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UTOPIAN THOUGHT BETWEEN WORDS AND ACTION:  
SEMINAR WITH RAYMOND GEUSS

UTOPIJSKA MISAO IZMEĐU REČI I AKCIJE:  
SEMINAR SA REJMONDOM GOJSOM





## UTOPIAN THOUGHT BETWEEN WORDS AND ACTION: Seminar with Raymond Geuss

Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory, Belgrade, February, 2016.

Raymond Geuss

### Introduction

As should be clear, I'm trying to argue for the importance of utopian thinking in human life. And I specifically use the term utopian thinking, rather than simply utopia, because I take the term utopian thinking to cover a larger area than simply utopia. In fact, you might say that even the notion of utopian thinking is too narrow, you should think in terms of something like utopian activities. I spoke yesterday about the cooperatives in Limoges, a form of utopian organization. Europe has produced many utopias, that is many descriptions of ideal societies, and some of these are of an extremely high literary quality. But this has had the disadvantage of tending to cause us to focus our attention perhaps too exclusively on only one aspect of utopian thinking, namely utopia as a literary image of static perfection. And this, in turn, can lead to a certain stunting of our understanding of the possibilities of social thought and social action. If one looks at any of the traditional utopias, they seem to be descriptions of a perfect, and in particular, a perfectly stable and unchanging society, which is radically different from anything we know.

However, it seems also that utopias refer to an impossible world, so there might seem to be a quick and easy way to show the pointlessness of utopian thinking, simply by focusing on the impossibility of realization of any of these proposed topics. If the world of utopia is really impossible, then one might argue: what is the point of describing it, apart from simply satisfying some vain, unrealistic wish, such as the wish that we could live forever. Giving way to such wishes, however, is merely childish, and, as we mature, we should grow out of them. Actually, I think, there are three or perhaps four different kinds of impossibility, and it's important to think about the way in which the concept of the impossible is not just socially and contextually specified, but in which impossible refers to different dimensions. First of all, there is a utopian state that is, as it were, inherently or internally impossible, for something like causal reasons. That is, for example, the image of a society in which people live and consume, but engage in no productive activity at all. That's an impossible state. In the Western European peasant imagination, this is illustrated by

such fantasies as *The Land of Cockaigne*, which is depicted in this famous painting by Peter Bruegel the Elder, which is in the Alte Pinakothek in Munich.

Now, in this 16<sup>th</sup> century painting, you can see people lying around, feasting on food that they've not grown, and they're not engaged in preparing. If you look at the image, you can see this man is lying on his back, and the wine is dripping off the table into his mouth. Here we have an egg, that has legs of its own, is already broken open, and there's some kind of instrument inside the egg so that you can eat it. Up here you can see a pig, who's been roasted and is walking around with a knife ready for tranches to be cut off him. Actually, this is an image of a peasant idea of utopia, but of course if you look at the image you'll see that there's another aspect of utopianism in it. One aspect is that it's an image of consumption without production. The other aspect of utopia is that you will have noticed that, although this man seems to be a peasant, because he has a thrashing apparatus, that man is some kind of military figure, because he has a lance, and this man has a kind of ermine coat. So, as you know if you've read Dubois, the Middle Ages had this conception of the three orders of society, society was divided into three orders. Now, in general, that was thought to be the clergy, the people who prayed for us, the farmers, the people who worked for us, and the knights, the people who fought for us. And this I think is a slight variation on this, there's the military function, the peasant consumption function, and the administrative function, and they are all lying around companionably around the same table.

So there are two aspects of utopia here, one is consuming without producing, but the second is that the lamb has lain down with the lion, that is, the different social orders are in the same situation and are equal to each other, they are lying around in equal comfort. So it's a kind of visual static image of a society which instantiates utopianism in a certain way. But, in particular, one aspect of it might not be impossible, it might be possible for there to be social harmony, but another aspect of it definitely is impossible, with the technological means available, namely the idea that eggs could be grown that had legs, with which the eggs walked towards the mouths of those people who need them. When the peasants merely open their mouth, the fowl fly into them. Of course, one has to discuss this relative to the technological level of those involved, but certainly in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, it's not possible for a whole society to be organized around consumption without production. So that's a first kind of impossibility, some kind of internal impossibility. A slight variant of this, which I'd like to count as a second kind of impossibility, is one which is not strictly causal, but is based on a value incompatibility.

As Isaiah Berlin among others has argued, it's not at all obvious that all human goods are evaluatively compatible with each other. I gave that example yesterday of a blacksmith who wanted to be a miniature painter. A society which is maximally tolerant will not necessarily also be maximally efficient, or perhaps maximally well-ordered. Toleration of human deviance is a human good, but some minimal kind of social order and security are also human goods. This line of objection might be connected with a rejection of the utopian idea of harmony. It's not difficult to see that human societies will never exist without conflicts, and that this is partly a manner of the causal realities of our world, but also partly a question resulting from the fact that various human goods and virtues do not necessarily easily

coexist, so that struggle is endemic. So the very idea of a static human society might be incoherent. We've got verbal utopias, we've got visual utopias, and there can also perhaps be other forms of utopianism which are even less connected to writing or imagination. Both of these two senses of impossibility make no reference to the specifically historical or temporal dimension. They take the utopian society in question, as it were, in a single point in time. Now, in a third sense of impossibility, utopia might describe a situation that is impossible, not for causal reasons, and not because it describes a maximal instantiation of values that are incompatible, but rather it's impossible because it's internally unstable. The idea of a utopia is not that of a state of society at a single point of time that's maximally good, but of a continuing of society that's good. So the society might be maximally good at a point in time, but that might not be a form of society that is stable and could continue. That's a third sense of impossibility. We could have a feast and pull all our food together and consume without producing, that might be a state that is very nice, but it wouldn't be a stable state.

Robert Nozick, one of my *bête noire*, gives an example that's supposed to count against certain forms of utopian egalitarianism. He argues that you may well redistribute all the goods in a society at a certain time, and so you can have a society with complete equality at that time, but this state of affairs will never last, unless artificially and continually re-established. Left to their own devices – and this is an anthropological assumption he makes – people will exchange goods and they will use their resources in differential ways so that, in a short time, relations of inequality will re-emerge. The utopian ideal of equality, then, was not one of continually redistributing goods, or draconianly prohibiting any kind of voluntary exchange, but the idea of a good state of society that was stable.

A fourth sense of impossibility is the obvious one, namely the absence of access to the utopian state from where we are. Here it's not that the state is impossible, or that it's beyond us, but that it's actually so far beyond our reach as not to be a realistic option. Thus, to take the famous example – suppose a 19<sup>th</sup> century society has a choice between developing its systems of roads for transport, developing a system of canals, or developing a railroad network. So, starting from point zero, any of these three choices is possible, and most sensible societies will opt for some combination. But suppose this particular society decides to put all its resources into an extensive canal system. Then, if we live in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we can imagine a world in which all long distance travel is by rail, that's possible, internally consistent, it might actually be stable. There's nothing inherently impossible about this, but at the same time it's effectively out of our reach. If we had invested our resources in the 19<sup>th</sup> century into building an appropriate infrastructure, some rail system, then we would have something to continue to build with now. But starting from where we are with canals but no railways, we can't, with the resources we have, simply throw away the whole canal system, and build a full rail system, *ex novo*. There's nothing inherently impossible about it, and it's not even unstable, it's just inaccessible.

So, I'll conclude then by reiterating my two basic points. First, impossible is itself a theoretical, not an observational or an empirical term. We should not assume that we antecedently know, in any situation, what is and what is not possible. Nor

should we assume that what is or what is not possible are fixed and invariant once and for all. Judgements about the possible and impossible are highly contextual and require careful scrutiny. This in itself is a justification of certain forms of utopian speculation and action as part of a larger process of evaluating how we want to live our lives. Second, I'd like to focus not on utopias as static pictures of perfection, or as full-fledged theories such as Newton's laws of motion, much less blueprints – rather, we should see utopia as a certain possible field of inquiry, or a domain of investigation, for utopia is a human task. As the early 20<sup>th</sup> century anarchist Gustav Landauer put it, this specific object domain is the realm of those vital human desires, the fulfilment of which is inherently impossible in our society, or purportedly impossible. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century this domain included the desire to have enough to eat without toil. Bruegel's picture was an exploration through art of this complex, and as such, it represents a kind of utopian thinking. It's a graphic rather than literary form of utopian thinking, but it's a kind of utopian thinking nonetheless.

This domain of investigation involves a number of things: bringing out clearly what the human desires in question are, for example. We are not always absolutely transparent to ourselves in our desires. So it's a tricky task to determine what we really want. It's not obvious, it has to be determined, that is part of the task of utopianism, to figure out what we want. You can't just read it out of revealed preferences, as economists think you can. We might not get a final or definitive answer to this, both because some desires might be too deeply embedded, outside the area to which we can get cognitive access, and because our desires sometimes change. Utopian thinking will have to extract and construct these desires, it won't in general be able to simply read them off from external behaviour. A further part of the investigation is trying to see whether the satisfaction of a given set of desires really is impossible, or it's merely assumed or asserted to be impossible, and if so, what. In addition we'll have to formulate some hypotheses about the conditions under which that, which was thought to be impossible, might after all prove to be attainable.

Utopian thinking refers to this whole process, not just to a particular isolated element in this process. It need not make any assumptions about the completeness, perfection or unchangeability of the picture it draws. This is an investigation of unsatisfied vital desires, without antecedent assumptions that these desires will necessarily have any rank ordering. We have a certain limited ability to become more fully aware of aspects of our situation of which we are unaware, and we also have the ability to call into question imaginatively investigated claims about what is possible and what is not. If we fail to cultivate either of these two faculties, we will have deprived ourselves of potentially important tools for discovering how to lead a better life.

### Igor Cvejić

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I have a brief question from the perspective of the cognitive-conative divide, which is common in the contemporary Anglo-American theory of action. You sometimes use a similar terminology, but you clearly and explicitly have a different approach

to this question and you do not accept this strict divide. I'm also not a fan of this divide, but my goal is to try to provoke some problems and questions that could possibly lead us to some discussion. I have three questions. The first question is very general, it refers to the conative moments. If utopian thinking is a kind of motivational impulse, it is based on certain existing needs, as a formation of thinking about the realization of these needs, especially this moment when you refer to Gustav Landauer. If these needs are contextual, constructed within society, it would lead us to the conclusion that utopian thinking presupposes that my motivational impulse is not strictly utopian, a constructed social conative moment, and that I think about people with socially constructed motivations, needs and issues which are not utopian. Certainly, we are used to having some idea of utopia with utopian kinds of desires, needs, etc. So, either this utopian social structure is methodologically prior or even determines my utopian thinking, or we have to give some utopian meta-position about preferred motivations, which would lead us to some different concept of utopia. In a practical way you gave a solution yesterday, I'd call it a Marxist kind of solution, that our acting really changes our needs and desires in the future, but I don't think it could answer the question of thinking – is my current utopian thinking based on existing needs that are not utopian in themselves?

The second question is relatively connected, it is the question of the problem of the relation of the cognitive input to the conative states – of course, presupposing that we speak about some kind of reflexive utopian thinking, which could be, for example, changed in a deliberate way. If we presuppose that I could recognize better my needs and the needs that exist in society, the question is would it really change my motivation, would it be preferable, or I would simply prefer to watch TV shows, drink beer, get rich and screw all other people. That's the old question of rational motivation, I think it is radicalising your theory (when you criticize moralization) a little bit, the idea that good is in itself motivating.

The third question is explicitly about how utopian thinking leads us to action. The standard belief-desire model of action presupposes that X would do a thing only if X has a belief that F-ing would lead to the realization of the goal Y. If utopian thinking is not simply wishful thinking, then this is not the case, and, according to these theories, an agent would not act upon his utopian motivational impulse. So my question is based on the question what would trigger not just utopian thinking but action, that is, according to this thinking and in a specific situation. At some moment yesterday you made a comparison with pragmatism and religious persons. I think that this is not the case here because if fanatics have some beliefs that some F-ing would lead to the goal Y, we just find these beliefs unjustified. This is another problem because, with utopian thinking we don't really believe that F-ing would lead to Y, we try to problematize it. It looks as if utopian thinking must be in some way by itself practical, in a way that it could overlap counter-utopian cognition, that is, overlap mind-to-world direction of fit (the way they usually call it), even if it is just an internal practice of changing the way we construct our belief, that is how I see your position.

But the point of this comment is that, in order to act, we must have some cognitive input belief about F-ing. I really think that we must have it. Doing without it or, in other words, having some concrete case in this world where we could apply

our utopian thinking. That presupposes some knowledge and some beliefs about this world that allow us to apply our utopian thinking in a concrete case. My question is: do you think that you could explicitly give some model of action (because obviously this usual desire-belief model doesn't work) that could not just justify utopian thinking as a good idea, but justify the possibility of concrete acts motivated by utopian thinking. I have some ideas from some counter-perspectives from theories of emotion, which are against the cognitive-conative divide, but I'd just like to hear your answer.

### Mark Losoncz

*Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory  
University of Belgrade, Serbia*

As is well-known, there is a long history of the critique of utopia and utopian thinking, especially in conservative thought. However, I don't want to focus on the history of political ideas, but on an even more radical critique, on the philosophical critique of possibility as such. Philosophers who are often mentioned as representatives of *Lebensphilosophie* elaborated a devastating critique of possibility – I am referring to Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Bergson. Just as they criticized the concept of nothing (*nihil*) they refused the modality of possibility as a pseudo-concept, as an illusion, as a false problem. They emphasized that the concept of possibility is merely negative, given the fact that it expresses a paradoxical existence that lacks effective existence. Within this framework, the realization of a possibility is nothing else than a neutral translation of something that is already given into the sphere of effective existence. Bergson claimed that the pseudo concept of possibility is the result of an illusory retrospective projection of an existing reality into the past. So, in his text entitled “The Possible and the Real”, he refused the concept of possibility and impossibility altogether. On the other hand, he evoked true creativity based on the heterogeneity and virtuality of duration. Schopenhauer refused possibility and impossibility as concepts of reflection. According to this, he introduced two concepts of reality – *Wirklichkeit*, on the one hand, which contains the modality of possibility and which is merely the result of abstraction, and *Realität* as a truly existing reality. Finally, and here I'm relying upon the interpretation of Arnaud François, Nietzsche refuses possibility as an expression of the false other-worldly hope. And finally, the theory of eternal return aims at the affirmation of an absolutely immanent life beyond possibility and impossibility.

To sum things up, one might reconstruct not only the history of utopias but also the history of anti-utopian thinking. What is more, the philosophical radicalization of the critique of utopian thinking shows that there could also be a deep desire which regards the liberation from the dangerous illusions of possibility which would have a certain therapeutic effect. It seems to me that every theory of utopia should be able to deal with these aspects of desire. Maybe there are also dreams of a world without possibilities. Now I would like to complete the first part of my intervention with a short reference to a contemporary philosopher, Giorgio Agamben, who also elaborated an alternative philosophy of possibility, but from an entirely different point of view. Namely, under the influence of certain scholastic philosophers, Agamben emphasizes that the Aristotelian concept of possibility,

*dynamis*, could also mean ‘to not do’ or ‘not be’. Thus, potentiality is not merely a privation of effective existence that precedes actuality, but it has a power of its own.

To put it differently, one could stop the transition from potentiality to action by making some potentialities inoperative, by suspending them. It is no coincidence that Agamben uses the terms ‘weak messianism’ and ‘the power of the weak’. As we know, he suggests that the political theory of liberation depends on whether we can have a new relation to the category of possibility. If so, one might ask whether utopian thinking necessarily has to focus on affirmation and creation, or we could experiment with a merely negative strategy that would make some power mechanisms inoperative. Would this strategy be utopian or not?

Finally, I would like to make a very short comment concerning the (allegedly) vain, unrealistic wishes, childish fantasies. What I found extremely exciting in the unorthodox Marxism of Ernst Bloch is that he elaborated an alternative theory of ideology that could appreciate such wishes and fantasies. Instead of refuting them as an expression of an irrational relation to the world, he claimed that we should perceive them as signs of unrealized expectations in bourgeois society, signs that point to alternative realities. In other words, he refused the *Aufklärer* position from which one could simply devalue these phenomena. He analysed fashion, orientalism, the books of Karl May, or even the story of Aladdin in this manner, as an expression of the desire for non-places, that tells us something about the dissatisfaction with the world. So one might ask whether a theory of utopian thinking must necessarily make a rigid distinction between realistic and unrealistic utopias or, instead, it should not underestimate even the most modest ways of alternative thinking.

### Jelena Pešić

*Faculty of Philosophy  
University of Belgrade, Serbia*

I will be brief. My question would be to some extent similar to Igor’s. I’m a sociologist, so my question would be somehow determined by my background. If utopian thinking involves an extraction of basic human desires and fulfilment of basic human needs, the question which arises is whether we could ever agree on what these needs and desires are and, more importantly, what is the satisfactory level of their fulfilment. You have pointed out in one of your texts that these needs are historically changeable, but I would like to say that they are not only historically changeable, but they also vary within one society, across different social groups. In that respect, I’m wondering whether we could escape the claim that utopian thinking is always particularistic, and that it reflects the needs and desires of certain social groups. The question that arises from that is which groups or collective action utopian thinking is able to motivate, and under which conditions.

### Raymond Geuss

Obviously I can’t respond to all of those points, I’m sorry about that. Let me start with the one where I think I have something relatively useful and helpful to say – let me start with Mark. The first point is that I assume that in any given society the distinction between necessary and possible may be flexible, that is, that in any given society certain things might in fact be possible that are considered to be

impossible. I still keep the concept of possibility as a central part of my thought. As we know, a lot of people have thought that's a big mistake. You mention Nietzsche and Schopenhauer and Bergson. Of course, one could also in a certain sense mention Spinoza. You all remember the famous example of Spinoza: if the arrow is shot from the bow, and if the arrow had been given consciousness, the arrow would be thinking not 'I've been shot from a bow', but 'I want to go'. So that the whole way of thinking about the human world as if there are possibilities is a mistake. It's an illusion.

That is a very, very powerful argument, for which I have a certain sympathy, but it seems to me that the point of view from which it's possible to see the world like that is, if you think in Nietzschean terms, not a human point of view. That is, that might actually be right, it might well be the case that there is no such thing as possibility but, for us as humans, we don't know what a human life would look like in which we really thought about ourselves in that way, except if we accepted certain extreme forms of Buddhism or religious thought perhaps. If you could accept certain extreme forms of religious thought, then perhaps you could become completely satisfied with seeing your life as one in which you had no possibilities. That's what Max Weber would have called one of the *Virtuosenleistungen* of religious belief. You can really not see yourself as having any choices at all. Now, that is not an argument because, as it were, metaphysically you might actually be right, and that might well be the case that there is no place for possibility in our world. But I'm not Superman. We are not Supermen, we're still human beings, and I'm trying to talk in the context of political human beings trying to live in the form of human life that we're accustomed to, and I think in that context, if this is an illusion, it's a very powerful illusion. I simply grant that, that you might well be right, but I'm making that assumption.

Your second point, something about the possibility of negative utopias, that is, utopias that didn't consist in acting, but consisted in failing to act. And, of course, that's a major topic in one of the philosophies I'm particularly interested in – Adorno's. Adorno is all about negative utopian thinking. When Adorno talks about Alban Berg's opera, *Wozzeck*, *Wozzeck* is a negative utopia. All works of art are supposed to be in some sense negative utopias. That's connected of course in Adorno with this thing he calls the *Bilderverbot*, the prohibition on graven images. So Adorno thinks all thought has to be utopian, but it must never be positively utopian, because if it's positively utopian it's going to be the golden calf, it's not going to be real utopia. I'm very happy to accept that, I don't know really what I can make of that, but that's my response to your two points.

The first set of comments, let me put some of what you said in my own terms. It's a question about the relation between people who are engaged in utopian thinking, between the producers and the consumers of utopia, that is, between the person who says I have a utopian project and the person who is supposed to be receiving the message of this utopian project. And you were asking: don't I essentially fail to look at an important factor here, namely that utopian thinking doesn't exist, as it were, in a vacuum? It doesn't occur in a vacuum, it occurs because of concrete people who are making concrete projects. And so, do I, as a utopian thinker, have to exempt myself in some sense from the ideological illusions that are around me? Don't I have to give some account of my own motivation for developing the utopian



project, or can I simply assume that my motivations need not be called into question? And am I trying to give a utopian project for others or for myself?

That's the first complex of things you were talking about. I completely agree, I'm trying to get away from the idea that the way to think about utopia is: Mr X sits down, he takes the ethnographer's view of society, he's like the administrator, he tells society what their needs are, and then people act on that. I'm trying to get away from that model, I'm trying to say that there are other ways of thinking about this, and part of what this will be of course is that the person who is painting a picture or writing a book or suggesting in the assembly that we have a cooperative, reflects on his own position and the nature of his own motivation in making this proposal. And, of course, my own motivation might be very different from the structure of the people I'm talking to, and that might be a very systematic problem that needs to be taken account of.

The second set was about the cognitive status of these utopias, you talked about the cognitive input. What I'm inclined to say is something which I think I can say – if I make a utopian proposal, that is some kind of suggestion that there are some vital needs that you have that I'm articulating. And if they really are vital needs, you won't necessarily immediately recognize them as such, because you might have various kinds of resistance to it. But if, in the long run, I've given this utopian project as good a run for its money as can be given, and you still refuse to accept it, then there's nothing I can do, I've shown myself to be wrong. Maybe it's not a cognitive failing, maybe it's more practical. The cognitive element is an important element in it, but the crucial element is an element of the ability on the part of the people to accept these suggestions, it's more like the purported effect of psychoanalysis, that you come to accept a certain interpretation of your behaviour. That's not detached from cognitive things, but it's not exactly the same thing. So that's the most I can say to the second point. The third point about utopian thinking and action – there I think you're right. I don't have much to say about that, I tried to gesture to Morus and the notion of *obliquus ductus*, indirect methods, but that's no more than a gesture, and I haven't really said much about that.

Your question then, Jelena – I don't know how much of this I should talk about. As you know, I think that it's really important to distinguish categorically between needs and desires. The normal way of presenting the concept of need is: I want, I desire, I desire very much, I need. And I need is an intensification of I desire. But I think that David Wiggins really saw the central point about this in an essay he wrote in the 60s, which is that I need is not an intensification of I want. They are two completely categorical kinds of claims. To say that I want or desire is to speak of an impulse that I have in a certain direction, it's to speak from the point of view of a subject who's moving out. To say that I need is to take an external point of view and talk about a structural relation that must exist. So when I say I want a pen, that's referring to my impulse to have a pen. When I say I need a pen, I need a pen doesn't mean I want it very much. It means, looking at my life from the outside, and seeing the projects that I have such as writing, you can see that this object plays an essential role in that project, whether I know about it and want it or not.

Now, in general I will know and therefore want what I need. But although that's in general the case, it's not the case in every particular respect. And what seems

to me to be very important in the Marxist tradition, a thing which has been completely lost sight of in economics, is that they represent two different categories. The economist wants to operate with a single category, the category of preference, in particular the category of revealed effective preference. What there is is what people want, that's all there is. And I'm keen to say that Marx was onto something, there are problems with it, but he was onto something in saying that it isn't just that I want and desire various things, it's also the case that I can say that I need certain things, and you can therefore investigate the relationship between my needs and my wants and desires. They are not the same thing, since they are approaching the same world from two different perspectives, and it's the ability to see that world from both of these perspectives at the same time, that gives social thinking its oomph. That is, what's really important to see is that there are three things you have to look at. First, there is what actually moves me to do things, there's what I think I'm doing, so there's desire in the sense of what actually moves me. There's recognized desire, there's what I know moves me. There are preferences, what I know moves me is what I can articulate. Then there are needs, and to have a social theory you have to be able to look at the human world through all three of those lenses at the same time. You have to look at it through the lens of how people are actually acting, what's actually moving them: through what they think they are doing, and through what they need seen through the context of some analysis of vital functions.

Now you will say – and it's absolutely right – doesn't this concept of need have authoritarian potentialities to it. Because someone has to say – the strength of liberalism is the strength of non-paternalism. Namely, you want to know what's good for me – what's good for me is what *I say*, and I'm the final goal for that. And that's the strength of liberalism. But that's also the weakness of liberalism, because it's not the case that I always know what's best for me. Much of my life has been recognizing why, in certain contexts, I didn't know what's best for me. So we have to accept that there's some way in which we give weight to the way people see the world, but we also have to accept that there are limits to that correctness with which they see the world, and it must be possible to look at that world from the outside, and look at them in terms of some analysis of their vital functions, and that analysis will of course then lead to an analysis of what they need. Now, you're absolutely right – two things: this distinction becomes much more difficult to maintain if you add to what I've said that human desires are changing historically and are changing sociologically, and human needs *are* changing. It's one thing abstractly to say we've got desires, we've got needs. It's a much more complicated thing to say there are desires and there are needs, when we admit that both of them are developing historically.

So I grant all of that, and I also grant that at this point it becomes important to see the political dimension of this, which is: who says which are the human needs. Agnes Heller of course wrote this famous book about the dictatorship over needs, and in a way what I'm saying is you can retain the focus on a distinction between desire and need, or focus on the distinctive impulse, without necessarily thinking that that means you can have an authoritarian dictatorship over what counts as needs. Now that means you're going to have complicated democratic politics in

which you have discussion of desires, needs, etc. That will be very complicated, and of course one will have to take into account all the things you've talked about, about the sociological differences of who's needs are being met and whose aren't and at what price, but that's the way I'd like to move with that.

### **Željko Radinković**

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Ich möchte hiermit auf die für das utopische Denken konstitutive Ambivalenz zwischen dem vorgestellten, imaginierten Konstrukt und der Möglichkeit seiner Realisierung reagieren.

Mir scheint, dass in dieser Hinsicht ein Hinweis auf die produktive Kraft dieser Ambivalenz praktisch durchaus relevant sein kann, jedoch nicht genügt, solange der modallogische Charakter dieser "utopischer Differenz", dieses für das utopische Denken charakteristischen Modallgefälles Wirklichkeit-Möglichkeit nicht geklärt ist. Kurzum: Von welcher Möglichkeit sprechen wir, wenn wir vom Utopischen sprechen?

In diesem Zusammenhang würde ich die transzendentalphilosophische Fragestellung vorziehen, weil sie im Sinne der transzendentalen Dialektik eine Antwort auf dieses Problem zu bieten scheint. Demnach sei die Utopie bzw. die utopische Urteilskraft im Sinne vom regulativen Gebrauch der Ideen zu betrachten, insofern wir die antinomischen Struktur des utopischen Denkens richtig erfassen sollen. (Warum antinomisch? Es geht nämlich um den Status eines Transzendens, zu dem wir uns sowohl thetisch als auch antithetisch verhalten können. Die wahre Natur der oben erwähnten Ambivalenz ist diese antinomische Struktur.)

Die Utopie als regulative Idee hat auch Richard Saage im Sinne, wenn er sagt: "Die Gefahr utopischer Ideen besteht in ihrem Umschlag ins Autoritäre, wenn sie nicht als regulative Ideen verstanden werden, sondern als Rezepte, die Eins-zu-Eins umzusetzen sind. Realisierte Utopien müssen notwendig repressiv werden, weil sie dann gezwungen sind, andere utopische Alternativen zu unterdrücken." Die Realisierung nimmt der Utopie ihre normative Kraft, die nur zur Geltung gelangt, wenn die Differenz zwischen dem utopischen Konstrukt und der Wirklichkeit bestehen bleibt. (Es geht also nicht darum, diese antinomische Struktur des Utopischen aufzulösen, sondern sie angemessen zu erfassen, indem verstanden wird, dass es sich hier um den regulativen Gebrauch der Ideen handelt.)

Als regulative Idee hat die Utopie – frei nach Kant – keine Gegenstände bzw. keine neue Erkenntnis zu geben, sondern eine gewisse Ordnung in Erkenntnis- und Handlungsbegrifflichkeit zu bringen. Die Utopien können die Erkenntnisse und Handlungen orientieren und ordnen. Sie stellen gewissermaßen die höherstufigen Möglichkeiten dar, d. h. solche, die nicht zu realisieren sind, sondern die Möglichkeitsräume eröffnen und organisieren.

Beispiel: Francis Bacon (*Neu Atlantis*)

Das utopische wird nicht nach dem Grad des Realisierten bestimmt, sondern nach ihrem Potenzial der Eröffnung der Möglichkeitsräume.

Weshalb verliert eine Utopie, die zum Teil realisiert ist (wie Neu Atlantis), nicht an ihrem utopischen Charakter?

## Predrag Krstić

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I would, first of all, like to thank Professor Geuss on this rare opportunity – as this year marks half of a millennium since the publication of More's *Utopia* – to discuss with him precisely that which he seems to bear witness to better than anyone else: the possibility of non-doctrinary utopian thought in an age hostile to utopianism. My questions concern one doubt that is sparked by this commendable striving. In such an attempt to provide an apologia for utopia as Geuss's, the focus is understandably on finding a justificatory function for utopian thought, that is on the process of 'extricating' from it the importance and the mission that it must still have for us today: Geuss thus wishes to 'investigate the way in which wishing, hoping, and desiring interact with knowing; to throw light on connections that might otherwise escape notice; provide ideal types that can stimulate further thinking; serving as a source of useful hypotheses'; and, instead of offering 'categories of immediate action' and definite answers, he asks the reader to 'reflect on such things as the socially recognised limits of that which is possible, the consequences and conditions of what we desire, the mutability of our needs'. One nevertheless gets the impression that the concept of utopian thought is so reductively and, to an extent, normatively reformulated that some of the classical, and perhaps equally valuable, elements of the complex of utopian thought are left out. To put it as a question – hasn't the tradition of utopian thought been significantly impoverished precisely by the arguments which have undoubtedly managed to convince us that thought can be 'cleansed' of utopian elements only at its own peril, but arguments which have also reconfigured these elements into some kind of 'realistic' utopia or hypothetical utopian speculation, into a contextualized utopia, one that no longer needs to be closed, complete, stable and immutable, but that is rather linked with historical transformations and the development of human needs?

It seems to me that giving up a 'picture of society in which everything is optimally arranged, in every aspect unsurpassably good', giving up the idea of 'unchanging perfection' doesn't necessarily mean that we can (or have to) do away with one common element that we find in every form of utopian thought – one that projects, after all, a certain kind of stasis, resistance to further dynamic, motion, complexity of the world, that projects an end to 'bad kind of complications' (that thereby also projects unsurpassability, because there is no further need for surpassing) – in other words, the common element which presumes that at least *some* aspect of society is thought of as optimally arranged once and for all. To put it more acutely, utopia doesn't have to be total, it doesn't have to project a society that has solved all its problems, but it can, or has to, think of at least one of them as *definitely* solved. It is my impression that the final argument of the paper "Some Varieties of Utopia" refers precisely to this kind of 'non-comprehensive' completeness, as well as the example of universal healthcare in "Realism and the Relativity of Judgment". The question, however, remains whether, for example, a picture of a world without illness or disease would also count as one such desirable kind of utopia? Or that of a world without war, hunger or forced labor? Or whether, on the contrary, this would already constitute an unjustifiable step toward the pacification

of all tensions that resembles the unfounded ‘utopianism’, in the sense of ‘lack[ing] the specification of a mechanism for realising the utopian state’? As it seems to me that the latter is true, I would also like to ask: isn’t the contemporary ‘responsible’ kind of utopian thought, as one might call it, confined for this reason to the last defensive line, to offering merely the examples of minimal and totally ‘realistic’ visions? But, to what extent can we still call that ‘utopian’ in any sense of the word – and not simply a political program; how much of the ‘utopian’ is left when we do away completely with the element of the ‘definite solution’, and why wouldn’t we rather speak then, in terms of classical political philosophy, of a ‘political ideal’, or even a project of reform?

If this intuition is correct to any degree, wouldn’t we have to exclude from such a reduced tradition of ‘desirable’ utopian thought almost all (not incidentally) ‘islands’, except perhaps Bacon’s *New Atlantis*: the one from Plato’s *Critias* as well as More’s *Utopia* and even Huxley’s *Island*? All these visions include – the first one in the form of memory, the second as fantasy, the third in a resigned manner as a failed attempt – what You rightfully point out: the withdrawal from the world as it is, with a specifically utopian fundamental rejection of this world. They see this world, however, as shot through precisely with the kind of freedom-negating, unworthy social dynamic that the ‘island’ visions should prove to be unnecessary. In one inspired paragraph from *Minima Moralia*, Adorno contrasts the image of the linear expansion of productive forces, the increase of production, the never-ending creation and growth, the obese voracity, the image of the imperative of expansion, of *gleichmacherei*, the swollen collectivity as the blind frenzy of *making* – he contrasts this image with Maupassant’s vision of ‘lying on the water and watching the sky in peace’, of not doing anything, like an animal, of not being anything, ‘without any further designation or accomplishment’. Would such form of resistance to the ‘logic of capital’ today be unacceptable, left outside of the scope of justifiable visions due to its aspiration to a genuine state of peaceful completeness? Or would precisely such vision provide the kind of ‘fertility, suggestiveness and stimulation’ that You consider to be constitutive of the ‘right’ kind of utopian thought?

If one were to use strictly philosophical terminology, one could perhaps say that You point out carefully the problems of ‘absolutism’, but not of ‘contextualism’: it isn’t clear how the latter manages to avoid arbitrariness, ad hoc judgment and action and how it can accomplish more than simply demonstrating the irreducibility of every nominalized particular situation in its concrete complexity, and how it manages not to preclude any kind of ‘principled’ judgment. The attempt to connect ‘realism’ and the aspiration to the impossible is infinitely interesting, inspiring and instructive, nevertheless the fact remains (not only mental but historical as well) that realism which pays attention to the context, in its abandoning of troublesome universal standards, ends up in some form of conservatism, the standpoints of which one wouldn’t exactly call utopian to say the least – quite the contrary. Edmund Burke would already be a decent example. In the Preface to *Politics and Imagination*, You reject the idea that Conservative Realpolitik should be contrasted with utopian speculation, arguing that even the deepest kind of political conformism and any defense of the status quo require acts of imagining of some kind. However, as You lucidly note in the essay ‘Authority: Some Fables’ from *A World*

*Without Why*, drawing on Hegel, Marx and Freud, the role of the imagination in politics has more often been ‘to reinforce the hold of the past over the present’, than the ‘production of unrealistic fantasies about a utopian future’. The nostalgia for the golden age and its gorgeous landscapes, however, has politically always had the function of conserving an idealized origin and, at best, the function of a reasonable word of caution to the unbridled optimism of what we usually call the utopian projection of a bright future. Since it seems that You in large part accept this objection, how does Your dichotomy of realism/moralism relate to the dichotomy of political empiricism/rationalism of Talmon and Oakeshott, for example, or even with the traditional division between utilitarian and deontological ethics?

### Srdan Prodanović

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I wish to focus my comments or questions on three relatively interconnected problems. First, I agree with the idea that we should stop making relatively useless analogies between utopian thinking and any kind of finite projections or blueprints, as well as viewing this form of thinking as something that necessarily has no connection with concrete everyday experience. However, even if we accept Geuss’s position that utopian thinking is ultimately a form of posing questions, there still remains the issue whether this ‘method’ of questioning (of social practice) is primarily an individual /private or collective/public endeavour. I am not saying that we have here some sort of a binary opposition. My question mainly pertains to strategy. If we paraphrase the words from the second essay in Geuss’s *World without Why*: when we are using utopian thinking, do we first need to break down the familiar forms of everyday speech (and then perhaps in consequence certain routine patterns of action and interaction); or do we first need to create positive new meanings, ways of speaking and acting, and eventually modes of living?

2. In light of these issues, how do we envision social engagement that would be driven by utopias and the role of intellectuals?

3. When this type of non-dogmatic utopian thought eventually generates some sort of social action, does its inherent openness imply that utopian social movements cannot have rigid hierarchies or organizational structures? Was the Occupy movement in any sense utopian?

### Raymond Geuss

May I start with Predrag’s question – you put your finger, of course, on what is the really central issue for me. Which is: I want, at the same time, to propound a certain kind of realism, which means, in some sense, I want to connect all forms of thinking with action, and that means I’m going to have to take some existing structures for granted, that’s what realism to some extent means. I can analyse them in various ways, but I have to start from them. And I want to combine that with utopianism, which, whatever it is, doesn’t have that form. And I fully admit that I have not gotten very far with that. I do want to make clear in response to something you said – I of course do not mean to deny that there can be definitive solutions to

some problems. I certainly do not mean that, when I say that utopian projects are not best understood as blueprints for perfection, therefore one cannot ever think one has found a definitive solution of a particular problem.

Let me give you an example that is close to me, because it is part of the tradition of utopianism that I grew up with. *News from Nowhere* by William Morris, they go out of their way to present a man who is one of the unhappy people in the future; he doesn't like the future, he pines for the old days of grandeur and tragedy and the existential, and this is an important part of Morris's project. Morris is not saying that there won't be people like that who will be unhappy. They are very unhappy, and he is not morally condemning their dissatisfaction, but what he is saying is, despite the fact that they are dissatisfied – and there is some reason for them to be dissatisfied – we have a definitively better society now.

So I wouldn't describe the world from *News from Nowhere* as having definitively solved a problem; I would say, though, it is definitively better. From the fact that it's definitively better, it doesn't follow that everyone in it is happy. There is this man who is justifiably unhappy, there is the married couple who have various problems. There are problems there, it's not a universal solution to all problems, it's not a panacea, but it can fail to be a panacea while still being an advance over the society in the past. My intention is to construe these things in such a way that you can recognize that there is no single solution to all these problems, and that there will be remaining things and *still* say: we have isolated some genuinely vital human needs and we've satisfied them. And that's all you need to say, but of course what a vital human need is is a question for interpretation, and there I think I probably am – just to refer to Željko's comments – I probably am further away from various Kantian ways of thinking than you would like, and I am closer to contextual and historical ways of thinking. And perhaps I'm wrong about that, but I believe that you've correctly diagnosed a number of problems with the contextualist view, I think those problems exist, but they are nevertheless less serious than the problems that would be associated with absolutism.

Another thing that I read out of your comments, which I think is also further criticism of my perspective, is that I think you saw quite rightly that, by virtue of trying to make the notion of utopian thinking more flexible, I am very much in danger of giving it no content. I'm very much in danger simply of identifying it with the imagination. Ideally, there is the imagination as a category, there is utopian thinking, then there is the kind of utopian thinking which is the blueprint for perfection. I'm trying to distinguish utopian thinking from these blueprints for perfection, but it isn't clear that, in doing that, I haven't simply moved it so far in the direction of simply identifying it with imagination. If even the conservatives who want to reproduce the status quo have to appeal to people's imagination, and if there is no distinction between appealing to people's imagination and utopianism, then you might say my whole project doesn't make any sense at all. So I do think they are all very fair criticisms, and I wish I could say something more about them, but thank you for that.

Željko, I'm going to try to rephrase some of the things you've said in a way that might not look natural and familiar to you, but tell me whether you can somehow see what you were trying to say in what I'm saying. Three different kinds of things:

there's the notion of a utopia that can be realized, or parts of which can be realized – *New Atlantis*, parts of that are realized. Second, there's the notion of utopia as a regulative thought, Kantian regulative thought. Now, of course, we know that a Kantian regulative thought, as you said in your presentation, has the property that it cannot be realized. If we have a regulative thought, this thought tells us which direction to go in, it says: every time you find a causal nexus, always look for a further cause. That's a rule which tells us how to proceed, but again Kant thinks, of course, that if I have the regulative principle which says: every time you see an event look for a cause, you follow the regulative principle, but it's a mistake to try to transform the regulative into a substantive or constitutive principle, that is to say that there is one cause which is the cause of every cause. So the regulative principle says: always look for causes, but the mistake is to think that always looking for causes means that there is a final cause that is the cause of everything. And you're appealing to that.

So you might think that, in Platonic terms, there is the ideal circle but no real circle can be like the ideal one, there's this utopian difference between the two of them. The first notion that you talk about is this notion of the thoughts that are impossible but in fact can be realized, you have the idea of a submarine and then it's realized. The second is a thought that inherently isn't the kind of thing that can be realized. Then you've got the third one, though, which is also extremely interesting, which is a sort of Heideggerian thought, which is that utopia shouldn't be understood, as it were, as if it's a project that might or might not be realized, and it also ought not to be understood as a perfect conception, which, however, you know can never be realized. But rather, utopian thought is like the Heideggerian opening of a domain for inquiry. You remember when Heidegger talks about Aristotle, and he says: the really important thing about Aristotle is that he for the first time opened up the field of there being such a thing as physics; by construing the world as bodies in motion, he made possible the development of physics. Now, that's a different sense of utopian thinking, that's not a sense of utopian thinking that can be realized or not, acting in such a way that produces the preconditions for other things is not something that can be realized and it's not a regulative principle. It's a different kind of thing, what Heidegger later calls *Stiftung*. So there's *Verwirklichung*, there's *Normativitaet*, *Regulativitaet* and *Stiftung*.

Three different ideas that you have in your discussion, and I think all of them are really important. I'm trying here to move utopianism both away from the idea that a utopian project is a total blueprint, and away from the Kantian idea that it's a regulative thing which can never be realized. So I was trying to move it away from both these things. Now, I understand that you resist that, and you have a good argument that you can use there. Namely (I'm putting words in your mouth), your suggestion is that there is some way in which precisely what you call the utopian difference can be a stimulation to further investigation. So that it isn't enough to do as I do, and to say you can't realize it fully, you have to realize that the fact that certain things can't be realized fully is itself a kind of *Ansporn*, it is itself a kind of motivation or stimulation, it can be a motivation for stimulating further utopian energies, and I agree with that. So I'm sorry, I don't know that I disagree with you sufficiently to respond. All I can say is I found that interesting and I think that I can do something with that.



Srdan, the first question was about individual meaning, public meaning, private meaning, everyday life and its role and the generation of new meanings. Obviously, it won't be news to you that I'm not in favour of the idea that meanings are private phenomena, or that we should think of this process of utopian thinking as a private phenomenon. That's why I kept saying: don't think about the picture or text, think about the whole process, which is a process of investigating and thinking about desires, and, I might say, the process of the reception of these. I haven't actually talked about these – partly because I haven't had time – but I'm thinking that, if you think about utopian thinking, the minimal unit should be the one that is expanded beyond the mere artefact, and it will include these things. Of course, it won't be private, and, as you know, one of the things I disapprove of most strongly in Rorty was this notion of individual, private vocabularies of giving meaning to things.

But you are also right that I tend to be on one side rather than the other of the great philosophical divide about everyday life and common language. Which is, there's, roughly speaking, the late Wittgenstein and there is, roughly speaking, Adorno. The late Wittgenstein says (it's a bit of exaggeration, but he says): philosophy changes nothing, it leaves everything as it was, everyday language is fine the way it is, it only becomes toxic when we begin to reflect and make these philosophical constructs; philosophy is just therapy, getting rid of these things, and then everything will be fine. My association with that is that Wittgenstein has this idea that there is this *Heile Welt*, the healthy world, 'zdravi svet', the romantic notion – the *Heile Welt* is everyday language. The other side is Adorno, which is that if societies really are totalities, and if there is something deeply wrong with our society – he thinks that what's deeply wrong is something about the dis-relation between the possibilities that we have and what we make of these possibilities.

For Adorno, the main instance of the evil of the world is the phenomenon of California. California shows why the world is evil, because it has wonderful possibilities and has been made into an inferno by human use of these possibilities. There is nothing wrong with starving in the Middle Ages, because, to some extent, you couldn't do anything about it. But there's a lot wrong with starving in the modern world, because we *could* do something about it and we don't. So it's that discrepancy between *wollen* and *können*. And if you think that societies are totalities, then that evil permeates the whole of the world, there is no innocent thing. Even everyday interactions are the reverse of innocent. And I must say that you can't hold those two views at the same time, they are just not compatible. I just think Adorno is more likely to be right about that, and that we must be scrupulously careful and reflective even about things that look to be most innocent things in the world. That means that I have a kind of scepticism about appeals to the health-inducing properties of participation in everyday life; that's not an argument, just an explanation.

Second, utopian thinking and social critique. That's a complicated issue, of course I tried to say a little bit about this as I said it seems to me that the two things go together, and it's not an accident that the Frankfurt School talks about ideologies very often as if they were poisoned utopias. Ideologies and utopia are the flip sides of the same coin, you want to analyse ideologies to set free the utopian kernel. And the last one was about hierarchy. Of course, there is a really important, although tremendously complicated discussion in Benjamin about the rebellion

of Korah in the *Book of Exodus* and the role of hierarchy in that, which is a monumentally interesting discussion but terribly difficult. I'm trying to get away from a focus on these traditional issues like hierarchy, and I don't want to be put in a position in which I must say every hierarchy is bad, because of course it depends what you mean by hierarchy. The term comes from *hieros arche*, sacred rule, and of course everybody is against hierarchy because we are against sacred forms of rule, but we use the term hierarchy today to refer not just to sacralized forms of rule but also to functionally necessary forms of rule. There are also hierarchical relations in this room, you can all speak in Serbian in this room, and I can't keep up with that, that's a hierarchical relation. I think it's a mistake to be hyper-leftist about the notion of hierarchy just as it's a mistake to be hyper-leftist about the notion of egalitarianism. I think what's important is to get some notion of the positive, decent life that one can live and to get rid of those hierarchical structures and those forms of inequality which are incompatible with that, but that's different from focusing specifically on hierarchies.

### **Marjan Ivković**

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My question concerns one uncertainty regarding your concept of realism in relation to the task of the engaged theorist to open up space, through non-doctrinary utopian thought, for reflection and the envisaging of alternatives, including radical utopian alternative to the existing social order in the public debate. So, in light of your Hegelian orientation, you have frequently argued in favour of historicizing or, more precisely, genealogical in Nietzschean and Foucauldian terms, account of societal phenomena. An account of how things have come to look this way, how they have come to be assembled this way from various sorts of bits and fragments, how they have come to assume this particular shape or meaning over the course of history, as I understand the basic explanatory mode of genealogy. So, how all kinds of symbolic phenomena, including our sense of self, and therefore also sense of what our interests are, have come to be. And it even seems to me that you prefer this genealogical, which I would call non-normativist form of social critique, but still a form of critique, to any normativist type, including the standard version of critical theory, and Adorno, who does have a normativist standpoint.

