Filozofija i društvo, godište XXXII, broj 2
izdaje / published by
Institut za filozofiju i društvenu teoriju
Kraljice Natalije 45, Beograd, telefon: +381112646242
Email: institut@instifdt.bg.ac.rs
www.instifdt.bg.ac.rs

redakcijafid@instifdt.bg.ac.rs

Prilozi objavljeni u *Filozofiji i društvu* indeksirani su u Web of Science (ESCI), Scopus, ERIH PLUS, Philosopher's Index, EBSCO, PhilPapers, ResearchGate, Genamics JournalSeek, Google Scholar, J-Gate, ProQuest, ReadCube, Europeana Collections, Journal Index, Baidu Scholar

Dizajn: Milica Milojević

Lektura: Edvard Đorđević

Grafička obrada: Sanja Tasić

Štampa: Sajnos, Novi Sad

Tiraž: 300. Časopis izlazi četiri puta godišnje.

Cena 350 dinara; godišnja pretplata 1200 dinara.

Objavljivanje časopisa finansijski pomaže Ministarstvo prosvete, nauke i tehnološkog razvoja Republike Srbije.

Univerzitet u Beogradu
Institut za filozofiju i društvenu teoriju

FILOZOFIJA I DRUŠTVO
PHILOSOPHY AND SOCIETY

broj 2 2021.
godište XXXII

Beograd 2021.
YU ISSN 0353-5738 UDK 1+316+32

PATRISTICS AND GENDER
PATRISTIKA I ROD

STUDIES AND ARTICLES
STUDIJE I ČLANCI

INTERVIEW
INTERVJU

I

PATRISTICS AND GENDER

PATRISTIKA I ROD

EDITOR'S NOTE

Vladimir Cvetković

This collection of thematically organized original studies presents and discusses the notion of gender in patristics, that is, in the early Christian authors, usually referred to as Fathers of the Church. The Fathers of the Church have not dealt with the notion of gender as different from the notion of sex and for them these two notions were synonymous. Moreover, the patristic authors shared the Christian late antique worldview on gender as a combination of ancient philosophical views on the sexes, of the wisdom of the Old Testament as well as of the new Christian message.

The Greek ancient world has dealt with the one-sex model developed in the history of medicine, beginning with Aristotle and Galen. In the one-sex model the differentiation between the sexes was drawn based on the position of their genitals. It was perceived that men have their genitals outside the body, while women have their genitals inside the body. Thus, female and male were homologues. The difference in the position of genitals of male and female inspired Aristotle to define the difference between men and women in terms of deprivation or lack. Thus, according to Aristotle due to lacking the possibility for rational and active action, that was allegedly man's attribute, the woman was considered to be a lesser man. The differentiation between men and women led to their separation and it served for the denial or restriction of women's rights in society.

The Old Testament's message was quite different. The account of the creation of the human being from the Book of Genesis stated that God created humankind 'in his own image' (*Gen*. 1: 26-27), and that God created them as 'male and female' (*Gen*. 1: 27), and as 'man and woman' (*Gen*. 2: 23). This account indicates the natural equality of men and women, and the consequence of this natural equality of men and women is their reliance to each other, expressed through marriage and family.

The New Testament not only repeats the message of the Old Testament with regards to equality and interdependence, but it affirms it as an historical fact. By interpreting the Old Testament message, Jesus Christ reminded Pharisees that God created humanity from the beginning as male and female in order for two to become one (*Matt*. 19: 4-6). Jesus' message was not confined

to marital life, but to the broader strata of the Jewish society. The biblical fables of the Samaritan woman, whom Jesus Christ asks for drink (*John* 4: 1-26) and of the Canaanite woman, who begged Jesus to heal her daughter (*Matt.* 15:21–28), point to the multi-faceted oppression of women in ancient Israel, as well as to the liberating capacity of the new Christian religion. However, these stories reveal the traditional hierarchal order of Jewish society and Jesus' role as emancipator of women discriminated on gender and ethnic grounds, but also that these acts of liberation of discriminated women led to the transformation of both the privileged and discriminated. The new religion brings a transformative impact to the relationship between Jews and Gentiles or between apostles and neophytes as oppositions confined to these times, as well as to the general oppositions between chastity and adultery, lord and servant, man and woman and finally, God and human being.

These two authorities that are behind the writing of the Church Fathers, namely the ancient philosophical tradition and the Judeo-Christian religious belief, were often contrasted, as it is in regard to the question of the status of women in the ancient society. Although it is very common to describe early Christian authors in patriarchal terms, they were quite critical of the autocratic authority exercised by *patres familias* in the Greco-Roman world. However, this does not mean that the Church Fathers were always free from the stereotypes that existed in the world of late antiquity.

The four articles gathered here together within the topic 'Patristics and Gender' go beyond the time of Jesus Christ and his apostles and they cover the period from the second to the the seventh century. The articles also go beyond the topic of Christian marriage, dealing either with strategies for the symbolic construction of women or with the question of the status of the sexual and gender differences in the human primordial state as well as in the Kingdom of Heaven.

The article of Vladimir Cvetković is an overview of how the patristic authors in three different periods addressed the issue of gender. Cvetković argues that in the first pre-Constantinian period of Christian Church characterized by frequent persecutions of Christians, the imperative for both male and female martyrs was to behave 'manly' at the moment of their violent death, as it is described in the accounts of these prosecutions known as martyrologies. The second period, which Cvetković analyzes, pertains to the fourth century when the Christian Church gained freedom and the way to witness Christian faith is displayed no longer through martyrdom but through ascetic life. By relying on the account of Macrina the Younger, Cvetković demonstrates how virginity as the highest Christian norm proliferated new gender roles for women. Finally, Cvetković maintains that authors such as Dionysius the Areopagate and Maximus the Confessor developed the model of erotic attraction between loving persons by which one person learns how to die for himself and to live for another person.

The point of departure of Maria Munkholt Christensen's article is the Socratic ideal of practicing death already in this life. Munkholt Christensen applies the

Socratic ideal to Christian women from the fourth and the fifth centuries, who reconciled in their philosophy the Platonic body-soul dichotomy and longing for transcendence with the Christian message of sacrifice. The author points to three different strategies of associating classical with Christian philosophy: replacing ancient philosophy with Christian, or particularly biblical tradition, like in the *Life of Macrina*; integrating elements of Platonic wisdom into the overall biblical world-view, like in the *Life of Marcella*; and inserting the Platonic heritage into Christian literature without pointing to Platonic sources, like in the *Life of Syncletica*. Finally, Munkholt Christensen argues that three Christian women – Macrina, Marcella and Syncletica – are united in their attitude towards gender and death. They freed their own souls from a life defined by their female sex and they were passionless and fearless on the brink of death.

The articles of Sotiris Mitralexis and Emma Brown Dewhurst are complementary, because their readings of the seventh-century Byzantine author Maximus the Confessor go into the same direction of interpreting sexual and gender differences as nonessential human properties.

Sotiris Mitralexis points to an ambiguity in Maximus the Confessor's *Ambiguum 41* as to whether the distinction of the sexes was intended by God or whether it is a product of the Fall. Mitralexis argues that according to Maximus' own exposition the properties of being male or female are not included in the human *logos*, meaning that they were not originally properties of human nature. As the sexual differences were not included in the original plan they will be also according to Mitralexis omitted in the eschatological state. Mitralexis points that Maximus' stance about the genderless *logos* of humanity is interpreted nowadays in several directions: as unusual but fully compatible with the patristic mainstream, as advocating marriage between a man and a woman, and as endorsing gender fluidity, transgenderism and same-sex relationships. Although for Mitralexis the looking for a solution for the nowadays gender issues at a seventh-century author is anachronistic, also the literal readings of Maximus' text that overlooks its potential implications for today's world would be erroneous.

The final article of Emma Brown Dewhurst is also focused on Maximus the Confessor's *Ambiguum 41*. Similarly to Mitralexis, Brown Dewhurst characterizes properties of being a male or a female as not intrinsic to original human nature, but rather being the modes of existence, introduced to human nature after the Fall, as means of reproduction. Brown Dewhurst further argues that in spite of the usefulness of this mode of existence in the present age, it will be removed in the eschaton, because the physical reproduction would not occur in the future age. However, Brown Dewhurst went further than other Maximian scholars in claiming that the differences between sexes will not only be removed in a metaphorical manner, but that this removal will also include the elimination of bodily sexual characteristics. Brown Dewhurst identifies the sexual differences and division with human gnomic and proairetic wills, as well as with the passions, that were introduced into human life as the consequence of the Fall, but also as instruments to bring people into line with a holy way of living.

UDK: 27-18
https://doi.org/10.2298/FID2102162C
Original Scientific Article
Received 20.01.2021. Accepted 22.02.2021.

PHILOSOPHY AND SOCIETY
VOL. 32, NO. 2, 157–334

To cite text:
Cvetković, Vladimir (2021), "Sex, Gender and Christian Identity in the Patristic Era", *Philosophy and Society* 32 (2): 162–176.

Vladimir Cvetković

SEX, GENDER AND CHRISTIAN IDENTITY IN THE PATRISTIC ERA[1]

ABSTRACT
Focusing on three historical examples of a different understanding of Christian identity, the paper seeks to address the role of contemporary concepts of sex and gender in the creation of Christian identity. In the first case study, focused on the literary representations of the Christian martyrdom from the second and third centuries, special emphasis is placed on the demand for the 'manly' or 'masculine' way of witnessing faith. The second historical example relates to the creation of a wider ascetic movement in the fourth-century Asia Minor, and its specific focus is on Macrina the Younger. In her Vita, Gregory of Nyssa distinguishes between Macrina's gender identity based on her virginity on the one hand, and her social role as a widow, and 'mother' and 'father' of her monastic community on the other. Finally, the focus is shifted towards Dionysius the Areopagite and Maximus the Confessor, whose teachings about ecstasy, as a way to transcend oneself in the movement towards the loved one, provide the basis for establishing a theology of marriage and creating a Christian identity based not on sexual or gender roles, but on the uniqueness of human nature.

KEYWORDS
gender, sex, Christian identity, martyrdom, virginity, ecstasy, love, marriage.

The definition of Christian identity in relation to gender and sex largely depends on the very definition of the concepts of gender and sex. Defining sex as a natural or biological category in relation to gender as a cultural or a socially constructed category is questionable. It is not only questionable within the framework of the feminist theory advocated by Judith Butler (Butler 2011: 5), but it is also questionable within the framework of the late antique philosophical view of the world, in which Christianity as a religion has been developed. The difference between man and woman was not expressed on the basis

1 This article was realized with the support of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia, according to the Agreement on the realization and financing of scientific research for 2021.

Vladimir Cvetković: Research Associate Professor, Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory, University of Belgrade; vladimir.cvetkovic@instifdt.bg.ac.rs.

of sex and gender, but in relation to the 'one-sex' model (Cobb 2008: 25–26). However, defining Christian identity in relation to sex and gender is extremely difficult in the patristic age, because often the differences between different groups of Christians can be greater than the differences between Christians and non-Christians.

