

II

STUDIES AND ARTICLES

STUDIJE I ČLANCI

To cite text:

Balibar, Etienne. 2024. "What is Engagement?" *Philosophy and Society* 35 (2): 405–416.

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WHAT IS ENGAGEMENT?¹

ABSTRACT

This text explores the nuances of choice and consequence through the philosophical lenses of Pascal and Sartre. It contrasts Pascal's transcendental faith-based approach with Sartre's terrestrial decision-making, emphasizing the inherent paradox of engagement beginning before choice. It argues that authentic choice demands embracing the unknown and its extreme consequences, rejecting the spectator's role for active participation. The text also examines the intellectual's duality, caught between bourgeois origins and subaltern solidarity, and the antinomy of integrating science and revolution. It concludes with reflections on the intellectual's role in revolutionary movements, highlighting the necessity of continuous critical engagement and the interplay of truth and error.

KEYWORDS

engagement,
transcendence,
subaltern solidarity,
science, revolution,
Marxism,
deconstruction

Introduction

Dear Colleagues and Students, dear audience of the Demos 21 inaugural Event, I feel very proud of receiving the Miladin Životić Award in the Conference Hall of the American University in Paris, and I am especially happy to be offered this occasion to discuss the philosophical issue that, *par excellence*, articulates our lives and our reflections: "engagement". For any intellectual (but where are the boundaries of "intellectuality" as they cannot be circumscribed by some academic status?), to speak about *engagement* inevitably means to speak about oneself, and about one's "Self", or history, actions, achievements and failures or errors. Such a discourse makes sense only if it is presented "in the first person" – both *singular* and *plural*, or to put it in Georg W. F. Hegel's famous formulation from the *Phenomenology of Spirit* – "I that is We, and

1 This article came about from a public lecture delivered at the American University in Paris as part of the Demos 21 Inaugural Event and the reception of the Miladin Životić Annual Award for Philosophy and Social Theory from the Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory at the University of Belgrade and the Center for Advanced Studies South-east Europe at the University of Rijeka which was held on December 11, 2020.



We that is I” – which immediately shows that although personal it cannot be reduced to a *narrative* of one’s life and thoughts. A difficult unity of concept and experience is required.

As you can see, I am using the French word *engagement* and I will continue to do so. I hope that this is not understood as chauvinism or parochialism. In his brilliant essay, “What Is an Act of Engagement? Between the Social, Collegial and Institutional Protocols”, Petar Bojanić has examined semantic and pragmatic issues which are closely related to my subject, but not completely identical. After discussing the *collective* dimensions of individual actions done in the service of the public, or the community, he concludes that:

An institutional act is also an engaged act that calls for the engagement of all, for the sake of transforming occasional, one-off acts of help into consistent institutional actions, that is institutional agency. (Bojanić 2020)

And, in the course of the lecture, he emphasizes the aspect of *anticipation* of such acts, which open future possibilities, showing that this quality of anticipation is best expressed through the combined use of two English categories: *engagement* and *commitment*, or the temporal and the subjective. This is important for me, but does not form my main topic, which is rather concerned with the “partisan” activity of intellectuals who, *qua* intellectuals, decide to support a *political* “cause” and join a *social* “movement”, if only as “fellow travelers” (Jean-Paul Sartre’s well-known definition of this relationship to the Communist Party in the 1950s, marking at the same time proximity and difference: he was reproached for both). Jean-Paul Sartre is indeed the one who coined the universal use of the word *engagement* in his famous essays “Présentation des Temps-Modernes” ([1945] 1948) and “Qu’est-ce que la Littérature?” (1948). Witness the fact that, in his *replica* to Sartre from 1965 (quoted by Bojanić), Theodor Adorno (1978) retains the French word in German. I am building on this precedent.