As I understand you, the genealogical operation is essential for the breaking of the grip of the dominant ideology, above all liberalism, on our thought. The dominant ideology which portrays itself, or which even has succeeded in becoming, to a greater or lesser degree, the common sense. For example, the notion that freedom can only be thought as the property of an atomistically conceived self, as absence of coercion, this has, more or less, entered the realm of everyday speech, although it's a crucial part of the dominant ideology. Now, genealogy is therefore also an essential first step toward the creation of space for non-doctrinary utopian thought, or rather the creation of favourable conditions under which it might be to any degree endorsed by actors as an invitation for further reflection, for posing questions. On the other hand, it seems to me, a realist explanation of phenomena the way you conceive of it, is premised upon a rather non-historicizing, classical

Marxist understanding of certain phenomena in terms of objectivity, like the actors' objective interest. So, this concept of objective interest, as I see it, has also permeated everyday speech and become part of common sense, from an opposite direction than the liberal conception of negative freedom. But it's still a form of petrification of thought, of a non-historicizing way of relating to ourselves. Isn't a realist explanation in this sense somewhat opposed to what I would call the counter-intuitive sentiment of genealogical explanation, and doesn't it to some extent reinforce the existing limits of what it is possible to say, instead of opening up space. Or, to use a more Adornian language, isn't realism also a part of systemic thought? It is my belief that the fundamental political struggle today is over the meaning of the content of terms such as autonomy, freedom, so the fundamental task is to wrest these concepts from the petrified form in which they exist today as part of dominant ideology. It seems to me that genealogy is perfect for this task, but realism seems to petrify these meanings further.

### **Aleksandar Matković**

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My question was in a sense posed by other members of the seminar, and concerns the relation between utopian thought and ideology. So, I'll just try to crystallize what we may term the role of utopian thought in two main political traditions of Europe, Marxism and liberalism. What's interesting to me, in these two political and theoretical currents, is how they differently conceive of utopian thought. Marxism has a pretty interesting history in the usage of utopian thought, but as a literary genre. For example, it uses it to historicize itself, if you recall Marx's and Engels' talking about compiling a list of literary genres that would present socialism and the historical tendency of European society. Kautski even wrote on More being a socialist, in France there was a movement that read More with the workers and envisage the future society based exactly on the utopian genre. Even Marxism itself could be considered as constituted as a critique of utopian thought.

On the other hand, it is interesting that in the liberal and even neoliberal imagination, utopian thought is very positively, even uncritically accepted as being constitutive of some versions of the free market. If you recall Mandeville and the *Fable of the Bees*, which has the subtitle 'private vices, public benefits', it's how these contradictions between our needs and desires actually conflict one another and produce a better society for us all. That is one of the premises of the free market, and I think this sort of utopian thought has in a sense been extended to neoliberal ideology today as we know it. For example, yesterday you spoke of Margaret Thatcher and there is no alternative statement. I also recall Milton Friedman who even had a television show which was sponsored by Ronald Reagan, where he would go, as this sort of neoliberal ethnographer, to different parts of the world, to Singapore, Berlin, etc. and speak about how the free market could function. He was this utopian ethnographer, who pointed out that this was the free market, it could function like that at home, etc. You could even recall Ludwig Gerhardt in Germany who used media extensively to implement *Marktwirtschaft* in Germany and the German society.

So I think that Thatcher, Friedman and Gerhardt are examples of how neoliberalism used utopian thought to constitute itself, and I think that this repeats itself, not only on the level of a literary genre, but on the level of abstract economic thought. I think this is a great problem, that even when you don't have philosophical and literary thought, you can have economic thought that is utopian, precisely because it does not question itself. If you think about what are the two main points that liberal critique, or self-critique, revolves around, those are the first two points that you outlined. Free market still doesn't exist, we need to bring it to existence, to somehow conceive it. It somehow transcends our schemes of categorization of reality, an instrument that would make our society better in a sense. And what's interesting is that this utopian thought actually pretends to be anchored in reality, it seems it is always in this sort of transition, which is important for Eastern European societies, this transitology, that we are supposed to reach this sort of utopian society. Which is very interesting because, if you think how liberalism presents utopian society, it is actually divorced from itself, from its own economic infrastructure.

This is for me an important point because there is no complete theory of utopia, utopian thought does not address these phenomena, and I find in your lecture a very important contribution to addressing these very issues. Think about the end of history, Fukuyama, think about the idea that here we are, we realized this utopia, and then when we saw that it doesn't function, we fall back to the two points that you outlined, that it still doesn't exist, that it somehow transcends our categories of today. Hence, I think that my main question would be how you envisage this relation between ideology and utopian thought, or have you for example commented upon different strands, such as the sociology of knowledge by Karl Mannheim, or with this sort of tradition. Basically, what's your conception of ideology and utopia?

### **Tamara Petrović Trifunović**

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Keeping in mind that utopian thinking should not necessarily be understood as a set of injunctions for immediate action, I still have a question regarding the possibility of realization of utopian thinking in the sphere of professional politics and governance. While in theoretical work and in everyday life of the individual (but also as a constituent of the politics of resistance), the goal of relying on utopian thinking in coping with and in overcoming the conditions of our situation seems attainable if not necessary, what do you envisage as constraints in putting in motion and (maybe more importantly) continually relying on utopian thinking by those occupying the positions of political power? This is more so taking into account the inherent constraints of political sphere and the role of political discourse in the perpetuation of the symbolic domination and the status quo.

That is: even if the hypothetical political actor is determined to overcome those constraints, what do you see as obstacles to stepping out of the politics-as-usual in contemporary societies? Politics-as-usual here being understood as the politics of the possible encompassing some elements of moralism (where utopian is not always rhetorically most effective) together with tendencies towards the narrowing of the discursive space for discussion.

In other words, how do the criteria of (im)possibility, in your opinion, differ between theoretical and political fields?

### Raymond Geuss

May I try to respond to these in reverse order? The third question is about the role of utopian thinking in actual politics. You talked a bit about obstacles to stepping out of the everyday form of politics and about the conditions under which politicians might constantly appeal to utopian speculation. I have a former student who is a professor in South Africa, who constantly is confronted with the question – during the struggle in South Africa against apartheid, politicians continually appealed to something which is a form of moralizing discourse, namely natural rights. If you look at the way the African National Congress and their representatives formulated their demands, they were in terms of human rights. And the idea was that human rights were a transcendent, non-empirically specifiable entity, and they played a role in this. From the South-African perspective, I am constantly getting people who say: you say that human rights don't exist, but that is a very unrealistic position to take. Look, you can't understand what happened in South Africa if you think that human rights are merely an illusion. That's what the people thought they were doing, you have to take that seriously.

And, my view is that of course one must take very seriously what people think, and if one wants to be a realist in politics one has to correctly cognize what people think, what views they have, what concepts they hold, and one must have a good, clear idea of what the power structures are. But, from the fact that you need to understand these things correctly in order to be politically effective, it doesn't follow that you need to endorse them. It is the case that in South Africa people thought that natural rights, human rights were the thing that motivated them to do what they did. But all sorts of things can motivate people to act, from the fact that you recognize that I'm motivated to act by some conception it doesn't follow that I need to endorse that conception. Think of Lukacs who talks about the English Civil War, he says the English thought they were arguing about the nature of the Eucharist, whereas they were arguing about something completely different. So I would say that that's the sort of answer I'd give to that, you have to both look at the internal perspective and the external perspective; in other words, you're not honouring people by endorsing what you have good reason to think is a misconception on their part, even if they've used that misconception to get a goal that you think is a good goal. I think it's part of the responsibility of intellectuals to take seriously what people think, take it very seriously, but also not simply to identify themselves with whatever they happen to think. That's the kernel of correctness in Lukacs' theory about imputed class consciousness. You have to know what people think, but you have to be able to have an analysis of the situation which allows you to judge that.

Aleksandar, I come from a particular context, I've lived for 20 years in Britain in a university where the only philosophical activity available is a certain pretty debased form of analytical philosophy, which still believes that there are facts and there is an ontological distinction between what's possible and what's not, and you have to take account of the facts. So I'm very keen to fight a particular battle, which is a battle which says that, no, the facts are not everything, and even talking

about the facts means you've construed the facts in a particular way. In a way, that's probably irrelevant to people in this room, because you don't need to be told that, you're interested in more sophisticated things. In a way, I do speak as if utopianism is something good but, of course, you're absolutely right, utopianism is good if you mean by utopianism the view that the world is not constituted simply by facts that are pre-given. Compared to that, the theoretical position that recognizes that, in order to even see what the facts are, you have to go beyond them, utopianism in that sense is necessary and good.

But that doesn't mean that every particular configuration of utopian thought is good, and you're absolutely right, neoliberalism is a form of utopian thought that is deeply ideological. The free market is a construct, it never exists, and in fact we have good reason for thinking, not only that it does not exist, but that it never could exist, because it's dependent. You can't marketize everything, because the market presupposes an existing structure, which allows the market to operate, which can't itself be marketized. So the market, by its very nature, can't be the end of the story; it's inherently contradictory, but it is a utopia, and it has the structure that you can always say: it doesn't work because we don't have enough of the market. So all things that are associated with that, the idea that market is perfect, that it's never wrong – I have a friend that works in the publishing industry, who publishes economics books, and he says: an economist is a person who thinks that the market is never wrong, except in the case of their own books. And in a way that's telling. So I agree with that completely.

Then of course, you're going to say (and its perfectly legitimate) if it's not the case that all forms of utopia are good, how do we tell which ones are good and which are bad, and then of course I say what you know I will say, which is that you can give some general principles about that, such as the ones that are cognitively closer to what we see the reality is like, but with those general principles you can't get an algorithm that will separate them, in the final analysis you will have to decide on the basis of contextual factors. Then you are going to have to ask me what context means, of course. I've been through this – and then I'm going to have to say: context itself is something that can only be contextually determined. And then you're going to say, well at that point, doesn't anything go? And I'm going to say no, it doesn't follow from the fact that everything is contextual, and that you can only say contextually what counts as the context, that you can't make some distinction between what is reasonably to be taken as context. So I say, it depends on the context, you say – what's the context; I say the context is contextually specified; you say how do I contextually specify the context; I say, that is something that can only be contextually specified. Then you say, haven't you lost the plot there, and I say – no, because to say that what the context is can only be contextually specified is not to say there are no criteria at all for saying what it is, it's to say that the criteria that there are, are in that context. So, from the fact that there is always a further context, it doesn't follow that in any given context, anything goes as the next context. And at that point, generally, the discussion stops, and I don't know whether it stops because I've won or lost, or because people have become fatigued.

Marjan, there are three entities, and you are asking quite rightly, again and again, about the relation between them. Actually, there are four – there's realism, which

I've talked about as the opposite of moralism. There's social critique, or ideological critique, there's genealogical analysis, and there is utopia. I take a lot of the questions to be essentially questions about the relation of those things. What's the relation between them - I wrote the first book on *Ideologiekritik*, then I wrote a book on genealogy. What's the relation between *Ideologiekritik* and genealogy? Then I wrote some stuff on realism - what's the difference between realism and *Ideologiekritik*, etc. So first there is a general question about the elucidation of that, second there is a specific supposition that you have, which is that, really, for the kinds of concepts that are most important in the modern world, your suspicion is that genealogical analysis will be the one that will turn out to be most useful. I don't myself think that genealogical analysis is going always to be as powerful perhaps as you take it to be.

In a genealogical analysis you analyse the way in which different components come together accidentally. Let me give one example - Foucault - we have a certain conception of feminine psychology. We had at a certain time in Western history this conception that certain features naturally come together, that women had a unitary psychic structure composed of a number of facts, and those facts were not put together at random, they held together, they had a kind of *Wahlverwandschaft*, there was an elective affinity between them. So, therefore, you can treat women as a unitary category, you don't have to worry about it. It's a *Selbstverständlichkeit*, something that's obvious, taken for granted. Genealogical analysis analyses ways in which that appearance of unity and semantic coherence is an appearance, and it's actually just the result of a contingent set of things. But of course, I can do that kind of genealogical analysis on almost anything, and it will be illuminating. So I can do that kind of analysis on my own conceptions of university career, etc, and there will be various components that come together there. From the fact that it's contingent, that these identities are contingent, it does not follow that I will reject them. I might think that the identity of being a philologist is something which has an accidental history, that's actually very good. So from the fact that I analyse them genealogically, I'm not necessarily motivated to reject them. To be motivated to reject them, it seems to me, I need also to see the role that they play sociologically in the world.

I need to see that thinking about women in that way is not something that everybody realizes and enjoys and now we can go on. I have to see not just that it had a certain history, but that it functions in a certain way, it functions repressively in a certain way. And I have to focus my analysis on that aspect of the situation too. So for me, an analysis that's genealogical, an analysis that's in your terms realistic in terms of the power relations that are involved in the constitution, and an analysis that's ideological, that talks about the way this functions in society, are compatible, and they are compatible parts of social criticism as a general enterprise. The general enterprise of social criticism needs a number of different ways of dealing with things, and we have to throw light on phenomena in a number of different ways, and I'd be very loath to reduce that simply to genealogical analysis. I think, for example, that for the notion of autonomy and the notion of freedom, it's very important to see how those notions actually function in the society in question. It isn't enough just to see where they come from and, I think, to see

how they function, you need to see that against the background of an imaginative conception.

Let me give you an example: my father was a steel worker in the United States, he worked on a railway that moves steel around from one part of the steel mill to another. I could have told him a genealogical story of great complexity about how that particular kind of work environment came to be organized, how it could have been organized differently, was organized differently in Japan, in other countries – it was only because there was a conjunction of this and that that the identity of a worker got established. This wouldn't in itself have moved him in any way to think. Every genealogy has within itself the possibility of being transformed into a pedagogy, in the terminology that I use; that is, he could, or would have seen it as a story of success. Yes, all of these accidents needed to come together for this wonderful thing to happen, this social role of a worker in the steel mill who has these things. To convince him to change his mind, you would have needed to talk more about the way in which that role prevented him from doing certain sorts of things, and that means contrasting it with certain possible other functions that could have been satisfied by elements of this conjunction of things. And to do that, I think you need a kind of imaginative going beyond of the actual story, which won't necessarily just be given by a genealogical analysis.

### **Predrag Milidrag**

*Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory  
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Just two short questions. Could you tell us in what measure the philosophy of Ernst Bloch is still relevant for utopian thinking today. Is there any place in utopian thought today for his notion of the fatherland, *Heimat*? In Serbo-Croatian it is 'zavičaj'. The second question concerns negative utopia. Does utopian thought today think negative utopia at all? Is there any place for that notion? Is it necessary to define negative utopia through the totalitarian systems, or can we define it in some other way? For example, the film trilogy *Matrix* – a perfect world, perfectly virtual world, where people do not know it is virtual, and they live their lives without knowing that they are controlled all the time. Is it a kind of negative utopia; is, after all, negative utopia a utopia at all?

### **Božidar Filipović**

*Faculty of Philosophy  
University of Belgrade, Serbia*

My questions have already been to some extent answered today. They are not so interesting and intriguing. In order to pose the questions, I have to underline three important moments of your presentations today and yesterday. You have said that a 'utopian proposal cannot be directly implemented and acted upon', or, in other words, utopia is 'not a blueprint'. You have also been critical about the privileged position or viewpoint of the colonial master. We should 'abandon the literary fiction of an author who purportedly surveys a society at rest, and takes it all in'. And finally you said that 'it is not difficult to see that human society will never exist



without conflicts'. I'm pointing out these because of the question of criteria. When I say criteria I mean criteria for distinguishing between utopia and non-utopia, and by non-utopia I don't mean dystopia or negative utopia, I mean any political project. On the other side, I think that it's important to raise the question of criteria for distinguishing between utopian and non-utopian thinking. To be more precise, my question is, is it possible to have utopia without a privileged position, the viewpoint of the colonial master? How to know whether some society is close or closer to the utopian ideal, and some other further from it? And, if we have utopian projects of negotiation, or consent, can there be such a thing as unintended utopia, utopia without subjects, without privileged actors or position who will tell us what utopia is and what is not?

Also, you said something about the difference between utopia as totality, as total society which is included in utopia, and utopia as micro-utopia or micro-project. And you said something about the relationship between, on the one side, desires, needs, preferences and acting, and how this is connected. My question is, do we need experimental or empirical utopias to test all possibilities? Is it possible, if we don't have micro-utopia, but just the totality or whole society – can we test those relations between acting and wishing, acting and needs, preferences and so on?

### **Bojana Radovanović**

*Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory,  
University of Belgrade, Serbia*

The variety of utopia that you are in favour of, if I understood correctly, is the one that focuses, not on the picture of a perfect world, but rather on those human desires and needs that continue to torment us, but are incapable of being satisfied under present social circumstances. I would like to go back once more to needs, and I will build on what Jelena already said. You pointed out that needs are historically determined, some are luxurious, some are necessities. What is today a luxury, tomorrow might be a necessity. I wanted to ask whether utopian thought should be focused on luxuries or necessities, but I think you already said that it should be focused on vital human needs. However, what is a vital human need in the United States might be a luxury in Ethiopia. So should a utopian thinker from Ethiopia be focused on what is a vital need in Ethiopia or a luxury there, or what is a vital need or luxury in the States? Should there be some benchmark? Also, yesterday at the end of your talk you said that the main question is what should be done so that everyone leads a dignified life. And you said that the answer to this question is not the equality of resources, not the equality of material goods. This reminds me of Amartya Sen, who is also against the equality of material sources, because this equality wouldn't do justice, for example, to the disabled, who would need more resources to achieve the same level of functioning as someone who is not disabled. Today you said that, if I again interpreted correctly, that you are against this equality of material resources because of the instability. If everyone has the same amount of resources today, tomorrow we would again end up in inequality due to exchange. So is this the only reason? Finally, I would like to ask you how you would define dignified life, whether it is dependent on context or not.

## Raymond Geuss

May I start with Predrag. Ernst Bloch. There is one thing in Ernst Bloch that I think is of exceptional importance and that is his notion of excess, or his notion of going beyond, or his notion of surplus. And his idea that even minimally taking account of the world appropriately means going beyond what in some sense is the mere content of the experience. I think that's really important, to have some notion of a semantic. I've always thought that Marx talks about *Mehrwert*, and, in a way, Bloch talks about *Mehrsinn*, surplus meaning. I've always thought this is absolutely crucial, and you can't find it in many other people (you find it in Adorno). Then you asked the specific question about *Heimat*, and that of course is a very difficult concept to deal with. I don't have any solutions to this, but I think it is important to try to detach a reasonable and laudable attachment to one's local context from nationalism. The neoliberal model is the model of a flat world, and we don't want to live in a flat world. I want to come to Belgrade, because I don't want to think I'm in Rimini or in Duesseldorf when I'm in Belgrade. If I am in Belgrade, I want Belgrade to be itself, and to be in some sense expressive of the people who are here, to be an appropriate locus, a place. It's of course an unsolved problem, how you can maintain that theoretically and practically and yet avoid some of the evils associated with excessive nationalism. And I have no solution to that, but, within limits, then, I would say that, yes, I think there's nothing wrong with Serbs wanting to live in a Serbian place where they feel at home. That's a perfectly reasonable thing to do. The crucial thing is detaching that from nationalism, and, of course, as you know, in a lot of cases, people have found that it's possible to cultivate certain local traditions better in a non-national context. The big hope of the European Union was that a lot of small states wouldn't need to be nationalistic in a politically deleterious way because they would have security, you wouldn't need to have a militarized Belgium because Belgium would be in a larger context in which some of its security needs would be met, and so you could get rid of the distorting influence of a lot of these structures and you could concentrate on other things. I know that is no solution to the problem, but that's the best I can say about that.

The second question was about negative utopia and, of course, I think that there are two slightly different things there. One is the notion of dystopia, and the other is the notion of negative utopia. The notion of a dystopia is the notion of an exaggeratedly bad place, a place which is extremely bad. The notion of a negative utopia is the notion of an imaginary state of affairs which would be better than the state of affairs that's presented in a work of literature. When Adorno says that Berg's *Wozzeck* is a kind of negative utopia, it means that you should read that work in the context of it having utopian significance, although you can't formulate what the utopian significance is, it points out the negativity in that state of affairs. And doing that makes you more aware of the possibility and necessity of something else. And I think that's a slightly different structure from the structure of dystopia. And the question about whether we can only imagine dystopia relative to totalitarian regimes: no, I think we can imagine all sorts of dystopias that are not particularly connected with what we know about totalitarian regimes. There's a very nice neoliberal dystopia that we can imagine, of course not.

Božidar, three questions there. The possibility of any kind of utopian thinking without a privileged standpoint. Well, yes and no, namely, as I said in response to the earlier question, of course utopia has to presuppose that there is a kind of privileged standpoint in the sense that a utopian theorist has to think that he or she has analysed a problem relative to which they have a better solution, there is something definitive about that. So to that extent there has to be a privileged position. But, of course, when we talk about the privileged position of a colonial administrator, we don't mean the privileged position in that sense. The colonial administrator has a privileged position that is connected to a whole apparatus of power. Every time I make an affirmation, in some sense I'm claiming a privilege because I'm claiming that what I'm saying is right. If privilege means privilege in that sense, then yes of course. But if privilege means privilege in the sense in which we train people in Cambridge and they go to India and have the power of life and death in this whole area, then not privilege in that sense.

Then there was a question about testing and utopia. That's of course the Popper question, namely isn't there some way in which you've left the realm of that which is testable, if you have a project that is not piecemeal but universal. Because if you have a universal project, the notion of testing the project makes no sense. Of course, I can drink water once and then twice, but I can't live my life and then live it over again, I can't live my first life as an experiment, and then do it the second time around learning from that. There's some way in which testing doesn't play a role in this. There's some way in which testing can't play the kind of role in human life as a whole that it plays in experimental science. And that's my answer to that, namely that I think it's not a problem with the theory, it's a problem with human life, that in some sense we have to live our lives as the unique phenomena that we know them to be. We can't repeat them, human societies can't ever go back. And that means that there are going to be limits on testing, testability and the role of testability doesn't mean there is no place where you can talk about testability, but it will depend on very complicated analogies, thinking analogically about the Roman Empire, about Japan, etc. It won't be a test in the standard way, but that's not an objection to utopian thinking, it's a fact about human life. And then your third question was about unintended utopias. Yes, the genuine utopia would be one in which you wouldn't know you were living in a utopia. Because why would you have to know it's utopia if it were completely perfect?

Bojana, another very important thing. And here again I'm on weak ground, I know. This is the question of what used to be called in critical theory the *Adresaten der Theorie*, who is the theory directed at. Does the Ethiopian theoretician direct her discourse to other Ethiopians, to everyone in Africa, to everyone in the world, to some imaginary cosmopolitan community, etc. And then, won't there be parallel differences in what counts as needs? The second question is about dignified life. The answer to that is: I don't see that one of those can possibly exclude the other. You can't nowadays, it seems to me, talk just to a Serbian audience or just to an Ethiopian audience, or just to an American audience, because the world is actually a place in which communication takes place. And you're not going to be able to. So it seems to me you're absolutely right, there's going to have to be a really complicated process of mediation involved, in which you take account of what's happening in the

rest of the world, but you also direct your statements to the people you are actually talking to. Let me take a better example, Somalia. As you know, in Britain it's a big problem that many Somalians think it's part of their social life, their form of life that there be genital mutilation of women, they engage in genital mutilation. Until very recently, the British government did not prosecute those people. It was a big change about six or seven years ago, when the government decided they were not going to allow Somali immigrants to genitally mutilate their girls, they were going to be prosecuted for that. They passed the law that said that doctors who suspected this had the responsibility and duty to report this, and they would be prosecuted. So you can't any more simply direct your remarks about what is a vital necessity to the Somali community or to the British community or to the worldwide community, you have to take account of all those at the same time. Now, how you're going to do that, I wish I had an answer to that question but I don't.

Dignified life – you're right, I don't know what to say about that, but let me give you an example of what I have in mind. At one time you could lead a perfectly good, simple life – this is perhaps an imaginative embellishment of what was actually the case, but you could buy good, nourishing brown bread that wasn't very expensive, wasn't very high quality, but you could eat bread, you could eat paprika, you could eat some cheese, wasn't very high quality, but it was available. We are moving now, in Britain, to a world where you can't get simple nourishing food unless you have a lot of money. If you go to the shops and buy what is on offer there, you're poisoning yourself. You're getting agro junk that's produced, that tastes like nothing, has addictive substances in it. And if you want to get something that is actually eatable you have to pay more money for that. So you're connecting the possibility of leading a decent life with having enough money to do that.

I'm not saying that I think it's irrelevant how goods are distributed, I'm not saying it's irrelevant whether many people have a lot and nobody has anything. Of course it's important that we don't have ten wealthy people who own the world. But what I'm saying is, just as Marx said, don't focus on distribution, focus on production, focus on relations of production, not of distribution. If you focus on relations of distribution you're never going to get anywhere at all. That doesn't mean that distribution is irrelevant, it doesn't mean that at all, it means you are only going to understand what's going on if you don't focus on the subordinate phenomenon, the distribution, and you get to the root of it, namely you get at the ways in which it's produced. And that's what I'm saying, when I say of course you should think about distribution of medical services, etc, but don't fall into the trap of thinking you can understand everything simply by assuming that human value is defined by monetary resources, and therefore we have to distribute them.

Think that there's something to that, and independent of that, and it's not disconnected from that, but it is something like leading a decent, dignified life, having the ability to get what you need, and you can do that, you can imagine a society in which you can do that even though there are still discrepancies in people's income. I think that was the thing Marx thought, of course there will be differences in people's consumption habits, some will consume more, some less, but basically there was enough for everyone. Think of Harry Frankfurt's objection: it isn't important that everybody gets the same, it's important that everyone gets enough. Or think

of the book by Avishai Margalit about the decent society, that's what I'm saying. Don't follow rules and think: we accept that everything's going to be monetarized, we accept that, of course the whole world is going to be monetarized, and now we look at the distribution of monetary resources, that's all we have to do. What I'm saying is don't think about it that way, think about it in terms of actual human self-affirmation, activity, leading a decent life, dignified life, look at that and look at patterns of distribution as connected to that, and look at the way this is possible in a given society relative to different patterns of distribution.

### **Dorde Pavićević**

*Faculty of Political Sciences  
University of Belgrade, Serbia*

One question is about the conditions of possibility. You said that you're against direct realization of any utopia and whether this includes some kind of self-reflection – I'm thinking about direct realization in terms of revolution, external intervention, like Plato thinks about the external ruler. If we have to restrict ourselves in the realization of our utopian ideas, does this include a kind of self-reflection that we have to think that part of our ideas is utopian? In terms that we cannot expect that we can realize them directly, and we have to accept some stubborn facts about reality, life or to adapt our mode of social and political action to these facts. I'm asking this because I think that most of utopian thinkers – we are considering them utopian – were not self-consciously utopian, in terms that they believed that their ideas were utopian. I'm thinking about 19<sup>th</sup> century thinkers, for example Saint-Simon, Fourier or even nationalist utopias like Manzini or ideas about harmony, inside the national state. To be brief and precise, I will restrict myself to one other question. I'm trying to figure out what is the difference between your conception of utopia and many other theories of realistic utopia that are based on Rousseau's injunction that we have to take account of men as they are and laws as they might be. My question is whether there is any essential distinction between this conception (later Rawls, for example, has this idea of a realistic utopia, even some sociologists like Olin Wright have an idea of real utopia) and your conception of utopia?

### **Rastko Jovanov**

*Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory,  
University of Belgrade, Serbia*

I'm going to be very brief. The first question is a methodological one, as it should be in every discussion. I cannot see the place of utopian thinking in philosophy, the space of that thinking in the philosophical field. Where is it? If I'm going to write in those utopian terms, am I going to write as a practical philosopher or as a practical politician, or is it the same as *theoretische Vernunft*? Also, do you want to rehabilitate utopian thinking, or do you think that utopian thinking should be our new way of critical thinking, because thinking is always a way of critical thinking? It's critical of *Dasein*, *Institution*, *bestehende Institution*. In that manner, how can you defend utopian thinking against those liberal criticisms of utopia from the middle of the last century? 1947, utopian nationalism, Popper, and after that, in the

50s and 60s, they criticized utopian thinking as a way of thought that leads not to peace but to struggle. I'm not fond of that, but my question is how you intend to defend your way of thinking against those liberal criticisms of utopian thought? Utopian thinking emerges after the First World War, Mannheim, Buber, Rosenzweig, Benjamin, Bloch – why? Where do you find a fruitful field for utopia – in international law. Why? Because we still don't have any stable definition in international law. And utopia should be there where the struggle is.

### Petar Bojanić

*Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory,  
University of Belgrade, Serbia*

Just two questions. One is some kind of invitation for you to explain to us, because you sent us this second chapter of your new book, *Realism and the Relativity of Judgement*, and you didn't send us the first chapter, "Dystopia and Elements". You used this chapter several times in the beginning of your lecture. This chapter is very interesting because you are talking about analytical philosophy. Would you be kind to tell us where is the place of utopian thinking in philosophy, probably in some kind of antagonism to political philosophy. Second, I'm not sure that this is one possible kind of utopia or paradise. Here you don't have a group, you have one agent (the egg), there is no collective intentionality, group agency, you have digestion, probably collective, but you know very well – I mentioned that in Fourier, for example, you have the action without limits, where he imagined a huge work with 500 000 people to change something in Sahara. Or you have for example the big Babylon Tower, as a huge construction of group work, group agency and acting together. I'm asking this because generally we are making the group with some kind of language. Because you use direct action and immediate action several times in your text, but generally you mention Plato.

Utopia, as you said, is first of all a description, you are doing something with words, as we are doing today. Also, it is a literary genre, and at the beginning of the text you are talking about the commonplace, because *topos* is commonplace. In Aristotle's *Rhetoric* you have this commonplace as a possibility (if you are using commonplace all the time, here we have some kind of group constitution). This is important because this is not commonplace, this is *topos* without *topos*. On the second page you said that this is Plato, that construction of utopian thinking is something which is done only with words, that means language. In that place, *The Republic* (592a–b), Plato said, 'I understand', this is a dialogue, 'you mean the city whose establishment we have described', this is only by words, 'the city whose home is in the ideal, for I think that it can be found nowhere on earth'. 'Well, said I, perhaps there is a pattern laid out in heaven for him who wishes to contemplate it, and so beholding to constitute himself as citizen'. 'But', Plato said, 'it makes no difference whether it exists now or will ever come into being'. Here I'd like to have your commentary – we are using some kind of projection, using language not in a performative way – I didn't plan to talk, as I saw that all the others are engaged, but I'd like to talk because I'm obliged to be part of the group. Here we have some kind of projection in utopian thinking, and this projection could be something that connects us.

## Raymond Geuss

First Dörde. As you know, I have a lot of criticisms of Rorty, but he did say one thing that I thought is right, and I think it's a quotation from someone else. He says 'it's a sign of civilization that you can know that your own beliefs are contingent, your own values are contingent, and you can stand by them'. Not of course in all circumstances, but I can see that if I hadn't been born in the United States in a particular window of time and contingently had the education that I had, which was only possible during a brief period of time, I wouldn't have the values that I have. The values that I have are highly contingent and problematic, and yet I stand for some of them. I think that's the answer to your question about utopians who do or do not realize they are being utopians. I want to say, just as in every other case – think of Schiller between *Naïve* and *Sentimentalische Dichtung*, there are naïve poets who just talk about the world, and there are sentimental poets who reflect upon their own ways of looking at the world. And these are two different ways of being a poet. There are different ways of being utopian – there are people who make utopian projections but do not know they are utopian, there are people who do things, like the people who set up the Limoge cooperative, who don't realize they are engaged in a project that will work for 100 years but will stop working. There are unreflective and reflective people. In the modern period, we have little alternative but to be reflective about what we do. But I don't see there is any reason why I can't quite rightly say I'm committed to some sorts of views, I know that's utopian, they are not going to come about, but the very fact that I stand by them is a cultural fact.

Rousseau and realistic utopia. My problem with Rawls' notion of realistic utopia is that it seems to me his realistic utopia is neither realistic nor is it utopian. It's not realistic because it's never going to come about, it's not utopian because it's just an idealized ideological description of the American form of government, so it's not utopian, it's not really different from what exists. So for me, that's an instance of an ideological construct, not a utopian one. I know that's not an answer to your question, and I wish I could give a better one. There's nothing in general in my way of thinking which says that this can't be possible. As I said in response to Predrag, there are different forms – one is the utopia that can be realized, then there's a Kantian utopia which has the form of something which inherently can't be, and then there are utopias which are opening up different ways of thinking about things, but not actually making a view on things. So there is nothing in my view that makes that impossible.

Rastko, I must confess that I'm not actually that interested in philosophy *per se*, I'm not interested in disciplinary boundaries, I think that philosophy has to be integrated into the rest of the world, and I come from a culture where there's what seems to be a stultifying and demented interest in patrolling the boundaries of that which is philosophy. The boundaries of philosophy are clear, everything that's not philosophy is devalued, and I think the result of that is that philosophy becomes more and more limited. In Oxford you can't study philosophy without another subject, in Cambridge you have a single subject in philosophy. And that means that the only topic is the structure of the human mind and language. It strikes me they are very important topics, but they are not all. There is no aesthetics, political

philosophy, no real ethics. Bertrand Russell says in his 1910 book: ethics is not about acting, it's about the structure of propositions that have a certain form. That's exactly what I'm trying to get as far away from as possible. I want to say ethics has to do with acting, with good acting and of course the structure of propositions about what is good is an important topic to study, but not to the detriment of thinking about pictures, action, about getting yourself together and all of this. So, I think my real response to you is maybe what I do isn't philosophy and maybe this analysis of utopian thinking isn't really relevant to philosophy as it's constituted now. I wouldn't be terribly concerned by that, because sometimes in my life I've been in philosophy faculty, sometimes in political science. I'm more interested in thinking about things than in disciplinary boundaries, I think disciplines are necessary but the boundaries, the imposition of boundaries is becoming increasingly a detriment to serious thought, rather than a contribution to it.

Your second question was about the liberal criticisms of utopian thinking after the war, and actually, in a way, the whole project is directed against Popper and against Berlin. This is all against the poverty of utopianism and the *Open Society and Its Enemies*, so I can't say in one sentence what my response to it is, because my response is that we should continue to do this in a way which makes sense, which is different from anything he said. As I said in couple of places in the lecture, I try to turn some of his points against him. He thinks that because we can't predict the future of science we can't have utopian thinking. But, of course, you can turn that conclusion around, you can say because we can't predict the future of science, how do we know what's going to be impossible tomorrow? So you can take that point and run exactly the opposite way with it. If you look at the paper actually *sotto voce*, between the lines, if you can think of footnotes to Popper between the lines of every paragraph, that's my answer to it, that's one way of seeing the whole paper.

The third thing you asked is why there is such an upsurge in utopian thinking after the First World War. Of course, there had been utopian thinking before that, there was More, Campanella, Fourier, we all know about this. But there was a big upsurge of it after the First World War. In Germany, which had been defeated – and it doesn't seem to me that you need to be a sociologist to think that being massively defeated in a war to which you've invested your national resources is a good breeding ground for trying to think about different ways of organizing the world. There's nothing worse than success. Success is bad, because it makes you complacent. Even worse than that is half-success. Britain thinks it won World War II. Well, yes and no. There were also the Yugoslavs, Russians and Americans, so it's not that they won World War II. That configuration allowed Britain to fail to take the kinds of thoughts about itself that people in the rest of Europe did, which is: there were problems before the war, we have to change things. In Britain people thought you could reconnect with those things and continue on. So winning the war is not very good, it makes you complacent, half-winning the war is bad because it makes you self-deceived. French have their own version of that, which is, 'we were all in the Resistance'. Well, not actually true. Losing a war, however, is also not a good thing. I mean, the conclusion is that war is not good, whether you win it or lose it. If you win it, you're stultified, if you lose it, you are destroyed. So I think that the outburst of utopian thinking at the end of the war was a response to poverty, degradation,



the clear sense that something had gone wrong, that people had to try something else out, and that released this flood of thought.

Petar, you didn't say this, but I'll try to put words in your mouth. There's a really important task which is the construction of agency, the construction of a 'we'. How do we become a 'we'? How do we get a sense that we have common purposes, common goals, and what role can utopian projects play in this? We were talking about the British political system, and the fact that the conservatives succeeded in convincing a large number of members of the working class to identify imaginatively with the aspirations to being members of the middle class. And if you can identify imaginatively with those aspirations, of course you've won the political discussion. A similar thing can happen if you engage in common projects. As you begin to engage in common projects, that's not just a question of thought or forms of thinking, it's a form of action, of interaction. If you have a common project, writing a grant, you'll meet every day, and if you meet every day you'll get to know one another, and if you get to know one another, that will lead to the generation of new needs, as Marx says – you'll want to see one another. I don't mean to reduce that, and, as you said, this image is not an image of collective action, it's an image of collective consumption, and not even collective consumption. I absolutely agree that that's not a model for human life, human life has to be more active and has to be about the constitution of agency, collective agency.

This is, however, an image of a peasant's idea. If you're a peasant in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, you might have the idea that it would be nice not to have to have collective action. The peasants didn't have to be told about collective activities then, they were out in the fields all the time in collective activities. Their utopian conception was Sabbath, end of the day, rest like this. That's a utopian conception, it's not a good utopian conception for us, because we are confronted with completely different problems. We are confronted with the problem of getting ourselves together, constituting ourselves as subjects who can't be pushed around by other people, and who have a locus of our own generation of thoughts and actions and values. I completely agree with that and think that it's tremendously important, but I would say that in that project of collective action, words can play a role and they must play a role, and they'll play a role in different ways. They will play a role in everyday interactions in which you talk with one another, everyday forms of discourse, they'll play the role of essays you might write and read together. They'll play different sorts of roles and I want to expand the spectrum of things that can play a role in that. So, construction of agency. And that's connected of course with what you quite rightly said – that a lot of utopias are connected with projective uses of language, rather than interactive uses, we're projecting different ways in which we could talk with one another.

Then finally you ask about analytical philosophy; well I've written this paper in the book called 'Dystopia, the Elements', which is about why I think analytical philosophy had an important historical role around the time of the First World War, but is actually now completely run out of steam and is now rather repressive and an impoverishing way of thinking about the world. That's what's in the first chapter of the book there. And that's part of the project of trying to defend at the same time utopianism and criticism: thinking of the task of utopian thinking, criticism

and these tasks of the positive generation of collective forms of agency. I'm thinking that analytical philosophy plays little positive role in any of these. It played a certain positive role in criticism for a while, and still does. Analytical philosophy has one strength which is the attention to the critical use of language, which is very important. We must be clear about the language we use, about the meanings we use, but there is no such thing as absolute clarity. Absolute clarity does not exist, and the pursuit of clarity in analytical philosophy has become an end in itself in a way that is self-destructive. To say that something is clear is to say it's clear enough for me in a context in which I'm trying to do something, and that's not an absolute magnitude, that's a relative magnitude. To absolutize that, as certain form of analytical philosophy does, is a mistake. I try to talk about that there, and in another paper that I wrote in the last collection called *Vix Intellegitur*, which is about Cicero's comment on Thucydides, which is that some of the sentences in Thucydides can barely be understood, and what does it say about the world, if you have a major historian that's written statements that can barely be understood. And why certain forms of failure of complete clarity might have some value and how in any case the idea that clarity was an absolute magnitude is a mistake.

BERNHARD WALDENFELS AND THE PHENOMENOLOGY  
OF THE FOREIGN

BERNHARD WALDENFELS I FENOMENOLOGIJA STRANOG



Žarko Paić

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE AN ALIEN? BERNHARD WALDENFELS AND POLITICS OF RESPONSIVE INTERCULTURALISM

### ABSTRACT

The author analyzes the politics of responsive interculturalism in Bernhard Waldenfels' thought, starting from the assumption that after Husserl's phenomenology only two fundamental concepts – body and the Other – should be considered. In contemporary German “post-phenomenology” the first concept was systematically articulated by Hermann Schmitz, while the latter theme has been advanced in Waldenfels' works as the phenomenology of the alien, up until the end of Western metaphysics. In the two parts of the discussion, the author draws on his fundamental hypothesis about aporias and paradoxes of interculturalism, since responsiveness and xenology cannot reach the positive definition of the concept of culture in the era of global entropy. The analysis, therefore, deals with the questions: (1) what is the responsiveness of man in relation to the Other, including the different ways of his presence in the world; and (2) whether the Other as alien and uncanny (*Unheimlich*) calls into question the basic assumption of phenomenology as such – the intentionality of consciousness?

### KEYWORDS

alien, phenomenology, responsiveness, irreducible asymmetry, interculturalism, body

### Introduction

If we should ask what remains of Husserl's phenomenology and its study of intentional consciousness, the answer would probably be as follows – a *body* and *Other*. When Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Levinas introduced into contemporary philosophy “the spirit of turn” of all metaphysical categories, abandoning its original starting point in the questioning of relations of Being, beings and the essence of man, phenomenology remained with no signifiers – Husserl's return to the so-called natural attitude. The question of consciousness and self-consciousness, which was so important concerning the assemblage of contemporary philosophy, denotes a redirected issue regarding the conditions of the possibility of thinking of what is not just the affiliation of the human decency with the tense, but rather the place of the encounter with the views and structures of Western metaphysics. Heidegger had rightly appointed onto-theological framework of history. The reason is that thinking necessarily begins with the question of Being and with the first cause, whether the primordial source of overall beings (*arché*). If phenomenology in the contemporary technical way of constructing the artificial intelligence and

artificial life lacks the object of its orientation, such as the manifest forms of human consciousness, then the only remaining area of its “resurrection” can possibly be distinguished in the *body* and *the Other*. By analogy, since metaphysics has been signified by the concept of subjectivity (the mind) of the new era, the return of the body to the post-metaphysical view of the Twentieth Century should not be understood from the return to materialism and physicalism, even less so to some dark side of psychologism. The body is considered in contemporary philosophy with the same riddle as consciousness but on the very different foundations of what the metaphysics of the mind has established. The term of the Other has developed with Husserl’s criticism of Cartesian heritage in contemporary thinking. And yet he did not radically break through the frames of subjectivity and self-consciousness or did not come out of the steel embrace of egology and anthropology. So, the contributions to his idea of transcendental intersubjectivity largely go in the direction of thinking of the community space constituted outside the reign of “I” and Ego (Schutz 1957: 81–107; Zahavi 1994).

As far as the first approach is concerned, it is well-known that it can be found mostly in Merleau-Ponty’s existential phenomenology, while another approach is shown in the most significant Levinas’ work *Totality and Infinity* (*Totalité et infini*) from 1961. There are multiple overlaps. For both French thinkers, the *body* and the *Other* at the same time signify the way into a labyrinth of feeling and an ethical call for freedom and justice in the community. The differences, of course, are unquestionable between their phenomenological research. In the contemporary philosophy, however, new approaches can be summarized as a *phenomenological analysis of the body* with the principal representative of Hermann Schmitz (Schmitz 2011) and as a *phenomenological analysis of the alien* with the Bernhard Waldenfels as the main thinker. The task of this review is to show how and in what way Waldenfels can even set up the problem of the Other as an alien, and also the way to an internal turn of phenomenology. This way of thinking Heidegger himself left almost immediately after the publication of *Being and Time* at the end of the 1920s. We should not neglect this fact. In the two parts, we would like to perform the critical reading of Waldenfels’ texts with regard to two questions: (1) what is the responsiveness of man in relation to the Other, including the different ways of its presence in the world; and (2) can we even think the Other as strange and unknown, and therefore uncanny (*Unheimlich*), without questioning the fundamental premise of phenomenology as such - the intentionality of consciousness?

## 1. Between responsiveness and “irreducible asymmetry”

In the lecture, which Bernhard Waldenfels entitled “Homo respondens”, held on the occasion of the foundation of FORhUM in Ljubljana in November 2014, where he developed items of phenomenology responsiveness with regard to the question of alien and the Other, first sentences are more than indicative:

Man is a being who puts himself in question. (...) Anthropology, which seeks to redeem each and every other egology, inevitably ends in an ideology that leaves the idea behind us dimmed. Since any speech is improperly or out of focus, someone is questioned - Who am I? - with a question - Who are you? (Waldenfels 2015: 8).

Developing further the different definitions of man through the history of metaphysics (*homo sapiens*, *homo erectus*, *homo faber*, *homo ludens* etc.), seems to be an attempt to realize purely phenomenological horizons as being questions-answers, which is much more than pointing out what we already knew about Heidegger's *Being and Time* (*Sein und Zeit*). In it, though, he does not speak of a man, but of a *being-there* (*Dasein*) whose essence lies in its existence (Heidegger 2018: 12). However, Waldenfels does not even care to remind us of this state of affairs, but rather to establish a different notion of the relationship between man and what is becoming irretrievable in our time. This is, of course, the technical term of communication which, unlike the so-called immediate one, triggers an excessive response. Moreover, it is as if a man is required to constantly be the one who answers the questions. And they are simultaneously performative statements and conceptual language games, commands, orders, suggestions, announcements. If, then, instead of Heidegger's "hermeneutic circle" in which the issue of necessity assumes a question about the man and Being, he wants to go a step further and see why the man himself must ask whether he would have any chance of being human, then it is obvious that anthropology, as well as egology, cannot escape the darkness of their own origins. Waldenfels really did not care about a new version of Descartes's suspicion in everything beyond thinking as a self-reflection of Being, beings and the essence of man. On the contrary, the subject of reflection lies in the relationship between two interrelated issues. Though formally here we deal with egology in the new garment and the phenomenology of the Other which is always derived from this or that concept of the subject, and which has also been the underlying problem of Husserl's intersubjectivity, it might be unquestionable to encounter something truly uncanny and mysterious (*Unheimlich*). If a man must ask himself, is his "destiny" quite determined by the inability to answer the question "Who am I?" without answering the question "Who are you?"