The aim of this paper is to dwell on several ways in which late Antique communities established their Christian identity in relation to sex and gender. It must be borne in mind that the early Christian communities developed as minority communities in an attempt to establish themselves beyond the dominant social, ethnic and gender identities. Apostle Paul's request that there should not be Jews or Greeks, nor slaves or free men, nor male or female, but that all should be one in Jesus Christ (*Gal.* 3: 27–28) clearly shows this tendency. The identity of the early Christian communities was not only shaped in relation to faith in Jesus Christ, but also to a large extent in relation to the social order. The early Christian congregations had a direct memory of Jesus and lived in the hope that the second coming of Jesus would happen during their lives. In order to preserve the memory of Jesus and his teachings, Jesus' disciples – apostles wrote down the life of Jesus in a number of gospels that have been later divided into four canonical and several non-canonical. In addition to the life of Jesus, the lives of the apostles and their disciples, the so-called apostolic fathers, who faced the persecution from Roman authorities while spreading the new faith, were also written down. From the description of these events of persecution emerged a kind of early Christian literature, whose common feature is the focus on the suffering and martyrdom of Christians. The emphasis is on voluntary death, as a way to become like Jesus Christ and at the same time to testify the faith in his resurrection, which was seen as a pledge of universal resurrection and eternal life. The main difference between Christians and others was the willingness of Christians to testify through suffering and martyrdom (martyr in Greek means witness) that Jesus is actually the messiah (Christ) and that he overcame death with his resurrection. At the same time, the early Christian model of martyrdom as an expression of identity is not opposed, but it is created in accordance with the existing Greco-Roman assumption regarding sex and gender (Cobb 2008: 5).

Sex, Gender, and Martyrdom

People of the late antiquity did not distinguish between sex and gender. The distinction between men and women was conditioned by their individual characteristics rather than by sex, which was the result of Aristotle's understanding of sexual difference. Aristotle was the first thinker who offered a comprehensive reflection on sexual differences, on whose metaphysical and logical aspects will be the focus here. Aristotle's critique of Plato's metaphysical duality of form and matter as the nature of different entities can be extended to his critique of Plato's view on sexual differences. In his *Timaeus*, Plato distinguishes three models in the created world: idea or form as the intelligible and

ever-consistent source of creation, matter as visible receptacle of creation and the world of physical objects as the union of these two (Plato 1929, *Timaeus*: 50cd; Allan 1997: 58–59). The first model pertains to the cosmic father, as generating principle, the second to the cosmic mother, as passive natural recipient of all expressions, and the third to the cosmic offspring as the union of generative and receptive principles. This enables Plato to identify forms or ideas with the masculine gender, matter with the feminine gender, and the world of sensory things with the neuter gender (Plato 1929, *Timaeus* 52a). Aristotle opposes the duality between form and matter, claiming that form and matter are one. Thus, for Aristotle if an object is stripped of its form or essence it is also striped of its materiality, because nothing remains from its physical properties (Aristoteles 1957a, *Metaphysica*: Z3 1029a). Since form (εἶδος) and matter are inseparable from the essence of things, then the only way to distinguish things that share the same essence, i.e. the same nature, is on the basis of their belongingness to a certain genus or species (Aristoteles 1957a, *Metaphysica*: Z3 1020 a 6–17). Gender here does not refer to the Platonic distinction between form, matter and the world of sensory objects, which can be further identified with the masculine or the feminine principle, but rather it refers to a particular genus (such as animals), within which the difference (e.g. bipeds in relation to quadrupeds) can distinguish different species (e.g. human being in relation to primates) (Aristoteles 1949, *Categoriae*: 5.3a23; Aristotle 1989, *Topica*: VI,4,141 b 31–32). The division into male and female is no longer a division into separate genera, but a division that exists within certain genera (animals), i.e. species (humans, primates). Male and female are not two genera or species, but opposites that exist within the genus, because the difference between them is not of a formal nature, that is in shape (such as the difference between winged and wingless animals), but of a physical or bodily nature (as a difference in the anatomy of the body) (Aristoteles 1957a, *Metaphysica*: I8, 1058a 29–31). According to Porphyry, a faithful interpreter of Aristotle, the difference between male and female could be expressed as an inherent difference, because sex, like a physical trait (blue eyes, curved nose), was considered a distinguishing characteristic (or predicate) of each individual, but not the most essential, or in the Aristotelian sense understood by a specific differentia, because then members of different sexes would be classified by species (Porphyrius 1887, *Isagoge*: 4.1–3). Such an attitude influenced to some extent the belief that women, in addition to the same physical characteristics as men, have also the same reproductive organs, only, as Galen from the 2nd century, and after him Nemesius, the 4th-century bishop of Emesa, put it, 'inside and not outside' the body (Nemesius Emeseni 1987, *De Natura Hominis* 86, 246–247; Nemesius 2008: 155).

Since the physical, i.e., anatomical, differences between male and female members of the same species are considered individual sexual characteristics, the question arises about the origins of this difference in the social perception of the roles of men and women. The humanity owes this distinction, which can also be described as gender difference in its modern sense, to Aristotle again. Since, according to Aristotle, male and female are not different species,

but opposites within a species, then according to the definition of the term opposition, they can be contradiction, deprivation, contrariety and relatives (Aristoteles 1957a, *Metaphysica* I4 1055a 38 – 1055b 1–2). Since the contradiction does not have an intermediate state, then the opposition between men and women is not a contradiction, because there are people who have physical characteristics of both sexes, which indicates the intermediate state. Therefore, the opposition between male and female can be expressed in terms of deprivation, or specifically as a woman's deprivation of certain qualities that a man possesses. From the relationship of horizontally structured opposites, i.e. sexual deprivation advocated in the *Metaphysics* and the *Categories*, Aristotle moves on to a hierarchical, vertical unipolar model that rises from woman as a passive and unreasonable principle to man as an active rational principle in the *Politics, Nicomachean Ethics* and *Generation of Animals* (Aristotle 1942, *De Generatione Animalium*: 729b 15–20; Aristoteles 1957b, *Politica*: 1334b 13–20; Aristoteles 1963, *Ethica Nicomachea*: 1102b 13–19). The unipolar model is characterized by the fact that at one end there is a masculine, active and rational principle that represents a norm, and at the other end there is a feminine principle, which, as deprived of the possibility of rational and active action, represents a deviation from that norm. Since a female principle deviates from the norm in sense of lacking the active and rational principle, it would be better described not as deviation, but as deprivation from the norm. Therefore, the philosophical view of the relationship between male and female represented by early Christians could be summarized: in physical terms, women and men have all bodily characteristics the same except the reproductive organs, and in social, i.e. quasi-ontological terms they differ on the basis of their participation in the masculine or feminine principle.

The same principles can be seen in examples from martyrological literature, which, according to Stephanie Cobb, was crucial for the formation of Christian identity in the 2nd and 3rd centuries (Cobb 2008: 5). The heroes of these deeds, men and women, stand under the same imperative to profess their new faith at the cost of death. This readiness to prove their faith by sacrificing their own lives is for them the highest expression of rationality, that is, the rational assumption that the life that awaits them after death is a better life. Since the rational principle itself was identified with the masculine principle, then this led to the necessary masculinization of martyrdom. The dominance of the male principle as an imperative can be seen in the descriptions of athletic and competitive confrontation of brave Christian men with their Roman executioners and wild beasts in the Roman Colosseums. Thus, in the work *The Martyrdom of St Polycarp*, a voice from heaven tells Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna, who was previously brought to the amphitheater for torture in 155, to be 'strong and manly' (*De Martyrio Sancti Polycarpi*: 9.1; Musurillo 1972: 8–9). It is clear here that in the perception of early Christians, masculinity or maleness was not given to men, but, as Cobb claims, it is rather the goal of a long-term aspiration that implies self-control, wisdom and virtue (Cobb 2008: 28). However, masculinity is not only an ideal for Christian men, but it is also an imperative

for Christian women. Thus, in *The Martyrdom of Saints Perpetua and Felicitas*, the day before she had to be thrown to wild beasts in Carthage in 203, the noblewoman Perpetua had a vision that she resisted wild beasts and gladiators in the middle of the amphitheatre, until at one point her clothes stripped off and she realized that she was a man (*Passio Sanctorum Perpetua and Felicitatis*: 10,7; Musurillo 1972: 118–119).

A similar example offers Blandina, a slave from Lyon, who was condemned as a Christian by the Roman authorities and brought to the amphitheatre in Lyon in 177, where she resisted attacks by wild beasts. Eusebius of Caesarea wrote in his *Church History* that Blandina's, "fortitude and endurance were compared to those of a victorious male athlete" (Eusebius 1926, *Historia Ecclesiastica*: 5.1.17–24; Shaw 1996: 309; Boyarin 1999: 75).

On the basis of these three examples, it can be concluded that 'masculinity' is set as an imperative for both men, as it is the case of the ninety-year-old bishop of Smyrna, and for women, as the example of two young Christian women, Perpetua and Blandina indicate. This imperative is actually presented as God's will, expressed either as a voice from heaven to Polycarp, or as Perpetua's vision. Not only are gender differences abolished in these examples, but also the social hierarchy, both internal Christian and external Roman, is called into question. In the broader context of Roman society, the differences between the Roman nobility, freemen and slaves are erased, and the slave Blandina is placed on the same level with the learned Polycarp and the noblewoman Perpetua. Similarly, through disobedience to her father, and by leaving her husband and breastfed child for the sake of martyrdom, the noblewoman Perpetua questions the existing social norms, and in a way, deviates from the norm of being a human being ordered by feminine principles. In a narrower Christian context, all three examples confirm that the church hierarchy is not a measure of Christian ethos, and that the identity of early Christian communities was built primarily on martyrdom, because Polycarp, longtime bishop of Smyrna, a disciple of St John the Theologian, Christ's dearest apostle, is on par with Blandina, a slave and a Christian and with Perpetua, who as catechumen was preparing for baptism. The gender and wider social roles of Christian women were redefined. The noblewoman Perpetua accepts marriage and motherhood, thus realizing herself as a woman, and then she redefines her gender role by becoming an exemplary 'Christian man' through martyrdom. Similarly, through her sufferings, Blandina became a model of masculinity not only for her Christian mistress, but also for the multitude of men who suffered together with her. Although early Christianity challenged many social norms through martyrdom, it still insisted on the previous Greco-Roman assumption that in a 'one-sex' system, masculinity as a character trait was a social imperative, putting masculine courage and perseverance in martyrdom at the core of its collective identity.

