put it back in a church, where it used to belong, the outcome will never be that of the restoration of the original meaning of the work. What we merely obtain is yet another place of touristic enjoyment.<sup>13</sup>

Two immediate related conclusions follow from this and there are both unacceptable for Gadamer. First, the interpreter is completely detached from what he is interpreting. There is no element of self-understanding in the process of unveiling past thought. As such, no hermeneutic experience as transformative experience can occur. Second if we keep Schleiermacher's account of hermeneutics, we are condemned to an understanding of tradition as lacking any sense of continuity and as such any contemporary relevance. Instead of this Gadamer argues for an understanding of tradition as a continuing process of integration and in favour of a concept of understanding as involving a dimension of self-understanding. Hegel provides the possibility of both. The alternative for the

---

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 159.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 159.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 160.

objective and fruitfulness reconstruction of past meanings is the Hegelian reflective mediation of our relation to the past:

Here Hegel states a definite truth, inasmuch as the essential nature of the historical spirit consists not in the restoration of the past but in thoughtful mediation with contemporary life. Hegel is right when he does not conceive of such thoughtful mediation as an external relationship established after the fact but places it on the same level as the truth of art itself. In this way his idea of hermeneutics is fundamentally superior to Schleiermacher.<sup>14</sup>

In his appropriation as well as in his critique of Hegel, Gadamer always dwells on Hegel's relation to Ancient and especially Platonic philosophy, one that ensures the image of a dialogical Hegel.<sup>15</sup> I will, in what follows, say a few words on the subject since this is not a single occurrence in Gadamer. His account of Hegel is often interviewed with that of Greek thought. This will serve us as a good introduction for the next section, since Gadamer's interpretation of Hegel is in fact a contrasting between Hegelian and Ancient thought. The way in which Gadamer will try to go beyond Schleiermacher can be described as an attempt to carve out a notion of reason that is comprehensive enough to accept its own situatedness in history.<sup>16</sup> Gadamer understands his own hermeneutics as deeply Hegelian in spirit. The task that he ascribes to his hermeneutics is *to retrace the path of Hegel's phenomenology of mind until we discover in all that is subjective the substantiality that determines it*.<sup>17</sup> The substantive in the subjective, the historical in what appears trans-historical as well as a concept of tradition as a continuous, circular back-and-forth movement between understanding ourselves and understanding history is what philosophical hermeneutics has to learn from Hegelian phenomenology. Gadamer emphasizes the importance of dialogue in Plato's early works, especially in the *Philebus*. He praises Socrates for understanding philosophy as an ongoing inter-subjective exchange, rather than a set of rigid doctrines and elaborated arguments. Plato is "no Platonist," for that matter. The dialogical aspect of Plato's philosophy is not merely external or decorative but is essentially connected to his conception of truth, rationality, and knowledge. Philosophy is an ongoing dialogical exercise. As such, it is determined by a willingness to recognize the rationality of the other. Its internal mechanism is the *docta ignorantia*.

While focusing on the Socratic *docta ignorantia*, Gadamer emphasizes a deep affinity between Socratic dialogue and the Hegelian dialectics of history. In Socratic dialogue, the conversation is made possible by the interlocutors' capacity to gain knowledge as

---

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 161.

<sup>15</sup> In Gadamer's own words: *To be sure, then, what shaped my thinking in this way was a personalized and dialogical Hegel behind whom there always stood the daily, thoughtful interaction with the Platonic dialogues*. Cf. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Heritage of Hegel*, p. 331.

<sup>16</sup> I take the account of Gadamer's appropriation of Hegel from Kristin Gjesdal, *op.cit.*

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 301.

agreement on a given problem. This agreement however most often proves to be parochial and in need of further, discursive work. At stake, as Gadamer reads it, is an ongoing progress towards increased universality, a perpetual effort to reach a dialectical sublation of two seemingly opposed positions into a more universal third. According to Gadamer, Hegel's phenomenology displays a similar dynamic. In the early Platonic dialogues, Socrates develops his position through discussion with someone else. The Hegelian shapes of consciousness develop through the self-criticism of spirit. However, in the *Phenomenology*, the spirit proceeds through gradually overcoming that which is alien. The very self that is engaged in the process matures through considering and integrating the point of view of the other. This is the central philosophical intuition of Hegelian dialectics namely that of transforming what is alien into something that is its own. In this sense, Hegel, too, is a dialogical thinker, and it is the force of his thinking to move the dialectics of dialogue from the level of interpersonal conversation to the level of history and tradition.<sup>18</sup>

## 2. Hegel and the metaphysical tradition – a Gadamerian account

One of the most challenging tasks that any serious interpreter of Hegel has to face is to give an accurate account of his relation to the philosophical tradition and most notably with Kant and the other great representatives of German Idealism. There is probably no other place where scholars are more divided than in how to render explicit Hegel's relation to metaphysics. The questions to be posed are: does Hegel return to a pre-Kantian notion of substance metaphysics<sup>19</sup> or is he to be understood as a self-conscious critical philosopher working in the wake of Kant's rigorous attempt of fleshing out the limitations of human knowledge, or is he perhaps pursuing the ideal of a renewal of metaphysics in the light of the Kantian intervention? Many of the recent Anglophone commentators<sup>20</sup> sought to envisage an entirely non-metaphysical portrait of Hegel. Largely these studies assume that Hegel as a post-Kantian thinker offers a modified version of the project of transcendental idealism. But one can find in Anglophone as well as in German scholarship interpreters who, on the contrary, dismiss such a hypothesis and argue for an affinity between Hegel and some pre-Kantian lines of thought, not to

---

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Kristin Gjesdal, *Gadamer and the Legacy of German Idealism*, p. 132–135.

<sup>19</sup> For a detailed account of Hegel's relationship to pre-Kantian metaphysics, see: Brady Bowman, *Hegel and Metaphysics of Absolute Negativity*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2013, especially chapter 2: *Hegel's complex relationship to pre-Kantian metaphysics*, p. 62–101.

<sup>20</sup> I refer especially to: Robert B. Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism – the Satisfaction of Self-Consciousness*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989 and Terry Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology: the Sociality of Reason*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996.



mention that Kant himself, or at least the young Kant, is now being linked back to pre-critical doctrines.

Although Gadamer does not concern himself specifically with the issue whether Hegel is *per se* a metaphysician or not<sup>21</sup> his portrait of the inherently speculative nature of philosophy in Hegel's thought might shed some light on the issue. In its basic outline Gadamer's contention is that, as far as Hegel is concerned, the assumption that the form of thought by which the truth can be adequately attained should be the form of the *finite thought-determinations* or more precisely of the categories of traditional ontology is utterly untenable. Furthermore, Hegel agrees with Kant's diagnosis that these traditional categories should be the focus of critical attention. Yet in Hegel's opinion Kant is not sufficiently radical in his intention, for he confines himself to considering only the range of their validity, while restraining himself from examining what Hegel calls their internal *logical structure*. Stephen Houlgate<sup>22</sup> offers an explanation of this topic that is very close to what Gadamer had in mind. Kant, according to Hegel, assumes that all acts of understanding should be taken as acts of judgment, and as such, all concepts including our basic categories, become *predicates of possible judgments*.

Houlgate offers an illuminating example regarding the Kantian use of the concept of substance. For Kant, if one takes concept of substance, the purpose of the concept would not be that of standing independently as an object of contemplation but to be applied to something in a judgment such as the judgment "X is substance". Starting with the assumption according to which thought is mainly judgment, Kant then goes on to derive the basic categories of thought from the various forms of judgments that we are familiar with from traditional logic. The affirmative judgment, "S is P", delivers the category of "reality", the negative judgment, "S is not P", yields the category of "negation", the problematic judgment, "S might be P", emphasizes the category of possibility. As such the categories can serve as *predicates* in any other form of judgment: one can equally state that "S is possible", or "S is not possible", or that "S might be a substance". Each category, however, has its *origin* in a particular form of judgment or putting it in another way in the specific way in which the subject and predicate hold together in a particular form of judgment. Each judgment form thus gives rise to a specific category that can then serve as a predicate in several different forms of judgment. In Hegel's view, Kant's deduction is open to criticism since the categories are derived not from the very nature of thought as such but from what functions merely as a weak assumption, namely the fact that judgment is the essential activity of thought.

<sup>21</sup> Though he does mention Hegel as a forerunner in his attempt of surpassing substance metaphysics: *To defend this view, and thus to oppose the common interpretation of Aristotle's criticisms of the doctrine of ideas, and to attack also the substance metaphysics of the Western tradition, has been the goal of my writing in this area. By the way, I do not stand all alone in this; Hegel also held such a view*; Cf. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Autobiographical Reflections*, p. 31.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Stephen Houlgate, *Hegel's Logic* in Frederick C. Beiser (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel and Nineteenth Century Philosophy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009, p. 111–134; see also Stephen Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel's Logic*, Purdue University Press, West Lafayette Indiana, 2006, p.10–16.

However Kant never provides a satisfactory argument as to which judgment is fundamental to thought, or as to why judgment must take certain forms. Kant takes all of this for granted uncritically, and for that matter, he cannot prove that he has discovered all the basic categories of thought or that he has conceived of them properly.<sup>23</sup>

This idea, of the critique of the assumption according to which judgment is the essential activity of thinking lies at the core of Gadamer's interpretation of Hegel. Accordingly Gadamer conceives of Hegel as providing a definition of philosophical thinking as primarily comprehensive in nature and as such as rejecting the form of the judgment as philosophies proper mode of presentation. Gadamer claims that in doing so, in distancing himself from this assumption he draws heavily on the Ancient account of dialectic. Gadamer advances the claim of a deep affinity between Greek philosophy and Hegelian dialectics. His claim is that even though Hegel did not himself explicitly consider this aspect of his philosophy and did not give any systematic account of it but only hinted to it in a rather preliminary manner, one can still convincingly argue for such a state of affairs. From the outset, however it should be emphasized that despite Gadamer's identification of many similarities between Hegelian philosophy and Ancient thought, he ultimately conceives of Hegelian philosophy as primarily resting on a modern, more precisely Cartesian ethos. The modern strand will prevail in Hegel thought. This will concern us later.

What resources of the Ancient dialectics does Hegel deploy and to what extent.<sup>24</sup> In order to properly answer this question we must remember, Gadamer advises us, Hegel's claim regarding the fundamentally speculative nature of philosophy. If philosophy is essentially speculative, it must follow that the form of the judgment or the statement is plainly inadequate as its mode of presentation: *The fact that the form of the proposition is not suitable for expressing speculative truths was something Hegel had both known and told us.*<sup>25</sup> Accordingly, Hegel's use of the Ancient dialectics stems from his claim regarding the inadequacy of the form of the statement as the proper vehicle for the expression of speculative truth. For Gadamer Hegel's philosophy is intrinsically comprehensive, and for that matter, the ordinary form of the judgment is unable to satisfy this internal demand.

I will try to sketch Hegel's argument as it is understood by Gadamer in what follows. In the judgment we always encounter an underlying subject to which the predicate is related as its accidents and where the same subject is posited as a fixed basis.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Stephen Holgate, *Hegel's Logic*, p. 115–116.

<sup>24</sup> I do not intend to pursue here the vast and multi-faceted subject of Hegel's relation to Ancient philosophy nor the complicated and controversial issue of the accuracy of Hegel's account of classical thought. I simply intend to shed light on Gadamer's interpretation of Hegel alongside his own understanding of Hegel's relation to Ancient dialectics. For that matter I will abstain from references to the Platonic or Aristotelian texts, nor will I critically assess Hegel's interpretation of the Greek texts. For a detailed account of Hegel and Ancient philosophy see de Laurentiis Alegria, *Hegel's Interpretation of Aristotle's Psyche – A Qualified Defence* in Katerina Deligiorgi (ed.), *Hegel: New Directions*, Acumen, Chesham, 2006, p. 243–254.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Heritage of Hegel*, p. 322.

Accordingly, the activity of determination is pictured as a back and forth movement across the posited subject. The subject can therefore be determined in one or another respect, it can always be judged in yet another or another way. The respects in which a subject can be judged come out to be external to the subject itself. As a consequence determination is merely external to the matter at hand, since always new predicates can be assigned to the fixed subject, which in return will always extend beyond any particular determination. Determination's development therefore lacks necessity. All these determinations relate to each other only externally.

Contrary to this picture, in speculative thinking which by contrast behaves comprehensively, this tendency to reach beyond the subject of the sentence to other things in virtue of which the subject is then determined as such or such is removed. Speculative thinking proceeds in an opposite direction. Surely it begins with the subject but with the sole purpose of discovering that the subject has passed into the predicate, that it has been sublimated and that in fact the predicate becomes the subject. Our natural tendency when we intend to learn something new about a thing is to reach beyond the foundation of that subject to something else, which we subsequently ascribe to that subject as a new predicate. Philosophic statements are an entirely different case. In philosophical thinking, thought does not proceed by way of reaching a predicate that refers to something else but instead to come to a predicate which takes us or, in Gadamer's own words, forces us back to the subject itself. In this way we are obligated to scrutinize the subject anew:

We do not take up something new or different in the predicate, for in thinking the predicate we are actually penetrating into that which the subject is. The subjectum taken as a firm foundation is abandoned since thought does not think something else in the predicate but rather rediscovers the subject itself.<sup>26</sup>

The subject understood as a firm foundation is forsaken in speculative thinking. To clarify his claim Gadamer takes one of Hegel's well known examples, the statement *The real is the universal*. The concept of the real is the one defined in this statement and as such we cannot ascertain that thought passes beyond that concept. The real is not determined in this statement as something other than itself, rather as that which it is and that which it is proves to be the universal, hence the universal is the true subject of thought. Gadamer's point is that from the perspective of speculative thinking the essential issue that one should notice here is the consequence that thought goes back into itself. Thought for Gadamer's Hegel reflects on itself since as a matter of fact it does not reflect about something while reaching outside of its content in order to bring in other determinations of reflection. Thought understood from a speculative point of view immerses itself in its own content, *in that which the subject itself is*.<sup>27</sup> This constitutes what Gadamer understands to be the

---

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Hegel's Dialectic*, p 19.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Hegel's Dialectic*, p 19.

essence of dialectical speculation, namely the thinking of nothing else but this kind of selfhood, *thinking the being of self itself one in which the ego of self-consciousness has always already recognized itself*.<sup>28</sup> The subjectivity of self-consciousness is for Hegel as understood by Gadamer, indeed the very subject of all statements. Quoting the *Encyclopaedia*, Gadamer ensures us that according to Hegel philosophical speculation begins with the decision to try to think purely, or putting it another way to think nothing besides that which is being thought. To sum up, Gadamer offers us three elements that he perceives as fundamental for speculative thinking. The first concerns what is thinking and accordingly thinking is thinking of something in itself taken by itself.<sup>29</sup> From this it follows that thinking necessarily thinks contradictory determinations simultaneously. Finally the unity of contradictory determinations has the proper nature of the self.

According to Gadamer, Hegel finds all the three elements in the dialectics of the Ancients. The first point can, in Gadamer's opinion, easily be identified in Ancient dialectics. In Gadamer's almost empathic words *only the decision to try to think purely and to avoid imaginative notions could have led to the incredibly daring thought characteristic of Eleatic philosophy*.<sup>30</sup> Gadamer offers the example of Zeno, who employs such thought. Zeno's demonstration that if there were "a many" it would have to be infinitely small because it would consist of the smallest parts without size, and at the same time it would have to be infinitely large since it would consist of infinitely many such parts rests on the presupposition that both determinations, that of the smallness and that of the multiplicity of the parts, are thought by themselves, and in each case lead by themselves to determinations of the "many." The second element regarding simultaneous thinking of contradictory determinations, can also be traced in Zeno's argument as far as to the argument is seen as an indirect refutation of the hypothesis of the "many." But it is such a refutation only insofar as smallness and size are to be directly ascribed to the many and not in different respects. A separation of the different aspects of multiplicity and smallness would, in fact, prevent the contradiction. The form of the argument corresponds in Gadamer's opinion exactly to the one which the Ancients attributed to the Eleatic Parmenides. The contradiction of every statement must be inquired upon along with the statement itself and the consequences of both outlined. In Zeno, however, the point of thinking determinations together and by themselves is a negatively dialectical one. That which is determined by such contradiction is, as contradictory, null and void. Hence the third component of Hegelian dialectics cannot be found in Ancient dialectics. Gadamer offers a detailed account as to why this is as such. It rests primarily on a series of misinterpretations from Hegel's part of key Platonic passages that Gadamer discusses at length. I will not enter this discussion since in

---

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Hegel's Dialectic*, p 19.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Hegel's Dialectic*, p 21.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Hegel's Dialectic*, p. 20.

presupposes too many philological details that cannot be properly dealt with here. It will suffice to state that even though Gadamer criticizes Hegel for misinterpreting Plato, he does not for that matter dismiss the value of his insights into the truly speculative Plato. I would like to point out another aspect namely the manner in which Gadamer contrast Hegelian and Ancient Dialectics. In detailing the relation between Hegel and Ancient philosophy, Gadamer the fact that Hegelian dialectics follows the Eleatic and Platonic model of demonstration rather than the Aristotelian.<sup>31</sup>

Gadamer's remark is not merely a pedagogical tool meant to help us better understand the Hegelian or the Ancient accounts of dialectics. Gadamer is convinced of the fact that valuable Platonic insights are appropriated as such by Hegel thus appropriated into his own thought. Moreover, Gadamer sees Hegel playing a historical role in the interpretation of Plato Hegel is seen as the first to have acknowledged Plato's philosophical depth. Hegel is the discoverer of the truly speculative dialogues namely the *Sophist*, *Parmenides* and *Philebus* virtually unknown for eighteenth century philosophy. However in pursuing a methodological ideal of dialectic Hegel heavily relies on the Socratic dialogues, on what Gadamer calls *the immanent formation and self-unfolding of thought which he extols in Socrates guidance of discussion*<sup>32</sup> rather than on the late dialogues. Gadamer disrupts the discussion of the affinity between Platonic and Hegelian dialectics in order to point out the fact despite his great achievement of rehabilitating the ancient thinkers as philosophers, Hegelian dialectics derives its methodological strength from elsewhere namely from principles of the Cartesian method, on the learning of the Catechism, and on the Bible.<sup>33</sup> Gadamer insists that for Hegel the truth of what he perceives to be the modern era<sup>34</sup> is indeed superior to the classical understanding of dialectic.

---

<sup>31</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Hegel's Dialectic*, p. 6.

<sup>32</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Hegel's Dialectic*, p. 7.

<sup>33</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Hegel's Dialectic*, p. 7.

<sup>34</sup> For a well informed account of Hegel's understanding of modernity, see Ludwig Siep, *Practical reason and spirit in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* in Dean Moyer, Michael Quante, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit – A Critical Guide*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2008, especially Section I *The Concept of Spirit and its Historical Origin*, p. 173–175. In Siep's opinion Hegel attributes his concept of spirit to what he understands to be *the modern age and its religion*. By the phrase *modern age* Hegel designates in both Siep's as well as Gadamer's opinion the *querelle des anciens et des modernes* as following the Greco-Roman era. The religion that Hegel has in mind is naturally Christianity and the philosophy that characterizes it is Neo-Platonism. Hegel's understanding of *nous* is it Siep's opinion rather Aristotelian as *Denken des Denkens*. Besides Christian theology and its Hellenistic heritage, Siep identifies yet another two historical sources for Hegel's concept of spirit namely, his interpretation of Greek ethical life and the Herderian concept of *Volkgeist*. Siep and Gadamer share the same opinion when claiming that for Hegel the modern strand is superior to the ancient account.

## Conclusion

In light of the recent reconsideration in Gadamer scholarship of his relation to German Idealism and especially to Hegel, I tried in this paper to further develop this much needed re-approach. Accordingly, I tried to retrieve the scholarly insights that Gadamer provides us with in his interpretation of Hegel. Starting with Gadamer's contrasting of Hegelian philosophy with Greek thought, I sought to shed some light on how Gadamer understands Hegel's relation to the philosophical tradition, more precisely what is Gadamer's take on the status of metaphysics in Hegel's thought. Even though Gadamer does not deal with these issues as such, my contention was that in his interpretation of what Hegelian *speculative logic* amounts to, one can retrace some answers to such a question.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Primary sources

- Gadamer, Hans-Georg, *Hegels Dialektik: fünf hermeneutische Studien*, J.C.B. Mohr, Tübingen.
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg, *Hegel's Dialectic: Five Hermeneutical Studies*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1976.
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg, *Hegels Dialektik: sechs hermeneutische studien*, J.C.B. Mohr, Tübingen, 1980.
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg, *Gesammelte Werke, Band 3, Neuere Philosophie I Hegel – Husserl – Heidegger*, J.C.B. Mohr, Tübingen, 1987.
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg, *Truth and Method*, Continuum, London and New York, 2004.
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg, *The Heritage of Hegel*, in Richard E. Palmer, *The Gadamer Reader – A Bouquet of the Later Writings*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Illinois, 2007.
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg, *Autobiographical Reflections*, Richard E. Palmer, *The Gadamer Reader – a Bouquet of the Later Writings*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Illinois, 2007.
- Hegel, G. W. F., *Das Erbe Hegels*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt, 1979.
- Hegel, G. W. F., *The Encyclopedia Logic*, Indianapolis, Hackett, 1991.
- Hegel, G. W. F., *Hegel's Science of Logic*, Amherst, New York, 1999.

### Secondary sources

- Bowman, Brady, *Hegel and Metaphysics of Absolute Negativity*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2013.
- Forster, N. Michael, *Hegel and Hermeneutics*, in Beiser, C. Frederick (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel and Nineteenth Century Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2008.

- Gjesdal, Kristin, *Gadamer and the Legacy of German Idealism*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2009.
- Houlgate, Stephen, *The Opening of Hegel's Logic*, Purdue University Press, West Lafayette Indiana, 2006.
- Houlgate, Stephen, *Hegel's Logic* in Frederick Beiser, C. (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel and Nineteenth Century Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2009.
- Pippin, B. Robert, *The Persistence of Subjectivity: On the Kantian Aftermath, part II, chapter 4 Gadamer's Hegel: Subjectivity and Reflection*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2005.
- Pippin, B. Robert, *Hegel's Idealism – the Satisfaction of Self-Consciousness*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989 and Terry Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology: the Sociality of Reason*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996.
- Pippin, B. Robert, *Gadamer's Hegel*, in Malpas Jeff, Arnsward Ulrich, Kertscher Jens (eds.), *Gadamer's Century: Essays in Honor of Hans Georg Gadamer*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 2002.
- Redding, Paul, *Hegel's Hermeneutics*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1996.

## THE MEANING OF RUSSIAN NIHILISM

OLEG GHILAS\*

**ABSTRACT.** *The Meaning of Russian Nihilism.* The origins of nihilistic doctrine can be traced to Greek antiquity; but the spread of this term and shaping of its meaning belongs to eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a historical period nihilism came close to the uprising movements, to the negation of the old principles and the refusal of a world built on a conservative tradition. This meaning of nihilism transpires in Dostoyevsky's writings, in which his characters deny the divine principle. Then why does nihilism stand out by negation, what is the relationship between nihilism and atheism? Which are the values nihilism puts forward instead? Can we talk about any values regarding this new phenomenon? These are some questions we seek to answer in the following lines, using Dostoevsky's writings, who revealed nihilism in all its breadth.

**Keywords:** *nihilism, atheism, values, doctrine, freedom*

### The Etymology of Nihilism

Nihilism, an adaptation of international Latin term *nihilismus* (from lat. = nothing), means reduction to nothing, to nothingness. As a philosophical term it represents that theory or attitude which denies any real (non-relational or imperishable) substance of the existing ones, and therefore the real nature of knowledge (the existence of truth) or ethical values. Western scholars regard the sophist Gorgias as standing at the origin of nihilism.<sup>1</sup>

The term appears for first time in 1733 in a philosophical context, but also in a theological one, in a study by Friedrich Lebrecht Goetzius, *De nonismo et nichilismo in theologia*. Fr. H. Jacobi enforced the actual use of the concept since 1799 (*Sendschreiben an Fichte*), when he praised Kant's transcendental philosophy as nihilistic and particularly J. G. Fichte's "doctrine's renewal". In 1819 in *The World as Will and Representation*,

---

\* PhD student at the Doctoral School in Philosophy, Faculty of History and Philosophy, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania. E-mail: olegghilas@yahoo.com

<sup>1</sup> Christos Yannaras, *On the Absence and Unknowability of God: Heidegger and the Areopagite*, 2nd edition, trans. by Haralambos Ventis, New York, Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2004, p. 21.



Schopenhauer approached “in a nihilistic key to the issue of knowledge and the essence of reality, [...]”. Since 1836, the term was also used by W. Hamilton in *Lectures on metaphysics* to define the doctrine by which D. Hume negated substantial reality (*Lectures on metaphysics and logic*, 1856-1860).<sup>2</sup> The term nihilism spread due to the emergence in 1862 in Russia of the Turgenev’s novel *Fathers and Sons*, in which the author describes the nihilistic spirit of the main character Bazarov, who positions himself against the principles and morals of Russian traditional conservatism. Bazarov’s attitude designated a radical denial of an authority that doesn’t have its outset in rationality and utility. The real-life prototype for this character was the literary critic Dmitry I. Pisarev, who claimed that the spreading of science, philosophy and materialist ethics fostered human liberation from the “irrational” ties of family, religion and society. Based initially on a “rationalistic egoism”, Russian nihilists’ attitude was afterwards oriented towards the idea of social happiness that had a utilitarian substrate. Starting herein, the term acquires thereby a political meaning, since it regards “the extremist attitude of the young socialists, opponents of the tsarist aristocracy”.<sup>3</sup>

Nihilism is a doctrine that, in a general sense, negates the “reality of being” both theoretically and practically. More specifically, we can distinguish among the *metaphysical* nihilism that denies the “substantial” reality, the *logical-epistemological* nihilism that can be assimilated into the scepticism that denies the objective value of truth and the *moral and political* nihilism resulting from namely that loss of metaphysical truth. This third meaning is actually the negation or the rejection of any principle, rule or other social duties. Beyond these meanings, nihilism is also “the doctrine of an intellectual and political movement” inside the Russian world as asserted itself in the second half of the nineteenth century and which aimed the transformation of “social structure on the basis of an individualism of pessimistic and naturalist character”.<sup>4</sup> To this “revolutionary movement” took part students and young generation of 1860s.

In philosophy dictionaries, the names of Dostoevsky and Nietzsche appear together, but only in order to mark the two different views on this movement. Nihilism, according to Nietzsche, is a natural conclusion of the decadent Western history, which includes the classical philosophy, Christian religion and traditional morality. This is the crisis point of civilization and the German philosopher suggests an overtaking of nihilism. Thus, Nietzsche distinguishes between an active nihilism, which aims to reassess the traditional order of values that perpetuate only a semblance of the life; and a *passive* nihilism, which designates the weakness and the submission of the ones who lack the

<sup>2</sup> *Enciclopedia de filosofie și științe umane [Encyclopedia of Philosophy and Human Sciences]*, trans. by Luminița Cosma, Anca Dumitru, Florin Frunză, Radu Gâdei, Cornel Mihai Ionescu, Mihaela Pop, Hanibal Stănculescu, Sabin Totu, Bucharest, ALL Educational, 2004, p. 752.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 752.

<sup>4</sup> *Enciclopedia Filosofica, III, LI-REI [Encyclopedia of Philosophy, III, L-R]*, Center of Philosophical Studies of Gallarate, Institute of Cultural Exchange, Venice–Rome, 1957, pp. 890–891.

force of a revolt against general conformism. We owe to Dostoevsky a deeper meaning of the term, by his literary illustration of a society where “everything is permitted”, as according to Ivan’s formula from *The Karamazov Brothers* novel, as a result of the loss of traditional Christian values in modern world.

This current is characterized by the negation, rejection and denial of any principle outside human space, i.e. by not acknowledging the divine principle.<sup>5</sup> This is its first and defining aspect, by which it actually attempts a self-definition and assertion.<sup>6</sup> And from here on it continues with the negation of the per se accepted values – of the traditional values recognized as superior ideas having normative character, of the notion of good, of truth and its founding principle and function, of the limit. Starting with nothingness theorization, that with the awareness of absence of a meaning to be referred against a supreme and exterior principle, the individual becomes free. Man can no longer relate only to himself.<sup>7</sup> Thus, paradoxically and since it is a doctrine, nihilism, by denying tradition’s coercion gives the freedom to man. Why then are the axiological and lofty ideas negated? Is nihilism just a negation for the sake of negation, or does it have a certain claiming character? Restoration of justice, of a strictly human equity, in order to release the man, seems to be the only guiding criterion for nihilism.

And while the West is characterized by an individualistic nihilism conform to the model of Max Stirner,<sup>8</sup> in Russian world this movement refers to a community that has a collectivistic specific. And on this basis, Russian nihilism is also messianic, because essentially it acts as an atheism and it claims the function of humanity salvation. Its apocalyptic mood<sup>9</sup> aims namely the transformation of a deified universe into a human one. In this key its radical dominant trait becomes evincible. These expressions of nihilism transpire from Dostoevsky’s writings and from the way he imagined Russian nihilistic phenomenon.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Filosofia de la A-Z. Dicționar enciclopedic de filosofie [Philosophy from A to Z, Encyclopedic Dictionary]*, Élisabeth Clément, Chantal Demonque, Laurence Hansen-Love, Pierre Kahn; trans. by Magdalena Cojoccea-Mărculescu, Aurelian Cojoccea, Bucharest, ALL Educational, 1999, p. 366.

<sup>6</sup> Berdyaev says that the denial by nihilism of the accepted lofty ideas must be seen as a religious phenomenon, because like Orthodox asceticism, nihilism was an individualist movement, but it was also directed against the fulness and richness of life. Nihilism considers as sinful luxury not only art, metaphysics and spiritual values, but religion also. All its strength must be devoted to the emancipation of earthly man, the emancipation of the labouring people from their excessive suffering, to establishing conditions of happy life, to the destruction of superstition and prejudice, conventional standards and lofty ideas, which enslave man and hinder his happiness. That is the one thing needful, all else is of the Devil. Nicolai Berdyaev, *The Origins of the Russian Communism*, Glasgow, Robert MacLehose and Company Ltd, The Glasgow University Press, 1948, p. 45.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Franco Volpi, *Nihilismul [The Nihilism]*, trans. by Teodora Pavel, foreword by Ion Tănăsescu, Iași, European Institute Press, 2014, p. 28.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *Enciclopedia Filosofica, III, LI-REI [Encyclopedia of Philosophy, III, L-R]*, Center of Philosophical Studies of Gallarate, Institute of Cultural Exchange, Venice–Rome, 1957, pp. 890–891.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Nicolai Berdyaev, *The Origins of the Russian Communism*, Glasgow, Robert MacLehose and Company Ltd, The Glasgow University Press, 1948, pp. 44–45.

Dostoevsky's intelligentsia are usually the antithetical product of liberation movements in Russia, a (subjectively or objectively) undemocratic effect of democracy, an elite result of the plebeians. However, the intellectual has no longer anything to do with the old patriarchal society or with the noble world principles, longings or desires; but he is stuck into the tragic antinomies of the modern world.<sup>10</sup>

In this transforming world Dostoevsky will have placed his nihilistic characters, the anti-heroes: Raskolnikov, Ippolit, Stavroghin and Ivan Karamazov.

### **The Anti-heroes or Dostoyevskyan Nihilistic Characters**

For Dostoevsky all the actors, in almost all of his writings are at the limit of reasoning and through extreme mental exercise they fall within the irrational, becoming unpredictable even for themselves. Man, as a spiritual being, has this space of irrational on his side. This unusual characteristic provides unpredictability, hope and supposes the existence of the absurdity or the tragedy. That is why Dostoevsky did not accept other forms of social organization and declared himself against nihilism and socialism that in the end could limit one's freedom by fencing him exceedingly, as both are based only on a rational reasoning. Man is not a piano "key", as he says in *Notes from Underground*, which is why he resisted humanistic ideas of "progress", "general welfare", "happiness", etc.

Eventually his heroes are representatives of nihilism, of refusal, of opposing to certain norms, values and precepts. There are attempts of these ones to introduce their new attitudes, morals, ideas. His heroes also stand out by negation, which makes them "antiheroes" – the most eloquent example remaining the antihero "from the underground".

The first clearly defined characters, bearers of new nihilistic ideas appear in Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (1866), a work that opens the four major writings of the author.<sup>11</sup> It is worth noting that his position towards nihilism is present in various remarks of his characters, in his "figures" of the nihilism, in the interference with the likewise new ideas of an emergent socialism. Nihilism and socialism, as doctrines, are close, and when the author refers critically about nihilism, then usually an acid critique of socialism follows or vice versa. This is not accidental: the writer has demonstrated the unifying binder of these ones, their common anti-Christian germ.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Ion Ianoși, *Dostoevski: Tragedia subteranei; Dostoevski și Tolstoi: Poveste cu doi necunoscuți* [Dostoyevsky: *Underworld's Tragedy; Dostoyevsky and Tolstoi: A Tale with Two Strangers*], Bucharest, Europress Group, 2013, p. 27.

<sup>11</sup> *Crime and Punishment* (1866), *The Idiot* (1869), *The Possessed* (1872), *The Karamazov Brothers* (1880).

<sup>12</sup> "However, it was by choosing to make reason, in its most limited aspect, into an act of faith that the nihilists provided their successors with a model. They believed in nothing but reason and self-interest. But instead of skepticism, they chose to propagate a doctrine and became socialists. Therein lies their basic contradiction." Albert Camus, *The Rebel*, trans. by Anthony Bower, New York, Vintage Books, 1991, p. 154.

The investigator Nikodim Fomitch, shortly before Raskolnikov's self-denunciation will have said:

Your career is an intellectual one and you won't be deterred by failure. For you, one may say, all the attractions of life *nihil est* – you are an ascetic, a monk, a hermit! There are a great many Nihilists about nowadays, you know, and indeed it is not to be wondered at. What sort of days are they? I ask you. But we thought... you are not a Nihilist, of course? Answer me openly, openly! – N-no ...<sup>13</sup>

### Criteria Adjudged by Nihilism

Is Raskolnikov a Nihilist? Dostoevsky gave us all the details, all the clues, but he didn't rule on it. Illustrated through his characters, murder and suicide become manifestations at Dostoevsky, artistic expressions of the radical ultimate nihilism. The nihilistic group from *The Idiot* is pictured by characters like Ippolit Terentiev, Keller, Doktorenko, and Antip Burdovski. These four represent the younger generation in the novel (although Keller was 30 years old), that is under the influence of ideas with which Dostoevsky debated. But they aren't actually Nihilists, explains Lebedev, because "they surpassed" even them (among which are also "educated people, scholars" – agreed both Lebedev and the author), "they go much further in that they pursue something peculiar, they are primarily action people. So, prudently, the writer attacks thus nihilism in its extreme and degraded forms."<sup>14</sup>

Kirillov from *Demons* is a twenty-eight years young man studying the suicide phenomenon and its motivations, thinking that people do not commit suicide because of prejudices as "pain" and "the other world". Kirillov *believes*, though not in the common sense of the term, and introduces himself as an atheist. Narrator's questioning implies the following: "Are there no atheists, such as don't believe in the other world at all?"<sup>15</sup> In the absence of any prejudice, says the actant, *all* would commit suicide. And the attractiveness and calling of life are explained through a deceit. A nihilist would say: "Life is pain, life is terror, and man is unhappy."<sup>16</sup> The concepts of *now* and *then* arise: "Now man is not yet what he will be. There will be a new man, happy and proud. For whom it will be the same to live or not to live, he will be the new man. He who will conquer pain and terror will himself be a god. And this God will not be."<sup>17</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, Reprint edition trans. by Constance Garnett, New York, Dover Publications, 2001, pp. 415–416.

<sup>14</sup> Valeriu Cristea, *Dicționarul personajelor lui Dostoevski [Dictionary of Dostoevsky Characters]*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Iași, Polirom, 2007, p. 73.

<sup>15</sup> Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Possessed*, trans. by Constance Garnett with introduction by Elizabeth Dalton, New York, Barnes & Noble Classics, 2004, p. 67.

<sup>16</sup> *Idem*, p. 67.

<sup>17</sup> *Idem*, p. 67.

In *The Karamazov Brothers*, the author puts nihilism in relation with atheism, and the new paradigm arises not in terms of existence or death of God, but in terms of belief, a belief of the messianic logos fulfilment, or in its rejection. With this new approach, the topic remained open and actual between the faith in logos and *his* promises of his word and the belief in the absence of logos, the silence of the Divine tantamount to *him* not getting involved, also lack of faith in *him*; but that does not concern the question of the Divine existence or death. Ivan refused logos' promises, but didn't negate his existence. Christ does not empower through logos, through word, the establishment of an *order* of continuing denial. This *order* would be established against *him* and without *his* consent; in his absence, but not by *his* non-existence.