In the text of the lecture, by no means does Waldenfels give a "positive" or "negative answer" to the question of man, because it would mean that he had already assumed the results of some anthropology ranging from philosophical to structural and cybernetical. Man, therefore, at the very least, is always "somewhere in-between", halfway between animal and God, even though this "being in-between" (*Zwischenwesen*) is actually the one that only allows the Other (animal or God?) to become a philosophical problem (Waldenfels 2015: 7). Why? Not because it would stoop to the level of solipsism and epistemological constructivism, but because the thinking that belongs to the human way of telling the being necessarily holds the determinants of singularity and contingency. That is what Waldenfels has to assume, at the same time, as an improper assumption of the entire Western philosophy. "I" and "You" are not possible without a relationship that allows the existence of a person as a person, and the one who has yet to question it. Let us get rid of misunderstandings. It is not a matter of his will or desire to break down the "subject" to elementary particles. The necessity of self-determination of man comes from the necessity of his freedom. It paradoxically reveals itself in answering questions. Answer something that was dumped beforehand with the expectation of a solution of what was pre-thrown (gr. πρόβλημα, *problem*) means only the possibility of openness and uncertainty of his mode of existence. In the technical

landscape of the world turned into gadgets and autonomous objects this really becomes the question of everyday survival.

The responsive ethics of the Other thus has a phenomenological “advantage” to the ontological foundations of the world. But we shall make the big mistake if we attribute it to Waldenfels as the appropriation of ideas from Levinas’ critique of metaphysics. No ethics of the Other is preceded by the question of the limits of the relationship between man and other beings and worlds (Waldenfels 2002: 63–81; Paić 2013: 346–392).<sup>1</sup> Instead of such “radical” cuts, which have a tendency to deal with Heidegger’s “destruction of traditional ontology,” an attempt to create a turning point in thought, starting from what the metaphysics of the West had been from the very beginning in Greece, and that was the question about the body and human sensitivities (ethical-aesthetic turn of ontology), Waldenfels offers much more cautious and acceptable attempt at a “more practical” solution of the contemporary world. That does not come out from what is still called phenomenology. Unlike Schmitz, for example, it does not seem reasonable to deduce the notion of phenomenology to empirical science or any newer aspect of positivism (Waldenfels 1999: 43). It should be noted that his analysis, as is evident in the lecture “Homo respondens”, always patiently and interpretatively circulates around the same questions about the other, the stranger, the alien, what is neither “I” nor “You”, but it must be shown in essence as a question of how “I” and “You” can, at all, have their meaning by providing a break with traditional metaphysics of self and subjectivity, from Descartes to Hegel. In any case, it will seem strange why we would move in our analysis in reverse order: from the present thought path, towards the transmitted and largely adopted as the main determinant of its phenomenology, to the Other as an alien. The answer might be simple. Waldenfels from the very beginning of his observations sees a kind of “phenomenology of modernity”, and therefore to trace Husserl, Levinas and Merleau-Ponty is to try to find a new starting point for understanding the Other without the illusions that the Other as an alien (*Fremden*) can become “integrated” in the phenomenology of its own (*phänomenologie des Eigenen*). If we take this statement into the language of contemporary political practice, then refugees and homeless people in search of their own “new” identity can never lose their memories of living in homeland overnight and become pseudo-cosmopolitan beings without something of their own. The process of integration into a new (political) community presupposes a painstaking building of that “third” as the bond/relationship of “own” and “alien”.

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1 In the text titled “The Boundaries of Orders” Waldenfels explains that the notion of modernity is marked by two important discoveries: (1) the discovery of ourselves (“We”), which cannot be reduced to earlier times, nor to any social, political and cultural order, and (2) the discovery of contingency, which means that every order can become different than it is. In this way, the social alternatives of individualism and holism, particularism and universalism, relativism and absolutism appear in everyday discourse of the identity of a modern man. But instead of such logic either-or, Waldenfels advocates a “constitutive paradox”. It is about entering an alien figure into the world. This eliminates any form of consensus about the mutual relationship of what it is “Same”. Hence, living with that foreign and unknown means experiencing a different kind of limit and limitation (Waldenfels 2004: 71–86).



However, when Waldenfels deals with the problem of the Other, his intentions are essentially different from the way of thinking of the unconditional ethics of the Other by Emmanuel Levinas. In the book, *The Strangeness of Modernity: The Phenomenological Crossing Borders (Verfremdung der Moderne: Phänomenologische Grenzgänge)* from 2001, in the second chapter we can see the foundation of un-transgressiveness in the thinking of an alien as a stranger. Namely, the stranger is not someone other in the sense of selfishness and selfhood, someone very close to whom we address as “our” neighbour. It is the “irreducible strangeness” of his mode of existence. Certainly, we can precisely say that what modernity is at the same time should be a simultaneously exciting and a conflicting epoch of the world. The problem of an alien was in a strangely visible way a crack in Greek philosophy already in Plato (the Greek term ξένος *xenos* means someone who is not a member of “my” or “our” community, who is in the position of a borderline because it is neither “here” or “there”). In his work *The Laws* (Νόμοι) about a state with regard to the freedom of association in the community, it is a vague noun, as the political and policy provides an additional mystery and ambiguity (Plato 1988). Unlike Greek democracy and its dark places, constraints and disaggregations by sex/gender, ethnic origin and social class exclusion (women, strangers, slaves), modern era could be characterized by the aspiration of fulfilling political rights in principle for all citizens. But regardless of this standardized process that remains in the sphere of formal civil rights, it might be clear that anything that does not belong to the nation-state rooting and its leading culture and politics is considered as uncannily strange and unacknowledged. In his book, Waldenfels cites the German humorist Karl Valentin:

“Stranger is an Alien even in the strangeness”.

There is no doubt that this cannot be highlighted about Husserl’s intersubjectivity, by means of which we can retrieve the position of the Other from our “perspective” of thought. But thinking cannot be reduced to the act of reflection and self-reflection of an intentional subject. Its complexity is in that what comes from the contingency of the event, and it affects the human affectivity and performance of the language. The thinking, then, could never be a neutral act of indifferent computing in dealing with things. In the encounter with the Other, as Merleau-Ponty clearly showed, I have experience of the body of my own existence. It is not only the test concerning the ethical reasons of compassion for the suffering of the Other (Merleau-Ponty 1945). We should devote much more attention to the test of what has been established over time in the paradigm of modernity in the West – about the rational thinking of science, capitalist social order, the system of values, and finally the meaning of culture. Alienableness of an alien should be almost impossible to be seen from the traditional metaphysical idea of a subject and object, which has its origins in the new era. What remains is to search for the meanings and notion of the Other in its stranger/alien position, thus questioning the security of the existential organization of my “own” (Waldenfels 2001). What does all this have to do with the responsiveness of a man and his ability to answer the questions asked and to ultimately question himself? Waldenfels has become aware, from the very beginning of dealing with the question of “phenomenology of the alien”, that a man can no longer be determined philosophically via some of

his external attributes. Labour and technology, science and production, however, belong to the human way of securing material existence. But for the Greeks, these were areas that had lower formal rank than pure theory. *Praxis* and *poiesis* have the decisive power in the historical advancement and development of Western civilization. Nevertheless, the essence of human existence, no matter how important it is, is solved on the ground of confrontation with the Other as its own boundary of human dignity and this ultimately has an ontological significance. The man as a free being in its immediate ability to communicate with each other confirms itself as a being who can only answer the question about the conditions of possibility of self-transformation into something else entirely, and even inhuman just as we bear witness to experiments with artificial intelligence and its astonishing and simultaneously problematic issues in the *posthuman condition* (Paić 2011).

The man as a *homo respondens* recalls, as Waldenfels says, Aristotle's definition of a human as a living being who possesses logos (ζῶον λόγον ἔχον, *zoon logon echon* or *animal rationale*). The problem is that the mind in the sense of a transcendental subject does not rise in the modern age to the language as a saying, although many evidences will support Rorty's "linguistic turn" or Habermas' "post-metaphysical thinking" in which language has the function of the fundamental signifier of contemporaneity. However, with the introduction of cognitive-digital machines, human thinking and communication have become visual, so language can no longer be considered as a decisive instance of mediation. Instead, Waldenfels introduces into circulation what connects the language, body and freedom of human decision to a situation that is not predetermined by the "necessity" of society, politics and culture. Everything is contingent and becomes subject to change. Hence, the phenomenology of responsiveness does not refer to the expected human responses in the sense of mere confirmation of the statement to the orders and of pointing them out. What is really a responsivity? In the aforementioned lecture, Waldenfels argues that this term must be understood from the "strangeness of modernity", which means that "a man who responds is neither a lord of things nor their ball to play" (Waldenfels 2015: 8). What kind of answers should be "expected" from the contemporary man? First of all, they are "technically standardized, normal and creative responses", but their performance is shown as the communicative opportunity of encounter and dialogue with the Other on the very different social and cultural assumptions from all previous periods in history. The reason is self-explanatory. We live, in fact, in a globalized order of the rule of techno-scientific production results, which are visible in what sociologist Manuel Castells calls the "network society" and what media theoretician Vilém Flusser named a "telematic society" (Paić 2008).

In Waldenfels' book about "strangeness of modernity" except the phenomenological description of the state of affairs with the position of man and the world, much more attention was paid to the new approach to a foreigner as such. It is therefore not by chance that interpersonal inter- and trans-discursivity means the path of open dialogue with Other. Nothing is closed in itself. As long as this alien in its "strangeness" finds itself in the very idea of "self-propriety" of a subject that answers the question of the Other as an alien, it is so certain that there is no royal way of integrating it into the value system of the dominant culture. But Waldenfels in his *phenomenology of the alien* cannot establish a model of communication that

would fall below the level of Habermas' "ideal speech situation" as a condition for the possibility of the post-national constellation of democracy (Habermas 1981: 107–108). Therefore, responsiveness is always in relation to the pathos of corporeal affection. We are not machines. In addition, we do not have an obligation to listen to the orders of some kind of uncanny program to accept instructions for the further operation from the office of "Big Other". After all, we do not behave just like mass audiences at stadiums or as an unbridled crowd ready to chase selfish individuals in autocratic tyranny. Freedom of non-response allows responsiveness to be both resistance and protest, and subversion and disadvantageous system based on the idea of engaging and disconnecting the Other. In various studies, discussions, and lectures during 1997–2001, Waldenfels clarified what *phenomenology of the alien* (*Phänomenologie des Fremden*) means. Interestingly, the topics and concepts developed, such as "order" (*Ordnung*), "the pathos" (*Pathos*) "response" (*Antwort*), "body" (*Leib*), "attention" (*Aufmerksamkeit*) and "interculturalism" (*Interkulturalität*), are an extremely complex network of what remains of the phenomenology after Husserl. Between the *body* and *the Other* in their complex relationship, it should be obvious that Waldenfels' basic "categories" and "existentials" are related to the consideration of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology and existential phenomenology of body and Levinas' ethics of the Other. It is, therefore, significant to point out that his way of thinking denotes precisely the place between Husserl and French contemporary thinkers who were first in the 20th century to seriously take into consideration the relationship between man's corporeality and the perception of the Other. These six terms are not ranked in line with the spirit of classical metaphysics. After all, hierarchical order just creates the inevitable and inescapable exclusion of the Other. It could be therefore legitimate to introduce into the discussion the concept of the "irreducible asymmetry" (*untilgbare Asymmetrie*) between "individuality" and "alienness" (Waldenfels 2006: 28; Gmainer-Franzel 2008: 115–117).

Such asymmetry clearly points to the problem of constituting something that can no longer be carried out on the basis of intentional consciousness. This term meant the orientation of thought in the sense of reflection on the subject of consciousness. For the late Husserl, the discovery of the concept of the life-world (*Lebenswelt*) had far-reaching consequences to the new phenomenology. The thinking takes place as an event in the space-time world. Therefore, it encompasses the whole man as a person with all his possibilities of understanding and knowledge about the Being. The mind, hence, is not pushing more superior feelings. In this regard, phenomenology and psychoanalysis were related to the discovery of a primarily human body in the world. Namely, the *body of the Other* in its eccentric "foreignness" tells us that we are close to each other only in the distance. His/her "I" must be affirmed in relation to my "I" from something that connects us to humans. Obviously, it could not be any more of a fiction of a cosmopolitan community of mankind by Kant and his followers in the sense of the ruling of the universal over the particular. The experience of the relationship with the Other as "the Other" takes place on the perception and attention as a moment of perception of his/her body. For Waldenfels' language as the means/purpose of communication, it is always the task of establishing "responsive rationality". The problem arises, of

course, because the dialectical logic of the synthesis of opposites in the meaning of opposing differences might not enter into force here. However, unlike Derrida and ways of deconstructing logocentrism or Deleuze's ontology differences as becoming (*devenir*, *Werden*) in the process of design-scape of "desiring machines", Waldenfels' direction goes to what reconciles Husserl's desire to transcend physicalism and psychologism awareness and introduction into circulation of "irreducible asymmetry" in that moment. Is it even possible to establish, in real life, an intercultural dialogue between "own" and "foreign", without the constitution of some higher-level instance that this relationship bestows though a quite fragile sustainability? In other words, can there be a true dialogue without the strong hand of the "Big Third"?

The idea of "irreducible asymmetry" refers hence to the autonomy of the relationship beyond the hierarchy and order based on the transcendental authority of the Father/Law, to use the concept of Lacan. Namely, for the relationship to have the confidentiality and the proximity between "one's own" and "the Other" one must suspend any *a priori* form of hostility towards the Other. Within "responsive phenomenology" this becomes a key motive for any further development of initial assumptions about dialogue and interculturality. And what if the "hostility" as opposed to "friendship" is what necessarily arises from the relationship that "singularity" in relation to "alienness" considers cultural set point, and that the other needs in one way or another to accept, because otherwise it will stay out of history? It is interesting that Waldenfels' turn to the whole part of the terms "responsiveness" coincides with high ethical and political revolution of the 1990s in the thinking of Levinas and particularly Derrida. In the case of Derrida, we must not forget that his last seminal work entitled *The Politics of Friendship (Politiques de l'amitié)* has been published in 1994 (Derrida 1994). There is a thought on something unusual for the philosophy of politics from Plato and Aristotle to Hegel. But it could be obvious that non-political elements of thought have become decisive for the understanding of the contemporary world, not more than conceptual-categorical determinations derived from the metaphysics of the mind. Friendship-hostility belongs to the terms of decisionism performed in modern political theory by Carl Schmitt. However, in Waldenfels' use, it is more than obvious that the answer to the question of human identity in the age of global networking of science, technology and information requires different ways of interacting with the Other. We cannot explicitly say that it is about returning to the dark core of the body, or what Lacan calls ethics of psychoanalysis. When the desire for truth and justice becomes the key to understanding the ethical requirements of man, and not Kant's rigorous mental rules and norms, it becomes twisted. However, the foundations are not radically altered. The system continues to act perhaps even better on quite different assumptions.

But Waldenfels is aware that the *politics of responsive interculturalism* must develop into a new experience of relations with the Other as "own strangeness". So, a friendship is not a mere denial of hostility. It belongs to the "irreducible asymmetry", between two participants in the communication process. This requires mutual trust and desire for understanding the Other. Otherwise, everything seems futile. There cannot be a good and just community if freedom does not radiate from participants in dialogue regardless of their cultural differences. In that regard, the

freedom cannot be a phenomenological problem simply because it encompasses the idea that flows from the desire to be free, from that kind of thinking that Heidegger in *Being and Time* appointed as the pre-ontological understanding of Being. To comprehend the desire for freedom is necessarily to acknowledge the Other's freedom to keep "his own", even when it exists in a quite "other" space of life. Thus, the place of foreignness in the experience appears with all the accompanying thoughtful apparatus as a bitter slump of freedom in the space-time of human common being. So many misunderstandings are already present in the very language of speaking with regard to this experience which we have named from the experience of an alien from Plato to Albert Camus. Being-as-an-alien means, in many European languages, something marginal, excessive, uncanny. Waldenfels shows both in English and French languages the foreign and other people are something external (*externum, foreign, étranger*). In fact, it is about something beyond our own area of action. Additionally, to be "strange" assumes a basic concept of a speculative-dialectical system of Hegel, it then appears in Feuerbach's anthropological critique of religion, and reaches a milestone in the early Marx who fixes ontological terms to the concept of labour. Of course, the word-concept is – *alienation (Entfremdung)*. Anyway, what is not "your own" has the meaning of uncanny discomfort. The man is obviously afraid of an encounter with strangers and aliens, and this has the very origins in the ancient times as we have to witness in the traces of the Greeks from Sophocles to Plato (Waldenfels 1990; Waldenfels 1997: 68–69).

Language, therefore, directly points to signs of the Being. Hence in the German language, it is foreign or strange (*Fremde*) and is located between the alienation, or *Entfremdung* (Hegel-Feuerbach-Marx) and the A-effect, or *Verfremdung* (Brecht). To be an alien means to always be elsewhere, outside of your own homeland, extradited to the possible hospitality of "native people" and equally to their "hostility", almost to the rejection of being accepted and recognized in "its own strangeness". There is nothing in advance to give a guarantee that the event of communication on the assumptions of trust and closeness to human understanding will be successful. It seems as if we are talking about something we are constantly encountering in the world-historical events of the political nature: it should be like post-metaphysical thinking in the new order of rapprochement between warring states period and their citizens. But, as Levinas has chosen for the model of his unconditional ethics of the Other the face of refugees and displaced persons from their native homeland and their own country, so Waldenfels necessarily has to have figures of foreigners and guests in another country in his *phenomenology/xenology* (Prole 2017: 172–192). The figure means nothing other than the outline of a universal character (*eidōs*), which Husserl himself often uses in his texts in his late period, and also in the famous work *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*. Can philosophy exist without such thoughts? We should immediately note that this does not mean anything but the primacy of modal categories of reality different from possibility. Similarly, philosophy does not mean a mere description of what "is" and how it is happening in space and time. We could determine the main problem of Waldenfels' phenomenology of the Other as an alien by the impossibility of his understanding of "responsiveness", which is just another way of critiquing Habermas' theory of communicative action. Let us not forget that the notion

of communication in the theory of Habermas simply denotes a contemporary way of explaining the complexity of the rare undisputed “life-world” (*Lebenswelt*).<sup>2</sup> It is well known that he took it from the late Husserl’s thinking.

However, the difference between one’s own and another’s world (*Heimwelt* versus *Fremdwelt*) for Waldenfels is not fixed and forever persistent. The difference, namely, originates from Husserl and does not relate to atypical phenomena but is ontologically established. There is much evidence for this claim. Waldenfels mentions the difference between “his” and “foreign” language, which belongs to the “innate” and “learned” (Waldenfels 1993). Responsivity is not possible in a common world without what Plato claims to be philosophical as the thinking of the Being. It designates a dialogue, a conversation in which the position of the Other reveals the impossibility of his conception as a mere other or different “I”. In addition, it could be no coincidence that Plato in the *Laws* embodied an *Alien* or a nameless man in the lead in conducting the dialogue. In an attempt to be able to understand the world inhabited by the irreducible Other, regardless of the differences in culture, there must be a desire to talk. Therefore, this desire is also the highest aspiration of philosophy. In that case, however, a contemporary phenomenology might be manifested in inter- and trans-discursivity. Finding another as my neighbour contemplates at the same time his approach as well as a departure from his own “innate” indifference towards anything that does not belong to what Wittgenstein designated with the statement “the limits of my language mean the limits of my world” (Wittgenstein 1922: 5–6). In it, the place of residence was questioned when an alien as a stranger came into the world. Everything suddenly becomes a space of uncanny discomfort and neglect. Such anxiety represents the highest form of fear of sinking into the abyss of nothingness of the existence of the singular individual, so the fear of the foreign world and its culture assumes the features of loosening the ground of its feet. Hence, a man is in the encounter with the one of his own – faced with the event of a radical change of the world and of life in general. Nobody can remain indifferent about such matters.

2 Husserl’s notion of the *life-world* (*Lebenswelt*) is articulated in *Die Krisis der Europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie: eine Einleitung in die Phänomenologische Philosophie* (Husserl 2010). In short, the powerful semantic level of the term derives from the question of the meaning and sense of human life in the scientific and technical way of life production in general. In this respect, the notion already has something that will soon become the fundamental notion of modern science but also of philosophy. It is about “life”, about the living that opposes every kind of contingency and human posture. The life-world denotes for Husserl the self-explanatory ground for the emergence of every science, art and human practical arts. It is simultaneously a “primordial sphere”. The term is used in a twin way: (1) as the anthropological foundation of man’s relationship to the world and (2) as a practical, pervasive, concrete life-world. In relation to the socio-cultural environment, the concept of the life-world insofar as it occurs universally and almost the same is what belongs to man as such in all historical epochs. However, the problem lies in the fact that only with the modernity due to method of natural sciences can we detect the spiritual-historical essence of man as irreducible. Preserving the world of life should not be just an ethical duty in every culture and society. It is an imperative of human existence and can only be understood from it by differences and similarities in culturally specific communities and societies (Marx 1987; Luckmann 2002: 55–67).

## 2. The End of Intentionality? Double Strategy Approaching

It is strange, as in its incomprehensibility, meaningless, does not mean any unspecified X who is waiting for it to be determined. The alien *shows that it could be unknown* (Waldenfels 1997: 73).

Waldenfels shows us what was already transparent to Nietzsche and Heidegger: that man as an “incomplete being” or as a being-there (*Dasein*) is always and will always be lacking, and, with the paradoxical aspirations that when approaching the Other remains at a distance, is never to be united with the source of its separation. Therefore, the relationship between “personality” and “alienation” cannot be solved in a dialectical way. There must be a gap between these two modes of being, that is, between these two phenomenological modes of what Heidegger in *Being and Time* has called an authentic notion of time versus vulgar. Without one, the Other cannot be distanced. Likewise, in this game of non-communitarian and asymmetrical nature of human contingency, it is only undeniable that it cannot be radically alienated in the language of self-determination. Being-as-an alien means to be different and viewed from the horizons of difference. We can say that, in advance, Waldenfels, in the wake of Merleau-Ponty, does not understand this difference as “ontological”, as it is for Heidegger an ontological difference between Being and beings, without which even the metaphysics of the West and its history could not be possible. Instead, this difference stems from what is unknown in its essential indefinite nature and is shown in this way. Showing a stranger pass through space-time that is neither authentic nor vulgar, but constituted as a relationship of “one’s own strangeness” towards “the stranger of our own”. We cannot be Other even if we wanted it to be, because we always retain the demonic nature of the factual existence of that before we become the Other. This is not just the problem of contemporary interculturalism. On the contrary, it should be a problem that is crucial for the entire historical-epochal destiny of the West with the arrival of the Christian religion. As is well-known, the authentic time that preaches Christianity with the coming of St. Paul designates the time of presence (*parousia*) as the bonds/relationship between the truth and the freedom of man in relation to God. And this means the possibility of abstinence and radical change of man in his mode of existence (*metanoia*). Changing from the foundation might be possible only when thinking opens space to a different world that comes, as once Nietzsche marvelous wrote – “on the pigeon’s feet”.

Waldenfels, on different occasions, testified the issues of some important sociologists and anthropologists-ethnologists, like Norbert Elias and Claude Lévy-Strauss, regarding the theme of the Other and strangeness which they introduced into the discourse of social sciences and humanities in the second half of the 20th century. The problem is, however, that in the end, it could always be only the “adopting” of the Other (*Aneignung*) and not its “irreducibility”. To appropriate means to integrate something or someone into one’s “own” culture in a way that almost reminds us of the exotics that have features of “domestication”. It is not unusual, therefore, that contemporary discussion will continue to be a sign of “modernist” and “postmodernist”, universalist and particularistic, contextualist and constructive approach, with regard to the question of what is primarily a mystery for Western metaphysics.

It is not just a matter of a stranger as an alien, but moreover, the problem is what we should do with animals and their way of being, regarding the contemporary advancement in neurocognitive sciences and technosciences overall (Paić 2018). In general, each question of the Other might be necessarily a question of anonymous Third, as shown by the contributions of Sartre, Merleau-Ponty and Levinas. What we have shown in Waldenfels' rejection of Habermas' theory of communicative action, is that the problem of "rational responsiveness" continued in all his other writings about the possibility of other specific communities outside Husserl's intersubjectivity. When, for example, Waldenfels argues that "interculturality transcends *trans-culturalism*", while "the difference between one's own and a foreign one leads to *communicative indifference*" (Waldenfels 1997: 78), we always listen to the same old story from Plato to Gadamer. It is, therefore, necessary to break away from the foundations of this "one-way dialogue". Undoubtedly, the hermeneutics cannot be performed on that ground. The reason is that the understanding of the Other as an alien cannot cross the threshold of the so-called "an authentic way of understanding". Namely, we could only listen and hear that Other one as the Other. But it cannot even realise that his "self-interest" is one that challenges our self-confident and self-contained logo-phonocentrism. Answering a foreigner's request means releasing a space for a kind of "responsiveness" different from the one that stands in the foundations of Western metaphysics. That is a reason why Waldenfels has to look for a place where the dialogue and discourse responsiveness in an inter-cultural/trans-cultural sense are not only possible but also the necessary, not to the extent that it requires a change in the direction of thinking. Instead of listening to the wishes of the Other, it is necessary to figure out how the "irreducible asymmetry" can be opened to the fullest extent for the one between "one's own strangeness" and "the Other of our own". In other words, it should be necessary to re-examine how to arrive from the phenomenology of the corporeality of the Other to the primary feeling that leads to interaction in communication, and not to "appropriation" and "domestication".

In a text entitled "Thinking of the Alien" ("Das Fremde Denken"), published in 2007, Waldenfels introduces the distinction between the radical and relative thinking of the foreigner. The latter refers to our knowledge that is always limited, and the example is taken from the foreign language. The radical thinking of an Alien/Other is the one which goes to the very root of things. Hence, foreignness separates itself from *its own* (*Eigenen*) and the *common* (*Gemeinsame*) (Waldenfels 2007: 361–362). It might be very interesting that the latter is derived from the political universalism of Western democracies. Constitutional document as a fundamental law on which modern state rests at the same time assumes the logic of exclusion, because in the case foreigners, those who for various reasons are the citizens of the nation-state, it does not recognize their legitimacy as alienness of political subjects. In order to develop the "philosophy of the alien", Waldenfels' phenomenology must lead to the end of the possibility of the basic concept of Husserl's – intentionality. It is well known that the distinction between *noesis* and *noema* (thoughts and objects) has shaped the essence of the phenomenological approach to the things as such. Starting from the so-called natural attitude, using eidetic and phenomenological reduction (*epoché*), the thinking directly *sees* the essence of being without quasi-mediation.



But in the case of Waldenfels's concept on the trajectories of Merleau-Ponty and Levinas, it should be obvious that both the thinking and its subject can no longer be performed in anthropology and egology. We have seen, however, that Waldenfels strictly denies those traces of phenomenology that remain dimmed. Facing the "irreducible asymmetry" of an alien as such in space-time communication between people in a globally networked society, Husserl's inter-objectivity can no longer be a salvific solution. Why? Let us recall that Husserl understands intentionality as an act of awareness (*noesis*) on the subject (*noema*). Each intentional act has noetic content. Thinking or *noesis* has a realistic character, meaning that things give their own meaning. *Noema* is a "sense" (*Sinn*) of an object. To avoid the attack of Kant's transcendentalism of the subject, Husserl develops the intentional content of the thought mission directed at (1) the intentional object of the act; (2) intentional matter; and (3) intentional nature of the act. Finally, the noetic-noematic structure of consciousness in intentional acts of perception, imagination, memories are the same. By rejecting Berkeley's solipsism and Kant's transcendental idealism, Husserl did not become a cognitive realist. The objects, therefore, in the real world have their meaning only when they are witnessed as the acknowledged objects of our perception, imagination and memories (Husserl 2009). However, this cannot be applied to the figure of an alien. The reason lies in how the manner of his appearing is uncanny indeterminacy and a mystery for consciousness in the meaning of "subject" and "I". To be able to think what is strange in its strangeness Waldenfels comes to the results of French poststructuralism with the revised Habermas' project of the theory of communicative action. Decentered subject matter and a plurality of rationality create the preconditions of the creation of a new space for the thinking of the Other as a foreign/alien (Waldenfels 2007: 363).

Let us see how Waldenfels depicts his *phenomenology of the alien* in view of the assumptions of a new approach to the problem. There are, therefore, several discernible framework definitions, motives, and efforts to it:

- Alien is encountered in the form of the experience of foreignness and is preceded by the knowledge, understanding and acknowledgement of the stranger. Affective relationships here are more important than the rational arrangement.
- Alien is not just a state of disadvantage, but a complement to one's own. This is the approaching that Freud calls uncanny (*Unheimliche*), and Benjamin – *aura*.
- The radical form of foreign matters can only be understood in a paradoxical way as a "perceived inability" that goes beyond our own possibilities. The relationship is asymmetric because I never see you in the same way as myself.
- The strangeness is separated into different dimensions: the stranger of myself, the stranger of the Other, and the stranger of another order. It begins with one's own body, in one's own house and on the ground. An example is the mother language which we learn by listening to the Others. Waldenfels here introduces the notion of *ecstatic extinction* related to the restriction of the Other because the Other is twofold and duplicate. When the rest of myself is established in the reflection of my own, then the ecstatic state of the strangeness is complete.

- Being angry is manifested in all the cornerstones that enable us to live together. In addition to the ecstatic and duplicative form, an outsider also has a third form of so-called *extraordinary* strangeness.
- Alien can only be experienced indirectly as a deviation from the normal and the excess. The examples Waldenfels states are a gift and forgiveness, but also excesses like hate and violence as well as pain and trauma. When a person stands inside and out of culture then he/she can be asserted for him/her as it has been done by philosophical anthropologist Helmuth Plessner when he has determined a man as “eccentric positionality”.
- Annihilation has to be thought in plural because it has a multitude of different forms of foreign as well as *Ordnungen*. This is not of importance to strangers or wanderers, but to patients or victims (Waldenfels 2007: 364–365).

Having in mind all this, we can conclude that Waldenfels is almost comprehensively considering that which enters into the phenomenology of the alien. From the aspects of activities different from feeling to experience, from customs to the cultural habits of man in society and the common way of Being. In particular, it is interesting to use the literature, which is mostly an ethnographic inspiration, in order to spread its widespread insight into “xenological endeavours”. But immediately it becomes clear that we are witnesses of the transgression of disciplinary boundaries, like the one done to the ethnology and anthropology of culture. How much this issue is of a multiple significance is reflected in the contemporary policy of refugees, asylum seekers and stateless people. In recent texts, Waldenfels is increasingly concerned with the understanding of an alien as a refugee in the pluralist cultural societies of the West. It might not be necessary to point out specifically why it should be exactly that. The huge refugee wave of people from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq since 2015 is represented as a serious security policy issue to the European Union and also to the member states, and the way to tackle this “humanitarian issue” has far-reaching consequences for future global relations and possible deficits of democratic principles of equality, freedom and justice in the environment of Europe and the West (Waldenfels 2017: 89–105). In the context of “cultural entropy”, when globalism opposes localism, Waldenfels warns of the possibility of the resurrection of the ideology of “blood and soil”. Therefore, “selfishness” can no longer think of the authentic relationship between man and the ideas that have been attached to the West and the world by the seal of wisdom and knowledge. Threatening, instead, with a danger resulting from the aggressive and paranoid struggle for so-called one’s own identity before endangering external and internal enemies. If we look more closely at how Waldenfels develops his *phenomenology of the alien* in the last texts with regard to the “political entropy” of the global order, we will notice that it is no longer a dispute about the end of intentional consciousness – the keywords of Husserl’s phenomenology. Much more problematic seems that which comes out of phenomenology and could never have been adequately thought, including Merleau-Ponty’s and Levinas’ attempts, and the same applies to all the interpretations of late Heidegger, who repudiated phenomenology roughly after *Being and Time*. Heidegger called it a *being-with* (*Mit-Sein*). As part of post-phenomenological attempts, such as those being done by

Jean-Luc Nancy, we can call it the thinking of the upcoming community (Nancy 2014). Of course, it is in this regard to think of that strange and eccentric first-rate task with regard to the problem of the political constitution of such a community, which can no longer be backward, in the bosom of a nostalgic order of *polis* or the *Republic* of ancient times of democracy (Paić 2013). The alien is not “marginal”, as it could not only be “just” about the normative order of the ruling “innate” culture.

We have seen in the foregoing considerations that Waldenfels is trying to give space to a different notion of the body and mind as a dialogue and responsiveness between the participants in communication. However, his fundamental idea represents the one that connects the feeling, experience and comprehending of the Other as an “irreducible asymmetry” of what is strange and foreign and appears just like such experience. We could paraphrase Marx and say that nothing inhumane is no uncanny to us. Maybe it was before and there, but it is not right now. Why? Because strangers and outsiders cannot, in their mode of relativity and paradoxes, keep up with the riddle, some uncanny elevated object of uncertainty. It changes depending on how much the asymmetry really shows a dual approach strategy. What would otherwise be the policy of interculturalism today, if not just this new approach to learning and taking care of the Other? There is no doubt, however, that this process will be extremely painful. In the era of *technosphere* when artificial intelligence, by accelerating the operation of “thinking” and “acting” in accordance with the programmed responsiveness of the Other, the question of an alien is no more so enigmatic and even eccentric as it could be before technical hyper-modernization. But is the technique a solution to a problem that is disturbed by what is happening in the thriving space of a concrete community and society, politics and ideology? The answer lies in the spirit of Waldenfels’ texts. The technical level of this problem is by no means “neutral”. Let us recall that for the philosopher of technology like Gilbert Simondon even the robot is the alien and the ultimate in the human world.<sup>3</sup> The technology appears, therefore, as it is alienated, strange, and by no means its own. Over time, this way of a relationship has changed. It is not possible to isolate the technique from the socio-cultural context of human existence.

If the Waldenfels has “intentionality transformed into responsiveness” (Waldenfels 2003), then the path of phenomenology in the new conditions of the action of globally networked societies must be labelled as a “post-phenomenological path”. Otherwise, in one place, intentionality should be described as “shibboleth” of phenomenology. It is apparent now that the communication potential of the existence of man in a historical-epochal sense does not hide in the answer to the question of an alien. We said above that the answer assumes not just listening to the war orders and his missionaries, to say what Heidegger named in the 1930s as a trace of his thinking of the *Event (Ereignis)* (Heidegger 2009). What is Waldenfels’ transformation of fundamental phenomenological concepts and categories?

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3 “The machine is an alien; and that stranger who is just creating that human, it evokes it, materializes it, serves him, but always remains out of the reach of the human. The real cause of alienation in the modern world consists in this ignorance of machine, which is not alienation caused by machine, but by the unknown knowledge of its nature and its being, the absence of the world of meaning and its lack of a value table and in the notions that have a share in culture” (Simondon 1958/1969/1989: 9–10).

First of all, in the fact that the word “*Ordnung*” lies now in the foreground, instead of “the world”, and instead of “us” (We) comes the “stranger/alien”. Everything is related to new boundaries and delimitations, and what is particularly important is that the notion of the Other is holding in the meaning taken by Levinas. He even claims that ethics (the Other) becomes the first philosophy or ontology. Waldenfels’ intention is a completely different way of thinking (Friesen 2014: 68–77). Although in our consideration, the term “The Other” is used as a way of presenting an alien and a stranger in an existential situation of deceit in an “order” or “world” that has already been defined as a cultural-plural context of Western civilization, but vice versa with raising the level of communication in the global order of capitalism, there is a clear difference between their mode of Being. The Other is not necessarily a stranger. Moreover, an alien does not have to be the Other in any historical-epochal situation, because its fundamental determinant is to appear and to act in the way of a stranger to someone or something, but even to itself. Marx, for example, has developed the ontological notion of alienation which is alienated from nature, from other people in alienated society, from a man to man, or from himself in his own singular existence. Consequently, it might be only probable to say that the alien is someone quite Other. This is true only when it appears as the opposite order with egologically established awareness of the subject.

How does Waldenfels approach the body on the phenomenological way? It has become commonplace to follow the critique of Descartes’ dualism of the two substances. So it should be the case in his attempt. The synthesis of the mind and corporeality presupposes that the body is manifested through the sensation of seeing and hearing, touch and smell, movement and rest. But in the first place, the body can be understood as a whole of self-defence in all directions. It is not, therefore, a reflection of something derived from transcendental consciousness as the first cause and ultimate purpose of human thought. The body, as well as the machine throughout the history of metaphysics, has been an alien and an unknown territory in philosophy and humanities. Paradoxically, since the new era, when more attention to the scientific sense has begun to be devoted the body, it is increasingly locked in the bonds of physicalism and psychology. But Waldenfels does not approach the same way such as Foucault and Deleuze. His interest in the body is mediated by the achievements of the existential phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty. What makes it crucial for further analysis of the subject within philosophy and humanities refers to the movement in the reverse direction of Husserl’s philosophy of intersubjectivity. Being a body means being in the way of openness of sensitivity, feelings and experiences as the primary ways of intuitive knowledge of the foreign-in-world. Since Waldenfels, as a condition, is phenomenologically embracing the notion of “the world” because it is not in a concrete analysis of human relations in the space and time of encountering different cultural “worlds”, it is self-evident that the body’s self-replication and self-referentiality of the body occur through pathos and responsiveness of events in the relationship between “personality” and “alienation”. The body is never a mere means for any other purpose. In addition, the body denotes a phenomenological indicator of the relationship between man and the world, or, in other words, human existence and its established order of value in living as an articulation of the meaning of the Being.

Why is responsiveness beyond the limits of intentionality? The answer specifies a plan already in the orientation of consciousness toward objects “one-time” as the causal flow of information. This model of communication prevails, though, in the world based on the logic of purpose-aim, cause-effect. However, Waldenfels introduces a decentered subject into circulation and a plurality of rationality in the dialogue between “one’s own” and “alienation”. In this way, it extends the circle of mutual relationship and understanding. But no longer an extraterrestrial object in its materiality—the content of the message or awareness of “the subject”. Responsivity should be noted as a multifaceted model of communication. And in it, even the phenomenon of attention has a moment of the presence of a change of “subject” and “object”. It does not sound pretentious to say that Waldenfels promotes intentionality, starting from what is in quantum physics, cybernetics and contemporary philosophy in the area of the phenomenology of the object. In this case, the inaccuracy of an alien, his insensitivity to intentional intersecting intellect in the object-space of action can make a turn in the essence of phenomenology. So, the phenomenology is now redirected to try not to close the circle from one perspective and listen, but to asymmetrically open in the new possibilities of dialogue and discourse about a stranger as such. Multilateral communication request significantly changes the position of “one’s own” against the “Other”. For Waldenfels, it is perfectly clear that this necessarily critically goes beyond the limitation of access to the Other as an expanded horizon of the meaning of “appropriating” and “integrating” into the predominant “world” of the society and culture with dark origins. We see now that this does not mean just a shortcoming in the thinking of the logo-phonocentrism of the West. It is also a requirement to begin to think what was not possible to think just because the object X (from man to machine) felt excluded. The stranger/alien, therefore, in its existential unease of otherness and exclusion of metaphysical thinking necessarily appear as excess infection (Waldenfels 2009).

There remains, however, a completely different “obscure origin” of what Waldenfels in his lecture “Homo respondens” particularly emphasized. In a strange way, this is the main theme and motif of the metaphysics of the end of modernity. It is the notion of emotions, feelings and awareness. In all relevant philosophical speculations, the notion appears in such a way that it causes the reflection of body and body as a condition of aesthetics and ethics. What was neglected, pushed aside, ultimately having a second-rate character for the new philosophy or ontology of realism, is at once an extraordinary meaning? In the works of Deleuze and Levinas, in Nancy and Waldenfels, we witness the return of feelings to the reflection of a new body of bodies in relation to what neurocognitive science does today. For how else to explain what this post-phenomenology refers to when, instead of the intentionality of consciousness in the acts of perception, experience and memories, advocates responsiveness on the boundary between communicative rationality and the requirement of recognizing the strangeness in one’s own identity. Waldenfels, in his article “Strange in Own: Origins of Emotions” from 2006, already recalls in the introductory sections that Husserl also felt that the notion of feeling grew into a “mentally inward world”. So, this means that it could be “appropriated” from psychology and anthropology and thus lost in the thematization of the positive

sciences of the contemporary age (Waldenfels 2006). But if the feeling is understood in Kant's meaning, then it becomes a relationship between natural and moral laws. In both cases, the feeling is shown by some external means. That is a reason why it appears as a function of something else. Can we ever have a "feeling" for understanding the alien as our own in the other skin and that it does not degrade in the "sentimentalism", in that "merely physicalism", which is certainly not appropriate for reflections in and resides outside the horizon that is established by the transcendental subject of a new era?

When Waldenfels argued that Husserl "freed the feelings from their subjective fingers," giving them intentional meaning, this is not yet sufficient for a phenomenology of the alien. Why? Simply, because the consciousness always encompasses the consciousness of something (object to in this or that sense). But the alien is not just the subject of consciousness. It is the seat as a spiritual and historical of our cognitive synthesis. The totality of the body shows up in factual corporeality as thought-and-action. It goes in the direction of making sense of the meaning of human life and of meaning in the cosmic and divine mode of manifesting the Being. When life makes sense then the universe is in balance too. Feelings, furthermore, belong to the body, and the body is defined as the existential organization of the relationship towards the Other. Since Waldenfels, as we have already demonstrated, transforms the underlying concepts of Husserl's phenomenology over what was the discovery of Merleau-Ponty, then responsiveness is a complex relationship of multiple communication rather than a mere response to an order coming from or out of the interior. However, the body cannot be thought without the duplicity of its origin in natural and spiritual sciences. Therefore, the materiality of the body corresponds to the psycho-social determinants of its proximity and singularity. The body language corresponds to the dialogue with the elements of affectivity and rationality. In general, thinking about a phenomenological feeling means opening up the problem of how bodiliness is spreading and timing as the most unusual. From all other experiences, the feeling of self-collecting experiences denotes a touch of the Other as a "foreign body". But how and what else lies in our neighbourhood, however close, almost as confident as a hug and kiss. In this Platonic notion, our *eros* and *philia* (love and friendship) should be to look for further opportunities in advance when possible phenomenology of commons right now in the days of complete nihilism perhaps opens up new quite outstanding odds.

## Conclusion

Waldenfels' contributions to the new phenomenology are extremely valuable because he shows an original way to connect two fundamental concepts remaining after Husserl in the wake of Merleau-Ponty and Levinas: *the body* and *the Other*. But the way he did it in his numerous books, studies, lectures and talks from the 1990s to today deserves special interpretative attention. We have seen that his thinking can be labelled by a productive connection of German and French phenomenology, with the addition of critical computation regarding Habermas' theory of communicative action. Responsivity and phenomenology of the alien presuppose the decentered operation of the subject of contemporary philosophy and

social sciences and humanities. However, one term in this strict and exact reading of the contemporary state of affairs by means of the notion of a stranger, the guest, stateless persons, in the extension of the term of the Other, remained at the core of this thinking and may be still insufficient subject matter. It is about the concept of *culture*. In the phenomenological discourse, it would be easy to determine that this is the area of regional ontology. In addition, with respect to the term “life-world” that the late Husserl and Habermas develop as a fluid field entering the meaning of what links the “self” and “foreign”. Indeed, Waldenfels, in an effort to understand the “culture wars” in the global order, has created a philosophical framework for interculturalism. Let us leave possible objections to the concept of culture as something between the “life-world” and inters in the objectivity of man, because the problem arises when each post-phenomenology must be calculated with the excess of common being (*Mit-Sein*) in the emerging world of networked societies and cultures. In this way, the encounter with the indefinite and ineligibility of the alien is shown at the same time as an encounter with a foreign culture. In the form of the Other and its identity, culture becomes the question of the relationship between “one’s own” and “Other”.

What makes interculturalism fragile, and also not very effective policy dialogue and open communication, primarily shows in that the culture is not just the sum of the language and customs, but articulations and power of the nation-state in relation to the other. Time has ceased culture to be a mere trace of the spiritual being of man in the scientific-technical world. Power has the features of maintaining continuity in time and rootedness in space and never diminishes only by force and violence. Moreover, what distinguishes the cultural form of power should be its discursive credibility as a way of symbolic communication in the world. In the formal framework of the post-national constellation of democracy, speaking in Habermas’ language, this power can replace only the logic of the formation of the post-imperial sovereignty of “big space” (*Großraum*) as announced by Carl Schmitt, in his *Nomos of the Earth (Der Nomos der Erde)* (Schmitt 1947). Waldenfels’ philosophical attempt, however, is to open the space for intercultural communication from the recognition of the other kind of universe, as opposed to hermeneutics, and universal pragmatists, from the one that always means the disguised triumph of subjectivity in the discourse of egology and anthropology. The problem of this space is not geographical nor can be resolved by reference to the formal frameworks of modern democracy as universal model of resolving disputes between different actors in the dialogue. The place of the stranger becomes the “personality” place. Everything suddenly appears “here” and “now”. Strangers are no more rarity in this interconnected world. From refugees to immigrants to states with economic and political stability, space is becoming more deterritorialized. What does that mean? First of all, there are no “original” residents in it. Cities have been surrounded by ghettos and areas of exclusion for immigrants, aliens and asylum seekers. No illusions should be created any more. The difficult life of the Other cannot be solved over the paths of the utopia of complete integration. The reality might be always more complicated than the models and paradigms of interculturalism.

However, Waldenfels has opened up the problem we face today and we remain without a respectable solution. What is constant in his contemplation is that no

return to the tradition in terms of hermeneutics or pragmatism (Gadamer and Rorty) helps to understand why being an alien means to break into the metaphysical origin of terms with which we have deliberately compared the order of meaning and ultimately proved unsuccessful and unobtrusive for the present intertwined with the aporias and the paradoxes of identity. This self-referentiality of the alien and the foreign, which means that it is impossible to include-exclude the already established order of the idea of the power of the Other, might mean that after all its occurrence it exists as an “intruder”.

Being an alien means being someone else and beyond each and every part of the founding of a common being. It might be the fate of the “same” from Plato’s time to nowadays. Nothing has changed except that destiny has become contingent, and “intruder” is a day-to-day encounter with that uncanny thing, though is disturbing but in an acceptable measure between fear and exoticism. Where, however, an alien comes and why its essence belongs to the upcoming community? This question is no longer a matter of Waldenfels’ phenomenology. With it, they request responsiveness of affective body in communication with other phenomenology hitting its own realization. Perhaps the time has come for us to open up a completely different view of what makes everything strange and unfamiliar in the world, outside the overwhelming phenomenological path. In the beginning, it is necessary to abandon the illusion of the power of the subject and equally the illusion of the power of the community. Beyond the universality and the particularities, the whole and the parts, the place of a mysterious encounter between those who share the destiny of aliens and the world gives more worries of the dignity of the other existence than ours, of this safe and normalized “boredom” which becomes an entropy without authentic culture and politics. To think of in-between “one’s own” and “strangeness” means to prepare new fundamentals for the possible touch of what has always been obscured in the sources and necessarily untouchable during the history of Western metaphysics. Time has come to “enlighten” that darkness. *Maybe...*

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Žarko Paić

Šta znači biti stranac?