Sex, Gender, and Virginity

With the Edict of Milan in 313 Christians gained the freedom to profess and practice their faith, which greatly changed their previous situation, because persecutions became far less frequent, as well as opportunities for martyrdom. The focus is transferred from the external aspect to the internal, and the confrontation with Roman executioners and wild beasts is replaced by the confrontation with one's own physical and mental passions. The fight against passion becomes a priority, and the earlier practice of martyrdom is replaced with ascetic practice. Various ascetic models, borrowed from previous philosophical schools, mostly Stoic, are built into the Christian worldview. The virtues are opposed to physical and intellectual passions, and the virtue that is considered the most sublime is virginity, whose personification were the Virgin Mary and Christ himself.

Virginity became a social ideal in many Christian communities during the 4th century in Egypt and Asia Minor, and a number of patristic authors offered philosophical elaborations of this phenomenon. Thus, in his work *On Virginity*, written in 371, Gregory, Bishop of the city of Nyssa in Cappadocia, equates virginity with an introduction to philosophical life (Gregorii Nysseni 1952a, *DeVirg*: Praef. 1, 20: 248; St Gregory of Nyssa 1966: 6) and "a certain art and faculty of the more divine life, teaching those living in the flesh how to be like the incorporeal nature" (*DeVirg*: 4, 9: 277; St Gregory of Nyssa 1966: 27). According to Gregory, as compensation for death (*DeVirg*: 13, 1: 303), which was a consequence of Adam's apostasy from God, people were given a marital and sexual union within which they would continue the species. Since, for Gregory, marriage only continues the existing state of fall and multiplies death, it should be replaced by virginity, that is, abstinence from sexual intercourse, which leads to deliverance from death (*DeVirg*: 13, 3: 305). This deliverance from death is reflected in the universal application of virgin life. Gregory claims that abstinence of procreation would provoke Christ's second coming, since the humanity would be under the threat of extinction (*DeVirg*: 14, 4: 309). Gregory of Nyssa can be considered an ideologue and propagandist of the virginal ascetic life, for which his family and especially his older sister Macrina were his great inspiration and role model and whose life he describes in the works of the *Life of Macrina the Younger* and *On the Soul and Resurrection*. Macrina, often called Macrina the Younger, in order to be differed from their grandmother Macrina the Elder, introduced some changes in the existing ascetic practice, which largely led to changes in the gender paradigm and gender relations.

In order to understand the scope of the changes that have taken place, one should be aware of the existing spiritual and ascetic practices of that time. The radical asceticism represented by Gregory of Nyssa in the early 370s was the dominant practice in Asia Minor for more than a century. The practice of women leaving married life and parenthood for the sake of witnessing to their faith through martyrdom, which arose during the persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire, continued even after the persecution of Christians, except that

the goal was not martyrdom but spiritual life. Based on the acts of the Council in Gangra (in Asia Minor) from 340, it can be seen that certain tendencies have grown into unwanted practices. Thus, by its decisions the council sanctions a number of Christian practices, such as: condemnation of marriage or persons in marital status, celibacy for reasons other than ascetic, abandonment of husbands by wives and vice versa wives by husbands for spiritual life, abandonment of children by parents for spiritual life, persuading slaves to leave their masters, equating slaves and free men, wearing men's clothing and cutting off hair by women under the pretext of asceticism (*Concilium Gangrense*: 9–10, 12–17: 113–114). Two clear tendencies can be discerned from these documents. The first is the favouring of the virginal at the expense of married life, and the second is the understanding of salvation as the privilege of men, and the prevalence of the practice of transforming virgins through asceticism into the so-called 'manly virgins' or 'manly women' (Elm 1994: 124-125). At the beginning of the 4th century, virginity was a social ideal among Christians in Asia Minor, but its implementation was not so easy, because virginity was practiced either within the existing family or through the institution of pseudo-marriage. Thus, fathers or *patres familias* undertook obligations to financially support the virginal life of their daughters, maids or domestic female slaves, and less often sons or male slaves, and to keep them 'pure' for Christ (Elm 1994: 34–35). Another form of practicing virginity is through living in a pseudo-marital union, where the spouses take the vow of chastity, without consuming marriage. The transformation of virgins into manly virgins was socially desirable process, since masculinity was as an imperative to be achieved, either through martyrdom or through asceticism.

Although the ideal of virginity was highly valued in the family of Gregory of Nyssa, his older sister Macrina was already engaged at the age of twelve. Gregory describes in her *Vita* that while she was waiting to turn old enough to get married, her fiancé died suddenly. She made a decision then, against the will of her parents, to continue her life as a virgin – a widow (Gregorii Nysseni 1952b, *V.Macr* 4: 3–24; Elm 1994: 45). After the death of her father, Macrina, together with her mother, moved to one of their rural estates and began to organize the life of the household. The household grew into a monastic community because both her mother Emmilia and the youngest brother Peter took the vow of chastity. The community organized in this way attracted other virgins, some of aristocratic and some of non-aristocratic origin. Macrina accepted household duties that were considered to fall exclusively into the domain of slaves, such as bread-making. After the sudden death of their brother Naucratius, the mother experienced shock, while Macrina taught her to be strong and masculine (ἀνδρείαν). This event provoked a change of roles and Makrina became a mother to her mother and the other members of the household. Macrina's brother Peter described Macrina as 'father, teacher, pedagogue, mother, counsellor of all which is good' (*Vita S. Macrinae* 12, 1–15; Elm 1994: 87). The former household characterised by social and class inequality, masters and slaves, became a community of socially equal members, former

masters and former slaves, led and supervised by Macrina, who was everyone's father and mother.

Susanna Elm singles out several periods in Macrina's life, starting with 'virgin daughter' and 'virgin widow' through 'virgin mother' to 'manly virgin' (Elm 1994: 91). Here one faces a very complex gender structure far more complex than the manly female martyrs of the 2nd century. In manly female martyrs, the female principle completely disappears, and they are considered as a man in everything, except for their physical characteristics. In the case of manly virgins of the 4th century, we have a gender construction that at the same time combines the masculine disposition of martyrs with a completely opposite trait, the feminine passivity of virgins (Boyarin 1999: 75). The phenomenon of the virgins mentioned in the acts of the Council of Gangra, who, in addition to vows of chastity, wore men's clothes and cut their hair like men, may be explained as an attempt to deny the role of women as wives and mothers through virginal life, and then to gain masculinity by asceticism and by adopting the physical appearance of men. Macrina's case differs from the case of the 2nd-century manly female martyrs, as well from the case of the virgins convicted at the Council in Gangra for transvestism. First, Macrina was ready for marriage and motherhood as a teenager, but with the death of her fiancé, she took on not the gender role of a virgin, but of a widow. Thus, she did not base her virginity on the status of a daughter or wife, which were the most common models, but on the status of a widow, which means that she did not oppose her virginity to the fact that she was a woman. This was once again confirmed by her role as a mother not only to her younger sisters, brothers and servants, but also to her own mother. If one remains in the system of philosophically constructed one-sex model, which has male and female as opposites, then it could be said that Macrina fills the spectrum of all female gender roles, starting from being a daughter, through being a widow to being a mother. However, as being also a father, teacher and pedagogue, she enters the spectrum of gender roles attributed to men. Gregory's depiction of Macrina in the work *On the Soul and Resurrection* fully corresponds to her role of father, teacher and pedagogue, because after the death of their brother Basil the Great, she comforts Gregory. By conducting him through various Hellenistic philosophical teachings, Macrina advocates the thesis of the immortality of the soul in its relationship with the body after death. Elizabeth Clark claims that Macrina for Gregory, like Diotima for Plato, represents the alter ego of the male narrator or the necessary female absence (Clark 1998: 26). However, despite the very critical attitude towards Gregory's description of Macrina as an instrument by which he contemplates certain theological problems of his time, Clark also gives a positive definition. Thus, Macrina is a living example of Gregory's teaching that the first creation of human being did not involve sexual division, and that sexual division was introduced later when by foreseeing Adam's fall, God divided human beings into male and female and thus gave them the opportunity to reproduce (Clark 1998: 28). Macrina, as Clark concludes, has already taken a significant step through her virginity to regain the 'image of God' in the human being, which

implies the state before the sexual division, and to transform sexual lust into the prudence of the 'integral' mind (Clark 1998: 28).

If one tries to present it in modern categories of sex and gender, then it could be said that Macrina was above men and women as gender categories (Elm 1994: 102), although according to the Aristotelian one-sex model or due to the position of her sexual organs within the body, she remained a female. In regard to her gender, understood here either as acceptance or as rejection of the social roles, which come with having a male or a female body, one needs to differentiate between the sexual and the social side of her gender role. On the level of sexuality, Macrina was above gender categories, because with her virginity she rejected sexuality and sexual divisions, trying to reintegrate the wholeness of the human being. In this case, it was a denial of one's own sexuality. However, on the level of social norms, Macrina transcends gender categories not by negation but by complete affirmation. Thus, at the same time as she denied her sexuality by virginity, she confirmed by the roles of widow, mother, and father both her femininity and her masculinity, filling thus the entire spectrum of gender categories that are united in the notion of a human being.

Sex, Gender, and Marriage

The ideal of the human being, created according to the 'image of God', to which Elizabeth Clark refers to in her interpretation of Gregory's work, represented the first created human being, which had not yet been divided into sexes. In order to understand Gregory's position, one should look at his interpretation of the book of Genesis, which describes the creation of the world. Thus, in his work *On the Creation of Man*, Gregory claims that "the creation which lies between the opposites, and has in part a share in what is adjacent to it, itself acts as a mean between the extremes, so that there is manifestly a mutual contact of the opposites through the mean" (Gregorius Nyssenus 1863, *De hominis opificio*: I, 2: 128d–129a; Gregory of Nyssa 1994: 389). When God, according to Gregory, created the world, he created extremes, e.g. the heaven and the earth within which the creation stretched and whose extremes stood dialectically opposite each other. For Gregory, this means that the very nature of opposites is not completely without mixing properties, with each other, which makes everything in the world agree with each other. According to Gregory, creation itself, although often revealed in the properties of opposite natures, is always in unity with itself (Gregorius Nyssenus 1863, *De hominis opificio*: I, 4: 132a). This view contradicts the above-mentioned view of Aristotle. Aristotle understands opposites as the fullness of itself and the deprivation of the opposite. Thus, in the case of the earth – heaven opposition, the earth indicates the deprivation of heaven, and in the case of the female – male opposition, the female characterizes the deprivation of the male. However, Gregory's view that the creation, or part of the creation, always remains in unity with itself, despite the fact that it is revealed though the properties of opposite natures, actually indicates that regardless of whether sensible nature is revealed through

sky or earth, or human nature through male or female, it is always the unity of its opposites. In terms of deprivation, this means that one opposite does not represent the deprivation of another, but rather that each of the opposites is actually a deprivation in relation to the unity of opposites. Thus, sky or earth is a deprivation in relation to sensible nature, and male and female deprivation in relation to human nature.