Dostoevsky takes a leap, as observed by Camus, from "If God does not exist, then everything is permitted" (from *The Karamazov Brothers* and *Crime and Punishment*) to "If there's no God, then I'm God" (from *Demons*, as Kirillov reasons). Nihilism, understood through the new paradigm of absence, emptiness and desolation of the role occupied by divine doesn't benefit of a fair assessment. Therefore according to Dostoevsky the role of the Divinity by no means may be left vacant. The man wanted to replace the divine. In *Demons*, through Kirillov, on the one hand, and through Piotr Verhovenski (and Stavroghin), on the other hand, we see how the author debates about revolution: the outer revolution – a paltry, power thirsty as well, chaotic, profane one germinates a transformation of the human, namely the inner revolution of the rational spirit driven to the extreme. A new and ominous mutation occurs, one shattering the values and reference points.

Referring to Ivan's postulate Camus defines it as the launching point for nihilism's undertaking in the world and its becoming a doctrine.<sup>18</sup> Thus the absolute, utter rebellion of Dostoevsky's characters proclaiming full permissiveness (Raskolnikov, Ivan), which denies a higher order established by the faith in the existence of an out of human scope governing principle, announces in fact a new ordinance, directed by the man's own rules and laws; thus operating in a confined, interior and strictly human space. Raskolnikov permitted himself the crime, while at the same time Ivan permitted his father's murder. The new human ordinance is established through crime, which sanctifies and enshrines it.

After contesting the legitimacy of the ruler of this world, he must be overthrown. Man must take his place. "As there's no God or immortality, the new man is allowed to become god." But what it means to be god? It's to avow that everything is permitted; to deny any law other than one's own law. Without the need to develop interim judgments, we deduce thus that becoming a god is to accept the crime (an equally favourite idea of Dostoevsky's intelligentsia).<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> See Albert Camus, *The Rebel*, trans. by Anthony Bower, New York, Vintage Books, 1991, p. 56.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 57.

Two order criteria are adjudged by nihilism: justice and freedom, and it acts being engaged in fighting the divine and human injustice. The divine values are denied, but in virtue of the divine “silence” and injustice extension it vindicates the principle of equity as its driving force and trigger of action and at the same time as its ultimate goal. About the second principle, the new doctrine’s principle of freedom, Dostoevsky refers on a hesitant tone: you cannot underlain justice through injustice after Shigaliiov’s system. So therefore freedom is marred as it is self-repealing. Nihilism’s aim can be defined as an empire of justice, nevertheless an empire of a barren unsubstantial freedom, as its justice has an arbitrary basis.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Berdyaev, Nicolai, *The Origins of the Russian Communism*, Glasgow, Robert MacLehose and Company Ltd, The Glasgow University Press, 1948.
- Camus, Albert, *The Rebel*, trans. by Anthony Bower, New York, Vintage Books, 1991.
- Cristea, Valeriu, *Dicționarul personajelor lui Dostoievski [Dictionary of Dostoyevsky Characters]*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Iași, Polirom, 2007.
- Dostoevsky, Fyodor, *Crime and punishment*, Reprint edition trans. by Constance Garnett, New York, Dover Publications, 2001.
- Dostoyevsky, Fyodor, *The Possessed*, trans. by Constance Garnett with introduction by Elizabeth Dalton, New York, Barnes & Noble Classics, 2004.
- Ianoși, Ion, *Dostoievski: Tragedia subteranei; Dostoievski și Tolstoi: Poveste cu doi necunoscuți [Dostoyevsky: Underworld’s Tragedy; Dostoyevsky and Tolstoi: A Tale with Two Strangers]*, Bucharest, Europress Group, 2013.
- Volpi, Franco, *Nihilismul [The Nihilism]*, trans. by Pavel, T., foreword by Ion Tănăsescu, European Institute Press, 2014.
- Yannaras, Christos, *On the Absence and Unknowability of God: Heidegger and the Areopagite*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, trans. by Haralambos Ventis, New York, Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2004.
- Enciclopedia Filosofica, III, LI-REI [Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, III, L-R]*, Center of Philosophical Studies of Gallarate, Institute of Cultural Exchange, Venice-Rome, 1957.
- Enciclopedia de filosofie și științe umane [Encyclopaedia of Philosophy and Human Sciences]*, trans. by Luminița Cosma, Anca Dumitru, Florin Frunză, Radu Gâdei, Cornel Mihai Ionescu, Mihaela Pop, Hanibal Stănculescu, Sabin Totu, Bucharest, ALL Educational, 2004.
- Filosofia de la A-Z. Dicționar enciclopedic de filosofie [Philosophy from A to Z, Encyclopaedic Dictionary]*, Élisabeth Clément, Chantal Demonque, Laurence Hansen-Love, Pierre Kahn; trans. by Magdalena Cojocă-Mărculescu, Aurelian Cojocă, Bucharest, ALL Educational, 1999.



## THE NATIONAL PEASANTS' STATE IN THE VISION OF CONSTANTIN RĂDULESCU-MOTRU\*

SORIN ALIN SESERMAN\*

### **ABSTRACT.** *The National Peasants' State in the Vision of Constantin Rădulescu-Motru.*

In the interwar period, the major parties, the Liberal Party and the Peasants' Party, looked for their government formulas, the options being a bourgeois capitalist state or a state built on national peculiarity, as an expression of the existing social structures, rising from traditional values. In April 1934, the *Philosophical Journal* published the study *The Ideology of the Romanian state*, which perhaps was the most important contribution to the elaboration of the principles that formed the basis of the peasant state. From the outset, without any connection to Peasantrism, being a conservative, he built his philosophy on the idea that the liberal state is inadequate and is an artificial creation, idea which results from all his work in the philosophy of Romanian culture. Approaching the Peasantrism doctrine came naturally, the philosopher exposing his ideas in the personal line, whether he defined Peasantrism or the peasant state.

**Keywords:** *peasant' state, Peasantrism, liberal state, Constantin Rădulescu-Motru*

### **Introduction**

The philosophical and cultural approach of Constantin Rădulescu-Motru on the peasants' state is rooted in his early works before the war, when the philosopher regarded that the foundations of society should be built in line with the realities and spirituality of each people. The author lamented the disappearance of old rural social structures, criticizing the bourgeois state for nearly half a century. In the study *From Racial Struggle to Class Struggle*. C. Rădulescu-Motru, Marta Petreu said, "for forty years from now, the philosopher will work to build a philosophy of culture intertwined with political philosophy and applied to the Romanian people, in which

---

\* This paper is supported by the Sectorial Operational Programme Human Resources Development (SOP HRD), financed by the European Social Fund and the Romanian Government under the contract number SOP HRD POSDRU/159/1.5/S/136077.

\* Doctoral candidate at the Doctoral School in Philosophy, Faculty of History and Philosophy, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania. E-mail: seserman@gmail.com



the preferred terms, often metaphorically defined are: soul of the people, personality, culture, vocation, destiny, ethnic, racial, energetism, ecc.” In this book, set on the general basis of Junimism theory of forms without substance, the philosopher “went further than his mentors, making the village centre of national tradition and epicentre of the social and economic development”, which approaches him to the “agrarian trends”, as noted by Keith Hitchins.<sup>1</sup>

Since 1920, Constantin Rădulescu-Motru fought for political representation of the peasantry by choosing their own representatives in the Romanian State, in order to bring their issues to the forefront of society. His book *Peasantry, a Soul and a Policy*, published in 1924, is a call for both peasants and intellectuals to contribute to the birth of political consciousness, of a Romanian peasant ideal, with a view to a political regeneration of society. Of course that in the social and political context, the emergence of agrarian parties which had registered success in the first elections of the unified Romania, signaled the initiation for a political movement designed to have the peasantry as centre pin. He saw the Peasantry movement in a broader sense than that movement organized within the Peasants’ Party, through the fact that the peasantry must reach a political consciousness to be able to materialize the ideals it has to fulfil. The philosopher’s idea was that not the organization, syllabus or statute of the party can mobilize peasants to achieve their interests, but the acquisition of the consciousness that they have a precise role in society, and for that he calls Romanian intellectuals originated from villages, he calls the Peasants’ Party to contribute to the ideals that the peasantry has to fulfil. “The more this knowledge will come faster and more complete, the faster the regeneration of our political life will come and it will be more profound”.<sup>2</sup> In his view, the forty-fighters have established in society the European bourgeois mentality, in that everything was done in the name of freedom and democracy, but things remained the same.

Thus, he said, these words become magic and oppressive while preventing an objective analysis of Romanian policy and of peasant political principles and also did not produce anything serious for this deeply disadvantaged category. The peasant was not the beneficiary of these stated goals, the provisions of the new Constitution being away from him. The peasants’ class was not the beneficiary of the rights registered in the Constitution, it did not benefit from the European liberalism which opened its doors to privileges only to landowners. These were only interested in agricultural benefits, but not the interests of the 80% of the rural population. “We removed the adequate

---

<sup>1</sup> Marta Petreu, *From Junimea to Noica. Romanian Culture Studies*, Iași, Polirom Publishing House, 2011, p. 123.

<sup>2</sup> Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, *Political Writings*, the study, *Peasantry, a Soul and a Policy*, Preface by Cristian Preda, Nemira Publishing House, Bucharest, p. 417.

peasant mentality without introducing the authentic policy of the European bourgeois mentality. We have introduced liberal trade laws, but anti-Semitism at the base; we introduced universal suffrage, but cheating at ballot boxes; we killed rural households to multiply credit institutions, but we didn't allow free competition between these institutions, but we favoured some, those belonging to our people and we persecuted those belonging to others, those of opponents; we encouraged national industry, but not to come to the benefit of the rural population, as it would have been right, because it made sacrifices, but to come to the benefit of politicians who were the retirees of this national industry."<sup>3</sup> To have their own policy, peasants need autonomy in their communities, and a part of the taxes to the state to remain, in order to establish their needs and interests, and their children who went to school to find there their purpose in life, in order to improve their lives, to support their development and their communities. The philosopher insists that the peasantry and the intellectuals must make common cause in rising villages through education and culture and to stop the spiritual uprooting. "The duty of all intellectuals is to contribute to the awakening of the peasants so that they come to understand themselves".<sup>4</sup> Also, peasants need to learn from intellectuals crafts, new skills, economic and practical techniques to transform the culture and primitive agricultural production of the labour force in a perfectible work. He also refers to the existing political organization of the Peasants' Party, he appreciates the party leaders, but besides political syllabus, the peasant, he says, needs a moral improvement for the state to be able to keep its natural and historic coordinates. Namely, maintaining political conservatism, which is political at us, which can be achieved if peasants will have "a clear consciousness of the ideal they have to fulfil. A soul and a policy".<sup>5</sup>

In April 1934, the *Philosophy magazine* published the study of Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, "The ideology of the Romanian state", which is perhaps the most important contribution to the elaboration of the principles that formed the basis of peasants' state. The philosopher generally delimitates himself from the radical-conservative or radical anti-industrialist views and he is a critic of the liberal state, of liberalism in general. Constantin Rădulescu-Motru was a conservative alongside Take Ionescu, who developed concepts of conservative philosophy culture. He occupies an important place in the development of Peasantry doctrine, being a representative of the Peasants' Conservatism trend especially because of the fundamental idea which he elaborated from the beginning, namely state building on organic realities, "Rădulescu-

---

<sup>3</sup> Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, *Political Writings*, the study, *Peasantry, a Soul and a Policy*, Nemira Publishing House, Preface by Cristian Preda, Bucharest, p. 373.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 371.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 341.

Motru built his socio-political conception step by step and left from tolerance philosophical points. He is a representative thinker of the culture, respectively for the Romanian philosophy from the first half of the twentieth century and the evolution of his thinking reflects how things were at his time, helping us to reconstruct some of the drama that happened in Romania in a long historic period”.<sup>6</sup>

He believes that our national state has developed only under the conditions corrupted by the Turkish Empire and under the influence of the European states. He says there is no bourgeois state, nor liberal or socialist, but each state has its own identity that functions, be it the English state, creator of the bourgeoisie, be it the National Socialist German state or the French state based on the principles of the French Revolution. He says that the bourgeois regime is challenged “everywhere and in different forms”, without making a distinction between regimes, where formulas of the authoritarian state have evolved towards totalitarianism, as is the case for Germany. The same, he refers to fascism in Italy, which he considers as an alternative to liberalism and capitalism of which he says: “Their immediate end is anticipated.”<sup>7</sup> Thus, he argues that states must be placed on their history, on their own experiences, which are not created on the new authorities, the existing authority being only sublimated, the philosopher does not differentiate between democratic or authoritarian states in the construction of ideas.

Contemporary reality shows that the ideology that was gaining greater popular support in Europe was nationalism and totalitarianism, and at the level of collective thinking, between state and nation, there was a pronounced adherence. State identifies with the vocation of every nation, “namely the state of each nation”,<sup>8</sup> he said. In contrast to bourgeois principles, Constantin Rădulescu-Motru outlines the directions on which the Romanian state should be based on, respectively on an organizational model of true equal opportunities, namely the rising of all classes through education, access to resources and culture. Motru mixed things in the sense that he was making reference to national values, whether he formulated an idea in support of a state based on democratic principles, whether he related to totalitarian states.

Following the adoption of the motion by the National Peasants’ Party Congress in April 22-23, 1935, its government has assumed the new syllabus and the basic principles of the Peasantrism as its ideological line, on the idea of peasants’

---

<sup>6</sup> Marta Petreu, *From Junimea to Noica. Romanian Culture Studies*, Polirom Publishing House, p. 99.

<sup>7</sup> Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, *Political Studies*, the study „Ideology of the Romanian State”, Nemira Publishing House, Preface by Cristian Preda, Bucharest, p. 429.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 417.

democracy, as a “fundamental requirement of the Romanian political life”.<sup>9</sup> In the debates for and against the peasants’ state, Constantin Rădulescu-Motru says that most critics of the peasants’ state are those with Marxist views, be they publishers or supporters of the liberal state, who believe that the peasants “cannot reach class consciousness of their social class, as they always aspire to become little more than peasants!”<sup>10</sup> He believes that the syllabus of the National Peasants’ Party is based on the idea of work aimed at developing and implementing Romanian people’s interests, according to its nature and cooperation between social classes. The philosopher thinks that Europe no longer believes in the individual, heading for other anti-liberal and anti-individualist forms, be it Italian fascism, the Russian Sovietism or the German state. But peasants’ state differs, however, because it does not cultivate any racial kinship nor imperialism, nor a dictatorial industrial organization, but the formation of a healthy moral peasantry, which to be taken out of poverty and ignorance and be the representative of the people for the people.

He believes that the state promoted by economic liberalism is a lie and, behind those principles, a small group of interests develops, as the only beneficiaries of the principles, which in theory and on paper, are addressed to all citizens. From his observation emerges the idea that theoretically nobody hinders the well-being of individuals in a free state, where the laws are equal for all, where the conditions of prosperity are available to all. So, everyone can enrich, everyone can be happy and prosperous. But it’s not like that. It isn’t like that because the liberal state is tailored so that only the bourgeoisie to be the beneficiary of this form of organization, most actually not having direct access to welfare. The bourgeois state has shown its limits, he says, by the very fact that the industry or trade cannot expand indefinitely and even greater production brings no gain, and economic crises, unemployment, are the effects of this system that tends to be replaced by ideology that takes many forms, as mentioned, in the case of Germany or Italy. He believes that bourgeois organization is a creation of English spirituality, of machinery production, of industrial technology, which was subsequently loaned to other European countries, so these countries do not have their historic vocation to be supported on the model of the British bourgeoisie. However, beyond these advantages the industrial progress gives, the state must take into account each nation’s own vocation, which must be supported, in our case, on the spiritual traditions of the nation and on the intrinsic link between peasant family and the territory of the country. “The ideology of peasants’ state does not justify the political order of the Romanian State on abstract considerations of economic individualism and on the hypothetical desire of gain that would have

---

<sup>9</sup> *Dreptatea* newspaper, 25<sup>th</sup> April, 1935.

<sup>10</sup> C. Rădulescu-Motru, “Peasants’ State and the Liberal State”, in *Dreptatea* 21<sup>st</sup> November 1935.

existed in the soul of each individual, but on the actual institution of peasant household, where man, work and land form an inseparably integer, with a vocation in which the nation and the land identify.”<sup>11</sup>

Constantin Rădulescu-Motru believed that the state has focused on the interests of the bourgeoisie, those of capitalist production, on a large scale of estates leasing and lending institutions were made available to traders and industrialists. Great assets avoided peasantry, schools have trained free practitioners in the service of the same bourgeoisie. The peasant needs a cheap credit for the production that highlights the country's land, he says, and the state must ensure individual activity within the collective activity of society, considering that it is one of the most important functions of the state. “The real Romanian state treats the peasants as if they were underage, who can still wait. Peasants' economic interests result from commercial and industrial interests”.<sup>12</sup>

Regarding the construction of the idea that the Romanian state must follow its natural, historical course, Constantin Rădulescu-Motru starts right from the Constitution of 1923, which is very similar to that of other European countries, however, he says, reality and political life in these countries are different from ours. “The text of the Romanian Constitution does not differentiate anyhow the Romanian State from the other European states. In it we find the same democratic principles that we find in the Constitution of the Belgian State, although the political life of the Romanian nation is different than the political life of the Belgian people.”<sup>13</sup> Thus, every article of the Constitution must have a counterpart in the Romanian reality, to indicate whether the classes of society take part in the exercise of those rights or they are the beneficiaries of such rights that are listed. The author demonstrates that the fundamental principles underlying the Constitution are being eroded by social and economic reality. The philosopher argues that the principle that Romania's territory is indivisible is vague, because land areas are leased by industrial holdings, belonging to petroleum, that the industries maintained by foreign capital compete with the exports of peasant agricultural production. Thus, the principle is distorted, rather being a national goal. With regard to individual rights, Romanian citizens benefit from right support, but at the same time, governments may restrict these rights, be it political, by applying special conditions in the country, by restricting the public activism of citizens, or economic, where the state intervenes between the industrial and agricultural producer or between creditor and debtor.

---

<sup>11</sup> Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, *Political Studies*, the study „Ideology of the Romanian State”, Nemira Publishing House, Preface by Cristian Preda, Bucharest, p. 429.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 423.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 420.

At the foundation of the state there is our nation made up of citizens who have the right to vote and this should be reflected considering the composition of the state, which in our case consists in its great majority of peasants. The state must first treat their interests like duties, to create the normal frame for development, as if in the case of cities. We're talking about the education of the peasants' children, villages' hygiene, peasant economic interests that are behind the industrial interests, agricultural interests who regard agricultural exploitations in general rather than peasant households. "The Romanian state should be more a peasants' state in its concerns, however it is a bourgeois state in concerns, like all industrial countries of Western Europe. Borrowing in its written constitution the great democratic principles, it also borrowed along with these principles the bourgeois spirit, considering itself not an executor of national peasants' will, but educator and leading with self-power of this will! Instead of delegates of peasants, those who exercise the powers of the Romanian State take their role as masters of the peasants. Real Romanian state is the exact opposite of the Romanian state from the Constitution".<sup>14</sup> Constantin Rădulescu-Motru believes that, following the introduction of universal suffrage, the peasantry opens up the possibility of occupying or capitalizing on a certain social function, occupying a free position, through the national character of the elections. This allows the Romanian State to be a national state, by identifying the electoral body with the peasant population. "It also must be said that Rădulescu-Motru believed that" Romanism "will be stately performed based on the peasant class"; "Under the new spirituality of Europe, the Romanian state will have to stand on its true foundation, on the peasant population. He will be, by its differential characters from other states, a peasants' state";<sup>15</sup> "According to the new spirituality of Europe, the Romanian state will have to stand on its true foundation, which is the peasant population. It will be, by its differential characters, a peasants' state, different from other states."<sup>16</sup>

Setting of this population as the foundation of the Romanian state should not be seen by the fact that the state must solve their problems or to standardize the needs of citizens in towns and villages, those cultural, educational or other, but the state to mediate social order to achieve a moral and material prosperity. It is not an ideology of conservative reaction or a return to the past. "The Peasants' state means something precise and simple; it means ordering state functions with permanent interests, moral and material interests belonging to the peasants' population. An ordering, not for the momentary satisfaction of the interests of the peasants voters, but ordering of permanent interests that ensure the future good moral and material condition of the

---

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 423.

<sup>15</sup> Marta Petreu, *From Junimea to Noica*, Polirom Publishing House, p. 154.

<sup>16</sup> Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, *Romanism*, p. 150.

peasantry.”<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, the vote must remain the main pillar of democracy and not an exchange of services between voter and candidate, the latter taking only the vote in exchange for promises, only because the peasantry has no consciousness of its interests. All this vicious circle, after which beneficiaries are some demagogues politicians can be interrupted only by educating the peasants, rural youth, so a deep reform of the state in the spirit of national interest, “the scholastic policy of the Romanian national state should focus in the future to a single goal: bringing intellectual youth among rural population. With this youth should begin offensive against poverty, which dries the roots of the nation”.<sup>18</sup>

Returning to the bourgeois state, Constantin Rădulescu-Motru considers that it appeared accidentally, and the laws being made by the bourgeoisie, sought to strengthen their own interests by leasing large-scale estates, making available large capital and other benefits related to education or culture. Also, the ideology of the bourgeois state goes forth the premises of individualist production, from which the state takes its share from taxes and solves its problems. Thus, based on economic individualism, the bourgeois state develops a whole network, by providing material and intellectual capital through credit institutions, higher institutions of education, etc. Economic individualism and freedom are not enough to increase wealth, and for that it requires material and intellectual capital, so schools and credit institutions which the bourgeois state provides for. He believes it is not enough to affirm your principles, but try to give them meaning, otherwise they have only a theoretical value. Liberal state, he says, invites everyone to happiness, invites the peasants to get out of poverty. Laws, being equal for all, all are invited to enrichment and prosperity, as we mentioned. But is this possible? Motru says that a peasant child can become a clerk just as someone can become a lottery millionaire, with the same chance of success. “Even so, one in ten thousand peasants can become a bourgeois in the city or a great owner in the country. All are possible in this world when man is lucky. But state policy should not be a lottery prospect. And so it is liberal state policy; a lottery prospect. Without the peasant who become clerk or become rich, there are still nine hundred ninety-nine peasants at home in misery and ignorance. How long can this scam take place with equal conditions before fortune?”<sup>19</sup>

Regarding the peasants’ state, it must not be viewed by reversing the principles of the bourgeois state, but by restoring normal relations between social classes, being placed in a community of interest. The peasant, he says, needs cheap

---

<sup>17</sup> Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, *Political Studies*, the study „Ideology of the Romanian State”, Nemira Publishing House, Preface by Cristian Preda, Bucharest, p. 429.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 435.

<sup>19</sup> Constantin Rădulescu-Motru in *Dreptatea*, 21<sup>st</sup> November 1935.

credit for the production that highlights the country's land and needs autonomy to promote primary interests in the community. The state should be concerned, firstly, by framing the individual in the collective activity of society on the principle of collectively organized production and not in any case on the principle of individualism, which is alien to the nature of the peasantry. If the bourgeois state is interested in multiplying individual entrepreneurs, peasants' ideal is to form families of wealthy peasants, within which "health and traditions of the nation to ensure their continuity". This connection is historic because, over time, the warriors and the soldiers were rewarded with land, and today this connection is "the root of our national energy". Thus, Peasantry ideology prioritizes the peasant family which is in communion with the country's territory: "peasants' state ideology is characterized, on the contrary, by the tendency to give the isolated state a framing in the collective production of the village, as by means of it to raise itself to a moral and material prosperity. Peasants' state ideology is based on the principle that welfare of the individual peasant depends on the welfare of the whole village."<sup>20</sup> "So Constantin Rădulescu-Motru desires a recovery, eventually adapted, of the old rural structures, by returning to the village and a recovery of relations in which the peasant should be rewarded by access to cheap credit, social insurance, school and other benefits, because the peasant, no matter how well it will work the land, will not be able to reach the retailers' level, of entrepreneurs, who by nature of their trade can develop much more, with many possibilities. Therefore, to compensate for the lack of opportunities, the peasantry must be again the basis of political order, because it is a national interest and a common creed.

In the debates of his time, Constantin Rădulescu-Motru considered that their opponents and their supporters are under Marxist influence and that the peasants' state seeks not class struggle, and the governance perspective should not aim at replacing a class with another, but harmonization of classes by subordination of personal interests to general interests of the nation. Nichifor Crainic and the thinking sociology followers understood something different. Crainic reacted vehemently against the idea of Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, saying the peasants' state is a state of class and that could only be totalitarian state. "It is the reaction against the bourgeoisie state. The peasantry against the bourgeoisie."<sup>21</sup> The same is notified by Cristian Preda, who said that this was one of the forms used by Motru to express radical opposition to liberalism and democracy. "In 1934, when he wrote the *Ideology*

---

<sup>20</sup> Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, *Political Studies*, the study „Ideology of the Romanian State”, Nemira Publishing House, Preface by Cristian Preda, Bucharest, p. 432.

<sup>21</sup> Dumitru Micu, *Thinking and "Gândirism". Moments and Syntheses*, Minerva Publishing House, Bucharest, 1975, p. 344, „Mystification of Romanism” in *Gândirea*, XV, no. 7, September 1936, p. 361.



of the Romanian state, Motru used to oppose to the bourgeois ideology (whose »basis« was economic individualism, which entails »political liberalism«), the peasants' ideology or the ideology of the peasants' state."<sup>22</sup> Comparing the liberal state with the peasants' state, he says that individualist belief in totalitarian states is subordinated to totality supremacy of the people, by the fact that totality chooses the individual's fate and not the individual decides the fate of others, the individual acquiring meaning only within the totality of the nation.

The philosopher is moving toward such a political philosophy and a totalitarian political solution. By contrast, the peasants' state upholds the interests of the peasantry, thus serving all people. He said that Europe no longer believed in the individual's power to generate prosperity and hence individualism remained from then on, a problem for philosophers.

Constantin Rădulescu-Motru was concerned about the development of principles for the Peasantry doctrine, focused himself on drafting the party and state ideology seen by him from a peasant's point of view. Some ideas are found in Constantin Stere and Virgil Madgearu too. Drawing a conclusion, Constantin Rădulescu-Motru requires a reform of the state on grounds of our nationality, our education and culture, by organizing the peasants' interests in the spirit of peasants' state ideology. "Peasants' state ideology situates, at the ground of our political order, the hierarchy required by the permanent interests of the nation. Peasants' interests first and only then those of the bourgeoisie. It is the ideology of the Romanian national state, as this state must have been if it had been able to develop under normal conditions. This ideology should be the ground of our syllabus as a common creed of all politicians."<sup>23</sup> Capitalizing this tradition as the foundation of national policy, was actually an alternative to anti-liberal and anti-democratic vision, says Cristian Preda. "The Romanian state is a creation of major European countries policies. Old spirituality of Europe gave the Romanian State the baptizing: it made it democratic and bourgeois and thus put it at enmity with national traditions ... In the new spirituality of Europe, the Romanian state will have to stand on its true foundation: the peasant population. It will be, through its differentiated characters, different from other states, a peasants' state."<sup>24</sup>

In Constantin Rădulescu-Motru we find some of the principles issued by Junimea, such as the idea that nations develop and reborn naturally, that by their own culture and preserving the past and the traditions, nations can build their

---

<sup>22</sup> Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, *Political Studies*, Nemira Publishing House, Preliminary study by Cristian Preda, Bucharest, p. 42.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 432.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 41

future. But from a traditional conservative thinking and conception, Motru comes to admire totalitarian visions. "From an organic and conservative vision of society and history, Motru reached a totalitarian vision, and then to a complete totalitarianism, following the German model, in which he accepted the idea of superior and inferior races, the idea of their hierarchy and therefore unequal treatment which they may be subjected to."<sup>25</sup>

Of course that from the beginning, without any connection to peasantry, being a conservative, he built his philosophy on the idea that the liberal state is inadequate, an artificial creation, which is apparent from all his philosophy work. Organic conservative vision of society at the beginnings of his writings turned into a radical approach to ideas that ultimately led even to acceptance of totalitarianism. Approaching of the peasants' doctrine came naturally, the philosopher developed his ideas in a very personal manner (his works were not referring to other authors), whether he defined peasantry or the peasants' state.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

*Dreptatea* newspaper, 25<sup>th</sup> April, 1935.

Petru, Marta *From Junimea to Noica. Romanian Culture Studies*, Polirom Publishing House, Iași, 2011.

Rădulescu-Motru, Constantin, *Political writings*, Preface by Cristian Preda, Nemira Publishing House, Bucharest.

Micu, Dumitru, *Thinking and "Gândirism". Moments and Syntheses*, Minerva Publishing House, Bucharest, 1975.

---

<sup>25</sup> Marta Petru, *From Junimea to Noica. Studies of Romanian culture*, mentioned Publishing House, p. 177.



## SACREDNESS AND VIOLENCE IN THE JURIDICO-DISCIPLINARY *DISPOSITIFS*

ȘTEFAN VLAD\*

**ABSTRACT.** *Sacredness and Violence in the Juridico-disciplinary Dispositifs.* *Sacredness and violence in the juridico-disciplinary dispositifs* advances an analysis of sacredness as a strictly and eminently juridical and political phenomenon. Being the result of enforcing a value threshold beyond which human existence no longer possesses any juridical, economical or epistemic value, sacredness, as a matrix of the violent relation between power and the human body, reveals itself to be both the unveiling act of sovereign power and the crossing point between the juridical and the biopolitical power patterns. Following also Foucault's distinction between *subjectivation* and *assujétissement*, we shall develop the analysis of a form of subjectification which, as a perpetual struggle against power, exceeds the power-knowledge nexus of juridical and biopolitical apparatuses.

**Keywords:** *subjectification, sacredness, dispositif, disciplinary norm, exception*

### Introduction

The starting point of this paper consists in describing the different juridical patterns that subjectification processes imply in two distinct registers: sovereign power relations and disciplinary power mechanisms. Simultaneously, the changes implied within juridical theory and practice by this power transfer, also entail a detailed description of the shift from a discursive ensemble having law at its core to a different discursive apparatus, focused on norms. As a result, the concept of *dispositif*, as defined within Michel Foucault's research upon the power-knowledge-subjectification connection, becomes most lucrative insofar as it minutely depicts the network between the power relations, the economy of truth, the systems of public right and the subjectification processes. Thus, a process of subjectification shall be described against the background of a *dispositif*, alongside a broader dynamic of power mechanisms producing truth-effects which, in their turn, are producing power-effects, the immediate impact of this cyclicity consisting in both the system of law/the juridical *dispositif* and in the act of becoming subject. Let us read, in order to put things into perspective, a piece of text where Foucault undertakes his widely known inversion in the study of power:

---

\* PhD Student at the Doctoral School in Philosophy, Faculty of History and Philosophy, Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania. E-mail: stefan\_vlad89@yahoo.com

My problem is roughly this: What are the rules of right that power implements to produce discourses of truth? Or: What type of power is it that is capable of producing discourses of truth that have, in a society like ours, such powerful effects? ...we are also subject to the truth in the sense that truth lays down the law: it is the discourse of truth that decides, at least in part; it conveys and propels truth-effects. After all, we are judged, condemned, forced to perform tasks, and destined to live and die in certain ways by discourses that are true, and which bring with them specific power-effects.<sup>1</sup>

The core thesis of my research can be summarized as follows: underlying Foucault's texts, there can be found two different levels at which subjectivation processes are described and analysed: in the first place, subjectivation refers to an effect produced by the power-knowledge relations within the network of a *dispositif*; secondly, and in fierce contention with the first instance, the process of becoming subject involves a neverending resistance maintained alive by holding out against the strategies of power and by eluding the codifications operated by knowledge apparatuses. Analyzing both these versions one at a time, this study is directed by two main tasks: verifying to which extent does sacredness – bearing within the entirely new determinations brought by Giorgio Agamben – represent the matrix of the first meaning by which we pinned down here the processes of subjectivation, namely the subject as a counterpart of the *dispositif*; and secondly, we shall dwell upon and try to extract the deeper theoretical and political implications held by the second definition of subjectivation processes.

### **The Subjects Pertaining to Juridico-Disciplinary *Dispositifs***

If we emphasize here the juridical and disciplinary components of a *dispositif*, it is precisely in order to point the fact that, at a specific point in time, even if the production of subjects is a function of the disciplinary power-procedures exclusively, within the discursive level the same subject gets caught up in two completely dissimilar registers. Precisely how does one end up in this state of affairs, and what is it exactly that the former consists of?

Almost every time when he writes about the birth of the disciplinary power, Foucault defines it as being utterly incompatible with the old sovereign relations of power, particularly by the fact that power's immediate intervening area becomes now the human body; in other words, the microtechniques of discipline fit the subject-function exactly on the somatic singularities. Thus, contrasting the power of sovereignty, we can witness now a strong individualisation development at the inferior side of the power relations.

---

<sup>1</sup> Michel Foucault, *Society must be defended. Lectures at the College de France. 1975 – 76*, translated by David Makey, Picador, New York, 2003, pp. 24–25.

Consequently, the old juridical and philosophical theories by means of which the power of sovereignty was codifying individuality become no longer efficient in transcribing these entirely new mechanics of power. The former were providing a theoretical framework for a process in which the human body endures the exercise of power in an incidental, discontinuous and almost always spectacular manner, as in the case of ceremonies or that of public executions. Assuming thus this situation and employing an uninterrupted supervising-writing procedure, the recently generated forms of power bring forth an apparatus of clinical knowledge, setting up their own complementary discursive regime within the field of human sciences and adding thus a brand-new instrument to the already existent polymorphous repertoire of disciplinary techniques, namely the normalization procedures. The human body now becomes subjected, normalized, psychologized; it becomes enframed but at the same time extended by a normative core, through the medium of which the disciplinary procedures of power shall perform their functions: classifying, ranking, distributing, dividing the normal from the abnormal, but also retrieving and redressing all the residual waste resulted from these processes, all elements that proved themselves to be irreducible to disciplinary norms, and unveiling thus an era of social orthopedics. The human sciences are the effect of these series of procedures, and it would be a historical and political error to consider that the loose and uncertain field of human conduct would have been appended to science by means of absorbing the rationality specific to exact sciences. At the same time with the power shift from the sovereign regime to the disciplinary techniques, the framework within which power reverberates its truth-effects becomes, from a juridical one, a predominantly scientific one, overrun by a normative logic.

The utterly new fashion of power-functioning and the innovating knowledge apparatuses that it generates do not entail, as might have been expected, the fade out of the theoretical headquarters of sovereignty. The *ancien* discursive regime persists in organizing the juridical apparatus – juridical theory, codes and practice – at the same time with the revolutionary transference from royal sovereignty of divine origins to national sovereignty. The collectivization of the sovereignty principle and its most original junction with the phenomenon of birth, implies a full conversion in the subject's status, from the position of a submissive patient, to the condition of the citizen pertaining to the new created nation-state and embodying the self-contradictory figure of the sovereign subject of right. Thus, the actual exercise of the disciplinary power coexists with the juridical and philosophical revival of the sovereignty principle, which is now assigned to the social corpus. The identity of a subject now becomes caught up within this heterogeneous interplay. Once again, we shall resort to Foucault's accurate depiction of this state of affairs:

We could say, if you like, that there is a kind of juridico-disciplinary pincers of individualism. There is the juridical individual as he appears in these philosophical or juridical theories: the individual as abstract subject, defined by individual rights that no power can limit unless agreed by contract. And then, beneath this, alongside it, there was the development of a whole disciplinary technology that produced the individual as a historical reality, as an element of the productive forces, and as an element also of political forces. This individual is a subjected body held in a system of supervision and subjected to procedures of normalisation (...) What I call man, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, is nothing other than the kind of after image of this oscillation between the juridical individual, which really was the instrument by which, in its discourse, the bourgeoisie claimed power, and the disciplinary individual, which is the result of the technology employed by this same bourgeoisie to constitute the individual in the field of productive and political forces.<sup>2</sup>

As a result, the attempt to conceive of the subject as a product of the truth discourse and of the power mechanisms transcribed by them, resorts to stage the becoming of a subject upon the conflict between law and norm, a confrontation that drags in the intrusion and colonisation of the juridical procedures by the discourse and micro-practices belonging to disciplinary normalisation. The penal theories and procedures specific to the old power pattern were only ratifying the seizure and monopolization of justice by the state, within the hands of the sovereign, and at the same time the limits of a strict legalism were enframing and codifying the series law-transgression-punishment. But beginning with the Classical period and reaching its climax in the nineteenth century, we witness the breakthrough and the advancement of a form of penalty structured by a displacement of the juridical/penal qualification of a committed act towards a procedure of individualising the perpetrator himself:

Certainly the crimes and offences on which judgement is passed are juridical objects defined by the code, but judgement is also passed on passions, instincts, anomalies, infirmities, maladjustments, effects of environment or heredity; acts of aggression are punished, so also, through them, is aggressivity; rape, but at the same time perversions; murders, but also drives and desires.<sup>3</sup>

The source of one of the central categories of criminology, that of dangerousness/threatness, is not to be found anywhere in the juridical theories or reforms proper, but in those practices and power relations cutting the social corpus,

---

<sup>2</sup> Michel Foucault, *Psychiatric power. Lectures at the College de France 1973-74*, translated by Graham Burchell, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2006, pp. 57–58.