Choosing the Extreme

I will ask your permission to bring in at the outset some semantic and stylistic considerations about the words used by Sartre in his text (I rely mainly on the *Présentation*) in the original language, and the parallelism they exhibit with a famous development in Blaise Pascal’s *Pensées* called “le pari” (*the wager*). Sartre’s presentation of *engagement* is linked both explicitly and implicitly to Pascal’s *pari*, as a reading of the two passages immediately demonstrates. First Pascal:

Oui, mais il faut parier. Cela n’est pas volontaire, vous êtes embarqué. Lequel prendrez-vous donc ? Voyons. Puisqu’il faut choisir, voyons ce qui vous intéresse le moins... (Pascal [1669])²

² “Yes; but you must wager. It is not optional. You are embarked. Which will you choose then? Let us see. Since you must choose, let us see which interests you least.” (translation Trotter, taken from Wikipedia)

And Sartre:

Totalement conditionné par sa classe ... c'est lui qui décide du sens de sa condition ... Non point libre de ne pas choisir, il est engagé, il faut parier. L'abstention est un choix ... totalement engagé et totalement libre. (Sartre [1945] 1948)³

Within the repetition of the motif, nevertheless, there is a difference. Which is it? It lies not in the paradoxical articulation of *embarqué* and *choisir*, or the “situation” and the “decision”, but in the articulation of the choice and its *consequences*, which depends on two types of “transcendence” or excess: either *inside* (Sartre) or *outside* (Pascal) this world, hence this within or beyond our life. The Pascalian subject expects and imagines the consequences of his choices (or non-choices) in the modality of *hope*, hence *faith*. The Sartrean subject *faces* or *confronts* the terrestrial consequences of his “decision”, both for himself and for others. In both cases, however, a paradoxical temporality is involved, since the condition of being “*embarqué*” (onboard) in the situation means that the engagement begins *before the choice*. What Pascal calls a wager (*pari*) is a choice *of the consequences* which retroactively determines the situation. What is not possible is *not to choose*, but there is an existential and in fact metaphysical difference between choosing “by abstention” and *choosing to choose*, choosing as acting. Again, however, choosing to choose is wanting the (largely) *unknown*: the consequences are not already there, they are *to come*.⁴ This has several implications. First, it means that the authentic choice is the choice *of the extreme*, or the “extremist” choice, a choice that doesn’t withdraw from itself, imagining itself to be able to control the consequences, implicitly limiting them to what is calculable or governable. Involved in the extremist choice is the possibility to find oneself at some point in a *different place* than one believed to be (e.g. switching the roles of oppressed and oppressor, as the Christians became inquisitors, or the Communists became dictators). Second, it means that choosing as action eliminates the position of a spectator or an observer (not to mention the famous “impartial observer”), even in the modalities which involve being critical or enthusiastic (as in Foucault or Kant): who chooses is involved or implicated *in the first person* (but there are many modalities). And above all to “choose” means a commitment to *continue choosing the same*, which again has many modalities: one could think of fidelity or faithfulness (to which I will return in the end), conversion, or enrolment. I would grant a privilege to the idea of *obstinacy*.⁵ I believe that every reflection on *engagement* that is

3 “Totally conditioned by his class ... it is he who decides the meaning of his condition ... Not free not to choose, he is committed, you have to bet. Abstention is a choice ... totally committed and totally free.”

4 On purpose I use a Derridean expression: there is of course an echo of both Pascal and Sartre when Derrida asserts that “toute décision est la décision de l’autre”, with the typical equivocality of the genitive: the decision made by the other, the decision of choosing or seeking the other. See: Derrida (2007).

5 This is the name given (in German: Eigensinn) by Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge (2014) to their remarkable book *History and Obstinacy*.

not blinding itself about its radical stakes must keep these “extremist” propositions in mind. But it is also subjected to the inevitable antinomies affecting the commitment-dedication (Max Weber’s *Beruf*) to intellectual operations in their relationship to politics.