Following in the footsteps of Gregory of Nyssa, the 7th-century Byzantine monk Maximus the Confessor developed a doctrine of five opposites or divisions within the world, beginning with the division into male and female, paradise and inhabited world, sky and earth, sensible and intelligible nature, and created and uncreated nature (*Amb.* 41; Maximos the Confessor 2014: II, 110–113). Therefore, created nature itself is a structure through opposites that are overcome on the way to God. On his way to God, the human being unites male and female in one human nature, paradise and inhabited in one paradisiacal world, sky and earth in one sensible nature, sensible and intelligible nature in one created nature, and finally created and uncreated nature in the deified creation. If the division into male and female is taken from the perspective of these five divisions, then it is difficult to justify the interpretation that the division into male and female arose as a corrective, given Adam's fall, and that its purpose is to continue the human species through reproduction. Thus, the interpretation of the passage from *Genesis*, according to which God "created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them" (*Genesis* 1: 27–28), should not be interpreted in the way suggested by Elizabeth Clark, and many before her. This interpretation advocates that the so-called original creation of human in the 'image of God' implies a complete human nature, because it excludes only the existence of sex in God. Only in the second step, which should be taken in a logical, not chronological sense, God creates male and female. By being understood in this sense, it would be perfectly logical to base the Christian identity on virginity and on the vow of monasticism (μοναχός means single, solitary), as some original state of human nature, which existed before the so-called corrective divisions of one human nature into sexes. However, if one changes the whole paradigm, and by following a number of Eastern and Western Christian thinkers, including Maximus the Confessor, one assumes that Christ's coming into the world in the flesh was not a corrective, but part of the original plan, in accordance to which the Son of God (together with God the Father and the Holy Spirit) created the world to come into it, then it would be logical to conclude that God created Adam in the image of Christ. Christ's or God's 'image' in human being does not imply Christ's sexual determination, which is transmitted as a trait to Adam and Eve, but in the fact that he unites in his person the divine and human nature, which can be considered as opposites and as much as the opposite sexes should be reconciled. Just as God becomes human, without ceasing to be God, so a woman or man becomes a complete human being, without ceasing to be a woman or a man. Becoming a woman or a man as a human being is therefore only the first step that every woman or man should

take. The further path leads human beings through the other four divisions. Finally, by becoming deified through their own participation in the uncreated activities of God, the created human beings become gods.

Let us dwell on the male-female relations within human nature because they are paradigmatic for all other divisions and opposites at higher cosmological levels, including the last level relating to the division between uncreated divine and created human nature. Male and female are opposites or divisions that exist within human nature, but it is through the movement of extremes towards the mean it is established their connection with the mean, which is human nature itself. Thus, the space between the extremes is actually filled with our movement from one extreme to another. In this way, the horizon between the sexes as opposites becomes a place where sexual beings, men and women learn to be human beings (Behr 2018: 25). Two things need to be pointed out here. First, male-female opposites are transmitted and somewhat equated with sexual beings, man and woman. Second, the movement of one opposite – sex towards the mean, i.e. the other opposite – sex is not seen as a process within one person, in which, as may be seen above from the example of Macrina, through sexual abstinence and gender mobility, the spectrum between male and female is covered. The process at stake includes two persons, a man and a woman in their movement towards each other that is initiated by the attraction that exists between the sexes. There is a tendency among some Christian authors, such as Clement of Alexandria, a writer from the 2nd century, to perceive this attraction between the sexes as part of the so-called corrective model. The corrective model represents God's subsequent intervention after the human fall and its goal is to attract opposite sexes to sexual intercourse, i.e. marriage for the purpose of reproduction and the continuation of human species (Clemens Alexandrinus 1985, *Stromateis*: III, 12, 89). Therefore, attraction between the sexes is part of the natural sexual urge, which is also intrinsic to animals. However, most Christian authors, commencing from the apostolic times, believe that having children is desirable, but that even without having them, marriage would fulfill its basic function. What, then, would be the function of marriage? An unknown writer from Syria from the end of the 5th and the beginning of the 6th century, known under the pseudonym Dionysius the Areopagite, writes that "divine yearning brings ecstasy so that the lover belongs not to self but to the beloved" (Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita 1990, *De Divinis Nominibus* 4.13; Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite 1987: 82). In a manner similar to Dionysius, Maximus the Confessor writes about the ecstasy:

> [...] if its motion is intensified in this way; it will not cease until it is wholly present in the whole beloved, and wholly encompassed by it, willingly receiving the whole saving circumscription by its own choice, so that it might be wholly qualified by the whole circumscriber, and, being wholly circumscribed, will no longer be able to wish to be known from its own qualities, but rather from those of the circumscriber, in the same way that air is thoroughly permeated by light, or iron in a forge is completely penetrated by the fire, or anything else of this sort. (*Amb.* 7; Maximos the Confessor 2014: I, 86–89)

Both passages describe the love that a human being feels, and use attributes that can be applied to the relationship between God and a human being, as well as to the relationship between two human beings. It is important to point out that the being in love feels ecstasy, a kind of coming out of itself, whereby the center of one's own being is transferred to another. As John Behr claims, through the power of erotic attraction one learns to die for himself, and to live for another (Behr 2018: 26). Thus, a loving relationship becomes self-sacrifice, and self-sacrifice is a kind of martyrdom.

Describing the unity of both God and the human being, as well as the two lovers, Maximus the Confessor uses spatial expressions such as 'embrace' and 'encompass' which indicate the erasure of the boundary between two lovers. A similar expression uses first Moses (*Genesis* 2: 18-24) and then the evangelist Matthew (*Matt*. 19: 4, 5), writing that a man will leave his father and mother and be united (προσκολληθήσεται) to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.

One flesh or a body that husband and wife create is, in a way, a model of the Church in which many people form one body – the body of Christ. The relationship of spouses has two dimensions, the first spiritual or intellectual, in which they mutually put the center of their being in the other, and thus dying for themselves, and living for the other, and the other bodily where there is no more physical difference between them and they become one body. Both dimensions point to the fact that the division into male and female in the creation of the human being was originally in God's plan, because it is the most natural, but perhaps also the most demanding way to reach communion with God through another human being.

From the perspective of sex and gender, it could be said that the creation of Christian identity in the marital status as an icon or prototype of communion with God fully affirms sexes and sexuality, while trying to expand the gender roles of men and women to the dimensions of the human being as such. Although the Christian view of sexuality is largely related to the fall and hence the necessity of the continuation of the human race, sexuality in this identity model is seen as transformed by the great role given to spouses in the marital union. Thus, although husband and wife on the sexual plane remain what they are and enter the sexual union, the primary purpose of that union is not the continuation of the species, but the elevation, through sexual love, eros and ecstasy, of male and female to the level of human beings. Through self-sacrifice, spouses are transformed and acquire, in modern terms, their gender roles as human beings. This model of Christian identity, as we have said above, is the most natural because it does not abolish the sexes, but affirms them in such a way that they ascend to the new human being. At the same time, this model is not at all easier and maybe even harder than the previous two, because similar to the model of martyrdom, it represents a renunciation of one's own life and a living for the other. The self-sacrifice for and ecstasy towards other human being become the basis for ecstasy towards God.

Conclusion

In conclusion, all three models created in the history of Christianity have continued to live and to be practiced, including the model of martyrdom as contemporary events from Libya and Syria show. The first model of martyrdom, however, no longer advocates the attainment of martyrdom as a manly ideal, because except in some non-Christian cultures, a woman is no longer considered deprived of certain socially favored qualities, and her sacrifice is human, not manly. Additionally, we are no longer living in the world of the ancient construction of the one-sex model, but in the world in which there is a tendency to consider both sex and gender as social constructions. Thus, if Christian women by force of circumstances are condemned to martyrdom for their faith, they die not as men but as women. The second model of virginal life is still practiced through Christian monasticism. Virginity becomes an ideal for those who have vowed to it. In this way and by following the example of angels, they try to gain the fullness of the human being by negating their sexuality. At the gender level, however, this model often stands under the imperative of gaining power as a male principle. Thus, often under a cloak of passive female virginity of nuns, the gender role shifts from the spectrum of spiritual motherhood to the spectrum of spiritual fatherhood. The struggle with one's own sexuality is often all-encompassing, requiring a lot of strength and dedication to rise to the imperative of the human being. The third, and historically closest to us, model of establishing Christian identity on marriage is something that has been developed through the comprehensive teaching on the attainment of deification as the goal of Christian life. Male-female relations are not scrutinized *per se*, but their arrangement is seen as the first and essential step on the path to salvation. This model, like the previous models, represents a kind of martyrdom, because unlike martyrdom, in which life is sacrificed for the sake of being like Christ, and virginity, in which sexuality is sacrificed for the sake of being likened to angelic nature, here one sacrifices one's life metaphorically, for the sake of spouse's life. The union characterized by ecstasy and coming out of oneself towards another human being is a model or an image of the union between ecstatic human being and God. In the end, this model affirms sexuality in its full meaning and considers people primarily as sexual beings. Nevertheless, although today some quasi-Christian ideologies insist on this model as traditional, due to the preservation of patriarchy and gender division, it abolishes any socially constructed division into genders, striving for the ideal of both men and women to be one and an all-encompassing human being.

References

Sources:

Aristotle (1942), *Generation of Animals*, LOEB, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
Aristoteles (1949), *Categoriae et Liber de Interpretatione*, L. Minio Paluello (ed.), Oxford: Clarendon Press.
—. (1957a), *Metaphysica*, Werner Jeager (ed.), Oxford: Clarendon Press.
—. (1957b), *Politica*, David W. Ross (ed.), Oxford: Clarendon Press.
—. (1963), *Ethica Nicomachea*, Ingram Bywater (ed.), Oxford: Clarendon Press.
Aristotle (1989), *Topica*, LOEB, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
Clemens Alexandrinus (1985), *Stromateis. Buch I–VI* (Bd. 2), Otto Stählin, Ludwig Früchtel (eds.), Berlin: De Gruyter.
Concilium Gangrense (1850), in J. P. Migne, *Patrologia Cursus Completus. Seria Latina*, vol. 84, Paris: Garnier fratres, col. 111–116.
Eusebius (1926), *Ecclesiastical History*, vol. I, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
Gregorius Nyssenus (1863), *De hominis opificio*, in J. P. Migne, *Patrologia Cursus Completus. Seria Greaca*, vol. 44, Paris: Garnier fratres.
Gregorii Nysseni (1952a), *De Virginitate* (=*DeVirg*), in *Opera Ascetica*, Werner Jaeger, Johannes P. Cavarnos, Virginia Woods Callahan (eds.), *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, vol. 8/1, Leiden: Brill, 1952, pp. 247–343.
—. (1952b), *Vita S. Macrinae* (=*V.Macr*), in *Opera Ascetica*, Werner Jaeger, Johannes P. Cavarnos, Virginia Woods Callahan (eds.), *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, vol. 8/1, Leiden: Brill, pp. 370–414.
Grégoire de Nysse (1971), *Vie de Sainte Macrine*, Pierre Maraval (transl.), *Sources Chrétien*, no. 178, Paris: Editions du Cerf.
Gregory of Nyssa (1994), *Dogmatic Treatises*, Schaff Philip (ed.) (*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, in 14 vols.; vol. 05), Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers.
Maximos the Confessor (2014), *On the Difficulties in the Church Fathers*, vol. I–II, Nicholas Constas (ed. and transl.), Cambridge, MA: Havard University Press.
Musurillo, Herbert (ed.) (1972), *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
Nemesius Emeseni (1987), *De Natura Hominis*, Moreno Morani (ed.), Leipzig: Taubner.
Nemesius (2008), *On the Nature of Man*, R. W. Sharples, P. J. V. Ander Eijk (transl.), Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.
Plato (1929), *Timaeus. Critias. Cleitophon. Menexenus. Epistles*, LOEB, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
Porphyrius (1887), *Isagoge et in Aristotelis Categorias commentarium*, Adolfus Busse (ed.), Berlin: Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften.
Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (1987), *The Completed Works*, Colm Luibheid (transl.), New York: Paulist Press.
Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita (1990), *De Divinis Nominibus*, Beata Regina Suchla (ed.), Berlin: De Gruyter.
St Gregory of Nyssa (1966), *Ascetical Works*, Virginia Woods Callahan (transl.), Washington: The Catholic University of America Press.