<sup>3</sup> *Idem, Discipline and punish. The birth of the prison*, translated from French by Alan Sheridan, Vintage Books, New York, 1995, p. 17

in practices of *police* like survey, control, correction and penitentiary adjustment, as well as within the interrelated fields of knowledge encoding and accounting for these practices:

Throughout the penal ritual, from the preliminary investigation to the sentence and the final effects of the penalty, a domain has been penetrated by objects that not only duplicate but also dissociate the juridical defined and coded objects. Psychiatric expertise, but also in a more general way the criminal anthropology and the repetitive discourse of criminology, find one of their precise functions here: by solemnly inscribing offences in the field of objects susceptible of scientific knowledge, they provide the mechanisms of legal punishment with a justifiable hold not only on offences, but on individuals; not only on what they do, but also on what they are, will be, may be.<sup>4</sup>

The punishment and the public-spectacular feature of death sentences, of funeral piles, of hanging, of body laceration, or of human stigmatizing by branding iron, succumb and give way to the newborn internment institutions inside of which the body no longer is subjected to a sudden power intervention, but becomes exposed to a slow and infinitesimal orthopaedical process reverberating its effects not upon what people do but upon that of which they might be capable of or inclined to do, therefore at the level of their conduct virtualities. The immediate result of such a change over consists of the fact that, from now on, the penal institutions, no longer being narrowed by the framework of a autonomous juridical power, become flooded by a huge power network consisting of institutional series that enframe the individual alongside his entire existence: psychological, psychiatric, pedagogical and medical institutions. From this moment onwards, the punitive function of the juridical apparatus is no longer reduced to proscribing and excluding the elements irreducible to the legal order to the outskirts of society, but becomes more and more subordinated to the disciplinary process of binding the individual to the machines of production and to the knowledge-transmitting apparatus, transposing thus time and body into labor force.

### **Sacredness – the Zero Degree of Juridical Identity**

Up to now we've kept track of the way that the subjectification procedures specific to the juridical *dispositifs* begin to fusion with the techniques of normalization, and of the simultaneous invasion of the juridical apparatus by the disciplinary micro-mechanics and by their discursive duplicate, namely the human sciences. We have assembled the concept of juridico-disciplinary *dispositif* precisely for an accurate

---

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 18



analysis of this hybridisation phenomenon. We have also took into account the fact that, according to Foucault's analyses, this process coincides with the histotical turning point by which the human body, as simple living being, becomes an abiding companion of political power, being caught within the relations and strategic schemes that the latter stages. Once we have reached this point, we shall raise the problematic of sacredness, and we shall choose as a starting point Giorgio Agamben's inquiry into Foucault's assumption related to biopolitics as a threshold for the modern era.

If Agamben calls into requisition the concept of *bare life*, he does so precisely in order to describe the human body in its historical connection with the political power. According to Agamben, this power-body relation must not be restricted to a trait of modern politics, but analyzed both as the prime moment of sovereign power and as the crossing point between the juridical and the biopolitical power patterns.

The constitution of juridical identity implies setting out a borderline beyond which human existence no longer possesses any juridical, economical or epistemic value. This act of desubjectification stands at the beginning of and operates alongside any political production of subjects. The founding of the political framework of sovereignty itself rests upon the initial act of creating and maintaining this residual field of exception, this non-ground within the boundaries of which the bare life is exiled and forlorn. And we might very well transpose this primary and violent power-body interplay within the formula renowned by Carl Schmitt: „Sovereign is he who decides on the exception.”<sup>5</sup> At the same time that political power produces this state of exception of which it withdraws any juridical feature of the political identity belonging to its subjects, the exercise of power itself becomes a bare act of pure violence, irreducible to any juridical determination and engrafting itself upon the living body of individuals. What the concept of *bare life* denominates is not something that preexists a political intervention, but precisely the result of such a violent act of power in its entirely juridical nudity. And we shall name sacredness the condition of that who, being absorbed within this non-space and exposed to the raw violence of the sovereign, is subjected only to this desubjectification: *homo sacer*.

*Homo sacer* is the outcome of a practice of exclusion (*sacratio*), an ancient roman law procedure, the depiction of which is borrowed by Agamben from Sextus Pompeius Festus treaty, *De significatione verborum*. This piece of work describes among its pages the upmost peculiar figure of a man whose murder may be committed by anyone without being punished, but whose sacrifice is strictly forbidden. This sacred man must not be confused with the victims of sacrificial rituals (*consecratio*), who are trasposed from the secular jurisdiction of terrestrial sovereignty into a divine holding.

---

<sup>5</sup> Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology. Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, translated by George Schwab, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England, 1985, p. 5

His exclusion from the political community does not entail an immediate entering into the domain of the sacred, but the ceaseless and aimless wandering through an anomic zone. Inside this juridical void, the indistinction between sacred and profane, between the religious and the political, turns the violence applied to the *homo sacer* absolutely indeterminate and unclassifiable, the murder of the sacred man being impervious to any juridical or religious informed violence: homicide, the enforcement of a sentence, sacrifice or desecration.

Thus, the figure of *homo sacer* seems to be configured by a double exception, regarding both the city of men and that of gods. The sovereign's decision on the exception might be trasposed here in the terms of the relation between the illegible violence of an act of power and the juridical nakedness of the living human body as a carrier of sacredness:

At the two extreme limits of the order, the sovereign and *homo sacer* present two symmetrical figures that have the same structure and are correlative: the sovereign is the one with respect to whom all men are potentially *homines sacri*, and *homo sacer* is the one with respect to whom all men act as sovereigns. The sovereign and *homo sacer* are joined in the figure of a action that, excepting itself from both human and divine law, from both *nomos* and *physis*, nevertheless delimits what is, in a certain sense, the first properly political space of the West distinct from both the religious and the profane sphere, from both the natural order and the regular juridical order. (...) If our hypothesis is correct, sacredness is instead the originary form of the inclusion of bare life in the juridical order, and the syntagm *homo sacer* names something like the originary „political“ relation, which is to say, bare life insofar it operates in an inclusive exclusion as the referent of the sovereign decision.<sup>6</sup>

Beside the concepts of *homo sacer* and *sacratio*, borrowed from the area of juridical practices of Roman antiquity, Agamben selects another analysis pattern for the investigation of sacredness out of the study of Walter Benjamin, *Critique of violence*. Within this piece of text lies the origin of the thesis according to which the mere natural life becomes sacred only as an effect of its exposure to the violence of sovereign power. Accordingly, the sacredness of human life, invoked and displayed as a basic and unalienable right by those who resist and fight back the abusing acts of political power, reveals itself to be both the condition and the effect of the same abusive power that people struggle against. In Benjamin's work, the ruling of legal violence over the living, as the genesis of the political, occurs under the notion of mythical violence; at the same time, the juridical nudity of the natural life, as a waste in the production of

---

<sup>6</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Homo sacer. Sovereign power and bare life*, translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen, Stanford University Press, Stanford California, 1998, pp. 84–85.

subjects of law, appears here as guilt, a juridical phenomenon which only later has been fallaciously transposed within the religious and ethic fields. Guilt is the analogous concept of sacredness:

The dissolution of legal violence stems, as cannot be shown in detail here, from the guilt of mere natural life, which consigns the living, innocent and unhappy, to a retribution that „expiates” the guilt of mere life – and doubtless also purifies the guilty, not of guilt, however, but of law. For with mere life the rule of law over the living ceases. Mythical violence is bloody power over mere life for its own sake...<sup>7</sup>

Thus, Agamben’s research on this topic can now be seen as articulating itself into a response brought to Benjamin’s interrogation upon sacredness, a concept whose indecisiveness casts itself even on the political struggles:

It might be well worth while to track down the origin of the dogma of the sacredness of life. Perhaps, indeed probably, it is relatively recent, the last mistaken attempt of the weakened Western tradition to seek the saint it has lost in cosmological impenetrability. (...) Finally, this idea of man’s sacredness gives grounds for reflection that what is here pronounced sacred was according to ancient mythical thought the marked bearer of guilt: life itself.<sup>8</sup>

Taking this specific structure of sacredness as a starting point, Agamben no longer defines, as Foucault did, the biopolitical conversion of power as the radical caesure between the juridical pattern of sovereignty and the modern power practices, but as the barely visible linkage that actually intertwines them. The process that the modern history of power brings forth consists rather in an invasion of the political sphere by an item that, up to that point, has been kept peripheral: the bare life, whose everlasting exile was rendering possible the juridical production of subjective identity. Enacting the state of emergency, which now becomes both an usual governing practice and the government’s sole legitimacy supply, potentially turns every citizen into a *homo sacer*, exposing him to a governmental act of violence which exceeds every possible juridical qualification and which remains impossible to sanction. The concept of this inversion between the exception and the regular normal case is to be found in Benjamin’s eighth thesis on the concept of history:

---

<sup>7</sup> Walter Benjamin, “Critique of violence” in *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, edited and with an Introduction by Peter Demetz, translated by Edmund Jephcott, Schocken Books New York, 1978, p. 297.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, p.299.

The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the „state of emergency“ in which we live is not the exception but the rule. We must attain to a conception of history that is in keeping with this insight. Then we shall clearly realise that it is our task to bring about a real state of emergency, and this will improve our position in the struggle against Fascism.<sup>9</sup>

Which is the immediate effect of this register shift that transposes sacredness – as the condition of bare life – from the political outskirts in the core of political practices? The juridical nakedness of simply being alive, a condition that in the old regime was at the mercy of the sovereign’s decision over life and death, now becomes orchestrated by two completely different, though intertwined power strategies: it becomes both the object over which the newborn disciplinary power imposes its domination techniques, and the ground out of which those who endure and fight back this domination deduct and invoke the sacred nature of life as a source of sovereign and unalienable human rights. As we have noticed along the first section of the present study, the mutations supervened within the modern exercise of power do not entail the obsolescence or disappearance of the juridico-philosophical edifice of sovereignty, but quite the opposite, the latter continues programming the juridical apparatus, encoding the juridical identity of the subjects within the new figure of the citizen of the national state. And this juridical procedure of subjectivation does not invest the sovereignty principle into the consciousness of the free individual, but into his mere birth, into the condition of being born within the national boundaries of a specific territory and from citizen parents. The biopolitical calling of this juridico-discursive regime of subjectivation combining juridical theory, constitutional texts and declarations of human rights, is the common denominator between it and the brand new disciplinary mechanics of power with which it coexists. So it becomes conceivable the fact that the same spectrum of sacredness underlies both the domination of the individuals by the disciplinary power, and the freedom demands of the same individuals in their struggle against the same disciplinary power.

### **Subjectivation – Assujettissement**

Let us now dissect this undecidable problem that contaminates the modern and contemporary political struggles, by employing Foucault’s concept of *dispositif* understood here as a heterogeneous aggregate that welds together power, knowledge and subjectification procedures.

---

<sup>9</sup> *Idem, Illuminations. Essays and Reflection*, edited and with an introduction by Hannah Arendt, translated by Harry Zohn, Schocken Books, New York, p. 257.

The concept of *dispositif* puts forward two different readings for the notion of subjectification. In the first place, the subject's identity is produced within a discursive regime which, in turn, is the product of a specific lay-out of power relations. We have analyzed in the first section this discursive field as being crossed by a juridico-disciplinary friction which divides the subject's identity between law and norm, between citizenship and disciplinary standards of normality. This version of subjectification is the mere additional process related to the power-knowledge nexus within the *dispositif*. Consequently, demanding the right to one's own identity against an oppressive and alienating power ultimately relapses the individual's struggle into a discursive regime engendered by the very same political power he fights against. Every single step laboured towards identity recognition is to be undermined and derailed by the fact that there is no conceivable or identifiable Outside for those juridical, psychological, economic and political categories by means of which power employs its subjects within the political and socioeconomic force fields. This first use of the concept of subjectification – *assujettissement*, a mere component inside the functioning of a *dispositif* – is well summed up also by Agamben as follows:

Indeed, every apparatus implies a process of subjectification, without which it cannot function as an apparatus of governance, but is rather reduced to a mere exercise of violence. On this basis, Foucault has demonstrated how, in a disciplinary society, apparatuses aim to create – through a series of practices, discourses, and bodies of knowledge – docile, yet free, bodies that assume their „freedom” as subjects in the very poces of their desubjectification. Apparatus, then, is first of all a machine that produces subjectifications, and only as such it is also a machine of governance.<sup>10</sup>

Alongside this juridico-disciplinary procedure, that we have registered under the notion of *assujettissement*, develops an alternative process of subjectification which, even though it stems out of the same power struggles, it raises its claims on the very same ground that power impregnates: the living human body. The biopolitical latency of the mere living being becomes a resistance source almost at the same time that power appropriates the bare life, amplifying and reassigning its forces. Within this second process of subjectification, the human body gets politically imbued at the lower end of the power relations, as we can read in this excerpt from *Lives of Infamous Men*:

Is it not one of the fundamental traits of our society, after all, that destiny takes the form of a relation with power, of a struggle with or against it? Indeed, the most intense point of a life, the point where its energy is concentrated, is where it comes up against

---

<sup>10</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *What is an apparatus? And Other Essays*, edited by Werner Hamacher, translated by David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 2009, pp. 19–20.

power, struggles with it, attempts to use its force and to evade its traps. The brief and strident words that went back and forth between power and the most inessential existences doubtless constitute, for the latter, the only monument they have ever been granted: it is what gives them, for the passage through time, the bitt of brilliance, the flash that carries them to us.<sup>11</sup>

The principal matter related to this unprecedented political process consists in the following: at a specific point of political confrontations, those who put up resistance realise that their only chance to endure and to circumvent power is to acquire a form of identity that exceeds all the categories of the biopolitical apparatus. The first step towards their goal consists in emptying the juridico-political nakedness of bare life. And it is only normal and only a matter of time the fact that this utterly new subjectification process still bears the terminological remnants of the old resistance tactics:

It was life more than the law that became the issue of political struggles, even if the latter were formulated through affirmations concerning rights. The „right“ to life, to one’s body, to health, to happiness, to the satisfaction of needs, and beyond all the oppressions or „alienations“, the „right“ to rediscover what one is and all that one can be, this „right“ – which the classical juridical system was utterly incapable of comprehending – was the political response to all these new procedures of power which did not derive, either, from the traditional right of sovereignty.<sup>12</sup>

### Conclusions and Further Research Directions

The central issue this study deals with could be summed up as follows: how could we achieve the theoretical and political requirements for the emergence of utterly unprecedented subjectification processes? Put another way: which philosophical and political tactics are to be undertaken in order to obtain acts of subjectification which are no longer encoded by the discursive categories of the knowledge apparatuses and which occur and persist as disquieting and disturbing agents within the force fields orchestrated by the power machine? In the second volume of *The history of sexuality, The Use of Pleasure*, Foucault traces down the archetype of this subjectification procedure within the techniques of self-discipline, developed by the ancient Greeks. *Enkrateia*, as „an active form of self-mastery, which enables one to resist or struggle“, grounds itself in „the dynamics of a domination of oneself by oneself and to the effort

<sup>11</sup> Michel Foucault, „Lives of Infamous Men“ in *Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*, Volume 3: Power, edited by James D. Faubion, translated by Robert Hurley, New Press, 2001, pp. 161–162.

<sup>12</sup> *Idem*, *The History of Sexuality*. Volume I: *An Introduction*, translated from the French by Robert Hurley, Pantheon Books, New York, 1978, p. 145.

that this demands.” This subjectification process of internalizing the relations of force specific to the social field, gains a certain autonomy relative to the power-knowledge *dispositifs* of the greek *polis*, thus commencing an unprecedented detachment of the political from the social fields: the prerequisites of political action become no longer reduced to a mere reflected image of social hierarchy and titles, owing to the fact that the new technique of self-governance, internalizing the practice of governing others, now become the indispensable requirement for the governing of othes itself. For the ancient greeks, this utterly new subjectification process has as an immediate result the completely new figure of *homo politicus*.

The defining trait of this illicit version of subjectification is that its becoming stands under the sign of an unceasing friction with power. We are never to talk of such things as subjects, but of individuals subjectified only insofar as they are employed by and within this ever-lasting political struggle for identity. Power always responds by reclaiming and seizing every breach that subjectification opens within the organism of a *dispositif*. Any production of identity by means of the derailment of forces is to be recodified and resettled by the juridical standards and disciplinary norms of the power-knowledge network. The multiple, mobile, local, and irreducible nature of these subversive subjectification procedures comes up against the acts by which power is aligning, homogenizing, stabilizing and incorporating it. All these micro-subjectivities are finally to be reabsorbed within juridical, economic, pedagogical scientific, sexual and familial reproductive apparatuses and codified by and around universal signifiers: State, Market, Production, Family, Morals, Religion, Sex, Art etc.

The juridical and biopolitical framework drawn by the concept of *dispositif* enables the analysis of this tensionate interplay between two heterogenous subjectification processes: *assujetissement* – as additional to the power-knowledge apparatus, and *subjectivation* – as the derailment of the power relations specific to the apparatus. Thus we took one step further the philosophical task to envision a form of identity that no longer revolves around the sacred subjects produced by the juridico-disciplinary machine, but around an utterly new political process of subjectification.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Primary sources

- Agamben, Giorgio, *Homo sacer. Sovereign power and bare life*, translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen, Stanford University Press, Stanford California, 1998.
- Agamben, Giorgio, *State of exception. Homo Scer II 1*, translated by Kevin Attel, University of Chicago Press, 2004.

- Agamben, Giorgio, *The Time that Remains. A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*, translated by Patricia Dailey, Stanford University Press, Stanford California, 2005.
- Agamben, Giorgio, *What is an apparatus? And Other Essays*, edited by Werner Hamacher, translated by David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 2009.
- Agamben, Giorgio, *The kingdom and the glory. For a Genealogical Theology of Economy and Government. Homo Sacer II, 2*, translated by Lorenzo Chiesa with Matteo Mandarinini, Stanford University Press, Stanford California, 2011.
- Agamben, Giorgio, *The Sacrament of Language*, translated by Adam Kotsko, Stanford University Press, Stanford California, 2011.
- Benjamin, Walter, *Illuminations. Essays and Reflection*, edited and with an introduction by Hannah Arendt, translated by Harry Zohn, Schocken Books, New York.
- Benjamin, Walter, *Critique of violence* in *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, edited and with an Introduction by Peter Demetz, translated by Edmund Jephcott, Schocken Books, New York, 1978.
- Foucault, Michel, *The History of Sexuality*. Volume I: An Introduction, translated from the French by Robert Hurley, Pantheon Books, New York, 1978.
- Foucault, Michel, *The history of sexuality*, Volume II: The Use of Pleasure, translated from the French by Robert Hurley, Vintage Books, New York, 1990.
- Foucault, Michel, *Discipline and punish. The birth of the prison*, translated from French by Alan Sheridan, Vintage Books, New York, 1995.
- Foucault, Michel, *Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*, edited by Paul Rabinov, New Pres, 2001.
- Foucault, Michel, *Abnormal. Lectures at College de France 1974-1975*, edited by Valerio Marchetti and Antonelle Salomoni, translated by Graham Burcell, Verso, London, 2003.
- Foucault, Michel, „Society must be defended“. *Lectures at the College de France. 1975 – 76*, translated by David Makey, Picador, New York, 2003.
- Foucault, Michel, *Psychiatric power. Lectures at the College de France 1973-74*, translated by Graham Burchell, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2006.
- Foucault, Michel, *The Birth of Biopolitics. Lecture at the College de France 1978-79*, edited by Michel Senellart, translated by Graham Burchell, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2008.
- Schmitt, Carl, *Political Theology. Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, translated by George Schwab, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England, 1985.

## Secondary sources

- Agamben, Giorgio, *Potentialities. Collected Essays in Philosophy*, edited and translated with an introduction by Daniel Heller-Roazen, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1999.



- Agamben, Giorgio, *Remnants of Auschwitz. The Witness and the Archive. Homo Sacer III*, translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen, Zone Books, New York, 1999.
- Agamben, Giorgio, *Profanations*, translated by Jeff Fort, Zone Books, New York, 2007.
- Calarco, Matthew & Decaroli, Steven (ed.) *Giorgio Agamben. Sovereignty and Life*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 2007.
- Deleuze, Gilles, *Foucault*, translated by Sean Hand, foreword by Paul Bove, University of Minnesota Press, 1988.
- Marchart, Oliver, *Post-Fundational Political Thought. Political Difference in Nancy, Lefort, Badiou and Laclau*, Edinburgh University Press, 2007.
- Ranciere, Jacques, *Hatred of Democracy*, translated by Steve Corcoran, Verso Books, 2007.

## TOLERANCE BETWEEN VICE AND VIRTUE\*

MARIA CIURCHEA BARBU\*

**ABSTRACT. Tolerance Between Vice and Virtue.** The concept of tolerance seems to occupy a very important place in the Western culture, gaining the statute of a supreme unquestionable virtue. Yet, there are also voices that warn about its dangers. Starting from this premise, the present paper aims to analyse different approaches on tolerance and the difficulties they raise. For this purpose, the research investigates the main arguments in favour of tolerance which then serves as a background for a critical examination of the contemporary approaches. The intention is to determine whether the new lines of thought are doomed to failure just like the ones they have replaced.

**Keywords:** *tolerance, freedom, truth, religion, philanthropy*

### Introduction

The concept of tolerance seems to occupy a very important place in the Western culture. In fact, for the multiculturalism of the west, for this postmodern space of reunion and celebration of differences, tolerance appears as an indispensable principle for the existence of culture, without which, as P. L. Berger<sup>1</sup> notes, the culture itself would collapse from the inside. On the other hand, despite its status as a supreme virtue of the postmodern culture, there are voices that warn us that the overbid of this tolerance might turn it into a vice.<sup>2</sup> For instance, Žižek claims that “the liberal idea of tolerance is more and more a kind of intolerance. It means” leave me alone; don’t harass me; I am intolerant towards your over-proximity”.<sup>3</sup> Taking those ideas as a starting point, the present paper aims to analyse

---

\* This paper is a result of a doctoral research made possible by the financial support of the Sectoral Operational Programme for Human Resources Development 2007-2013, co-financed by the European Social Fund, under the project POSDRU/187/1.5/S/155383 – “Quality, excellence, transnational mobility in doctoral research”.

\* PhD student at the Doctoral School in Philosophy, Faculty of History and Philosophy, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania. E-mail: ciurchea@yahoo.com

<sup>1</sup> This is related to the idea of “plausibility structures” which Berger examines in , *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*, New York, Doubleday, 1979.

<sup>2</sup> In Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, any virtue is the median position between two vices: the reversal means that vices are an overbid of a virtue.

<sup>3</sup> Slavoj Žižek, “Joker apart”, interview with James Harkin, in *The Guardian*, October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2005, available at <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2005/oct/08/internationaleducationnews.highereducation>.

different perspectives on tolerance as an ethical value of the western culture and to evaluate which are the difficulties that they hide. In this respect, my research analyses several aspects related to the problem of religious tolerance, which constitutes the initial framework for the discourse of tolerance, but it partly oversteps the limits of this area in an attempt to investigate the status and establishment of tolerance in the contemporary moral thought. As Lévinas notes, the main problem of religious tolerance is to save religion from its “dramatic fate” of being “torn between charity and truth” when it meets the alterity.<sup>4</sup> Extending on this idea, it could be said that the main dilemma of tolerance is that of having a correct relation to those who do not share the same truths and values.

In the first part of this paper, I will try to follow the evolution of the most important arguments brought in favour of religious tolerance, highlighting the understanding that they assume of the concept discussed. After I have shown the changes that took place in the definition of the concept of tolerance, which, as D. A. Carson points out, involve the transition from “accepting the existence of different point of views” to “acceptance of different views”,<sup>5</sup> I will continue with a critical analysis of the latest perspective. In this respect, I will discuss the consequences of this pluralist approach of tolerance to determine whether this line of thought will lead to a failure just like the ones that it replaces.

Before forging ahead, it is needed to locate the present research in the rich framework of perspectives treating the problems related to tolerance. Most of the present works treat tolerance in relation to prejudices of different types, such as sexism, racism and religious prejudices. Yovel Yrmiyahu distinguishes these criteria of discrimination in two categories: involuntary features, which are acquired by birth, and voluntary ones, obtained by volitional actions of partially free choices.<sup>6</sup> Though in practice things are not completely settled, at a theoretical level, the problems related to racism have been long and amply debated, and no discussion on the superiority of a race over others is still viewed to be acceptable. Hence, the main problem stays with the groups that entail a certain freedom of choice. Each of those groups require a specific approach.<sup>7</sup>

In the area of works that address those groupings mentioned above, there is a variety of perspectives for tackling them, from religious to political, epistemological, ethical, etc. In order to place the present research in the large spectrum of those studies on

---

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Emanuel Lévinas, *Difficult Freedom*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1990, p. 176.

<sup>5</sup> D. A. Carson, *The Intolerance of Tolerance*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Michigan, 2012, p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Yovel Yrmiyahu, “Tolerance as Grace and Rightful Recognition” in *Social Research*, Winter 1998, 65.4, pp. 898–899.

<sup>7</sup> In a research of the EU, *Intolerance, Prejudice and Discrimination. An European report*, there is no difference mentioned between the groups facing discrimination such as ethnical, religious and of a sexist orientation. In what concerns religious groups, there is only a mention of the prejudices towards Islam, but nothing related to the prejudices faced by the Christians in a secularized environment, in *Intolerance, Prejudice and Discrimination. An European report*, Nora Langenbacher, FES, Forum Berlin, 2011, p. 13

tolerance, I will use the classification made by Forst.<sup>8</sup> He talks about a vertical approach, which focuses on political theories meant to settle the relation between the state and the individual, aiming to protect and guarantee the freedom and peace of each individual or group of individuals. This line of thought is represented by thinkers such as Michael Waltzer, Eric Voegelin, Wendi Brown and others. On the other hand, Forst speaks of a horizontal perspective which deals with intersubjective relations. In this framework, the statute of tolerance is that of a virtue, a personal attitude displayed in relation to the other. Though the two lines partially overlap, the second one has been expanded with the emerging interest for the problem of tolerance after the second half of the 20th century, through voices such as J. Derrida, E. Lévinas, Axel Henneth, Charles Taylor etc. The main concern of this line is not a normative or epistemological one, but rather ethical and deontological. To some extent, one could claim that tolerance is no longer needed in a liberal democracy which claims equal rights to all individuals.<sup>9</sup> Yet, Žižek explains the status of tolerance as a “post-political ersatz (...) due to the retreat, failure, of direct political solutions”. Thus, “political inequality, economical exploitation, etc., are naturalized/neutralized into «cultural differences», different «ways of life», which are something given, something that cannot be overcome but merely «tolerated»”.<sup>10</sup> In this context, tolerance as an ethical and personal value becomes a desirable virtue for each individual.

In what follows, the paper deals with the second perspective, namely, that of the horizontal intersubjective, reckoning that this perspective envisions aspects related to both religious tolerance and those that pertain to the existence in a multicultural society.

As already mentioned, I will start by sketching a short history of the evolution of arguments in favour of religious toleration. This phase distinguishes four main periods determined according to the statute of the Christian religion. A first stage comprises the first three centuries of Christianity, when this was an unacknowledged and sometimes untolented religion within the Roman Empire. Then, the beginning of a second phase is marked by the Edict of Milan which established a new relationship between state and church, an interested collaboration. A third phase which debuts with the beginning of Modernity, displays a perspective dominated by the humanist theories of secularization while religion and its role are marginalized. Finally, one can speak of a fourth phase referring to the contemporary approaches; the status of religion in this period as that of an opinion among others.

---

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Rainer Forst, *Tolerance in Conflict: Past and Present*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2013, pp. 3–6.

<sup>9</sup> This is the questions that sets the base for Anna E. Galeotti's *Toleration as Recognition*, “The inclusion of the ideal of toleration in constitutional rights as a means of protecting individual freedom of conscience, expression and association seems to render the very notion of toleration superfluous”, Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> Slavoj Žižek, “Tolerance as an Ideological Category” in *Critical Inquiry*, Autumn, 2007 available at <http://www.lacan.com/zizek-inquiry.html>.

## 1. Short Evolution of Arguments in Favour of Tolerance

A discussion on the problem of religious tolerance in the context of western cultures involves understanding it in its historical context. Although there is no one acknowledged source of this idea, in what follows, the inquiry investigates some of the main ideas which were most influential in what one could call the history of religious tolerance in the West. Just as Derrida remarks, the discourse of tolerance has religious roots,<sup>11</sup> and therefore it is necessary to go back to the beginnings of Christianity in order to find out the origins of the discourse of tolerance.

When the subject of Christianity and tolerance is brought up, opinions are divided between authors who consider that the history of Christianity proved itself to be the most intolerant of all religions,<sup>12</sup> to authors who suggest that the western idea of tolerance is mostly due to the influence of the Christian thinking. However, most of them subscribe to Voltaire's statement that "of all religions, the Christian one should of course inspire the most tolerance (...)".<sup>13</sup> Why would Voltaire say that despite this sad story of intolerance, Christianity should be the ground of the greatest tolerance?

Authors such as Perez Zagorin cannot give an answer to this question, because he looks for the origins of tolerance only in the time of the emergence of Protestantism at the beginning of Modernity. Yet, a step forward in searching the origins of tolerance is taken by Rainer Forst. He starts from the idea that the essential arguments in favour of a broader tolerance are usually developed by the victims of persecution and oppression, who oppose the existing social order.<sup>14</sup> Hence, he offers more attention to the timespan of the first centuries of Christianity, when this was not an accepted religion, and many times it was even persecuted. Yet, he treats the idea of tolerance in biblical texts only fugitively, focusing on the patristic literature.<sup>15</sup> However, following the roots of tolerance in the Christian tradition, one should start from the biblical texts.

### 1.1. Addressing the Concept of Tolerance in Biblical Texts and in the First Centuries of Christianity

I will proceed by briefly presenting some of the main ideas related to tolerance that are found in the neotestamentary texts and which serve as the background of the further

---

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Jacques Derrida, *Deconstructia politicii*, Idea Design and Print, 2005, Cluj, p. 134.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Perez Zagorin, *How the idea of religious toleration came to the West*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2003, p.1.

<sup>13</sup> Voltaire, *Dictionar filosofic*, Polirom, Iași, 2002, p. 393.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Rainer Forst, *Tolerance in Conflict: Past and Present*, p. 37.

<sup>15</sup> With regard to the scriptural texts, Forst only mentions two passages which use the expression "patient-endurance of suffering" as the translation of *tolerantia* and the Greek *hypo-mone*, translated as the patience of those who trust in God. These attitudes are exemplified by the Parable of the sower from Luke 8.15 and the chapter of love in 1 Corinthians 13.4-7, *Tolerance in Conflict: Past and Present*, pp. 37–38.

Christian approaches to the subject. Firstly, one of the main ideas is that which will be later called the theory of the two kingdoms. The kingdom of Christ is not from this world, but it refers to a spiritual realm. Secondly, there is the sermon on the mount, which encourages Christians to rejoice even in persecution and to turn the other cheek to the hand that slapped the first, knowing that there will be a reward in heaven awaiting. Another relevant passage is the commissioning of the disciples (Matthew 10.28, Luke 10, and Acts 1): they are warned that they are sent as sheep in the midst of wolves. Finally, though there is more which could add to it, long-suffering is one of the virtues that are required from a Christian. Following Christ involves carrying one's cross, a denial of one's self and patience in suffering. For all these, Christ promises His disciples to give them the needed strength for suffering and a heavenly reward.

The idea shared by all these passages is that the follower of Christ is called to suffer and endure the injustice and pain caused by the other. Christianity is the religion of the turned cheek.

The same perspective is to be found in the authors of the first centuries of Christianity. As they were faced with outbreaks of rejection and persecution, they found strength in their trust in the Lord. Hence, for Tertullian, tolerance represented a virtue given by God to face persecution. Similarly, Cyprian talks of tolerance as the power to endure the evil ones, and for him this is what renders the faith beautiful. Though this interior strength seems to be no different than the stoic one, Forst notes that in Christianity, tolerance (as strength to suffer from evil) is not just an attitude to one's self, but „it is expanded to a relation to *the others*, though the latter, of course, is always mediated by a relation to God”.<sup>16</sup>

## **1.2. The Change of Perspective: Edict of Milan**

Things take a completely different direction starting with 313 A.D., with the Edict of Milan and then the Edict of Thessalonica. In a very short time span, by Emperor Constantine's embrace of Christianity, this passes from a persecuted church to the only accepted church and soon after, to a persecuting church. While the Empire was using the church to reach its own political purposes, the church would use the power of the state for its purposes, and as Errington remarks, supporting the unity of the church was a joint agenda.<sup>17</sup>

From this moment on, one could speak of a radical turn in the Christian discourse on tolerance, which was marked by Augustine. He soars in an impossible project which is described by Taylor as an “attempt to marry the faith with a form of culture and a mode

<sup>16</sup> Rainer Forst, *Tolerance in Conflict: Past and Present*, pp. 38–39.

<sup>17</sup> R. M. Errington, *Roman Imperial Policy from Julian to Theodosius*, The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 2006, p. 215–216, and Dragș Boicu, “Teodosie cel Mare și Edictul de la Tesalonic (28 februarie 380). Circumstanțe, Comentariu, Receptare” in *Revista Teologică* 2/2012, Andreiana, Sibiu, p. 190.

of society".<sup>18</sup> With this background, Augustine develops a theory of persecution meant to help him face the Donatists, which were perceived to be not just heretics but also rebels towards the existing social order. Hence, Augustine finds himself in the position to save both the social order and that of the church.

This situation is more and more common for the centuries to follow and because of that Forst suggests that it is impossible to follow the evolution of tolerance during the medieval times. Moreover, he notes that there are no new perspectives brought on the problem of tolerance, except for some of those brought about by Toma d'Aquinas who, just like Augustine, also justifies intolerance. By his time, the official church had subordinated the temporal power to the spiritual one by imposing an intellectual scheme that could include all types of people, from believers to pagans and heretics.<sup>19</sup>

This is the dominant perspective which is generally accepted with regard to the practice of intolerance in the heyday of the universal church. Yet, I consider that this perspective minimalizes the other side of the story, namely the existence of some groups of Christians, the so-called heretics, who objected to intolerance. It is necessary to recall the fact that according to Forst, it is among those groups that the arguments in favour of tolerance should be found. However, writings pertaining to those groups are rare and they did not have a significant influence.

### ***1.3. Modernity: The Rebirth of Tolerance through Secularization***

In some sense, it could be said that the history of tolerance experiences a new birth with Modernity and with the new ideological framework created by it. From the events that marked the beginnings of Modernity, Žižek notes that liberalism emerged in Europe after the catastrophe of the 30 year war between Catholics and Protestants, as „an answer to the pressing question: how could people who differ in their fundamentally religious allegiances co-exist?“ He continues by showing that there was need for something more than „tolerance as a temporary compromise“.<sup>20</sup>

It's probably not by mere chance that this time gives rise to a series of philosophers and thinkers who give special attention to the problem of religious freedom and tolerance. This multiplicity of voices that breaks out at the beginning of Modernity is the resurrection of the concept of tolerance. Among the thinkers that stand out in this context, one must mention Sebastian Castillo, whom Perez Zagorin calls "the first champion of religious freedom", Baruch Spinoza, John Locke, Pierre Bayle, Voltaire and others. The main change that they bring to the discourse of tolerance lays in its establishment in the human rights and in the ideal of freedom of consciousness and equality in front of the law. The writers of this period wanted to transform the meaning of

---

<sup>18</sup> Charles Taylor, *A Catholic Modernity?*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999, p. 17.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Rainer Forst, *Tolerance in Conflict: Past and Present*, p. 59.

<sup>20</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Tolerance as an Ideological Category*.

the concept of tolerance from that of an unmerited grace bestowed by a strong position according to a changing will, to “rightful recognition”, as Yovel Yirmiyahu puts it.<sup>21</sup>

Though for a long time Christianity remained a dominant ideology for the western world, the ecclesiastical institutions have been destitute of their former possibility to exercise their discipline outside the area of church life. Hence, the answers to the problems of life pertaining to the public sphere of the next centuries have been looked for in an opposite direction, making way for the humanist-atheist philosophies. To make a long story short, this trust placed in the political ideologies to solve the problems of humanity was revealed to be a failure, climaxing with the atrocities that marked the mid of the 20th century.

This new failure of Europe gave birth to a new wave of ideologies and discussion on the theme of tolerance, meant to fight against repeating such events as well as to solve the problem of diversity of opinions existing in the western cultural space, which surpass the possibilities of the political sphere. Hence, the discourse of tolerance has turned its focus towards its ethical dimension, meant to fill those spots that the politics cannot regulate.