A first antinomy arises from the fact that the intellectual who is also historically a “bourgeois” through origin or training (“bourgeois intellectual” is a tautology...) must “situate” himself uneasily and in fact contradictorily both *outside* and *inside* the condition of the “subalterns” whose defence and party he/she is taking – or “move” practically and emotionally from “outsider” to “insider”, in the form of solidarity and even identification. An identification which can never be complete, or only in the modality of the imaginary. Hence the perversions of engagements with revolutionary movements: victimization and terrorism, idealization or absolutization, *surenchère* (overbid) in radicality and masochistic humiliation (thirst for obedience to the “line” or the “leadership”). Are they inevitable? We know Marx’s (and Engels’) interpretation, as it is formulated in the *Communist Manifesto*: the philosophers who “rally” the working-class movement in order to become its intellectual spokespersons, seeking the “realization of philosophy”, are “traitors” to their bourgeois class (which also raises the symmetric question: are not the intellectualized activists in the labor movement at least potential “traitors” to the working class?). *Treason* in a sense is a paradigmatic figure of the *engagé* intellectual who is caught in the double bind of antithetic class positions.⁶

Symmetric Negations

A second antinomy concerns the combination of “science” (or theory) and “revolution”, two “instances” or “vocations” which seem to be at the same time impossible to fuse and impossible to separate (neither *one* nor *two*), although this double bind has many modalities, and remains ambivalent from the point of view of its internal hierarchy.⁷ Whereas Gramsci’s notion of the “organic intellectual” seems to be an attempt at positively overcoming the dilemma, it is interesting to keep in mind here Karl Marx’s personal “solution”, best described in *negative* terms in correlation: never give up on the intellectual exigencies of “science”, never give up on the practical exigencies of “revolution”. But it is also possible to believe that this double exigency (ironically expressed in the declaration: “I am not a Marxist.”) accounts for the *aporias* of Marx’s *political discourse*, which permanently oscillated between statist and anarchist tendencies, nourished by his twin critiques of his two great opponents within the socialist

6 One of Sartre’s close disciples, also himself an important philosopher and activist, André Gorz published in 1958 an autobiographical essay with the title *Le Traître*.

7 Althusser’s reversal of his position from the primacy of “theoretical practice” in order to provide the revolutionary party with its orientation (before 1968) to the primacy of class struggle and the idea of “class struggle in theory” (after 1968) is a perfect example of this antinomy. Each position essentially relies on the refutation of its opposite.

movement of his time: Mikhail Bakunin and Ferdinand Lassalle.⁸ It is also interesting to compare Louis Althusser's final description of the aporia (as formulated in particular in such "late" essays such as *Freud and Marx*) (Althusser 1976): certain theories are *conflictual* (or, as the German translator cleverly proposed, "schismatic") *sciences* (Althusser 1999). Such "sciences" not only would lack an established truth, they would move from the idea of "learning through error" (which is a standard dialectical model) to the idea of producing only (transitory, antithetic) "errors", or addressing truth only in the negative form of a permanent rectification of antithetic "errors", so that error is the actual content of truth *sub specie negationis*. Again, this seems to come very close to a Derridean notion of "deconstruction", if we admit that the crucial object of deconstruction is the metaphysics that "secures" or "confirms" the positive *truth value* of a theory, or to put it in Nietzschean terms, it questions the "will to truth" of science. However, the real difficulty lies in the exigency *not to give up on theory* (or knowledge, science) because of its dedication to truth, falling into some sort of skepticism or relativism. This antinomic position must be experienced in the present (not postponed indefinitely in the Kantian manner of a "regulatory ideal"), so that truth and error are *actually united* in a single modality of knowledge: a "schismatic" science is one in which hypothesis and experience, verification and falsification are contemporaneous moments. What knowledge "verifies" it also immediately "falsifies" in some respect, and the intellectual could be defined as a scholar and activist who *anticipates this falsification*, or seeks to identify the inevitable gap between the "rational" and the "real", the "impossible" within the "possible". Which also leads to the "Machiavellian" lesson that Althusser (and others) tried to implement within the communist movement: develop theory in order not to "justify" the political line, but continuously "betray" one's camp, or shoot against one's own position to test its validity.