Secondary literature:

Allan, Prudence (1997), *The Concept of Woman: Aristotelian Revolution 750 BC–1250 AD*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Behr, John (2018), "From Adam to Christ: From Male and Female to Being Human", *The Wheel* 13/14: 19–32.

Boyarin, Daniel (1999), *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Butler, Judith (2011), *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*, New York & London: Routledge.

Cobb, L. Stephanie (2008), *Dying to Be Men: Gender and Language in Early Christian Martyr Texts*, New York: Columbia University Press,

Elm, Susanna (1994), *'Virgins of God'. The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Clark, Elizabeth (1998), "The Lady Vanishes: Dilemmas of a Feminist Historian after the 'Linguistic Turn'", *Church History* 67 (1): 1–31.

Shaw, Brent D. (1996), "Body/Power/Identity: Passions of the Martyrs", *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 4 (3): 269–312.

Vladimir Cvetković

Pol, rod i hrišćanski identitet u patrističkom periodu

Apstrakt

Rad ima za cilj da pruži kratak pregled hrišćanskih pogleda na polni i rodni identitet, kako u ranohrišćanskom, tako i u patrističkom periodu. Fokusirajući se na tri istorijska primera različitog shvatanja hrišćanskog identiteta, rad nastoji da pokaže koju su ulogu igrali savremeni pojmovi pola i roda u stvaranju hrišćanskog identiteta u prvim vekovima hrišćanstva. U prvoj studiji slučaja, koja se odnosi na literarne prikaze mučeništva hrišćana u 2. i 3. veku, poznatijim kao martirioloska književnost, poseban akcenat se stavlja na zahtev za „muževnim" svedočenjem vere. Drugi istorijski primer se odnosi na 4. vek i stvaranje šireg asketskog pokreta u Maloj Aziji, i posebno se fokusira na ulogu sv. Makrine Mlađe i način formiranja njenog rodnog identiteta kako na osnovu devstvenosti, tako i na osnovu njene uloge udovice, odnosno majke i oca svojoj monaškoj obitelji. Na kraju, fokus se pomera prema Dionisiju Areopagitu i sv. Maksimu Ispovedniku, čija učenje o ekstazi, kao izlasku iz sebe prema voljenom biću, daju osnova za uspostavljanje jedne teologije braka i stvaranju hrišćanskog identiteta ne na polnim ili rodnim ulogama, već na jedinstvenosti ljudske prirode.

Ključne reči: rod, pol, hrišćanski identitet, mučeništvo, devstvenost, ekstaza, ljubav, brak

UDK: 128:305
https://doi.org/10.2298/FID2102177M
Original Scientific Article
Received 19.04.2021. Accepted 27.05.2021.

PHILOSOPHY AND SOCIETY
VOL. 32, NO. 2, 157–334

To cite text:
Munkholt Christensen, Maria (2021), "*Meditatio mortis*. Meditating on Death, Philosophy and Gender in Late Antique Hagiography", *Philosophy and Society* 32 (2): 177–193.

Maria Munkholt Christensen

MEDITATIO MORTIS MEDITATING ON DEATH, PHILOSOPHY AND GENDER IN LATE ANTIQUE HAGIORAPHY

ABSTRACT
According to Socrates, as he is described in Plato's Phaedo, the definition of a true philosopher is a wise man who is continuously practicing dying and being dead. Already in this life, the philosopher tries to free his soul from the body in order to acquire true knowledge as the soul is progressively becoming detached from the body. Centuries after it was written, Plato's Phaedo continued to play a role for some early Christian authors, and this article focuses on three instances where Christian women mirror Socrates and/or his definition of philosophy. We find these instances in hagiographical literature from the fourth and fifth centuries at different locations in the Roman Empire – in the Lives of Macrina, Marcella and Syncletica. These texts are all to varying degrees impacted by Platonic philosophy and by the ideal of the male philosopher Socrates. As women mastering philosophy, they widened common cultural expectations for women, revealing how Christian authors in certain contexts ascribed authority to female figures.

KEYWORDS
Macrina, Marcella, Syncletica, Socrates, Plato, philosophy, gender, emotions, Gregory of Nyssa, Jerome

Introduction

Sources from early Christianity are often unflattering in their assessment of women's capacities of keeping their emotions under control and engage in rational thinking. One example of a negative assessment of the female sex can be found in Augustine's *De Genesi ad litteram* from around 400, where Augustin writes:

> [...] woman was given [to man], woman who was of small intelligence and who possibly henceforth lived more in accordance with the senses of flesh than in accordance with the mental capacities. Is this why the apostle Paul does not attribute the image of God to her?[1]

1 Augustin 1894, *De Genesi ad litteram*: 11.42: [...] *mulier addita est, quae parui intellectus esset et adhuc fortasse secundum sensum carnis, non secundum spiritum mentis uiueret, et hoc est, quod ei apostolus non tribuit imaginem dei?*

Maria Munkholt Christensen: Research Fellow, Faculty of Protestant Theology, Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn; munkholt@uni-bonn.de.

Augustine's quote leaves the reader with the idea that women have a small intellect and are dominated by their bodies (flesh) rather than by their mental capacities (*secundum spiritum mentis*). However, there was always more than one approach to the topic of women and their abilities in Christian discourse, and although it would be an exaggeration to say that there were liberating tendencies for women in early Christianity, some (male) authors did in fact attempt to describe how according to Christian and philosophical theories the soul is not defined by the bodily sex, and how virtue is accessible to men and women alike.[2] Gregory of Nazianzus expresses this vision in his *Oration 8* about his sister Gorgonia where he exclaims: "O nature of woman overcoming that of man in the common struggle for salvation, and demonstrating that the distinction between male and female is one of body not of soul!"[3] These quotations by Augustin and Gregory of Nazianzus show how differently the topic of women's constitution was understood in Late Antique Christianity. However, they share the common understanding of the body as a negative element which ideally should be overcome by the reason of the spirit/soul. According to an antique understanding, it is a difficult task for both men and women to master their flesh and body, but for women, according to antique concepts, it is an even harder thing to do, because the womanly body was generally understood as a particular obstacle to the mind.[4]

In fourth-century hagiographical literature, women were occasionally praised – not only for their virtuous and chaste life – but also as Socratic figures with superior intellectual skills. In the following we shall look at three such cases, where holy women are related to Platonic philosophy. The three women under consideration are Macrina, Gregory of Nyssa's sister, Marcella, Jerome's friend, and the so-called *amma* (mother) Syncletica whose hagiographer is anonymous (Munkholt Christensen; Gemeinhardt 2019). In most cases, ancient women must be identified like this, by mentioning of the male authors who wrote about them. In the literary process, the women of the past lost their authentic *female* character as they were defined by men's words, and male theologians shaped their memory according to their male outlook and their theological ideals.[5] However, the fact that the female figures are, so to say, buried beneath male perspectives in historical texts like these, does not make the texts any less informative as historical sources, but it calls for critical interpretations and careful consideration about the agendas that may have driven male authors when promoting women. Arthur Urbano has pointed out

2 The Cappadocian father Gregor of Nazianzus expresses the idea that neither the soul nor life after ressurection is defined by gender (see Harrison 1990). In the works of Jerome one finds very different attitudes to women (see Novembri 2010).

3 Gregory of Nazianzus 1856-1866, *Oratio*: 8.14: Ὦ γυναικεία φύσις τὴν ἀνδρείαν νικήσασα διὰ τὸν κοινὸν ἀγῶνα τῆς σωτηρίας, καὶ σώματος διαφορὰν οὐ ψυχῆς τὸ θῆλυ καὶ τὸ ἄῤῥεν ἐλέγξασα!

4 See below how holy women are presented as transcending their bodily sex.

5 On the methodological difficulties in dealing with texts about women from Antiquity, see e.g. Burrus 2001; Clark 1994; Clark 1998; Clark 2004; Cobb 2009; Matthews 2001.

that stories about women "were told through the paradigms and categories of a male-dominated philosophical field" (Urbano 2013: 247). In fact, male authors promoted praiseworthy women explicitly as *men*, by emphasising male virtues exhibited by such women and directly describing them as male. For example, Syncletica's deeds are called ἀνδραγαθημάτων which literally means '*manly* deeds',[6] while Macrina helps her mother to be 'brave' (ἀνδρεία; this word is derived from the word *man* (ἀνήρ)).[7] The semantic field related to the word 'bravery/manliness' (ἀνδρεία, *virtus*) could in itself be the main focus of an investigation regarding gender in the mentioned sources. In the same way 'impassibility' (ἀπάθεια) and 'nature/bodily form/sex' (φύσις) are key concepts in the sources and could be investigated further, because bravery, impassibility and manliness regularly belong together in antique literature, whereas women must transcend their own nature to be thought of as virtuous (see e.g. Smith 2001). However, the approach of this article is a bit different. Here the focus is the reception in Christian hagiography of one particular Socratic saying, i.e. the true philosopher is continuously practicing dying. This saying is embedded in narrations about holy women, and thereby these women are related to Socrates and to his ability to pay little attention to the body and thereby reach the truth. I set out to show how this Socratic ideal of transcending the the body is intertextually applied in Christian hagiography and thereby imply a subtle gender bending and even gender transcendence in literary *Lives* of Christian women.

When it comes to the theme of this article, i.e. the combination of the ideal of Socrates and Platonic philosophy, on the one hand, and Christian women in Late Antiquity, on the other hand, there have been initial explorations. Especially the literary moulding of Macrina has been dealt with quite extensively in secondary literature (Maraval 1971; Meissner: 1992; Williams 1993; Muehlberger 2012; also Apostolopoulos: 1986). On the contrary, the Roman Marcella has not yet received much attention in her role as a disciple of Plato and the apostles,[8] and the indirect link between Socrates and the Alexandrian Syncletica has not yet been presented thoroughly. We shall encounter these three women and their links to Platonic philosophy below. However, before we arrive at the Christian sources, the first two paragraphs will define, firstly, how gender and emotions are presented in Plato's *Phaedo* and, secondly, the expectations to a philosopher that Socrates (re)presents in that text.