Bernhard Valdenfels i politika responzivnog interkulturalizma

Apstrakt

Autor analizira politiku responzivnog interkulturalizma u mišljenju Bernharda Valdenfelsa, počevši od teze da nakon Huserlove fenomenologije valja razmatrati samo dva fundamentalna pojma: telo i Drugog. U savremenoj nemačkoj „post-fenomenologiji“, prvi pojam je sistematski artikulisao Herman Šmic, dok je potonja tema napredovala u Valdenfelsovom delu, i to kao fenomenologija stranog do kraja metafizike Zapada. U dva dela diskusije, autor naznačuje svoju fundamentalnu hipotezu o aporijama i paradoksima interkulturalizma, budući da responzivnost i ksenologija ne mogu da pruže pozitivnu definiciju pojma kulture u eri globalne entropije. Analiza otuda tematizuje dva pitanja: (1) šta je responzivnost čoveka u odnosu na Drugog, uključujući i različite puteve njegovog prisustva u svetu, i (2) zbog čega Drugi kao stranac i neodomaćen (*Unheimlich*) dovodi u pitanje osnovni stav fenomenologije kao takve – intencionalnost svesti?

Ključne reči: stranac, fenomenologija, responzivnost, nesvodiva asimetrija, interkulturalizam, telo

Dragan Prole

## POLEMOLGY AND XENOLOGY: WALDENFELS AND THE STING OF THE ALIEN

### ABSTRACT

After explaining why phenomenology of the alien cannot be counted among traditional philosophical disciplines, the author explores why all of European history can be read as the “shading of the alien” (*Verblendung des Fremden*), although not in the sense of mere disregarding, neglecting or denying of the alien, but disciplining it, manipulating and exploiting it. The alien has not been forgotten for centuries, it was always in the European focus, but only as an instance through which the sense of power was traditionally constructed. Following the basic presumptions of Bernhard Waldenfels’ phenomenology of the alien the article presents the shading of the alien as analogous to the process of its naturalization. As if the tradition of European colonialism can be best understood in the key of *maître et possesseur de l’étranger*. That is to say, the European legacy shows, in an extraordinary manner, that the alien can be transformed into a resource, from which we can appropriate and assimilate everything. A crucial insight for Waldenfels is also that strangeness is not reducible to a narrow segment of reality, whether it is culture, religion or art-based, because strangeness is a radical dimension that transcends all regions.

### KEYWORDS

Waldenfels,  
phenomenology, alien,  
polemology, xenology

### The irreducibility of the stranger to an enemy

The phenomenology of the alien is not a new discipline among the already known philosophical disciplines. It can hardly be a new discipline, since to be considered as new, it must be determined by a new, previously unknown objective determination, or an entirely new methodology. A new method creates new forms of thought, which cannot be reduced to previous philosophical experiences. The phenomenology of the alien is not a new discipline because its topic is not a topic, and its object is not an object. Strangeness cannot be considered a traditional philosophical phenomenon, as it never exists by itself. The alien is always alien for someone or to someone, it is a category of a relation and it is not possible to perceive it without relating to someone or something. Strangeness is not tied to the sense of failure or perdition, it’s not just a simple failed misunderstanding. The experience of the alien is not like other experiences; it cannot be “grafted” to the previously experienced.

The experience of the alien is a diversion, a fissure, a break – it slices through the harmony of the spontaneous temporal fabric of consciousness. It disrupts me, being

in contact with it causes me to lose my thread, I lose my bearings, the ground beneath me shakes. The experience of the alien could have validity as a kind of an exercise, and even as an unsolicited and unbidden introduction into phenomenology. If the first methodological gesture, made by the phenomenologist as a routine, is tied to the suspension of all adopted and habitual validations, of all natural to us, then we have no better experience or “mundane” call for phenomenological discourse, than the experience of questioning everything intimate and known through the alien.

Contact with the alien can be considered “ground zero”, an event that opens a new horizon, not in the unknown exterior but within us. The alien does not provide us with new insights, but provides new means of seeing, by confronting us with the entity we were unable to see: “withdrawal goes beyond my own abilities by morphing them into the experienced impossible” (Waldenfels 2009: 111).

However, the affirmative observation of the withdrawal (*Entzug*), as one of the crucial elements of the experience of the alien, is not self-explanatory. What remains beyond our reach, is, in a certain way, implied, indicated and announced; otherwise we would know nothing about it. The game of presence and absence, understanding and not understanding, accessibility and inaccessibility fundamentally defines the alien. It is important to mention that the absent and inaccessible cannot be reduced to pure nothingness. In the alien, the negated achieves a specific existential value, the character of an incentive, stimulation or a challenge. In that which withdraws, we often find something that attracts. Some charm, objection or request, and when they are completely absent, what withdraws is no longer my concern, and I do not perceive it as such (Waldenfels 2001: 91). Even though the lures of withdrawal can be of use to determine the truly common in a community, it can also function as an instance of provocation. Something that incites in all instances, which calls for a change or self-examination in tradition, is transformed to something that is close, known and confidential. European history can be read as the “shading of the alien” (*Verblendung des Fremden*), but not in the sense of the disregarding, neglecting or denying of the alien, but disciplining it, manipulating and exploiting it. The alien has not been forgotten for centuries, it was always in the European focus, but only as an instance through which the sense of power was traditionally constructed: “Reducing something unknown to something known calms the mind and also gives a sense of power” (Nietzsche 1980: 93). The tradition of the relationship with the alien is at the same time the legacy of its removal from the stage, placing it to an inferior position, to a lower level in the hierarchy. European history takes the shape of the hidden, or the invisible of the *polemos* with the alien.

Even though tradition used to liken it with the enemy, the experience of the alien has nothing to do with hostility. The etymological oscillation between hospitality and hostility, which has long burdened the Latin term *hostis* (Waldenfels 1997: 45), completely failed to observe the fundamental, irreducible difference between the alien and the enemy. That difference implies that the encounter with the enemy animates and spurs the potentiation of the Self, while the encounter with the alien works in a different manner, and awakens doubt and mistrust, or for a moment suspends the Self. The enemy pursues the potentials of the Self to their outer limits, while the alien guides them beyond that. The clash with the enemy draws the community closer together, while the encounter with the alien

potentially transforms it, or even brings dissent or division to it. Unlike hostility, which is usually mutual, apart from dramatic historical instances in which the enemy is literally created, the experience of the alien allows one-sidedness. If we look alien to someone, that does not necessarily mean that that person will trigger the experience of the alien in us. Waldenfels sees the alien marked with a “sting”, which calls me, taunts me, wants me to respond to it. Unlike a bee sting, which requires the reaction of a remedy, which helps me remove the pain and discomfort, the sting of the alien leads us into the world of the special phenomenon. I do not reach for anything beyond me to clash with the alien and to neutralize its effects. Something else is at play here.

### The strangeness of God in the image of a traveler or a beggar

Waldenfels joins the line of ancient tradition, which, when confronted with the alien, sees a key moment for metamorphosis. It looks as if the alien, for a phenomenologist, plays a role akin to that of negation for dialectics. Without the alien there is no true change, “development”, the Self lives on from the logic of self-assertion, it maintains and perpetuates a certain established hierarchy. In a word: there can be no Self without the metamorphosis of the alien (Waldenfels 2008: 275). If we were to lose the alien, our world would be completely void of the secret, of existence and history, and such a world could not be referred to as a spiritual one. Complete transparency is equal to pitch dark; the absolute understanding of the totality is the end of all understanding. As it fiercely opposed the tradition of expurgation, “shadings” of the alien, Waldenfels’ phenomenology did not wish to reduce it to a mere self-knowledge medium, a necessary, but temporary step on the path of the self-awakening of the spirit.

The Self continuously meets the alien, but that alien which is “relative”: “The inclusion of the alien does not bring anything revolutionary, as long as that strangeness shows only the revolutionary side, as a necessary but temporary phase for the spirit to find itself, in which everything that is, and all that are, participate. The alien is for me and for us that in which we have not yet recognized ourselves” (Waldenfels 2002: 187). The learning process implies continuous encounters with what was once alien, which later becomes adopted, domesticated, to become a fundamental part of what we consider our own world. It is clear we come into contact with the alien throughout our lives, where it is not so highly emphasized that the standard European methods of dealing with the alien by default do not leave the bounds of the good ol’ egology. The shading of the alien is analogous to the process of its naturalization. As if the tradition of European colonialism can be best understood through the key of *maître et possesseur de l'étranger*. In a word, the European legacy shows in an extraordinary manner that the alien can be transformed into a resource, from which we can appropriate and assimilate everything of use. Like Descartes’ treatment of nature, we could say that the traditional relationship towards the alien occurs within the boundaries of management and proprietorship. Such a relationship towards the alien is similar to trade, in which for a minimal investments and for the lowest cost, I try to obtain maximal profit. The alien is there to encourage me, make me stronger, to be at my disposal, to develop my capacities

and increase my resources. What remains after that process is completely outside of my sphere of interest and the focus of my attention.

When the Old Testament prophet said that only a stranger can teach him, he focused on a position in which true learning and a true step beyond are impossible when everything is known, domestic and habitual. Isaiah and Elijah wanted nothing but the revolutionary; they did not even consider a world in which they could find a variation of themselves. Also, they knew that the desired, promised human world is not possible with the easily obtainable, the “relative” but through the distant, hard to reach, the “relative” alien. The true message of the alien cannot be condensed to enrichment, enlargement of the already known, but is recognizable as the constantly replenishing self-knowing of personal finiteness, and through that, directing the subjectivity beyond its boundaries: “the radical alien exists only if the state in which we exist, is not everything” (Waldenfels 2017: 308).

It is probable that the civilization roots of such thinking are older than the Old Testament’s strangeness of God, whose language is necessarily incomprehensible and whose apparitions cannot be recognized and interpreted in everyday registries, nor measured with the usual criterion. Because of that, *theophany* is traditionally displayed through a symbolical overturn of the existing order and existing values. If he appears as a man, the transcendental God could not be a magnificent, measured and wise aristocrat, nor the beautiful hero with lush hair and a seductive visage, or a fearless warrior. That way he would lose his transcendent elements and would be placed at the pinnacle of value of the known and desired. On the contrary, the apparition of the greatest and highest, but also alien order must appropriate the appearance which is despised, humiliated and marginalized in the domestic. The divine alien is, though that, incarnated in the image of a domestic alien, a pariah, the humiliated: “The main characteristic for theophany is that the divine or demonic, usually appears as a small, inconspicuous man, usually [...] a traveler or a beggar” (Čajkanović 1973: 141).

The modern traces of the Old Testament spirit are usually found in the phenomenology of Emanuel Levinas, to which Waldenfels owes far more than one would assume at first glance. If we follow the traces of Husserl’s term of constitution, we will see that Levinas moves the source of the constitution from the Self to the Other, from ego to alien. What initially marked the specificity of conscious life - a synonym for personal productivity and freedom and always started anew - is now given to others who initiate: “my own birth at someone else’s request. To exist means to exist for someone else, to “subsist”. Institutions come from substitutions” (Waldenfels 2005: 214). Does such a gesture appropriately mark the modern alienation of the individual, his irreversible estrangement, and through that the necessity of rebirth, starting from “the elsewhere”. In short, is the phenomenology of the alien the final proof that we have all become aliens?

### Transcendental or empirical strangeness?

We can easily recall moments when, even to ourselves, we appeared extraordinary, when we surprised ourselves, or we felt and thought of ourselves in a way that made us feel alien. Does this imply that we are all, in essence, aliens? If that is the case, strangeness loses its specialty, it becomes universal, and ceases to be alien in the

inherit sense of the word. When observed within the confines of itself, strangeness necessarily falls into the trap of generalizing the strangeness that cancels itself out (Waldenfels 1994: 29). According to the well-known aporia of selfsame strangeness, employed by Julia Kristeva, its outcome leads to the direct cancellation of the previously established thesis: “The foreigner is within me, hence we are all foreigners. If I am a foreigner, there are no foreigners” (Kristeva 1991: 192). Unlike Kristeva, Waldenfels’ phenomenology of the alien follows Husserl’s, Levinas’ and Derrida’s tracks, when it insists on the conservation of the alien, as a direct philosophical correlate of gestures of hospitality, and also all those forms of interpersonal relationships, which counter assimilation and all known forms of the violent suffocation of strangeness.

Unlike the Freudian psychoanalytical approach, whose emphasis was on the disharmony and discomfort *within each individual*, man’s unconquerable strangeness in the world, the phenomenologists find the moments of harmony, that is, the disharmony in *interpersonal relations* much more significant. The psychoanalytical interest for the individual is incomparable and incomprehensible to the phenomenological interests in the collective, the intersubjectivity. It appears as if Husserl and Derrida, despite all inaccessibility and irreducibility which define the alien, focus on those moments of harmony, transcendental equality, thanks to which my primordial worldview is shaped. This world is never my private world, and its nature, including all human products, I experience exclusively through intersubjectivity. In the *Paris lectures*, Husserl particularly accentuated the term *mutuality*, in which the inaccessibility of the other becomes my inaccessibility to the other: “It is a fact that I experience other minds as real, and not only do I experience them in conjunction with nature, but as interlaced into one whole with nature. Furthermore, I experience other minds in unique manner. Not only do I experience them as spatial presentations psychologically interlaced in the realm of nature, but I also experience them as experiencing this selfsame world which I experience. I also experience them experiencing me in the same way that I experience them, and so on” (Husserl 1998: 34).

Derrida hits the mark in reading Levinas’ *Violence and Metaphysics*, when he asks the crucial question – the empirical or transcendent character of strangeness? In the background is the decision to go with either symmetry or asymmetry. From one end, Derrida agrees with Levinas in that the origin of violence is tied to the translation of the alien to my empirical ego, interpreting it as nothing more than a variation of myself. In a word, even if my empirical self is the inevitable starting point towards the alien, we inevitably face the possibility of the strange being entirely reduced to it: “every reduction of the other to a real moment of my life, its reduction to the state of empirical alter-ego, is an empirical possibility, or rather eventuality, which is called violence [...] For, on the contrary, to gain access to the egoity of the alter ego as if to its alterity itself is the most peaceful gesture possible” (Derrida 1978: 159–160). On the other hand, Derrida does underline the significance of the analogical presentation, which is persistently present in our every observation, which continuously reminds us of the primordial origin of symmetry between the different means of the function of my embodied Self and the Self of others, with which in synchrony, in a common manner, I experience the same world: “Dissymmetry itself would be impossible without this symmetry, which is not of the world, and which, having no real aspect, imposes no limit upon alterity and dissymmetry—makes them possible, on the contrary” (Derrida 1978: 157).

Unlike Derrida, it appears as though Levinas and Waldenfels emphasize the interlacing of the empirical and transcendental, stressing the asymmetrical relationship towards alien subjectivity. If the transcendental marks the “pure” consciousness, the type of consciousness which, through the phenomenological methodology, managed to abstract from the *validity* of all mundane contents of conscious acts (Szilasi 1959: 65–66), then a question can be asked – can the phenomenology of the alien really be constituted if we keep solely with Husserl’s position? Can we go further, and say something more meaningful about the experience of the alien, apart from the formal determination about the “accessibility of the initially inaccessible”? Derrida follows Husserl’s transcendental symmetry, mutuality, equality. For Levinas, it is no longer about the experience of the alien in the sense of a specific type of experience. It is no longer about the establishment of objectivity, but about the elementary precondition of subjectivization. Levinas and Waldenfels insist on an asymmetrical relationship, which by no means shows the desire to be subjugated (Dallmayr 2001: 151), but the precondition of every true personal relation. Everything from this side of calculative symmetry – love, friendship, attention, responsibility, all those relations are not based on the golden rule (treat others the way you want to be treated), but happen as asymmetrical relations. It is not about losing yourself as a result of the alien, giving myself to the other and irreversibly dissolving in the ontical mundane, but rather about leaving the confines of the closed immanence of the interior: “the quintessential experience is not that of reception, meditation or bliss, but that of exit and break” (Guibal 1980: 13). Naturally, such experience cannot be perceived on the plain of a thought experiment, because it requires an embodied alien: “The alien is not pure, but is mundane and social self” (Waldenfels 2015: 52–53).

### What must the reality of the phenomenology of the alien be like?

Must such a self also be seen through the “mundane and social eyes”? Without doubt, one of the most precious philosophical traditions suggests the correlation between reality and insight. The way the world appears is subject to the way we perceive it. An altered manner of observing does not solely bring new information and uncover the facets of the world, but also shows a radically different world. Here is where the question about the altering character of reality, due to the introduction of new means of examination, or a new type of rationality, becomes interesting. There’s only one world, but it is subject to change. Phenomenologically speaking, the historical changes in the world present a dependable consequence of the alteration of the way it has been perceived.

Unlike Marx’s last thesis about Feuerbach, phenomenology always claimed that a different worldview necessarily conveys a different world. What would rationality be then, for the phenomenology of the alien? What type of reality is comfortable with the phenomenon of the alien? Would it be reducible to a simple discourse about alienation, which inevitably shifts between the confronted sides of romantic aesthetic affirmation and Marxist revolutionary negation? Where Waldenfels tinkers with the thinking of the future, starting with passages and thresholds, and not with projects (Waldenfels 2008: 98), he also points out a different type of rationality. His structure touches the term of responsiveness, being that it is initiated



behind established meaning, conventional norms and existing rules. The vision of rationality is always interlaced with limitations with whose confines the means of viewing its subject occurs. An important insight for Waldenfels is also that strangeness is not reducible to a narrow segment of reality, whether it is culture, religion or art-based: “For me, it is not a question of regional ontology, aesthetics, religion; the alien is a radical dimension that transcends all regions” (Escoubas and Waldenfels 2000: 206).

### **The alien as the source of civilization and the “objectiveness” of the world**

If strangeness is a child of otherness, then the phenomenology of the alien was inconceivable before the terms of the Other and otherness attained highest possible ranks within philosophical terminology and its problematization of things. It certainly does not start where the others simply became the subject of philosophical reflection, and aliens happened to be spotted among them. On the contrary, the time for insight into strangeness came when we recognized the foundations of objectiveness in those aliens. Where Descartes found God, Husserl found another man. The phenomenological confrontation with solipsism no longer dealt with divine attributes, but rather relied on the radicalization of transcendent reduction, on the *experience of the alien*, which allowed the attesting objectiveness of transcendent knowing: “I obviously cannot have the ‘alien’ or ‘other’ as experience, and therefore cannot have the sense ‘Objective world’ as an experiential sense, without having this stratum in actual experience” (Husserl 1973: 127).

Waldenfels’ interpretation of Husserl’s thesis shows that experience of the alien has already done its job before we uttered a single word about the world. The unspoken argument of Husserl’s term of intersubjectivity tells us that every conviction about a reliable, stable, “objective” in this world exists due to the often-unconscious meeting with another person. The analogical representation of everything he does, and what I could do if I were him, gives me a precious confirmation that my worldviews and convictions are not just fictional, but are based in the common structures of humanity.

In the end, perhaps the crucial premise of the phenomenology of the alien would be that the source of civilization is equal to the source of reality. Both hide in the company of aliens (Levinas 2009: 248). The focus of the interpersonal relation towards the ontological relation is throughout depicted quite credibly. That relation, according to Levinas, is not based on joint mutuality, harmony and balance. On the contrary, the source asymmetry is the basis of rationality, as the other holds uncontested preeminence. Unlike the traditional ties of egology and ontology, self and ownership, through the ontology of the guaranteed care of affirmation, strengthening and self-preservation, the ego, dialogical reality, Levinas notes, is based on the thesis that through immanence, there is no and cannot be any meaning (Levinas 1972: 41).

A being that does not transcend, does not leave itself so it can go to another being, disables itself from finding any meaning. The price of unlimited trust in the self and the immanence in the modernity is paid by these phenomena, or “existentials” which we tied to the seclusion of our existence. The decay in which the

*Dasein* is exposed in the everyday, Waldenfels attributes to the unconscious “immunity” of the fundamental ontologists to the elementary impulses of the alien which drive experience: “Heidegger’s Self is not decaying thanks to a mere self amnesia of here-being, but to its seclusion from the phatic impulses of the alien, which stimulate our experience” (Waldenfels 2015: 277).

The resumé of the phenomenological exploration of intersubjectivity with Husserl could be summarized in the following manner: the transcendental We precedes the transcended I, and the root of all rationality hides in interpersonal relations. The root of intelligibility is not autonomous, and knowledge does not come from itself. Even if we condense it to a life-world, “a realm of subjective phenomena which have remained ‘anonymous’” (Husserl 1970: 111), such a realm is not based on some autonomous knowing attainment. Furthermore, the entire phenomenological movement after Husserl can be explored via the horizon of the crucial question, which ties strangeness and worldness: “it has never been recognized that the otherness of the foreign becomes extended to the whole world, as its ‘Objectivity’, giving it this sense in the first place (Husserl 1960: 147).

### Protology is xenology

Starting with Aristotle, the ontological interest was shaped and wrapped around different ways of predicating being. Waldenfels calls for a multiplicity of approaches towards other-being, a commitment to a multidimensional approach which refuses to level different means of other-being: “not only being, but other-being too if affected by Aristoteles’ *polachos legatei*: it can be presented in different ways” (Waldenfels 2007: 424). Being a devotee of the first philosophy meant speaking in a neutral, third person, not only to anonymize the individual but to also relieve it of all personal markings, memories and history.

It turns out the ontological third person is not a monolithic and monotonous discursivity, but a multitude of different and mutually irreducible origins of thought. Different methods of discourse about the being have named a multitude that does not give up on self-reflection and finally merges into one. A devotee of *prote philosophia* has, with equal devotion, thought on different roads and moved though incomparable paths. His goal was not to find the most productive way to describe the being and eliminate all other means. On the contrary, thinking in registers of multitude and difference did not leave any of them behind. The former rationality of the logos assumed its load capacity from different expressions. However, such ability, from the perspective of phenomenology of the alien remains void of form, measure and boundary, and thus, every foundation: “To a living being that has the logos, nothing is strange. The well know operation lack only in that if becomes infinite, it also loses its foundation” (Waldenfels 1998: 34).

The study of the first, protology, acknowledged all different methods at once, which proved to be as rich in meaning as the being itself. From the perspective of modern thinkers, the interlacing of protology and xenology is proof enough for a thesis that classical thinking was not one of neglect, but actually of too much care.

The first ontological word of modernity was uttered when first-person singular moved consciously from speech which was once primarily practically oriented, to

the anonymous discursivity of first philosophy. While the jurisdiction of first philosophy was once reserved strictly for the questions about *What*, for thinking about the essence and purpose of existing things, now it starts to include the previously unthinkable *How* and even *Who*, which no longer rejected out front the strangeness of subjectivity. The neutrality of the source speech of ontology conceded its place to the first-person speech. Afterwards, due to, in good part the phenomenology of the alien, it moved towards decentralizing the subject, in the spirit of “overpowering the I, which decisively contributed to the revelation of alterity” (Waldenfels 2015: 33). When observed through the perspective of first philosophy, the process of civilization is not tied to the perception of freedom, it is pointed in the direction opposite to any kind of perception. If we can even consider the term of development, Waldenfels’ subject does not aim toward self-foundation and self-determination but comes to itself by leaving itself. It does not come from something it has, but from something it literary lacks. Overpowering the I mostly brings the term of reality which is always something more than it is. According to Waldenfels, the “more” is always an expression of an order that is not based on itself but allows for the “moments of extraordinary and weird” (Waldenfels 2017: 12).

In the attempt to move further from Husserl’s stance on “surplus of meaning” (*Mehrmeinung*), which claims that things are always something more than we know about them, Waldenfels’ term of responsiveness brings a new moment. Unlike Husserl’s view, which sees the source of entire being in transcendental subjectivity, Waldenfels pays close attention to the reality beyond the domestic and individual. It is not there to help us affirm the objective world, but defines us by asking, requesting, demanding something from us. It makes an impression on us, forms a certain *pathos*, from which our every response comes. The logos of phenomenology of the alien brings a new term of experience which is no longer in the realm of the duality of noesis and noema, but the *pathos* and *respons*. This heir of Husserl’s intentionality will not be able to solve the crisis of European sciences but might be able to solve the crisis of European humanness. There is no doubt that the road beyond the endangered, levelled humanity can have a responsive prefix. In the end, *starting elsewhere* seems far more appealing than any known European response.

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## Dragan Prole

### Polemologija i ksenologija: Valdenfels i žaoka stranog

#### Apstrakt

Nakon razjašnjavaња zbog čega fenomenologija stranog ne može biti ubrojana među tradicionalne filozofske discipline, autor ispituje zašto bi celokupna evropska istorija mogla biti čitana kao „zasenčenje stranog“, ali ne u smislu pukog odbacivanja, zanemarivanja ili poricanja stranog, nego njegovog disciplinovanja, manipulisanja, eksploatiranja. Strano nije bilo vekovima zaboravljeno, ono je uvek bilo u evropskom fokusu, ali samo kao instanca posredstvom koje je tradicionalno konstruisan osećaj moći. Prateći osnovne pretpostavke fenomenologije stranog Bernharda Valdenfela, članak uočava zasenčenje stranog kao analogno procesu njegove naturalizacije. Kao da tradicija evropskog kolonijalizma može biti najbolje shvaćena zahvaljujući ključu *gospodar i vlasnik stranog*. Rečju, evropsko nasleđe na izuzetan način pokazuje da strano može biti transformisano u resurs od kojeg možemo da prisvojimo i asimilujemo sve što nam može biti od koristi. Valdenfelsov presudan uvid glasi da stranost ne može biti svedena na uzak segment realnosti, bila ona vezana za kulturu, umetnost ili religiju, jer je ona radikalna dimenzija koja transcendirira sve regije.

Ključne reči: Valdenfels, fenomenologija, strano, polemologija, ksenologija

Andrej Božič

## HEARING VOICES: PAUL CELAN WITH BERNHARD WALDENFELS

### ABSTRACT

The paper discusses voice as a medium of human communication through the indirect approach of listening. After designating the multifaceted nature of the voice, the author dedicates attention to Bernhard Waldenfels' theory of the voice as developed on the basis of the phenomenology of the alien. According to Waldenfels, the polyphony of the vocal, in which the own and the alien re-sound in mutual permeation, calls for the possibility of responsive listening. In the concluding portion of the article, the author takes into consideration one of the poems from the cycle "Stimmen" ("Voices") that Paul Celan published in the collection *Sprachgitter*. With regard also to Celan's auto-poetological writings, the ensuing interpretation attempts to briefly sketch the contours of the anti-politics of voice.

### KEYWORDS

voice, listening, the other, Paul Celan, poetry, Bernhard Waldenfels, responsive rationality

*Gedichte, das sind auch Geschenke –  
Geschenke an die Aufmerksamen.  
Schicksal mitführende Geschenke.*

Paul Celan: "Brief an Hans Bender"

Human communication, the mediation — and the (post-modern, all-encompassing) mediatization — of the singularly and collectively experienced, the mutually communal world, (almost) cannot be conceived of without the medium of voice. From before birth, from the parental conversations echoing distantly within the sheltering interiority of the initiative womb, to after death, to the words whispering in the air without breath in the final proximity of exposed exteriority, accompanying not only ordinary existence, but also determining exceptional moments in the (solitary as well as social, private as well as public) lives of individuals and communities, the enigmatic, multifaceted, complex — (in the abysmal elusiveness of its fundamental essentiality) "aphenomenal" — phenomenon of voice — even, *per negationem*, in the extreme of (speech/hearing) impairment — co-constitutes, (often) over-heard, (but) entreating hearkening, (n/ever) listened-to, the effectuation, the self-realization of human(e) being-in-the-world.

The vocal dimension of dwelling, its vocality, can be and is encountered in numerous, in innumerable situations and circumstances, not only in the "literal" sense, but also in a "metaphorical" transfiguration: the varied, intensively and

extensively diversified engagement, “usage”, of the (inter-mediating) function(s) of voice embraces, on the one hand, the mundane, un-obvious spontaneity of quite quotidian dialogical “exchange of opinions” or of increasingly inane broadcasting of “information”, as well as, on the other hand, the challenging “elaboration of justice” in the legal proceedings of a courtroom trial or the demanding “dissemination of knowledge” in the education process in a schoolroom setting. Whereas it is, it seems, impossible to imagine the historicity of nascence and the wide-ranging ramifying, the wide-spread ramifications and reception of (certain, if not all, forms of) art, predominantly, however, of course (contemporary: “popular” as well as “elite”) music and literature, beyond (at least a) collaboration of the vocal, its political trans-form(ul)ation offers opportunity to lift or lend — co-incidentally: “for a cause” — one’s voice during periodically un-stable re-enactments of the declaratively guaranteed, but continually endangered right to vote in democratic elections.<sup>1</sup> Yet, the self-assertive, self-assuming boundaries of wholly worldly immanence receive the outline of a pro-visional, pro-visionary sketch through the (transcendently?) etching re-sounding of the innermost hollowing voice of consciousness exhorting, from within, towards ethical action and the outermost hallowing voice of god summoning, from without, towards religious devotion.

In accordance with the briefly drafted and asserted affluence (of the manifold occurrence) of voice and (also) of “voice” an equally heterogenous array of natural, human, and social sciences, as well as proficiencies of other professions, could be consulted to discuss specific separate aspects if not the entirety of the phenomenon of vocality: beside the above fleetingly indicated communication theories and media studies, beside jurisprudence, pedagogy, and aesthetics or musicology, beside sociology or politology, ethics, and religiology, wherein voice may play a prominent, perhaps pivotal, but sometimes somewhat underestimated part, to name (but) a few: anatomy and physics provide indispensable, detailed insights into physiological “production” and acoustical “diffusion”, whilst anthropological and ethnographical research, supplemented and complemented by, for example, linguistics and psychology, con-textually illuminates the value of vocality amongst peoples and nations of the world through the inter-cultural expansion of interpretive horizons. The confluence and influence of the immense, the immeasurable knowledge thus (once) attained would, irrefutably, proffer a profound, well-(g)rounded platform (also) for (an attempt at) a (potential/ly) “philosophical” — hermeneutical or phenomenological, or both, or of another appurtenant appellation — consideration of voice, which would, in turn, in its own re-turning towards itself, require a reflection upon and of the historically highly stratified, polymorphous tradition of (anti-)metaphysical thought.

The subsequent deliberation, therefore (—and: however—), would like to, without pretention to exhaustive comprehensiveness, concentrate attention upon the question(s) regarding the communication medium of voice as it has been thematized, on the one hand, in the poetic work of Paul Celan (1920–1970) and, on the other hand, in the philosophical thought of Bernhard Waldenfels (1934). Although

1 The designated correspondences are unambiguously manifest in several languages; for instance, in the Slovenian language, the noun “music”—“glasba”—and the verb “to vote”—“glasovati”—are etymologically related with the word “glas”: “voice”.

such a juxta-posing, a contra-positioning of perhaps (in their pre-suppositions indelibly and irreconcilably) opposing stances seems to possess a certain degree of arbitrariness—or, at least, contingency—, it is necessary to emphasize that both authors—at first glance in part divided not only by cultural, experiential, or generational precipices, but also by the abyss between divergent realms of their respective creativity—at fundamental inter-sections of development in a decisive and even defining manner dedicate intent efforts to the discussion of vocality, and do so (also) with reference to the other one’s—neighboring, albeit often contrary—“field of agency”:<sup>2</sup> whilst Celan, as his vast library bears witness (cf. Celan 2004), nurtured a lifelong, at once extensive and intensive interest in philosophy, and within it, especially phenomenology,<sup>3</sup> in the elaboration of responsive rationality, founded upon the phenomenology of the alien, Waldenfels, correspondingly, frequently draws into debate examples from literary arts and recurrently expressively quotes Celan’s poetry.<sup>4</sup>

Yet: the purpose of the present paper is neither to expound upon the eventual influence phenomenological philosophy exerted on Celan’s poetic oeuvre nor to explore the latter’s possible importance for Waldenfels’ progressive unfolding of various aspects of responsive phenomenology, nor it is its intention to interpretively im-pose the perspective of either one onto its counterpart, but to (endeavor to) approach (the experience of the phenomenon of) vocality by taking into account mutually co-(in)dependent viewpoints of (Celan’s) poetry and (Waldenfels’)

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2 The question of voice, specifically insofar as it is internally inter-connected with problems of the language of poetry and the artistry of writing, on the one hand, re-presents one of the essential, if not fundamental, at least extremely important, often thematized, albeit “in research” to a certain degree overlooked, overheard motifs and dimensions in Celan’s lyric work: conceivable, in effect a *desideratum*, is not only a re-tracing of explicit “mentions” of voice throughout the development of the author’s entire poetic creativity from the earliest beginnings to the late poems, but also a “re-”elaboration and a “de-”contextualization of implicit scientific, linguistic, cultural, artistic, religious, and political references to the (polymorphous) poly-vocality of human(e) existence in the world. Waldenfels, on the other hand, preponderantly, as in the lectures on the bodily corporeality of the self *Das leibliche Selbst* (cf. Waldenfels 2000: 379 ff.) or as in the book dedicated to attention *Phänomenologie der Aufmerksamkeit* (cf. Waldenfels: 186–204), recurs to the dimension of voice in order to illustrate and explicate, in a sense exemplify, the fundamental features of the thought re-orientation, which he has been in ever sterner detail and in ever greater nuance pursuing since the publication of *Ordnung im Zwielficht* (cf. Waldenfels 1987) onwards, and which he—in a pre-cursory jotting of his (recently in book form published) diary—already in the year 1980 succinctly designated thus: “Direction of thought: *floating rationality*, confronted by such differences as subject and object, world and man, no fixation and no hypostatization into a higher reality.” (Waldenfels 2008: 25)

3 For a brief discussion of Celan’s highly paradoxical relation towards Martin Heidegger (1899–1976) and the (in-famous) meeting between the poet and the thinker in Todtnauberg cf. Božič 2012.

4 Although Waldenfels scarcely ventures an (in-depth) interpretation of Celan’s work, the poet’s name, words and verses many times re-appear within his writings; e.g.—to cite (among numerous) but one instance—, the entire third, concluding section of Waldenfels’ seminal book *Antwortregister* stands under the epigraph taken from Celan’s (“programmatic”) poem “Sprich auch du” from the collection *Von Schwelle zu Schwelle* (1955); cf. Waldenfels 2007: 319 and Celan 2000, I: 135.

philosophy, insofar as they—in a kind of an interference of the different and the differing, from which “a common ground” (or groundlessness?) can be inferred—circumscribe “the (self-)same” as other(ed) through the prismatic fracture of poetic or philosophical language, by taking an indirect, a lateral, sidewise and crosswise, path through (the problematics of) listening, wherefore the following contemplation as the de-parting and as the de-terminating (p)reference point would like to ex-pose a reading of a “string” of 8 poems, usually, according to the anaphorically repeated, italicized (watch-/pass-)word, quoted as “Stimmen” (“Voices”) (cf. Celan 2000, I: 147–149 and Celan 2001: 88–93), that the poet, in intervals, intermittently, wrote in the years between July 1956 and November 1958,<sup>5</sup> and later included, as the initial and the initiative, the introductory cycle, in his third(/fourth) book of poems entitled *Sprachgitter* (1959).

Although a profound discussion of Celan’s cycle would unavoidably, on the one hand, require a thorough reading not only of the autonomous singularity of each individual poem, characterized by the use of 7 separating asterisks in between, but also of the intricate, among them commonly shared, interlacing (nonetheless) integrating them into a self-supporting whole, and, on the other hand, demand a consideration of the exposed placement of the cycle within the collection as well as its particular, extraordinary relevance within the complete poetic opus, although it would, furthermore, for a complex dis-entanglement of the con-notated, un-concealed meanings necessitate a reflection with regard to biographical and historical con-texts as well as inter-textual influences and allusions, I subsequently intend to dedicate the focus of attention to the finale, the *coda*, of the cycle. The poem, in the original of Celan’s German language and in the English translation of John Felstiner, be-speaks (of) voice thus:

*Keine*  
*Stimme* – ein  
 Spätgeräusch, stundenfremd, deinen  
 Gedanken geschenkt, hier, endlich  
 herbeigewacht: ein  
 Fruchtblatt, augengroß, tief  
 geritzt; es  
 harzt, will nicht  
 vernarben. (Celan 2000, I: 149)

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*No*  
*voice* — a  
 late-noise, alien to hours, a  
 gift for your thoughts, here at last  
 wakend: a  
 carpel, eyesize, deeply

5 Cf. the commentary of Barbara Wiedemann in: Celan 2005a: 644–645.



nicked; it  
 resins, will not  
 scar over. (Celan 2001: 91–93)

What does, what can it mean to listen to a—not only my own, the appropriated (inner?), but also the alienated, strange (outer?) other’s—voice, to hearken to it, to hear it?

In an art of an approximative, “experimental” and “heuristic” meditation (presumptively recapitulating essential emphases of Waldenfels’ theoretical stance regarding responsive listening, before delving into Celan’s words, I, with the (nagging) ringing of a s(t)inging riddle in the ears, place, trans-pose, myself—my self (for I cannot do otherwise?)—with concentration endeavoring to expound upon (the dimension of) voice, into one of the most common, most commonly, generally and universally, but nonetheless solely singularly experienced dialogical, inter-personal (of) situations: into the circumstances of a conversation: whether I may be debating issues of intimate, ardently alluring concern, perhaps in the closed, (half) confined space of a (downtown) quiet quaint café talking about our views on the artistry of poetry with my friend, perhaps with my wife chitchatting about the course of our everyday life in the airy, (half) open space of a (suburban) balmily breezy balcony, or, whilst at a railway station impatiently awaiting the train to arrive, plainly, with (perchance) un-palpably un-perceivable, (annoyed) im-politeness, replying to a passing stranger’s simple request to check my watch for time, I encounter the (un-surprising) event, the (un-predictable) advent of (a/the) voice of the other, to which (the/a) voice of mine is provoked to respond, as a needle—threaded with language—piercing—tearing (asunder) and sewing (up)—through the retrogradely re-established (often awkwardly stifling, outer or inner) stillness, whereto the ceaselessly rambling and rumbling noise of the surrounding world progressively altogether subsides during the inter-weaving movement of words, that seizes the scene, but has already always been begun before it starts once more in an already always renewed in-(de)finite, in-(de)terminable continuation: yet, the confoundingly tactile text(ile), a sort of veil, of voices enveloping the (development of a) conversation, in their inter-play maintaining relational proximity amongst internally included participants as well as the relative remoteness of partly excluded externality, with-stands, with its fragility and with its fragmentariness, (despite and in the face of) the (omni-present) possibility of dis-integrative destruct(urat)ion: confronted with “the matter at hand” voices, brought about through it, impressing upon it their expression, although the slightest of interferences, a foreigner’s comically intricate accent in the struggle with pronunciation or the abrupt outburst of an earnestly unsettling dispute with a vendor in the street, can cause, attracting attention, the wandering/wondering meander of a sudden detour, a (short) pause or a (long) break, the retracing/retracting emendation of a strenuous recommencement, in agitation rise or in appeasement fall, lead to a concluding agreement or to a final altercation, encourage towards boundless proliferation or crumble towards desolate muteness.

But: a voice I listen to is not the voice I hear, and a voice I hear is not the voice I listen to (cf. Waldenfels 2010b: 184 ff.).

A voice—being (not) just (but also) language, being (not) just, (but also) sound—however (—and: therefore—), the voice, the inter-(ap)pellation, the address of which calls for(th) an intent, an intentional hearkening, is never a straightforward, never an ideal enunciation of self-evident and self-sufficient sense: a voice is neither (just) the (in-significant) sounding, nor (just) the (in-audible) meaning of words, but, taking part in the “materiality” of bodily “concreteness” as well as in the “immateriality” of spiritual “abstractness”, both, at once, in their mutual permeation and in their simultaneous infiltration: the im-material, un-abolishable and un-avoidable, re-sonances re-present, as “signs”, as “signals” splinters, of the senseful in the illegibility of its (con-notated) meaning. Each and every voice is, with the modulations and the modifications, the dynamics of its vibrant transformations, situated in the “in-between” of the inter-mediate, on the border-line between, on the one hand, what, as persevering in the unknown, inexplicable and unrecognizable, the distant, the alien, no reason and no reasoning can grasp—the occasionality of voice itself as it instigates, institutes (the response of) listening—and, on the other hand, what—through (the answer of) hearing as a constitutive, construing in-activation of voice—becomes understandable, as rendered into the close, recognizable and explicable, the known, the own, speaks to us, you and I, bespeaks us, me and you: every and each voice takes place on the border-line of sense and nonsense. Voice is a/the medium of their mutual mediation: voice is (the/a) non-sense.

The giving, the gift, of voice is an incision into silence: in silence it converts (it) into sound, and, on the precarious path-way of the con-sonant voyage slowly passing away, ultimately reverts (itself) to silence: the departure point of voice lies in the other, it comes to us from elsewhere, and, in listening to it, enters, sometimes violently shrill, other times mildly scarce, our ears, our hearing: (it) gives (itself) to (us to) understand (cf. Waldenfels 1995: 97 ff.). The (echoing) sounding and the resounding (echo) of voice, itself, re-covers, discloses and encloses, its origin: whilst it abandons, leaves it behind, it nonetheless (also) de-posit, in-habits its own—disowned—, its strange—estranged—spatial and temporal mark. The origin of voice, even in the case of my un-alienable, my un-alienated voice (the pre-supposed “purity” of autoaffection is “infected” with germs of alterity), never fully and totally coincides with the instant and the location, where and when it is (being) listened-to, (being) heard. Insofar as it travels through space and transverses it, passes through time and traverses it, in itself always dis-placed, dis-similar in itself, voice un-veils its origin in-to silence: it secretes it and keeps it secret. The itinerant, the errant voice, (as) an echo(ing) of itself, is a temporalization and a spatialization of the space and the time of the world, as opened, as opening through its an-archically de-centered mirror: “Voice does not precede experience, it is voiced *in the experience*. Therefore, it proves to be a *broken, ripped, ruptured voice*; it is surrounded by previous sounds and resonances, accords and discords, it is an *echo of itself*. This originary resounding of voice resists being domesticated in a simple monotony or homophony, which amalgamates everything in a single or a common voice; at the same time, it also withdraws the well-known oppositions, such as time and space, the enlivened and the inanimate, the own and the alien, action and passion, person and thing, autonomy and representation, the heard and the unheard.” (Waldenfels 2010b: 183)

The (e)motion of vocality is a continually fluctuating—trans-mut(at)ed—oscillation between the semantic layers and the sonorous qualities of language, their un-dis-solvable inter-weaving on the margins of non-sense, which it, itself born of breath, bears, the chiasmus and the hiatus—the ch(i)asm—between them: as de-noting a hetero-chrony and a hetero-topy (of the world) voice is and can be only received and perceived at the crossroads of its own being-(an)other, its own speaking-differently, its own speaking-in-differences, in its own “otherness”.

The alterity, the “alter-nativity”, the un-(a)biting of sense and nonsense with-in, with-out (human) voice, allows us to give audience and to be granted an audience, a be-longing beyond obedience, to the unheard through the heard (cf. Waldenfels 1999a: 197–199), which imbues voice with the character of an event: “Voice is the unheard event of being-heard, of finding-a-hearing [des Gehörtwerdens, des Gehörfindens], it is not merely an acoustic resonance within a world of heard given dates. Therefore, it follows that listening means responding, that it listens *to* something, even before it hears and understands something as *something*.” (Waldenfels 2000: 384)

Responsive listening, listening as a response to the address, the appeal and the claim, of—the un-heard(-of)—voice(s), according to Waldenfels de-marked by the two-fold,—temporally/spatially—diastatic movement of precedence (of the address) “beyond” reach and subsequence (of the response) “beyond” recompense (cf. Waldenfels 2010b: 192–194), attentively gives and takes heed to/of the polyphony of the own and the alien in the mutuality of their inter-permeation: “The polyphony begins by the duplication and the multiplication of voice itself, by the circumstance that speech deviates from itself, supersedes and overtakes itself, that it is never completely by itself, but always already outside.” (Waldenfels 1999b: 12; cf. also Waldenfels 2007: 435 ff.)

The polyphonic re-sounding of voice is one of the figures, one of the pre-figurations of the extraordinary, which eludes all order(ing), defies its nets, precedes and supersedes, sur-passes (through) it, occurs as the singularly plural and as the plurally singular, which, therefore, causes the estrangement of experience (cf. Waldenfels 2001), and gives itself, whilst being listened-to, to be heard (only) indirectly, through and as the un-heard, on the border(s) of order: thus, for Waldenfels, (also) philosophy and poetry, or art(s) in general, fulfill the function of intervening inter-rupture [Störfunktion], bringing about innovative responses to the address(es) of the alien by the anomalizing inter-play of the extra-ordinary that prevents the processes of normalization to render dull the sting of the alien (cf. Waldenfels 1999b: 169 and also Waldenfels 1998).<sup>6</sup>

On the basis of the present(ed) abbreviation of Waldenfels’ comprehension of the medium of voice, I re-turn to the vocal phenomenon as it co-constitutes, co-determines Celan’s (thoughts on) poetry. The poems, along with the cycle “Stimmen”, beside it, published in *Sprachgitter*, as the title of the collection itself seems to suggest, bear witness to Celan’s enduring, in effect lifelong, strenuous struggle with the il-legitimacy, the self-effacing self-justification and self-authorization of poetry in the face, in the confrontation with the abysmal historic rupture of the holocaust,

6 Cf. the—somewhat more—thorough discussion of Waldenfels’ theory of responsive rationality—especially against the background of the confrontation with the hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900–2002)—in: Božič 2017.

customarily symbolized with the—in-famous ominous—(“name”) of Auschwitz: the existentially engaged, engaging response, a response of a German speaking poet of Jewish descent, to the contradictions and the conflicts of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, (in an “exemplary” manner) “dis-embodied” in the fate—and in the faith—of the countless thousands of members of the Jewish nation during the Second World War, sets in motion, despite the tendency to fall—frightfully—silent, despite the “hermetic”, “opaque” obscurity, the poet’s dialogical search for a way towards an essential change of poetic language, towards a trans-form(ul)ation of words, towards a “breath-turn”, and could, therefore, be comprehended as a harbinger, a precursor of Celan’s auto-poetological re-consideration(s) beginning to take first shape precisely in the time of the nascence of poems for *Sprachgitter*, and ultimately culminating in the preparation of the speech “The Meridian” (“Der Meridian”) delivered in the year 1960 on the occasion of the award of the Georg Büchner Prize (cf. Celan 2000, III: 187–202 and Celan 2001: 401–413). Thus, a look forward, ahead and beyond the cycle, perhaps (also), retrogradely, offers a retro-spec(ula)tive insight into the grounding—groundless?—elements of Celan’s understanding of voice as articulated, voiced, in the “voices” of “Stimmen”.