At this point I am inclined to borrow another Machiavellian trope, famously expressed in the "Dedicatory Letter" of *The Prince* (1613): *esser principe, esser popolare*. The intellectual or theorist is one who "places himself" on the antithetic positions of the ruler and the ruled in order to uncover each side's secret weakness.⁹ We could read it in the following manner, as a complex pattern of "betrayal": for any movement or party in which an intellectual is *engagé*, or to which he or she is committed, there is something that the enemy or adversary (the other party) *knows about it* that the party does not know itself, or there is something necessary to its "self-knowledge", its actual balance of truth and error, that can be found only through the *detour* via the enemy's "place" or "ideology". And if we think about it more accurately, is this not what Marx did with his "critique of political economy" and his borrowing of concepts (such as "value", "equivalence") which subsumed the analysis of labor under the viewpoint of capital, in order to "reverse" their hierarchy? But this is also

8 I have described this antinomy in my essay from 1984 "Le proletariat insaisissable" which was later incorporated into the volume *La crainte des masses: Politique et philosophie avant et après Marx* published in 1997. See: Balibar (1997: 227 and elsewhere).

9 See: Balibar (2015).

what, with very few exceptions, was lost in the history of Marxism, with its concepts of “class consciousness” and “proletarian science”. It requires a specific form of *engagement* where the “outside” and the “inside” continuously exchange their functions.

Passion of the Concept

Now, I want to try and move beyond these traditional references towards a more personal discussion of theoretical *engagement* which I subsume under the formula: “the passion of the concept” (Balibar 2020). There are many risks here: falling into some sort of autobiography which covers self-complacency. The “I” speaking in this discourse refers to someone (myself) whose *engagement* (whether inside or outside the academia) was always essentially “theoretical” (even if combined with political and ethical commitments related to present social conflicts, wars and human dramas): my point is precisely that there is an intellectual *engagement* in the field of theory, whose relations to the political realm are strong, ambivalent and contradictory, but never reducible to a *subjection* of “theory” to “practice”. We may hear in this manner the Spinozian motto: *sed intelligere* (“but what is requested is understanding”).¹⁰ Contrary to what a traditional “rationalist” reading would suggest, this call for understanding does not *substitute action*, but changes its modality, and it does not eliminate “passion”. On the contrary, it involves a set of relations and intentions which can be said “passionate” in various respects. There is a passionate relation to the discovery of truth (of things, of discourses) but also to its critique or “refutation” (the passion of the negative). There is a passionate relation to the achievement of the “truth-effect” *par excellence* which is the intelligibility of the world (hence the situation, the conditions) in which an individual and, above all, a collective subject is situated in the moment of his or her constitution. There is a passionate relation to the effort and the struggle to remove obstacles preventing intelligibility (be they external, e.g., social and institutional, relations of power, or internal, e.g. ideological and unconscious, “relations of desire” as it were). As Freud once said, quoting Vergil: the unconscious inferno must be moved (*Acheronta movebo*).¹¹ And there is a passionate relation to the *communication* of knowledge (or the truth), which is intrinsic to its “production” or “discovery”, therefore an expectation of the Other’s replica and rebuttal.

We find here again the trope of retroactive effect: if there is no truth before its communication, then there is also no truth before its “enunciation”, the

10 Spinoza writes: “Sedula curavi, humanas actiones non ridere, non lugere, neque detestare, sed intelligere.” (I have labored carefully, not to mock, lament, or execrate, but to understand human actions.) (Spinoza [1677] 1883: chapter 1, section 4).