Emotions and Gender in Plato's Phaedo

Plato's *Phaedo,* also known as *On the Soul,* from the 5th century BC is the account of Socrates' last conversation with his friends – a dialogue centred on the immortality of the soul. In *Phaedo*, the conversation is recounted by one of the involved, Phaedo himself, who also describes the context of the dialogue. The

6 Pseudo-Athanasius 2002, *Vita Syncleticae*: 15.
7 Gregory of Nyssa 1971, *Vita Macrinae*: 10.
8 Jerome 1912, *Epistula 127*: 6.

conversation took place on the day before Socrates' execution in the prison in Athens where Socrates was incarcerated. Towards the end of the text, Socrates swallows the poisonous hemlock, and then he takes his last breath with the famous words: "Crito, we owe Asclepius a cock."[9] For this article, two themes in *Phaedo* are of particular interest: Firstly, the text gives us an idea about how women are stereotypically dealt with in antique philosophical literature,[10] and secondly, in the text we learn how Socrates defines philosophy.

From the beginning of the dialogue, the reader encounters a group of men and only one woman, Socrates' wife Xanthippe. She is visiting Socrates with their child, when his male friends enter the room where he is held. Phaedo describes the situation:

> So we went in and found Socrates who had just been unfettered and Xanthippe – well, you know her – sitting beside him with his young son. Now when Xanthippe saw us, she cried out and said the kind of things that women usually do, such as: 'Socrates, this is the very last time your friends will be speaking with you, and you with them'. And Socrates looked at Crito and said: 'Crito, get someone to take her home'.[11]

Xanthippe is obviously presented as a disturbing element for the philosophical conversation that is about to take place, and she has to leave. Her womanly voice must leave the room, before the men can begin their discussion. The text expresses an expectation towards women in general which Xanthippe immediately fulfils, as she cries out and says "the kind of things that women usually do" (οἷα δὴ εἰώθασιν αἱ γυναῖκες). In this case, we are given one example of Xanthippe's "womanly" utterances: that is her sentimental statement that this will be the last conversation between Socrates and his friends. As she is taken away, she is "shouting and wailing".[12] Socrates, on the contrary, remains calm. According to Phaedo, Socrates even seemed happy, "so fearlessly and nobly was he meeting his end".[13] With the reactions of Socrates and Xanthippe, we thus encounter the most radical responses to Socrates' coming passing. However, the scheme of 'male = calm' versus 'female = emotional outburst' is not generalized, as also Socrates' male friends struggle to bear the situation.

---

9 The full-length quotation from Plato's *Phaedo* 118a (Plato 2017): Ὦ Κρίτων, ἔφη, τῷ Ἀσκληπιῷ ὀφείλομεν ἀλεκτρυόνα· ἀλλὰ ἀπόδοτε καὶ μὴ ἀμελήσητε.

10 We do encounter women in antique philosophy, but only few. Hypatia and Sosipatra stand out. See Hartmann 2018, 1361: „Dennoch blieben die wenigen Philosophinnen auch in der Spätantike ein Randphänomen".

11 Plato 2017, *Phaedo*: 60a: εἰσιόντες οὖν κατελαμβάνομεν τὸν μὲν Σωκράτη ἄρτι λελυμένον, τὴν δὲ Ξανθίππην –γιγνώσκεις γάρ – ἔχουσάν τε τὸ παιδίον αὐτοῦ καὶ παρακαθημένην. ὡς οὖν εἶδεν ἡμᾶς ἡ Ξανθίππη, ἀνηυφήμησέ τε καὶ τοιαῦτ' ἄττα εἶπεν, οἷα δὴ εἰώθασιν αἱ γυναῖκες, ὅτι "Ὦ Σώκρατες, ὕστατον δή σε προσεροῦσι νῦν οἱ ἐπιτήδειοι καὶ σὺ τούτους". καὶ ὁ Σωκράτης βλέψας εἰς τὸν Κρίτωνα, "Ὦ Κρίτων", ἔφη, "ἀπαγέτω τις αὐτὴν οἴκαδε".

12 Plato (2017), *Phaedo*: 60a-60b: βοῶσάν τε καὶ κοπτομένην.

13 Plato (2017), *Phaedo*: 58e: εὐδαίμων γάρ μοι ἀνὴρ ἐφαίνετο, ὦ Ἐχέκρατες, καὶ τοῦ τρόπου καὶ τῶν λόγων, ὡς ἀδεῶς καὶ γενναίως ἐτελεύτα […].

Phaedo had a "strange sort of feeling and a curious mixture made up of pleasure and pain in equal measure",[14] and "everyone present was affected pretty much in this way, laughing one moment and crying the next [...]".[15] In effect, only Socrates himself is in control of his emotions, whereas the people around him are more or less under the influence of their sorrow.

As Xanthippe has left the scene, the philosophical conversation begins. It is conducted among men, and the "philosopher" who is idealized in the dialogue is always spoken about as male (explicitly in e.g. 95c: φιλόσοφος ἀνὴρ). Towards the end of the text, Socrates again meets with his children and with women of the family, before he sends them away one last time and meets with his male friends for his execution.[16] It is fair to say, that there is one "room" established in the text for Socrates' relation with women and children, and another "room" in which the philosophical conversation and, finally, the execution by forced suicide takes place.

As Socrates receives the poison that will kill him, his companions give into their emotions and cry. However, this becomes too much for Socrates, and he reprimands them, saying:

> What are you doing, you strange people? This was the main reason I sent the women away so they wouldn't disrupt things in such a way. For I've heard it said one should die in silence. Do calm down and pull yourselves together.[17]

This chastisement makes the men ashamed, and they get their tears under control. However, once again it is clear that Socrates had expectations to the women: that they would be emotional and disturb the peace, and he cannot accept this behaviour from his male companions.

'The True Philosopher' in Plato's Phaedo

The preceding description sets the scene for the conversation between Socrates and his friends. At the beginning of the dialogue, the topic is 'the true philosopher', whom Socrates defines as someone pursuing death and dying. Two succinct formulations attributed to Socrates are: "Other people are likely not to be aware that those who pursue philosophy aright study nothing but dying and being dead".[18] And: "In reality therefore, [...] those who are true

14 Plato 2017, *Phaedo*: 59a: ἀτεχνῶς ἄτοπόν τί μοι πάθος παρῆν καί τις ἀήθης κρᾶσις ἀπό τε τῆς ἡδονῆς συγκεκραμένη ὁμοῦ καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς λύπης.

15 Plato 2017, *Phaedo*: 59a: πάντες οἱ παρόντες σχεδόν τι οὕτω διεκείμεθα, τοτὲ μὲν γελῶντες, ἐνίοτε δὲ δακρύοντες.

16 Plato 2017, *Phaedo*: 116b.

17 Plato 2017, *Phaedo*: 117d-e: Ἐκεῖνος δέ, Οἷα, ἔφη, ποιεῖτε, ὦ θαυμάσιοι. ἐγὼ μέντοι οὐχ ἥκιστα τούτου ἕνεκα τὰς γυναῖκας ἀπέπεμψα, ἵνα μὴ τοιαῦτα πλημμελοῖεν· εκαὶ γὰρ ἀκήκοα ὅτι ἐν εὐφημίᾳ χρὴ τελευτᾶν. ἀλλ' ἡσυχίαν τε ἄγετε καὶ καρτερεῖτε.

18 Plato 2017, *Phaedo*: 63e: κινδυνεύουσι γὰρ ὅσοι τυγχάνουσιν ὀρθῶς ἁπτόμενοι φιλοσοφίας λελῆθέναι τοὺς ἄλλους ὅτι οὐδὲν ἄλλο αὐτοὶ ἐπιτηδεύουσιν ἢ ἀποθνῄσκειν τε καὶ τεθνάναι.

philosophers are practicing dying and for them of all people death is the least thing to be feared."[19]

Here we come across a philosophical method in the Socratic repertoire: "practicing dying" (ἀποθνῄσκειν μελετῶσι). However, it is clear from the context that this does not entail that the true philosopher is fascinated by death as such. Rather, the true philosopher longs for his soul to be free from the weight of the body and bodily desires, so that he will be able to think purely without biases induced by his physical existence. In order to be a philosopher, one must abandon one's bodily existence. This can, of course, only be accomplished to a certain degree in life, by trying to disregard bodily pleasures, and only in death – when the soul is free – can this process be completed.

"So it is this that's given the name death: the freeing and separation of the soul from the body?", asks Simmias.[20] Socrates affirms it: "Yes, and the ones who always desire most to set it free, as we say, and the only ones, are the true philosophers, and just this is the proper practice of the philosophers: the freeing and separation of soul from body, or isn't it?"[21] Socrates is about to die in a bodily absolute sense, but his ideal for every philosopher is to practice death throughout life – a metaphor for the ability to think and transcend bodily demands (Marques 2018: 136).

Long after Socrates' death and Plato's writings, this particular Socratic definition of philosophy remained in circulation, also in the Latin speaking world. In his *Disputationes*, Cicero mentioned Socrates' passing, and he cited Socrates' words about how a truly wise man approaches death. Cicero writes:

> our true wise man (*vir sapiens*) will joyfully pass forthwith from the darkness here into the light beyond. [...] For the whole life of the philosopher, as the same wise man says, is a preparation for death.[22]

The Socratic maxim thus transferred into the Latin speaking world: *Tota enim philosophorum vita, ut ait idem, commentatio mortis est.*[23] The Latin word *commentatio* as the Greek μελετάω contains the aspects of practise and study. With these words it is expressed that life should ideally be defined by its endpoint, death, and the brighter existence beyond. Christian authors as well adopted the Socratic maxim, and it seems to have spread even without its

19 Plato 2017, *Phaedo*: 67e: Τῷ ὄντι ἄρα, ἔφη, ὦ Σιμμία, οἱ ὀρθῶς φιλοσοφοῦντες ἀποθνήσκειν μελετῶσι, καὶ τὸ τεθνάναι ἥκιστα αὐτοῖς ἀνθρώπων φοβερόν.