Celan’s speech “The Meridian”—as well as other (fragmentary, aphoristic) writings and (occasional) jottings on the problems of (contemporary) poetry, among them most notably the planned, but never realized series of lectures “On the Obscurity of the Poetic” (“Von der Dunkelheit des Dichterischen”) from the year 1959 (cf. Celan 2005b: 130–152)—conceives of a poem as with-standing (with-in) “*the mystery of an encounter*” (Celan 2001: 409), as being effectuated on the margins of itself, as addressing itself, underway, towards the other. As neither plainly and simply (just) “language”, nor (just) verbal “correspondence”, but the “actualized language, set free under the sign of a radical individuation” (Celan 2001: 409), a poem, mindful of its dates, of its limitations, becomes—receives its—form as language of a single person marked by the creatureliness of being: it is “an epiphany of language”: a—language turned (through breath into a:)—“voice”.

A poem—“the unique, heart- and sky-grey language in time, born by breath” (Celan 1999: 55)—is, at its core, the “labor”, the “elaboration” of someone who perceives, questions and addresses the (surrounding) phenomena, and, thus, a conversation, however oftentimes a despairing, a hopeless one. For a lonesome, errant poem, directed towards and bound for the other, each and every thing, every and each (human) being is a form of the other, but: as the other it is constituted only in the encounter, in the “in-between” of the conversation itself: as the other gathers around the naming I and becomes a Thou, it also brings its (alien/disowned) otherness—its time—into the (own/alienated) presence of a poem.

Poetry—“this speaking endlessly of mere mortality and uselessness” (Celan 2001: 411)—that travels—with art, towards the uncanny, towards its strangeness, towards its selfmost straits, in order to, with-in a turn of breath, set free a poem ... and send it on its way from the own to the other, is: a journey, and the poem (is) a path: “Then does one, in thinking of poems, does one walk such paths with poems? Are these paths only by-paths, bypaths from thou to thou? Yet at the same time, among how many other paths, they’re also paths on which language gets a voice, they are encounters, paths of a voice to a perceiving Thou, creaturely paths,

sketches of existence perhaps, a sending oneself ahead toward oneself, in search of oneself [...] A kind of homecoming.” (Celan 2001: 412) Because poems, as “voices”—are, Celan declares in a letter to Hans Bender (quoted as the epigraph to this paper), also presents, presents for the attentive—listener/s: the author as well as the reader—, presents that bring about destiny (cf. Celan 2000, III: 177–178).

The language of (his) poetry, as Celan attempts to circumscribe it (predominantly) in “The Meridian”—thereby citing one (the second) of the poems of “Stimmen”—is the—at once: “voiceful and voiceless [stimmhaft und stimmlos]” (Celan 1999: 55): anti-metaphorical—language of a poem, through the voice of which, through the naming of which in the encounter of the word and the world, the mortally personal, the radically individual, the singular, voicelessly partakes and departs (home) as “the mute consonant/consonance of the named” (Celan 1999: 145), as the—or: a—brittle, fragile being of the “world” of the word and the “word” of the world: of the wor(l)d.

The cycle of poems “Stimmen” sings of voices: whilst it, by no means in an impressionistic manner of a colorful iridescence of outer environment, projected onto the inside, by no means in an expressionistic manner of a tense agitation of internal torment, projected onto the outside, re-currently, always anew, refers to perception and reception (of the event—the eventuality—) of re-sounding plurality, multiplicity of vocality, to divergent situations and to contrary positions of listening to, of hearing voices in the mutually inter-twining un-folding, an art of a (contrasting, but complementing: chiasmic) parallelization, of the “natural” and the “social”, wherethrough the one re-calls, re-minds of the other, and, in a vexatiously enigmatic mirroring among them, the other way around, its language itself, confronted with the (seemingly?) groundless, ungrounded—freely floating—voices—without the “subject” of enunciation, without the “object” of address: only the sixth segment beginning with “Jakobsstimme” (“Jacob’s voice”; Celan 2000, I: 148 and Celan 2001: 91) conveys an individually, singularly “identifiable” voice, and, accordingly, also imbues the poem(s) with a biblical “backdrop”, further emphasized in the subsequent section—, offers a secure, safe refuge from ir-revocably ir-resolvable dissipation “into thin air”: a poem, the cycle, provoked by voices, by evoking them, through the echo of a poetic “translation”, instigates, institutes, despite the (imminent) threat of (dis-integrating, dis-embodiment) “dismemberment”, remembrance: the em/brace of memory.

The concluding (part of the) poem, paradoxically (as well as programmatical-ly for the development of Celan’s work), in a stark, “un-(equi)vocal” contra-diction (to the preceding seven parts/poems), a sort of a “musical” (motivic-thematic) “condensation”, on the one hand, summarizes and resumes the cycle’s movement by concisely recapitulating certain “traits” of the (“transcribed”) “experience”, but, on the other hand, also essentially and principally supplements it, the entirety of its “statement”, by giving testimony, by bearing witness to the mystery of the (en-counter with the) lack(ing) fail(ure), the shortfall, the shortage of voice: yet, as the enframing, hesitating line break and dash accentuate, the vocal (still) *is* present, however, no more as voice, but solely, singularly, singly, as a late-noise, a late noise: the voice of (a) noise, the noise of (a) voice, which has (been) with-drawn into the un-recognizable, the un-distinguishable, which comes, reaches us, belatedly, which has become (completely, utterly) alien, alienated to (our) hours, the hours of (our)

worldly dwelling, a foreigner, a guest, but nonetheless gives itself, although absent, although through absence, (to us), as (in a “flash” of) an instantaneous reminder, a reminiscence, as a gift, a present (to the present, to the presence of) thoughts, gives (itself, us) to pause (at least for a moment) and think: thus, at last, as finite, subordinated, ordained (in)to the ir-reversibly relentless passage of time, it re-awakens, can be re-awakened, here, where we dwell, where the poem dwells: (as) a carpel: the welcoming, hospitable leaf of a perhaps minute, perhaps minuscule, yet, by seeing, be-holding, budding, but deeply nicked, profoundly injured (female reproductive organ of a) flower—the (possibility of the) “dimension” of a sheet of paper in the German original of “Fruchtblatt” should, however, not remain unnot(ic)ed—; attentive to, in attendance at the re-sounding noise(s), the (remote, distant) echo(s) of voices—of the dead? of the loved-ones who perished in the inexorable vortex of historical turmoil? of the ones who are destined to bear the (burden of) biblical tradition? of something/someone (absolutely?) other?—(a/the)—poetic—dwelling, (the/a)—dwelling—poem—(sk)etching the contours of existence with-in, without (of) the wor(l)d—, a-rises—as resin re-signing (before) the endured encounter: re-“producing” voice(s): re-singing (them) in the face of death, in the face of life—, from the for-ever open, never closing, for-ever opening, never closed wound, from the dis-closure of a wound that cannot, that will not scar over.

Celan’s poem, giving voice to the encountered—as noise: in-audible—voices, disowning itself, yet—at once—be-coming (to) its own, by dis-obediently responding to the address of the other, which dis-(e)nables (re-medial) healing of the originary—the original?—wound (between them), insofar as it, therefore—itself, thus, other(ed)—, pre-“serves” the un-ambiguously political institution of memory, against “use”, against “misuse”, against “abuse” from the interior (exteriority) and the exterior (interiority) of “the political”, through wor(l)d, maintains, with-stands (with) what, although “subjected”, although “objectified”, nonetheless, after all, before all, defies—de-faces—the (manipulative) “grasp” of politics:—the anti-politics—of voice.

Yet: are we (not), thus, as the multivalent, multifocal dimension—the measure?—of voice brings us, from (within) our distance, closer to the world, brings it, from (within) its distance, closer to us—without establishing a bridge over the un-surmountable gap—, confronted, through the communicative inter-mediality of the vocal, (also) with something—a thing? a nothing?—that cannot be consummately mediated, that obstinately and enduringly resists, rejects all mediation and, indeed, mediatization, that not only withdraws and entices as the immediate, but, furthermore, as the immediable, as the ar-rhythmic im-pulse of existence, reveals itself only through the extraordinary ruptures of its regular, regulated flow, then/there, where/when voice—derailing into giggling laughter or into trembling weeping, perforating atmosphere with shrieking cries, waning in vain with overwhelming deafness—, —once (and for all?)—lost, fails?

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## Andrej Božič

### Slušajući glasove: Paul Celan sa Bernhardom Waldenfelsom

#### Apstrakt

Članak razmatra glas kao medijum ljudske komunikacije posredstvom indirektnog pristupa slušanju. Nakon što je naznačio složenu prirodu glasa, autor posvećuje pažnju teoriji glasa Bernharda Waldenfelsa, razvijene na osnovama fenomenologije stranog. Prema Waldenfelsu, polifonija vokalnog, u kojoj vlastito i strano odzvanjaju u međusobnom prožimanju, ohrabruje mogućnost respozivnog slušanja. U zaključnom delu članka autor uzima u razmatranje jednu od pesama iz ciklusa nazvanog „Glasovi“ („Stimmen“), koju je Pol Celan objavio u zbirci *Sprachgitter*. Imajući u vidu i Celanove autopoetološke spise, interpretacija će nastojati da kratko skicira konture anti-politike glasa.

Ključne reči: glas, slušanje, drugi, Pol Celan, poezija, Bernhard Waldenfels, respozivna racionalnost



III

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STUDIES AND ARTICLES

STUDIJE I ČLANCI



Michal Sládeček

## POLITICAL MORALITY AND NEUTRALITY

### ABSTRACT

The article gives the reasons why a distinction between political morality and ethical conceptions needs to be drawn, as well as the reasons for which political liberalism is a substantial moral conception, and as such in tension with certain understandings of the neutrality. Further, the text analyzes the definition of personality through capacity for action (above all ethical). Recognition of this capacity is necessary, but not sufficient to attribute to a person a special status from the standpoint of political morality, since individuals also must be capable to coordinate their ethical actions with moral principles of others. Further, the text critiques Charles Larmore's moral grounding of the theory of justice on respect of persons by arguing that the concept of respect should be considered as part of the complex interrelationships with other moral concepts, such as equality. In this way, neutrality regarding content of respect, as well as neutrality regarding capacity for ethical action turns out to be insufficient.

### KEYWORDS

political morality,  
neutrality, ethics,  
capacity for action,  
respect

### Introduction

Political morality, as is understood here, is concerned with the normative basis of fundamental political principles. However, aside from this sense, political morality can be comprised of multiple meanings and can refer to different topics. In the first sense, the concept refers to the morality of particular policies and programs. It can endorse a “realistic” approach, according to which moral categories are considered in the context of *realpolitik*, be used in relation to non-normative elements in politics, such as interests and social power, or as a complementary or discordant part of *techné* or mode of governance.<sup>1</sup> It can be assumed that there is an expectation to act in just way when the practice inevitably includes compromises and relations of domination, and therefore the acts of the state should, alongside legality, entail legitimacy or normative justification of the policy as well. In the second meaning, political morality concerns the moral basis of citizenship, that is the ethical characteristics or virtues which are necessary for members of different social groups or proponents of diverse conceptions of good to achieve social cooperation in a

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<sup>1</sup> For this relationship of morality and politics see collection of articles *Politics and Morality* (Primorac 2007).

democratic community (Dagger 1997; Galston 1991; Dunn 1990). Although such virtues might not be treated in a strict republican sense as implying activism, political arrangement is unsustainable as far as there is no aptitude among people for the acceptance of dialogue with co-citizens, cooperation with others as equal partners, genuine commitment to the common good and willingness to accept risk for its realization. The third meaning of political morality is concerned with the normative significance of political institutions and their functions. Legitimacy can be ascribed to institutions because they are constituted in accordance with procedures which are ingrained as fair and impartial by peers, while it can be considered as morally insufficient if particular institutions are constituted in accordance with a cosmological order or convictions on their validity based exclusively on tradition. Such a meaning of morality is deployed in the analysis of democracy and majority rule – in argumentation if and why democratic adjudication is highly acceptable and superior to other political decision-making (cf. Brennan and Lomasky 1993; Vernon 2001).

In line with Rawls' understanding, political conception of justice, as is conceived in this article, is morality for political, social and economic institutions and it refers to the "basic structure" of a modern constitutional democracy" (Rawls 1983: 224). His idea of the theory of justice as freestanding conception indicates its independence from conceptions of good existing in a particular society – it is not derived from wider doctrine. However this theory is sufficient to affirm values which persons in the political domain accept as valid, and give them priority in relation to other values which oppose them. In this article, political morality and liberal political morality are taken interchangeably, considering liberalism as the most developed normative political theory, and the most plausible theory which clarifies political morality. Liberal theories of justice are moral theories because they comprise ideas on how society should be organized, as well as an assessment of if accepted norms of social organization correspond to liberal moral norms; also, they are grounded upon central moral concepts of rights, freedom, fairness, impartiality, equality, respect etc., and by means of them undertake to formulate principles of justice; finally, they comprise a particular conception of personhood, endeavouring to find the answer to the question of which virtues are complementary to just institutions, that is, which properties of the human character are necessary for a just political arrangement be feasible and sustainable.

This article will analyze the morality of basic principles of political structure in the context of substantial and permanent disagreement on ethical norms in a given society. Political morality and particular ethical conceptions function in separate social spheres, they differ in comprehensiveness, generality and potentiality of consensus regarding their norms. Political morality is concerned with the political sphere, its norms are valid for all members in a political framework. They are generally obligatory, can be transformed to statutory requirements, and, in as much as they are formulated clearly, coherently and impartially, reasonable agreement can be achieved concerning basic norms, and rational person would have no valid reason to refuse them. Ethical conceptions are valid in the domain of particular communities (or for a specific group of people that share particular ethical convictions), they are obligatory only for the members of a particular group and do not bind non-members to their support or endorsement; also, force should not

be used to compel members to follow ethical principles. Ethical norms are deeply controversial and – in a situation when individuals have the possibility of choice and the right to use the reason freely, i.e. in such a way they acknowledge as correct – it cannot be expected that endorsed values will converge and the people will achieve general consensus on ethical values and norms in toto.<sup>2</sup>

These qualities are ideal type ones, and more meticulous analysis can reveal that in concrete cases political morality has certain properties in common with ethical conception and, vice versa, particular ethics have the features of general morality, as well as those which belong to special cases of political morality. The norms of morality such as those concerning rights, justice or freedom of speech can be controversial, as people will disagree overwhelmingly on the questions of, for example, animal rights, a statute of limitations in common law or the content of hate speech.<sup>3</sup> Also, it can be stated that contemporary philosophical and religious ethics share a common minimal moral core, such as respect to the right to life and freedom of movement, as well as condemnation of torture and slavery. Furthermore, despite a generality, obligatory nature of the norms of political morality is confined to a given group, therefore it is considered as unjustified when states with just laws, free media and fair democratic procedures of political adjudication attempt to impose the character of their institutions in other, illiberal or less democratic states. On the other hand, in ethical systems fair relationships to non-members and coexistence

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2 The goods that are generally accepted as agreeable and objective can be listed, such as knowledge, realization of certain personal and social relationships, cultural achievements, life in accordance with autonomously chosen values etc. (cf. Parfit 1984; Brink 1989: 231; Arneson 2003: 215-216), however an agreement on ethical values and norms will not be achieved *in toto*. Ethical systems are all-encompassing, they entail additional obligations, regulations, norms and values, not only the above mentioned generally desirable goods. An integral part of numerous religions is the prohibition of blasphemy (the third commandment in Decalogue is proscription of this kind), the norm which does not have moral content and which, from a moral standpoint, might be rejected as incompatible with the more important value of freedom of speech. Concerning philosophical theories, utilitarian imperative to enhance general well-being and/or prevent misery could be presumed by many people as too demanding a duty which deters people from those projects which are not intended for the prosperity of all. Finally, ethical norms which are accepted as customs of the local community are an amalgam of those norms which correspond to morality and morally neutral habits or modes of community members' interaction which could be different while at the same time not becoming more or less moral – only from an external standpoint could it be possible to discern which modes of interaction should be mandatory. Therefore, the existence of a common moral core in various ethics still cannot be an argument on behalf of the proposition that an appropriate (or the best) conception of good can be installed as a basis for the normative constitution of political arrangement.

3 However, the argument (posed by some liberals) for the neutrality of political morality in relation to philosophical, religious or ideological stances is still viable, regardless of the objection that political concepts such as fairness and equality are, similarly to ethical concepts, deeply contested. Blasphemy is unacceptable as a norm of justice not only due to its permanent contestability, but also, as it has been said, because it collides with the fundamental norm of freedom of expression. Thus, defenders of neutrality towards ethical conceptions can argue that the reason why principles of justice cannot encompass conceptions of good is not the incontestability of the former and the lack of consensus of the latter. See Lecce 2008.

with those who do not share certain ethical convictions are often incorporated. Despite the fact that some ethics are local, intended for regulating the behavior of people in smaller communities, secular and religious ethics can undoubtedly be universalistic, and, at least according to their own interpretations, many of them claim to be applicable to all persons at all times.

The distinction between morality and ethics is of particular importance in the dispute between neutral liberalism and its claim that political norms (and, accordingly, state actions) should be neutral concerning ethical conceptions which exist in a society, and perfectionism, claiming that states ought to promote honourable activities, while discouraging less commendable ones. Neutral liberalism and perfectionism offer different assessments on *if* and *to what extent* strict separation of political morality from particular visions of the good life is justifiable. Those theoretical positions give different answers to the question can adequate ethical conception be fundamental to political morality, as well as if the state can be justifiably allowed to sanction particular conceptions of good, or to treat them differently – to promote particular values and visions of the good life while discouraging less valuable or worthless ones. As is well-known, starting with Rawls' texts after *Theory of Justice*, liberalism begins to self-define itself as a political theory, independent of any comprehensive theory, including liberalism itself as a specific ethical, ideological and philosophical doctrine. Regardless, if theory of justice is further developed in the direction of neutrality or is criticized from the perfectionist standpoint, the distinction between morality and convictions on the good life turns out to be indispensable in order to formulate political theory as adequate for ethical value pluralism in modern societies.

Specificity of political morality as constitutive in the political domain does not imply diminishing the significance of individual and collective choices concerning the good life. The proponents of neutral liberalism (starting with Isaiah Berlin and his concept of “negative freedom” which is political in its nature and neutral in relation to the good life) argue that there are numerous reasons why it is not only allowable, but also necessary for persons to pursue morally commendable aims. A neutral position means that the state is not entitled to suppress particular conceptions of good if the majority consider them as undesirable. Nevertheless, the situation is less clear when worthless visions of human good are concerned – some theoreticians of neutral liberalism argue that it is right to discourage such visions, at the same time claiming that it cannot be justifiable to enforce stronger legal repression towards them, such as prohibition.

However, it would be misleading to describe political morality as “thin”, claiming that it should be confined to principles and measures which are indispensable for the coexistence of different individuals or groups, that is, reduced to rules of impartial conflict-resolving between them. In accord with Rawls and Larmore, Nagel remarks that liberalism is not just a doctrine of tolerance: liberals have their specific values and normative systems. Liberal impartiality is a substantive moral position.<sup>4</sup> Dworkin claims that liberalism is not a metaethical conception which describes in which way moral reasoning is used in political argumentation and persuasion, but

4 See Nagel 1987: 217 and 240. Cf. also Rawls (1993, 1996: 11 and 147) concerning the claim that political liberalism is a moral conception.

it is value laden itself as this stance takes a particular side in moral disputes. Liberalism endorses neutrality not because, as he wrote, “there is no right or wrong in political morality, but because that is what is right” (Dworkin 1985: 203). Having in mind the substantiality of the liberal theory of justice, its most integral part is concept of personhood, which is based on the assumption that people have a particular moral abilities, which enable them to enact those interactions with others which will be based on respect and mutual recognition as equals and on acknowledgement of basic freedoms for all.

### Capacity for Self-imposed Ends

As the specificity of human beings, Kant considered their capacity to set ends for themselves (Kant 1991: 195, MS 6: 392), a standpoint which was adopted by later Rawls and numerous other liberals as well. Human actions are aimed at some goal or purpose, but the very existence of intentional behaviour is not the sole condition of moral actions as people have to be capable of choosing goals by themselves, i.e. autonomously, and also includes mandates that goals should be the result of rational choice. Human beings are not slaves to irrational impulses, passions and urgencies, nor to the external forces and circumstances. In this sense, individuals cannot be dependent on externally imposed goals, hence the valuable purposes are only those which are chosen after rational scrutiny. Therefore, free, rational and autonomous beings will constitute arrangements in which equal opportunities to form spheres of freedom are conceived in such a way that compulsion will not be used to impose a specific conception of good. By Rawlsian interpretation, Kant’s principles emphasize that it will be requisite to rule out any political system based on a particular comprehensive worldview (see Caranti 2017: 23). A legal and political systems should be neutral regarding those worldviews, as it should guarantee a persons’ right to form, develop and follow particular visions of good. Concisely expressed, by enforcing a particular ends or conception of good, respect for the autonomy and self-determination of all persons who follow a different conceptions of good will be invalidated, and consequently this enforcement will be immoral (Kant 1991: 187, MS, 6: 381).

Caranti in his insightful study of Kant’s political philosophy identifies three problems with which an agency-based approach is confronted, the approach according to which the distinctive feature of a human being is agency, that is, capacity to act on self-imposed ends.<sup>5</sup> The first problem is identified by Danto (1984) in his critique of Gewirth’s underlining of agency, which is analogous to Kant’s: contrary to Gewirth and Kant, agency is not a moral condition because even slaves have agency, as well as the required skills and education, which make them useful and valuable to their master. However, it cannot be stated that slaves’ rights and dignity are respected, and that they are treated as commendable human beings. The second problem is torture: by proclaiming that torture is bad and should be outlawed,

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<sup>5</sup> Caranti 2017: 44. Although, Caranti in his critique has in mind a different case of agency-based justification for general human rights, which is not the topic of this article, it also concerns agency as the capacity to set ends as a reason for special ethical and legal treatment of the agency-holder.

we are not demanding the banning the torture exclusively because it deprives persons of their capacity for meaningful action (this is not even the main reason why we should consider torture as evil), but because to inflict hurt and suffering is bad intrinsically. The third problem is that children and mentally impaired persons, in as much as they are not able to form and give justification for their goals, should not be entitled to human rights and should not be granted special respect. In this way, those three problems imply that a person's capacity to act ethically can not be counted as a condition for the ascription of exclusive dignity to those beings, because in this way moral status is ascribed unjustifiably to some, and unjustifiably taken from others, and it exaggerates the moral significance of the capability to act on self-imposed ends.

In the next section I will challenge Caranti's argument, not in order to defend the flawlessness of the Kantian position, but to reinterpret the concept of capacity, since additional conditions are requisite for ascribing moral status to a capacity for self-imposed ends. Concerning the first problem, slaves are not treated as independent persons, as having the opportunity of self-determination, so it will be inappropriate to claim that they have agency in Kant's sense. This example rather confirms the validity of an agency-based approach, because the slave is not an autonomous agent, but the subject or instrument for achieving someone else's goals, those which the slave did not formulated or choose. The other two objections overlook that agency as an action on self-imposed ends is the reason for particular respect for an individual, which nevertheless does not imply nullifying other considerations towards children, mentally impaired persons or animals. Unwarranted infliction of pain, torture and mutilation of humans as well as animals is morally wrong, but only to beings with developed intellectual capacities can self-determination be attributed, they can be humiliated, disrespected, insulted or degraded (as is obvious, the vocabulary referring to immoral treatment is very developed and nuanced in the case of higher human capacities), which means, to inflict hurt on them in indirect sense. Human beings should be treated as valuable *also because* of the capability to follow their ends, and it is always wrong to disrespect this capacity when beings have it. To ascribe special status to agency as the capacity to determine the purpose of actions, form a worldview and follow autonomously chosen projects does not mean nullifying the values of children, mentally incapacitated persons or non-rational living beings in general. Moreover, this does not mean prioritizing rational creatures as beings capable of ethical agency. Respect for those beings is adjoined as something additional to the moral status that human beings already have.

Kant, as well as Rawls, holds that persons should be treated with dignity and their right to freedom has to be recognized in order to give them the opportunity to develop their moral capacities.<sup>6</sup> As autonomous choice is treated as valuable, it is necessary to draw distinction between freedom as plain self-determination and freedom as autonomy in the sense of moral choice, or a capacity for moral actions. Kant introduced the latter capacity because plain capability for self-determination still does not indicate that a subject's action are in accord with moral imperatives:

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6 The freedom is "independence from being constrained by another's choice" and this independence is our "original right" we have "by virtue of our humanity" (Kant 1991: 63, MS 6: 237).



persons can also be committed to immoral goals and their life purposes can be meaningless. The capacities can also have a specific sense, such as capacity for artistic production which although can be intrinsically praiseworthy, is not relevant morally, as this production is not primarily intended to influence the behavior of other persons and to shape relationships between them. Furthermore, artistic creativity can stem from different motives such as art for art's sake, or even for profit. Numerous Renaissance masterpieces were created owing to Maecenas' wealth, which can be, by applying exclusively ethical criteria, appraised negatively notwithstanding great intrinsic value of the work. As is well-known, Kant excluded extra-moral motivation from moral actions and related it with heteronomy: actions which are not motivated by good will can be worthy only contingently, as they are generated in consequence of ethically irrelevant factors, albeit not due to intentional acknowledgement of ethical imperatives.

Hence, the capability for praiseworthy acts is still not valuable morally, and in the same vein a capacity is not regarded straightforwardly as moral if the subject utilizes it autonomously. The approach of newer theories to autonomy and self-determination are considerably wider than Kant's, as they do not define those concepts exclusively by moral categories, i.e. by those which govern interpersonal relationships. Autonomously chosen care about physical well-being, self-improvement and self-education, can be valuable and can be purposes which are worthy to aspire to, and, in addition, they can be appraised as valuable in virtue of the very autonomy of choice, but this self-determination is ethically related to person involved and directly concerns only the individual who is making those choices. Nevertheless, from Kant's standpoint, an individual should be respected as the subject of projects – moral, ethical or extra-ethical – who is capable of forming, reflecting or revising them and deciding on their acceptance or refusal, whereby a considerable limiting of this freedom is regarded as incompatible with morality. The question is, however, whether respect for autonomy, including person's capacity for rationality and reasonableness, as well as appraising such abilities as commendable, are a sufficient conditions for morality and are required regardless of their use – is there an obligation to neutrality concerning the content of those capacities?

Concerning neutrality as the ethical condition in forming and pursuing conceptions of good, two problems can be emphasized. The first one is the assumption that there are primary goods as neutral conditions for acquiring the capacity to form a conception of good, and that there is unanimous agreement about their indispensableness; the second problem with neutrality is concerned with respect to a vision of good or life projects as such. The first problem stems from the Rawlsian liberal-neutral comprehension of fair distribution of primary goods. It assumes that, in the absence of particular goods, such as freedom of speech, a basic right to self-expression, equal liberty and right of assembly, it would not be possible in a full sense to form, develop and maintain ethical visions, and, therefore, principles such as equal liberty are grounded in neutral values.<sup>7</sup> Just distribution of primary goods should be general and universal enough to enable everyone to form and pursue the vision of a good life, and it is a formal condition which must be fulfilled. This condition is much less controversial, and to a considerably greater

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7 On this interpretation of Rawls' primary goods see de Marneffe 1990: 257.

extent acceptable than “positive” or “material” ones, such as equal access to education, the right to unbiased and as much as possible objective media, the provision of resources that exceed bare necessities, proper amount of leisure time needed for deliberation, as well as the possibility of obtaining enough information, knowledge and skills necessary for pursuing personal or collective projects. Those conditions on which there is widespread disagreement, however, are no less important than primary goods in order to form and achieve personal or collective projects. Insofar as freedom of speech, assembly and other basic liberties are more than self-contained values, and have to be guaranteed and maintained as inevitable conditions of the capacity for self-imposed ends, those conditions also assume those goods on which there is no unanimous agreement.

The second problem of the condition of neutrality in an individual’s forming and pursuing the visions of good is related to the question if it is possible to respect a person while not respecting their beliefs. In moral action, i.e. conduct intended towards other person(s) it is expected of the individual to give reasons for acting in a certain way, or to explain the reasons for adopting particular norms of actions towards certain person(s). If person does not appreciate the requirement to provide justification for her attitude towards me, she will treat me similarly to “mindless objects”, as if my rational abilities are not pertinent (McCabe 2000: 326). When somebody claims that she has a right to express her opinion, she is not only claiming that nobody should restrict her for publicly endorsing the opinion and compel her to abandon certain convictions, but she “is insisting that his/her/opinions properly track his/her/ own deliberations.”<sup>8</sup> Persons deserve to be treated as rational, as well as reasonable beings, those who are able to form, endorse and defend particular moral principles through arguments – otherwise they would be treated paternalistically in the same way as children (in the case of human beings not considered as fully rational) or as psychopaths (when persons are not accepted or recognized as reasonable, i.e. capable of ethical conduct).

However, is ascription (no matter how well corroborated) of rationality to persons and acknowledgement of their capacity to act according to moral norms enough to qualify those persons as capable for intersubjective deliberation which would lead to social cooperation on fair basis? Only superficial neutrality could be fulfilled by this indifference regarding the way in which persons’ capabilities are used, as well as regarding content of the conceptions of good which persons with mental abilities of rationality and reasonability endorse.

Political morality assumes that additional conditions should be fulfilled considering respect for the individual as moral person capable for cooperation with other members of society. To recognize the citizens as fully moral persons is to respect them, first, as rational beings, second, as beings competent to set ethical goals which they are aspired to accomplish and, third, as beings capable to endorse, affirm and maintain moral standards. The citizens should espouse those standards on coherent manner (which is demand for political sphere) and they have to adjust

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8 Gauss 2003: 150. Similarly, Galston claims that we respect a person by giving her the best reasons which we can provide regardless of whether or not she accepts those reason as valid. Our attitude towards her should be as if she is endowed with a sense of justice and is capable of decisions in accord with reasonable moral principles (Galston 1991: 109).

them with principles of justice (which is of particular importance for political morality). Or, as Rawls claims, persons should have “sense of justice” as the ability to understand the conception of justice and to act in accord with its principles.<sup>9</sup> This condition can be understood more fundamentally – that respect for the person as capable to form higher moral abilities depends on the very content of endorsed moral norms, and the respect of those capacities as such is not identical with the respect from the point of view of political morality. Person’s rationality and capacity for reasonableness have the value from the stance of political liberalism as long as person is capable to espouse the conceptions of good compatible with claims of justice affirmed by other persons. Others are obliged to give reasons for their conceptions and can point to deficiency of my assessment, eventual illogicality of my judgements, to the wrongness of my assumptions, to prejudices or partiality, but if I am still continuing to rely on my unreasonable claims, other persons can ignore them. Nothing is indicated in favor of the assumption that in this case actions towards me will be disrespectful and others would treat me similarly to an object.

### Respect as basic moral requirement

One of the theoreticians engaged intensively on elaboration of political liberalism as the full-blown moral theory is Charles Larmore, who is endeavour to redefine Rawls’ idea of theory of justice in direction of more underscored moral foundation of this political theory. Political liberalism is autonomous or freestanding in relation to comprehensive metaphysical or naturalistic theories, ideologies or religious beliefs, but it is not freestanding in regard to morality (Larmore 2008: 149. and 162). At the heart of liberalism is the respect for persons – it has a quality of moral principle and itself is independent not only of visions of good, but also regarding procedurally correct decisions, “will of the people”, as well as regarding common ground or agreement which could be achieved as a result of debate, coordinating the statements and contrivance of shared values. Though he is undertaken to constitute political liberalism through moral categories, Rawls – in Larmore’s interpretation – insisted on procedural character of justice, while omitting special status which respect have.<sup>10</sup> In his theory it can be discerned a tension between political will and moral principles which have to be independent of this will, and this is displayed in Rawls’ understanding of original position. On one hand, it is assumed that persons

9 See Rawls 1993, 1996: part 3, lecture 8.; Rawls 1971: ch. VIII. Larmore as well emphasized that somebody’s particular (or all) beliefs does not deserve respect, but only capacity of the person to form a coherent worldview, whereby the respect to other person is related to hers capability to elaborate standpoint which is worthy of respect (Larmore 1987: 64). If Larmore’s standpoint associate with Rawls’, it will mean that moral feature of reasonableness as capability to form and endorse conception of good is connected with rationality (as coherence in forming and endorsing), but also with ultimate condition that conceptions are worthy of respect, i.e. they are not dissonant with “sense of justice” or capability to political morality.

10 Larmore 2008: 150. Emphasizing the foundational role of respect in contemporary liberalism is already present in Larmore’s book *The Moral of Modernity*, whereby it is evident (and he admits that) this idea is adopted from Dworkin’s political philosophy. Cf. Larmore 2008: 148.

in this position are reasonable, and not only rational and competent to follow their own interests. As reasonable, they have particular moral sensibility, potential and willingness to coordinate their actions with others, and they can conduct their acts according to principles of cooperation. In order to be justifiable for all, those principles have to be constituted on certain moral assumptions, in absence of which they would not achieve principles of justice based on fairness (see Larmore 2008: 151). On the other hand, when Rawls states that principles of political justice are freestanding and doctrinary autonomous, “freestanding” does not mean independence from comprehensive doctrines only, but from “moral requirements externally imposed” as well (Rawls 1993, 1996: 98). He agrees with Habermas that the source of validity of the basic principles of justice rest in consensually constituted political will that are antecedent in relation to moral norms.

Even value pluralism is controversial doctrine – it can be convenient starting point for the explanation of disagreement, but on value pluralism cannot be based liberal form of political life as fair, as well as stable, that is, on which the consensus of the persons endorsing different ethical comprehension would be constituted (Larmore 2008: 142; Larmore 1996: ch.7). Pluralism is not a norm: liberals argue that pluralism is a fact of modern society which should be acknowledged, but it has to be appreciated only when it is reasonable or when it is constituted on the moral core. This moral core of political liberalism is “a principle of respect of persons” (Larmore 2008: 143) which, in contrast with other political principles, its validity does not draw from the fact that it is the result of the consensus of reasonable people. Respect for the people put us under obligation independently from our will and the agreement of citizens that respect is honourable: respect is external and antecedent in relation to collective will. Only on this way political liberalism can be constituted as moral theory, otherwise it will be just one of *modus vivendi* doctrine, in which liberal principles, such as two principles of the justice as fairness, are chosen in order to balance individual interests of participants in social cooperation. Or, as Larmore argued in his critic of Habermas, only if it has moral foundation, people’s sovereignty can achieve the ideal of democracy to which persons aspire (Larmore 2008: 159).

Nevertheless, in Larmore’s conception the role which specific ethical, ideological or religious conceptions have for constituting and maintaining of liberal political arrangement is unspecified. In order to be relevant for stability, respect should be interpreted in such a way that its validity would be appreciated by adherents of different conceptions of good, therefore only those conceptions should be considered as reasonable which in their foundations have equal respect. If we adopt this stance, there is threat that almost all religions would fail the test. Confucianism, instead of equal respect, emphasize hierarchy, while Hindu religion, which is based on Vedas as holy scriptures, entail extreme disrespect towards pariah. Abrahamic religions were interpreted in most of their history in such a way that they approve slavery, and they did not oppose it in a long period of time. Almost all of them were accused of promulgating disrespect for gentiles and infidels – religions as such, therefore, do not incline to the respect for the other person or universal respect to humanity as such. Also, the principle of equal treatment of all people cannot be deployed when it comes to interpersonal relationships which religions promulgate. For example, certain interpretations of religious teaching states that in

their religion women are highly respected, even if their status is much lower than status of men – they cannot be ministers, choose their partners, went out not accompanied by men etc. – which indicate that to respect somebody does not necessarily mean to treat somebody as equal.

As primarily political norm, respect, as Larmore noticed, does not express or is based on a comprehensive moral philosophy, which means it is not bind to one type of ethics, but it is encompassed in variety of diverse and mutually incompatible ideas of human good.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, duty to respect other persons is also part of those theories and ideologies which presume that embedment and belonging to group or community are essential for moral conduct, although not critical stance or reflexion. Being attached to tradition and communally accepted norms does not imply refusal of liberal values (despite the fact that conceptions which emphasize belonging often affirm traditional hierarchy of social roles), and endorsement of individualism can imply elitism and repudiation of the values of common people. It could be assumed that Larmore's theory conflate critical attitude towards traditions as methodical stance (as well as the way to achieve social goods, legitimacy of governance, fair policy etc.), with individualism as ethical position which, in its extreme variant, deny common good. However, the collective goods can be accepted as relevant for moral thinking, while they are transmitted by tradition and mediated by critique at the same time: whether it makes sense to attribute relevance to traditional values and norms, it is because they have stood the test of time, and they withstand critique and challenges which are set by new conditions.

Also, in such conceived stability of political arrangement the premise of equality is tenuous, and conceptions based on tradition can, but also cannot entail or appreciate it, whereas liberalism in particular variances (including Larmore's theory) does not emphasize its relevance sufficiently. Premise of equality, however, is inseparable from critique, as it is almost always debatable what equality is at issue, as well as its extent and optimality. Whether it concerns political theory and philosophy, or it concerns political discourse, dispute on meaning of equality, including equality of respect, is perpetuated incessantly. Respect is, therefore, a controversial concept and has to be interpreted in a proper way in order to acquire status of relevant moral value in constitution of political arrangement. The question "which respect" is indispensable and from it depends if it inclines to equality, or to perpetuation of the traditional forms of hierarchy, repression and submission, even when it is declamatory insisted on giving honourable status to other persons. Apparently, we are often confronted with disrespect towards persons which is repugnant as such, but, in order to be accepted as valuable relationship, every type of respect should correspond to particular criteria of equality, and it is commendable when ethical or political action aspire to equalization of respect.

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11 Larmore 2008: 164–165. Furthermore, persons which endorse those ideas should nevertheless be respected: "Others are due equal respect by virtue of their capacity for working out a coherent view of the world and indeed of good life, whether or not they exercise this capacity autonomously or experimentally, or through the uncritical acceptance or traditions and forms of life" (Larmore 1987: 65). It is odd, however, if liberal neutrality imply indifference whether persons accept ideas of good life by autonomous choice, through reflexion and critical approach, or embrace them by blind obedience.

Realisation of justice should include assessment of the extent to which respect is actualised as egalitarian, bearing in mind that equality is one of the substantial features of liberalism. Vice versa, conceived as isolated from respect, equality which would not appreciate individual's particularity, aspirations, visions of goods etc. evidently will decline from ideals of justice which liberalism requires. The example of respect illustrates interconnections of components of liberalism, the need to reflect them, for conceptual refinement and marking the point on which they are manifested as vague and insufficient. The overemphasis and overlook of particular components is often related to a general tendencies liberalism's, such as the evolution of Rawls' liberalism from comprehensive to political, which, as critics emphasized,<sup>12</sup> lost egalitarian component, being contended with equality in political rights. However, moral constitution of political liberalism on plain respect can even more have inegalitarian connotations.

## Conclusion

To distinguish respect as an independent moral category from the corpus of moral concepts (as a starting point or as the aim to which moral acts should tend to), while not paying a due attention to moral reflexion of its content and relationships with other moral categories, is the consequence of neutrality conceived as excluding of disputes concerning the meaning of the respect of people. Related to this, the necessity of this excluding is explained as a neutral approach to conflicting conceptions of good. As shown before, neutrality perceived in such way is, similarly, complacent with the existence of subject's formal capacity to agency as the condition for the moral treatment of a person. In contrast with this conception, it should be assumed that person, in order to be worthy of respect in public sphere from the standpoint of political morality, should espouse the particular moral standards compatible with principles of justice possessed by others and endorse them in a coherent manner.

Neutrality, including liberal one, was often identified with tolerance and pluralism, or with exposition of morality as "thin", regulating the coexistence of various social groups with manifold potentially conflicting ethical conceptions, whereby the addition of other moral values complementary to the former ones was considered as a divergence from liberal precepts. As a consequence, liberals have been frequently presented as those who know *against* what they are, but not *for* what they are. However, as it was noticed, tolerance is not the only value of liberalism, and the values of pluralism and tolerance should be reflected along with various forms of equality, respect, freedom, self-governance etc. From the standpoint of morality germane for political sphere, neutrality, in so far as comprise tolerance and appreciation of pluralism only, is not sufficient and political liberalism as a moral theory has to rely on a wider whole of values.

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<sup>12</sup> For example, Barry (1995) and Bernard Williams (2014: ch. 63) claimed that in Rawls' book *Political Liberalism* redistributive implications have been set aside.

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## Michal Sládeček

### Politička moralnost i neutralnost

#### Apstrakt

U tekstu se navode razlozi zbog kojih je neophodno povući distinkciju između političke moralnosti i etičkih koncepcija, kao i razlozi zbog kojih se politički liberalizam ispostavlja kao supstancijalna moralna koncepcija, pri čemu se javlja napetost između nje i određenih shvaćanja neutralnosti. Dalje se analizira određenje ličnosti kroz kapacitet za delanje (u prvom redu etičko), i obrazlaže se da je priznavanje ovog kapaciteta neophodno, mada ne i dovoljno da bi se osobi pripisao poseban status sa stanovišta političke moralnosti i da je za ovo pripisivanje takođe neophodno da pojedinac bude u stanju da usaglasi svoje etičke akcije sa moralnim principima drugih osoba. Takođe, u tekstu se kritikuje Larmoreovo moralno zasnivanje teorije pravde kroz poštovanje osoba, pri čemu se brani stanovište da pojam poštovanja treba razmatrati u sklopu kompleksnijeg međuodnosa sa drugim moralnim pojmovima, kao što je jednakost. Na taj način, neutralnost u pogledu sadržaja poštovanja, isto kao i neutralnost u pogledu kapaciteta za etičko delanje, se pokazuje kao nedovoljna.

Ključne reči: politička moralnost, neutralnost, etika, kapacitet za moralno delanje, poštovanje



Strahinja Đorđević

## FICTIONALISM AND THE PROBLEM OF UNIVERSALS IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF MATHEMATICS

### ABSTRACT

Many long-standing problems pertaining to contemporary philosophy of mathematics can be traced back to different approaches in determining the nature of mathematical entities which have been dominated by the debate between realists and nominalists. Through this discussion conceptualism is represented as a middle solution. However, it seems that until the 20<sup>th</sup> century there was no third position that would not necessitate any reliance on one of the two points of view. Fictionalism, on the other hand, observes mathematical entities in a radically different way. This is reflected in the claim that the concepts being used in mathematics are nothing but a product of human fiction. This paper discusses the relationship between fictionalism and two traditional viewpoints within the discussion which attempts to successfully determine the ontological status of universals. One of the main points, demonstrated with concrete examples, is that fictionalism cannot be classified as a nominalist position (despite contrary claims of authors such as Hartry Field). Since fictionalism is observed as an independent viewpoint, it is necessary to examine its range as well as the sustainability of the implications of opinions stated by their advocates.

### KEYWORDS

fictionalism, universals,  
realism, nominalism,  
philosophy of  
mathematics,  
metaphysics, ontology

### Mathematics and the problem of universals

The problem of universals is one of the major ontological problems that never left the main philosophical discourse, even though the discussion revolving around it undoubtedly changed its course. It can be said that the core of this problem is one of the main preoccupations of philosophers throughout history, which, in truth, has had different manifestations. As a discipline that is essentially non-empirical, philosophy in its dealing with principles is constantly confronted with issues that are, to a lesser or greater extent, concerned with the problem of determining the status of universals. However, philosophy is not the only discipline that is not based on empirical facts. Mathematics is also a field of study that is largely made up of principles whose origins most likely cannot be found in the sensuous world.

With the emergence of conceptualism<sup>1</sup> in the Middle Ages, it became clear that strictly relying on realism or nominalism is not the only way of thought. Therefore, new perspectives are emerging in this period which will not be so decisively associated to any of the two mentioned opposing viewpoints. What does this mean for mathematics? Since mathematics deals with principles, it is clear that many of its entities, like the universals, “are not to be found in the ordinary world of space and time” (Armstrong 1989: 76) and their properties cannot be talked about on the basis of immediate insight. Because of this fact, the problem of universals is very important for the philosophy of mathematics as well as mathematics alone. Determining the relationship between realism, nominalism and conceptualism has thus become one of the main tasks that philosophers of mathematics will have to solve. And they have tried, but what was immediately seen as a result was the fact that the main thing still did not change<sup>2</sup> – there was no consensus around which viewpoint is right. Thus, the conflicts philosophers had with the problem of determining the degree of reality of ideas are present when philosophers of mathematics are trying to determine the ontological status of many mathematical entities. This may have been anticipated, since even old Greeks have been speaking of numbers and confronted while considering their nature. Since the numbers are just “the tip of the iceberg” when mathematical entities are concerned, it was clear ever since the emergence of the philosophy of mathematics that the issue of the problem of universals would be a very fruitful topic for philosophers of mathematics.