#### ***1.4. Contemporary Approaches to the Ethics of Tolerance***

Starting with the second half of the 20th century, it can be said that there is a new direction of interest in approaching the problems related to tolerance, and the loss of faith placed in politics lies at its base. The main changes of paradigm that bring this new understanding of the concept of tolerance could be summed up by the aspiration to neutrality of the liberalist theories and the pluralistic turn. With regard to the first one, it appears as a necessary condition of existence, once the collective faith in politics has dropped. Hence, in what concerns the government, the accent has slipped from the exercise of the sovereignty of a majority to the guarantee of individual rights and to the means of protecting the minorities. Politics loses its globalizing aspirations. It can no longer provide answers about the meaning of life at a large scale, as those can only be found at an individual level. Neutrality becomes the main characteristic of politics and this assumes an attitude which guarantees each individual the freedom to seek their own personal interest.

The loss of a universal sense makes way to an individual sense. As Gianni Vattimo states in his essay “Toward a Nonreligious Christianity”,<sup>22</sup> this context favours a new model of emancipation based on pluralism. But, the pluralism of values does not suppose only a tolerance towards the values of others, but also a relinquishment of the pretence of an absolute truth.

---

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Yovel Yirmiyahu, *Tolerance as Grace and Rightful Recognition*, p. 898–899.

<sup>22</sup> Gianni Vattimo, “Spre un creștinism nereligios” in eds. John D. Caputo and Gianni Vattimo, *După moartea lui Dumnezeu*, Curtea Veche, București, 2008, pp. 64–65.



The pluralist turn creates the possibilities for legitimating the beliefs of other individuals, abolishing any proselyte tendencies and the pretence of a unique truth. Faith becomes an opinion among others and it cannot be seen as intrinsic or superior.<sup>23</sup> In this context the meaning of tolerance has changed, as it does not mean the endurance of evil, but rather a respect for opinions contrary to one's own which is meant to guarantee a good functioning of the society.

Having this background in mind, the critique of the traditional concept of tolerance is taken one step further by postmodern philosophers among whom I will mention Derrida and Žižek. The first one sees tolerance as a mask for violence and for some relations based on power, because tolerance legitimates the superiority of one side. In change, Derrida argues in favour of an unconditional hospitality, an idea that I will discuss in more detail later on. Similarly, Žižek argues that instead of tolerance, we need to engage on behalf of the excluded ones, proposing as a solution the universalization of the particular, such as: we are all immigrants.<sup>24</sup>

## **2. Critical Perspective on the Postmodern Ethics of Tolerance**

In this last section I will discuss several critical perspectives referring to the postmodern approach to the ethics of tolerance. They will be grouped under two themes, namely a critical perspective on pluralism and neutrality and a critical perspective of the unconditional philanthropy.

### **2.1. A Critical Perspective on Pluralism and Neutrality**

Outside the borders of a religious discourse, tolerance was founded on the recognition of universal human rights. In this context, tolerance becomes what Yirmiyahu calls "rightful recognition". This recognition that works at the political level, as a consequence of the loss of a globalizing vision of politics, sets the base of a neutral character meant to make way to a freedom that allows each individual to pursue one's own interests. Though this perspective seems to be a functional one, in what follows I will look at two of its weak points: the first one refers to the exclusivism implied by the pretence of neutrality while the second tackles the impossible relationship between religious truth and pluralism.

With regard to the former, Taylor shows that the freedom favoured by pluralism and neutrality is one that denies any vision the right to become dominant, resulting in a weakening of Christianity as well. The message it transmits is that the human life is better

---

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Marcel Gauchet, *Ieșirea din religie*, Humanitas, București, 2006, p. 108.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Slavoj Žižek, "Political Subjectivization and Its Vicissitudes" in *The Ticklish Subject: the absent centre of political ontology*, Verso, London, 1999.

without any voice of the transcendental. This leads to the conclusion that “the development of modern freedom is identified with an exclusivist humanism that is to say, one based exclusively on a notion of human flourishing, which recognizes a valid aim beyond it”.<sup>25</sup> Peaceful coexistence seems to be the primordial purpose of this line and any other aim beyond this is perceived as dangerous for modern freedom. However, Taylor strikes the sensitive chord when he poses the question whether we really have to pay “this price – a kind of spiritual lobotomy – to enjoy modern freedom?”<sup>26</sup>

Secondly, the pluralist solution for solving the conflict between kindness and truth is that of giving up any pretence of universal truth. This perspective transforms post secular religion into identities meant to render meaning to the life of an individual. Hence, as Gauchet explains, religion plays the role of a source of values among others with the same value. Its relevance is limited to answering the need for meaning of a private life.<sup>27</sup> Talking about this chance, Carson argues that the denial of any public dimension of religious truth would lead to nothing else but the trivialization of religion. And a religion that bears no relevance, a religion that has no pretence of truth is a religion that does not deserved to be followed.<sup>28</sup>

## **2.2. A Critique of the Unconditional Philanthropy**

In light of unconditional hospitality, Derrida shows that morals have to pass beyond right, duty and obligation. This idealism displayed by Derrida reminds of the Kantian deontology, which he aims to surpass through the theory of unconditional hospitality. What he fails to see is that this ethics is doomed to fail in the same way as its precursor. Analysing the modern project of morality, Macintyre notes that modern ethicists have tried to legitimate the same values that they have inherited from the previous centuries while denying their finality. Hence, “the moral scheme that creates the historical background of their thinking had a trifold structure made of the natural human nature, man-as-he-could-be-if-he-would-fulfil-his-telos and the moral precepts that allow him to pass from one stage to the other”.<sup>29</sup> He explains that the modern thinking has dropped the telos, which causes the relation between the other two to become unclear. The loss of the telos made moral impossible. This is also available for the hospitality described by Derrida. He talks of an unconditional opening to the Other, towards the one that is a complete Stranger. Derrida sees in this attitude an outpass of the problem of

---

<sup>25</sup> Charles Taylor, *A Catholic Modernity?*, p. 19.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Marcel Gauchet, *Îșirea din religie*, p. 60–119.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. D. A. Carson, *The Intolerance of Tolerance*, p.123–126.

<sup>29</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre, „schema morală care formează fundalul istoric al gândirii lor avea o structură care presupunea trei elemente: natura umană naturală, omul-cum-ar-putea-fi-dacă-și-ar-împlini-telos-ul și percepțele morale care îi permit să treacă de la o stare la alta”, în *Tratat de morală: După virtute*, Humanitas, București, 1998, p. 79–80.

tolerance and intolerance involved by it. Yet, what is missing is a base and a reason that would determine one to expose himself to the unanticipated danger of the visit implied by that “hospitality of visiting” for the one who is an “absolute stranger”, “non-identified”, “unpredictable, the absolute other”.<sup>30</sup>

In a similar manner, in “A Catholic Modernity”, Taylor argues that “a solidarity ultimately driven by the giver’s own sense of moral superiority is a whimsical and fickle thing. We are far, in fact, from the universality and unconditionality which our moral outlook prescribes”.<sup>31</sup> He goes on by showing that the danger that threatens any perspective that “aims higher than its moral sources can sustain”<sup>32</sup> is to repeat the same mistakes of the past that it seeks to avoid. The hidden side of this philanthropy anchored in humanism is the continual disappointment caused by human failure, which will finally lead one to withdraw or to force the other to “help themselves”. Hence, this reality of human failure will eventually cause the action that started as philanthropy to incorporate aggression and even hatred. Ironically, Taylor notes that humanism makes itself guilty of the same despotism that it criticizes in the medieval societies dominated by religion. On the other hand, the anti-humanists don’t place much hope in men, but they are also not interested in investing in philanthropy. This line of thought would eventually adopt indifference as their attitude towards other.

The question that ultimately raises is, from Taylor’s perspective, “how to have the greatest degree of philanthropic action with the minimum hope put in mankind?”.<sup>33</sup> He suggests that the only solution is to maintain an unconditional love for the beneficiary. Yet, this thing is only possible for us, human beings, “to the extent that we open ourselves to God, which means in fact overstepping the limits set in theory by exclusive humanism”.<sup>34</sup> Hence, the value does not lay anymore in what one accomplishes in oneself, nor in what one accomplishes in the other, but in the main feature that lays at the base of human action, namely that of being created in God’s own image. This becomes the source of any identity and the source of philanthropic action.<sup>35</sup> This consciousness of being created in God’s image is not something that one applies only for oneself, but the principle is extended to any human being. In this respect, Yirmiyahu describes a tolerant mentality as one that engulfs the capacity of seeing the human value of the other as an echo of one’s own humanness. The decision to respect someone whose way of life and principles one disapproves of, comes from the condition of perfectibility of ones still open human possibilities, which he calls “the right to err”.<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Deconstructia politicii*, p. 135.

<sup>31</sup> Charles Taylor, *A Catholic Modenity?*, p. 31.

<sup>32</sup> *Idem*, p. 30.

<sup>33</sup> *Idem*, p. 35.

<sup>34</sup> *Idem*, p. 35.

<sup>35</sup> The idea is similar to what Forst noted relatively to tolerance in the Christian understanding: it is more than a relation to the self or to the other, it is a relation to God.

<sup>36</sup> Yovel, Yirmiyahu, “Tolerance as Grace and Rightful Recognition”, pp. 909.

### 3. Several Conclusions

The problem of tolerance is a very complex subject and the present paper, as I have already mentioned, approaches just a limited part of it, focusing on the relations and consequences brought about by the claim of neutrality and pluralism as well as the lack of a functional foundation of the postmodern moral ideals. Although this process of analysis does not allow one to come up with a new formula of tolerance, there are still some preliminary conclusions that can be drawn with regard to its conditions of possibility.

First of all, tolerance implies and requires the freedom to believe what one acknowledges as true. It presumes to have a position that one stands for and to establish a right relation with the people whose ideas one disapproves of. Only the consciousness that is engaged in some belief can be tolerant. Otherwise it is about indifference. The solution for the dilemma of goodness and truth is not to give up truth (actually, history gave us the lesson that when compelled to choose between life and truth, many had chosen truth).

Besides having a position that one stands for, tolerance implies valuing the other as a human being beyond one's beliefs. This is only possible when, as Lévinas notes, tolerance is an intrinsic value of the adopted belief system.<sup>37</sup> This requires a faith that would value the other not for what he or she believes, but even against that.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Harvard University Press, 1982.
- Berger, P. L., *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*, New York, Doubleday, 1979.
- Carson, D. A., *The Intolerance of Tolerance*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Michigan, 2012.
- Derrida, Jacques, *Deconstructia politicii*, Idea Design and Print, Cluj 2005.
- Errington, R. M., *Roman Imperial Policy from Julian to Theodosius*, The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 2006, apud Dragoș Boicu, "Teodosie cel Mare și Edictul de la Tesalonic (28 februarie 380). Circumstanțe, Comentariu, Receptare" in *Revista Teologică* 2/2012, Andreiana, Sibiu.
- Forst, Rainer, *Tolerance in Conflict: Past and Present*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2013.
- Galeotti, Anna E., *Toleration as Recognition*, Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Gauchet, Marcel, *Ieșirea din religie*, Humanitas, București, 2006.
- Intolerance, Prejudice and Discrimination. A European Report*, Nora Langenbacher, FES, Forum Berlin, 2011, pp. 13

---

<sup>37</sup> Lévinas, Emanuel, *Difficult Freedom*, pp. 173.

- Lévinas, Emanuel, *Difficult Freedom*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1990.
- MacIntyre, Alasdair, *Tratat de morală: După virtute*, Humanitas, București, 1998.
- Taylor, Charles, *A Catholic Modernity?*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999.
- Vattimo, Gianni, "Spre un creștinism nereligios" in eds. John D. Caputo and Gianni Vattimo, *După moartea lui Dumnezeu*, Curtea Veche, București, 2008.
- Voltaire, *Dictionar filosofic*, Polirom, Iași, 2002.
- Yirmiyahu, Yovel, "Tolerance as Grace and Rightful Recognition" in *Social Research*, Winter 1998, 65.4.
- Zagorin, Perez, *How the idea of religious toleration came to the West*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2003.
- Žižek, Slavoj, "Political Subjectivization and Its Vicissitudes" in *The Ticklish Subject: the absent centre of political ontology*, Verso, London, 1999.
- Žižek, Slavoj, "Joker apart", interview with James Harkin, in *The Guardian*, October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2005, available at <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2005/oct/08/internationaleducationnews.highereducation>.
- Žižek, Slavoj, "Tolerance as an Ideological Category" in *Critical Inquiry*, Autumn, 2007, available at <http://www.lacan.com/zizek-inquiry.html>.

## THE LEGITIMATION CRISIS OF THE POLITICAL AND THE INVESTITURE OF TECHNOCRACY AS CONSIDERED THROUGH THE PERSPECTIVE OF GIORGIO AGAMBEN'S THEORY

CIPRIAN RĂZVAN LICĂ\*

**ABSTRACT.** *The Legitimation Crisis of the Political and the Investiture of Technocracy as Considered through the Perspective of Giorgio Agamben's Theory.* Under the conditions of the society of the spectacle, delivered entirely to consumerism as its end, the link between sovereignty and government that traditionally legitimized political power is dissolving in what appears to be a managerial paradigm of power. Simultaneously with this, trust in the given word, as well as in the authenticity of any form of inter-human communication in general, including political speech, is receding. How does this emergent paradigm legitimize itself?

**Keywords:** *sovereignty, government, legitimacy, spectacle, language (truthfulness of)*

### 1. Introduction

The two main elements of the tradition of Occidental political thought, sovereignty and government, appeared until present time as parts of a unified whole, such as that only through their conjunction can be guaranteed the legitimacy and efficacy necessary for a state of right. Agamben argues that the paradigmatic model for this articulation proceeds from the movement of secularization of the theological-political concept of intra-Trinitarian *oeconomia* (concept that describes both the inner articulation between the Persons of the Holy Trinity, and respectively God's divine plan of redeeming the world, in which Agamben identifies a model for an effective form of the government of the world), a historical process that leads towards the immanentization of the *oeconomia*, or in other words towards the evacuation of sovereignty by the government, simultaneous with a growing concern given to security considerations. If language may be considered as the primordial, zero degree political institution, then the devaluation of the function of the oath – and, consequently, of the power to promise that constitutes the condition of possibility of the capacity of

---

\* PhD student at the Doctoral School in Philosophy, Faculty of History and Philosophy, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania. E-mail: ciprian.lica@gmail.com

veridiction inherent in language as such – is symptomatic for a growing trend of lack of faith in politics, a trend that marks the victory of the society of the spectacle. *Zoon politikon* risks thus to be completely replaced on the scene of historical evolution by *animal oeconomicus*, and politics itself by a *Polizeiwissenschaft* whose function will be to manage the generalized derealization implied by the idealization of measureless consumption as substitute to the good life.

## 2. Argument

In “Introductory note on the concept of democracy”, published in the collective volume *Démocratie, dans quelle état?* (2009), Agamben brings to his reader’s attention the double meaning of that concept. On the one side, democracy denotes a mode of constituting a body politic, and consequently a type of legitimizing political power, and on the other, a technique of government, a mode in which power can be effectively used. This distinction appeared already in Aristotle’s *Politics*, at the moment in which he began classifying the types of government:

Since *politeia* and *politeuma* signify the same thing, and since *politeuma* is the supreme (*kyrion*) power in a city, it necessarily follows that the supreme power resides either with an individual, with a few or with the many.<sup>1</sup>

The problematic aspect of this passage stems from the ambiguity of the term *politeia*, that can denote both constituent power (*politeia* as political activity), as well as constituted power (*politeuma* as the political result of this activity). In order to surpass the ambiguity and unify the two hypostases under which politics appears, Aristotle made use of the term *kyrion*, supremacy, or, in other words, sovereignty, that has the role of link between them. Similarly, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in *The Social Contract*,<sup>2</sup> tried to present the executive as distinct, but strongly tied to the general will, and thus to legislative power. Here also the quality of sovereignty appears as both one of the elements of the relationship and as the term that assures the link between them, while the sovereignty’s uniqueness in a state is one of its specific traits.

---

<sup>1</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, 1279a, 25, apud Giorgio Agamben, “Introductory note on the concept of democracy”, in Giorgio Agamben et al., *Democracy in what State?*, Columbia Univ. Press, 2011, pp. 2–3. For a translation that supports Agamben’s interpretation of this passage, see Aristotle, *Aristotle’s Politics*, transl. Benjamin Jowett, Oxford Univ. Press, 1926, p. 114: “The words constitution and government have the same meaning, and the government, which is the supreme authority in states, must be in the hands of one, of a few or of many.”

<sup>2</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, “The Social Contract”, in *The Social Contract and the First and Second Discourses*, ed. Susan Dunn, Yale Univ. Press, 2002, passim.

Such a state of indistinctness of the concept of sovereignty has accompanied constantly the development of Western political thought and the systems in which it found its actualization, leading ultimately to the present situation, where all appeals to the concept of popular sovereignty are manifestly demagogical, part of the spectacle to which politics is now reduced. The sovereignty of the people, the basis of what has been called the general will, lacks an effective influence over state policy, having become nothing more than an empty abstraction. The legislative, the place of public debates between the elected representatives of the people, now houses only the spectacle of lawmaking, while the actual decisions are made through bargains reached behind closed doors.<sup>3</sup> Even the principle of the separation of powers in the state, a fundamental principle of modern democracies, is threatened, since the government assumes also the power to introduce legislation through the abused mechanism of the emergency decree, created to deal with situations of emergency.<sup>4</sup> With the development of the process of globalization, multinational interests seek to influence the legislation of nation-states while circumventing the procedures and publicity of the respective houses of the legislative, by means of binding international treaties, whose signatories are members of the governments of the involved countries, hence not officials elected directly by the people.<sup>5</sup>

The historical stage that evolved after the fall of Stalinist regimes, on the one side, and simultaneously with this, of the democratic ideal of the Occidental constitutional state – both ideologies leaving their place to the formation of the state of integrated

---

<sup>3</sup> See also Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. An Inquiry into a Category of Burgeous Society*, (fifth printing), The Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1993, p. 205: “[...] it is precisely the interlocking of organized [private] interests and their official translation into the political machinery that lends to the parties a paramount position before which the parliament is degraded to the status of a committee for the [public] airing of party lines – and the member of parliament himself <to the status of an organizational-technical intermediary within the party, who has to obey its directives in case of conflict>. [...] *de facto*, the delegate receives an imperative mandate by his party.”

<sup>4</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *op. cit.*, p. 4: “Today we behold the overwhelming preponderance of government and the economy over anything you could call popular sovereignty – an expression by now drained of all meaning. Western democracies are perhaps paying the price for a philosophical heritage they haven’t bothered to take a close look in a long time. To think of government as simple executive power is a mistake and one of the most consequential errors ever made in the history of Western politics. It explains why modern political thought wanders off into empty abstractions like law, general will, and popular sovereignty while entirely failing to address the central question of government and its articulation, as Rousseau would say, to the sovereign or *locus* of sovereignty.”

<sup>5</sup> An example of such an attempt to establish legislation, this time failed, was the 2011 A.C.T.A. international treaty – the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement – drafted and negotiated behind closed doors by representatives of governments and of large multinational corporations, all the while being kept secret both from the general public and even from the legislatures of the involved countries – the European Parliament first found out the content of the draft of the treaty from [www.wikileaks.org](http://www.wikileaks.org)



spectacle that Guy Debord has described as the final stage of the state-form<sup>6</sup> – is presented in *Note on politics* (1992). It is a regime that presents itself as a democracy, but actually it is only the appearance of one. Its institutions, that claim that exist in order to serve the people, serve only apparently, while the language of their institutional discourse, the ruling ideology, propagated through mass media (which also claims that only serves) and the educational system and consequently internalized by the masses, employs the old words of sovereignty, people, democracy, etc. as pure publicity slogans, without any effective reference in reality.<sup>7</sup>

The state itself survives only under the form of a pure structure of domination over a society entirely delivered to the *telos* of consumption of goods. In this sense it may be noted that none of the arguments I have encountered in favour of the minimal state – that eliminate from the state's domain of intervention components such as the economy, healthcare, education or social assistance – propose a same elimination of the police. On the contrary, security represents the central argument used for legitimizing state order and the diverse policies adopted under the form of emergency measures, pertaining to a state of exception, such legitimization replacing the justification through appeal to a general will. This phenomenon is entirely consonant with the direction towards which society is heading, as a society of consumers instead of a society of citizens, a society that needs to have only the peace necessary for a leisurely consumption instead of the *agony* of involving one's political will.<sup>8</sup> This may be argued to be pure economic management, and no longer politics as such:

---

<sup>6</sup> See Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, Zone Books, 1995; and respectively idem, *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle*, Verso, 1990.

<sup>7</sup> Giorgio Agamben, "Notes on politics", in *Means without Ends. Notes on Politics*, Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2000, pp. 108–109: "In the same way in which the great transformation of the first industrial revolution destroyed the social and political structures as well as the legal categories of the ancien régime, terms such as sovereignty, right, nation, people, democracy and general will by now refer to a reality that no longer has anything to do with what these concepts used to designate – and those who continue to use these concepts uncritically literally do not know what they are talking about. [...] Contemporary politics is this devastating experiment that disarticulates and empties institutions and beliefs, ideologies and religions, identities and communities all throughout the planet, so as then to rehash and reinstate their definitively nullified form."

<sup>8</sup> Of course, any citizen of a given polity does have to consume in order to live. In the city-states of Ancient Greece there were laws that either demanded that public offices be granted only to those who had sufficient private income, or that a public stipend be paid to any citizen occupying a public function. Nevertheless, the societies of these city-states were not organized as consumer societies. That is a phenomenon of our own time, in which every citizen is also a consumer (although not every consumer is also a citizen). Still, these two concepts, consumer and citizen, are distinct: one belongs to the order of economy, the other to politics. A consumer has as his end the consumption of goods, a strictly private affair, whereas a citizen has as his end the good of the state, the public good. A human being, in order to reach its goal in its quality as consumer has to employ what Kant has called the private use of reason, whereas to reach its goal as citizen, it has to employ its public use of reason. These two distinct modes of using one's reason are incompatible in that they cannot be used simultaneously, in order to think one and the same thought, at the same time, for a heteronomous (extrinsic) end of reason and for an autonomous (intrinsic) end of reason.

The theorists of political sovereignty, such as Schmitt, see in all this the surest sign of the end of politics. And the planetary masses of consumers, in fact, do not seem to foreshadow any new figure of the *polis* (even when they do not simply relapse into the old ethnic and religious ideals).<sup>9</sup>

Even the emergence of the totalitarian regimes of the 20th century is tied, as a symptom, to this fall into desuetude of the model of the nation-state, as Agamben argues in his writing *In this Exile (Italian Diary 1992-94)*:

In this sense, the totalitarianisms of our century truly constitute the other side of the Hegelo-Kojévian idea of an end of history: humankind has by now reached its historical *telos* and all that is left to accomplish is to depoliticize human societies either by unfolding unconditionally the reign of *oikonomia* or by undertaking biological life itself as supreme political task.<sup>10</sup>

The difference between these two alternatives isn't one of essential nature. In both cases, the sovereign decision (if it may be still named as such) is given over to experts, and the domain of intervention is that which is one's most proper, life itself, that finishes by being reduced to the quality of bare life (for example, in the situation of illegal immigrants). It is the age of the triumph of biopolitics.

In *The Kingdom and the Glory. For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government (Homo Sacer II, 2)*, Agamben identifies in the theological concept of economy – a concept intended to describe both the internal articulation between the persons of the Holy Trinity, as well as, simultaneously, the relation between God and creation (as a divine plan of salvation) – a model for the government of the world (the legitimization through divine right being deduced from it, as well as its condition of possibility, residing in the relation of vicariousness that cleaves politics in two: the function of a sovereignty that is practically ineffective, that does not govern, and respectively the function of a distinct governmental activity, legitimized through appeal to this sovereignty; as it will be shown, the development of modern political thought continues this model).

The theory of Nicolas Malebranche on the action of the divine providence,<sup>11</sup> developed inside this theological tradition, states that God, having the attribute of absolute wisdom, always acts through the most simple means possible: through

---

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 112–113.

<sup>10</sup> Giorgio Agamben, "In this exile (Italian diary 1992-94)", in *Means without Ends. Notes on Politics*, p. 139.

<sup>11</sup> Nicolas Malebranche, *Treatise on Nature and Grace*, Oxford Univ. Press, 1992. For a brief synthesis of Malebranche's theory on primary and secondary causes, see Steven Nadler, "Malebranche on causation", in *The Cambridge Companion to Malebranche*, ed. Steven Nadler, Cambridge Univ. Press, 2000, pp. 112–136.

general laws that, owing to the fact that the faculty that determines action is will, must be established on the basis of general volitions. Even the miracle may be reduced to such a general law, that delegates to the angels the power to act in an apparent contradiction of the natural order, as in a state of exception from the laws of physics: miracles, and implicitly particular wills (if the miracle were a direct act of God, it would imply that God willed it with a particular will, pertaining to the particular situation), *non sunt multiplicanda extra necessitatem* – this may be the formulation, analogous to that of Occam's Razor, of a principle of the economy of providential action. The possibility of an ordered, reasonable and, as such, effective government of the world is given by the fact that the state of the world is determined only through the interaction between general laws and particular occasional causes. What may be observed here is that in such a world, governed by immutable laws, once these laws have been initially established, God Himself doesn't seem to be necessary any longer. It is a world altogether similar to the one envisioned by modern science.<sup>12</sup>

It is, simultaneously, a monstrous world, due to the measureless hypertrophy of the law that governs it, as Voltaire has shown in his *Candide*,<sup>13</sup> where he demolished ironically the *Essays of theodicy on the goodness of God, the freedom of man and the origin of evil*,<sup>14</sup> written by Leibniz, who took over Malebranche's system. The obscene quality of a law that is absolute, that legislates every minute detail of life, banishing any chance for spontaneity (similar to the superego of the obsessional) stems from its very absoluteness, from the fact that necessarily nothing is outside its jurisdiction, not even the aberrant, the monstrous. Absolute evil is an unfortunate but necessary consequence of the absolute good (which is identical to the law in this legalistic point of view).<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory. For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government (Homo Sacer II, 2)*, Stanford Univ. Press, 2011, pp. 261–269.

<sup>13</sup> Voltaire, *Candide or Optimism*, Penguin Books, 1986.

<sup>14</sup> Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Essais de Théodicée sur la bonté de Dieu, la liberté de l'homme et l'origine du mal*, Garnier-Flammarion, 1969.

<sup>15</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *op. cit.*, pp. 271–272: "In the case of Leibniz this defeat has two reasons. The first is juridical-moral, and concerns the justificatory intent that is expressed in the very title, *Theodicy*. The world as it is does not require justification, but saving; and if it does not require saving, it needs justifying even less. But to want to justify God for the way in which the world is amounts to the worst misunderstanding of Christianity that one can imagine. The second and more important reason has a political character, and concerns his blind faith in the necessity of the law (of the general will) as the instrument of the government of the world. According to this aberrant idea, if the general law requires as a necessary consequence that Auschwitz takes place, then also »monstrosities are within rules«, and the rule does not become monstrous for this reason." For the necessity that monstrosities should take place, within the system of Malebranche, see Andrew Pyle, *Malebranche*, Routledge, 2003, p. 176: "God wills Order; Order requires that He act by a few simple laws. Working in accordance with these laws will produce, on odd occasions, monstrous results. God could of course intervene to prevent this, but that would require Him to act in a manner unworthy of Him, i.e. by particular volitions." Also, on p. 179 of the same work: "[...] God loves His own perfections more than He loves His creatures. His concern that His conduct should express His attributes (His love of Order) overrides His concern for the well-being of mere creatures, and requires that He act by means of general laws."

Another heir to Malebranche's system is Rousseau,<sup>16</sup> in whose political theory, through:

[...] the notions of *volonté générale* and *volonté particulière* the entire governmental machine of providence is transferred from the theological to the political sphere, thereby compromising not only some points of Rousseau's *économie publique*, but giving it its fundamental structure; that is to say the relationship between sovereignty and government, law and executive power.<sup>17</sup>

Already prefigured in Aristotle's writing, in the case of the state of indistinctness that characterizes the problem of sovereignty – as seen in what, during the development of Occidental political thought, came to be regarded as the distinction between constituent and constituted power – the question of sovereignty remains problematic even with regard to the established modern democratic constitutional state, with its division of power. Who is now actually the sovereign one, the people or the state that claims to embody the people's general will? And if it is the state, which one of the divided entities that comprise it, since sovereignty as such is essentially indivisible? Such questions are a legacy of the theological-political paradigm of the providential *oeconomia*, inherited by modern political thought through Malebranche and Rousseau:

[...] as in Malebranche, the occasional causes are nothing but the particular actualization of God's general will, so in Rousseau, the government, or executive power, claims to coincide with the sovereignty of law from which it nevertheless distinguishes itself as its particular emanation and actualization.

[...] What was needed to assure the unity of being and divine action, reconciling the unity of substance with the trinity of persons and the government of particulars with the universality of providence, has here [in Rousseau] the strategic function of reconciling the sovereignty and generality of the law with the public economy and the effective government of the individuals.<sup>18</sup>

But, as previously seen in the case of Malebranche, if there are laws that effectively govern it, the world may function even if God is radically absent from it. In conditions as those under which, today, the notion itself of popular sovereignty appears only as an empty form, as does also the notion that the government only applies the decision made by the general will of the people through the intermediary agency of their representatives, Agamben's answer to the question on the essence of politics, and on the crisis that confronts political legitimacy is the following one:

---

<sup>16</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *op. cit.*, passim.

<sup>17</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *op. cit.*, pp. 272–273.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 275–276.

What our investigation has shown is that the real problem, the central mystery of politics is not sovereignty, but government; it is not God, but the angel; it is not the king, but ministry; it is not the law, but the police – that is to say, the governmental machine that they form and support.<sup>19</sup>

In consequence, the emergence of a type of regime that may function without any need to appeal to the forms of traditional political legitimacy, such as the social contract and the general will of the people, should be considered as a strong possibility. If the politician of traditional democracies was legitimized as a representative of the general will, the technocrat as a manager specialized in government has no need to make recourse to the relation of representation and to the contractualist idea, legitimizing his use of power only through his managerial expertise, his capacity to assure an optimal flow of the processes of production and consumption of goods.

It may here be argued that this is still politics, by referring to Carl Schmitt's definition of the essence of the political,<sup>20</sup> since we are dealing, in practice, with the generalization of the state of exception<sup>21</sup> and, implicitly, with a form of the decision pertaining on who the enemy is. Also, another objection that could be raised is that the political man remains necessary, since the technician must be told what to do – but this assumption remains valid only insofar we suppose that there are still properly speaking political decisions to be made. Let's not forget that we are being told that we live in the age after the death of ideologies. If this were the case, the decisions at state policy level that are being made today would not stem from differences and accords between conflicting political points of view on how the society should evolve, towards what goals, in what does a good life truly consists, but would be derived only from differences between strictly speaking particular interests. This definition of politics may be contrasted with another one, in the sense of what Hannah Arendt referred to as "to think at what we are doing",<sup>22</sup> or, even better, of the Kantian public use of

---

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 276.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, (expanded edition), The Univ. of Chicago Press, 2007, pp. 25–26: "A definition of the political can be obtained only by discovering and defining the specifically political categories. In contrast to the various relatively independent endeavors of human thought and action, particularly the moral, aesthetic, and economic, the political has its own criteria which express themselves in a characteristic way. [...] The specific political distinction to which political actions and motives can be reduced is that between friend and enemy."

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Walter Benjamin, *On the Concept of History*, VIII, accessed in 13-I-2015 at [<http://www.sfu.ca/~andrewf/CONCEPT2.html>]: "The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the 'state of emergency' in which we live is not the exception but the rule. [...]"

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., The Univ. of Chicago Press, 1998, p. 5: "To these preoccupations and perplexities [the future value of human labor, considered as the source of all value, in the condition of the advent of automation that may make labor unnecessary; the unintelligibility of scientific jargon, which does not render itself to be translated in natural language, when technology dominates our very lives etc.], this book does not offer an answer. Such answers are given every day, and they are matters of practical politics, subject to the agreement of many; they can never lie in theoretical

reason, strictly distinct from the private one, which is, by definition, un-free<sup>23</sup> (Agamben seems to be meaning a similar definition of what he considers to be an authentic politics, as will be shown a little later during the argumentation of this paper). The problematic aspect of the managerial paradigm of politics is that, inside it, the decision is no longer, strictly speaking, a political one, being altogether of an economic type, similar to the decision-making of the patriarch from the ancient *oikos*, the ancient household, who is a strictly private figure.

Karl Marx, in his *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, considered bureaucratic thinking as altogether identical with the corporate<sup>24</sup> one, bureaucracy itself being nothing other than a corporation that acceded to state power, whereas in Hegel's theory,<sup>25</sup> the corporations that are authorized by the state, as associations of individuals that are members of civil society and that have common particular interests, and hence common particular wills, are part of a strictly distinct dialectical moment from that of the ethical universality realized in the state. Marx disputes this claim and affirms that the aims of the bureaucracy are exactly as particular as the aims of the corporations, and that that specific characteristic of bureaucratic thinking is that it misrepresents and imposes these particular interests as being the general interests of the whole society.<sup>26</sup>

---

considerations or the opinion of one person, as though we dealt here with problems for which only one solution is possible. What I propose in the following is a reconsideration of the human condition from the vantage point of our newest experiences and our most recent fears. This, obviously, is a matter of thought, and thoughtlessness – the heedless recklessness or hopeless confusion or complacent repetition of »truths« which have become trivial and empty – seems to me among the outstanding characteristics of our time. What I propose, therefore, is very simple: it is nothing more than to think what we are doing.”

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Immanuel Kant, *What is Enlightenment?*, accessed in 19-II-2015 at [<http://www.columbia.edu/acis/ets/CCREAD/etscc/kant.html>].

<sup>24</sup> Although the meaning of the term “corporation” has changed from the one in which it was used during the Middle Ages, through Hegel’s time to nowadays, a common thread may be identified in these subsequent historical meanings by defining it as an association of private individuals, recognized by law, that has particular ends as its aim.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, ed. S. W. Dyde, George Bell and Sons, 1896. For a brief description of the relationship between civil society and state in Hegel’s theory, see Zbigniew A. Pelczynski, “The significance of Hegel’s separation of state and civil society”, in *The State and Civil Society. Studies in Hegel's Political Philosophy*, ed. Z. A. Pelczynski, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1984, pp. 1–13.

<sup>26</sup> Karl Marx, *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, Cambridge Univ. Press, 2009, pp. 47: “[...] The bureaucracy has the being of the state, the spiritual being of society, in its possession; it is its private property. The general spirit of the bureaucracy is the secret, the mystery, preserved inwardly by means of the hierarchy and externally as a closed corporation. [...] As far as the individual bureaucrat is concerned, the end of the state becomes his private end: a pursuit of higher posts, the building of a career. In the first place, he considers real life to be purely material, for the spirit of this life has its separate existence in the bureaucracy. Thus the bureaucrat must make life as materialistic as possible. Secondly, real life is material for the bureaucrat, i.e., in so far as it becomes an object of bureaucratic action, because its spirit is prescribed for it, its end lies outside of it, its existence is the existence of the bureau. The state, then, exists only as various bureau-minds whose connexion [sic] consists of subordination and dumb obedience. Real knowledge appears to be devoid of content just as real life appears to be dead, for this imaginary knowledge and life pass for what is real and essential. Thus the bureaucrat must use the real state Jesuitically, no matter whether this Jesuitism be conscious or unconscious.”

If in the contemporary discourse emitted from inside the paradigm of organizational psychology it is said that the vertical structure of organization of the classical bureaucratic hierarchy is to be replaced with a horizontal, fluid, flexible one, nevertheless the principle of obedience towards the leadership maintains its central position, and the proposed change of organizational paradigm relies ultimately on the internalization of the organization's ethos, values and ends by its members, and these are nothing else but the private values and ends of the organization's leadership.

This resembles somewhat the *Führerprinzip* as it was described by Carl Schmitt, who envisioned in the person of the *Führer* the source of all authority and law, and the embodiment of the ethos of the German People. But, even more pertinent here is Schmitt's ulterior analysis, dating from 1950, of what made possible such obedience of an entire people to this regime: the legalistic tradition of a state endowed with a strong caste of civil servants, in other words, a strong bureaucratic tradition.<sup>27</sup>

Of course, if an employee of a contemporary organization disagrees with the values and ends of the said organization's leadership, he will not meet a grisly end at the edge of a long knife. He will just be fired, or, said in a more politically correct way, will be given the opportunity to further advance his career somewhere else. This is one of the key aspects of the concept of flexibility as used in the paradigm of organizational psychology. In any way, the salient aspect remains that despite its differences<sup>28</sup> from classical bureaucratic hierarchy, the new organizational paradigm still retains at minimum a two-tiered hierarchy: the management and the rank and file employees, and these last one still owe obedience towards the leadership.

Adolf Eichmann could also have referred, as observed by Hannah Arendt, to this principle of leadership and to the duty of absolute obedience to the commands of the *Führer*, whose words are law, during the course of his trial for war crimes.<sup>29</sup> Eichmann is

---

<sup>27</sup> Carl Schmitt, *State, Movement, Right. The Triadic Structure of the Political Unity. The Question of Legality*, Plutarch Press, 2001.