11 “Flectere si nequeo superos acheronta movebo.” (The goddess Juno in Vergil’s *Aeneid*, Book VII; 312). “If I cannot prevail upon the gods (to do my will), then I shall move Acheron (one of the five rivers of the underworld).” Often translated figuratively as “If I can’t move heaven; I’ll raise hell!” This verse is quoted as an epigraph in Freud’s *Interpretation of Dreams* published in 1990.

speech-act that makes it communicable. But there are at least two modalities of enunciation, which contemporary philosophers have described in antithetic manners: enunciation requires *writing*, therefore (as Derrida has particularly insisted) knowledge or science is always “literary”, it is always *stylistically* determined; and enunciation requires *speaking* (which ultimately, as Foucault has insisted in his elaboration of the ancient Greek notion of *parrhesia*, means speaking *to some power*, “provoking” its representatives).¹² Therefore we can retrieve the idea already present in Sartre and Adorno: *engagement* does not so much neutralize (or instrumentalize) “literature” (and art, more generally); rather, it *intensifies* their internal conflicts and divisions. This makes sense provided, of course, we do not identify “art” only with certain *works*, but with the *acts* or *actions* of speaking and writing.¹³

A traditional manner of describing the antinomy located at the heart of intellectual activity resides in the opposition between universality and “situated knowledge” (the expression popularized in a famous essay by Donna Haraway (1988), with remarkable “Sartrean” resonances, perhaps through the intermediary of Simone de Beauvoir). Perhaps the best way of emphasizing the antinomy, i.e. the mutual dependency of antithetic propositions and intentions, resides in understanding “universality” not primarily in terms of a knowledge or truth that can be recognized and *accepted by everyone*, at the cost of neutralizing locations and differences, but in terms of what Spinoza had provocatively called “the point of view of eternity”. Eternity is not a temporal modality, it is the discursive form that “survives” the conditions of its own enunciation, or becomes independent of its “production”. On the other side, we should understand “situation” not in a *passive* manner, as a mere dependency of the activity of knowing on given conditions that *restrict* or *limit* its capacity of reaching the real, but rather in an *active* manner, whereby the knowing subject is allowed to *reflect upon its own situation*, as a condition of possibility of reaching a critical and self-critical awareness of the conditions themselves (what some feminist epistemologists have called “strong objectivity”).¹⁴ However, such a radical formulation of the antinomy also suggests a shifting of the problem towards a more *subjective* definition of the antinomy, or towards considering a second antinomy, which forms the counterpart of the first on the side of *subject position*. This is where the “passionate” character of knowledge collides with the paradoxes of *engagement* as I tried to describe them earlier with the help of references to Sartre and Pascal.

Let me be more specific. On the side of *engagement* there is always a character of “undecidability” which ultimately concerns not only the consequences (always unpredictable) of any “practical choice” in the real world, but also, more dangerously, the *ethical value* of the principles themselves (for which the Nietzschean motto “beyond good and evil” could serve as a symbolic marker).

12 See: Balibar (2018).

13 I join Petar Bojanić (2020) on this point.

14 See: Harding (2005).

And, on the side of “partisanship” (the commitment to actual causes which are not defined by the subject, but framed by the circumstances and the political relations of forces) there is always a radical dissymmetry between the antagonistic “parties” from the point of view of their capacity of self-criticism (i.e. the capacity to know oneself, and especially one’s own errors or crimes). This can be illustrated by the discussion launched by Slavoj Žižek (2009) when he wrote that Martin Heidegger when choosing to join the Nazi party in 1933 and actively support Nazi politics had “taken the right step, albeit in the wrong direction”. He would link this judgment (which has provoked many reactions of outrage) to the idea of the supreme value of banning eclecticism and “choosing the extreme” (instead of the liberal balanced “middle ground”), not only in terms of political action, but also in terms of intellectual radicalism. However, even admitting this description of engagement, it seems to me that the discussion is ill-oriented when focusing on questions of “right” and “wrong” (or *only* on such questions, which lead to sentences of condemnations, apologies, disowning), leaving aside the more difficult question of the responsibility for the consequences arising from one’s convictions (i.e. the *combination* of the two “ethics” famously separated by Max Weber). My conjecture (which *per se* is also a “wager”) would be that “conservative” theories don’t really need self-criticism and critical capacities (they only need *adapting* to circumstances and new realities), whereas “revolutionary” theories intrinsically need this capacity of self-criticism because – to put it in the famous Marxian words – they are not about “interpreting” but about “changing the world”, more precisely *deviating the (ongoing) changes of the world*. Therefore, they are permanently caught between attitudes of “resistance” or refusal and attitudes of “acceleration” and overcoming of existing conditions. Which means that there are no “self-critical nazis” (although there are plenty of more or less sincerely *repentant* nazis), whereas there are – at least some – “self-critical communists” (who retrospectively appear as the genuine communists – among which we may count Marx himself).