Similarly to numbers, when it comes to mathematical concepts such as sets, points, algorithms, functions and everything else covered in mathematics, the debate on the nature of universals can be deliberately moved to its field of research without losing the original opposing positions. As a result, in the discussion of the status of mathematical entities we have realism, which in most cases is equal to platonism<sup>3</sup> (although it is not the only realist theory<sup>4</sup>), and the claim that mathematical entities exist independently of humans. On the other hand, there is nominalism<sup>5</sup> which claims that the abstract entities used in mathematics are essentially non-existent and that the concepts<sup>6</sup> derived from mathematics are the result of human aspiration to explain the empirical world. However, as Geoffrey Hellman correctly observed, the main division<sup>7</sup> within this problem “should not automatically be conflated with the contrast between ‘platonism’ and ‘nominalism’” (Hellman

1 About conceptualism, as well as medieval disputes concerning the problem of universals. More in Evans (1993).

2 In relation to previous philosophical thoughts that were not necessarily concerned with determining the nature of mathematical entities.

3 See Balaguer (1998).

4 “But it must not be assumed that all realist interpretations must be platonist”. (Hellman 1989: 2)

5 As the most prominent anti-realistic position. Some thinkers, such as Charles Landesman consider that nominalism is a form of so-called particularism. (Landesman 1971: 4)

6 Like all other non-empirical objects.

7 According to Landesman “same three doctrines reappear in twentieth-century surveys of the philosophy of mathematics” (realism, conceptualism and nominalism) but he claims that they are “under the new names logicism, intuitionism, and formalism” (Landesman 1971: 223-224). Although this view is interesting, we will not be dealing with it in this paper.

1989: 2). One view that is highly compatible with nominalism (if not even its theoretical embodiment) is constructivism<sup>8</sup> (and its most famous variation intuitionism<sup>9</sup>), which claims that all mathematical entities are the product of the human mind and that they have no real existence independently of it. The emergence of constructivism and other similar positions has led to the fact that the two main contradictory viewpoints (realism and nominalism) are described in the discussions in a very broad way, such that usually nominalism refutes platonism, and platonists respond to constructivists with their own arguments, it is also common for the advocates of intuitionism to respond to realists. But it seems to be most congenial for us to stick to the term realism and nominalism, which will almost entirely be synonymous with other names of related (or subordinated) positions<sup>10</sup>.

Since this essential terminological distinction is made, there is a need to point out the connection between these two points of view. Although this may seem contradictory, realism and nominalism have one very important thing in common – their equal position on the truthfulness of the mathematical entities themselves. Both realism and nominalism treat mathematical models as something that carries a certain truth, which means that despite the existence of mutual differences in observation of the world, both positions consider that mathematical entities essentially speak of something real<sup>11</sup>. This is one of the rare points where there is a consensus among the followers of mathematical realism and mathematical nominalism. Does this mean that as a result of their consensus, the question of truthfulness of mathematical entities and mathematics itself is automatically treated as resolved?

### Fictionalism and arguments in its favor

As far as the potential positive answer to the question posed at the end of the previous passage can be satisfactory, that is simply not the case. In the philosophy of mathematics, during the the eighties of the last century, an “autochthonous” position emerged, which would represent direct opposition to nominalism<sup>12</sup> and realism. Its main distinction from these two points of view is based on a different notion of the possibility of attributing truth to mathematics and its entities. The name given to it is fictionalism, the third major viewpoint<sup>13</sup> in the discussion regarding the nature of mathematical concepts. Its founder is Hartry H. Field who has also made a significant contribution to popularizing this position. In addition to Field, among prominent fictionalists we include David Malet Armstrong, Joseph Melia, Mark Balaguer and Stephen Yablo. All of them, despite different approaches and

8 Although some thinkers like Hellman claim that there is a “vast difference between nominalism and constructivism”. (Hellman 1989: 47)

9 According to which “mathematics is an essentially subjective activity”. (Øystein 2017: 76)

10 Realism for platonism, nominalism for constructivism and intuitionism.

11 Although nominalist don’t believe in “realness” of mathematical entities *per se*.

12 It is important to emphasize that fictionalism is often viewed as a nominalistic position. This is not the attitude that will be favored in this paper, as it is argued that these two points are essentially different.

13 Conceptualism could be treated as a third major viewpoint, but it is not represented so much among the philosophers of mathematics.

divisions, such as those of hermeneutic and revolutionary fictionalists (Kalderon 2005: 5), had a major influence on the development of fictionalism.

Fictionalists, above all, try to present mathematics as something that does not have any reality, nor has the ability to correspond with anything from reality. According to this point of view, there are no universal ideas, forms, or any other similar concept as in realism, nor is mathematics considered to be a product of the human mind or treated as a certain construct that can be extracted from the sensuous world as in nominalism. It should, however, be taken into account that fictionalism is generally treated as a nominalist viewpoint because of its denial of reality of mathematics and its abstract entities. Armstrong states: “As a matter of fact, in the geometrical case it appears that such notions as that of a perfectly straight line or a perfectly circular object may be acquired directly in experience. For cannot something look perfectly straight or perfectly circular, even if it is not in fact so?” (Armstrong 1989: 80). Such claims about the nominalistic basis of fictionalism will be discussed below. From its very name<sup>14</sup> it is understood that, in contrast to, not only realism, but also nominalism, fictionalism negates any truth to mathematics<sup>15</sup>. Fictionalists claim that mathematics and everything it contains does not exist in any way and can be labeled as fiction. Can this controversial position be justified in any way? At first glance there is no valid reason to believe in the necessity of fictionalism, but the situation may change when we consider the arguments used by advocates of fictionalism to justify their position.

Proponents of fictionalism have tried to show the correctness of their point of view through creative examples such as the so-called paradox of existence, described by Stephen Yablo in detail (Yablo 2000: 275-312). This very simple paradox tells us that, in the same way as with the difficult problem of determining the nature of our existence, we in our theoretical limits cannot come to the knowledge of reality of abstract entities of mathematics, but our daily speech about mathematics allows us to refer to the existence of its entities. Philosophically and objectively speaking, we do not have any conclusive evidence for the real existence of mathematical entities. Our daily judgment about mathematics can be taken as something referring to existing entities. In this way, “ $2 + 2 = 4$ ” testifies that abstract concepts such as numbers 2 and 4 exist, just as the statement “I exist” refers to their own existence, but only within the context of everyday speech. When it comes to philosophical discussions, we must, according to fictionalists, stick to the principles that the abstract entities of mathematics do not exist and that the mentioned speech is only a product of fiction. It seems as if fictionalists refer to this argument solely for the purpose of justifying the enormous disproportion of statements implying the existence of mathematical entities in relation to those who question their reality in everyday speech. Their pointing to the differences between philosophical and everyday discourse is certainly meaningful, but it does not say anything about our ontological commitment in everyday speech to be fictitious. “If a mathematician comes up with a radically new pure mathematical theory, she can be criticized on the grounds that the theory is inconsistent or uninteresting or useless, but she cannot be criticized — legitimately, anyway — on the grounds that the objects of the

14 Whose general acceptance is somewhat absurd.

15 And to all of its aspects.

theory do not exist” (Balaguer 1998: 56). Ultimately, one essential fact is not to be distracted from the mind, and that is there is no agreement among philosophers about the ontological status of mathematical entities.

Another interesting argument considered by Yablo is the one which refers to the thought experiment in which we imagine a certain Oracle appearing to us, telling us that mathematical entities really do not<sup>16</sup> exist. Since we are sure on this occasion that mathematical entities really do not exist, what would be the consequences of such knowledge? Would we suddenly stop dealing with numerous math problems and would we no longer deal with statements such as “6 is a prime number” or “triangles have three sides”? There is no doubt that, in this matter, everything would remain the same as it has been before. Our new ontological knowledge would certainly not change our way of looking at mathematics as we do now. Based on this assumption, Yablo, as well as many other fictionalists argued that our relationship with mathematics has nothing to do with its ontological status. However, it seems here that fictionalists confuse cause and effect. The fact that we can make these statements, which are meaningful and verifiable, is proof that they exist. The problem is not about finding the truth about these entities, but in the entities themselves, which, by their very existence, guarantee their truthfulness. If a certain all-knowing being tells us that they do not exist, it means that they really do not exist, but this seems thought-provoking or that it is deliberately avoiding the problem itself, because this imaginary being can be used to deny the existence of anything, even the whole outer world. This in essence does not seem much different (though the argument goes in a different way) than the famous evil spirit that René Descartes mentioned in his writings<sup>17</sup>. This simply cannot be a sufficient argument because it is assumed that the entities of mathematics do not exist and the consequence of this knowledge is observed, without giving any conclusive proof why the being mentioned above is correct. Although it must be acknowledged that fictionalists project a mature dose of creativity in developing such thought experiments, it all suggests that their strength is at least discernible.

### Fictionalism and criticism of other positions

In addition to arguments in their favor, fictionalists also point direct criticisms to opposing viewpoints, such as realism, which, by claiming that “truth-values of our mathematical assertion depend on facts involving platonic entities that reside in a realm outside of space-time” (Field 1982: 59) acts, at first glance, as a much more stable theory than fictionalism. However, their weakest point is, ironically enough, hidden in their position about the truthfulness of mathematical claims. The problem pointed by fictionalists regarding realism is that their position has no ontological justification of its epistemic claims concerning mathematics. What does this really

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16 Or *vice versa*.

17 It is about a well-known assumption that an evil spirit (Descartes 2008: 16) deceives us by affecting all our senses, such that the world around us is being questioned. However, even though we may doubt the existence of external world, we cannot doubt that we exist, since for someone’s senses to deceive them must mean that someone exists. More about Descartes’ analysis of skepticism in Descartes (2008).

mean? As we have already seen, realism represents theories that all mathematical entities are not only real, but also that their “realness” is something that transcends out of reality of this world because it is not limited by space or time in any sense. When considering things this way, it seems that weaknesses of this position start to become clearer, and that they can most likely be reduced to a paradoxical claim of realists that the world of ideas has nothing to do with the empirical world, but they (as empirical beings) are referring to it at the same time!

If we want to give a more detailed explanation of this problem, we could refer to the already mentioned numbers and the realist viewpoint which deals with them. Consider for example a realist who claims that number 7 exist and that we can have real knowledge about that fact. What exactly can give us proof of the existence of a number to a realist? He argues that it is a fact that he knows that this number is a part of the world of ideas in which it has immutable characteristics that guarantee its truth. It is not claimed that number 7 only exists, but it has its own clear definitions which can be talked about with immeasurable precision. The question fictionalists pose to all realists is what relies on the justification of this claim. As realism teaches us that our world is very distinct from the world of ideas in a transcendent way and that we are unable to fully understand it, how can realists then know and claim with certainty that mathematics and its elements found in the world of ideas are true? Keeping this in mind, realists seem to have “excluded themselves” on this matter, because it makes it unjustifiably possible to talk about the existence or non-existence of some entities that are an opus of some reality we cannot understand, nor will we ever be able to. It is clearly seen why the mentioned criticism that the realists have no ontological justification of their epistemic claims still stands. Knowledge is certainly conditioned by the truth, and if we cannot reach it, in spite of the contradictory claims, then we have no knowledge. Therefore, our ignorance testifies that we cannot speak of any truth because unknowable concepts (it is assumed that the world of ideas is unknowable) cannot be treated as either true or not true, rather as a product of fiction, which fictionalism claims in its core. It should be mentioned that, for fictionalists, the world of ideas is nothing more than fiction that does not have any property which would ensure its “realness”. Through pointing to the unnatural relationship between claims that mathematical objects exist<sup>18</sup> and the fact that the world of ideas is unknowable to humans and cut out from the sensuous world, fictionalists have been able to question the basic principles of a monolithic theory such as realism.

What about the second great theory and how fictionalists observe it? Nominalistic theory, unlike realism, does not pretend to claim objective existence of mathematical entities. Nominalists see “mathematical theories as instruments for deriving nominalistically stated conclusions from nominalistically stated premises” (Malament 1982: 523). Because of this, many believe that it could be compatible with fictionalism. However, this cannot be the case because their difference is reflected in the discussion of the already mentioned essential question regarding the truthfulness of mathematics. Since nominalism claims that mathematical assumptions have truth values, it automatically differs from fictionalism. Therefore,

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18 And are literal truth.

its implications can be subjected to fictionist criticism. What could be the fault with nominalism from such perspective? First of all, the objections which have a very strong foothold in realist view are not present. Contrary to the claim that mathematical entities are real, and that they exist in the world of ideas which we cannot have absolutely any knowledge about, nominalists believe that the reality of such concepts is reflected solely in our application of “their manifestations“ in nature, this means that nominalism isn’t ontologically committing to the assertion that abstract objects exist in the world we live in, rather we extract them from what we are given by our senses. Therefore, the same number 7, for which realists uncompromisingly claim that it must be real and independent of us and everything else that exists in the empirical world, for nominalists is not an entity that they could attribute self-existence to. Nominalists observe numbers solely through empirical application because “if a mathematical theory is added to a nominalist scientific theory, no nominalist consequences follow that wouldn’t follow from the scientific theory alone” (Colyvan 2001: 69). This does not mean that nominalists claim that numbers exist fictitiously, as do fictionalists, rather their existence is strictly related to us as the creators of those abstract entities which we build with the “material” we receive from our senses. Because of this a nominalist would never say that mathematics does not possess truth values because it has this property, though nominalism does not recognize real existence to its entities.

Having in mind that nominalists do not make an ontological transgression as in realism, it would seem that funding a more serious criticism of the nominalist position would be harder than the one established in order to disprove the basic principles of realism. However, despite of all this, there is one very important aspect of nominalism that fictionalists can interpret as a big weakness of this theory. It concerns the very justification of the possibility of finding mathematical entities in the empirical world. This criticism indicates that, although the existence of some mathematical concepts may be, to a lesser or greater extent, echoed from our daily perception and that there is a very decisive possibility of pointing to them, for most such constructions we do not have confirmation from the sensuous world around us. Although we can easily describe number 7 and perceive it in various spatial extensions, things are not so simple when we start talking about abstract mathematical concepts such as derivatives, integrals, functions, etc. It is generally possible to apply the rule that the more complex mathematical theory is, the more difficult it is for the matching correspondent to be found in empiricism. In spite of this very difficult task, nominalists believe that their theory is correct because the constructions of the human mind based on mathematics and everything that makes them are so complex that, in most cases, the very mind that constructed them cannot fully understand them. This does not mean that nominalists want to mystify mathematics and its entities, nor attribute them to a real existence independent of humans, but only point to the fact that the way we perceive the world around us is sometimes so complex that we ourselves cannot interpret what it carries with itself. Therefore sometimes we encounter conceptual issues that we cannot answer, which does not mean that they do not have an empirical basis.

The very weight of such issues has indeed made a counterpoint to nominalists, but it seems that they still believe that the viewpoint they defend does not in any

way imply that talking about more complex mathematical concepts would be more problematic than talking about seemingly simpler things such as natural numbers. The unreality of numbers was also claimed by “Benacerraf, an early advocate of eliminative structuralism<sup>19</sup>, who made much of the fact that the set-theoretic hierarchy contains many exemplifications of the natural number structure. He concluded from this that numbers are not objects” (Shapiro 2005: 22). This way nominalists defend their viewpoint, but this does not mean that fictionalists are satisfied with this response. The rebuttal of the reality of numbers and other mathematical entities does not tell us anything about the possibility of confirming the truth of mathematics. On the contrary, it distances from this idea because it mystifies human knowledge, arguing that the concepts we have created have their own independent objective confirmation in the sensuous world that surrounds us. The view that complex mathematical concepts are something unreal, but whose truth is revealed in nature and that the human mind abstracts this truth, represents a real opposition to fictionalism. Fictionalist need to find the alternative to both realist and nominalist viewpoint which are equally based on the claims regarding the truthfulness of mathematics. This problem could be posed in the following way: If one accepts the fictionalist claim that mathematics and its entities cannot be true, how do we account for evidence in our everyday life that support the fact that the truth of mathematics can be proved<sup>20</sup>, above all, in theoretical sense?

This is a really crucial issue for positioning fictionalism in the debate on the problem of universals. It seems that the denial of the truth of mathematics and its entities is something that is less sustainable than the claim that they exist independently of us or that our minds construct them by the sensation of our senses. One cannot get rid of the impression that people from their earliest childhood discover some things that could be called mathematical truths. It is also important to note that some of these so called mathematical truths have a certain inter-subjective arrangement, which, according to many philosophers<sup>21</sup> guarantees conditional objectivity. Very often mathematics is used as an example of exactness<sup>22</sup>, which intuitively acts very meaningful, given that in almost all aspects of interpersonal interaction, the truth of mathematics and its entities is not questioned. Even if we do not re-examine the essence of mathematical theories we will not argue that the claims “ $2 + 2 = 4$ ” and “The square area constructed over the hypotenuse of the rectangular triangle equals the sum of the square areas constructed over the catheti of that triangle” are not true. Even mathematicians who, by complex calculations, come to the statement “ $2 + 2 = 5$ ” and by means of analyzing the principle of non-euclidean geometry state that there may be certain deviations from the validity of Pythagorean theorem do not claim that the attitudes of mathematics are false or that mathematics itself is something that does not have truth values, rather

19 More about eliminative structuralism of Paul Benacerraf in Benacerraf (1965).

20 More about applied mathematics will be mentioned below.

21 Such as Immanuel Kant, who thinks that speech about “thing-in-itself”, unknowable “noumena”, which is the only one which could be treated as objective, is not possible. (Kant 1998: 338–353) In our empirical world the role of objectivity is taken over by intersubjectivity. More in Kant (1998).

22 Interestingly, in colloquial speech exactness is often linked with the truth.



they examine its individual principles. Fictionalists, on the other hand, believe that speech about mathematical entities cannot be true because mathematics does not exist at any level of reality.

### Applied mathematics as an argument against fictionalism

When we are talking about fictionalism, we have to forget all our past intuition and what we think are indisputable facts about the nature of mathematics and its entities. Through this prism, mathematics is viewed solely as fiction, so all speech about it is treated as illusory. Is it possible that mathematics is so illusory that it has succeeded in making us believe that it is factual, and that we could not see it for so long?<sup>23</sup> Large number of critics would immediately recall the fact that the truth of mathematics is not only reflected in the generally accepted mathematical theories, but also in the practical application of mathematics<sup>24</sup>. Engineering, industry, information technology and many other areas of human activity are based on mathematics and they work very well with its principles. This is where we come to applied mathematics, which brings this discipline to a direct connection with the empirical world and deals with practical solutions to problems. “The contributions of mathematics to science (both standard and non-standard) provide solid grounds for rejecting the dispensabilist-nominalist proposals<sup>25</sup>” (Bangu 2012: 145). In order to solve a problem, it seems coherent that its solution must be adequate, which, of course, implies that there are also inadequate solutions, and that both are necessarily determined on the basis of concrete truth values. It is clear to everyone that the construction of the famous pyramids, as well as other, fewer or more relevant buildings, including the buildings and houses we live in, depend on the authenticity of mathematics (especially geometry<sup>26</sup>). If the application of these known principles of mathematics was wrongly implemented, none of these buildings could stand, and our senses prove that this is not the case. This suggests that there is a certain truth that must be attributed to mathematics and its entities, as its application has shown that the truthfulness of ultimate series of claims can be proven concisely. Even Field admits this when he said “the only serious arguments for platonism depend on the fact that mathematics is applied outside of mathematics” (Field 1989: 8). All of this acts as a very clear affirmation of the claim that by its application, namely through the successful symbiosis of applying its principles with the knowledge of the empirical world, mathematics succeeds in simultaneously removing all doubts concerning its potential of practical uselessness and gives us an immediate insight into its truthfulness. However, “Field’s goal is to show that science can be done without mathematics, albeit in a terribly inconvenient manner” (Shapiro 1997: 219).

23 The very structure of this question is somewhat paradoxical, but that is what follows from the fictionalist claims about falsehood and non-existence of mathematical objects.

24 More about different approaches to practical application of mathematics in Wigner (1960) and Wilson (2000).

25 As well as fictionalist.

26 It should be noted that “nominalists often object that geometrical explanations are not genuinely mathematical”. (Baker 2005: 228).

Regardless of Field's eliminative ambition<sup>27</sup>, it seems natural to ask whether anyone can still argue that the practical application of mathematical principles "does not require its truth but only its conservativeness<sup>28</sup>" (Resnik 1985: 164)? In this way, not only is fictionalism re-examined, but also its connection with nominalism. If we consider the fact that the view of the authenticity of mathematics defended by nominalism differs from the fictionalist claim that it is fiction, it seems right to question their mutual relationship. Since Field's founding of fictionalism, it is considered a nominalistic position<sup>29</sup>, but the claim itself that absolutely all mathematical aspects, including those which are directly related to sensuous world, are not true, creates the impression that fictionalism cannot be treated as a kind of nominalism. One can argue that nominalism has different variations, such as like there is extreme nominalism and its milder variations like conceptualism<sup>30</sup>, there is one version on the opposite side of the spectrum when it comes to the view on truthfulness of mathematical entities. Although this classification is accepted in the general discourse, such criterion of determining philosophical positions can unequivocally lead to ontological relativism, in other words, the identification of fundamentally different directions of thought. If one accepts that fictionalism is a type of nominalism, it is obvious that a very important speculative maxim is ignored, and that is the one in which the approach to a specific problem that satisfies the criterion of recognizing the *differentia specifica* in relation to the object being compared to, deserves to be treated as a separate viewpoint. It does not seem very likely that many philosophers would argue that the question of determining truthfulness is not important enough for acknowledging differences to affected objects within a specific problem. Why would the matter then be different when considering the problem regarding universals, or even more precisely in the question of re-examining the essence of mathematics and its entities? It is obvious that all nominalistic viewpoints, to a lesser or greater extent, acknowledge the existence of certain truths that can be attributed to mathematics and its entities, and that fictionalism explicitly renounces them. Although for pluralism of perspectives within a single position there is a need for certain mutually opposing statements, it seems that the difference between fictionalism and other nominalist viewpoints is simply too large to allow fictionalism to be treated as a kind of nominalism.

## Mathematics as useful fiction

In addition to saying that mathematics (as well as its entities) is a product of fiction, there is another important element that fictionalists attach to it, and that is its usefulness. How can mathematics be both fictional and useful at the same time? Can

27 Field wanted to "accomplish enough of an eliminativist project to avoid an ontological "commitment" to mathematical entities" (Shapiro 1997: 219).

28 "Conservativeness can in some cases be defined as "a technical property between mathematical theories and scientific theories" (Shapiro 1983: 523).

29 Field describes his point of view as nominalistic because he thinks that mathematics does not „add nothing new to the nominalistic theory" (Melia 2000: 463), although there are those who think that his nominalism can be challenged. More about Field's view and its critique in Field (2016), Malament (1982), Shapiro (1983) and Resnik (1985).

30 Assuming that conceptualism is also a kind of nominalism.

things be useful to us if they do not exist? The followers of fictionalism firmly believe that there are things that have no reality but “they could be useful fictions” (Armstrong 1989: 80). Fictionalists believe that combination of these determinations is necessary for our better understanding of mathematics and its relation to the world we live in. Take for example a fairy tale<sup>31</sup>, which by definition is fictitious. Nobody except the followers of fictionalist realism<sup>32</sup> will argue that fairy tales speak of real things<sup>33</sup>, and yet there is a general consensus that they are useful. If we take for example a fairy tale in which the main hero with his virtue and glory defeats his morally downright rivals, or if the protagonist has achieved something great due to his patience and modesty, it seems that we can still argue that there are some benefits in them. The first story tells us that it is good to be morally correct<sup>34</sup> and that the behaviors in accordance with moral law is something that needs to be aspired. The other one tells us that it is good to be patient and modest and that we should strive to nurture these positive traits. Both fairy tales, though indisputable products of fiction, offer us some life lessons that we can apply in our daily lives. “A metaphor has in addition to its literal content—given by the conditions under which it is true and to that extent belief-worthy — a metaphorical content given by the conditions under which it is “fictional” or pretence-worthy in the relevant game” (Yablo 2000: 249). All of this is useful, and at the same time there is no need to attribute real existence to fairy tales.

Similar to fairy tales and imagination as a creator of fiction, fictionalists believe that mathematics and its entities carry certain usefulness, but that does not make them more real than other fictional objects (Leng 2010: 155–181). Having this fictionalist argument in mind, we cannot resist the impression that we are making a big ontological leap claiming that something that does not exist can affect us by making itself useful. When it comes to fairy tales and similar fictional creations, it seems that we can find something in them that represents the analogy of the world we live in. As a result, we have people who, with their patience and modesty, have achieved their aspired goals, or the ones who have shown that moral virtue is the highest quality a human can possess in the real world<sup>35</sup>. On the other hand, the reality of mathematics is denied so that it cannot be analogous to anything real. As fictitious as they are, fairy tales have to be subjected to reality in a certain sense. If the fictitious abstract mathematical entities represent the subjection of reality, what is then the nature of that reality that they are inspired by? It seems as though

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31 Fairy tales, like all other related literary genres, have a certain structure that completely speaks about non-existent things.

32 This view, as noted by Anthony Everett, represents the viewpoint that truthful statements can refer to fictional objects such as characters from literary works. See Everett (2005) for criticism of the fictionalist realism.

33 Although not real, it should be noted that fairy tales are very often plausible and rarely engage in contradictions. But there are also examples, such as the one from Serbian folk poetry (related to fairy tales) where Kraljević Marko “breaks the spear into three halves”, which contradicts with basic mathematical principles.

34 In a colloquial sense, without deeper reflection in the deontological critique of this behavior.

35 This could be interpreted as moral realism, because it claims that the quality of a moral act can be determined on the basis of the truthfulness of the statement about it.

we have made a full circle and returned to realism, which would have to explain, with its claim about real abstract mathematical entities out of time and space, what exactly does our speech about mathematics subject to. In one hand, this is the only thing that fictionalists could call upon when they want to find what is the inspiration behind our allegedly fictitious speech about mathematics. Of course, they could, similarly to other nominalistic views, claim that mathematics is a human construct, but then they must face the problem of its truthfulness.

## Conclusion

Based on the previous statements, it seems that fictionalists did not give a clear explanation that would bring us close enough to their views on the possibility of fictional mathematics that would not correspond to anything in the empirical world or any other domain of reality. Another big blow to fictionalism is the fact that there are arguments in favor of the thesis that mathematics is revealed, which is a direct attack on their assumption that mathematics is a product of human imagination. Many mathematical concepts that were thought to never be practically useful have found their application much later. Furthermore, they were actually of crucial importance for solving some of the problems of the empirical world. This is certainly something that contradicts both fictionalism and nominalism, therefore the implications of these discoveries are in favor of realism, where mathematics and its principles and entities are seen as independent of humans and the only thing we can do is to discover and apply them in the right way.

The significance of fictionalism is reflected in giving one good thought experiment to all those who deal with determining the status of mathematics and its entities. By arguing that mathematics is fiction it is brought to the same ontological level as non-existing things, so we could relate it with the fairy tales which are basically miming of the real world. All of this begs the question: What is it then that mathematics is miming? With this question we come to the knowledge that both of the alleged products of imagination have to take real entities as the basis for their structure, and thus one more question is asked: Where are these entities? As much as they attempt to attribute creative power to imagination, which it cannot possibly possess, it seems that the followers of fictionalism must acknowledge the existence of a transcendent<sup>36</sup> world in order for this imagination to “obtain the form” or simply accept the claims of most nominalists that, although mathematical entities do not really exist, they still tell us some truth about the empirical world we live in. Despite the fact that we have to classify fictionalism as an unjustified radical position, it was surprisingly refreshing for the discussion of the status of universals because in its essence it cannot be characterized as either realism or nominalism, even though the prevailing intellectual currents are trying to place it into the latter group of opinions. Having in mind that this is a relatively young philosophical viewpoint, it is not impossible that in the future there will be new arguments in favor of fictionalism that will try to fill the ontological gap between the correct description of the nature of mathematics and fictionalist denial of its existence.

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36 Like for example Plato's world of ideas. See Ross (1951).

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Strahinja Đorđević

## Fikcionalizam i problem univerzalija u filozofiji matematike

### Apstrakt

Poreklo najvećeg broja problema savremene filozofije matematike se može tražiti u sporu oko određivanja prirode matematičkih entiteta kojim dominira rasprava realista i nominalista. U rubnim delovima ove diskusije se zastupaju i pojedina srednja rešenja, kao što je na primer konceptualizam. Međutim, čini se da se sve do XX veka nije pojavila treća pozicija koja ne bi iziskivala nikakvu vrstu oslanjanja na jedno od dva navedena gledišta. Tokom ovog perioda nastaje fikcionalizam, koji matematičke entitete posmatra na radikalno drugačiji način, što se ogleda u tvrdnji da su pojmovi kojom matematika barata ništa drugo do proizvoda ljudske fikcije. U ovom radu će se razmatrati odnos između fikcionalizma i dve tradicionalne pozicije u okviru diskusije koja se u svojoj srži svodi na pokušaj uspešnog određivanja ontološkog statusa univerzalija. Jedna od glavnih tačaka je i dokazivanje da se fikcionalizam ne može klasifikovati kao nominalistička pozicija (uprkos suprotnim tvrdnjama autora poput Hartrija Filda), što će biti pokazano i na konkretnim primerima. Pošto se fikcionalizam posmatra kao samostalna pozicija, a njome se spori čitav predmet matematike, nužno je preispitati njegove domete, kao i održivost implikacija stavova koje njeni zagovornici zastupaju.

Ključne reči: fikcionalizam, univerzalije, realizam, nominalizam, filozofija matematike, metafizika, ontologija

Miloš Agatonović

## THE CASE OF TRANSHUMANISM: THE POSSIBILITY OF APPLICATION OF NIETZSCHE'S ETHICS AND CRITIQUE OF MORALITY TODAY

### ABSTRACT

Transhumanism, the movement that promotes radical enhancement by non-traditional means based in scientific and technological advances, has contributed to contemporary interest in Nietzsche's philosophy. In this paper, we are going to claim that transhumanists' references to Nietzsche's philosophy are unfounded. Moreover, we will make a few remarks about Nietzsche's ethical doctrine in order to show that his conception of enhancement, contrary to transhumanist conceptions, relies on traditional means, such as upbringing and education. Although Nietzsche's positive ethical doctrines cannot be used to justify transhumanist goals, his critique of morality can be used as a critique of the transhumanist conceptions of human enhancement.

### KEYWORDS

Nietzsche, *Übermensch*, will to power, enhancement, transhumanism, liberal eugenics

As a philosopher-advocate of life, Friedrich Nietzsche showed concern for the successful realization of life, for the manifestation of its creative and active essence. He wanted to stimulate creativity with his philosophy and to inspire achievements which would change our world view. Some political and cultural movements, that want to radically change the humanity in the name of allegedly better future, such as fascism, Nazism, anarchism or, in our recent times, transhumanism, found an inspiration in Nietzsche's philosophy. All of them used or are using an interpretation of Nietzsche's philosophy which is in opposition to his own intentions. It is ironic that Nietzsche's followers plead for the views that he most severely criticized. That is the source of Nietzsche's forebodings which his Zarathustra expressed in his interpretation of the dream where he saw "a devil's grimace and scornful laughter." "Indeed," spoke Zarathustra, "all too well I understand the dream's sign and warning: my *teaching* is in danger, weeds want to be wheat!" (*TSZ II*, "The Child with Mirror").<sup>1</sup>

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1 Citations of Nietzsche's published works that are used in this text follow the next abbreviations for reference to English translations: *A* = *The Antichrist*; *EH* = *Ecce Homo*; *GM* = *On the Genealogy of Morality*; *TI* = *Twilight of the Idols*; *TSZ* = *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*; *UM* = *Untimely Meditations*.

## 1. Nietzsche's Conception of Enhancement is not Transhumanistic Conception

In his philosophy Nietzsche is primarily concerned with the questions about the way of human life. His answers to those questions do not impose any kind of concrete model of a right way of living. Any movement that would change mankind, that would enhance it in the name of a new social order, in the name of social progress, brings a slurring of men. According to Nietzsche, enhancement represents the natural tendency of life, although it has a different sense in different context. Prescribing enhancement would be suitable only if enhancement as a natural tendency was in danger or if there was a danger of an alienation of enhancement from natural tendencies. Only then, Nietzsche would think, could a philosopher have a role of a formative teacher, educator, legislator. Otherwise he would be like, to use Nietzsche's language, a "shepherd" or "priest-improver of humanity" who represents permanent threat of moralizing in a society. By trying to explain the danger of "improving," Nietzsche said:

People have always wanted to "improve" human beings; for the most part, this has been called morality. But this one term has stood for vastly different things. The project of *domesticating* the human beast as well as the project of *breeding* a certain species of human have both been called "improvements": only by using these zoological terms can we begin to express the realities here – realities, of course, that the typical proponents of „improvement,“ the priests, do not know anything about, do not *want* to know anything about... To call the domestication of an animal an "improvement" almost sounds like a joke to us. Anyone who knows what goes on in a zoo will have doubts whether beasts are "improved" there. They become weak, they become less harmful, they are *made ill* through the use of pain, injury, hunger, and the depressive affect of fear. – The same thing happens with domesticated people who have been "improved" by priests... To put the matter physiologically: when struggling with beasts, making them sick *might* be the only way to make them weak. The church understood this: it has ruined people, it has weakened them, – but it claims to have "improved" them... (TI, "Improving' Humanity", 2)

That danger exists even today, hidden behind the sophistication of the contemporary science and scientific breakthroughs. Contemporary "religion of improvement," dressed in the clothes of scientific progress, appeals to Nietzsche as its prophet. At the beginning of this century, with the development of science and technology, transhumanistic movement gained the momentum which is directed towards the future in its commitment to the radical enhancement of human being, the enhancement of all its psycho-physical capacities and functions in the way that specifically presupposes the application of non-traditional means, those of biomedicine (neuroscience, genetics, pharmacology) and those of technology (molecular nanotechnology, informational technology, artificial intelligence, robotics). The transhumanism, according to Max More, one of its founders, is essentially Nietzschean. Max More agrees with Nietzsche's view that nihilism is a transitional stage that we should leave behind, affirming a positive value-perspective (More 1990: 5). Stefan Sorgner, a philosopher-transhumanist of a younger generation, accepts More's view on the relation between Nietzsche's philosophy and transhumanism, with the intention to show that there is a fundamental resemblance in that relation



(Sorgner 2009). The main similarity, which abets us to jump to conclusion, is the adequacy between transhumanistic conception of posthuman, that is of radically enhanced man, and Nietzsche's *Übermensch*.<sup>2</sup> The thesis that Nietzsche's idea of *Übermensch* represents an anticipation of the transhumanistic conception of posthuman is dubious on several grounds. First, Nietzsche could not have had in mind radical enhancement of men by the nontraditional means, because of which the thesis of Nietzsche's idea of *Übermensch* as an anticipation of posthuman is anachronistic. Second, even if we put aside the anachronism of that thesis, because of an obscurity of Nietzsche's idea of *Übermensch* it would be inadequate to take it as a touchstone for a comparison of Nietzsche's philosophy to any other conception. The term "*Übermensch*" appears in Nietzsche's opus only in a few places, without needful elucidation.<sup>3</sup> In the later phase of Nietzsche's philosophy the idea of *Übermensch* is left out, and on the most important place, the place of the exemplary person, the higher type of man is put. As the higher type Nietzsche recognized the great men and nations of the past, and also the distinguished individuals of his own time, who certainly are not enhanced by genetic engineering or symbiosis with some progressive artificial intelligence.

Although we have pointed at the exegetical problems of the thesis of Nietzsche's *Übermensch* as anticipation of posthuman, we have not denied the claim that Nietzsche is the forerunner of transhumanism yet. His doctrine of will to power gives enough stimulation for transhumanistic interpretation. If someone seeks power, and Nietzsche assumes that is the characteristic of life in general, then it is in his own interest to enhance himself (Sorgner 2009). For Nietzsche, tendency to power is a natural tendency to enhancement. If there is already tendency to power by nature, and therefore tendency to enhancement, does it mean that the one *should* seek power and, respectively, enhancement? According to the interpretation that we plead for, power and enhancement in Nietzsche's philosophy have a relative, context-dependent meaning. In a biological context power or enhancement has the meaning of the growth and development of biological functions of organism, in a psychological context the meaning of feeling of power, self-confidence and self-control, which are acquired by an overcoming of frustrations and resolution of psychological conflicts, in a social context the meaning of social recognition and prerogative which comes with the recognition. The given meanings of the enhancement are logically independent: an enhancement in biological sense is possible without enhancement in psychological and social sense, and likewise. Transhumanism insists on enhancing biological base of humans on which it is possible

2 Sorgner translates Nietzsche's term "*Übermensch*" as overhuman, because of its gender-neutrality (Sorgner 2009). Contrary to that, Paul Loeb prefers to use Latin prefix "Super-" for German "*Über-*," although thinks that "*mensch*" should be translated gender-neutral as Sorgner suggests, following Graham Parkes' and Adrian Del Caro's translation of *Zarathustra* (Loeb 2012: 3–4).

3 In Nietzsche's published works term "*Übermensch*" appears in *Zarathustra*, in some parts his intellectual autobiography (*EH*, "Why I Write Such a Good Books", 1; *ibid*, "Thus Spoke Zarathustra", 6; *ibid*, "Why am I a Destiny", 5), on the one place in *Twilight of the Idols* (TI, "Skirmishes of an Untimely Man," 37), in *The Antichrist* (A, 4), and *On the Genealogy of Morality* (GM I, 16). It also appears in several fragments from his unpublished writings.

to directly apply the means of biomedicine and technology. It is questionable if an enhancement of human biological base would bring the psychological or social enhancement, and, moreover, if biological enhancement would be justified at all.

The specific enhancement that transhumanists are concerned with usually is justified by the general utility. For Nick Bostrom, one of the leading transhumanists today, transhumanism is based on the values of enlightenment, individual liberty and general welfare, and for that reason it is more akin to English liberal thinker and utilitarian John Stuart Mill than to Nietzsche (Bostrom 2005a: 4–5). Therefore, similarities between Nietzsche’s philosophy and transhumanism are just surface-level similarities, as Bostrom holds. We can think that Nietzsche’s doctrine of *Übermensch* has inspired transhumanism, but Nietzsche did not have in mind a technological transformation, only a cultural and personal uplifting (ibid: 4). Sorgner opposes to Bostrom’s view of the relation between Nietzsche’s philosophy and transhumanism, thinking that although Nietzsche did not have in mind a technological transformation of men he does not exclude the possibility of technological enhancement (Sorgner 2009). Sorgner would not exclude the possibility that Nietzsche would be in favour of genetic engineering, because he affirmed science, he was in favour of enhancement, and the bringing about of the overhuman (ibid). For his Nietzsche-transhumanist enhancement is justified by interest of a man to seek power. The enhancement is useful for it helps to acquire power which men seek, or it can help men to become *Übermensch*. However, Nietzsche never said without a mask that men should become *Übermensch*. In fact, it was Zarathustra’s words “*I teach you the overman (Ich lehre euch den Übermenschen)*. Human being is something that must be overcome... What is the ape to a human? A laughing stock or a painful embarrassment... Behold, I teach you the overman! The overman is the meaning of the earth. Let your will say: the overman *shall be* the meaning of the earth!” (TSZ, “Zarathustra’s Prologue”, 3). One of the rare places from Nietzsche’s opus where the word “*Übermensch*” appears, in the book *Ecce homo*, Nietzsche says that that word designates “a type that has the highest constitutional excellence, in contrast to ‘modern’ people, to good people, Christians and other nihilists – a word that really makes you think when it comes from the mouth of a Zarathustra, a *destroyer* of morals; this word ‘*overman*’ is understood almost everywhere with complete innocence to mean values that are the *opposite* from the ones appearing in the figure of Zarathustra, which is to say the ‘idealistic’ type of higher sort of humanity, half ‘saint,’ half ‘genius’... Other scholarly cattle have suspected me of Darwinism for these reasons; they even read into it the ‘cult of hero’ that I condemn so bitterly, the invention of that unknowing and involuntary counterfeiter Carlyle. If I whisper to people that this type would look more like a Cesare Borgia than a Pasifal, they do not believe their ears” (EH, “Why I Write Such Good Books”, 1). This place confirms that Nietzsche’s ideal is the real person (*der wirkliche Mensch*) and not ideal one (*idealen Menschen*) (TI, “Skirmishes of an Untimely Man”, 32), and so it is not “*Übermensch*” as “the ‘idealistic’ type of higher sort of humanity.”

Nietzsche was inexorably expressing the imperative “become what you are.” And for men to become what they are is not sufficient, or even necessary, to enhance their biology. Before all, there is a need for understanding the context of man’s life

and knowing conditions in it. And because those are different kinds of conditions, there is a need for exchange between different sciences, those that Nietzsche specifies in *On the Genealogy of Morality*, psychology, physiology and medicine (GM I, 17, “Note”). The values and norms that conduct lives of men, which are known to history and ethnology, represent the conditions of the important influence. A philosopher, according to Nietzsche, should advocate this relationship between sciences and mediate in their investigation of values, so he could solve the *problem of values* and decide *rank order of values* (ibid). That is the future work of philosopher (ibid). To know how one should live and which values are valuable for life we should understand the historical context of life and identify the effective conditions in it. That is true on the level of any social collective as a whole and on the individual level of a person. Second, regarding the results of investigating life we should stimulate the conditions that are valuable to life, those which contribute to its harmony, but which are always connected to a context and relative to it. Therefore, third, we should have in mind examples of higher men and higher cultures, and in accordance with those examples stimulate the conditions which would in given historical context give birth to an original high value culture and to exceptional individuals without whom such culture would not be possible.

A creative culture and efficacious individuals for Nietzsche are the examples of the ideal that he advocated. That appears to be the only ostensible similarity between Nietzsche’s philosophy and transhumanism. Bostrom thinks that the ambit of transhumanistic enhancement, besides technology and medicine, also encompasses economic, social and institutional designs, cultural development, and psychological skills and techniques (Bostrom 2005b: 4). For Nietzsche cultural development should come first. Surely, Nietzsche had no idea about nontraditional means that transhumanists advocate, although he would have permitted the application of such means since he did not have conservative views. However, he emphasizes the importance of education and upbringing in stimulation of cultural and individual creativity as the best means that enables us to become what we are. In his work *Schopenhauer as Educator*, where the question of education and upbringing is explicitly thematized, Nietzsche says that “certainly there may be other means of finding oneself, of coming to oneself out of the bewilderment in which one usually wanders as in a dark cloud, but,” he continues, “I know of none better than to think on one’s true educators and cultivators” (UM, “Schopenhauer as Educator”, 1). For him, an educator (*Erzieher*) is the bearer of the high culture who assists us in becoming what we are by giving us an example of his own posture. The true upbringing and education is not an external aid, as paternalistic education is, which is regularly the object of Nietzsche’s critique (in the final stage of his work, in *On the Genealogy of Morality*, *Twilight of the Idols*, and *Will to Power*, such education is described by the pejorative expression “improvement (*Verbessert*)”). According to Nietzsche’s own words, true educators and formative teachers are the “liberators”:

Your true educators and formative teachers reveal to you that the true, original meaning and basic stuff of your nature is something completely incapable of being educated or formed and is in any case something difficult of access, bound and paralyzed; your educators can be only your liberators. And that is the secret of all culture: it

does not provide artificial limbs, wax noses or spectacles – that which can provide these things is, rather, only sham education. Culture is liberation, the removal of all the weeds, rubble and vermin that want to attack the tender buds of the plant, an outstreaming of light and warmth, the gentle rustling of nocturnal rain, it is imitation and worship of nature where nature is in her motherly and merciful mood, it is the perfecting of nature when it deflects her cruel and merciless assaults and turns them to good, and when it draws a veil over the expressions of nature’s stepmotherly mood and her sad lack of understanding. (ibid)

The true educators by the examples of their own life show how to get to self-knowledge, how to recognize the difference between the life-useful conditions and those that are harmful or not useful to life, and how to free yourself from the harmful ones and stimulate those that are useful. In that way man can accomplish his true nature, which “lies immeasurably high above him” (ibid). Despite Nietzsche’s belief that true nature of man lies high above him, his philosophy cannot be interpreted as transhumanistic. The best means for self-knowledge, self-accomplishment, self-affirmation is the education by looking up to higher men. The higher men are the great creators, philosophers, and artists, whose personal example brings us to emancipation. Biomedicine and technology cannot help our self-accomplishment and self-affirmation. Their application could make us dependent upon contemporary means of enhancement, and so spoil our emancipation and alienate us on our way to becoming what we are. It appears that Nietzsche’s ethics, grounded on the ideal of affirmation of life, could appropriately be applied only in education. For, if the answer of the basic ethical question “how one should live?” can be grasped by describing the life of higher men as an example of the affirmation of life, then that answer concerns education before all, its evaluation and recommendation in concrete circumstances. Therefore, as other scholars also think, it is justified to claim that whole Nietzsche’s philosophy project could be understood as an educational enterprise (Dobrijević 2009: 119).

## **2. Some Possible Use of Nietzsche’s Critique of Morality Against the Transhumanistic Accounts of Enhancement**

Although, as we have already suggested, Nietzsche’s positive ethical doctrine cannot be applied in justification of transhumanistic goals, his critique of morality can be applied against the ethical reasonings in transhumanism. Rooted in the enlightenment’s heritage of trust in rationality and science, transhumanism accepted enlightenment’s humanistic values of liberty and general welfare. Transhumanists advocate application of nontraditional means of enhancement appealing to general welfare of humanity or the value of man as an intrinsic value. Julian Savulescu, for example, takes a provocative transhumanistic position: enhancement represents the moral obligation (Savulescu 2007: 517). He justifies that position appealing to well-being of men: biological manipulation to increase opportunity for human well-being is ethical (ibid: 525). Besides that, in another place, Savulescu, together with Ingmar Persson, claims that biomedical moral enhancement would be the most important biomedical enhancement and without it other techniques of biomedical enhancement seem likely to increase global injustice (Savulescu & Persson

2010: 12–3). The increasing growth of advanced technology makes our lives better, but also provides the means of our destruction. Therefore, transhumanism offers a moral enhancement as means which can help us to address the dangers that the progress of technology brings (ibid, 13). This position could be characterized as moralistic, and if we could reduce it to its motto “to be human is to be better” (Savulescu 2007: 531), we would see that it is basically tautological. Human in normative sense of the term, in terms of those capacities that afford members of our species moral status and value (Savulescu & Persson 2010: 13), which means in terms of capacities that make human be better, means to be better. According to that position enhancement is recommended on the grounds of what human in value sense should be, or, in apparent tautological formulation, humans should be enhanced because they should be better. Nietzsche would criticize this position by pointing to its ungrounded optimism in seeking general well-being and to an inappropriateness of the universal application of enhancement for the sake of well-being of all, no matter what kind of means are used in enhancement. Because of the differentiation of life, of the exceptions that cannot be conducted by the norms of majority, such as the great creators that provide unique contributions, the enhancement for the sake of general well-being would actually be a ruining. Even caution in such enhancement, caution that is, as Savulescu admits, well grounded (Savulescu 2007: 517), could not provide the justice for the exceptions that Nietzsche wants to protect. That is why Nietzsche recommends an independent education guided by valuable examples of people, the great creators, philosophers and artists.