<sup>28</sup> The reduction of hierarchical levels designated as the horizontal character of the new organizational paradigm is intended to actually strengthen the control of the central management, by stripping away the intermediary bureaus that each jealously guarded its share of the distribution of power within the organization.

<sup>29</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem. A Report on the Banality of Evil*, The Viking Press, 1964, pp. 133–134: "He [Eichmann, during the trial] then proceeded to explain that from the moment he was charged with carrying out the Final Solution he had ceased to live according to Kantian principles [he previously stated that he had read Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason* and that throughout his life he maintained a keen sense of duty], that he had known it, and that he had consoled himself with the thought that he no longer »was master of his own deeds«, that he was unable »to change anything«. What he failed to point out in court was that in this »period of crimes legalized by the state«, as he himself now called it, he had not simply dismissed the Kantian formula as no longer applicable, he had distorted it to read: Act as if the principle of your actions were the same as that of the legislator or of the law of the land - or, in Hans Frank's formulation of »the categorical imperative in the Third Reich«, which Eichmann might have known: »Act in such a way that the *Führer*, if he knew your action, would approve it.«" (*Die Technik des Staates*, 1942, pp. 15–16).

not mentioned here in order to imply that present business managers would be all some kind of miniature *Führers*, and neither that the recourse to a managerial paradigm in politics would lead automatically to the establishment of some death camps. His name is used only in order to illustrate that someone with good managerial skills (and he was somewhat of an expert in logistics) is not necessarily someone we would want to be led by. Also, Arendt's argument – citing Hans Frank – that, in the Third Reich, the Kantian public use of reason was altogether replaced by the reason of the dictator in a perverted form of a categorical imperative that demanded absolute obedience to the *Führer*, may serve as a remainder of the distinction between the public and the private use of reason, the first belonging to politics, the second to economy.

A totalitarian regime does not, strictly speaking, constitute a politics, resembling in its mode of functioning an ancient tyranny, which Aristotle classified between the aberrant forms of politics. The tyrant is not a political figure, but a private one, who holds the whole state as his private property, with the right to use and abuse of it.<sup>30</sup>

What the expertise of the ancient tyrant, the bureaucrat, the present manager of an organization and the technocrat as manager of a state apparatus all have in common is that they all fulfil private roles, functioning strictly in private quality, even if they masquerade as having the public interest as their aim. According to Aristotle, the proper place for these figures is the *oikos*, economy, and not the *agora*, the public forum of politics.

In consequence, if the society of the present is delivered completely to the economy, no longer being a community of citizens, but one of consumers, its leadership can take no other form than that of a management of the security necessary for consumption, in other words, of a management of biopolitics.

Any further critical analysis of this trend should take into consideration the *de facto* form under which the consumer society of the present appears, namely that what Guy Debord called as the spectacle.

In his *Marginal Notes on Commentaries on the Society of the Spectacle*, Agamben identifies in the event of Timișoara 1989 the paradigmatic moment for the advent of the domination of the integrated spectacle as end of the state-form, with the legitimization, transmitted live on television, of the instauration of a new regime, a legitimization realized exclusively through disinformation:

[...] the secret police had conspired against itself in order to overthrow the old spectacle-concentrated regime while television showed, nakedly and without false modesty, the real political function of the media. [...] What the entire world was

---

<sup>30</sup> Aristotle, *op. cit.*, 1311a, pp. 217–218: “The idea of a king is to be a protector of the rich against unjust treatment, of the people against insult and oppression. Whereas a tyrant, as has often been repeated, has no regard to any public interest, but only to his private ends; his aim is pleasure, the aim of a king, honour. Wherefore also in their desires they differ; the tyrant is desirous of riches, the king, of what brings honour.”



watching live on television, thinking it was the real truth, was in reality the absolute nontruth; and, although the falsification appeared to be sometimes quite obvious, it was nevertheless legitimized as true by the media's world system, so that it would be clear that the true was, by now, nothing more than a moment within the necessary movement of the false. In this way, truth and falsity became indistinguishable from each other and the spectacle legitimized itself solely through the spectacle.<sup>31</sup>

The spectacle is, in its essence, the defining communicativeness of human beings, but a communicativeness that has passed through a process of alienation, taking up the role of an autonomous sphere, becoming the essential factor of the type of processes of production that dominate society (see also Heidegger's essay, *The Question Concerning Technology*). Agamben compares this process with the medieval cabalists' interpretation of the sin of Adam, according to whom the sin consisted in separating and contemplating only the last *Sephirot* (emanation) of the divinity, the *Shekinah*, the manifestation of God on Earth, His *logos*, while disregarding the rest. Adam tastes only from the fruit of the tree of knowledge, but neglects to partake also from the tree of life.<sup>32</sup> (This myth, depicting a radical separation, a divorce of reason from life, may be interpreted as equating the state of the fall of mankind with madness.)

The autonomization of knowledge-language in the spectacle represents the absolute realization of nihilism, because, under the reign of the spectacle, language itself becomes the spectacle's servant. Such vital questions as the debate and distinction about right and wrong, truth and untruth become meaningless, since the horizon that circumscribes any possible narrative belongs strictly to the order of the spectacle.

In *The Sacrament of Language. An Archaeology of the Oath (Homo Sacer II, 3)*, Agamben shows that the institution of the oath is derived from the primordial existential experience of the human being as a being endowed with speech, even more, a being for whom the capacity for using language constitutes its very essence as a rational and social life-form. This primordial existential experience of speech refers to the prehistoric moment when the human beings became conscious of their communicative essence and chose to assume responsibility for their words and deeds. Agamben links this

---

<sup>31</sup> Giorgio Agamben, "Marginal notes on Commentaries on the Society of spectacle", in *Means without Ends. Notes on Politics*, pp. 80–81.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82: "[...] the sin that cabalists call »isolation of the Shekinah« and that they attribute to Aher – one of the four rabbis who, according to a famous Haggadah of the Talmud, entered the Pardes (that is, supreme knowledge). [...] The Shekinah is the last of the ten Sefirot or attributes of divinity, the one that expresses divine presence itself, its manifestation or habitation on Earth: its »word«. Aher's »cutting of the branches« is identified by cabalists with the sin of Adam, who, instead of contemplating the Sefirot in their totality, preferred to contemplate only the last one, isolating it from the others – thereby separating the tree of science from the tree of life. Like Adam, Aher represents humanity insofar as, making knowledge his own destiny and his own specific power, he isolates knowledge and the word, which are nothing other than the most complete form of the manifestation of God (the Shekinah), from the other Sefirot in which he reveals himself."

process to the very event of anthropogenesis, for while the animals are also capable of communication, even of dissimulation, only human beings can make promises, can swear oaths and put their life at stake for their words.<sup>33</sup>

Contrary with such theories that consider the oath as an archaic magical-religious institution, Agamben affirms that it represents the threshold of indistinctness, the common origin from which religion and law separated, as attempts to control the nefarious possibility of perjury that is inherent in language as such.

Since under the all-encompassing aegis of the spectacle the question of the truthfulness of language, that is the question of our ethical relation to our own essence as speaking beings, tends to become untenable, perjury itself seem to become the political norm, something to be expected with nonchalance. The only language that may appear to be trustworthy is the jargon of the specialist, the technician, and this only insofar he appears to the public as being in control of the management of the spectacle (that he knows what he is talking about), when, in fact, the complete opposite is the case – he is only a cogwheel whose function is determined by the spectacular machine, lacking the self-consciousness given by the assumption of an ethical position:

When the ethical – and not simply cognitive – connection that unites words, things, and human actions is broken, this in fact promotes a spectacular and unprecedented proliferation of vain words on the one hand and, on the other, of legislative apparatuses that seek obstinately to legislate on every aspect of that life on which they seem no longer to have any hold. The age of the eclipse of the oath is also the age of blasphemy, in which the name of God breaks away from its living connection with language and can only be uttered in “vain”.<sup>34</sup>

The only ethical reaction remaining open to those presented with such monstrous proliferation of simulacra, of empty forms that seize onto and falsify the whole world, is shame, a shame that may yet possibly act as an efficient cause of change. It is a

---

<sup>33</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *The Sacrament of Language. An Archaeology of the Oath (Homo Sacer II, 3)*, Stanford Univ. Press, 2011, p. 69: “Just as, in the words of Foucault, man »is an animal whose politics places his existence as a living being in question«, so also is he the living being whose language places his life in question. These two definitions are, in fact, inseparable and constitutively dependent on each other. The oath is situated at their intersection, understood as the anthropogenic operator by means of which the living being, who has discovered itself speaking, has decided to be responsible for his words and, devoting himself to the *logos*, to constitute himself as the »living being who has language«. In order for something like an oath to be able to take place, it is necessary, in fact, to be able above all to distinguish, and to articulate together in some way, life and language, actions and words – and this is precisely what the animal, for which language is still an integral part of its vital practice, cannot do. The first promise, the first – and, so to speak, transcendental – *sacratio* is produced by means of this division, in which man, opposing his language to his actions, can put himself at stake in language, can promise himself to the *logos*.” The quote from Michel Foucault is from *The History of Sexuality vol. 1. An Introduction*, (translation of *La volonté de savoir*), Pantheon Books, 1978, p. 143.

<sup>34</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *op. cit.*, pp. 70–71.

shame similar to that which Primo Levi<sup>35</sup> described that it was felt by the survivors of the extermination camps, the shame felt by the victims for some kind of inherent complicity with their tormentors, given that they were of the same species with those who perpetrated the horror, a shame of being human. To experience a glimpse of this feeling, today it suffices to watch the news. The effect of this shame is that it renders impossible any further illusions on the worth of those that have used their power to help make the world as it now is, and on the value of the institutional and political system that enabled them to do so.<sup>36</sup>

There is, nevertheless also a positive aspect of this exacerbation of communicativeness, that is the direct experimentation of this defining aspect of what it means to be human – of communicativeness as such, the awareness of the fact of that we are beings delivered to the *logos*, in conjunction with the awareness of the openness generated through this delivery, towards the space in which an ethos may be formed, a space in which a being that can give account of itself only through dialogue with its others, its neighbours, may find its home. Agamben argues that an authentic form of politics may only appear under the condition of assuming the pure mediality (similar, in a way, to Heidegger's concept of *Lichtung*) that is given to human beings as beings that lack an inherent *telos*, a natural, instinctive end unto themselves – whereas the nature of the animal world is instinct, that of the human beings lies in language.<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>35</sup> Primo Michele Levi, *I sommersi e i salvati*, Einaudi, 1991, p. 63: "Era inutile chiudere gli occhi o volgergli le spalle, perché era tutto intorno, in ogni direzione fino all'orizzonte. Non ci era possibile, né abbiamo voluto, essere isole; i giusti fra noi, non più né meno numerosi che in qualsiasi altro gruppo umano, hanno provato rimorso, vergogna, dolore, insomma, per la colpa che altri e non loro avevano commessa, ed in cui si sono sentiti coinvolti, perché sentivano che quanto era avvenuto intorno a loro, ed in loro presenza, e in loro, era irrevocabile."

<sup>36</sup> Giorgio Agamben, "In this exile (Italian diary 1992-94)", in *Means without Ends. Notes on Politics*, p. 131: "[...] Primo Levi has shown, however, that there is today a »shame of being human«, a shame that in some way or other has tainted every human being. This was – and still is – the shame of the camps, the shame of the fact that what should not have happened did happen. And it is a shame of this type, as it has been rightly pointed out, that we feel today when faced by too great a vulgarity of thought, when watching certain TV shows, when confronted with the faces of their hosts and with the self-assured smiles of those »experts« who jovially lend their qualifications to the political game of the media. Those who have felt this silent shame of being human have also severed within themselves any link with the political power in which they live. Such a shame feeds their thoughts and constitutes the beginning of a revolution and of an exodus of which it is barely able to discern the end."

<sup>37</sup> Giorgio Agamben, "Notes on politics", in *Means without Ends. Notes on Politics*, p. 115: "[...] the first consequence deriving from this experiment is the subverting of the false alternative between ends and means that paralyzes any ethics and any politics. A finality without means (the good and the beautiful as ends unto themselves), in fact, is just as alienating as mediality that makes sense only with respect to an end. What is in question in political experience is not a higher end but being-into-language itself as pure mediality, being-into-a-mean as an irreducible condition of human beings. [...] Politics is the sphere neither of an end in itself nor a means subordinated to an end; rather, it is the sphere of pure mediality without an end intended as the field of human action and of human thought."

### 3. Conclusion

The temporary conclusion reached at this point of our analysis finds itself in accord with that of Carl Schmitt from *The Concept of the Political*, in the sense that a managerial paradigm of government, and thus a technocratic form of government, as it seems to be required by a consumer society, cannot in any way rise to the dignity of what we used to call politics. The reason for this conclusion does not imply accepting Schmitt's definition of the political, and hence a necessity of finding an enemy (even if as a scapegoat) for there to be politics. Nevertheless, he did explicitly state that politics as such is tied existentially with the life of human beings (hence, in his argumentation, the enemy is that who threatens our specific way of life), which may recall the Aristotelian *zoon politikon*. Aristotle also gave yet another definition of the human being, immediately following the first one, that of *zoon logon echon*, and these two definitions seem to be linked. The binding promise of the oath, the promise to keep true to one's word, is such a link. There can be no politics without *logos*, and when the *logos* slips away, as when we no longer can trust our own speech, so does politics with its promise of a good life. What we are left with is biopolitics, as a "politics" or, more correctly, an economy of survival. But to survive does not necessarily mean to live.

It seems as if somewhere during the unfolding of our history we have lost our way. For a further development of the present inquiry, a fruitful line of thought seems to lead towards Martin Heidegger's analysis into the meanings of the concepts of *technē* and *phýsis*,<sup>38</sup> which may shed light on the link between the derealization that results from the total domination of society by the economy of the spectacle, described by Guy Debord, and this purely immanent managerial paradigm of politics that tends to disregard completely any appeal from the place of a sovereign authority (God, the People, humankind, etc.) that could provide human beings with the dignity of an ideal that transcends mere buying and selling.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

#### Primary sources

- Agamben, Giorgio, „Marginal notes on Commentaries on the Society of Spectacle”, „Notes on politics”, „In this exile (Italian diary 1992-94)” in *Means without Ends. Notes on Politics*, Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2000.
- Agamben, Giorgio, „Introductory Note on the Concept of Democracy”, in Giorgio Agamben et al., *Democracy in what state?*, New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2011.
- Agamben, Giorgio, *The Kingdom and the Glory. For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government (Homo Sacer II, 2)*, Stanford, California: Stanford Univ. Press, 2011.

---

<sup>38</sup> Martin Heidegger, “The question concerning technology”, in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, transl. William Lovitt, Garland Publishing Inc., 1977. Also: idem, “On the essence and concept of Φύσις in Aristotle's Physics B, I”, in *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1998.

- Agamben, Giorgio, *The Sacrament of Language. An Archaeology of the Oath (Homo Sacer II, 3)*, Stanford, California: Stanford Univ. Press, 2011.
- Arendt, Hannah, *Eichmann in Jerusalem. A Report on the Banality of Evil*, New York: The Viking Press, 1964.
- Debord, Guy, *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle*, New York and London: Verso, 1990.
- Debord, Guy, *The Society of the Spectacle*, New York: Zone Books, 1995.
- Heidegger, Martin, "The question concerning technology", in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, transl. William Lovitt, New York and London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1977.
- Heidegger, Martin, "On the essence and concept of φύσις in Aristotle's Physics B, I", in *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill, Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1998.
- Marx, Karl, *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2009.
- Schmitt, Carl, *State, Movement, Right. The Triadic Structure of the Political Unity. The Question of Legality*, Corvallis, Oregon: Plutarch Press, 2001.
- Schmitt, Carl, *The Concept of the Political*, (expanded edition), Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2007.

## Secondary sources

- Arendt, Hannah, *The Human Condition*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Chicago & London: The Univ. of Chicago Press, 1998.
- Aristotle, *Aristotle's Politics*, transl. Benjamin Jowett, London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1926.
- Benjamin, Walter, *On the Concept of History*, accessed in 13-I-2015 at [<http://www.sfu.ca/~andrewf/CONCEPT2.html>].
- Foucault, Michel, *The History of Sexuality vol. 1. An Introduction*, (translation of *La volonté de savoir*), New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.
- Habermas, Jürgen, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. An Inquiry into a Category of Burgeois Society*, (fifth printing), Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1993.
- Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, ed. S. W. Dyde, London: George Bell and Sons, 1896.
- Kant, Immanuel, *What is Enlightenment?*, accessed in 19-II-2015 at [<http://www.columbia.edu/acis/ets/CCREAD/etscc/kant.html>].
- Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm, *Essais de Théodicée sur la bonté de Dieu, la liberté de l'homme et l'origine du mal*, Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1969.
- Levi, Primo Michele, *I sommersi e i salvati*, Turin: Einaudi, 1991.
- Malebranche, Nicolas, *Treatise on Nature and Grace*, Oxford & New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1992.
- Nadler, Steven, "Malebranche on causation", in *The Cambridge Companion to Malebranche*, ed. Steven Nadler, Cambridge & New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2000.
- Pelczynski, Zbigniew A., "The significance of Hegel's separation of state and civil society", in *The State and Civil Society. Studies in Hegel's Political Philosophy*, ed. Z. A. Pelczynski, Cambridge & New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1984.
- Pyle, Andrew, *Malebranche*, London & New York: Routledge, 2003.
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, "The Social Contract", in *The Social Contract and the First and Second Discourses*, ed. Susan Dunn, New Haven & London: Yale Univ. Press, 2002.
- Voltaire, *Candide or Optimism*, Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1986.

## THE ROLE OF ALTERITY AND OF THE DIGITAL MEDIA IN OUTLINING OF THE POSTMODERN INDIVIDUAL'S IDENTITY

RALUCA MARINELA SILAGHI\*

**ABSTRACT. The Role of Alterity and of the Digital Media in Outlining of the Postmodern Individual's Identity.** The postmodern individual forms his identity, his self-image and self-perception not only through self-reflection or through reference to his own convictions, his own system of values and principles. The construction of the self-image is dependent upon social recognition and on the messages transmitted from the other, during the interaction between them. The relevance of the other for the process of defining one's self-identity leads ultimately to dependence on mass-media, which offers to "gratuitously" help the individual in obtaining the social recognition that he aspires to, by constituting and reinventing himself in such a manner as to distinguish himself through superiority from the masses. Such dependence on mass-media leads to the alienation of the individual from his self, to his forming a subservient relationship towards trendy cultural models, opinion leaders or group opinions, dispensing with the individual's autonomy and capacity of critical reflection on the information he is presented with.

**Keywords:** *community of comparing finitude, identity, alterity, media culture, alienation*

### Introduction

The postmodern individual forms his identity, his self-image and self-perception not only through self-reflection or through reference to his own convictions, his own system of values and principles. The construction of the self-image is dependent upon social recognition and on the messages transmitted from the other, either verbally or non-verbally, during the interaction between them. Social recognition, the admiration and envy that others may manifest towards an individual, is a source of feelings of self-contentment, of fulfilment, understood as a confirmation of the human value of the individual. The relevance of the other for the process of defining one's self-identity leads ultimately to dependence on mass-media, which offers to "gratuitously" help the individual in obtaining the social recognition that he aspires to, by constituting and reinventing himself in such a manner as to distinguish himself through superiority from

---

\* PhD Student at the Doctoral School in Philosophy, Faculty of History and Philosophy, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania. E-mail: [raluca\\_marinela14@yahoo.com](mailto:raluca_marinela14@yahoo.com)

the masses, in relationship with a catalogue of advertising images and famous personages (celebrities) depicted in them, as desirable models to follow. Consumer goods become the mark of the personal identity of the individual, the act of consuming as such being considered the sole criterion of individual and social worth, of distinction, of the affirmation and presentation of a proper identity, exposed as sign of prestige.

Such dependence on the others and on mass-media as a medium of reference leads to the alienation of the individual from his self, to his forming a subservient relationship towards trendy cultural models, opinion leaders or group opinions, dispensing with the individual's autonomy and capacity of critical reflection on the information he is presented with. The TV screen becomes the optical apparatus determining his vision of the world and of his own self. The function of the individual is relocated to that of a consumer of images, goods and services that pre-determine his understanding of the environment, promising a make-believe world in conformity with his desires, a world of wish-fulfilment. Without such an intersection of the real with the imaginary realm of desire, the advertising images would lose their significant effect on the individual.

### **I. The vision of Jean-Luc Nancy on community and on the existence and status of the individuals in its frame**

The postmodern vision on the community, presented by the French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy in his work *The Inoperative Community*, is focused on understanding it as *a community of co-appearing, or comparing (com-parait), of finitude and of alterity*. A *community of comparing finitude* is made of singular beings leading a finite existence, that share between themselves through communication and comparing, that expose outwardly their singularities and, through the interplay of the articulations of their singularities, together establish reference to a totality considered as a common purpose: the community as unity of articulate singular beings – the only place that makes possible their existence as co-existence.

Articulation is the act of joining together of different/distinct singular beings in the totality represented by dialogue, a bilateral interactive communication process, based on reciprocal vision and perspective exchange, through which the singular being's exposure towards the exterior takes place, its exposure towards other singular beings. Being exposed to the other signifies situating oneself on the limit where the interior (the proper vision of the individual) is intersecting the exterior (the other's vision), being neither pure interior, nor pure exterior, but an interior-exterior (a synthesis between them), that defines the existential situation of the singular being as being together with the other, as being in the other, as being in exposure. This is, in fact, the singular logic of an interior-exterior, something that is neither pure interiority, nor pure exteriority, a logic of the limit, in which something belongs simultaneously to everyone and no one.<sup>1</sup> The exposure towards

---

<sup>1</sup> "Being together (and the possibility of saying »we«) has its place there where the interior, as interior, becomes exterior without the formation of a common »interior«." Nancy (2005), 138.

the exterior has as its fundamental end the realization of consensus between the communicational agents.

The basis of the community is communication, the bilateral, comprehensive and active dialogue processes between individuals. This is defined as the event of being with the other, of living in community (being-in-the-world) together with the others, the communion of singular finite beings that expose themselves constantly to their community, that depend on the existence of the other singular beings, and that recognize themselves as subjects only through their reciprocal rapport, as relation to another different from the self. Thus, community may be understood as the community of individuals that participate in their alterity. Finitude implies co-existence (being with the others), a necessary and permanent rapport to the others, living besides the other, the living together of a plurality of individuals that compare, that are distinct one from the other. The order of comparing consists in the appearance of a "between" among me and the other, through which the other and I (the fact of being between us) demonstrate that I am always another for the other, as well as that the other is another for me (there are no identical beings, since every being is different from another).<sup>2</sup> Communication is the operation of sharing that comes before all singular experiences and renders possible the instauration of an "together with" (as the essence of being) between me and the other, as an intermediary operator between us, that enables the interaction, the comprehensive act of communication and the possibility of consensus.

Comparing is understood by Nancy as the act of sharing to the others that what the individual is as human being (mode of thought, values, principles, vision) through his participation in society. Through such sharing, the community acquires dynamism. In it, the singular finite beings interact between themselves, aiming towards building consensus, acquire access to the fact of being-in-common, have access to the other, becoming open towards it, accepting diversity as a source of plus-knowledge that enriches the community and the self, instead of a communicational obstacle. In this sense, community may be considered as a process of building connections, links and relationships between the human beings that co-exist inside its frame.

The individual recognizes himself as subject only insofar he can say "we". Thus, individual existence becomes possible only through its relationship with the existence of the others, as co-existence. The possibility of saying "we" implies being-in-common, presenting and representing ourselves as a community. Community may be understood as participation in existence, meaning the fact of being exposed to ourselves as heterogeneousness, and to be exposed to our becoming as singular finite beings.

The community, in Nancy's vision, is not considered as a common being that would constitute the basis of being together, as a unified collectivity with a substantial

---

<sup>2</sup> "Being-in-common means that singular beings are not, do not present themselves, do not appear, only insofar they compare, are exposed, presented or offered one to the other. This comparison is not added unto their beings, their being itself can come into being only through it." Nancy (2005), 85.



principle of unification, but as an existence-in-common of diverse, singular human beings, that live with each other (*being together; dwelling together in the world*) in such a way that the existence of a finite human being is dependent upon the existence of the human beings around it, without implying their unification in a substantial collectivity (hence: *being singular plural*). This impossibility of the unification of the individuals in a complete totality should be considered as being a strength, inasmuch it renders possible the diversity and richness of sharing. Lacking such diversity, the individuals would lose their own identity and specificity, their own self-worth as irreplaceable human beings, being dissolved in the identity of the community, renouncing to think on their own, and adhering completely, losing themselves in the perspective and vision imposed by the community. Being-in-common cannot be reified, it does not represent a thing on which common ownership could be claimed. It cannot be understood as communion or common propriety to which all individuals of the community may claim access and right of use. The fact of being-in-common, of being together with the others, is not something added to the fact of being a self, or the fact of being alone. The words “with”, “in-common”, “together” do not signify being one in place of the others, because finite being cannot subsist by itself, since it cannot claim to be absolute being. The finite being needs the existence of the others and of communication, dialogue, with them. The finitude of the human being implies the fact of being with the others, as being in their exterior, of being exposed to them and of comparing.

The individual human being is communicative, dialogical, relational, and therefore distinct from its peers. Its existence can be guaranteed only in the frame of a community, only as co-existence, through living in the common with its peers and interacting with them. The morality of each member of the community (of the singular beings with finite existence that expose their singularity towards exterior), as well as the respect owed to the other as human being first, then as fellow citizen, guarantee co-existence, common co-belonging, as well as the sharing of this common – through bilateral, transparent and comprehensive dialogue whose finality consists in the realization of a consensus between the involved parts, that debate different points of view, different visions, different ideas pertaining to an event, a situation, a problem with which they find themselves confronted with. Such bilateral dialogue implies situating oneself on a position of openness towards the other, the acknowledgement and understanding of what the other communicates in his quality of communicative actor. In order that the dialog between individuals should not become a monologue only effective in strengthening the persuasion of its emitter, its starting point should be the acceptance of cultural diversity (the model of community proposed by Nancy is one of difference, of alterity) as beneficial both to the community and to the individual, as a chance to widen one’s worldview, a chance to learn from the other, instead of being considered as a communicational barrier or an obstruction to common cohabitation. To accept cultural diversity includes accepting the fundamental rights and freedoms which every human being should enjoy, while also accepting that reaching perfect coincidence,

perfect identity between different individuals is impossible. To accept that individuality rests on difference means accepting the fundamental fact of the presence of alterity, to relate to the other as such, as to someone different from the self, while understanding this alterity as beneficial to the self and to the community in which he lives, in other words to the singular beings that live in-common with each other inside the community that guarantee their existence.

## **II. The role played by the other in the self-perception of the individual**

A similar vision on the community, the status of the individual and the relationship of the individual with the other members of the community, as that of Jean-Luc Nancy, may be found in the theories of Hubert Hermans and George Herbert Mead. These theories are focused on the relationship between individuals and the mode in which the transmitted messages influence the individual's perception of the self and the world. The self is considered as formed by two components, two voices: the "I" (the proper self of the individual, the self-as-knower, the knowing subject that interprets and organizes subjectively his lived experience) and the "me" (the social self, comprised of a set of attitudes belonging to and assumed by the peers with whom the individual interacts).

a) Hubert Hermans, in *Voicing the Self. From Information Processing to Dialogical Interchange*, argues for the importance of communication, of interaction between individuals, in the formation of self-image, of how the individual ends of perceiving himself. The self is considered as dialogical, relational, open towards the other, inclined towards continual improvement, dynamic and capable of adopting multiple positioning. The self is permanently in relationship with the world, with the other individuals around itself, with whom it entertains comprehensive dialogical relations, aiming for consensus as the common aim of the communicational partners. Insofar as the individual lives besides his peers in a community, co-existing in common with them (as Jean-Luc Nancy considers), his existence and self-perception depend on the interaction with his other, on the message transmitted by the other, or more exactly on the influence of the other's position with regard to the self. The other's attitude and position with regard to the individual influences from the exterior the internal dynamics of the self, having a signifying impact on personal self-perception and self-conduct. During dialogue with another, the individual will take hypothetically as his own the other's attitude and position, even if is contrary to his own, in order to assess the other's view. The characterizing distinctiveness of the self is derived from the fact that there are no identical individuals, each one having his own voice, his own perspective on the different situations he encounters, living in his own world of significations, and consequently being irreducible to the others. In other words, Hermans confirms Nancy's theory on the community, maintaining that each individual is distinct from the others,

each being the author of his own narrative, all the eventual resemblances being considered as accidental, contingent. Taking over the other's attitude during the dialogue implies its internalization. As such, the other's point of view becomes a part of the self, like an interior voice, beside the individual's own one. Since both these voices (the own one and the one just internalized) are in the interior, they allow the instauration of an internal self-dialogue, an imaginary dialogue between the internal interlocutors with their contradictory views on the respective topic. Being analysed by the subject, this internal dialogue will influence his internal thought dynamics, leading to the formation of a certain vision on the debated topic, but also of how the individual perceives himself.

b) George Herbert Mead, in *Mind, Self and Society*, emphasizes the role played by the other in forming the personal self-perception, taking as his starting point the analysis of how the self operates within the community or social group to which he belongs. The community and social processes determine a specific type of individual behaviour by influencing the formation of a certain self-image of the individual. The self exists as such only by being relational, only through its direct dialogical interaction with the others and only if one is part of a community or a social group. The formation of the self is dependent on the others opinions on it, forming its self-image through identification with the social group to which one belongs (defined as the other, or as a generalized other). Self- knowledge implies the internalization in one's own direct experience of the attitudes and views of the whole social group to which the individual belongs, with regard to the common activities undertaken, to the relationships of cooperation that take place between the members of the group and that are realized in the framework of society. Inside each social group there are rules that establish the attributes and roles of each member, and that also determine the commonly shared purpose of the group. In order that this purpose be realized, and also to help prevent the apparition of inadequate behaviour, it is necessary that the individual, as member of that group, adheres to its values, principles and rules, and internalizes them in his own direct experience, relating them to the concrete situations where they are applicable. The process of internalization presupposes the inclusion of these elements into the structure of the self, as its own voices (similarly as in the theory of Hermans), thus becoming effective influences over the social and group behaviour of the individual. Relating to one's social group actually implies relating to the opinions of the other members, which will become constitutive elements in the construction of one's self-image. The individual recognizes himself and builds his self-identity through assuming the value system, the principles and norms of the social group to which he belongs, together with the roles occupied by the other individuals. Assuming the other's role, placing oneself in the role of the other and analysing the situation from the resulting perspective constitutes the first form of objectivation available to the self and is essential for the realization of the self. During the process of critical and objective reflection on a problem or situation, the self undertakes an inner dialogue, communicating with himself as if he communicated directly with the others.

### **III. The role of media culture and of consumerism in forming the identity of the individual**

Postmodern society may be defined as a communication and information-centric society, dominated by the processes of media culture. Media culture is eminently communicational, a culture of the image, a culture that bets on the determining power of the image on the mode in which the postmodern individual perceives himself and on the way in which his identity is constructed. In this type of culture, the identity of the individual is no longer a given, as it was in traditional societies, in which the individual, as member of a stable social group, had a prescribed identity, defined by his birth or marriage and tailored in accord with the system of values, principles and norms of the social group of belonging, with the social role he had to play inside it, and recognized through signs such as the type of clothing donned as symbol of belonging to the respective social group. In postmodern society, identity becomes unstable,<sup>3</sup> fluid, subject to permanent change/renewal/reinventing following the individual desires. Identity is defined as a construct of the individual, pertaining to his choice of a certain social behaviour, a certain style, image or appearance under which he presents himself to society and in function of which he will be judged by it.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, individual identity is formed partly in relationship with the others, based on their opinions on him, and partly through recourse to the various blueprints promoted through media imagery and the values and principles dominant in postmodern society as a whole or at the level of the respective social group. Inside these social groups, the individual assumes a personalized set of values, principles, attitudes and viewpoints and becomes aware of his difference from those outside his group, this leading to his desire to manifest these differences through his actions.

The role the church, school and family played in the past as instances accredited to establish an adequate system of universally valid values is taken over in postmodernity by mass-media. Now it is it that provides the criteria of what it means to be good or evil, moral or immoral, successful or not, an ideal spouse. Mass-media has taken seriously its self-proclaimed title of arbiter of taste, values, successful ideas, offering to the individual that is willing to affirm himself a large set of varied identity models with which to identify with in order to be in step with the tendencies of fashion and thus to be a successful human being.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> The identity of postmodern individuals is "unstable, fluid, fragmented, lacking unity, multiple, open and subject to dramatic transformations". Keller (2001), 289.

<sup>4</sup> "Building a stable identity represents an effort that requires will, action, engagement, intelligence and creativity, and these qualities are lacking to many of the postmodern identities; Such postmodern identities are only a little more than a game, a pose, a guise which may be renounced even the next day in favor of a new guise and image, identities that get thrown away when they become worn-out, easily replaceable identities fit for the postmodern carnival." Kellner (2001), 307.

<sup>5</sup> "The images and media celebrities come to replace family, school, church, in their quality of arbiters of taste, value and ideas, proposing new models of identification and producing resonating images of style, fashion and behavior." Kellner (2001), 29.

The individual has the possibility of permanently changing his self and his identity, he can even hold multiple and plural identities.<sup>6</sup> This is why it cannot be said that identity is vanishing in postmodern society. In effect, now we are facing a permanent reconstruction and re-defining of identity. The individual is encouraged to be receptive to what mass-media transmits towards him, to take into account the various models of ideal identities that are being presented, to be flexible, to reinvent himself permanently, this implying a permanent process of testing by himself the multiplicity of various identities that are being presented to him.

In consequence, we can safely affirm that media culture, besides influencing the construction of the individual's identity and the way in which he perceives himself, also bears upon his social behaviour, his mode of thought, his worldview, and on the dominant values of postmodern society. The effects of digital media on individual self-perception, on the mode in which the individual forms his self-image and his identity through recourse to the messages transmitted through advertising imagery are evidenced in the two theories on consumerism elaborated by Jean Baudrillard, in *The Consumer Society. Myths and Structures*, and respectively by Gilles Lipovetsky in *The Paradoxical Happiness. Essay on Hyperconsumption Society*. It must be specified from the beginning that the individual as consumer appears on a background of an increase in the quality of living conditions, of an unconditional individual access to goods, without regard to his social class, and of individual autonomy, freedom and equality, promoted as fundamental values of humankind. Nevertheless, this equality between individuals with regard to their access to consumer goods is a false equality, because it masks the existence of a discriminatory system, one that has taken a new guise. It is a discrimination centred on purchasing power and on the type of goods that are being purchased. The individual will be judged, catalogued in function of the value of the product he is buying. The equality promoted by consumerist ideology is not absolute equality, referring exclusively to equality with regard to the principle of satisfaction of the requests for absolute happiness, promised by the consumer goods glorified through their excessive publicity.<sup>7</sup>

Consumption in postmodern society is seen, both by Baudrillard and Lipovetsky, as sole criterion of individual and social worth, of distinction and affirmation of the proper identity of an individual. The desire that seduces and determines the individual's alienation and his integration into the world of consumerism is desire of social recognition and of

---

<sup>6</sup> "Identity becomes in contemporaneity a freely assumed game, a theatrical presentation of the self, in which the individual may present himself to the others in a variety of roles, images and activities, without having to preoccupy himself with the rapidity of these transformations or dramatic changes. And yet, exactly this condition of multiplicity of options has represented the main problem of the modern self, leading him to a state of anxiety and a crisis of identity. For the postmodern self such anxiety disappears, being replaced by a plunging into a multitude of fragments and euphoric experiences, and frequent changes of identity and image." Kellner (2001), 292.

<sup>7</sup> "All people are equal with regard to need and in front of the principle of satisfaction, because all people are equal with regard to the use value of objects and goods (although they are unequal and divided with regard to exchange value)." Baudrillard (2008), 63.

confirming his quality and value as human being. Social recognition from the part of his peers offers the individual member of the community the possibility of distinguishing himself from the others through a perceived superiority acknowledged through the others' admiration. The individual doesn't perceive himself any more exclusively through his own point of view, he is no longer completely autonomous in defining his self-image, renouncing to reflect critically on himself and his environment. His self-perception and his degree of self-contentment are dependent on the opinions of the others. The individual's dependence on others in defining his self-image is at work also in his reliance and dependence on mass-media as a reference media that promises a recipe for acceding to social recognition: the individual just has to follow the models provided by it. In consequence, the postmodern individual defines and recognizes himself, or, in other words, constructs his identity, not only through unmediated recourse to the people around him, but also, and increasingly so with the advances of the communications technologies, through the influence of the messages transmitted, directly or indirectly, through the media, including the messages of advertising images.