My own proposal regarding the “passion” inherent in the concept itself would be to view the *conceptual practice* as an intrinsically conflictual process, for which (imitating a famous formula by the logician and epistemologist W. van Orman Quine) I have coined the expression “polemic ascent” (Balibar 2020). I take this in a double sense:

- The “activity” of the concept, or its *engagement* born by the “intellectual” who assumes the corresponding subject-position, involves rising to the point where the “extremes” (in the field of discourses, therefore ideologies) are *closest*, and prove dissymmetric. If you do not experience the closeness, you will not reveal the dissymmetry. This is where the crucial “points of heresy” or the metaphysical and ethical choices cannot be avoided, because they express the intrinsic dilemmas of the situation (such as, for instance, the choice between fascism and communism to overcome the crisis of bourgeois liberalism).

- But the same activity involves rising to the level of *abstraction* (or speculation) where the involvement of the “subject” within the “object” itself can no longer be neutralized, therefore there is no “objectivity” through which the passionate action of the subject is eliminated (this is in some sense the reverse side of the idea of the “strong objectivity” that I mentioned above). György Lukacs ([1923] 2023) would have come very close to such an idea in many passages of his early essay *History and Class Consciousness*, written in the middle of the revolutionary turmoil that launched the “European Civil War”, if – following a Hegelian tradition – he had not dismissed “abstraction” in the name of the “concrete” universal. But this was because, in the end, he wanted to incorporate *engagement* into a preestablished logic of world-history (or reduce *engagement* to the subjective side of a dialectical necessity). He *practiced* the wager *and* denied it.

Combining the two sides of the conceptual *engagement* (heresy and abstraction), I submit that there is an intrinsic *politicality of the concept*, which continuously intersects with the requests of politics, arising from conflicts among social forces evolving in history, but not directly *reducible* to political commitments and “obstinacies”. This is also very much what I had in mind when emphasizing that Marx himself never “sacrificed the intellect” to his absolute commitment to the revolutionary cause (no more than he sacrificed his communism to the incompleteness of the understanding of the “historical tendencies” of capitalism). In other terms the political can be conceived as the problematic unity of “politics” (in the institutional and extra-institutional sense) *and* this “non-politics” that is carried on as “polemic ascent” in the conceptual field.

Becoming Other

As a form of provisional conclusion, I will now try and name the ethical postulate that was implicit in the above considerations, with all their hypothetic character: as opposed to a moral idea that proposes to the subject the aim of “becoming herself” (or *identifying* with her own ideal *ego*), but also a morality that *commands* obedience (“respect”) to the law or transgression of the law (the two symmetric attitudes that derive from the imposition of a preexisting symbolic order on the subject), I define it as the ethics of *becoming (an)other*. *Engagement* as a commitment to an “extreme” cause (which can be also a conceptual cause, hence the cause of “abstraction”) makes no sense if it is not a way one enters in order to *being transformed*. It seeks to construct a reciprocity between “transforming the world” (of social relations as well as ideas) and “transforming oneself”.¹⁵ Therefore the *desire* which animates *engagement* is not

15 This is not incompatible with the Foucauldian correlation between “governing oneself” and “governing the others”, provided we do not keep the understanding of “governance” as a stabilization of one’s character and place in the world, which is dominant

so much opposed to *dégagement* (detachment or disengagement, distantiating from the world, “acosmism” in Hannah Arendt’s words) as it is opposed to *re-remaining* the same (or the self-same) identical person, well protected within the *boundaries of the self* (that John Locke famously defined as being a “proprietor of his own person”).