Contrary to Savulescu’s morally obligated enhancement, Nicolas Agar, who can, as we hold, be classified as a transhumanist, in the defence of enhancement advocates the position that he calls “liberal eugenics.” According to the position of liberal eugenics an enhancement by nontraditional means such as genetic engineering should not be obligatory but only a permissible option. According to Agar, parents should be empowered to use available technologies to choose some of their children’s characteristics (Agar 2004: 2). Parents’ selection of enhancement for a child would be guided by certain conceptions of a good life. Parents’ ranking of life plans, their ranking of what is valuable in life, provides the definition of enhancement for them: a gene therapy will enhance their child if it improves the child’s chances of successfully pursuing life plans that they rank highly (ibid, 101). Liberal eugenics assumes pluralistic conception of human flourishing, or, respectively, of a good life, contrary to monistic conception such of Nazism or of, a less problematic, hedonistic utilitarianism (ibid, 100–1). Despite the pluralism and a wide range of positive freedoms, the position of liberal eugenics implies paternalism. Any enhancement that is guided from the outside, even when parents and benevolent experts conduct the enhancement, is paternalistic, and according to Nietzsche’s opinion it can make affirmation of the great creators impossible, which would be the greatest pity. For the great creators genetic enhancement would not be of the decisive importance if the conditions for true education were not accomplished. Perhaps Nietzsche would not be against the application of nontraditional means of enhancement, but his position strongly holds the belief that for the affirmation of life many other things are of greater importance, such as exemplary persons and values that shape current historical and cultural context.

### 3. Conclusion

In the twentieth century Nietzsche's ideas were used for the propaganda purposes of fascism and Nazism. It is questionable if Nietzsche is responsible for the interpretation of his philosophy that puts him into the context of those notorious political movements. However, Nietzsche's doctrines of *Übermensch*, higher and lower men, will to power give us a straightforward reason to think, though falsely, of his philosophy as being a predecessor of any movement that aims at the enhancement of men, or some kind of eugenics. In the recent years, the movement of transhumanism sets the posthuman age, that is to come if the technology and science is used in the right way to radically enhance men and women, as the goal that humanity should reach. The spirit of optimism and trust in science, common to transhumanism and some important aspects of Nietzsche's philosophy in its mature form, is the consequence of the Age of Enlightenment. Nick Bostrom openly acknowledges that transhumanism has its roots in rational humanism of the Age of Enlightenment (Bostrom 2005a: 3). Nietzsche, on the other hand, was highly critical of the Enlightenment movement. However, he absorbed the spirit of German Enlightenment, Kant and German materialist (Leiter 2012: 50–6). He also read English Enlightenment thinkers, John Stuart Mill for example, but criticized their mostly utilitarian approach. In *On the Genealogy of Morality* Nietzsche said that utilitarian explanation of the concept of good is rational and psychologically tenable, although that explanation is wrong (*GM*, I, 3). Nietzsche himself accepted usefulness and practicality as important kind of motivation in human life, but power, of which usefulness and practicality are just one aspect, is the most important life goal that provides the strongest motive for any activity in life. In the same work Nietzsche wrote: “[E]very purpose and use is just a sign that the will to power has achieved mastery over something less powerful, and has impressed upon it its own idea (*Sinn*) of a use function” (*GM*, II, 12). A few sentences further in the *Genealogy* it is said that true progress always appears in the form of the will or way to *greater power* (ibid). Nietzsche's wanted to describe the kind of instrumental rationality that is immanent to life in a broad sense.

Transhumanists think that to improve humanity and to reach posthuman state in which human beings are radically enhanced in every way, in every sense, it is necessary to use the means that science and technology provide. “Knowledge itself is power,” Francis Bacon said, and transhumanists concur. Bostrom explicitly claims: “Bacon advocated the project of ‘effecting all things possible,’ by which he meant using science to achieve mastery over nature in order to improve the living condition of human beings” (Bostrom 2005a: 2). Nietzsche also thought that all science could be helpful in solving the problem of values and decide the rank order of values, as we mentioned before. The question “what has a value for men?,” or, better to say, “what is prudent for men?,” Nietzsche thought should be approached from the different perspectives, as he had put it in the *Genealogy*:

[T]he question ‘value for what?’ cannot be examined too finely. Something, for example, which obviously had value with regard to the longest possible life-span of a race (or to the improvement of its abilities to adapt to a particular climate, or to maintaining the greatest number) would not have anything like the same value if it was a question of developing a stronger type. (*GM*, I, 17, “Note”)

Power, that should be obtained, differs in meaning depending on context, as we previously claimed. Therefore, the application of sciences and technology that produce power should differ depending on context, at least it is so according to our interpretation of Nietzsche's philosophy. Regarding that, we are justified to say that Nietzsche's philosophy is relevant when we think about problems of transhumanism. Although the application of technological achievements would not be of the key importance for Nietzsche. The greatness of men, according to his opinion, mostly depends on the adequate education, formation, social-cultural values, examples of human excellence. The technological enhancement would not be obligatory, nor would it be a respectable option, if a person was already well formed. Also, the external application of it on children, newborns, or embryos would be redundant if the greatness of individual could autonomously be developed from their inborn psycho-physical material. The self-overcoming (*Selbstüberwindung*), about which Nietzsche claimed that is the essence of life itself, in the context of his educational philosophy represents the process of self-improvement of autodidact by which person creates themselves. To say that improving humans by the means of progressive biomedicine and technology is morally obligatory, as some transhumanists say (e. g. Julian Savulescu), means to take one sense of improvement of men as adequate and necessary for any man, whether or not there is a real need for it. Nietzsche explicitly criticized moralistic norms that are regarded as universal, Kantian concept of duty and utilitarian concept of good as universal value. In the *Anti-Christ* Nietzsche wrote:

“Virtue,” “duty,” “goodness in itself,” goodness that has been stamped with the character of impersonal and universal valid – these are fantasies and manifestations of decline, of the final exhaustion of life, of the Königsberg Chinesianity. The most basic laws of preservation and growth require the opposite: that everyone should invent his *own* virtues, his *own* categorical imperatives. A people is destroyed when it confuses its *own* duty with the concept of duty in general. Nothing ruins us more profoundly or inwardly than ‘impersonal’ duty, or any sacrifice in front of the Moloch of abstraction. (A, 11)

Supposedly, Nietzsche would oppose to the enhancement of men that uses the means of medicine and technology if it would be guided by the universal moral considerations. He would also oppose to the selective enhancement that is guided by the parents or experts. One of the most important conditions of self-overcoming, as the kind of enhancement that Nietzsche favoured when he thought of the great men and creators, is the self-knowledge. To overcome oneself, one has to know oneself. Through the words of Zarathustra, who spoke to his disciples, Nietzsche said:

Let your spirit and your virtue serve the meaning of the earth, my brothers: and the value of all things will be posited newly by you! Therefore you shall be fighters! Therefore you shall be creators!

Knowingly the body purifies itself; experimenting with knowledge it elevates itself; all instincts become sacred in the seeker knowledge; the soul of the elevated one becomes gay.

Physician, help yourself: thus also help your sick. Let that be his best help, that he sees with his own eyes the one who heels himself.

(*TSZ*, I, “On the Bestowing Virtue”)

Nietzsche's language in the book *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, from which is the cited passage, is heavy with metaphors. On this specific place he clearly emphasized the point that you need to know yourself; you need to know your own body, so you could elevate yourself. And, as Nietzsche firmly held, a one needs to sovereignly use one's own capacities and so to become better. Nietzsche would oppose even to the liberal eugenics that is defended by Nicolas Agar, because it leaves open the option of parents and experts to decide what kind of enhancement is needful for the child that was born or is to be born. But, all things considered, it would not be honest to say that Nietzsche was conservative and that he opposed to any kind of enhancement. He accepted progress of science, medicine and biology, and encouraged its use in examination of the life of men. Though, he was careful to think that science could easily be misused and bring disastrous consequences to the human kind, if guided by abstract representations of an ideal of some kind or universal moral good.

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Miloš Agatonović

## Slučaj transhumanizma: mogućnost primene Ničeove etike i kritike morala danas

### Apstrakt

Transhumanizam, pokret koji se zalaže za radikalno poboljšanje sredstvima koja su rezultat naučnog i tehnološkog napretka, doprineo je interesovanju za Ničeovu filozofiju danas. U ovom radu navešćemo razloge na osnovu kojih ćemo sugerisati da su ta pozivanja na Ničeovu filozofiju neosnovana. Pri tom ćemo izložiti nekoliko teza o Ničeovom etičkom učenju kako bismo pokazali da se njegovo shvatanje poboljšanja, za razliku od transhumanističkih, oslanja na tradicionalna sredstva kao što su vaspitanje i obrazovanje. Iako se Ničeova pozitivna etička učenja ne mogu primeniti u opravdanju transhumanističkih ciljeva, njegova kritika morala može se upotrebiti u kritici transhumanističkih koncepcija poboljšanja čoveka.

Ključne reči: Niče, *Übermensch*, volja za moć, poboljšanje, transhumanizam, liberalna eugenika



Drago Perović

## „EWIGES BALLET“ IN PLATONS HÖHLE<sup>1</sup>

### ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Die Präsentation versucht, die Frage nach dem Verhältnis von Denken und Realität im gegenwärtigen technisch-technologischen entstehenden Vergehen. Verborgen damit sind alle grundlegenden philosophischen Fragen verbunden, und vor allem die Frage nach der Möglichkeit, „von“ oder „jenseits“ der entstehenden-vergehenden Realität zu denken. Die zeitgenössische Debatte kehrt damit zum transzendental-immanenten Charakter der Meinung zurück, die trotz der neu entstandenen/vergangenen Situation, als Frage möglicher Begründung des philosophischen Wissens man mit seinen traditionellen Formen und Leistungsweisen vergleichen kann. Das Feld dieses Tanzes ist eine neue „Höhlenwand“, die in ihrer kraftvollen Darbietung die Technik und die Technologie inszenieren.

### SCHLÜSSELWÖRTER

*Anthropos*, Höhle, Denken, Realität, Verblendung, virtuelle Realität, Vernetzung.

### 1. Verblendung mit der Realität als eine Quelle des Denkens

Die Vorstellung von der Realität als eine Quelle des Denkens betrachtet in seinen beharrlichsten internen Bedürfnissen und seiner externen Absicht ist Philosophie immer-schon eine geistige Identitätssuche nach der (gewünschten) wahren Wirklichkeit, die sie in allen ihren Epochen, trotz *ihres Weichens oder ihres Vordringens*, in der Regel gehalten hat, manchmal vollständig, manchmal weitgehend erkennbar und gewinnbar. Trotzdem unterschied sich der Hunger nach der realen Realität in ihrer immer wiederkehrenden Unersättlichkeit nicht vom häufigsten Hunger. Deshalb haben epochale Wendungen in der Geschichte der Philosophie es möglich zu machen an den Nähten genau „sezieren“, sowohl verschiedene Formen und Grade erforderlicher und erwartender Realität als auch der menschlichen Wünsche und Befestigung an sie. In der Vielzahl der Formen und Grade von heute fragen wir nicht nach mehr außer offensichtlich hermeneutischen Charakter Philosophieren *in, aus, gegenüber* und *außerhalb* derselben (offenbaren, veröffentlichten, gegebenen, geschaffen, idealen, offensichtlich, eigenen, fremden) Realität.

Diese hermeneutische Verwurzelung der philosophischen Haltung *des Anthropos* gegenüber der Wirklichkeit wird uns helfen, uns in unserer eigenen existentiellen „aufrechten“ Position zu verstehen, die offensichtlich mehr ist als die sogenannte technisch-technologische oder virtuelle Realität. Als Erleichterung für das Selbstverständnis kann Koževs Einsicht uns dazu genutzt werden, dass der Mensch, seit

1 „Ewiges Ballet: Die einen tadeln Technik und die anderen lernen es zu benutzen, um Geister zu zähmen.“ (Либера 2005: 272).

er denken kann, „es virtuell existiert“ (Kožev 1984: 250), durch die Notwendigkeit, seine gewünschte Realität zu bewerten und zu erreichen. Deshalb ist jede philosophische Frage ein Zeichen für diese unermüdliche Sehnsucht und Richtung. Auf dieser Spur stellen wir die Frage, ob heute und in welchem Maße wir von der, gegenüber oder außerhalb von uns, offenbar realistischsten Realität denken. Sind wir bei ihr nicht unentdeckt, mit ihr verwandt, dass wir uns nicht einstellen können und eine mentale Distanz von ihr herstellen können? Tritt unser traditioneller Gedankenangriff über die Realität seinen Platz der Strategie ab, die das Denken selbst von seinem Sturz verteidigt, eine Strategie, die zu ihrem letztendlichen Ziel einen gewissen Gegenangriff auf das Nachdenken über die Realität hat?

Allerdings gibt es in allen Epochen, in ihren Anfängen, Anzeichen für eine schwierig übermächtiges Verblendung des Menschen, des Denkens und der Sprache mit einmal zurücktretender oder fortgeschrittener Realität. Daher geht er nur durch die Philosophie und das Denken in erster Linie aus Erstaunen zurück zu sich selbst, zu seinen Umgebungen und Möglichkeiten und damit bereitet er sich auf eine neue, meist nachdenkliche und technische Beherrschung dieser Realität vor. Die Tatsache, dass das Denken und die Technik in ihrer kontinuierlichen dialektischen Vermittlung die Natur der „Geister“ freigesetzt haben, dass die Technik durch sachliche Art und Weise den Ausgang aus der Höhle und den Eintritt in die Welt der Bücher unterstützte, gab den Menschen die Sicherheit im Universum, aber zum großen Teil schnitt sie das Arsenal seiner Fähigkeiten ab. Ist die virtuelle Realität in gewisser Weise nicht gleichermaßen rachsüchtig aber auch die Notwendigkeit der unvermeidlichen Wünsche des Menschen? Da die Aufhebung des Spiels der Philosophie und Techniken laut dem Ballettprogramm der Aufklärung am Ende erwartet wurde, hatte der Mensch eine neue Realität für einen älteren aber jetzt seinen Geist, eine neue Form der Verzauberung zu schaffen.

Alle bis jetzt bekannten, epochalen „Entdeckungen“ oder „Durchbrüche“ einer neuen Realität, von der hellenischen Logosität bis zur modernen Virtualität, haben einen bezauberten, zu Gewohnheiten neigenden Gedanken in diese sich drehende und zurückkehrende Position gebracht. Das Denken, so scheint es uns, kommt einfach aus diesem Verblendung in einer Verzauberung heraus und danach aus einem bevorstehenden Selbstentzauberung. Und das scheint es am meisten, wenn sie nur von sich selbst diese neue Realität produziert. Sich von der Leichtigkeit der Akzeptanz zurücklassend, demjenigen zurückweichend *Notwendigen* gegenüberstellend, das mit seiner *Gegebenheit* verbunden ist, beginnt der Gedanke mit der Einsicht, dass sie durch das bedingt ist, was er denken *kann*.

Der Pass oder Sprung von einem zu einer anderen Realität tritt am häufigsten als Rückgang von der neuen Realität in die alte (Transzendenz in die Immanenz) oder als Durchbruch von der alten auf die neuen (von Immanenz zur Transzendenz), als Ausbruch *der Offenheit* ins Eindämmen oder als Notausgang aus dem schon zu dichten Verschluss der unverständlichen Offenheit. Zuvor vorgestelltes *Verblendung* ist in der Tat, wie diese ergreifbare Offenheit zu diskutieren. Immer wieder beginnt das Denken in dieser Offenheit sich selbst zu orientieren. *Sich orientieren* in einer neuen und noch üblichen, allgegenwärtigen Realität bedeutet zugleich darin ihre eigene Gedankenbestimmungen eingeben, es zu gewinnen. Und das alles mit fast immer den gleichen Denktechniken. Orientierung der Meinungen in der neu angetroffenen Offenheit ist also gedankliche Technisierung dieser Realität.

## 2. Die Verblendung mit der virtuellen Realität

Wenn die Techniken des Denkens im Zentrum jeder Technik stehen, dann ist die gesamte Geschichte des Denkens „das ewige Ballett“ derjenigen, die kritisch geringschätzen und derjenigen, die die Technik als eine Technik verteidigen und argumentieren, einschließlich auch die heutige Technologie. Die einen verwerfen in neu eröffneter Offenheit die ganze Bedeutung für Gedankenorientierung, die anderen gehen in einen offenen Krieg, mit einem meist gegen Techniken konservativen, kritischen Denken. Beide tragen ohne Ausnahme (ebenso wie die technischen und technologischen Entdeckungen selbst) zur Schwierigkeit der philosophischen Frage bei.

Nichts besonderes passiert auch jetzt, wenn unser Denken in der allgegenwärtigen eindringend-weichenden virtuellen Realität angetroffen ist. Gleichzeitig zeigt sie sich sowohl beim Eindringen als auch beim Weichen. Damit wurde die existentielle Situation des Menschen als Denker und orientiertes Wesen in einen Zustand der zweifachen Gegebenheit und Fragestellung gebracht. Gegebenheit und Fragestellung sowohl der Realität als auch des Menschen schaffen unentwirrbaren Knoten, in dem, wie es scheint, war er mehr und mehr gebunden, indem er die Illusion schafft, dass die virtuelle Realität unveränderlich ist, zumindest so viel, wie es traditionelle, physikalische Realität war. Damit in der Begegnung des Individuums mit der neu geschaffenen Realität eine Illusion einer völlig neuen, stabilen „Existenz des Menschen“ im neuen virtuellen Raum geschaffen wird. Was bedeutet das für uns? Wird damit alles verändert oder nur der menschliche Weg und die Orientierungstechniken in der Realität? Was sind der Unterschied zwischen Positionen für die Beine und den Hals gebundener Gefangenen Platons Höhle, Mönche in der Klosterzelle, bzw. Descartes, die von der Welt und Heideggers *Dasein* durch seine Strukturen für ihre eigene Existenz zurückgezogen sind, und einem modernen im Netzwerk der virtuellen Realität verwickelten Menschen? Sind die erwähnten „Gefangenen“ mehr abhängig von ihnen gegebenen Realität als wir die modernen vir(t)us-Menschen?

Abgesehen von dem scheinbaren Mangel an traditioneller Konzeptualität und Umwegsamkeit der neuen Realität mithilfe alter Methoden, die für alle epochalen Umkehrungen charakteristisch ist, hat das Bild zum ersten Mal seit Platon den Primat von dem Wort eingenommen und darin ein Selbstporträt über das Porträt. Die Zeit der Imagination, in der all dies geschieht, ist so zu tun, als ob alles aus sich selbst heraus produziert würde. Und es ist immer etwas Neues. Die Neugier eines Menschen geht über die bekannten Grenzen hinaus. Aber ist es so unvergleichlich?

Unentwickelt, aber die starke Sinnlichkeit von Platons Gefangenen, die sie mit der Erscheinung der Wirklichkeit verbindet, unterscheidet sich grundlegend von unserer gegenwärtigen Sinnlichkeit. Und nicht nur damit, dass diese andere seine immer kenntliche Passivität vermittelt und sich fast vollständig mithilfe technisch-technologischer Mittel passiviert hat. Obwohl diese Hilfsmittel traditionell dazu gedacht sind, die sinnrationale Unvollkommenheit des Menschen zu kompensieren, scheint es, dass sie nicht nur streben, sondern auch zu unmöglicher, unmenschlicher Perfektion führt. Deshalb verliert es immer mehr und schließlich überwiegt das im antiken Griechenland die direkte Beziehung begrenzter Sinne und veränderlicher Realität. Nun, wie in Hegels Onto-Logik, sind die Sinne und die

Realität immer schon porträtiert, transformiert, aber etwas anderes als sie selbst, einige „sinnliche“ Sinne und eine realere „Realität“. Etwas Ähnliches, nur viel radikaler, passierte mit der öffentlich-privaten Beziehung.

Die Tatsache, dass wir in unserer virtuellen Abhängigkeit nicht weniger von Höhle Gefangenen abhängig, hartnäckig Gläubigen oder neuzeitlichem selbstbezogenem Subjekt, Beweis, dass unsere Geselligkeit in sozialen Netzwerken reduziert wird, verweist uns darauf, dass wir Platons Höhle als eine Art sozialen Netzwerkes verstehen. Der Unterschied ist, dass der Ausgang mit dem Eingang im Höhlennetz geschlossen wird. Der Unterschied, zumindest vordergründig, betrifft den eigentlichen Charakter der Gebundenheit: In der Höhle musste Gefangenen (Denken) jemand anderes (Sinnlichkeit) binder, in der virtuellen Realität wurde unser faktische Bindung als die Krönung der Verwirklichung der Freiheit des Denkens und Handelns dargestellt. Somit wird dieses Modell der Bindung durch ihre Festigkeit und Ausdauer stärker, nicht nur als Platos Ketten der Sinnlichkeit, sondern auch als der geistigen Wiederanbringung der monotheistischen Religionen gezeigt. Der Mensch ist so, wie es scheint, jetzt mehr fest gebunden an die Wirklichkeit als irgendeiner von seinen Vorfahren, weil jede Möglichkeit der Distanzierung von ihr im Voraus verunmöglicht ist. Das Sein-im (oder aus-dem)-Netzwerk ist es, wie Heidegger sagte, Verfallen (Geworfenheit) in den Entwurf.

Sicherlich, technische und technologische Realität, so real wie das, was uns entdeckend, wie die Allgegenwart des Alltags veröffentlicht wird, mit ihren leicht erkennbaren Vorteilen, aber auch schwierig reparierenden Fehlern in ihrer Offenheit zum Denken. Diese ersten, meist technischen, werden von allen kontinuierlich genutzt und es ist selbsterklärend geworden, nicht darüber zu sprechen. Diese anderen provozieren widersprüchliche Meinungen, die sich so viel vervielfachen, wie die virtuelle Realität immer wieder absoluter wird, und niemand kann sie einzeln betrachten. Natürlich ist die wirklichste Wirklichkeit nicht nur von sich selbst geschaffen, sondern die Krönung der Entwicklung des westeuropäischen Denkens, sein Verhältnis gegenüber sich selbst und der Wirklichkeit, und als solche ist sie die Kristallisation von dem menschlichen, subjektiven, und vor allem positivistisch-pragmatischen Wissen. Daher, scheint es, sollte die traditionelle Sicht der menschlichen passiver Teilnahme an einer konstanten Realität als eine Frage der Möglichkeiten und der Grenzen von dem Konstruieren des Menschen und alles, was „real“ ist, am Ende auch sich selbst in dieser gleichen Realität betrachten.

Aus diesem Zusammenhang stellt sich die Frage, ob mit einer virtuellen Realität eine volle Umdrehung notwendiger (metaphysisch wissenschaftlicher) Entwicklung des Denkens schließt, oder ist es nur eine der vielen Stufen des rationalen selbstprojektierenden Selbstverständnis des Menschen. Wenn wir es als einen Punkt verstehen, der den Kreis schließt, dann die virtuelle Realität in ihrer *Selbstorganisation, Empfänglichkeit, Oberflächlichkeit, Unvermeidlichkeit, Machbarkeit, Erscheinungen, Designierung, Engagement, Quasiandersheit* zeigt, wie das, was uns *am meisten akzeptabel* im Gegensatz zu dem antiken Kreisumschreibung von einem absoluten Punkt (Idee des Gutes) aus, von dem alles, was mit dem Erscheinen verbunden war, als unwürdig des Denkens und des Gedankenwesens ignoriert wurde. Wenn virtuelle Realität nur eine der Stufen einer linearen Progression ist, dann stehen wir natürlich der endlosen Endgültigkeit der Offenheit gegenüber,

der sogar (einmal allmächtige) menschliche Phantasie oder verstohlene neutrale Mathematisierung gerade in seiner Epoche nicht mehr keine scheinbare Grenze skizzieren kann. Sicherlich sollte man nicht auf der Seite mit der Frage bleiben, ob unsere Zivilisation, die nur an seiner Spitze völlig gegen sich selbst wendet und ihre eigenen Grundlagen und Erbe – und nimmt als seine neue Form der Existenz die Illusion und Unbeständigkeit, Flexibilität und Offenheit, also genau das, was sie in seinem einzigartigen Anfang abgelehnt wurde – immer noch als eine Zivilisation verstanden werden kann, die ständig weiterentwickelt und sich ändert? Wenn das immer noch die gleiche Zivilisation ist, dann scheint es, dass die ganze Geschichte des metaphysischen und postmetaphysischen Denkens, die heute seinen Höhepunkt in Selbstkonstruktion virtueller Realität wirklich erreicht, nichts anderes als ein Ballett Spiel innerhalb Platons Höhle ist. Wenn ja, was ist mit ihrer Allegorie passiert? Macht die angeführte Ballettbühne das Wesen der Philosophie, ihrer metaphysischen Grundlagen und allen möglichen Denkweisen und postmetaphysischen Endungen? Erstreckt sich nicht die aktuelle Volatilität und Wiederholbarkeit, der Schwund im Moment und das Verbleiben in der Beständigkeit, eben wie der Hintergrund der Metaphysik der Anwesenheit, von Plato ab?

Die Reise auf diesen Rückwegen kann die Frage nicht umgehen, ob im europäischen Denken „die Wirklichkeit immer in einem gewissen Sinne technisch verstanden wurde“ (Brodbeck (internet)). Wenn ja, wenn *episteme* bereits auf etwas verweist, wenn die Idee als Modell verstanden werden kann, dann auf dem Grundlage des europäischen Denkens als seines (verborgenen) Trägers nicht das Erkenntnisinteresse, sondern Interesse und Macht, Herrschaftstechniken und Gewalt stehen.

In diesem Sinne ist Wissen als entlarvende Schöpfung einer neuen Wirklichkeit ein Kunstwerk, eine demiurgische Orientierung des Menschen. Die anfängliche philosophische Flucht aus der nicht existenten Wirklichkeit des Seienden endete in unserer Zeit in einer Flucht in die Unsändigkeit selbst. Die Variabilität der Realität, die für den Geist geistlos und unwürdig war, wird nun selbst zum Handwerker des Geistes. Diese neue, virtuelle Form der Wissensrealität bindet ihre Universalität und Universalität überhaupt nicht an die Einzigartigkeit, Unveränderlichkeit und Stabilität der Wahrheit. Begeisterung für die virtuelle Realität bringt eine völlig neue und empfängliche Erfahrung des Heraklitischen Flusses. Die gleiche virtuelle Realität können wir beide nicht betreten, entweder aufgrund der Variabilität der virtuellen Flussnetze oder uns selbst. Aus diesem Grund können wir nicht einmal aus der virtuellen Realität herauskommen, es bleibt einfach ein Fluss ohne Ufer. Es handelt sich um das perfekte Chaos-System.

### 3. Der Mensch und seine Reduktion

Die philosophische Orientierung auf die virtuelle Realität und die Fragen die daraus folgen bringen uns also zurück in die vergangene Debatte über die Vorteile oder Schädlichkeiten, das Gute oder das Böse der neuentstandenen/verganglichen Realität. Die erste Antwort auf diese Frage musste von Plato in seiner Höhlenallegorie gegeben werden. Können wir versuchen, es in uns selbst zu finden?

Die Höhle als natürliche Zuflucht, aber auch als allegorische Bestimmung, hat keine ideale natürliche Form, hat ihre Dunkelheit, ihren Eingang/Ausgang und

dadurch eine notwendige, aber ungenügende Einnahme des Lichtes darin<sup>2</sup>. Mit diesem Eingang öffnet der Bewohner der Höhle nicht nur die Höhle, sondern auch das vom Himmel offene und gleichzeitig geschlossene Land. Wenn er aus der Höhle, unter dem neu entdeckten himmlischen Gewölbe der neuen Höhle, hinausgeht, baut der Mensch mit seinen Fähigkeiten, manipuliert durch das metaphysische Triumvirat Geist-Auge-Hand, seinen idealen Unterschlupf und setzt sich darin nieder. Aber in unserer Zeit werden diese überirdischen Höhlen instabil und unwirklich. In jedem von ihnen ist eine virtuelle Höhle realistischer, die in ihrer ätherischen, idealen Grundlosigkeit die Verkrampfung der Höhle auf die immer unendlich virtuelle Ausdehnung und den Aufstieg reduziert. Mit der aufkommenden virtuellen Realität, einer neuen Höhle, die sich unendlich erweitert, verspürt der Mensch nicht mehr das Bedürfnis nach einer Öffnung, nach Transzendenz, bis die Höhle frei ist und das Licht (Vernetzung) ausreichend erhellt. Es ist ein absolut reales Labyrinth der Immanenz, ohne irgendeine Art von Transzendenz.

Die gleiche Bewegung entwickelt Wissen in der Höhle zum Virtuellen. Trotz seines unübersichtlichen Fortschritts war das Wissen nie geschlossener zur Kritik und durchsetzt von Ignoranz als in seinem virtuellen Bild. Paradoxiertweise wissen wir, ebenso wie Platons Gefangene, fast nichts über die grundlegenden Elemente der Realität, an die wir gebunden sind. Wir fragen uns sogar, ob unsere Realität überhaupt einige ihrer grundlegenden Elemente hat.

Als solches ist es vor allem vollständig an alle Realitäten des flexiblen Menschen, seines Geistes, seiner Sinne, seiner Bestrebungen, seines Willens angepasst... Sie ist im Wesentlichen ein durch die Imagination technologisierter Mann. Obwohl es nicht unbedingt instrumentell ist, obwohl technologische Systeme nicht nur Werkzeuge, sondern vor allem Medien der Kommunikation und Registrierung, Orte des Lebens, Meinungen und Handlungen sind, werden virtuelle Elemente nicht zur Hilfe als Folge der Unfähigkeit des Menschen aufgerüstet, sondern werden unsere wahren virtuellen Beine, Hände, Augen, Gedanken, Wünsche, Versprechen, Verträge... Es geht also nicht mehr darum, die organischen und sensorischen Defekte und Unvollkommenheiten des Menschen zu ersetzen, sondern um deren Veränderung und Reduktion. Die Augen, die jetzt nicht aus der unmittelbaren Nähe, die am weitesten entfernten Teile der neu entstehenden Realität ins Ziel nehmen, sind nicht dieselben wie die, die die entferntesten Berghügel oder fast unsichtbare Horizonte des unsichtbaren Tieflandes oder Ozeans beobachten. Das traditionelle Gehör ist weitgehend blockiert. Der Geruchs- und Geschmackssinn spielt keine Rolle mehr. Auf ihren Kosten durchbrach es als Mittel, die Berührung als Bindungsmittel, aber es reduzierte sich auch nur auf seine empfindlichsten Teile, auf die Wangenknochenfinger<sup>3</sup>. Mit all diesen Transformationen unserer Sinne, allem, was wir auf den

2 Anders als Plato, dessen Bewohner an die Bedingungen der Höhle gewohnt sind und die Höhle nur mit Gewalt verlassen, gibt Nietzsche Zarathustra die volle Freiheit, jeden Morgen aus seiner Höhle auf dem Gipfel des Berges zu kommen und mit dem Licht ohne Gewalt zu erregen. Der Unterschied liegt sicherlich darin, dass die Höhlen von Nietzsche dem Licht näher kommen und als asoziale Quelle der Selbsterkenntnis dienen.

3 Saramags Thematisierung der Höhle bespricht die Abschaffung des Triumvirats Geist-Auge-Hand, und die Technologisierung der menschlichen Welt. Die Beschreibung des Funktionierens eines Menschen in der alten, „kreativen“ Welt ist einfach: „Wenn wir geboren werden, haben die Finger immer noch keine Gehirne, sie bilden sich allmählich in



Bildschirmen sehen und hören, wird alles, was wir in Kommunikationsnetzwerken begegnen, anders als Plato, nicht nur als die authentischste, sondern als die angemessenste und attraktivste Realität des Menschen gezeigt.

Nichtsdestoweniger ist der größte Schlag gegen die menschlichen Sinne und ihre Verstümmelung bereits auf der Grundlage des Menschen als Wesen des Denkens, der Erinnerung und des Vergessens begangen worden. Und damit gegen das Vergessen. Vergessen, dank technischer und technologischer Errungenschaften, außer Meinungen zu vergessen, ist nicht mehr möglich. Ist dies „außer“ böseartig und wohlwollend für einen Menschen als Denker?

Der moderne Mensch ist immer noch in derselben sitzenden Position wie die platonischen Gefangenen: er kann sich auf der Erde erheben, die Höhle verlassen und in der Realität einen eigenen Schritt vorwärts machen, dank der Errichtung einer unzerstörbaren Verbindung von Geist und Auge und Hand, dennoch versagt er mit intelligentem Wissen, Augensicht und Hand-handeln, sich zu befreien von seiner Höhlengebundenheit und Bestürzung. Im Gegenteil, es ist gerade diese Bestürzung, die ihm wirklich fehlt und für die er sich sehnt. Es ist völlig irrelevant, ob die Bestürzung von etwas anderem kommt oder wiederum die innere Struktur des Menschen ausbildet. Um das herauszufinden, musste der Mensch seine Metaphysik als virtuell erkennen. Der Prozess dieses Wissens wurde als Überwindung der Metaphysik anerkannt.

Erinnern wir uns, dass das Verlassen der Höhle nur passiert ist, wenn ein Mensch das notwendige Vertrauen in sich selbst gewonnen hat und er von der Sicherheit der Wirklichkeit überzeugt wurde, die ich intelligent erschuf. Aber trotzdem blieb jede Form von Sicherheit (System) nur eine Kopie der Höhle und ihrer Realität. Die Aufhebung der Dunkelheit der Höhle mit Feuer – die erste technische Erfindung

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der Zeit und mit dem, was unsere Augen sehen. Die Hilfe der Augen ist genauso wichtig wie die Hilfe dessen, was man mit ihnen sehen kann. Deshalb waren deine Finger immer am besten platziert, um verborgenes zu entdecken. Was das Gehirn als angeborenes, wunderbares oder übernatürliches Phänomen ansieht, was auch immer das heißt, auf wunderbare oder übernatürliche Weise, lernte das Gehirn von den Fingern und seinen kleinsten Gehirnen.“ (Saramago 2016: 80) Deshalb ist die Hauptfigur des Romans Töpferei, die erste Person der Hand, und ihr Aussterben, in der neuen Realität. „Platons Höhle“ in dieser neuen Welt wird zu einer Touristenattraktion, und es ist im Wesentlichen ein Unterschirm einer technischen und technologischen Realität, in der das menschliche Leben in seiner Menschlichkeit nicht möglich ist. Die Tonkammer des Töpfers (Mini-Höhle), das bescheidene Lagerhaus, das Dorf als solches, die traditionelle Lebensweise der Anthropos, schluckte ohne Feuer und raucht Fortschritt, der nicht aufzuhalten ist (191), ein expansiver, lebloser, absolut kontrollierter Technopolis mit blinden Fassaden und geschlossenen Fenstern, mit antieuropäischer Ansicht, dass „der Teil größer ist als das Ganze“ (257). In dieser Welt des Unfugs hat ein einziger Satz eines niedrigen Beamten die Macht, „alles, was von der Realität, in der er lebt, übrig geblieben ist“, „den letzten“ alten Töpfer als den letzten wirklichen Mann, dessen „Belastung“ mit seinen Handwerken, Traditionen, Gewohnheiten, Kuriositäten zu streichen, Ängste, Pflanzen, Tiere, Gedanken, Liebe, mit ihrem Land, ihrem Meer und ihrem Himmel, „aussterben zu lassen“. Deshalb hat er nur noch eine Entscheidung: „Ich werde den Rest meines Lebens nicht an die Steinbank gebunden und auf die Wand schauen“ (338). Anders als der schwarze Kerl, der „für immer an die Erde gebunden ist“, „der Mensch ist nicht das, was du irgendwo hingestellt hast und sie bleibt dort, der Mann bewegt sich, denkt, rätselt, erforscht, will wissen ...“ (307).

– ist also nie völlig gelungen. Feuer in der Höhle ist nicht möglich, weil es jeden Hinweis auf den Unterschied zwischen den Schatten und den Dingen, der Erscheinung und der Realität, den Sinnen und dem Geist verbrennen würde. Wenn er aus der Höhle kommt, bindet ein Mensch sich an den Boden: Er baut darauf auf, gräbt hinein, läuft durch ihn hindurch, ruht darauf. Geist-Auge-Hand, als ein einzigartig versierter Denker, formt die Werkzeuge und Waffen in Bezug auf sich selbst: für die Verarbeitung, Jagd, Wohnen, Bauen. Nehmen wir zum Beispiel eine Hacke, das erfolgreichste Bild der landwirtschaftlichen Einstellung des Menschen zur Erde, werden wir nur sehen, dass jeder historische Fortschritt nichts anderes ist, als ihn zu perfektionieren, um eine ideale (bei Platons gewaltsame) Biagsamkeit der Anthropos zu erreichen. Und während diese Biagsamkeit historisch funktionaler erschien, begegnete der Bauer dialektisch dem Jäger in sich, und umgekehrt. Biagsamkeit in der neuen Wirklichkeit wurde vollständig auf das Sein des Menschen in der virtuellen Realität übertragen. Der einzige Unterschied ist, dass die Rolle der vollständigen menschlichen Figur, in der geraden Linie der Jagd, und in der Landwirtschaft, er jetzt den Indexpunkt in seinem Umgang mit der Computermaus genommen hat. Der einzige Unterschied ist, dass die Rolle der vollständigen menschlichen Figur, in der der Jagd gerade, und in der Landwirtschaft gebogen, jetzt den Indexfinger in seinem Umgang mit der Computermaus genommen hat. Der Zeigefinger hatte historisch die Funktion, sich entweder auf den Himmel (Platon) und die Beziehung zur Transzendenz zu beziehen, oder war auf die immanente Intentionalität von Husserl und die Rolle des Auslösers hingewiesen.

Er übertrug daher das Jagdverhältnis eines Menschen auf ein Seiendes, das Verhältnis eines Jägers zu einem möglichen Raub. Jagd und Landwirtschaft, die nomadische und sittliche Lebensweise der Erde, werden auf die automatische Aktion des Zeigefingers im virtuellen Wüstennetz reduziert. Zusammen sind die Wangenknochen aller Finger, und nicht der ganze triumvirat Geist-Auge-Hand, zu einem Mittel geworden, durch das wir die betroffene, virtuell umhüllte und unberührbare Realität „beeinflussen“. Der Philosoph, weder Hirte noch Jäger, auf eine Weise, in dieser neuen Lichthöhle in ihrer Vergessenheit des Denkens, wurde nichtnutzig. Der Mensch, der wegen des Wissen sich aus der Realität zurückzog, zog sich von sich selbst in eine neugeborene Realität. Die platonische Ideenwelt spiegelt sich nun komplett in der neuen Höhlenwand/Leinwand wider.

Kommt diese Realität als neu entdeckter Planet des Lebens zu uns? Es wird hauptsächlich als ein System von idealen Netzwerken veröffentlicht. Wenn man bedenkt, dass alle technischen Entdeckungen eine Kopie dessen sind, was bereits in der Natur gegeben wurde, das Netzwerk und seine Systeme uns selbst zur der Spinne zurückbringen. Der erste heilbringende Gedanke eines Mannes in der neuen Situation konnte sein, dass Spiderman geworden ist: derjenige, der den anderen mit seinem sechsten Sinn rettet. Das virtuelle Netzwerk ist aber etwas völlig anderes als der Filmstreifen. Eine Spinne klettert das Netz, um zu fangen. Wenn die Struktur fertig ist, erst dann hat sie die Möglichkeit zu philosophieren: Sie spielt herum, auf eine Beute wartend, die sie unweigerlich aufnehmen wird. Indem er sich in eine virtuelle Realität einfügt, liefert sich der Mensch durch sein Begehren zum Netz, und indem er es aufbaut, wird er seine Beute. Jeder Jagdschuss wird historisch als Bumerang dargestellt. So wird das Sein-im-Netz als wahre Verwirklichung des

Menschen dargestellt. Und zwar nicht nur in einer rein technisch-technologischen Organisation, sondern auch in der Wirtschaft, Kunst, Wissenschaft, Philosophie. Diese neue Art zu sein erfordert Technosofierung.

Die Technik der Werkzeuge und Maschinen aus den früheren Epochen wurde zum Friedhof von Saramago, mit dem die Technik unendlich ansteigt. Das Beziehungsgeflecht, das dem Menschen als Mensch nicht nur das einfache oder vollständige Beherrschen der Natur, sondern vor allem des anderen Menschen, und im wesentlichen mit sich selbst ermöglicht. Neben der materiellen Realität, die sich der Technologie völlig untergeordnet hat, hat die Technologie die spirituelle Realität vollständig übernommen, was im Menschen immateriell ist. Ein Mensch als ein Wesen des Wunschs und der Begierde (sowohl für das Endliche und das Unendliche, als auch für das Relative und das Absolute) hat sich schief schließlich gebildet. Eine virtuelle Realität zielt nicht nur darauf ab, menschliche Defizite, Bedürfnisse und Wünsche technisch zu kompensieren, sondern fokussiert vielmehr auf die Unzulänglichkeiten der gegebenen Realität selbst.

Dies bedeutet, dass die Millenniumsproduktion von Mitteln für das bereits gesetzte Ziel ist nicht mehr an der Arbeit, sondern, dass die virtuelle Realität selbst zu etwas Einzigartigem, einem Mittel-Ziel geworden ist. Das Ideal der Form, die es erreicht, ist jenseits jeder möglichen Natürlichkeit. Da jedoch dieser ganze Prozess der menschlichen Erschaffung der Wirklichkeit mit dem Beginn der Philosophie beginnt, gibt uns die Technologie selbst paradoxerweise nichts radikal Neues. Sie erweitert uns nur in einer speziellen, technologisierten Weise auf ihre eigene Realität. Diese Selbstausslieferung findet viel schneller statt als der Auszug aus Platons Höhle und wird daher paradoxerweise viel länger dauern, als es dauerte die begriffliche, metaphysische Grundlage der Wirklichkeit zu legen. Die Verringerung der Unabhängigkeit moderner Technologie gegenüber dem griechischem *techné* wird in der technologischen Reduktion der Technik radikalisiert. Den Menschen auf das virtuelle Idealschema zu reduzieren, den Verstand durch Zielstrebigkeit zu ersetzen, das Körper an die Augen und Wangenknochen der Fingerspitzen zu reduzieren, lebendige Sozialnetzwerke durch virtuelle zu ersetzen führte dazu, dass anstelle von klassischen Fragen wie Was? Wie? Warum? Wer? Warum? die grundlegende Frage unserer Existenz wird „Wo bist du?“ (Feraris 2011).

#### 4. Austritt aus der Höhle

Der philosophische Weg des Denkens in Plato war, sich hinter der mehrschichtigen scheinbaren Realität zu stellen. Der Technologischer Ansatz und die Vernetzung lassen uns nicht über die virtuelle Realität hinaus zu denken. Dies bedeutet, dass der neu geschaffene technologische Raum, die einzige Höhle ohne einen Ausweg ist, eine Höhle, die sich durch ihre eigene Offenheit verschlossen hat, um eine vollständige Vernetzung zu erreichen. In dieser unendlichen Höhle gibt es unzählige Minihöhlen, jede Figur grabt, wühlt für sich selbst, und erschafft seine „Mauer“ vor sich, die Mauer, die sich von ihr entfernt und die sie aufgrund der Anhäufung ihres Denkens nicht berühren oder, der sie nicht entkommen kann. Daher ist uns die Realität dieser Höhle, wie auch dem Gefangenen Platons, unberührbar. Im Grunde ist jeder dieser Unterhöhlen nur eine Miniunterkunft, dessen anderer

Name die unbefriedigende *Selbstgenügsamkeit*, Entfremdung oder die Geschlossenheit der Offenheit des Menschen ist. Dieser Höhlensieb erstreckt sich unendlich wie eine Mine, die uns in den Boden eingräbt. Die Tatsache, dass wir uns wirklich in der technologischen Realität befinden, erzeugt die Illusion, dass wir einfach in diese Realität hineingehen, uns selbst beherrschen und uns kontinuierlich von einer Realität in die andere bewegen.

Alles in allem weist die klassische Debatte über die Schädlichkeit oder Nützlichkeit von Technik und Technologie auf eine Art Sterilität der Philosophie hin, auf ihre ewige Frage: Ist Philosophie überhaupt notwendig für einen Menschen (und sogar Erforderlich)? Ist es immer noch die Grundlage des menschlichen Seins oder nur ein Pendant moderner technologischer Prozesse? Während das Neue Jahrhundert uns gelehrt hat, dass jedes Spiel sinnvoll ist, dass „zum erstenmal im Laufen der Geschichte der Mensch auf dieser Erde nur noch sich selbst gegenübersteht“ (Heisenberg 1957: 279), sind wir jetzt in einer Situation, in der wir uns in technologischer Vernetzung der Leistung von uns selbst gegenüber stellen, im Gegensatz zum Idealbild von uns selbst. Dabei werden wir natürlich selbst zu diesem Bild. So werden wir wieder Gefangenen und ihrer Schatten in Platons Höhle. Technologisierte Realität ist da und wir sind darin, genauer gesagt, wir sind es. Nur dass ihre Verbindlichkeitstechnik, die ihre traditionelle Neutralität oder Zielstrebigkeit verliert, den Menschen in seiner Mannigfaltigkeit zur Vernetzung als einheitliches, in absoluter Hingabe reduziert hat. Alle menschliche Wissen ist reduziert oder kann sicherlich auf die unendliche Vielfalt der Verbindungen von Null und Eins reduziert werden. Diese unendlichen Sequenzen ersetzen die begrenzten Höhlenschattierungen. Allen gemein ist nur der Gefangener, ein *Ballett-Beobachter*, ein *Homo numerus*, der vor ihnen sitzt, ohne den Wunsch, aufzustehen und sich von ihnen zu trennen. Platons Befreiung des Wortes von der Ausbeutung des Bildes, sowie dessen Verwaltung ist von der pythagoreischen Magie der Zahlen gezähmt.