The individual's dependence on mass-media in the formation of his identity generates his privation and alienation from establishing his own point of view on himself. He does not look in the mirror anymore, meaning that he does not perceive himself exclusively by relating to his own beliefs, conceptions and system of values (on the contrary, his essence and determinations are fluid, ever-changing). He is dehumanized and transformed from a rational subject into an object customized by the specifications of the market. The role of the mirror is taken over by the glittering shop window. The shop window represents the perfect, ideal projection towards which to tend, always the missing piece from the puzzle of the self-image to the realization of which he aspires, offering him a diversity of identity models from which to choose from and through which to reinvent and redefine himself in his quest for desirable social recognition, self-fulfilment and access to the promised happily-ever-after, thereby integrating the subject in the world of consumption. Publicity sells lifestyles and varied desirable identity-models, as modes of compensating for and filling the gap left open by the death of the autonomous subject. The individual, seduced initially by his desire of pleasing the other, of being admired in order to feel good in his own body, ends up by identifying with the character from the advertising image, wanting to be as it is, taking over its attitudes. This is how the postmodern individual in our consumer society forms his self-image.<sup>8</sup>

The thesis of the self-alienation of the individual effected through the influence of mass-media in his life is also upheld by Marshall McLuhan. He states that the electric processes— meaning the emergence of electric media, formed from cold means of transmitting information (telephone, television) that allow an active sensorial participation from the consumer, and respectively hot means (radio, cinema, photography) that, being

---

<sup>8</sup> "Media culture does not tend to build something akin to a subject and neither to interpellate individuals in order that they perceive themselves as subjects, but to build identities and positions of the subject, inviting the individuals to identify with certain very specific figures or positions, like the Marlboro man, the Virginia Slims woman, the mother from soap operas or Madonna." Kellner (2001), 306.

highly charged with information, require a lower participation from the user – has a negative effect on the individual, who becomes alienated from himself, transformed into a “nobody desperately seeking his own identity”.<sup>9</sup> In virtue of this observation, McLuhan argues that the analysis of consumption should be based on the formula that “the medium is the message”, that the means/medium of transmitting information, and not the content being transmitted, is the essence of the message. This implies that the medium of the message, irrespective of the content, has impact on the individual, determining how he relates to the world and to himself. For this reason, McLuhan considers the medium to be “the agent that provokes brainwashing”.<sup>10</sup> This theory provides support for arguing about a deepening tendency of the process of self-alienation of the individual in postmodern society. Mass-media provides to the individual already structured and pre-interpreted information (pseudo-events). Direct personal experience and critical reflection are no longer necessary for the comprehension of the transmitted messages, the only duties of the individual consumer being to be obedient and tuned in, to accept and to trust all that he is presented with. Only under this conditions, the pseudo-event – the reality of which is already cut out, altered and pre-interpreted – receiving credibility from the consumers, becomes legitimized, and transformed into a real event.

Being absorbed by the way he is perceived by others, the postmodern individual becomes a consumer. His choice of acquisitions is no longer made with regard to the utility of the goods, their use value, but with regard to the logic of consumption (that determines him to pass up no occasion for spoiling himself, to deny himself no pleasure that the advertising industry offers). He will choose to buy any object that he is promised that it will make his life more beautiful, that promises a quick shortcut to happiness, and that constitutes a sign of prestige and of an elevated status with regard to his peers. The use function of consumer goods is replaced by their function of signs in a realm of signs (they become signs of prestige, of differentiation, of abundance, of plenty). Exchange value may be considered the paradigm of the signifying function of the objects that had become consumer goods, to be exchanged through the medium of the market, and which the individual may acquire here and now, without effort and through any means possible. In other words, it is not a real need that awakens in the individual the awareness of the need to possess the respective object.

What triggers the act of consumption is the advertising message, given credibility due to its highlighting of the distinction that the consumption of that product is supposed to provide.<sup>11</sup> The bought good represents the mark of individual identity, of taste, of a distinction through superiority with regard to others. This is an alteration of the formerly

---

<sup>9</sup> McLuhan (2006), 10.

<sup>10</sup> McLuhan (2006), 324.

<sup>11</sup> The principle of the social logic of consumption is: “we never consume the object in itself (its use value) – we always manipulate objects (in the widest sense possible) as signs that distinguish us either by marking our belonging to the group we consider as the ideal reference, or by delineating us from our proper group of reference by referring ourselves to a group with superior status.” Baudrillard (2008), 76.

direct relationship of the individual with his peers. Now this relationship has become mediated by consumer goods and legitimized or compensated by the gain perceived to be received following the act of acquisition. The effectiveness of the brand of the product, the sign par excellence of prestige, is directly proportional to its fame, constructed through media publicity. This publicity becomes a guarantee of the quality of the good, and clear proof in front of the others of the individual's integration in society, his adaptability to the dominant trends, his ability to keep up with fashion, with the rhythm of consumption and of youth. The advertised objects are defined as products having been specially designed with regards to the needs of every individual consumer in part, by teams of professional experts, who address themselves to the consumer using a familiar language, suggesting closeness and the impression of an authentic care that the industry of consumerism has towards every individual consumer.<sup>12</sup> Since what is in play is prestige and social recognition, the postmodern individual will take great care in choosing the most appropriate product.<sup>13</sup>

Our self-image, the mode in which we perceive, interpret and present ourselves, is our calling card, in function of which we are judged by the others, since it determines how we are perceived by them. The body becomes the sign par excellence of prestige, the mark of our identity, the image that defines us. Thus it is eulogized, transformed into a consumer good, in a profitable enterprise. Beauty and success are presented as intimately linked and available to anyone, depending only on the postmodern individual to reach them, by acquiring the hyper functional products that are being sold.

These products, marketed as little pills of instant happiness, are constantly improved upon, under the narrative of an ideology of constant progress, each new generation of products being better than the previous, where the newest one is the best of the series. Internalizing this ideology, the individual becomes an addicted consumer, whose induced pleasures, prescribed in the name of profit, will never attain complete satisfaction, being permanently deferred, existing only as promises.<sup>14</sup> A process of sacralisation of the body as

---

<sup>12</sup> "The objects do not serve for something; primarily they serve you. Without this direct complement, without a personalized »you«, without this total ideology of personal performance, consumption would not be what it is: the warmth of reward, of personal comfort that gives its meaning is more than pure and simple satisfaction." Baudrillard (2008), 25.

<sup>13</sup> "The modern man of quality is exigent. He does not allow himself any omission. He doesn't neglect any detail. He is »select«, but not passively or through a natural grace, but through the exercise of a certain selectiveness. (That this selectiveness is orchestrated by others and not by himself is another matter.) It is not possible for him to be half-hearted or complacent, he must distinguish himself. To know how to choose without being wrong is equivalent here with the military and puritan virtues: intransigence, decision, virtue." Baudrillard (2008), 23.

<sup>14</sup> "The industry always deceives its consumers in what it permanently promises them. The circle of pleasure promised by the action and its packaging is constantly deferred: the malicious promise to what everything is reduced to means nothing else than that it will never be fulfilled – it is as if the client of a restaurant could be expected to become satiated by just reading the menu." Adorno (2012), 161. "The principle imposes that he be presented with all the needs that theoretically the cultural industry could satisfy him, but simultaneously that the respective needs be in such a way previously arranged that through their mean he would not perceive himself otherwise than as an eternal consumer, as an object of the cultural industry." Adorno (2012), 163.



an exponential value and as a narcissistic cult object occurs here.<sup>15</sup> The ends aimed at by “the little adjustments” realized by the so-called “surgeon-specialists in beauty” through esthetical surgeries legitimize the slogan of consumer ideology: “The body you dream of is your very own body.”

According to this slogan, the ideal body to which the individual aspires to is his very real and imperfect body, under the imperative condition that the body be modelled, perfected, made to fit into the requirements of the market. If it lacked a real basis in the intersection of the imaginary with the real, consumer ideology would have had no effect on the individual. For this very reason, this ideology takes as its starting point for its elaborations the real desire for social recognition of the individual with his imperfect body, promising the possibility of perfecting it. Aesthetic surgery is considered a means of quickly adjusting the individual to the model,<sup>16</sup> but also a means in the struggle against getting old, extending the duration of the appearance of youth. A youthful appearance permits the individual to relive the feelings of a carefree youth, in his search for fulfilling emotions and sensations. Self-image becomes through consumption, as Douglas Kellner states in his work *Media Culture*, a magical image of a newer, more attractive, successful and prestigious self.

The care for the body, besides with the practice of shopping in hypermarkets and malls (the forefront representative institutions of the society of abundance) are considered marks of a lifestyle, a simultaneously ludic and therapeutic activity that helps increase the self-esteem and relaxes the individual after a hard day at work or even after professional failure. In other words, this form of therapeutic relaxation provides the individual an escape from the real, allowing him to forget for a moment his daily problems, his loneliness, the grind of daily routine, giving him access to an enchanted realm, where he may satisfy all his desires through acquisition of commercial goods. The act of consumption is to be defined in this case as a form of reward that the individual gives himself for his quality as human being. Such association between the ludic<sup>17</sup> and the therapeutic in the act of consumption should be considered as symptom of the process of seduction that mass-media publicity directs towards the consumer’s unconscious. The consumer will consider himself as autonomous master of his own choices, capable of

---

<sup>15</sup> “Beauty has become an absolute, religious imperative for women. Being beautiful is no longer just a natural imperative, a supplement added to the moral qualities. It is the fundamental quality of those that take care of their hair and silhouette as devoutly as of their soul.” Baudrillard (2008), 170.

<sup>16</sup> “The body becomes, through an absolute reversal of signification, a threatening object that must be overseen, reduced, tortured for delicately-»aesthetical« purposes, with the sight trained upon the emaciated models from *Vogue*, in which we may decipher the reversed aggressiveness of an abundance society over its own triumph of the body, and the vehement rejection of its own principles.” Baudrillard (2008), 22.

<sup>17</sup> “The ludic is what establishes, with increasing frequency, our relation with the object, persons, culture, entertainment, with our work sometimes and even with politics. The ludic becomes the dominant tonality of our daily habitus, exactly in the measure in which everything, objects, goods, relationships, services are becoming gadgets.” Baudrillard (2008), 25.

freely rejecting the proposals of mass-media publicity, while actually all the choices have already been made for him by the media, his individuality having been reduced by it to the status of an object that has to be personalized through consumption (as it has been already argued here). Under these conditions, the individual will consider that watching TV, having a relaxing massage or going shopping are not forms of alienation but pleasurable rewards of real freedom.

## Conclusion

The media's effect upon the individual is filtered through his daily relationships, also already modified by consumerism, and hence also affected by the media. Consumerist practices express a new kind of relation of the individual with the others, and implicitly also with himself. This change of the type of relation implies a double alteration: the relation with the others becomes mediated through consumer objects and services, while the relation towards oneself is characterized through self-alienation, the colonization by the media of the individual's perspective over himself and over the world. The individual doesn't have to sign a Faustian deal with a Mephistopheles in order to obtain money or prestige, since these are offered with magnanimity by the society of abundance that asks only for the meagre price of self-alienation and loss of self in the abundance of goods that it provides. The individual is reified from an autonomous rational subject into an object determined by the logic of consumption, losing his authenticity, originality, naturalness, replaced by personalization through consumption, in order to obtain social recognition, self-knowledge and self-contentment, in order to feel good in his own skin.<sup>18</sup> Playing on the fact that the individual no longer has sufficient time for himself, to look himself in the face, to reflect on his own self (the measure of his time being the productive time spent at the workplace, followed by the equally productive time spent in consuming good and services) the specialists of media publicity offer their services of "helping" the postmodern individual to relax and even to get to know his "true" self (which, of course, is the self that is being personalized through consumption).

In order for the individual to escape from his addiction to advertising images that present their series of varied identities of social desirability, and hence success, Kellner proposes the solution represented by critical media pedagogy (a critically oriented media

---

<sup>18</sup> "Finding your personality and knowing how to affirm it means discovering the pleasure of truly being yourself. You don't need much for this. I have searched for a long time and have discovered that a slightly lighter nuance of my hair is sufficient to harmonize it perfectly with my skin tone, with my eyes. I have found this blondness in the line of Recital coloring shampoo! [...] With the so-natural Recital blondness I have not changed at all: I am more myself than I ever was." Baudrillard (2008), 20. "Ultra-Beauty guarantees you a silky, unitary and durable make-up, that will impart to your skin tone that natural shining you dream about!" Baudrillard (2008), 111.

alphabetization). This aims to empower the individual consumer to always make use of his capacity of critical objective reflection. When faced with messages transmitted through advertising images, he should analyse them critically and objectively, using as criterion the actual utility of the object, without letting himself be seduced by the pleasure, happiness or success that are implied to follow the acquisition of the respective product. The postmodern individual should be educated, his taste for quality and culture reawakened.<sup>19</sup> The means of the mass-media should be used as instruments of education and social progress (media as instrument of social change) with reference to the purposefulness of critical media pedagogy.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adorno, T. W., *The Culture industry: Selected essays on mass culture*. Routledge USA, 2001, pp. 61–98.
- Baudrillard, Jean, *Societatea de consum. Mituri și structuri*, Comunicare.ro, 2008.
- Bertrand, Claude-Jean, *Deontologia mijloacelor de comunicare*, Institutul European, 2000.
- Bertrand, Claude-Jean, *Introducere în presa scrisă și vorbită*, Polirom, 2001, pp. 17–21; 31–45; 215–233.
- Breton, David, *Antropologia corpului și modernitatea*, Cartier, 2009.
- Codoban, Aurel-Teodor, *Imperiul comunicării. Corp, Imagine, Relaționare*, Idea, 2001.
- Codoban, A. T., “Manipulare, seducție și ideologie ostensivă”, in *Journal of the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, no. 4/2003, pp. 122–138.
- Connor, Steven, *Cultura postmodernă. O introducere în teoriile contemporane*, Meridiane, 1999, pp. 63–85.
- Hermans, Hubert, “Voicing the Self: From Information Processing to Dialogical Interchange”, in *Psychological Bulletin*, vol. 119, no.1/1996, pp. 31–50.
- Horkheimer, M., Adorno, T. W., *Dialectica luminilor*, Polirom, 2012.
- Hugli, A., Lubcke, P., *Filosofia secolului XX*, All Educational, 2003, volumul 1, pp. 275–367.
- Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Accesată la adresa: <http://www.iep.utm.edu/>
- Kellner, Douglas, *Cultura media*, Institutul European, 2001.
- Lipovetski, Gilles, *Fericirea paradoxală. Eseu asupra societății de hiperconsum*, Polirom, 2007.
- Lochard, G., Boyer, H., *Comunicarea mediatică*, Institutul European, 1998.
- McLuhan, Eric, *Marshall McLuhan. Texte esențiale*, Nemira, 2006.
- McQuail, D., *Mass Communication Theory. An Introduction*. Sage Publication, 1983.
- Mead, G. H., *Mind, Self and Society from the Standpoint of a Social Behaviourist*, University of Chicago, 1934.
- Nancy, Jean-Luc, *Comunitatea absentă*, Idea Design and Print, 2005.
- Vattimo, Gianni, *Societatea transparentă*, Pontica, 1995, pp. 5–34.

---

<sup>19</sup> “The statement that we are modeled by what we see and hear is as true as that we are »modeled« by what we eat; as such, it is important that we persuade the individual that it is necessary for him to avoid poor quality media culture. This implies learning how to distinguish true good taste, how to cultivate the taste for superior-quality cultural products and also for alternative forms of culture, varying from poetry, literature, paintings to alternative music, film and television.” Kellner (2001), 392.

## PHOTOGRAPHY AS NECESSITY IN EVERYDAY AESTHETIC LIFE

ANDRA MAVROPOL\*

**ABSTRACT. Photography as Necessity in Everyday Aesthetic Life.** The aesthetic in everyday life is necessarily linked to an interior experience of the world we live in. In this frame of reference, the outlook of this article is that of highlighting the importance of photography as a required practice of recording and sharing experiences. Although the value of each experience is intrinsic, one may notice that the necessity of keeping the significant states of consciousness in an aesthetic wrap, along with sharing them with the rest of the world places us in an artistic mindset, but that does not necessarily make us artists.

**Keywords:** *photography, everyday aesthetic life, social media, ratification*

### Introduction

Starting from the fact that the aesthetic is in need to be redefined, because traditionally the aesthetics of art neglects the experience of everyday events, the aesthetics of everyday life comes as a necessity to that extent. Thus, aside from the initial context in which aesthetic categories applied just to *fine art*, the aesthetics of everyday life can be linked to the contemporary impulse of taking photographs (that can be related both to high art and everyday life). First, while acknowledging the aesthetic possibilities around us, the photographic camera comes to aid - the necessity of holding on to something that has an impact on us, hoping that its image will have the same impact over and over again. Second of all, if one takes into account the renowned phrase "the medium is the message" (McLuhan), one may notice that the medium of photography has *accessibility* and *speed* as properties, both of which favouring the message. What is the message then? The aesthetic acknowledgment is common to every human being, depending on the context. One might not be able to recognize a work of art from a forgery, but one may always find beauty in a sunrise, for example. The ordinary aesthetic life is necessarily linked to an inner experience of

---

\* PhD student at the Doctoral School in Philosophy, Faculty of History and Philosophy, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania. E-mail: mavropol.andra@yahoo.com

the world we live in; an acknowledgement of the surrounding beauty. On the other hand, beauty is not the only thing attracting one's glance. What might be shocking or deranging to the eye might be considered aesthetic as well.

This article is structured into four parts. The first one is regarding the "Conceptual frame" and it is meant to show that most of the concepts used to describe art are used by the aesthetics of everyday life as well. On the other hand, the latter has its own specific concepts such as 'nice', 'cute', 'fun', accompanied by phrases such as 'looks good' or 'sounds good'. "The Aesthetics of Everyday Life" (Light & Smith, 2005) was helpful in clarifying the basic concepts used in the everyday aesthetic life. The second part, "Artification" revolves around the concept introduced by Natalie Heinich. Yuriko Saito, in her article "Everyday Aesthetics and Artification" (2012), applied the artification to the work environment in order to improve one's quality of being-in-the-world. The purpose of this concept is basically the stimulation of perception and creativity. Furthermore, Kevin Melchionne argues that the aesthetics of everyday life is not equivalent to non-art. He highlights the aspect of continuity, denying that the aesthetics of everyday life is related to episodic experiences. Melchionne's article, "The Definition of Everyday Aesthetics", was relevant to this research because it provided a much clearer approach on the everyday aesthetic life that facilitated my connection between the everyday aesthetic experience and photography. For example, such practices as cooking or dressing up belong to the routine of everyday life, but it is not the activity in itself that matters in this context, but how does that activity make one feel. In this case, photography can easily intervene in order to record a certain look or a certain meal; that is because one desires to record the passing feeling of a certain moment in time and to substitute an experience with an image – to expose an ordinary habit in an aesthetic manner.

The third part of the essay is entitled "The Artist of the Ordinary" and it is dedicated to the "everyday-life-artists" (in the common, non-academic sense). The "Artist of the Ordinary" has nothing to do with what is considered to be *high art* (although to some extent one might have the intention of creating images with some *artistic* value, that are basically considered *artistic* not by acclaimed institutions, but by common folk) and it does not mean 'unsuccessful artist'. Having into consideration that our leisure is limited and the speed of everyday events seems to disregard our rhythm of living-beings, creativity is something that is constrained more and more by duration. Because of one's willingness to preserve what he considers to be aesthetic in the most efficient timing, the "Artist of the Ordinary" is most often a photographer. Every gadget (telephone, laptop, tablet, etc.) has a photo camera attached to it, making it easy to record events with an aesthetic value. The camera is nowadays a ready-to-use medium accessible to everybody. Because of its availability and not otherwise, there is a constant anticipation that something worth photographing is going to show up. One may blame this impulse of taking a photograph on the aesthetic experience. I, on the other side, think that we have this possibility of recording everything due to the capitalistic impulse of owning everything (as previously explained by Gunther Anders).

The fourth part is dedicated to the “Social Media”. The artistic production is constantly growing due to the photo/video media. This idea has its basis on the fact that anyone capable of working with a camera can be a potential artist. On the other hand, where do we place the photos/videos with an aesthetic content that are not considered art? The answer is simple: the internet. A place for aspiring artists or folk with an interest in aesthetics is also a place where well known artists share their works. Thus, we can state that the internet provides a virtual space in which aesthetic experiences can be shared by both artists in the academic sense and ‘everyday-life-artists’. To that extent, the most known and used application is *Instagram*. The common use of *Instagram*, along with *Tumblr* or *Flickr*, shows us that photography has a major role in how we see life – (whether we acknowledge it or not) as an aesthetic experience. Additionally “The Outdatedness of Human Beings. On the Soul in the Era of the Second Industrial Revolution” by Gunther Anders (the two paragraphs that I quoted are translated by myself into English) was important because it offered a different perspective on photography and its everyday life usage, focusing on the question why do people enjoy taking photographs of themselves.

Although I evoked the aesthetic theories of Yuriko Saito and Kevin Melchionne that are considered defenders of the ‘strong’ branch of the aesthetics of everyday life, I believe that the art world and the aesthetics of everyday life are not unquestionably excluding one another, thus I am in favour of the normative aspect of the aesthetics of everyday life. In this article I considered photography a meeting point for the two types of the aesthetic, but, although the subject of photography sometimes overlaps both the art world and the everyday aesthetic, it does not mean we must take one for another. My intention was not to blend the two into creating a heterogeneous body of matter, but to build up an interdisciplinary discourse (basically because photography can be both an aesthetic and a social process) with the purpose of creating a single path for photography to manifest itself whether as art or just as a social activity of recording memories, focusing on the latter. This article will answer the question of how and why is the practice of photography necessary in the everyday aesthetic life.

## 1. Conceptual Frame

All aesthetic phenomena, whether belonging to the art world or everyday life, have a common framework: the concepts used in identifying the aesthetic qualities of objects or phenomena. To establish if a phenomenon is part of the aesthetics of everyday life or not, one might need to borrow and apply the terminology from the aesthetics of art. Thus, one cannot appreciate an aesthetic phenomenon without referring to its aesthetic features. To clarify, Yuriko Saito states that:

the subject matter of aesthetics is dominated by the definition of art, expression in art, artist's intention, art and reality, art and ethics, as well as the issues specific to each artistic medium. As a result, the aesthetics of non-art is marginalized, attended to only when we discuss beauty and aesthetic experience. [...] for better or worse, aesthetics of art is our familiar frame of reference.<sup>1</sup>

Apart from the phrases "sounds good", "looks good", "it is ordered" or "it looks right", that can be related to artistic objects to some extent, the aesthetics of everyday life holds its own range of concepts that can be applied just in common situations. The most frequent notions are: *clean*, *cute*, *fun* and *tasteful*.<sup>2</sup> The first one, "clean", looks like it might not be applicable to an aesthetic judgment. Yet, something might be beautiful because it is clean if we take into account the relations among some objects, and not just one object.

For example, a photograph of a living room could be considered "clean" because its elements present some kind of harmony. The art world equivalent of this concept is "ordered", underlying other important notions, such as "symmetry" and "proportion". In the same context, if we were to apply the term "nice" to a phenomenon, although it is very important to the aesthetics of everyday life, the art world would consider it kitsch. The concept "fun", although it can be used to separate the aesthetics of everyday life from the art world, can be related to a very important notion of the art world, namely that of "play". What is identified as fun may assume an arrangement in which the one who has an aesthetic experience engages oneself in a *play* with the phenomenon that is experienced or with the other potential participants.<sup>3</sup>

Lastly, the idea of the "tasteful" applied to the aesthetics of the everyday life may be complicated. We are dealing here with a widespread opinion, namely that there exists a rule by which one can establish what is beautiful and what it is not. This rule would be called in the public opinion "to be in good taste". To clarify,

«The tasteful» is not to be confused with something that is beautiful strictly-speaking, or even with that which is in accord with taste (in the old eighteenth-century sense of the term). «The tasteful» is culturally emergent and constantly changing: turtlenecks may be tasteful one year and not the next. The quality of «tasteful» is generally ignored by contemporary aesthetics mainly because people confuse it with that which is considered aesthetically good by someone with taste.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Yuriko Saito, "Everyday Aesthetics", *Philosophy and Literature*, Volume 25, Number 1, April 2001, pp. 87.

<sup>2</sup> Andrew Light and M. Jonathan Smith (ed.), *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life*, Columbia University Press, 2005, p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 15.

Nonetheless, the aesthetic experience can be a negative one as well. A first example of such a negative experience would be if something can be deranging to the eyesight, or it can be referred to as 'bad to look at' or 'ugly'. This is a form of negative perception that affects the *higher* senses (sight, hearing – 'it sounds bad/ awful') and it can be applied to *high* art as well (not just everyday events), if the perceiver a. does not properly understand art or b. that is the desired effect of the art object that is contemplated. Regarding the everyday aesthetic life, Berleant suggests that the negative aesthetic experience often takes place in circumstances that traditionally were not likely to be called aesthetic:

Perhaps more prevalent are forms of aesthetic negativity not directly associated with art objects but present in situations that are not ordinarily considered aesthetically: urban environments, cultural practices such as ceremonies and rituals, and the functioning of an organization. These are practices of aesthetic import that may have no recognizable compensating features and may be perpetrated through ignorance, insensibility, or callousness, or from motives of enhancing power.<sup>5</sup>

Although the (negative) experience prevails in the *higher* senses, on the other side, the *lesser* senses have their negative counterpart as well: something can 'taste/smell bad' or even 'feel bad' / 'hurt' (if we consider skin to take part to the aesthetic experience). In this case, while facing a bodily experience that affects one directly (one cannot un-taste or un-feel something, but one can always look away or cover one's ears if something is disturbing the so-called higher senses), one is bound to that negative aesthetic experience, without the possibility of avoiding. An exception to this would be if something 'smells bad' and one decides not to taste, or if something 'tastes bad' and one decides not to taste again.

In this context of negative aesthetic experience photography comes as a physical (material) or digital support of a certain experience one wishes to record and remember. Thus, one might say that it is used with the same purpose; but, the 'negative' experience might be recorded with the intention of criticizing something by sharing it with others. In this case, photography is used as 'proof' or 'evidence'. For example, if one sees rats (considering this experience as both aesthetic and negative) in the basement (or any other shared space) one might decide to photograph this encounter in order to warn the other neighbours.

---

<sup>5</sup> Arnold Berleant, *Sensibility and Sense. The Aesthetic Transformation of the Human World*, Imprint Academic, 2010, p. 165.



## 2. The Artification

The concept of artification assumes recognizing the aesthetic potential in objects or phenomena that usually would not be classified as aesthetic. If applied, its purpose is to intensify the experience of everyday life through sharpening the aesthetic sensitivity.<sup>6</sup> The experience of beauty should not be an isolated one or a cut-out one, but it must be taken into account as a part of the living life, favourably influencing the state of being-in-the-world. Artification and all that it implies is important to this research because it can be related both to photography and the aesthetics in everyday life. In this context, photography seems to be the easiest way to self-expression in an aesthetic manner (since it does not require previous knowledge, and one can use the digital camera almost intuitively).

According to Yuriko Saito, the benefits of artification imply finding one's *inner voice* and stimulating one's awareness and creativity. The artification implies a new way of thinking, a new aesthetic approach in everyday life that contributes to adapting to the changes that occur in the environment we live in. With the aid of artification one's *imagination, spontaneity, inspiration* and *improvisation* can be improved through the self-discovery of those involved in the process. Correspondingly, all art forms have their own implied speech which urges one to debate. Thus, in a working environment, applying the process of artification might lead to a better functionality of that institution.<sup>7</sup>

On the other hand, Saito states that "artists working within the art world are free to raise fundamental questions through their works. For every artist whose works endorse and celebrate unbridled capitalism or praise the brave new world of technotopia, there is another artist who challenges it. The point is that that is the choice each artist can make. Such freedom is not granted in artified organizations."<sup>8</sup> This means that artification assumes the freedom of expression to a more limited extent rather than that promised by *high art*, despite the fact that it encourages critical discourse.

The conclusion Saito reaches is that, nowadays, the purpose of using art in different types of industries is not one that comes to advantage art or creativity: artification or any other aesthetic impulse is used with the strict intent of optimizing a specific industry.<sup>9</sup> Thus, aesthetics seems to be given a role that is pure functional, utilitarian.

---

<sup>6</sup> Yuriko Saito, "Everyday Aesthetics and Artification", *Special Volume*, Issue 4, 2012, p. 1.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 9.

<sup>9</sup> "Most often, particularly under a capitalist economy, the industry's purpose in using art is to promote successful business, not to enliven the artworld and encourage public discussion on art" in Yuriko Saito, "Everyday Aesthetics and Artification", *Special Volume*, Issue 4, 2012, p. 11.

In one of her early articles, "Everyday Aesthetics" (2001), Saito states that there is a *risk* concerning the comparison between art and ordinary objects and phenomena that are aesthetic. "Non-art objects tend to be regarded as »wannabe« art, which often turn out to fall short of those features characterizing art, such as formal coherence, expressive power, embodiment of an idea, and creativity and originality."<sup>10</sup> Her refusal of resembling non-art aesthetic experience to art-related aesthetic experience comes from the consideration of the art world and the world-lived as two hermetic spheres that do not interact; this point of view constitutes the basis of the 'strong pole' of the aesthetics of everyday life. She claims that "it is misleading to recognize the aesthetic value of everyday objects and activities only insofar as they are momentarily isolated from their everyday context and treated as art objects created specifically and exclusively for aesthetic purposes."<sup>11</sup> On the other side, the thesis formulated by D. E. Rațiu affirms that basically, the everyday aesthetics tries to expand the field of aesthetics beyond the exclusive *realm* of art, meaning there can be noticed a type of communication between the two presupposed separate 'worlds'. The bottom line of his thesis is that "maintaining a relation of exclusion between our lifeworld (private) and the art world (public), as AEL-strong does, is to fail to see the actual continuity between two worlds that are interpersonal and social."<sup>12</sup>

Unlike Saito, Kevin Melchionne insists upon the fact that the aesthetics of the ordinary is not a synonym to *non-high art*. It is true that one is facing the risk of trivializing art by claiming that art depends on the judgment of taste of everyone, thus having the possibility of naming anything "art".

As Melchionne suggests, the aesthetics of everyday life partakes in routine and not in episodic events.<sup>13</sup> For example, activities that imply some sort of *continuity*, such as cooking, cleaning or dressing up, may acquire aesthetic qualities. In this socio-aesthetic situation photography might easily intervene, and, along with the targeted objects and with the photographer's perspective, transfigures a phenomenon into an image. The phenomenon that is transfigured has an individual significance and it cannot be considered art. Nevertheless, in a series of events / phenomena with an aesthetic value, a certain change in experience can be traced, marking an impossible wish of recording (impossible because one cannot record an event, but its image). Although it may be about the experience of smell or taste to a greater extent than the visual impact, taking photographs of a certain dish because "it is good" or "it smells nice" is not lacking sense. On one side, the photograph substitutes the memory of the experience

---

<sup>10</sup> Yuriko Saito, "Everyday Aesthetics", *Philosophy and Literature*, Volume 25, Number 1, April 2001, p. 88.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>12</sup> Dan-Eugen Rațiu, "Remapping the Realm of Aesthetics: On Recent Controversies about the Aesthetic and the Aesthetic Experience in Everyday Life", *Esztetika: The Central European Journal of Aesthetics*, L/VI, 2013, No. 1, p. 20.

<sup>13</sup> Kevin Melchionne, "The Definition of Everyday Aesthetics", *Contemporary Aesthetics*, 11, 2013.

with an image, and on the other side, it pretends to render a mundane event in an aesthetic manner. What Melchionne suggests can be applied to photography as a social practice: the outlook matters more than the content.

If we were to ask ourselves why is photography important to the social aesthetics and when did that happen, the answer is simple: the moment photography became so easy to use (due to the improvement of its technical elements – the camera became more and more easier to carry around), both media and common people began to share photographs with different purposes.

Photographs regularly appeared in newspapers, starting around the turn of the twentieth century, and photographs regularly appeared in public shows and galleries. Photographs of the distant and exotic became more accessible via outlets such as National Geographic, while at the same time mundane snapshots were shared with friends and family via albums. Photography began to be part of everyday life.<sup>14</sup>

One can admit that the aesthetics in everyday life requires a minimal effort and planning, and also an embedding of aesthetics in everyday routine. A counterexample suggested by Melchionne is that of a pianist who is used to warm up his fingers every day. Watching this practice one may notice its aesthetic potential, but it cannot be a part of the aesthetics of everyday life because this practice is not common to everybody. Additionally, many works of art have everyday life as a theme, but this does not mean that the art object or its making is part of the everyday life aesthetics.<sup>15</sup>

### 3. The “Artist of the Ordinary”

Having into consideration the paradigm shifts that occurred during the dawning of the internet, the whole perspective that we had on culture changed. This is mainly because of the accessibility of the information. The effortless exchange of information (whether it is in the format of text or image) has also an impact on how we come to perceive art. Hence, whom we define as an artist is constantly changing as well.

First of all, it is important to trace back to where the distinction between amateur and professional photographers occurred. According to Gomez Cruz and Meyer, between the 1930s and the 1990s photography became more accessible, gaining an expanded and diverse range of users. Due to the dissimilarity between cameras (cheaper easy-to-use versus expensive and complicated-to-use) and the more or less artificial space used to share photographs (family circles versus magazines, galleries, clubs), a new discrepancy arose, namely that between *snapshotters* and *professional photographers*.

---

<sup>14</sup> Edgar Gomez Cruz and Eric T Meyer, “Creation and Control in the Photographic Process: iPhones and the emerging fifth moment of photography”, *Photographies*, 5:2, 203–221, published online: 14.08.2012, p. 210.

<sup>15</sup> Kevin Melchionne, “The Definition of Everyday Aesthetics”, *Contemporary Aesthetics*, 11, 2013.

The distinction between amateurs and professionals, especially with photography as art, was not only a matter of technique and the right equipment but also a matter of style, composition, and lab access and expertise. Nevertheless, some of the most famous art approaches were based on techniques and therefore knowledges (Ansel Adams, Paul Strand, and Edward Weston with their f/64 technique, Alfred Stiglitz with pictorialism, etc.).<sup>16</sup>

While common people were used to create snapshots of significant (*happy*) moments of their lives, “with cheaper equipment and without any intention of circulating them outside the family circle”,<sup>17</sup> professional photographers had access to a different type of equipment that grant their membership in specialized clubs. Thus, photography was institutionalized; not just because it was a difference of technique or technical equipment, but because of the difference of the space photographs were distributed: “family albums and shoeboxes for snapshots; magazines, journals, and galleries for professional photography.”<sup>18</sup> Nowadays, artists and ordinary people share the same space for photography: the internet. Due to the unlimited possibilities of creation by just pressing the button of the camera or of the phone, ordinary people started taking photographs of things other than just their families to share with the whole world; while searching social media websites, such as *Instagram* or *Tumblr*, we find that the photographs shared (both by professionals and common people) have an aesthetic value (or an artistic intention, at least) and are connected to the inner experience of the world of the photographers.

Considering creativity an important factor involved in artification implies a new way of looking at the world. Furthermore, photography, as an artistic or just social practice, starts from the same premise. John Dewey states that “to some degree we become artists ourselves as we undertake this integration, and, by bringing it to pass, our own experience is reoriented.”<sup>19</sup> In this particular case, the aesthetics of everyday life seems to question the elitist disagreement between art and life.

To bring the past out front or to keep a memory represent just two of the premises of the impulse of taking a photograph. Another cause would have to be experiencing a phenomenon independently of the formerly made assumptions about that particular phenomenon. For example, to place a cup of coffee on a shelf near an open window does not constitute an aesthetic gesture. But, if we consider the relationship between the warm cup and the breezy morning, along with a beautiful sunrise or the smell of spring, we might have a clearer idea about what the aesthetics in everyday life is about and why one has the intention of recording it.

---

<sup>16</sup> Edgar Gomez Cruz and Eric T Meyer, “Creation and Control in the Photographic Process: iPhones and the emerging fifth moment of photography”, *Photographies*, 5:2, 203–221, published online: 14.08.2012, p. 211.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 212.

<sup>19</sup> Yuriko Saito, “Everyday Aesthetics and Artification”, *Special Volume*, Issue 4, 2012, p. 2.

On the other hand, what ordinary people may consider to be beautiful, might be kitsch to the art world and vice versa. "Berleant implies that things such as telephone poles, power lines, commercial strips, trailer parks, suburban malls, and parking lots necessarily »embody negative aesthetic values«. Yet these are often the subjects of contemporary painting and photography."<sup>20</sup> Comparing the two types of aesthetics one may find that while the daily aesthetics is limited to judgments such as "I like it" or "I do not like it", the aesthetics of art is dominated by institutional standards and it is established on tradition. At the same time, one cannot consider discussing pure subjectivity or pure objectivity in the domain of the everyday aesthetics. The features that constitute the aesthetic experience have many variations, so that they cannot be mistaken for the features of the objects abstracted from the real world.