Clearly this was latent in Sartre and, before him, in the Pascalian allegory of embarking (“*nous sommes embarqués*”, meaning “we are onboard” a ship travelling towards the unknown, the absolute “other side”). Perhaps even Baruch Spinoza can be understood that way, despite his “paradoxical conservatism”,¹⁶ if we push to the extreme Gilles Deleuze’s indication (which has Nietzschean origins) privileging the assertion from *Ethics* (III 2 S) “the power of a body is unknown”, which opens the possibility of carrying the intelligence beyond every preestablished limit. And certainly – my favorite reference – it is dominant in Weber’s discussion of the “vocation of the scientist” that matches the “vocation of the political”, since what he describes as *axiological neutrality* goes along with a passionate critique of the “sacrifice of the intellect” in the “war of gods”, which I take to mean that one must be ready to “sacrifice” one’s identity for the sake of the understanding.

Finally, I associate the ideal of becoming other with a conversion from the primacy of “causes” (in both the epistemic and the ethical-political sense) to the primacy of *consequences*. Following the theological model of Saint Paul’s definition of “faith” (*pistis*), Alain Badiou has famously made *fidelity* the cardinal principle of *engagement*, emphasizing the consequences of being committed to a “truth” that has been experienced and revealed though the event that interrupts (or exceeds) a given situation or destroys one’s adaptation to the existing conditions of life (Badiou 2005: 233).¹⁷ The Sartrean legacy is there as well. However, in my own representation the primacy of consequences leads into the opposite direction: “fidelity” or “faith” involves that a reference (or “truth”) once revealed will remain essentially *the same*, in order for oneself to be forever the same intractable subject. *Engagement*, as I understand it, involves just the opposite attitude and readiness: becoming other as much as possible, through allowing oneself to experience the conflicts or “heresies” and the reversible “treasons” arising from a double “passion”, the passion for a revolutionary cause, and the passion for understanding what happens to that cause and to its supporters in history, i.e. *what follows* from its realization. “It’s right to rebel”. *Sed intelligere*.

in the Stoic tradition (*oikieïōsis*), but try to understand it in terms of an adventure with unpredictable consequences.

¹⁶ “Paradoxical Conservatism” is the formula used by François Zourabichvili (2023) in his brilliant interpretation of Spinoza’s pedagogy and politics.

¹⁷ The idea is developed in several other essays, including Badiou (2003).

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Etjen Balibar

Šta je angažman?

Apstrakt

Ovaj tekst istražuje odnose između izbora i posledica kroz filozofske okvire Paskala i Sartra. Stavlja u uporednu perspektivu Paskalov transcendentalni pristup zasnovan na veri sa Sartrovim svetovnim interpretativnim okvirom, naglašavajući inherentni paradoks angažovanja koje počinje pre izbora. Tvrdi se da autentičan izbor zahteva prihvatanje nepoznatog i njegovih ekstremnih posledica, odbacujući ulogu posmatrača sa aktivnim učešćem. Tekst takođe ispituje dualnost intelektualca, uhvaćenog između buržoaskog porekla i solidarnosti sa potlačenima, i antinomiju integrisanja nauke i revolucije. Zaključuje se promišljanjem uloge intelektualca u revolucionarnim pokretima, ističući neophodnost kontinuiranog kritičkog angažovanja i međusobne igre istine i greške.

Ključne reči: angažman, transcendentnost, solidarnost sa potlačenima, nauka, revolucija, Marksizam, dekonstrukcija.