20 Plato 2017, *Phaedo*: 67d: Οὐκοῦν τοῦτό γε θάνατος ὀνομάζεται, | λύσις καὶ χωρισμὸς ψυχῆς ἀπὸ σώματος;

21 Plato, *Phaido*: 67d: Λύειν δέ γε αὐτήν, ὥς φαμεν, προθυμοῦνται ἀεὶ μάλιστα καὶ μόνοι οἱ φιλοσοφοῦντες ὀρθῶς, καὶ τὸ μελέτημα αὐτὸ τοῦτό ἐστιν τῶν φιλοσόφων, λύσις καὶ χωρισμὸς ψυχῆς ἀπὸ σώματος· ἢ οὔ;

22 Cicero 1927, *Tusculanae Disputationes*: 74: *vir sapiens laetus ex his tenebris in lucem illam excesserit, nec tamen illa vincla carceris ruperit—leges enim vetant—, sed tamquam a magistratu aut ab aliqua potestate legitima, sic a deo evocatus atque emissus exierit. Tota enim philosophorum vita, ut ait idem, commentatio mortis est.*

23 In Hilberg's edition of Jerome's *Epistula 127*, the phrase is not rendered with *commentatio*, but with *meditatio*. See below, note 41.

attribution to Socrates.[24] As we shall see below, some Christian authors even related it – or, at least, the Socratic attitude – to Christian women and thus by borrowing a classic ideal, underlined the wisdom and endurance of Christians.

Macrina and Her Final Philosophical Discussion

A first instance of a Christian woman who must be interpreted in the light (or shadow?) of Socrates is Gregory of Nyssa's older sister Macrina. A substantial body of research has already established the literary connection, between, on the one hand, the presentation of Macrina in the Christian writings *On the Soul and the Resurrection* and *Life of Macrina* and, on the other hand, the presentation of Socrates in *Phaedo* and Diotima in *Symposium*.[25] There is an unmistakable link between Macrina and Socrates, almost, one might say, bordering on a literary cliché.[26] However, Gregory does not let Macrina quote Socrates directly, but in his presentation, she virtually *is* Socrates. She and her Christian teachings on the soul both evoke, correct and replace Socrates. According to the logic of Gregory, it does not play a role that Macrina is a woman, because she has transcended her human nature altogether.[27] By expressing such an assumption, we can sense the conflation of Christian theology and Neoplatonic philosophy that characterizes Gregory. It also comes to the fore in his descriptions of Macrina and her mother. In one instance he writes about them that they were "not weighed down by the burden of the body; instead their life was sublime and uplifted".[28]

In the above-mentioned writings about Macrina that date to the late fourth century, Macrina is, as Socrates was a millennium before, lying on her death bed (or rather, as a true ascetic, "not on a bed or cover but on the ground itself"[29]). Although seriously ill, Macrina remains brave and looks forward to the better life ahead.[30] According to Gregory, even on her death bed she was still able to speak clearly and logically about the soul and its resurrection, and she continued to make "greater progress in the philosophical life".[31] Gregory explicitly states that Macrina "entered upon a philosophical discussion regarding the soul"[32], and it is certainly no coincidence, that Gregory refers to their conversation as a *philosophical* discussion, as he has already mentioned several

24 On the reception of 'Meditation on death' in the Christian tradition, e.g. in Clement of Alexandria, Gregory of Nazianzus, Evagrius, Maximus Confessor, see: Guillaumont 1971: 620–21. Cf. Hadot 1995: 138–39.

25 See above Smith 2001.

26 Cf. J. Mossay who is quoted in Maraval 1971: 229, note 4: "l'image des derniers moments de Socrate, popularisée par Platon, pourrait être à l'origine d'un cliché."

27 Gregory of Nyssa, *Vita Macrinae* 1.

28 Gregory of Nyssa, *Vita Macrinae* 11: (ed. Maraval): οὐκ ἐβαροῦντο τῷ ἐφολκίῳ τοῦ σώματος, ἀλλ' ἀνωφερής τε καὶ μετέωρος ἦν αὐτῶν ἡ ζωὴ.

29 Gregory of Nyssa 1971, *Vita Macrinae*: 16: δὲ οὐκ ἐπὶ κλίνης τινὸς ἢ στρωμνῆς, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ τοῦ ἐδάφους

30 Gregory of Nyssa 1971, *Vita Macrinae*: 19.

31 Gregory of Nyssa 1971, *Vita Macrinae*: 17: τῆς ὑψηλοτέρας φιλοσοφίας.

32 Gregory of Nyssa 1971, *Vita Macrinae*: 18: περί τε τῆς ψυχῆς ἡμῖν φιλοσοφοῦσα.

times in her *Life* how Macrina perfected philosophy.[33] On Macrina's final day, as if she was inspired by the Holy Spirit, she explained the nature of man, revealed the workings of the divine plan and things to do with the future life.[34]

The resemblance with the Socratic tradition does not end here, also the idea of the calm philosopher who can lift up his friends as he is facing death nobly is incorporated into *the Life of Macrina*. Although sick and feverish, Macrina's contemplation of higher things kept her unaffected by the terrible illness.[35] She had trained herself to be unaffected by hardships, which is a topic throughout her *Life*. Now on her death bed, it is she who consoles the people around her. Firstly, Macrina's words have a huge effect on Gregory, who experienced the situation in quite a Platonic way, as he notes: "my soul seemed almost to be freed from my human nature".[36] But with the prospect of her death coming closer, everyone saddens. Even the male bishop, Gregory, gives into sadness, as to do the women living in Macrina's ascetic community. Macrina remains calm, she is after all a Socratic character.[37] Her final prayer alludes to Platonic concepts with a strict distinction between body and soul, but integrated into a Christian frame: "Grant that I may come into your presence when I shed my body and that my soul, holy and without blemish, will be received into your hands like incense before your face."[38]

Even though we do not encounter the exact Socratic maxim that a true philosopher is practicing death in *Vita Macrinae*, the anthropology and soteriology expressed by Gregory and reflected in Macrina is similar to the Platonic worldview in *Phaedo*. In both cases the ascetic training of the mind is crucial, in order to make the mind able to rule the body as well as to suppress spontaneous emotional reactions. Freeing the soul from the burden of the body is a crucial part of the *philosophic* life, and this training foreshadows the kind of life that awaits after death. Macrina is already acting as a Socratic philosopher in life, she has first transcended her female nature and then altogether her human nature.

Marcella and Plato's Saying

Jerome, who has gone down into church history as Doctor of the Church, lived in the fourth to fifth century Roman society. For our purpose he is interesting, because he wrote to and about women, and also because he continuously

33 E.g. Gregory of Nyssa 1971, *Vita Macrinae*: 5.
34 Gregory of Nyssa 1971, *Vita Macrinae*: 17. For the conversation in its entirety, see Gregory of Nyssa 2014, *De anima et ressurectione*.
35 Gregory of Nyssa 1971, *Vita Macrinae*: 18.
36 Gregory of Nyssa 1971, *Vita Macrinae*: 17: ὥστε μοι τὴν ψυχὴν ἔξω μικροῦ δεῖν τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης φύσεως εἶναι δοκεῖν [...].
37 Meissner 1992: 38: „Macrina wird also in der Lebensbeschreibung zum Vorbild für die christliche Haltungs angesichts des Todes stilisiert."
38 Gregory of Nyssa 2017, *Vita Macrinae*: 24: καὶ εὑρεθῶ ἐνώπιόν σου ἐν τῇ ἀπεκδύσει τοῦ σώματός μου μὴ ἔχουσα σπίλον ἢ ῥυτίδα ἐν τῇ μορφῇ τῆς ψυχῆς μου, ἀλλ' ἄμωμος καὶ ἀκηλίδωτος προσδεχθείη ἡ ψυχή μου ἐν ταῖς χερσί σου ὡς θυμίαμα ἐνώπιόν σου.

struggled with his classical education and the question of whether or not his education was useful to him as a Christian.

Jerome's connections with Christian women were not unproblematic, and he seems himself ambivalent, sometimes critical of women, while at other times he lauds his female friends. For financial and other reasons, he was acquainted with many women in the Roman elite, who supported his work and wanted to learn languages and exegesis from him. Marcella was one of these women, who had vivid interaction with Jerome. Their correspondence has, however, only been preserved in Jerome's letters and prologues addressed to her, and therefore we can only ever come to know the *hieronymized* Marcella. After her death, Jerome wrote his *Letter 127* about her, written in 412. It is a biographical writing, written in a way so that it lauds both Marcella and Jerome himself (Cain 2009: 68–98). In this letter about Marcella, Jerome paused in one instance to give a justification for his choice of subject: little women (note the diminutive form: *muliercularum*). Jerome wrote:

> The sceptical reader may perhaps laugh at me for wasting so much time in praise of little women. But if he remembers those holy women, the companions of our Lord and Saviour, who took care of him using their own possessions, and the three women called Mary who stood before the cross, and especially Mary known as Magdalene, who [...] was deemed worthy to be the first to see Christ after his resurrection, even before the disciples did, he will see that he is guilty of arrogance rather than I of foolishness. I judge a person's virtue by his or her character rather than by gender.[39]

Here Jerome defends himself towards an anonymous, but probably real critic that seems to have argued that women are not worthy to be presented as protagonists in literature. In this case, Jerome uses the argument that virtue and character/soul is not defined by gender – to think otherwise is an expression of silliness. In other words, the inner person is not defined by his or her sex, and both men and women can attain virtues. At this point in the text, Jerome has praised Marcella for living an ascetic life in Rome and for her Bible studies. Jerome equals her with "the perfect man" (*perfecto uiro*) from Psalm

39 Jerome 1912, *Epistula 127*: 6: *Rideat forsitan infidelis lector me in muliercularum laudibus inmorari: qui si recordetur sanctas feminas, comites domini salvatoris, quae ministrabant ei de sua substantia, et tres Marias stantes ante erucem Mariamque proprie Magdalenen,* [...] *prima ante apostolos Christum uidere meruit resurgentem, se potius superbiae quam nos condemnabit ineptiarum, qui uirtutes non sexu sed animo iudicamus.*White translates *muliercularum* with "mere women", which I changed to "little women".
Also in chapter 3, Jerome promotes a kind of equality between men and women. See Jerome, *Epistula 27*.3 (ed. Hilberg; tr: White): "I am not drawing a distinction between holy women as some people foolishly do with regard to holy men and church leaders, but I do draw the conclusion that those who make equal efforts should have an equal reward." (*non facio ullam inter sanctas feminas differentiam, quod nonnulli inter sanctos uiros et ecclesiarum principes stulte facere consuerunt, sed illo tendit adsertio, ut, quarum unus labor, unum et praemium sit*).