Platons Geschichte der Höhle war eine Geschichte über Wahrheit, Realität, Macht, Gewalt, Wissen, Bildung, Freiheit, Licht (enge, intime, weite, gewalttätige und fremde Horizonte) und die Aufgabe des Philosophen. Es bezeugt den ontologischen Grad der Realität, des Wissens, der Wahrheit und Bildung, auf dem Weg zur wahren Realität. Im Gegensatz zu Platon bot Bergson eine andere Denkaufgabe an:

L'intelligence humaine, telle que, nous nous la représentons, n'est point du tout celle que nous montrait Platon dans l'allégorie de la caverne. Elle n'a pas plus pour fonction de regarder passer des ombres vaines que de contempler, en se retournant derrière elle, l'astre éblouissant. Elle a autre chose à faire. Attelés, comme des boeufs de labour, à une lourde tâche, nous sentons le jeu de nos muscles et de nos articulations, le poids de la charrue et la résistance du sol: agir et se savoir agir, entrer en contact avec la réalité et même la vivre, mais dans la mesure seulement où elle intéresse l'oeuvre qui s'accomplit et le sillon qui se creuse, voilà la fonction de l'intelligence humaine. (Bergson 2013: 133)

Dieser bergsonische Höhlenlaustritt und die landwirtschaftliche Bindung, scheint uns für das Verständnis der virtuellen Realität nicht fruchtbarer zu sein. Im Gegenteil, die fragliche Realität ist mit der Entstehung der virtuellen Welt verschwunden. Das Dilemma Kontemplation oder Arbeit, für sich selbst, ist das Werk der modernen Eroberung von *Homo laborans*, und trägt nicht zu unserer Orientierung in der neuen Realität bei, sondern drängt uns mehr dazu, den unendlichen

Fäden (Furchen) der Virtualität zu folgen. In dieser Hinsicht ist Platos Bild unserer multiplen Beziehung zur Realität viel virtueller und damit unserer Denkorientierung angemessener.

Aufgrund der Naturwissenschaft und Technik ist die Natur als ein „wirkliches Buch der Fragen“ (Либерта 2005: 190) verschwunden, und dank der Sozialwissenschaften ist die Gesellschaft in eine Konstruktion und ein Simulacrum verwandelt worden, und die Technologie musste als ein neuer Demiurgos des Menschen entstehen. Ist es in dieser Hinsicht möglich, eine neue Allegorie über den technologischen Höhle und die Art und Weise zu haben, wie sich die Menschen in Bezug auf alles, was ist, verhalten? Ja, insofern die Wirklichkeit selbst zur Allegorie geworden ist.

Aus dieser Transformation ergibt sich die Frage, ob wir aus der Krise des Realitätssinns im 20. Jahrhundert diese einzigartige Sinnesrealität erschaffen konnten? Oder hat die Last einer Frage nach dem Sinn zu Gleichgültigkeit gegenüber der Frage geführt? Auf jeden Fall bleibt die Frage nach unserer Neuen (und metaphorisch auch alten) Position im Kosmos offen. Ob unsere Begegnung mit der virtuellen Wirklichkeit unsere Gedanken dazu bringt, zu sich selbst zurückzukehren und sich mit technischen Strategien in der Realität zu orientieren, hängt nicht nur von Kants Faulheit und Feigheit eines möglicherweise freigesinnten Wesens ab. Ob Philosophie und Wissenschaft, zusammen mit Kunst und Religion, ihre eigenen Schlachten und die Zeit ihrer unhinterfragbaren Herrschaft vergessen, die virtuelle Realität und die Existenz des Menschen darin begreifen, hängt mehr und mehr von der Dualität der Politik-Ökonomie und ihrer Verklärung allein ab. Die Produktion hängt zunehmend weniger von Gedanken und Handlungen ab.

Auf der anderen Seite weist die „Unehrlichkeit“ (Gadamer), die dieser und jeder Kritik an Technik und Technologie folgt, auf die Vielschichtigkeit der Selbsterhaltung des Menschen und damit auf die Multidimensionalität jeder Kritik oder Rechtfertigung hin. Die Respektlosigkeit der Kritik der technischen und technologischen Realität entspricht oft der Intensität des Genusses in der Fähigkeit, ihre Mittel zu benutzen. Die Naivität, alles Neue als besser in Bezug auf alte und sogar virtuelle Realität zu begründen, ist analog zu der zunehmenden Verbreitung von Naivität und der damit verbundenen Minderung des Risikos und der Gefahr, die die virtuelle Realität auf die Gesamtheit des Menschen ausübt. Aus diesem Grund verspricht die platonische „Flucht“ eines Mannes aus der Höhle, der mit etwas völlig anderem konfrontiert ist, viel mehr als Gagarins Flucht von der Erde und Begegnungen mit dem Selben. Obwohl es scheint, dass die Macht des menschlichen Denkens und seine grundlegende metaphysische Eigenschaft, die Einheit von Mensch und Wirklichkeit durch Wissen bezeugt ist, ist die Frage, wie sehr dieser offenbar streng immanente Sinn eine Höhle namens Mensch überschatten kann. Die Frage ist, ob auf dieser Grundlage die metaphysische Natur des menschlichen Seins und seines philosophischen Eros noch immer die Möglichkeit hat, in die virtuelle Realität hineinzufallen und sie zu verlassen. Ob es ontologische Ränge von Ausbrüchen oder ethische „Spuren“ des Unterkommens der Transzendenz sind, ein Mensch muss durch seine eigenen Gedanken und Handlungen zusehen, in seinem eigenen *Höhle-Land* als virtueller *Wirte-Jäger* für einen anderen Menschen kein Virus zu sein, wie das sein Licht des Wissens immer gewesen ist.

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**Drago Perović****„Večni balet“ u Platonovoj pećini****Apstrakt**

Izlaganje teži da sagleda pitanje odnosa mišljenja i stvarnosti u sadašnjem tehničko-tehnološkom nastajućem nestajanju. Sa njim su prikryveno povezana sva fundamentalna filozofska pitanja, a prvenstveno pitanje mogućnosti mišljenja „iz“ ili „iznad“ nastajući-nestajuće stvarnosti. Savremena rasprava se time ponovo vraća na transcendentno-imanentni karakter mišljenja koji se, uprkos novona(e)stalnoj situaciji, kao pitanje mogućeg opravdanja filozofskog znanja, da uporediti sa njegovim tradicionalnim oblicima i načinima izvođenja. Polje tog plesa je jedan novi „pećinski“ zid na kom svoja moćna izvođenja in-sceniraju tehnika i tehnologija.

Ključne reči: *Anthropos*, pećina, mišljenje, stvarnost, zaslepljenost, virtuelna stvarnost, umreženost

**“Eternal Ballet” In Plato’s Cave****Abstract**

This exposition attempts to explore the question of the relationship between thinking and reality in the current technico-technological disappearance-in-appearance. All fundamental philosophical questions are covertly related with it, and above all the question of the possibility of thinking “from” or “beyond” the reality which appears/disappears. The contemporary debate thus returns to the transcendent-immanent character of the thought which, as a question of possible justification of philosophical knowledge, can be compared with its traditional forms and modes of execution in spite of the new situation in its (dis)appearance. The field of this dance is a new “cave wall” that stages technics and technology in their powerful performance.

Keywords: *Anthropos*, cave, thinking, reality, blindness, virtual reality, networking.

IV

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REVIEWS

PRIKAZI





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PAMALA WIEPKING AND FEMIDA HANDY (EDS.), *THE PALGRAVE HANDBOOK OF GLOBAL PHILANTHROPY*, BASINGSTOKE, PALGRAVE MACMILLAN, 2015.

Bojana Radovanović

The focus of the Palgrave Handbook of Global Philanthropy, edited by Pamala Wiepking and Femida Handy, is on philanthropic donations, defined as “voluntary financial donations provided to nonprofit organizations by private actors including individuals, for-profit organizations, as well as other nonprofit organizations, such as churches and foundations” (p. 4). The editors endeavour to explain why people give their financial resources to non-profits, thus benefiting the public good.

Individual factors of philanthropic giving are well documented in the literature. Wiepking and Handy refer to the eight mechanisms that drive people to make charitable donations: awareness of need, solicitation, costs and benefits, altruism, reputation, psychological benefits, values and efficacy. The influence of contexts on the likelihood and level of individual philanthropic donations is much less researched. This volume strives to provide an explanation for cross-country differences in philanthropic donations.

The Handbook consists of three parts. In the first part, the editors provide an analytical framework for analysing a philanthropic landscape within which individuals make their philanthropic donations. Based on the theoretical framework of the social origins theory and economic theory

of market and government failure, the editors develop contextual explanations for cross-national differences in philanthropic giving. The contextual factors of philanthropic giving are: the roles of different stakeholders such as philanthropic organisations, state, religious organisations, etc. in social welfare provision in a historical perspective, the size and scope of the non-profit sector, government policy related to the non-profit sector including funding, subsidies and fiscal incentives, the legal regulations of the sector, and culture, which includes religion and fundraising professionalism.

The second part of the Handbook consists of contributions on philanthropic giving from 26 countries (25 countries and one region, the Caribbean). In the first section of each chapter the country-specific philanthropic landscape is depicted. The empirical data on the rates and levels of philanthropic donations in each country are provided in the second section.

The third part of the Handbook consists of six chapters that provide the main findings from cross-national analyses of contextual factors and their relationships with the likelihood and the level of philanthropic contributions. The potential to predict philanthropic giving of the social origins theory is analysed in the first

chapter of the third part, where it is tested against the empirical data from the second part of the book. The influence of government support, fiscal incentives, religion and fund-raising professionalism on philanthropic giving is examined in other chapters of the third part. In the final chapter, the editors summarise the impediments and facilitators of philanthropic donations the world over. The eight mechanisms that facilitate philanthropic giving are: “1) a culture of philanthropy; 2) Public trust, issues of transparency, accountability and effectiveness; 3) Regulatory and legislative frameworks; 4) Fiscal incentives; 5) The state of the non-profit sector; 6) Political and economic stability or growth; 7) Population changes; 8) International giving” (p. 610). Thus, the editors’ main aim of explaining cross-national differences in philanthropic giving through referencing philanthropic landscapes is achieved.

However, there are a few shortcomings. First of all, defining individual philanthropic donations as voluntary monetary contributions to non-profit organisations, excludes many voluntary activities done by individuals which are by its nature philanthropic, where philanthropy is seen as “voluntary action for the public good” (Robert L. Payton and Michael Moody, 2008, *Understanding philanthropy: its meaning and mission*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press). This definition of philanthropy includes giving directly to people in need without intermediary organisations. Such practices are well developed in some countries, as it is documented in the example of Mexico provided in this volume.

Moreover, the editors have chosen a rather narrow definition of culture. In this volume, culture is represented by religion and fund-raising professionalism.

Huntington’s definition of culture as “the values, attitudes, beliefs, orientations, and underlying assumptions prevalent among people in a society” (Samuel P. Huntington, 2000, “Cultures Count” in Lawrence H. Harrison and Samuel P. Huntington (eds.) *Culture Matters. How Values Shape Human Progress*, New York: Basic Books, pp. xii-xvii.) would be much more appropriate for these purposes. The attitudes and beliefs of individuals in regard to the roles that the family, the state and the third sector have in the provision of public good is an important contextual factor for giving. Also, fund-raising professionalism seems to be much more related to the characteristics of the non-profit sector than to the specificities of the culture.

Finally, many countries are left out of the analysis. The initial selection criteria for countries to be included is the availability of national level surveys on philanthropic giving, as the editors explained. For a profound understanding of the complex phenomenon of philanthropic giving and its varieties across the globe, there is a need to include a more diverse variety of countries. However, the conceptual framework developed in this volume, perhaps with minor adjustments, could be applied in the research of philanthropic giving in the countries not included in the volume, which the editors encourage.

To conclude, Palgrave Handbook of Global Philanthropy is the first encompassing comparative study of philanthropic donations that brings in contextual factors in explaining philanthropic giving, thus providing valuable insight into why philanthropic donations are practiced by relatively more people in some countries than in others. It is an indispensable source for all those interested in the field of philanthropic studies.

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DARRELL P. ARNOLD (ED.), *TRADITIONS OF SYSTEMS THEORY. MAJOR FIGURES AND CONTEMPORARY DEVELOPMENTS*, LONDON/NEW YORK, ROUTLEDGE, 2014.

Mark Losoncz

“There is absolutely no knowing what may yet become part of history. The past is still perhaps essentially undiscovered! There is yet so many retroactive forces still needed!”, Nietzsche writes in one of his aphorisms. In effect, this is the project realized by the book *Traditions of Systems Theory*. It is not a coincidence that the editor’s introductory article in Part I is entitled *Systems Theory: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century*. Indeed, it is suggested that there is a somewhat veiled intellectual history that needs to be reconstructed carefully. Ludwig von Bertalanffy, one of the founders of general systems theory has already claimed that the works of many thinkers might be reinterpreted as systems theory *avant la lettre*, including those of Nicholas of Cusa, Paracelsus, Leibniz, Vico, Ibn Khaldun, Goethe, Whitehead and others. This time the explicit systems theories of the twentieth century themselves are re-read as very important but mostly unacknowledged achievements. Accordingly, the analyses of the early, usually forgotten developments are especially valuable. This volume refers to systems theory as comprehensively as possible – “systems theory” embraces not only the various ramifications of general systems theory and cybernetics, but also dynamic systems theory (as developed by Ilya Prigogine and

others) and further contemporary developments (such as systems heuristics and evolutionary cultural ecology).

In his introductory article to Part I, Darrell P. Arnold emphasizes that Bertalanffy was inclined to integrate the sciences into one megasystem. According to Arnold, despite the failure of these immodest aspirations, systems theory became very significant, even in fields in which its influence mostly remained hidden (as in the case of holistic ecological thinking). Furthermore, Arnold compares certain systems theoretical insights to contemporary posthumanist (and transhumanist) constructivism and concludes that “we don’t get at the world directly or fully but only indirectly and incompletely, within the parameters of a particular system, with all that system’s limitations” (p. 13). Obviously, this is an essential counterpoint to the original ambitions of Bertalanffy. In Chapter 2, Philipp Schweighauser summarizes the conceptual results of information theory with a special emphasis on the problem of informational entropy, noise and semantics. Schweighauser points out not only that Shannon’s information theory faced many challenges, especially with regard to meaning and its distortions, but he also reconstructs the persistence of information theory in different theoretical approaches,

including the technology-centred, postanthropocentric theories of culture (as elaborated, for instance, by Friedrich Kittler) and the aesthetic theories of Jacques Attali, Michel Serres and William R. Paulson. In Chapter 3, Ranulph Glanville's article on cybernetics insists, in a venturous manner, that "cybernetics seems to be more general, more philosophical, and more abstract than systems theory" (p. 47). Regardless of this disputable thesis, Glanville reconstructs the main achievements of cybernetics cautiously and with precision. It is of great importance that he questions the pertinence of the distinction between first-order and second-order cybernetics, given the fact that the observer was often included already in the early work of Norbert Wiener. However, it does not follow that Glanville neglects the significant changes within cybernetics, on the contrary, he stresses e.g. the transformations with regard to the concept of error or the attempt of the cybernetics of cybernetics to make the field self-consistent and apply the system to itself. John Bruni's very short article (it consists of four and a half pages), entitled *Expanding the Self-Referential Paradox. The Macy Conferences and the Second Wave of Cybernetic Thinking*, describes the Macy Conferences as a decisive catalyst for second-order systems theory. One can find many exciting allusions, for instance, when Bruni writes that, according to Wiener's pivotal intuition, "systems radically destabilize self-identity, that is, they disturb the idea of the corporeal body as a grounding for subjectivity" (p. 81). Unfortunately, even this remark remains a mere hint. Bruni's extremely brief article can be contrasted to the 53-page-long, profound article written by David Pouvreau, *The Hermeneutical System of General Systemology. Bertalanffyian and Other Early Contributions to Its Foundations and Development*. Pouvreau defines Bertalanffy's theory as a philosophical (however, anti-speculative, "inductively metaphysical") systemology and, accordingly, gives emphasis to the philosophical (e.g. neo-Kantian and process-philosophical) sources of systems theory and its conceptual decisions

(de-substantialization, holism, relationism, constructivism, etc.). Although Pouvreau does not spend much time on convincing us with regard to the adequacy of the expression "hermeneutics" in this context, he accurately demonstrates the relevance of the symbolic sphere for Bertalanffy's perspective. It is particularly inspiring to follow Bertalanffy's vacillation between realist and constructivist philosophical positions. What is more, Pouvreau also takes into consideration the axiological, praxeological and technological aspects of general systemology. In the following chapter, Bernhard Pörksen discusses the epistemologically inspiring constructivism of Heinz von Foerster. As Pörksen puts it, "with second-order cybernetics comes the obligation to be conscious of one's own idiosyncrasies and blind spots, to link objects to oneself, and to understand them seriously as one's own product" (p. 139). In addition, Pörksen treats ethics as a key question for constructivist-cybernetic anthropology, with special attention to the challenge of undecidability and incalculability. The epistemological (and ontological) issues are also a central focus in Bob Mugerauer's article *Maturana and Varela. From Autopoiesis to Systems Applications*. Mugerauer is careful to mention the most significant divergences between Maturana and Varela. For instance, whereas Maturana defines organizational closure and the stability of homeostasis as the decisive aspect of autopoiesis, Varela claims that the emphasis should be put on structural coupling. Mugerauer also gives importance to ethical questions, within the context of a practical know-how and our "situated embodiment". The detailed interpretations of evolutionary theory, immunology and neurophenomenology will be of great help for readers unfamiliar with Maturana's and Varela's theory. In the final article of Part I, Joel B. Hagen covers Eugene Odum's thesis on the homeostatic ecosystem. This article is by far the most critical with the object of its analysis, in accordance with the controversies around Odum's suggestion that ecosystems have to be conceptualized as some kind of balanced superorganisms.

With an eye on both pro and contra arguments, Hagen managed to summarize one of the most interesting debates in systems theory and cybernetics in a nutshell.

Part II focuses on the sociological implications of systems theory, including Talcott Parsons' sociological theory of action systems, Luhmann's theory of complex systems and world-systems theory. Bettina Mahler's chapter draws up the development of Parsons' structural functionalism from his early voluntaristic theory of social action. Moreover, Mahler contrasts Parsonsian systems theory with Immanuel Wallerstein's world-systems theory and Luhmann's sociology. Luhmann's somewhat ambivalent realist constructivism is more detailedly presented in the following article written by Walter Reese-Schäfer. What is unique about this article is that it does not hesitate to deal with the most challenging and speculative problems of Luhmannian theory, including that of the observer's paradoxical self-observation as reflection, the re-entry of the differentiation between system and environment within the system or the exclusively recursive possibility of the world. Mahler brilliantly articulates even the uncommonly complicated concepts and succeeds in demonstrating the radicality of Luhmann's de-substantializing and de-subjectivizing theoretical project. In Chapter 11, W.L. Goldfrank explores the politically presumably most loaded branch of systems theory, namely, Wallerstein's world-systems analysis. It is worth noting that Goldfrank also takes into consideration the so-called dependency theory and the work of André Gunder Frank. Special attention is given to the processual (and transformational) models of world-systems theory and the influence of Prigogine's theory of fluctuations and chaotic turbulence. At the end of the article, Goldfrank also mentions the emancipatory hints of Wallerstein's theory, with the slogan "Another World is Possible". Part III discusses further contemporary developments, far beyond the early scope of systems theory. In Chapter 12, Andrew McMurry covers some of the most important applications of systems theory in literary studies, among others,

the theories of N. Katherine Hayles, Cary Wolfe, and Bruce Clark. He suggests that a fusion of systems approaches and the theories of posthumanism, media and mass culture is not only possible but highly desirable. Chapter 13, *Systems Heuristics and Digital Culture*, by Raphael Sassower and Nimrod Bar-Am, unnecessarily repeats certain unargued commonplaces with regard to (anti-)reductionism, the overcoming of the paradigm of the "clock" and the still prevalent Smithian ideal of *laissez-faire*. The article becomes more meaningful when it introduces the problem of complexity, interconnection and joint/crowd intelligence. The authors convincingly argue that the concept of the digital-stigmatic-human system is one of the most promising contemporary developments in systems theory. Unfortunately, in Peter Finke's article, *A Brief Outline of Evolutionary Cultural Ecology*, cultural ecology appears merely as a floating and vague approach, without a satisfying clarification of its historical development and key exponents – these information might be reconstructed only partially, with the help of the notes. The article contains certain inspiring remarks (e.g. on the typology of information cycles), however, it still remains an unfinished draft. In Chapter 15, *Prigogine. The Interplay of Cosmos, Complexity and Culture*, Dorothea Olkowski shows extensively that complexity and chaos theory might be the most significant sequel of systems theory. According to this vision, the concepts of time irreversibility, attractors, bifurcations, far-from-equilibrium and dissipation might renew the way we used to think about systems. Regrettably, the exact relations between "classical" systems theories and Prigogine's ideas remain unclear. At the end of the article, Olkowski discusses the cultural relevance of complexity and chaos theory, with special focus on the feminist interpretations of the "non-treatment" or the demonisation of chaos, or of the fascination with its images. In Chapter 16, *Systems Theory and Practice in Organizational Change and Development*, Debora Hammond, following Gareth Morgan and others, rejects

the view that organizations can be merely “psychic prisons and instruments of dominations” (p. 329). Hammond provides the reader an opportunity to gain insight to the origins of management science, the general systemological and cybernetic theories of human systems, critical systems approach and soft systems methodology. In the concluding remark, the author stresses that the aforementioned approaches lead “toward the cultivation of ... the capacity for informed self-organization” (p. 340). The book concludes with the transcript of a Skype conversation between Nora Bateson (the daughter of Gregory Bateson) and Phillip Guddemi (a former student of Gregory Bateson).

Before enumerating the undisputable positive aspects of the book, we have to make the following critical remarks. Firstly, *pace* Hans-Georg Moeller’s laudation, *Traditions of Systems Theory* provides a “state-of-the-art survey” only to a limited extent. More precisely, it remains unclarified how and why the crisis of systems theoretical approach began and which systemological insights are to be forgotten from the viewpoint of scientific conceptuality and heuristics. As Darrell P. Arnold puts it, systems theory “did not live up to the aspirations” (p. 11), at least not in fitting systems into a megasystem, and “some versions have proven rather more speculative than scientific” (*ibid*). What is more, Arnold adds that “much of the success of systems theory and cybernetics has been because of their influences on developments that continued without them” (p. 4), but also that certain “explicit forms of systems theory and cybernetics do continue and may even be undergoing a renewal” (p. 12). In fact, many authors attempt to identify the reasons for which the golden age (“Systems Age”) of systems theory has ended or, at least, why certain aspirations have been left behind. For instance, Pouvreau suggests that in Bertalanffy’s “own discipline molecular biology was being strongly promoted, a development rather unfavorable to his systemic biotheory” (p. 122). McMurry also feels himself obligated to explain why literary studies remain disdainful of

concepts drawn from systems theories (p. 264). While summarizing the article of Olkowski, Arnold claims that “some of the basic ideas of chaos and complexity theory ... in many areas eclipsed original systems theoretical positions” and “dynamic system model ... is certainly one of the areas in which systems theory is alive” (p. 257). Obviously, the latter remark implies that many other fields of systems theory are already dead, however, it is left uncertain which ones. Unfortunately, this obscurity regarding the current state and validity of systems theory runs through the book. A more detailed view on the institutional and organizational history of systems theory might be of interest in solving this puzzle. Secondly, it is regrettable that systems theory is presented as an intellectual project limited to the USA, Germany and the United Kingdom, that is to say, that its non-Western impact is not taken into account. For instance, systems theory was extremely influential in Eastern Europe, especially in Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union. Surprisingly, *Traditions of Systems Theory* mentions the link between systems theories and Buddhism three times (firstly, Arnold emphasizes that cybernetic and systems-theoretic constructivism is often “Buddhist instrumentalist” in orientation (p. 15); secondly, Glanville compares the cybernetic concept of responsiveness and control to Buddhist approaches (p. 61); thirdly, in the context of Varela’s ethical theory, Mugerauer refers to Buddhist views of “no self”, mindfulness and non-dualism), however, this remains an unexplained association. Furthermore, it is completely incomprehensible how the phrase “the aggression of the Islamic civilization” (p. 305) could appear in a book like this. Although Peter Finke completes the phrase by adding that this aggression “can be understood as a reaction to another more subtle aggression”, the phrase is still simply meaningless, insulting and unacceptable. Finally, the cybernetics of Gregory Bateson certainly deserved an article of its own – an improvised Skype conversation cannot serve as an adequate substitute.

Given the depth and length of the volume, I have only been able to scratch its surface in this review. Overall, the editor Darrell P. Arnold has done an excellent job. He managed to provide a book summarizing the very complex field of systems theory without needlessly forcing a unified all-comprehensive account. The volume testifies to the amazing richness of a partially unacknowledged and hidden tradition and, as such, it is a splendid achievement. It gives a most impressive picture of the myriad forms of this field and might serve as an excellent resource for students

and scholars. The spirit of *Traditions of Systems Theory* is that of conceptual precision, awareness of the theoretical sources and revitalization. This is an admirably well-edited and well-structured book, creatively blending historical and theoretical perspectives. It is worth reading for anyone interested in the intellectual history of the twentieth century. What this book strongly confirms is that the tradition of systems theory is inevitable for those who want to understand the veiled background of the way we think today.

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GIOVANNI GIORGINI AND ELENA IRRERA (EDS.),  
*THE ROOTS OF RESPECT. A HISTORIC-PHILOSOPHICAL ITINERARY*,  
BERLIN, WALTER DE GRUYTER, 2017.

Marina Budić

The book *The Roots of Respect*, edited by Giovanni Giorgini and Elena Irrera, represents the collection of closely connected essays that are written by several authors, mostly professors of social and political philosophy, including the editors of the book. It is the result of the interest for the nature of respect in ethical, political and legal sphere. The collection of essays aims to outline and critically discuss some of the most prominent theoretical expressions of the notion of respect in ancient, modern and contemporary times.

The book consists of three parts, and each of them of three essays. In the first part of the book, *Respect in Ancient Philosophy*, while investigating the notion of respect in Ancient Greek poetry, the author is claiming that the idea of respect for persons finds its roots in the culture and history of Ancient Greece, and suggests that it retains an aristocratic flavor. In the essay on the notion of respect, and what “belongs to” oneself, author explores Plato’s thought on respect. The most important claim made in this chapter is that Plato effects the necessary combination by using the notion of what is “ours”, or “belongs to” – is *oikeion* to – ourselves, so that it includes others and others’ interests as well as our own. The first part ends with Aristotle’s thoughts on respect for persons.

The second part, *Respect in Modern Philosophy*, is dedicated to Hobbes’ and Kant’s thought on respect for persons. In the first essay the author explores Hobbes’ thought on respect for persons and self-respect through his view on human interaction in the state of nature. The author attempts to identify different forms of respect for oneself and respect for others in Hobbes’ state of nature, by way of an identification and critical engagement with some of the key notions which inform his view of the mechanism of human interaction: power, recognition, honor, esteem and fear. In the next essays on Kant’s theory of respect, the author argues that Kant distinguishes between *two different kinds of respect: reverential*, that is a feeling that a person experiences towards whatever is morally warranted and that will lead her to do what is morally warranted, provided that she has cultivated a calm state of mind. Author explains that respect understood as reverential is the source of moral motivation that includes not purely intellect, but also the feeling of respect. She argues that, according to Kant, respect is a special kind of feeling, which can give rise to specific inclinations. But unlike other feelings that are pathological, respect depends on the exercise of our own practical reason. In contrast, *observantia* consists



in a set of actions she has to perform in response to certain morally relevant features of persons, for instance their dignity. Observantia includes actions that we owe to others. The author also examines the respect as the foundation of human rights, but draws an important and relatively novel conclusion that Kant does not have a concept of human rights at all, and that rights are connected to the respect for persons. The third part of the book, named *From Modern to Contemporary Perspectives on Respect*, gives insight into thoughts of four authors. First, Hegel's theory of "abstract" respect for "abstract" personhood is discussed. In the next essay the author explores the idea of respect for persons in John Stuart Mill's thought, focusing on individuality and the sense of dignity. The idea of equal respect as something which we owe to each other underlies some of the most notable contemporary attempts to conceptualize respect in liberally-oriented political communities. One outstanding example is the work of John Stuart Mill. The author investigates the sense of dignity, a feeling of self-respect and its relation to self-development and the life of justice, and points out that the sense of dignity is the foundation upon which the respect of the rights, liberty and individuality of others is to be built. Further, he raises the question whether a utilitarian can accommodate the idea of respect for persons, irrespective of losses in social utility. The last essay is dedicated to the role of respect and self-respect for Rawls' and Walzer's theories of justice, and provides a comparative analysis of both philosophers. The author demonstrated why the notion of respect and self-respect plays a central role in Rawls' and Walzer's theories of justice.

The notion of "respect" plays an important role in contemporary ethical and political theory. The authors examine the idea of equal respect of persons that is rooted in the fundamental values of equality, freedom and dignity. It is discussed the nature and different kinds of respect and its historic and philosophical roots are discussed. The book has two aims: first,

conceptual clarification of the ways in which the notion of respect and its manifold connotations are articulated in ancient, modern and contemporary philosophy and how it might act as a suitable historic and theoretical basis for a fruitful discussion of the supposed normative role of respect in the public domain; second, addressing the theme of respect for persons from the point of view of the history of philosophy may fruitfully contribute to a deeper understanding of the nature and implications of issues such as ethical virtues, political justice and the human good. (p. 2) These considerations may offer a fresh new lens through which elements of analogy, continuity and rupture between philosophical theories belonging to different times and contexts might be put in better focus. (p. 2). This study is a historic/philosophical investigation of the nature of respect and the related notion of recognition. The authors explain how the notion is developed across the history of philosophy.

The editors intend to provide the answers to the following set of questions: 1) how many kinds of respect can be traced in the history of philosophy? 2) What are the most seminal attempts to conceptualize such kinds of respect? 3) Did such attempts affect the contemporary reflection on the problems of respect, justice and human rights, and how? 4) How do various kinds of respect for persons interlace with the value of "self-respect"? Do the two notions contribute to reciprocally shape their meaning and range implications? (p. 3) The working hypothesis underlying this volume is that the contemporary formulation of respect presents itself as the upshot of a process of theoretical reflection which finds its roots in classical antiquity and incorporates a collection of themes already at work in philosophers like Plato and Aristotle: the feeling of shame, rational agency, ethical virtue, justice, reciprocity, moral equality and abidance by the law. (p. 3). The aim is to offer an account of respect which involves all of these characteristics and recognition and politics and human rights.

The essays included in this volume do not aim to provide conclusive answers regarding the role played by the issue of respect for persons in ancient, modern and contemporary philosophy. Rather, they simply mean to offer some plausible suggestions on knowledge, morality and politics which the reader might find profitable for his or her own reconstruction of the notion of respect through the history of philosophy. (p. 15) Nevertheless, the collection represents systematic study of the notion of respect, which gets into the very core of the notion. Although the authors display the thoughts of other famous philosophers, they do that with personal comments, critical review and evaluation of the arguments of authors. In that way they give personal and original contribution to the topics of the essays.

The approach of the authors combines analytical aspects with historic-philosophical insights. By providing critical reconstruction of the thoughts of mentioned philosophers the authors go through the most important aspects of the human life. The respect represents a complex phenomenon produced by an intersection of beliefs, perceptions, judgments, emotions, feelings and ways of experiencing things. Viewed under this light, the attitude of respect encompasses a range of cognitive, affective, motivational and evaluative dimensions. It investigates the essence of human beings, the special kind of feeling and relation to ourselves and other people: self-respect, respect to others, dignity, recognition, honor, thus something that underlies our status as human beings capable of moral actions.

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INBAL OFER AND TAMAR GROVES (EDS.), *PERFORMING CITIZENSHIP. SOCIAL MOVEMENTS ACROSS THE GLOBE*, LONDON/NEW YORK, ROUTLEDGE, 2016.

Jovana Papović

For several decades now, debates around the concept of citizenship have been raised in the academic community. Today, authors frequently contest the traditional conceptions advanced by legal specialists or researchers in political sciences. The notion of citizenship as strictly related to the idea of belonging to a political or a civic community, or as related to the status, the rights and the responsibilities of nationals has become ever more complex: now, it is the very nature of citizenship, as well as its place and role in the community that is at the center of the work of scholars of various disciplines, ranging from sociology to cultural anthropology. Moreover, traditional definitions have several difficulties to assimilate empirical evidence that shows that citizenship is not a fixed concept: the recent protest movements that have sprayed out around the globe, from the Arab Spring to the Indigenous movements and other anti-austerity protests, strongly challenge traditional definitions and suggest that citizenship is no longer strictly confined to the national framework, triggering reflections on the global dimension of the concept.

Under the influence of these developments, the book *Performing Citizenship, Social Movements Across the Globe*, edited by the historians Inbal Ofer and Tamar

Groves, contributes to the contemporary quest for a redefinition of the notion of citizenship, fitting in the lineage of recent work on new social movements and global protests. The book constitutes a collection of case studies that stretch from the 1960s to the beginning of the twenty-first century and spreads across various continents. Dealing with the multidimensionality of citizenship, it embraces an ambition to retrace the transformations undergone by the concept in the recent history, conceiving citizenship not as a status, but as a practice that arises from the actions of a community.

As announced in the very title of the book, authors attempt to analyze how social movements, by performing citizenship in different ways and through different means, have transformed this very notion. And the book does this with proficiency, avoiding simplistic approaches of any kind. For instance, by choosing not to present the analyzed cases chronologically, authors cleverly avoid falling into the trap of presenting the transformations of the notion of citizenship as a linear evolution of a paradigm. Moreover, they also avoid making a comparative compendium, and the format of the collection makes it possible to approach all these experiences simultaneously, without necessarily confronting them.

Authors divide their cases into two types of citizenship performances: as a participatory practice or as community building, treating them in two thematic sections. The first bloc presents three chapters that analyze the organization and the mobilization of citizens and it raises two essential questions that are often at the heart of the debate about citizenship: firstly, who is a citizen? And secondly, what forms of participation can be understood as an exercise of the rights on the part of that citizen? The second section treats the question of activism, analyzing how it can create new forms of commonality and therefore, how it can displace the notion of citizenship towards the idea of fraternity.

This sensible division is not only practical for the reader, but it also allows the authors to illustrate a point of central interest in their analysis, which is related to the larger debate surrounding the national, post-national or trans-national nature of citizenship in the world today. All the examined cases exemplify how social activism is situated in between the global and the local: while the first three cases show how the goals of local activism or national movements have been transformed or curbed by global factors, the next three show the opposite logic, that is, how global movements or organizations have affected and altered the local and the national scene of social engagement.

In the first chapter, Pamela Radcliff discusses Spanish citizen activism in the 1970s, shortly before the end of Francoism. The author describes how local communities, associated in a strategic coalition with oppositional political movements, were capable to reinvent their role as citizens and even rephrase the very definition of the term, channeling demands for democratization. Nevertheless, Radcliffe also claims that the commitment of these citizens in search for democracy was also the indirect result of the very contradiction of a regime that was facing internal crises and increasing economic liberalization. At the end of the transition process, she demonstrates, the participative forms of citizen engagement that had arisen during

the protests drowned permanently into the new government practice of parliamentary democracy, having to meet the requirements of international neoliberalism.

The second chapter of the book also addresses the impossibility of implementing participatory practices that work at the local level at the state level. Paul Haber analyses the relation between local indigenous and environmental social movements to the new left-wing governments that came to power in Latin America during the 2000s. Focusing mainly on the cases of Bolivia, Ecuador and Brazil (the text is clearly previous to the recent political upheavals in Brazil), Haber seeks to demonstrate how citizen movements that have helped to bring left politics in power end up feeling alienated from these new governments, which in order to meet their promise of social equality are often forced to neglect the identity and the environmental claims of the same activists who helped them rise to power. He thus shows that in response to this perception, different groups of citizens tend to relocate their practice in what he describes as sub-national islands of resistance, disconnecting from the state.

The third analyzed case constitutes yet another example of failure to transpose a local citizen movement to the national level due to global problems and influences. Zeev Rosenhek and Michael Shalev discuss the Israeli 2011 Summer of Discontent and its attempt to create a national movement with broad claims of social justice that could surpass identity, religious and class cleavages that are present in Israel. While the authors argue that this civic protest is exemplary because it is the only recent movement that addressed social demands instead of identity issues, they also insist on its shortcomings, which they attribute to its incapacity to create an inclusive identity. According to the authors, the movement was the result of the discontent of the middle classes, who had lost their privileged place in Israeli society due to drastic austerity measures taken as a consequence of the global economic crises, which posed several obstacles to its development.

The relatively pessimistic conclusions of the first section transmit an almost consensual skepticism about the abilities of the down-top movements to reach the national scale, suggesting that their difficulties are often due to global factors. On the contrary, the second section of case studies observes the exactly opposite movement, focusing on how the global influences the local, and it offers thus a more positive outlook.

Jie Chen studies the role of international non-governmental organizations in China. This chapter aims to demonstrate the positive influence played by these organizations and transnational civil society on Chinese local activism, in an authoritarian context where any form of political commitment is forbidden. Chen shows how it is the international actors who paradoxically produce the tools necessary for the creation of a legal framework for local actions, helping people to organize themselves in a context that does not favor the development of civil society. Chen concludes with a positive note on the role played by international non-governmental organizations in China, offering only a shy criticism as to the capacity of these actions to frame genuine local needs. The author does not seem to consider the limitations of citizen activism in a context such as the Chinese: in particular, one should take into account that, by often formulating social needs without taking the risk of translating them into true political demands, citizen activism in itself has only a narrow potential to boost democratization.

The study by Simon Avenell is perhaps the most stimulating chapter of this collection, offering both an analysis of how certain social movements have influenced the notion of citizenship and a historically-minded reflection on the concept. Avenell argues that the creation of a transnational chain of equivalence between movements can be a way of enriching the notion of citizen in each local context. The Japanese context, he claims, is particularly thought-provoking in that regard. Until the end of the Second World War, the Japanese were not familiar with the Western notion of “citizen”, and throughout all

their modernization process, the Japanese were not designated as citizens but as “subjects” of the sovereign emperor. In 1945, a new term was created: *kokumin* – literally “people of the country”, which would designate the nationals with inalienable rights but without the urban or the civic connotation that the term has in the Western context. As this new term irrevocably linked the citizen to the state in a passive relationship, and consequently prevented it from engaging in a dialogue with the authorities, one of the militants’ tasks was to envision what would be the position of an active citizen. Therefore, they propose another word as a signifier for a civic and urban citizen: *shimin*, which literally translates as “people of the city”. The creation of this new identity and its inscription in the language allowed Japanese activists to disconnect their practice from the purely national context: *shimin* citizens were from then on able to connect with various struggles outside of their country and to build bridges with different social and political contexts. Avenell argues that interactions with anti-war activists in the context of the Vietnam War, as well as with environmental activists from other national contexts, allowed the local Japanese activists to take a deep look at their own practice and to further develop their engagement. In other words, they were capable of moving from an activism mostly led by a passive logic of victimization towards an activism now led by an active logic of responsibility, therefore becoming a transformative factor in their society.

Finally, Guimar Rovira’s contribution constitutes a depiction of the multi-dimensionality of the Zapatista movement which, thanks to the multiplication of communication technologies, has gone from being the local revolutionary movement of the indigenous people of Chiapas in Mexico, to become one of the symbols of the international alter-globalist struggle. Rovira is especially interested in the multiple connections between the transnational and local dimensions of activism, and she defines Zapatismo as a multi-scalar engagement. The author shows that if

transnational movements recover the local struggle and transform it into an identifier that appeals to actors on the global scene, the local struggle also benefits from this international influence, which can be used to strengthen and propagate its commitment on the local level. Rovira argues thus that the global mediation ends up serving the natives of Chiapas to renew their local citizen practice.

In general, the compilation *Performing Citizenship, Social Movements Across the Globe* offers most interesting perspectives on the subject of contemporary citizenship. It must however be said that the reader will find a certain inconsistency in the quality of the contributions, some of which fail to engage critically with the cases exposed. Furthermore, the book could also benefit from a critical review on the concept of citizenship, and a more critical approach to the emancipating potential of the new social movements, which some of the contributions take for

granted without further reflection. All of this tends at times to render the book excessively optimistic, losing touch with a current global context that shows many pessimistic signs with regards to the potential of citizen participation.

Nevertheless, the book offers stimulating perspectives on fascinating cases of study, which to a certain extent makes us reconsider the currently popular idea that citizenship has become a post-national phenomenon. The assembled contributions show, on the contrary, that the local and the national still remain unavoidable points of reference in civic engagement and practice, but that entanglements with the global and transnational dimensions make these initial experiences richer and more intricate. Hence, rather than speaking of “post-national” or “transnational” to describe the different scales of citizenship today, the authors invite us to “denationalize” the phenomenon to grasp it in its full complexity.

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JAIME RODRÍGUEZ MATOS, *WRITING OF THE FORMLESS*.  
JOSÉ LEZAMA LIMA AND *THE END OF TIME*, NEW YORK,  
FORDHAM UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2017.

Djurđja Trajković

Rodríguez Matos first book is one of the rare theoretical events in today's Humanities that will appeal not only to Latinamericanists but should also be of interest to interdisciplinary audiences. The book is ambitious not only because it addresses the crucial theoretical debates concerning the status of the political in the wake of Modernity's decline into nihilism, but because it wishes to accomplish several objectives at once: to rethink the relation between politics, writing and literature. Taking a Cuban writer José Lezama Lima as a thinker and writer of the *informe*, the formless, Rodríguez Matos works through a series of topologies and figures in order to shed light on the problem of time. The book is divided into two parts. In the first part, four chapters explain the problem of time, as well as its' relation to formless, revolution and nihilism. The second part of the book moves into innovative reading of Lezama's writing that bear witness to the destruction of principal politics and opening toward the infrapolitics of void.

The point of departure is temporal question in Latin America that is generalizable to the relation of time to Modernity and Revolution. For Matos, the question of time and temporality is crucial not only because it shakes up the foundations of the philosophical (ontology) and the political

(representation) but because the formless as destruction of time as presence has an immense implications for rethinking history. On one hand, the linear time of Hegel's philosophy of history and on the other, the teleological time of messianic redemption show itself to be two sides of the same coin. If temporality of modernity is now seen to be constantly battling between linear and circular time, even if impossible to synthesize, this would mean that modernity is no longer the other of revolutionary interruption but rather constitutive of it. By way of the dual apparatus, linear time (as time of alienation) and circular time (as time of redemption) work as policing force and residual effect or the symptom of the emergence of order itself. Matos concludes that modernity is committed to the constant confrontation of disparate forms of time. The author offers a third thinking of time that he finds in Lezama's writing such as "intemporal", "time of the absence of time" and "muerte del tiempo". Such thinking of time, time as the lost time, or time of the void would fall beneath all the principal politics in retreat and outside of legitimizing Western modernity that governs both the time of the One and that of the multiple. The writer's confrontation with anti-representation modes of expression of time closes

off the mechanism through which time is mastered and disciplined. For Lezama, there can be no imposition of time, and such an understanding would open up the possibility of thinking history not as eternal but neither as infinite.

The second part of the book dwells in more detail on Lezama's conceptualization of the void against the politico-theological closure. Lezama's writing of the formless exposes the difference between those texts of the Western tradition that forget the question of being and those whose starting point is the challenge and the difficulty that the question poses – dealing with the ground that is and is not there in its absence. The crucial point is whether is it possible to imagine or not a writing and thought that do not simply fall silent in order to guarantee the continuity of the narrative of legitimacy and sovereign authority in poem or politics. However, the radicalization of deconstruction no longer fixed on the literary and textual playfulness poses the question if the writing of formless is simply a trace of politics in withdrawal?

Matos' book sets itself against the contemporary thinkers such as Badiou, Negri, Žižek and Agamben who remain deeply entangled in the political theology of Christianity unable to illustrate the militant subject except thought the figure of the saint.

Pushing against the dominant thought and dogma “everything is political”, the book performs politics of separation and irreducibility of the *formless* to any discourse which would make new grounds for order, stasis and politics.

As a thought experiment, Matos' deconstruction is a remarkable contribution to the contemporary thinking of the problem of time. In its ambition it succeeds in bringing difficulty and complexity to thinking and theory. However, while rich on theoretical insights, the book does not address how change and transformation can be enacted. While Matos does away with the militant subject of politics, one wonders whether infrapolitics of void does not produce another subject. How is one to feel the absence of time if one is not already subjected to such a form, whether formless or not, it makes no difference? On the other hand, the book remains in the infinite dislocation and deferral without offering any insights into how such conception of time can be related to new writing of history. Furthermore, with the insistence of lack of foundation, Matos forgets that the lack of foundation is itself a foundation. In other words, it remains unclear as to whether this ambitious project is not simply a nostalgic return to the question of being or simply another postmodern metaphysics, albeit, in a different shape.



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Up to two double sheets (60.000 characters including spaces), abstracts, key words, without comments.

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Between 100 and 250 words.

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In the bibliography: Anscombe, Gertrude Elizabeth Margaret (1981), „You can have Sex without Children: Christianity and the New Offer“, in *The Collected Philosophical Papers of G.E.M. Anscombe*, Ethics, Religion and Politics, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, pp. 82–96.

In the text: (Anscombe 1981: 82)

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U literaturi: Miller, Johns Roger (1926), „The Ideas as Thoughts of God“, *Classical Philology* 21: 317–326.

Hartman, Nikolaj (1980) „O metodi istorije filozofije“, *Gledišta* 21 (6): 101–120.

U tekstu: (Hartman 1980: 108).

U napomeni: Hartman 1980: 108

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U literaturi: Espozito, Džon (prir.) (2002), *Oksfordska istorija islama*, Beograd: Clio.

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U tekstu: (Nizbet 1999: 33).

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