It is important to state that Arnold Berleant challenges the traditional approach on aesthetics, claiming that the social dimension of aesthetics is given by considering the human subject as an active participant to the aesthetic experience. He denounces aesthetics as contextual, signifying that "in a contextual theory no single or dominant feature establishes an aesthetic situation. Instead, a number of factors combine into an inclusive situation."<sup>21</sup>

From another viewpoint, the artwork has become a commodity, thus the boundary between the common consumption and the artistic consumption was erased. In this context, starting with Duchamp, the artist is considering a new technique, namely the "readymade". Anything that can be traced back to this concept is based on two procedures: "production" and "selection".<sup>22</sup> As a contemporary artist, the process of selection is the most important. However, having into consideration the fact that the artist must please the spectator, he/she has to make him/herself noticed in the current overproduction of art by playing the part of a *democratic politician*. Because the art world (and its aspiring folk), is characterized by overproduction, the process of selection is necessarily assigned to the spectator/ buyer; the latter is overwhelmed by the flow of pretended artistic creations and has selection as the only weapon against it. Thus, the one who makes judgments about art is evaluated as an artist. Every one of us is condemned to be an artist today, because nobody can prevent oneself of making selections. And nobody is immune while facing an aesthetic judgment, because everyone is a subject of an outside glance.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>20</sup> "Theorizing the Aesthetics of the Everyday", in Andrew Light and M. Jonathan Smith (ed.), *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life*, Columbia University Press, 2005, p 5.

<sup>21</sup> Arnold Berleant, "Ideas for a Social Aesthetic" in Andrew Light and M. Jonathan Smith (ed.), *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life*, Columbia University Press, 2005, p. 26.

<sup>22</sup> Boris Groys, *Topologia Aurei*, Idea, 2007, p. 9.

<sup>23</sup> "cel care face judecăți despre artă este evaluat ca artist. Fiecare dintre noi este condamnat astăzi să fie un artist, căci nimeni nu se poate împiedica să selecteze. Și nimeni nu este imun în fața unei judecăți estetice, pentru că fiecare este mereu supus unei priviri dinafară." Translated into English from Boris Groys, *Topologia Aurei*, Idea, 2007, p. 14.

#### 4. Social Media

The photo-video media in particular contribute to the rising of artistic production. “This relatively simple process makes anyone capable of pressing the photo or video camera button tendentiously into an artist.”<sup>24</sup> Alongside “apparatus” and “camera” there must be taken into considerations the gadgets that facilitate the distribution of photographs and videos into the World Wide Web: mobile phones and tablets. Both gadgets have the possibility of installing applications with which ordinary photographs or videos can be edited and launched into the virtual space.

With the arrival of digital photography and the inkjet printer, and more recently of the mobile phones and online sites for distributing photographs, many of the assumptions about photography are blurring and changing. The iPhone is, among all the current devices, one of the most important, not only because of the technical features that give control to the photographer of the entire process, but because it has been able to enrol different actors to give it a social meaning: professional and amateur photographers, the media, software companies, social networks, and general users.<sup>25</sup>

The shift from analogue to digital photography is meaningful in a social context especially if we consider the economic issue, namely the fact that everyone can afford it.

Just as the shift from expensive 36-exposure film rolls, with a relatively high per-shot cost, to digital memory cards, with essentially a zero per-shot cost, greatly increased the number of photos people take since the decision to press the button once more has few consequences from an economic perspective, the shift to unlimited internet access changes the calculus people do in their heads when deciding whether to upload and share a photograph, now that they can do it quickly, and for essentially no additional cost. This changes the relationship between people and their devices.<sup>26</sup>

The most popular application of the sort is *Instagram*, through which every *smartphone* user may create the impression of a professional photographer. Through diverse *filters* applied to ordinary photographs, *Instagram* simulates the renowned software Photoshop. Although it is used generally by ordinary people in familiar

---

<sup>24</sup> Boris Groys, *Topologia Aurei*, Idea, 2007, p. 14.

<sup>25</sup> Edgar Gomez Cruz and Eric T Meyer, “Creation and Control in the Photographic Process: iPhones and the emerging fifth moment of photography, Photographies”, 5:2, p. 217.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 215.

situations (especially in the everyday aesthetic life), the application has become a medium through which artists can promote their works basically because of the possibility of sharing images on other social networks as well. "Devices like the iPhone, combined with applications like Instagram, add a whole range of filters and tools to modify the poor-quality pictures of the camera phone into more »artsy« images. This changes the politics of seeing the banality of images of everyday life."<sup>27</sup>

In the context of social aesthetics, "while there is no artist, as such, creative processes are at work in its participants, who emphasize and shape the perceptual features, and supply meaning and interpretation."<sup>28</sup> Thus, we are facing new trends in the social media, such as the *selfie*. The latter implies a sort of a self-portrait, most often made in front of a mirror, with the aid of a smartphone or a tablet. The selfie has been so overused that other devices were invented to improve it, for example, the *selfie stick*. That is literally a stick that can be attached to the phone to simulate a portrait made by somebody else from a greater distance (the stick represents a continuity of the human arm). There has even been invented a second camera phone, which works as a mirror.

Although the *selfie* is inevitably an individual activity, these type of images are distributed (*shared*) massively on social networks, constantly looking for the "appreciation" (*likes*) of other people (be them known or complete strangers). The paradox in this situation is that although technology dehumanizes us (to the extent that we avoid asking a person to take our photograph), at the same time we are constantly looking for human interaction by way of technology.

In order to broaden our perspective of why humans have this need of taking photographs of themselves, we considered Gunther Anders's theory of the Promethean Shame in "The Outdatedness of Human Beings. On the Soul in the Era of the Second Industrial Revolution" (1956). Despite its context, the text is still relevant for the current status of the world (especially in the framework of photography). The Promethean Shame is a type of guilt that humans feel towards themselves and their origin. Anders suggests that humans feel ashamed of being unique, unlike the objects of mass production that are multiple and ubiquitous. In order to be more like the perfect commodities, humans make virtual copies of themselves through photography.

Among the reasons that are responsible for this hypertrophic production of the image, so pertinently described, one of the most important is that through the image man has won the chance of creating »*spare-pieces*« of himself; thus, of defeating the lie about his unbearable uniqueness. This is one of those counter measurements taken against »I am just one time only«. Having been excluded

---

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 216.

<sup>28</sup> Arnold Berleant, "Ideas for a Social Aesthetic" in Andrew Light and M. Jonathan Smith (ed.), *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life*, Columbia University Press, 2005, p. 31.

from the serial production, he turns himself yet, when being photographed, into a »reproducible product«. He gains, at least in effigy, a multiple existence, even in thousands of copies. And even if he is living »just« as a model, »he« somehow exists in his copies as well.<sup>29</sup>

Although photography is considered to be an excellent way of making immortal copies of ourselves, it is not as satisfying as making actual copies (literally). In the framework of mass production there is no distinction between the model and its copies.

But still: compared to the truthful multiple existences that our products enjoy, multiplying ourselves through images is just an »as if«, and the satisfaction that it grants us is just a surrogate of satisfaction, despite our intense iconomaniac activity. The difference between the actual models and the copies, the fact that we must be grateful of the possibility of multiplying in the shape of photographs, while the products are given the liberty to advance into the world as truly identical copies, cannot be changed. That is why the human shame towards »his better things« cannot be completely erased through his images.<sup>30</sup>

## Conclusions

The aesthetic experience in everyday life implies not just *acceptance*, i.e. to have an open mind to discover something that presents itself as *different* in a repetitive situation, but the way in which we *perceive* and *relate* to the world we live in (to be aware of the beauty around us). The way in which we participate to the daily aesthetics makes us, to some extent, potential artists. This occurs not only because we have a

---

<sup>29</sup> "Printre motivele care sunt răspunzătoare pentru această producție hipertrofică de imagine, atât de pertinent descrisă, unul dintre cele mai importante este acela că prin imagine omul a cucerit șansa de a crea »*spare-pieces*« ale lui însuși; deci de a dovedi minciuna unicității sale insuportabile. Ea este una din acele contramăsuri luate în stil mare împotriva lui »eu nu-s decât o dată«. Rămânând exclus din producția de serie, el se transformă totuși, atunci când e fotografiat, într-un »*produs reproductibil*«. Câștigă și el, măcar în effigie, existență multiplă, ba uneori chiar în mii de exemplare. Și chiar dacă el însuși trăiește »doar« ca model, »el« totuși există cumva și în copiile sale." Translated into English from Gunther Anders, *Obsolescența omului. Despre suflet în epoca celei de-a doua revoluții industriale*, TACT, 2013, p. 95.

<sup>30</sup> "Și totuși: comparată cu existența cu adevărat multiplă de care se bucură produsele noastre, multiplicarea noastră prin imagini nu este decât un »ca și cum«, iar satisfacția pe care ne-o oferă e doar un surrogat de satisfacție, în ciuda intensei noastre activități iconomane. Diferența dintre exemplarele efective și simplele copii, faptul că trebuie să ne mulțumim să ne multiplicăm în forma fotografiilor, în vreme ce produselor le este îngăduit să se împrăștie în lume ca exemplare într-adevăr identice, acestea nu pot fi schimbate. De aceea, rușinea omului față de »mai bunele sale lucruri« nu poate fi ștearsă complet prin imaginile sale." Translated into English from Gunther Anders, *Obsolescența omului. Despre suflet în epoca celei de-a doua revoluții industriale*, TACT, 2013, p. 96.



constant wish of *recording* and *repeating* significant experiences, but we desire to *share* them with the rest of the world. Thus, in order to share one's personal relationship with the world, one is often turning to the 'service' of photography, a widespread medium of *creation* and *communication* through the pervasive power of the image.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Primary sources

- Berleant, Arnold, *Sensibility and Sense. The Aesthetic Transformation of the Human World*, Imprint Academic, 2010.
- Gomez Cruz, Edgar and Meyer, Eric T., "Creation and Control in the Photographic Process: iPhones and the emerging fifth moment of photography", *Photographies*, 5:2, pp. 203–221, published online: 14.08.2012.
- Melchionne, Kevin, "The Definition of Everyday Aesthetics", *Contemporary Aesthetics*, 11, 2013, in [www.contemporaryaesthetics.org/newvolume/pages/article.php?articleID=663](http://www.contemporaryaesthetics.org/newvolume/pages/article.php?articleID=663)
- Rațiu, Dan-Eugen, "Remapping the Realm of Aesthetics: On Recent Controversies About the Aesthetic and the Aesthetic Experience in Everyday Life", *Esztetika: The Central European Journal of Aesthetics*, L/VI, 2013, No. 1, pp. 3–26.
- Saito, Yuriko, "Everyday Aesthetics", *Philosophy and Literature*, Volume 25, Number 1, April 2001, pp. 87–95.
- Saito, Yuriko, "Everyday Aesthetics and Artification", *Special Volume*, Issue 4, 2012, pp. 1–12, in <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.7523862.spec.405>
- The Aesthetics of Everyday Life*, Edited by Light, Andrew and Smith, Jonathan M., Columbia University Press, 2005.

### Secondary bibliography

- Anders, Gunther, *Obsolescența omului. Despre suflet în epoca celei de-a doua revoluții industriale*, TACT, 2013.
- Groys, Boris, *Topologia Aurei*, Ed. Idea, Cluj-Napoca, 2007.

## DE ANALOGIA ENTIS AU CHIASME ONTICO-ONTOLOGIQUE\*

VIRGIL CIOMOS\*

**RÉSUMÉ:** De *analogia entis* au chiasme ontico-ontologique. L'auteur propose une analyse historique et conceptuelle du passage architectonique de l'analogie classique au chiasme contemporain. Il accorde, tout d'abord, une attention spéciale à l'*habitus*, tel qu'il avait été défini par Thomas d'Aquin dans son *analogia entis*, pour démontrer ensuite – contrairement à l'opinion commune des commentateurs, qui oppose sur ce point l'Aquinat au Stagirite – les origines aristotéliennes de cette doctrine dans les *Topiques*. Le fait qu'Aristote différencie ici entre l'énonciation et la signification le conduit à reprendre la différence fondamentale entre le genre et l'espèce et à développer une nouvelle interprétation de la *Métaphysique Z*, surtout de la *hyle hos ti* et de la *hypotyposis*. Dans cette perspective, il reprend la thèse aristotélienne sur la paronymie et montre comment le Stagirite avait déjà conçu la possibilité d'un analogue »en chiasme« de l'énonciation au niveau même du discours – la copule, par exemple, redéfinie comme *shifter* –, solution déjà préparée par Platon dans son *Timée* et surtout dans ses *Lois*, grâce à la *khora*. La nature du *typos* aristotélien anticipe sa future fonction dans la deuxième *Critique* de Kant comme la *hypotyposis* aristotélienne anticipe sa future fonction dans la troisième *Critique*. L'auteur restitue finalement le sens originaire, déplié »en chiasme«, d'un célèbre adage aristotélien selon lequel, à l'origine de la philosophie et de son discours, il y avait en fait l'étonnement, à savoir un silence parlant.

**Mots clé:** *analogia entis*, chiasme, *typos*, *hypotyposis*

### 1. Prolegomenon: *proportionalitas* versus *ad unum*

La thèse récurrente selon laquelle *analogia entis* – surtout sa variante consacrée, celle thomiste – aurait eu son origine dans l'œuvre d'Aristote a été infirmée par la majorité des commentateurs contemporains. L'argument le plus important vient des mathématiques: les rapports de type *proportio* entre les catégories et l'être ne peuvent pas être ordonnés selon les règles de l'analogie classique – *proportionalitas* –, qui suppose

---

\* This paper is an edited version of the opening lecture delivered at the Conference of Doctoral Students organized by the Doctoral School in Philosophy of Babes-Bolyai University on 8 May 2015.

\* Doctoral supervisor, Doctoral School in Philosophy, Faculty of History and Philosophy, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania. E-mail: virgil.ciomos@gmail.com

l'égalité d'au moins deux rapports.<sup>1</sup> En effet, dans la perspective du *pros hen* aristotélicien (lat. *ad unum*), le numérateur – l'être lui-même ou son analogue prédicatif, l'essence (*a*) – sera toujours le même tandis que le dénominateur sera toujours différent, selon chacune des autres catégories (*b, c, d*):

$$(1) \quad \frac{a}{b}; \quad \frac{a}{c}; \quad \frac{a}{d} \text{ etc.}$$

Or, il n'y a point d'égalité entre les rapports dont le numérateur est toujours identique et le dénominateur différent. Ce qui semble contredire l'interprétation de Thomas d'Aquin.

## 2. Reformulation d'*analogia entis*: de la paronymie au *habitus*

Notre hypothèse de travail – qui reprend, entre autres, celle du criticisme kantien – consiste dans le fait que *analogia entis* visée par Saint Thomas ne concerne pas un sens quantitatif (mathématique) mais un autre, «qualitatif», qui définit, plus précisément, la *proportio* des catégories dynamiques. Paradoxalement, ce déplacement thématique – du mathématique au dynamique – avait apparu même chez quelques célèbres commentateurs qui se sont laissés convaincus de la fausseté de l'interprétation thomiste. Nous pensons surtout à Pierre Aubenque,<sup>2</sup> qui propose d'ailleurs une très inspirée synthèse entre *analogia* et *ad unum* en s'appuyant justement sur les textes de Thomas. Or, étant donné que l'objet auquel se réfèrent ici les catégories est différent de celui mathématique, la grande nouveauté que le même Thomas apporte dans ce contexte judicatif réside, nous semble-t-il, dans l'introduction du concept de *habitus*.

Dans *De veritate*, il précise, en effet, que l'*habitus* approprié pour tous les types de prédication qui concernent la substance et les autres catégories est *ens*: *ex habitudine quam substantia et accidens habet*.<sup>3</sup> Une liste de ces types de discours avait été déjà établie par Aristote dans les *Catégories*: 1. la prédication équivoque – analogue de l'homonymie, 2. la prédication univoque – analogue de la synonymie et, enfin, 3. la prédication analogique – analogue (pour ainsi dire) de la paronymie. Aussi, *analogia entis* thomiste correspond-t-elle à la paronymie aristotélicienne. En fait, Aristote parle ici de la paronymie proprement dite mais aussi de ses termes, „dérivés” – *ta stoicheia* –, ce qui pourrait induire une confusion entre la perspective „verticale” – supposée par l'origine commune des termes „dérivés” – et celle „horizontale” – supposée par la simple succession de ces mêmes termes. Car au delà des rapports „horizontaux” entre „médecin” et „médical”, par exemple, il faudrait supposer une origine commune,

<sup>1</sup> Voir aussi V. Ciomos, *Timp și eternitate*, Paideia, Bucarest, 2001, Troisième partie.

<sup>2</sup> P. Aubenque, *Les origines de la doctrine de l'analogie de l'être*, «Les Études philosophiques», 1/ 1978.

<sup>3</sup> *De veritate*, 2, II c.

„verticale”, celle que les linguistes modernes allaient appeler leur „racine” commune – soit \**médic-*. En ce sens, nos termes dérivés „tombent” – *ptosis* – sous deux catégories différentes: la substance, pour „médecin”, la qualité, pour „médical”. D’ailleurs, compte tenu du statut „vertical” des racines, les indo-européistes ont désigné aussi la „racine de toutes les racines” – qui est l’être lui-même: \**es-*, „centre focal” de toutes les prédications catégorielles et, par la suite, de toutes les racines déterminées – en utilisant un oxymore: „le verbe substantif”. Il est donc clair que les racines du discours relèvent d’une origine libérée de toute morphologie et de toute syntaxe déterminées.

C’est que Aristote confirme lui-même quand il insiste sur le fait que la seule manière de connaître la „présence” des principes au niveau des étants – et les catégories sont de tels principes – reste celle analogique.<sup>4</sup> En vérité, comment pourrions-nous connaître „directement” le principe de l’identité autrement qu’en le situant quelque part „dehors” lui, pour qu’il puisse se convertir dans un „objet” de discours? Mais, par une telle opération, le sujet du discours serait situé, lui aussi, dehors l’identité, c’est-à-dire justement dans la contradiction. Et ça sera la même chose avec les catégories, qui sont, en fait, saisies par un acte intellectuel simple, indécomposable et, par conséquent, inanalysable dans le cadre d’un jugement. Pareillement aux termes dérivés, les prédications analogiques sont, d’une part, différentes, car elles supposent des modes d’être – *habitudines* – différents (conformément à l’*habitus* de chaque catégorie), mais aussi identiques parce que tous ces modes attributifs concernent un seule et même „terme” – *ad unum*<sup>5</sup> –, qui se situe dehors toute attribution analogique, en tant que son „centre focal”. Une fois interpellé dans le discours (*kategorerein* signifiait au début „interpeller quelqu’un dans une assemblée”), le rapport même des catégories avec leur propre essence sera proportionné selon l’*habitus* approprié de chacune d’entre elles: *secundum suam habitudinem*. Aussi, en essayant de synthétiser toutes ces importantes précisions faites par Thomas, Aubenque nous propose-t-il de réécrire la série des rapports illustrés ci-dessus sous une forme analogique:

$$(2) \quad \frac{b \text{ R } a}{b'} = \frac{c \text{ R } a}{c'} = \frac{d \text{ R } a}{d'} \text{ etc.}$$

où *b'*, *c'* et *d'* sont les habitudes discursives des catégories – *b*, *c* et *d* – par rapport à leur propre essence – *a*.<sup>6</sup> On voit bien comment Thomas essaie d’articuler *proportionalitas* – l’analogie classique d’entre les catégories du discours (situées au numérateur) et leurs propres habitudes (situées au dénominateur), d’un côté, avec la *proportio*, de l’autre,

<sup>4</sup> *Métaphysique*, 1070b.

<sup>5</sup> In *Metaphysica*, IV, 1, 1, nr. 535.

<sup>6</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 8.

définie par rapport au „centre focal” (originaire) des catégories, qui est leur propre essence – *essentia*. Dans un langage thomiste, on dirait que la participation analogique de l’étant – *ens* – à l’être n’est pas directe mais (compte tenu de ce contexte discursif) *indirecte*, par l’intermédiaire de la signification catégoriale sous laquelle l’étant lui-même „tombe”.

Après avoir assumé cette vision paronymique sur l’*analogia entis*, Thomas essaie de l’appliquer à toutes les catégories de l’être, y compris à la substance, terme qui risque de rester encore ambiguë sans préciser que, dans ce contexte, il désigne l’*essentia* – *gr. ousia* –, dans la stricte mesure où elle est déjà engagée dans un mouvement analogique (paronymique). *Scriptum super Sententiis* nous offre une formulation suffisamment claire de cette extension: „Tout comme la substance se rapporte à l’étant qui lui est donné (*ad esse sibi debitum*), la qualité se rapporte à l’étant qui convient à son genre (*esse sui generis conveniens*)”.<sup>7</sup> C’est le moment où Aubenque ne peut plus suivre l’interprétation thomiste. Il invoque pour cela le Stagirite: 1. il n’y aurait chez Aristote aucune participation de la substance à l’être (Aubenque confond ici *substantia* – déjà engagée dans le discours sur la place du sujet – et *essentia* – „engagée” quelque part „dehors” le discours, sur la „place” focale d’un *unum*) et 2. il n’y aurait pas de distinction aristotélicienne entre l’être et l’essence. Mais alors, comment Thomas définit-il *analogia entis* dans le cas de l’essence? Il est clair que, parmi les multiples sens dérivés de l’essence – *essentia* –, il faudrait maintenant faire quelques différenciations paronymiques. Même si elles ne seront pas directes – *per dictionem* – elles s’avèreront pourtant indirectes – *extra dictionem*. En effet, dans *De ente et essentia*, l’Aquinat insiste sur la possibilité d’un *actus essendi* grâce auquel *entia* – les étants – participent d’une certaine manière à la perfection, selon leur propre essence. Or, puisque nous avons déjà désigné la perfection par *a* et parce qu’il faudra reconstruire les relations illustrées par (2) en incluant l’analogie de l’essence, nous allons notée la „perfection” du *unum* par *A* (et non pas par *a* jusque maintenant). Nous obtiendrons ainsi:

$$(3) \quad \frac{a \text{ RA}}{a'} = \frac{b \text{ RA}}{b'} = \frac{c \text{ RA}}{c'} = \frac{d \text{ RA}}{d'} \text{ etc.}$$

Ce qui signifie que, selon l’Aquinat, il existe un mouvement analogique (paronymique) y compris à l’intérieur de l’essence et que, tout comme nous pouvons parler d’une essence de la qualité, de la quantité etc. nous devrions faire la même chose pour l’essence. Avec la précision, importante, que nous avons à faire – ici aussi – d’un mouvement exigé par l’engagement discursif de l’essence.

<sup>7</sup> *Scriptum super Sententiis*, III, d 1, q 1, a 1.

### 3. Confirmation d'Aristote: la différence entre l'énonciation et la signification

Même s'il pourrait paraître paradoxal, il existe pourtant dans le Corpus Aristotelicum un passage qui illustre un tel point de vue „thomiste” avant la lettre. Il s'agit d'un fragment des *Topiques* – traité consacré aux lieux communs: *koinoi topoi*, tel *agora* (qui nous a donné justement *kat-egoria*) –, plus précisément dans la partie qui introduit la différence essentielle entre *kategoriai* (*praedicamenta*) et *kategoroumena* (*praedicabilia*). Voici donc le passage en entier: „Toutes les prémisses signifient (*semaiousin*) ou l'essence (*ti esti*) ou la qualité, la quantité ou une autre catégorie. Il est évident que ce qui signifie l'essence (*ti esti*) revient ou à l'essence (*ousia*) ou à la qualité, à la quantité ou à une autre catégorie. Par conséquent, quand on parle de l'homme en affirmant qu'il est homme ou animal, on énonce l'essence (*ti esti legeri*) et on signifie l'essence (*ten ousian*). S'il est question de la couleur blanche et on dit que la chose est coloré ou qu'il est blanche, on énonce l'essence (*ti esti*) et on signifie la qualité. De même, s'il s'agit d'une grandeur d'un coud et on dit que la chose a un coud de grandeur, on énonce l'essence (*ti esti*) et on signifie la quantité. Et pareillement avec les autres catégories”.<sup>8</sup> Il existe, donc, une différence entre l'engagement „vertical” de l'essence – exprimé par *ti esti* – et celui „horizontal” – signifié par *ousia* – qui, en fonction de sa position dans le jugement, peut être traduite ou par la *substantia* – en tant que sujet (*definiendum*) – ou par *essentia* – en tant que prédicat (*definiens*). Ce qui veut dire aussi qu'énoncer *ti esti* et signifier *ousia* sont tout à fait différents. Les commentateurs modernes regrettent, en général, l'incompréhension de ce passage des *Topiques*.

Cependant, Alexandre d'Aphrodise avait déjà offerte une explication assez claire et simple:<sup>9</sup> quand le sujet et le prédicat „tombent” sur une seule et même catégorie, le prédicat signifie la catégorie, mais le jugement énonce le *ti esti*, à savoir justement ce que le sujet est en vérité, son essence propre, même s'il s'agit de la qualité, de la quantité ou, comme nous l'avons déjà vu, de l'essence elle-même. La difficulté réside, semble-t-il, dans l'usage inhabituel de *ptosis* – qui désigne „la chute”, d'où le concept grammatical de cas (cf. lat. *cado*, *cadere*) – dans un contexte qui concerne y compris le prédicat et, par analogie, le verbe (qui, dans les grammaires modernes, est conjugué et non pas décliné). Or, dans *De l'interprétation*,<sup>10</sup> Aristote avait déjà désigné le temps des verbes par *ptosis rhematos*. Il est donc évident que le sens qu'Alexandre d'Aphrodise attribue à la *ptosis* concerne la possibilité même – „verticale” – du discours, à savoir les prédicables, définis en tant que possibilités originantes et, par la suite, paronymiques du tout discours. La meilleure traduction latine qu'on pourrait trouver pour le grec *ti esti* – compte tenu de la manière dont il est impliqué dans la définition des *kategoroumena* – serait ainsi *quidditas*, c'est-à-dire justement la réponse à la question *quid est?* Ainsi, le mouvement analogique de l'essence sera lui aussi inclus dans *analogia entis*:

<sup>8</sup> *Topiques*, I, 9, 103b.

<sup>9</sup> Alexandre d'Aphrodise, *In Aristotelis Topicorum*, éd. M. Wallies, Berlin, 1891, 461.

<sup>10</sup> *De l'interprétation*, 16b.

$$(4) \quad \frac{\text{essentia } R \text{ quidditas} \quad \text{qualitas } R \text{ quidditas} \quad \text{quantitas } R \text{ quidditas}}{\text{ens} \quad \text{esse sui generis} \quad \text{esse sui generis}} \dots \text{etc.}$$

L'énonciation relève de l'engagement „vertical” du discours (de sa condition de possibilité), la signification, de celui „horizontal” (de son effectivité dérivée). Ce qui anticipe, d'une part, la déduction métaphysique des catégories de Kant – développée dans la *Critique de la raison pure* – mais aussi la théorie d'Émile Benveniste sur la différence entre l'énonciation et l'énoncé, une différence essentielle qui sera incorporée dans le discours psychanalytique.

La liaison entre *ti esti* et *esti* – la copule dans la langue grecque ancienne – est plus qu'évidente. La seule différence entre les deux coïncide avec celle d'entre une question et sa réponse. Aucun autre mot ne pouvait mieux exprimer l'unité et la diversité des catégories que ces paronymes, car ils désignent justement l'être a-catégoriel. Et pourtant, *esti* – la copule déjà engagée dans le discours – ne coïncide pas avec la quiddité „verticale” à laquelle se réfère, par rapport à leur „centre focal”, les termes du discours (qui „tombent” sous une seule et même catégorie) mais plutôt le fait que *esti* lui-même représente l'analogue „horizontal” (discursif) de *ti esti* et, par conséquent, de sa „verticalité” non-discursive. Nous pourrions donc dire que, dans les langues indo-européennes, ce qui échappe au discours (étant ainsi refoulé) – à savoir sa condition de possibilité énonciative – s'inscrit (par un retour) en tant que „trace” dans le discours lui-même (plus précisément dans l'énoncé), sous la forme d'un *shifter* dont la „particularité” principale et justement celle de n'avoir aucune. D'ailleurs, l'occurrence de la copule dans la langue grecque ancienne est assez „récente”. Elle a été précédée par une sorte de vide ek- et, respectivement, in-spirateur censé marquer le passage du sujet (le nom) au nom prédicatif.

#### 4. La différence entre le genre et l'espèce: de *genos* à la *genesis*

La paronymie introduit dans notre discussion le problème de l'origine commune des termes dérivés, les seuls à pouvoir être engagés effectivement dans le discours. Car, répétons-le, l'origine reste toujours hors discours et, par la suite, hors toute réponse ou énoncé possible. En ce sens, il est assez symptomatique le fait qu'Aristote avait désigné les catégories par des questions: qui?, combien?, comment?, quand?, où?, etc. Il existe donc une différence architectonique entre la question – *ti esti* – et la réponse – *esti*. C'est justement ce qu'Aristote suggère dans ses *Catégories* au moment où il redéfinit la catégorie du rapport – *pros ti*: „Il ne faudrait pas avoir peur de l'objection selon laquelle, par tout ce que nous avons dit sur la qualité, nous n'avons fait que d'énumérer des relatifs. Car n'avons-nous pas dit aussi que les dispositions et les états sont des relatifs? Dans ces cas, seulement les genres sont de vrais relatifs, pas leurs espèces. En effet, c'est seulement la science qui s'institue comme relative à autre chose car la science est

toujours science de quelques chose (*tinós gar epísteme legetai*). Au contraire, aucune espèce de la science n'est pas directement relative à autre chose. On ne peut pas dire: la connaissance de la grammaire est grammaire de quelque chose, ni la connaissance de la musique est musique de quelque chose. Si elles sont véritablement relatives, cela est dû à leur propre genre ainsi que la grammaire est dite de la science de quelque chose et non pas de la grammaire de quelque chose, comme la musique est dite de la science de quelque chose et non pas de la musique de quelque chose: la grammaire n'est pas une grammaire mais une science des lettres, comme la musique n'est pas une musique mais une science des sons. Toutes ces sciences ne sont pas relatives d'une manière directe. Et si elles le sont d'une manière indirecte, nous ne recevons pas de telles qualités dans la mesure où nous les possédons. Car notre possession ne concerne que ces sciences particulières [et non pas la science en soi]. On dit que nous sommes vraiment des connaisseurs compte tenu de la possession de ces dernières seulement. Il s'ensuit que ces sciences, grâce auxquelles nous sommes qualifiés d'une certaine manière [comme des grammairiens ou des musiciens] sont à chaque fois dites comme des qualités et non pas comme de termes directement relatifs. Pourtant, s'il arrive que une et seule chose soit relative [directement] et en même temps une qualité il n'est pas absurde de le compter, simultanément, dans les deux catégories de relatifs".<sup>11</sup>

L'importance de ce passage justifie les dimensions de cette citation car il constitue un vrai pendant de celui des *Topiques*, analysé ci-dessus. Nous avons, d'abord, un *unum* – la science en soi, définie ici en tant que genre (le correspondant de *ti esti* et de la *quidditas* des *Topiques* et, par conséquent, de l'origine même de tout acte d'énonciation) –, qui n'intervient qu'indirectement dans le discours (dans l'énoncé), à savoir par le biais de ces espèces: la grammaire et la musique. Entre la science en soi et ses espèces s'institue une *proportio* de type *ad unum*. Il existe donc une différence architectonique entre la science en soi et les sciences spéciales parce que c'est seulement elle, la science *haplos* (l'énonciation), qui peut avoir un rapport direct avec l'altérité – avec la singularité, dirions-nous: *ti kata tinós* –, tandis que (par l'énoncé) les sciences particulières ont seulement un rapport indirect avec cet „autre”, à savoir compte tenu de leur degré de „perfection” (définie „en fonction” de la science en soi), en produisant à chaque fois un *habitus* qui leur soit approprié. L'objet des sciences spécifiques n'est pas indéterminé, comme celui de la science en soi (défini comme genre). Il „tombe” sous une détermination spécifique (propre à l'acte de signification). Autrement dit, les lettres (*grammai*) et les sons (*phonaí*) sont seulement les habitudes de la grammaire et de la musique par rapport à l'„unité focale” qui est la science comme telle: la grammaire est une science des lettres (écrites ou lues), la musique est une science des sons (articulés dans un chant). Or, puisque, dans ce contexte, Aristote utilise la différence entre le genre et l'espèce, nous obtiendrons une nouvelle définition d'*analogia entis* chez Aristote:

---

<sup>11</sup> *Catégories*, 8, 11a.



$$(5) \quad \frac{\text{eidos R } \textit{genos}}{\textit{tode ti}} = \frac{\text{grammatike R } \textit{episteme}}{\textit{grammai}} = \frac{\text{musike R } \textit{episteme}}{\textit{phonai}} \text{ etc.}$$

Il est facile d'identifier dans l'occurrence du deuxième membre de cette analogie l'exemple qu'Aristote avait déjà donné au début même des *Catégories* qui concernait les rapports entre „grammaire” et „grammairien”, termes dérivés qu'illustraient la paronymie. Toutes ces remarques correspondent non seulement aux exigences thomistes de la syntèse (qualitative) entre *proportio* et *proportionalitas* mais surtout aux exigences aristotéliennes, telles qu'elles ont été formulées à la fin du passage des *Catégories* que nous avons commenté. Car, même avant Thomas, le Stagirite suggère la possibilité d'exprimer les deux rapports – celui direct (*proportio*) comme celui indirect (*proportionalitas*) – dans une seule formule, manière d'illustrer, encore une fois, les deux types de rapports – „vertical” et „horizontal” – qui définissent la paronymie. Nous comprenons mieux maintenant pourquoi Aristote situe la qualité parmi les relatifs et pour quelle raison les termes relatifs représentent l'expression – indirecte, spécifique („horizontale”) – d'une relativité directe („verticale”), propre au genre. D'ailleurs, les termes dérivés sont désignés aussi par *ta sustoichia* – „les (termes) apparentés” – ou *ta ptoseas* – „les (termes) tombés”.<sup>12</sup> Nous pourrions dire, pour synthétiser, que les termes dérivés (qui définissent la paronymie) sont „tombés” d'une origine (Lacan dirait du Nom du Père) par rapport à laquelle ils sont seulement ap-parentés. Aristote est très précis là dessus: l'étant humain n'a jamais la possession du genre de la connaissance – la science en soi – mais seulement celle de ses espèces – la grammaire, la musique, etc. En d'autres mots, l'homme connaît le genre – *genos* – seulement à travers ses propres espèces. Ou encore: il ne peut pas connaître l'origine même – *genesis* – de sa propre connaissance, conclusion éminemment kantienne qui soulève d'importantes doutes sur la manière dont la logique moderne a réduit les rapports entre le genre et l'espèce à ceux qui sont purement quantitatifs, comme il est le cas dans les diagrammes de Ven.

##### 5. L'espèce comme prédicat universel: *materia signata* et *hypotyposis*

Quelles sont les conséquences de cette véritable différence ontico-ontologique introduite entre le genre, d'une part, et l'espèce et son *habitus*, de l'autre? Aristote développe sa réponse dans le livre Z de la *Métaphysique*, où il aborde le difficile problème de la présence des Idées dans les choses sensibles. Car il existe, bien évidemment, des essences „sans matière” (les objets propres de la philosophie première) mais il existe aussi des essences „avec matière” (les objets propres de la philosophie seconde). Or, nous l'avons vu, Aristote introduit comme intermédiaire entre l'Idée – l'essence première – et

<sup>12</sup> *Topiques*, II, 9, 10a.

les choses un concept dont le rôle fondamental vient d'être déjà remarqué – l'espèce: „il existe une certaine identité, en espèce (*tauto eidos*), entre les Idées et les choses qui participent à elles”.<sup>13</sup> C'est une des conséquences presque directe de la division aristotélicienne entre l'intellect actif et l'intellect passif. Même si la connaissance humaine tend vers l'universel – comme Aristote le dit lui-même –, cela ne signifie pas – même s'il pourrait nous paraître paradoxal – que l'universel serait autre chose qu'une certaine espèce („intelligible, selon les scolastiques, un simple schème, selon Kant), différente par rapport à l'essence première (au genre, donc, ou au concept transcendantal): „L'homme en général, le cheval en général et les autres termes pareils – qui sont affirmés d'une multiplicité d'individus en tant que prédicat universel (*katholou*) ne constituent pas une essence (*ousia*) pure et simple mais un composé déterminé (*synolon ti*) par une certaine forme et par une certaine matière, prises au sens universel (*hos katholou*)”<sup>14</sup>. Ce que Frege allait symboliser non pas par un simple *f*, mais par *f*l).

Il existe, bien sur et avant tout, l'essence „comme telle”. Mais l'essence générique ne peut jamais être réduite à ce qu'elle devient après son „incarnation” discursive car, dans ce cas-là, l'essence même se convertit dans un prédicat universel sous lequel „tombe” son *habitus* approprié – le sujet –, avec lequel il s'articule dans un *synolon* (un jugement, par exemple). L'articulation dans et par le discours de l'essence coïncide ainsi avec sa chute de son statut initial – celui générique – dans un autre, spécifique, c'est-à-dire „dérivé”. Ce qui peut nous induire en erreur c'est justement le fait que, d'habitude, l'essence générique et l'essence spécifique sont désignées par le même mot, ce qui, évidemment, peut créer des paralogismes: „Il est clair que l'âme constitue une essence première, que le corps est matière et que l'homme en général ou l'animal en général sont composés d'une âme et d'un corps pris au sens universel (*hos katoulou*). Aussi, au cas où l'âme de Socrate est, en même temps, Socrate lui-même, le terme ‚Socrate’ [...] présentera-t-il une double signification”.<sup>15</sup> Tout comme l'intellect est une fois actif (générique) et une autre fois passif (spécifique), l'âme peut, à son tour, être une fois générique – les scolastiques l'ont appelée *animus* (au masculin) – et une autre fois spécifique – les mêmes scolastiques l'ont appelée *anima* (au féminin). Les essences premières ne sont pas accessibles à la connaissance discursive. Et tout comme nous avons parlé d'une différenciation entre l'essence „comme telle” (générique) et sa configuration spécifique, nous pourrions parler maintenant d'une différenciation entre la matière „comme telle” (indéterminée) et la matière déterminée (*signata*). C'est la raison pour laquelle, insiste Aristote, nous ne pouvons plus dire que la matière „comme telle” sature une espèce (Wittgenstein allait parler d'une „propriété matérielle”) mais seulement une essence générique (la grammaire n'est pas grammaire mais la science des lettres): „nous ne pouvons pas définir le composé par

<sup>13</sup> *Métaphysique*, XIII, 4, 1079a.

<sup>14</sup> *Métaphysique*, VII, 10, 1035b.

<sup>15</sup> *Métaphysique*, VII, 11, 1037a.

l'union avec la matière car cette dernière est totalement indéfinie. C'est pourquoi nous allons le définir par rapport à l'essence première".<sup>16</sup>

Dans la perspective des relations que nous avons reformulées par (5), nous aurons donc deux „déclinaisons” de l'essence première, compte tenu des deux membres qui articulent le composé (*synolon*): la première tiendra à l'espèce – redéfinie en tant que *forma signata* –, la deuxième, à son *habitus* – redéfini en tant que *materia signata*. Or, parce que l'étant humain n'a pas d'accès discursif direct à l'essence première, il s'ensuit (comme chez Kant) que l'essence devrait tout d'abord s'inscrire comme un „mono-gramme” au niveau du prédicat universel comme à celui du sujet qui „tombe” sous celui dernier pour que, s'appuyant sur ces deux „dérivés”, elle puisse être ainsi thématisée: „Compte tenu de tout cela, il faudra examiner maintenant ce qui est bon et ce qui est mauvais dans ce qui a été affirmé [sur les essences premières] et surtout qu'est-ce qu'elles sont en vérité [...] Toutes ces questions s'imposent à notre recherche seulement après que nous nous sommes déjà imprégnés avec l'empreinte (*hypotyposamenois*) de ce que l'essence est premièrement”.<sup>17</sup> Nous pouvons remarquer que le terme de *hypotyposis* suppose ici une double signification: d'une part, il désigne l'*habitus* (indirect) de l'essence première, de l'autre, ce même *habitus* devrait être défini – comme nous l'avons déjà vu – par rapport au prédicat universel sous lequel il „tombe” – *hypo*. Car l'*habitus* „tombe” – *ptosei* – directement sous une espèce et seulement indirectement sous son genre. Aussi, pourrions-nous reconstruire le paronyme approprié de *hypotyposis* qui, nous le voyons bien, ne peut être que *typos* car *hypotyposis* est justement celle qui „tombe” – *hypo* – sous un *typos*. Les relations que nous avons définies par (5) seront ainsi réécrites sous une nouvelle forme:

$$(6) \quad \frac{\textit{eidos R genos}}{\textit{tode ti}} = \frac{\textit{morphe ti R morphe}}{\textit{hyle ti}} = \frac{\textit{typos R ti esti}}{\textit{hypotyposis}} .$$

Les liaisons entre le dernier membre de cette nouvelle analogie et le criticisme kantien sont évidentes: le *typos* aristotélicien nous conduit à la typique de la deuxième *Critique* tandis que l'*hypotyposis* aristotélicien nous conduit à l'hypotypose de la troisième *Critique*. Le temps ne nous permet pas de développer ici ces analogies. Retenons, pourtant, que la relation de „chut” entre *typos* et *hypotyposis* nous rappelle un célèbre adage kantien: le Beau représente le symbole du Bien moral. Le Beau „tombe” sous le Bien, il représente un accomplissement paronymique réflexif de celui dernier. Et inversement: la variation des maximes morales sera toujours rapportée (schématiquement) *pros hen* au Sublime éthique tandis que la variation des beaux

<sup>16</sup> *Métaphysique*, VII, 11, 1037a.

<sup>17</sup> *Métaphysique*, VII, 2, 1028b.

symboles sera toujours rapportée (imaginairement) *pros hen* au Sublime esthétique. Il existe donc un chiasme entre la „descente” de l’ontologique dans l’ontique (mouvement univoque propre à la première *Critique*) et la „montée” de l’ontique dans l’ontologique (mouvement équivoque propres aux deux autres *Critiques*). Or, l’expérience du Sublime coïncide justement avec la „montée” de l’étant humain dans cette variation. Y a-t-il une anticipation aristotélicienne de ces développements de Kant, celui qui, rappelons-nous, se contente souvent et seulement d’ironiser Aristote?

## 6. Zurück zu Plato: de chora à agora

Nous avons déjà vu comment, pour Aristote, l’essence „verticale” (prédicable) de tout discours – *ti esti* –, qui reste non-discursive, trouve son analogue „horizontal” – au niveau du discours lui-même – dans et par la copule – *esti* –, qui n’est pas vraiment une „partie” du discours. Elle symbolise plutôt le vide (la lacune, le trou) d’entre le nom et le nom prédicatif par un „mot” qui exède pratiquement tout sens déterminé. Comme si la frontière „verticale” d’entre la non-discursivité et la discursivité – qui n’a aucune dimension discursive – s’„incarne” dans le discours lui-même dans et par la frontière „horizontale” d’entre le nom et le nom prédicatif, une limite qui „gagne” pourtant une certaine dimension „discursive”, à savoir dans et par la copule, mot vidé de tout sens déterminé. Ainsi, la survenue de l’indicible dans le dicible ne suppose pas une reduplication perpétuelle des prédicats. L’indicible n’existe pas du point de vue prédicatif. Il in-siste de l’intérieur même du discours, plus précisément, dans la lacune (le non-lieu) qui s’ouvre (comme un gouffre) entre le sujet et le prédicat, une sorte de „vide” que les Grecs l’ont appelé *chaos*, Heidegger (après Hölderlin), *das Offene* et le psychanalyste, *die Bejahung*. Dans d’autres termes, il existe une certaine „kénose” de l’indicible dans le dicible et elle s’inscrit justement dans le vide – gr. *kenos* – qu’elle crée entre le sujet et le prédicat.

Une telle „incarnation” kénotique de la frontière d’entre l’indicible et le dicible dans le dicible lui-même avait préoccupé Platon, qui, dans son *Timée*,<sup>18</sup> nous propose comme intermédiaire (topologique) révolutionnaire justement la frontière – *khora* –, une „espèce invisible” (du point de vue hypotypique) et „sans forme” (du point de vue typique), une limite aporétique donc (*aporotata*) entre le sensible et l’intelligible. Or, Platon compare cette frontière sans dimension avec le mur „dimensionné” d’une cité. Dans ce contexte à la fois topologique et topique, ceux qui „habitent” le non-lieu de la frontière, les gardiens, c’est-à-dire les désappropriés de toute détermination (y compris de tout revenu) – seront les seuls préparés pour représenter vraiment les intérêts de la cité (*polis*), dans sa totalité. Par conséquent, conclut Platon, les politiciens devraient être recrutés seulement parmi les gardiens. Le statut du politicien – destiné à proférer des discours (*kat-egorein*) dans l’*agora*, le centre de la cité – suppose ainsi une

<sup>18</sup> *Timée*, 51b.

„intérieurisation” de la condition marginale du gardien et, par la suite, une „intérieurisation” de la frontière. Avec la précision que, tout comme la frontière d’entre l’intérieur et l’extérieur n’a, en principe, aucune dimension, l’*agora*, qui s’avère être l’„intérieurisation” de la frontière de la cité, ne permettra aucune habitation. Car il est interdit d’habiter l’*agora*. L’opacité du mur se convertit ainsi dans la transparence de la place publique. Il existe une communication non-dimensionnelle entre les marges et le centre. Sauf que l’intérieurisation des marges (opaques) produit maintenant une sorte de „dilatation” non-déterminée (transparente) du centre en lui-même, par analogie avec son caractère non-dimensionné. L’unité d’une cité n’est pas réductible à la simple addition de ces habitations mais plutôt de l’espace vide d’entre elles, un non-lieu concentré dans sa propre *agora* – in-habité –, d’où partent et où arrivent toutes les routes. Ce qui revient à un véritable chiasme entre le principe topologique de toute habitation „verticale” et son *habitus* „horizontal”, a-topique. L’*agora* devient une sorte de copule de l’habitation, tout comme, par analogie, la copule pourrait être une sorte d’*agora* de la discursivité. Et tout comme le troisième „terme” du discours – *ti esti* – s’incarne dans et par la copule – *esti*, „terme” indéterminé (non-discursif) qui dépasse la simple dualité d’un discours de type proportionnel –, le troisième „terme” de l’habitation – la loi morale – s’incarne dans et par l’espace public – *agora*, „terme” indéterminé (non-habité) qui dépasse la simple dualité d’une habitation de type proportionnel. C’est la raison pour laquelle dans les *Lois*, dialogue postérieur au *Timée*, Platon allait proposer la conversion de la *khora* en *agora*.<sup>19</sup>

## 7. Le chiasme de l’analogie: du discours lacunaire au silence parlant

Cette extraordinaire intuition des pères de la philosophie occidentale – la possibilité d’une incarnation du Logos (de l’indicible) dans le logos (dans le dicible) – soulève un difficile problème phénoménologique. Car il s’avère maintenant que, avant même que les termes – le sujet et le prédicat – soient articulés dans un discours, il faudrait qu’il existe un «lieu libre» (une lacune, un vide) non-discursif qui précède toute discursivité. Avant de prononcer sa première proposition, le sujet humain doit «savoir» qu’il peut parler «en général». Ce qui reviendrait ainsi à une expérience de la béance même du (non-)lieu de l’énonciation. Et il ne s’agirait pas ici d’un silence «pur et simple» mais d’un silence «parlant». Kant allait la désigner par l’«étonnement», état d’esprit qui suppose, il est vrai, une réduction de la discursivité mais sans laquelle aucun discours ne serait possible. Or, l’étonnement – source première de la philosophie, selon Aristote – représente une expression kantienne privilégiée pour l’«expérience» du sublime. Dans cet espace vide – dans cet inter-dit, dirait plus tard Lacan – allait placer la psychanalyse les formations quasi-discursives de l’inconscient (i.e. de la conscience transcendante): le lapsus, les mots d’esprit, etc.

---

<sup>19</sup> *Lois*, V, 745a.

Tout cela relève d'un véritable chiasme entre la discursivité et le non-discursivité, entre l'ontique et l'ontologique puisque l'indicible – l'interdit – ne s'«incarne» pas dans le discours mais plutôt dans ses lacunes, dans ses silences. C'est-à-dire dans son inter-dit. Wittgenstein avait déjà remarqué ce chiasme dans la seule conférence – sur l'éthique! – qu'il a donnée de son vivant: „À présent, je décrirai l'expérience de l'émerveillement devant l'existence du monde en disant: dans cette expérience, le monde est éprouvé comme un miracle. Mais me voilà tenté de dire que l'expression juste, dans la langue, du miracle qu'est l'existence du monde – bien qu'elle n'exprime rien *dans* la langue – est l'existence du langage lui-même”.<sup>20</sup> En conclusion, sans assumer la nature analogique de l'expérience humaine – sans l'expérience d'une „descente” de l'Un dans le Multiple et, respectivement, d'une „montée” du Multiple dans l'Un – aucune sublimation n'est plus possible – ni éthique, ni esthétique – et, par conséquent, aucune „silence parlant”. Or, c'est justement un tel „silence” qui est demandé au philosophe – au moment où il entre dans le sublime, à savoir dans le vrai étonnement – et au psychanalyste – au moment où il entre dans la passe, à savoir dans la vraie écoute.

---

<sup>20</sup> Apud G. Agamben, *Enfance et histoire*, Payot & Rivages, Paris, 2002, p. 18.



## APPLICATION AND PHILOSOPHY WITHIN A HERMENEUTICAL HORIZON\*

KÁROLY VERESS\*

**ABSTRACT.** *Application and Philosophy – within a Hermeneutical Horizon.* What is “application” according to its basic meaning, and what does it mean when it is used with philosophical pretensions? How does the relationship between application and philosophy, viz. the role of applied philosophy develop in a context outside hermeneutics, and how can it be thought of in a hermeneutical perspective? How is the question related to the hermeneutical sense of “application” connected to the question of the application of philosophy? And how does contemporary philosophical hermeneutics contribute to the exploration of this relationship?

**Keywords:** *application, applied philosophy, epistemological discourse, practical knowledge, philosophical hermeneutics, Bildung, speculative character*

The more fashionable the term “applied philosophy” nowadays is, the more should it make us think. Philosophical hermeneutics particularly urges us to do just this, since it stands in a characteristically double relationship with the question of application. Contemporary philosophy puts the problem of application into the foreground, while it also posits itself as a philosophy whose essence lies precisely in application.

### 1.

According to its basic meaning, “application” is the transfer of something, i.e. that which is *applied*, upon something else, i.e. that which it is *applied to*. As such, it has a double object, an active and a passive one. The separation of these two objects manifests itself as the pre-existence of that which is *applied* to the act and to the subject that endures the application. Conceived in this way, application is etymologically related

---

\* This paper is an edited version of the opening lecture delivered at the Conference of Doctoral Students organized by the Doctoral School in Philosophy of Babes-Bolyai University on 9 May 2014. The train of thought of this paper is based on the author's studies, published in Hungarian: “A hermeneutika mint alkalmazott filozófia”; “A filozófia alkalmazásának hermeneutikai aspektusai”; “Az alkalmazás értelme”. In Veress Károly, *Az értelem értelméről*, Mentor Kiadó, Marosvásárhely, 2003, pp. 130–138; 139–147; 148–158.

\* Doctoral supervisor, Doctoral School in Philosophy, Faculty of History and Philosophy, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania. E-mail: veress.karoly@ubbcluj.ro



to two other concepts: *adequacy* and *opportunity*. The conflict between these concepts introduces a semantic tension into the concept of application. *Adequacy* presupposes an inherent correspondence between the active and the passive object of the application. Something is adequate for a certain end or, in other words, possesses the requisite ability to be applied for that end. But then again, *opportunity* is an outside circumstance upon the existence of which it depends whether the intrinsic correspondence can manifest itself. Thus, opportunity requires a continuous state of preparedness. It is either given or not. The opportunity that presents itself can be seized, but it also can be missed. Thus, intrinsic correspondence manifests itself within application as something extrinsic in which the objects of application are related merely *occasionally*, within the *act*.

However, contrary to its basic meaning, application can also be conceived of as an *objectless* process. This is especially emphasized by philosophical hermeneutics. In this sense, application reveals itself in its very essence and meaning as a mode of being of the applier, viz. as an active relationship that involves the applier, and that which is applied as something formed within this historical effect. Within application as a process of occurrence of being and meaning, the applier and the applied can only be separated by analytical means.

## 2.

In the context of the positivist view on science and of discursive rationality, knowing, understanding, and applying are rendered diachronically, as separate and subsequent moments. The appreciation of theoretical knowing is accompanied by the devaluation of application and the emphasizing of its occasional character. Application is reduced to an *occasional marginality* compared to knowing and understanding.

From an epistemological viewpoint, “application” means the use of a pre-existing body of knowledge in solving a theoretical or practical problem. Knowing and applying form a sequence of operations based on the logic of instrumental action. This approach projects the traditional opposition between theory and practice upon the separate and subsequent character of production and application, as the posterior practical use of the previously worked-out theory. Consequently, it renders explicit the context-dependent nature of practical use, as opposed to the internal autonomy of theory. That which is theoretical leaves behind its status of being an *end in itself* and is put to use for an external end (and within an external medium). The extrinsic and instrumental nature of this “relationship” is also hinted at by the fact that application, as a phase that follows the production of that which is applied, can happen, but it can also not happen, since within this view application does not necessarily follow from the essence of that which is applied.

Although not directly, this relationship also reveals a deeper meaning of application as *adequacy* for the attainment of an end that is external to theory. The relinquishment of theory as an end in itself also means – from the perspective of

practice – an entering into the self-determined medium of practice. Hence, the opposition of theory and practice contains a truth that guides our attention to the genuine character of application, according to which the applied knowledge is put to use within the specific, self-determined medium of practice. In other words, the practical validation of the *adequacy* of theoretical knowledge for the attainment of a practical goal does not simply mean a transfer-based usage – as a second step –, but also that this specific theoretical knowledge becomes adequate for becoming and generating within another medium. In this sense, it is the creation of knowledge itself. Consequently, application does not simply mean the mechanical transfer of knowledge from one sphere to another, but the *re-creation* of knowledge in the medium of practice, i.e. its creation as *practical knowledge*. E.g., applied mathematics is not the application of pre-existing mathematical theories for solving a specific practical problem, but an exploration of the specific mathematical context of the problem or, in other words, a mathematics that establishes itself in a different way, viz. a different mode of being of mathematics. Thus, in such cases, the (mis)identification of the “applied” and the “practical” is not welcome. The main opposition is not between theory and praxis. Applied mathematics is no less a theoretical accomplishment than non-applied mathematics. The difference between the applied and the non-applied rather manifests itself as the *process of becoming* of a specific knowledge, viz. whether it develops from within the world of that specific problem or, instead, attempts to draw the problem in its own world. This difference reveals the *original* applied character of any knowledge. As for philosophy, one cannot view the difference between non-applied and applied as a relationship between the theoretical and the practical because this is not difference between theoretical and practical philosophy. If we could posit the identity of applied philosophy and practical philosophy, what sense would it make to speak of, e.g., applied ethics?

### 3.

The function of application is also not clear *within* the hermeneutical perspective. H.-G. Gadamer calls attention<sup>1</sup> to attempts to reconcile the traditional epistemological perspective and the hermeneutical perspective, which operate with the discursive distinction between understanding and application. Those attempts which are aimed at working out a general theory of interpretation – such as the conception of E. Betti<sup>2</sup> – necessarily separate and render into a discursive sequence the operations of

<sup>1</sup> Cf. H.-G. Gadamer, *Igazság és módszer. Egy filozófiai hermeneutika vázlatja*, Gondolat, Budapest, 1984, pp. 218–220. (H.-G. Gadamer, “Wahrheit und Methode. Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik”, *Gesammelte Werke* Band 1. Hermeneutik I. J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), Tübingen, 1990, pp. 312–316.)

<sup>2</sup> E. Betti considers the requirement of application as legitimate only when applied to normatively oriented interpretation. – Cf. E. Betti, “A hermeneutika mint a szellemtudományok általános módszertana”, in *Olasz filozófiai hermeneutika*, Athenaeum, 1992, Vol. I. No. 2, pp. 34–35.

knowing and understanding, understanding and applying, cognitive and normative functions, and, in doing so, the spheres of theoretical reflection and the practical way of life. On the other side, we can see the perpetuation of the tradition of Romantic hermeneutics, the conception of understanding based on the principle of congeniality, which dissolves the identity of the structural phases of the hermeneutical process in an act of *identification*.<sup>3</sup>

As opposed to the above approach, within the horizon of philosophical hermeneutics as sketched out by H.-G. Gadamer, interpretation, understanding, and application can be thought of as mutually interdependent phases of the same hermeneutical process. The tension between the meaning that constitutes itself within the hermeneutical process and the meaning that manifests itself within a specific phase of interpretation is constitutive for our understanding. To understand the meaning of something means to understand it anew and differently in each specific situation. Thus, understanding is always also application, the concreteness of the meaning that has been developed within the hermeneutical process, as it presents itself in the specific situation of understanding. The meaning that has to be understood, as abstract and general as can be, cannot be separated from a specific situation of interpretation. Since meaning always emerges by means of the specific conditions of the situation, it is also always a meaning *applied* to that specific situation. This is why we can say that application is the mode of being of the meaning which manifests itself within the process of interpretation.

#### 4.

The attributive form of the term “applied philosophy” suggests that that which is being applied and that which it is applied to are logically and linguistically separated. The term carries the meaning that a previously elaborated philosophical conception is used to elucidate a specific problem, viz. philosophical means, methods, and procedures are applied for solving strictly non-philosophical problems. This is how the different philosophical “disciplines” are born, such as moral philosophy or political philosophy – nowadays included under the heading of “applied philosophy”–, but one can also hear about the “philosophy of communication” or about the “philosophy of environmental protection”. These designations lead us to think that such philosophical preoccupations bring philosophy out of the theoretical and methodological confines of the ideal of “rigorous science”, adopted by philosophy under the influence of the positivistic perspective and the prevailing epistemological

---

<sup>3</sup> Within Romantic hermeneutics – as Gadamer observes – the “inner fusion of understanding and interpretation led to the third element in the hermeneutical problem, *application*, becoming wholly excluded from any connection with hermeneutics.” Gadamer, *op. cit.*, 218. (*Wahrheit und Methode*, p. 312.)

attitude, and move it closer to the investigation of problems more closely related to human life, which are the so-called *practical* problems. It seems that we are dealing with nothing else than an actualisation (or re-actualisation) of traditional practical philosophy and the so-called practical knowledge that is conveyed by it. However, the methodological situation thus created obscures exactly the real meaning of practical knowledge and practical philosophy. Essentially, the aforementioned “applied” philosophies are still practiced as a kind of theoretical philosophy or as the application of philosophical theories. Thus, there do not seem to be too many opportunities for overcoming the theoretically centred mode of practicing philosophy. All those instances of philosophizing that presuppose a technical sense of application, removed from the essence of philosophy, obstinately resist to this possibility.

Our approach hitherto has used the term “applied philosophy” for designating a disciplinized and professionalized mode (or modes) of being of philosophy in which application and philosophy mutually limit each other. Being “applied” also implies a classification. If there is an *applied* philosophy, there also should be a *non-applied* philosophy. However, our primary question here is not related to the essence of non-applied philosophy. Rather, the question is about how application is related to philosophy. Is this an extrinsic, additional relationship – sometimes present, and at other times absent –, or does application organically and essentially belong to philosophy? If it is a relationship in which an already elaborated philosophy assumes an applied character in a determined context, then it really is appropriate to talk about two different kinds of philosophy, one applied and the other non-applied. However, if being applied does not relate to philosophy extrinsically but essentially, then the question proves to be one of the fundamental problems of philosophy itself, and we need to elaborate and understand the relationship between application and philosophy starting with this question.

## 5.

Modernity defines the essence of philosophy within an *epistemological* perspective. Accordingly, philosophy is primarily knowing, which presupposes a certain field of problems and a specific way in which these problems are handled, associated with a more or less well-defined subject (field), a clearly definable methodology, and argumentative procedures. All these serve as the basis for the legitimation of modern philosophy not only before itself but also within culture as a whole. Within the epistemological discourse, the separation of the theoretical and the practical, viz. the positing of the primacy and superiority of the theoretical to the practical could be well accommodated. This discourse could also be effectively accommodated with the idea of a dominant philosophical paradigm, or the positing of a dominant philosophy of the epoch. In this context, the applicability of previously

worked-out philosophical constructions of a theoretical nature to practical problems also seemed a plausible idea. The enthusiastic vision of the possibility of creating the dominant and total philosophy would only enhance this impression that from the perspective of such a dominant philosophy the practical philosophical investigations can gain a secure theoretical foundation and methodological orientation, and our specific existential problems can be soon resolved.

Thus, in the case of modern philosophy, its “application” raises the problem of how a philosophical system of presuppositions, which has been worked out theoretically, can be applied for the investigation of a specific individual problem, viz. how a problem that does not present direct philosophical relevance can be drawn into the universal horizon of a philosophical conception that is at our disposal. From a methodological perspective, these problems have culminated in the debate of universality vs. particularity, or the question of how far problems investigated in their specificity can have pretensions to philosophical, i.e. universal relevance. *Professionalized* philosophy, devoted to scientific reasoning, still progresses further in this direction, since it effectively promotes the universal philosophical perspective as a readymade methodological framework that has to be filled with content by specific, thematic and empirical investigations. The result is so-called “science” practiced as a kind of applied philosophy, which nowadays also publicly assumes its scientific status in its designation (e.g. cognitive philosophy – cognitive science). This endeavour, however, calls into question precisely the *philosophical* character of the so-called “applied philosophical investigation”.

## 6.

In a *postmodern* context, it is not only the way on philosophizing that changes but also discourse that conveys the self-definition of philosophy and the way in which philosophy views itself. At the level of this new discourse, the epistemological paradigm of modern philosophy is articulated as a self-liquidation and loss of self of philosophy. According to the opinion of both Lyotard and Rorty, this new culture which organizes itself within the medium of the dialogue (*culture conversationnelle*) is a post-philosophical culture.<sup>4</sup> In this cultural context, there are no more specifically philosophical problems, and philosophy does not have a “proper” field that would belong only to it, and the philosopher can also not lean upon a comprehensive method that would secure a basis for the legitimation of her or his investigations.

The sinister image that announces the end of philosophy is the result of the partial break with the epistemological view of philosophy. Philosophy that is subjected to the formal criteria of scientific reasoning has nowadays entered into a “post”-philosophical

---

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Manuel Maria Carrilho, *Rhétorique de la modernité*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1992, p. 20.

epoch in which it becomes necessary to critically review the epistemologically imposed demands. However, this also only means that the problem of the dissolution of philosophy practiced as science presents itself as a *philosophical* problem that contributes to the survival of philosophy.

The metamorphosis of philosophy, far being destructive, only brings to the surface its genuine characteristics. The critical “turning away” of philosophy from the epistemological tradition of modernity also means a “turning toward” its own genuine nature, its original essence, and a more correct understanding of its role within European culture.

One of the most important characteristics of the post-philosophical state of contemporary culture manifests itself through the fact that – borrowing a description from György Márkus – philosophy has entered a novel, post-“system” phase.<sup>5</sup> Not only do the encompassing, global philosophical systems disappear in this period, but also those characteristics of the practice of philosophy change, which have carried its systematic character in the past. It seems that contemporary philosophy wants increasingly less to do with a fragmented world that is falling to pieces and is put together again into different arbitrary configurations. At the same time, a new tendency clearly emerges within the philosophical thinking of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – inspired by, among other sources, the perspective of the Heideggerian fundamental ontology. This approach views philosophy more as an existential attitude than an epistemological construction. Philosophy does not appear anymore within culture as a preliminary and universal self-positing of readymade meaning that is prior to any specific experience but much more as lifelike interpretative attitude and investigation. In this approach, philosophy when practiced as the interpretation and understanding of being, is also application in the sense in which we can view application as the mode of being of that which is applied.

With the postmodern turn, the philosophical problem of application and the issue of applied philosophy is also being put into a new light. Nowadays, nobody attempts anymore to create an encompassing and dominant philosophical theory that could offer a universal explanation of the world and interpretation of being, or that could deliver the methodological premises for such an endeavour. Instead, we have multiple philosophical approaches, orientations, and paradigms. These can coexist and also open up different possibilities for conceiving the essence of applied philosophy. Nevertheless, neither does the choice between them does rest upon chance, nor is it a question of ideological options, but it is rather existentially motivated. The characteristics and specific expressions of existential occurrences themselves determine the philosophical horizons in which certain philosophical endeavours can most readily find themselves. In this perspective, the effective practice of philosophy cannot be anything else than *application*, and philosophy itself according to its essence cannot be otherwise than *applied*.

---

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Márkus György, *A „rendszer” után: A filozófia a tudományok korában*, Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1994, p. 16.

## 7.

Among all the contemporary philosophical orientations, the characteristic mode of being of philosophical tradition, which manifests itself in application, is most thoroughly explored by *philosophical hermeneutics*. I shall emphasize here two aspects of the hermeneutical conception of H.-G. Gadamer in order to support this point: the hermeneutical sense of *Bildung*, and the speculative nature of philosophy.

Gadamer's break with the philosophical conception based on the epistemological paradigm can be presented by expanding upon the meaning of *Bildung* (*formation*). In its Gadamerian sense, *Bildung* carries an opening toward a new type of thinking, speaking, and acting, based on the principle of the historicity of human existence. The historical horizon of our human existence fits into the horizon of a world that is in constant motion and change, and any attempt to fixate this universe into a final, unchanging and hierarchical form has lost its meaning today. The hermeneutical attitude is not oriented toward the possession of "the truth" or to the realization of "the moral law", but toward the fulfilment and perfection of our own human being, so that we can fulfil better and better the requirements of a world which we can imagine and which is possible for us. Instead of the epistemological focalization on "the truth", *Bildung* means the *formation* of the modes of sensibility to these different possible worlds and of the various modes in which we can relate to our world. All this is associated with the rehabilitation of the senses and with the development of our faculty to discern between good and bad, right and wrong, i.e. the faculty of judgement. These faculties furnish us with a continuously renewed and ever-accumulating practical knowledge that can be successfully employed in each novel life situation as the medium of our self-understanding. *Bildung* does not substitute for the "knowledge aimed at in reflection", but explores the limits of a certain type of knowledge, i.e. the knowledge of facts, which is modelled on the natural sciences. Similarly, *Bildung* also shows the limits of the lifestyle enclosed in the narrower circle of personal interests and based upon the primacy of egoistic concerns. An individual who is formed according to the ideals of *Bildung* is capable to step out of the magic circle of egoism in any direction, toward the reception of plurality and variety, otherness, and openness for dialogue. She or he is capable of forming and experiencing the fully-fledged human community, i.e. *communion*, which is also a community of being and meaning.

Philosophical hermeneutics presents the application of philosophy as an emergence of meaning in our individual and community lives. Ultimately, *Bildung* means our preparedness for philosophy. It is a perpetual self-building process in which we are engaged in with others and that is connected with the construction of a possible meaningful world. In this approach, philosophy is not merely the implementation of methods which help meaning to emerge but an existential attitude that opens up the questioning and seeking of wisdom. This is the road taken in our dialogical togetherness with things, texts, tradition, other persons or even our own self.

## 8.

The exposition of the *speculative character* of philosophy is yet another aspect through which Gadamerian philosophical hermeneutics sheds light upon the existential entanglements of philosophy, which are manifested within and as application. The speculative character of philosophy reveals itself within reflection, i.e. in the fact that the philosophical idea genuinely lives as philosophy in its ungraspable, mirror-like (or image-like) quality, or in the floating state of pure representation. Philosophical thought and reflection never entrusts itself on the “fixed determination” of ideas, but rather *reflects*, i.e. it moves along with the idea within its own movement, and these two elements reciprocally form each other as the components of the same occurrence of meaning. When the speculative thesis affirms something – as Gadamer, who is drawing here on the Hegelian tradition, maintains –, it also reveals the unity of the concept. Within the unity of the concept, the thing and the idea coexist as the inseparable unity of that which reflects and that which is reflected. When relying on the power of reflection we grasp the thing conceptually, ultimately, it is the thing itself which manifest itself from its own side and does not let take over those elements that are already determined or self-evident from the perspective of intuition and opinion.<sup>6</sup>

This speculative unity of the thing and the concept stands in a double relationship to the connection between philosophy and application. On the one hand, Gadamer points out that the form of the thesis destroys itself within the speculative unity of the thing and the concept, since here it is not the case that the thesis would express the truth of the subject in the form of a predicate. In fact, it is the duality of the attributive relationship that is abolished here, i.e. the basis of the possibility for the “practical application” of the “theoretical” philosophy. On the other hand, the speculative unity of the thing and the concept reveals the speculative structure of the occurrence of being as an existential process, i.e. the way in which the existential occurrence and the emergence of being, the series of existential events and the reflection related to it accompany and reciprocally form each other as the associated sides of the same occurrence.<sup>7</sup> Thus, philosophy becomes not some kind of an instrument for solving problems, and it is not even some special and exotic possibility to raise problems, but proves to be an existential medium in itself, viz. the speculative side of human existence. Philosophy – and especially contemporary

---

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Gadamer: *op. cit.* p. 323. (*Warheit und Methode*, p. 469.)

<sup>7</sup> The organic interrelationship between philosophical conceptualization and existential occurrences also becomes evident from another angle of approach of this issue. G. Deleuze and F. Guattari also view the true task of philosophy as consisting in the *creation* of new concepts. Also, according to them, the creation of philosophical creation of concepts is an existential occurrence which effectively plays into the separation of things and events, viz. into the formation of conceptual entities. – Cf. Gilles Deleuze–Felix Guattari, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?* Les Éditions de Minuit, Paris, 1991, pp. 10, 36.



philosophy – rather holds up a mirror to existential events – a mirror that organically belongs to that which it mirrors –, in which human problems appear, and in which they can be seen and reflected upon.

## 9.

By trying to restore the philosophical dimension of human life and action, philosophical hermeneutics offers a kind of *way out* of our unphilosophical state, which is at the same time a way that leads back to the essential nature of philosophy, i.e. being on the road toward meaning. This is also the road that reveals the true meaning of applied philosophy, which lies in the manifestation of the authentic character of practical knowledge.<sup>8</sup> Ultimately, our knowledge that organizes itself in abstract and general forms, or in well-grounded theoretical constructions, is a part of our life and a building block of our world. Its true essence is shows itself in the way in which it can confront the challenges of specific problems and answer our existential questions.

Thus, according to its nature, hermeneutics can never realize itself as a philosophy that encloses itself into an epistemological framework. It can never remain simply a theoretically worked-out methodology of interpretation and understanding, because the philosophical content that is inherent in it does not manifest itself in theoretical constructions but rather in the perspective, attitude and way of life that are characteristic to it.<sup>9</sup> This philosophical content is not artificially produced within speculative reflection, but represents an unfolding of the philosophical character that is naturally inherent in our life-world.

---

<sup>8</sup> This also entails the revival of the older tradition of practical philosophy, according to which the validation of knowledge does not exhaust itself in indicating the conditions of their validity, but also entails the clarification of the ways in which the different forms of knowledge correspond to the different human needs. Hermeneutics does not simply revive this philosophical tradition but places it within the historical horizon of our current understanding of being and thereby integrates it as its organic element. – Cf. Georgia Warnke, *Gadamer. Herméneutique, tradition et raison*, Édition Universitaires, De Boeck Université, Bruxelles, 1991, p. 204.

<sup>9</sup> Gadamer – similarly to Rorty – refuses the reduction of philosophy to epistemology and confers on it a novel function, i.e. the function of dialogue and construction. Like Habermas and Apel, Gadamer also views as the main danger of an epistemology which imposes the conditions of scientific knowledge that it obscures the political and practical dimension of social life. This epistemology transforms every issue into a technical one and dismisses knowledge in favour of expertise. The development advocated by it is not guided by human consensus, but by the possibilities and requirements of technology. By following this road, humanity loses its identity. Accordingly, Gadamer sees as the task of philosophy to synthesize our knowledge into a coherent whole that could be integrated into the conduct of the individual who is capable of communication and into the conduct of the responsible citizen, thus facilitating our common orientation and the creation of consensus, making it possible for the ideal human community, based on mutual solidarity, to discern and develop the conditions of a better life. – Cf. Warnke, *op. cit.* pp. 203–206.

Therefore, I do not think that “application” is necessarily the right word to use in the case of philosophy. It is not simply an instrument for possessing truth and dominating being, which one could improve and develop. If we still want to use the term “application”, then we should use it in a sense in which the application of philosophy is an *opportunity* for the development of *competence*. Philosophy is not a technique for mastering things but a way in which we can participate in the truth of things and in the occurrence of truth. Through philosophy, our human nature can get closer to its authentic mode of being.

#### 10.

Nowadays, *globalization* has already begun to reproduce the alienating mechanisms of system structures based on the principles of rationality, which are aimed at gathering and weaving into a single web the dispersed elements of rationality.

Against this dominance of the principle of generality as it is commonly accepted within the culture of rationality, hermeneutics reflects and furthers the principle of the proprietary, the particular, and the specific. Thus, in an era of the dispersion of rationality, hermeneutics attempts to reconstruct meaning, meanwhile leading a novel kind of dialogue with the tradition of modernity. Within this hermeneutical perspective, the limits of the increasingly stronger globalization process also become apparent. In any web – be it even worldwide –, humans can only exist continuously struggling. As opposed to this, hermeneutics sees the meaning of practicing philosophy in the intensive construction of our own world as a world of meaning, starting from the specific and the particular. It is in this way that it brings philosophy again closer to life and to us, humans.