1, whose delight is in the law of the Lord.[40] After having established her as a biblical scholar, Jerome goes on to underline her knowledge of Platonic philosophy as well, which is evident when he writes:

> So Marcella lived in this way for many years and found herself old before she had time to remember that she had once been young. She thought highly of Plato's saying that philosophy was a preparation for death.[41]

According to Jerome, Marcella lauded (*laudans*) the Platonic saying (*Platonicum*) that philosophy is training for death (*philosophiam meditationem mortis esse*). We are not told that Marcella *is* a philosopher, but that she apparently knew philosophy and was able to estimate its value. The thought that a woman could philosophize is not altogether foreign to Jerome. In the preface to his *Commentary on the Prophet Zephaniah*, Book 1 (which is addressed to two women), he mentions pagan women, among them Themista who "philosophizes among the wisest men of Greece."[42] Marcella is not a philosopher in Jerome's view, and she also does not let the philosophical statement speak for itself, she immediately Christianises it. Jerome describes how, for Marcella, the Socratic maxim is combined with biblical verses that express the same, namely:

> That is why our apostle also says: 'Every day I die through your salvation' (*1 Corinthians* 15,31), and the Lord according to the ancient copies says: 'Unless a person takes up his cross every day and follows me, he cannot be my disciple' (*Luke* 14,27). Long ago the Holy Spirit spoke through the prophet saying: 'For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter' (*Psalm* 44,22 (cf. *Romans* 8,36)), and from many generations later we have the saying: 'Remember always the day of death and you will never sin' (*Ecclesiasticus* 7,40) [...].[43]

These immediate links that are established between the Platonic saying and biblical Scriptures seem to legitimize both sources, and the reader can

40 Jerome 1912b, *Epistula 127*: 4 (148,9–10 H.).

41 Jerome 1910, *Epistula 27*: 6: *Annis igitur plurimis sic suam transegit aetatem, ut ante se uetulam cerneret, quam adulescentulam fuisse meminisset, laudans illud Platonicum, qui philosophiam meditationem mortis esse dixisset.*

42 Jerome1969-1970, *Commentary on the Prophet Zephaniah*: Book 1, Preface: "I shall come to the pagan women, so they may see that it is customary among the philosophers of the world to look to the differences of souls, not bodies. Plato introduces Aspasia into a disputation. Sappho is a writer, along with Pindar and Alcaeus. Themista philosophizes among the wisest men of Greece." (*Ad gentiles feminas ueniam, ut et apud saeculi philosophos uideant animorum differentias quaeri solere non corporum. Plato inducit Aspasiam disputantem, Sappho cum Pindaro scribitur et Alcaeo; Themista inter sapientissimos Graeciae philosophatur*).

43 Jerome 1912, *Epistula 127*: 6: *unde et noster apostolus: 'Cotidie morior per vestram salutem,' et dominus iuxta antiqua exemplaria: Nisi quis tulerit crucem suam cotidie et secutus fuerit me, non potest meus esse discipulus, multoque ante per prophetam spiritus sanctus: Propter te mortificamur tota die, aestimati sumus ut oves occisionis et post multas aetates illa sententia: Memento semper diem mortis* [...].

infer that the Platonic wisdom is only rightly understood when interpreted according to biblical insight. However, Jerome's Marcella is presented as having an extra set of references that guide her interpretation of Plato's words, also "the most eloquent advice from the satirist: 'Live without forgetting death, for time flies and what I am now saying is already a thing of the past (Persius V 153)'."[44] In these few lines, Marcella is presented as well-versed in both Christian and philosophical literature, and additionally in satire, which means that she is well-educated across a wide range of genres. Her entire education, biblical and classic, led her to live a life directed at death: "Marcella lived in such a way that she never forgot that she would soon die. She dressed in a way that reminded her of the tomb and offered herself as a living sacrifice, reasonable and pleasing to God".[45]

Marcella's life came to an end under dramatic circumstances shortly after the sacking of Rome in 410, where the Visigoths under Alaric plundered the city. Jerome explains that the bloody conquerors burst into Marcella's house, and she confronted the intruders without betraying any fear.[46] When she was beaten with sticks and whips, she felt no pain, but some time after the harsh events, she died. On her deathbed, she was able to calm and comfort the bystander in a way that is reminiscent of both Socrates and Macrina: "smiling despite [Principia's] tears, for she knew that she had lived a good life and that rewards awaited her".[47] Interestingly enough, the grief that is mentioned in *Letter 127* is not Marcella's, but primarily Jerome's own "incredible powerful grief" (*tristitiae incredibilis*) over the loss of his friend.[48]

Letter 127 is not the only existing example that Jerome refers to Plato and *Phaedo* 64a. In fact, there is a telling parallel in Jerome's *Letter 60*, which is written to Heliodorus, Bishop of Altinum, and consists of consolation because Heliodorus' has lost his nephew Nepotianus. Here Jerome writes:

> Plato thinks that a wise man's whole life ought to be a meditation of death; and philosophers praise the sentiment and extol it to the skies. But much more full of power are the words of the apostle: 'I die daily through your glory'. For to have an ideal is one thing, to realize it another. It is one thing to live so as to die, another to die so as to live.[49]

---

44 Jerome 1912, *Epistula 127*: 6: *et numquam peccabis, disertissimique praeceptum satirici: uiue memor leti, fugit hora, hoc, quod loquor, inde est.*

45 Jerome 1912, *Epistula 127*: 6: [...] *aetatem duxit et vixit, ut semper se crederet esse morituram. Sic induta est vestibus, ut meminisset sepulchri, offerens hostiam rationabilem, uiuam, placentem Deo.*

46 Jerome 1912, *Epistula 127*: 13.

47 Jerome 1912, *Epistula 127*: 14: *dum inter lacrimas tuas illa rideret conscientia vitae bonae et praemiis futurorum.*

48 Jerome, *Epistula 127*: 1.

49 Jerome 1910, *Epistula 60*: 14: *Platonis sententia est omnem sapienti uitam meditationem esse mortis. laudant hoc philosophi et in caelum ferunt, sed multo fortius apostolus: cotidie, inquit, morior per uestram gloriam aliud est conari, aliud agere; aliud uiuere morituram, aliud mori uicturum.*

In this case, in contrast to *Letter 127*, Jerome is not trying to use a knowledge of philosophy to demonstrate education, as he seemed to be doing in the case of Marcella. In this instance, he instead uses the reference to Plato to compare Platonic views to the insights of Christianity. He now promotes the Christian message as more powerful than the wisdom found in pagan philosophy which he, however, does not present fairly in this place. Socrates, as we saw in the opening paragraphs, expected a transformation in this life by someone claiming to be a philosopher, this would free the immortal soul, and therefore it is not fair of Jerome to claim that the Platonic saying refers only to an idea and not to its realization. In any case, the Christian soteriology is presented here as clearly exceeding the Pagan understanding, since for Christians the point is not to die in life, but to live in death. For the Christian bishop, Jerome goes on, the deceased are absent, but not dead (*quasi absens, non quasi mortuus*).

Syncletica and Her Divine Symposium

The last of our three examples of 'Socratic' women is the desert mother Syncletica, an eremite from the desert outside Alexandria. She is known to us because of her *Vita* from the fifth century and for her occurrences in the *Apophthegmata Patrum*. Her vita consists of a few biographical information that frame a long speech by Syncletica. She delivers the speech to a group of people that has sought her out with a question concerning their salvation. Unlike in the text about Marcella, Syncletica's connection to the Platonic tradition is described in an indirect way. David Brakke has shown that certain topics in Syncletica's speech indicate to the educated reader that the gathering around her is an event like the Platonic Symposium (Brakke 2009: 188–190). Once in the *Vita* it is also said explicitly: it was "a divine symposium (θεῖον συμπόσιον) for those present. For they were made merry from the chalices of wisdom".[50] Syncletica is obviously the authority in the text, she serves wisdom (σοφία) to the people around her.

Regarding our topic, we must look at a part of Syncletica's speech where she describes ascetic virtues and says:

> The cross is the trophy of victory for us. For our profession is nothing but renunciation of life, the rehearsal of death. Therefore just as the dead do not operate in the body, so neither do we.[51]

Particularly noteworthy is the definition of the ascetic profession: the 'practice of death' (μελέτη θανάτου). We find here the exact same idea and vocabulary as we saw in Plato's *Phaedo*. The underlying logic also seems to be similar to the idea in *Phaedo*: that the body represents a stumbling block for the real

50 Ps.-Athanasius 2002, *Vita Syncleticae*: 30: ἦν μὲν οὖν θεῖον συμπόσιον τῶν παρουσῶν· ἐκ γὰρ τῶν τῆς σοφίας κρατήρων εὐφραίνοντο·

51 Ps.-Athanasius 2002, *Vita Syncleticae*: 76: σταυρός ἐστιν ἡμῖν τὸ τρόπαιον τῆς νίκης· τὸ γὰρ ἐπάγγελμα ἡμῶν οὐδὲν ἄλλο ἐστὶν ἢ ἀποταγὴ βίου καὶ μελέτη θανάτου· ὥσπερ οὖν οἱ νεκροὶ οὐκ ἐνεργοῦσι τῷ σώματι, οὕτω καὶ ἡμεῖς·

spiritual life, and that it is important to control the body. In the *Life of Syncletica*, the spirit, mind and soul are presented as being in opposition to the body:

> For the apostle says, 'The world is crucified to me, and I to the world'. We live in the spirit. We demonstrate virtue through it; we are merciful in accordance with the mind; for 'blessed are the merciful' in soul.[52]

It is worth mentioning in this context, that the anonymous author of the *Life of Syncletica* might not have had *Phaedo* in mind when writing this, he(?) could rely on a text by a Christian ascetic author, Evagrius Ponticus' *Praktikos*, which definitely was known to the author of the *Life*. Evagrius knows and uses the same Platonic vocabulary to describe that the ascetic withdrawal from the world is "meditation on death":

> Separating body from soul belongs solely to the one who joined them together; but separating soul from body belongs also to one who longs for virtue. Our fathers call anachoresis a meditation on death (ἀναχώρησιν μελέτην θανάτου) and a flight from the body.[53]

Now we cannot know if Plato's writings were actively read and received in the Alexandrian communities that produced the *Life of Syncletica*. It is probably also not as important as to state that the particular Socratic formulation from *Phaedo* as well as the Platonic logic behind it, was received and integrated into the Christian ascetic culture, where both men and women were struggling to remove themselves from their bodily needs and as such acted like philosophers training for death in a Platonic sense. The art of mastering one's body was performed by practising fasting and other kinds of renunciation, but also by attempting to control unwanted emotions such as sadness or anger.

At the end of the *Life of Syncletica*, her bodily deterioration is described in great detail and presented as blows by the devil. However, even in this physically miserable state, Syncletica continued to demonstrate "her own virility (ἀνδρείαν)".[54] The devil mistakenly looked down on her as a woman defined by "the weakness of her body"[55], "for he did not know of her virile (ἀνδρεῖον) mind."[56] The description of Syncletica's sickness and death show the reader that Syncletica's teaching, including her rehearsal for death, has proven valid (Krueger 2004: 141–158). Whereas her body is deteriorating, her "greatness of soul"[57] is intact.

---

52 Ps.-Athanasius 2002, *Vita Syncleticae*: 76: ὁ Ἀπόστολος ὡς Ἐμοὶ κόσμος ἐσταύρωται, κἀγὼ τῷ κόσμῳ· τῇ ψυχῇ ζῶμεν· αὐτῇ τὰς ἀρετὰς ἐπιδείξωμεν· κατὰ διάνοιαν ἐλεήσωμεν· Μακάριοι γὰρ οἱ ἐλεήμονες τῇ ψυχῇ·

53 Evagrius Ponticus 1971, *Praktikos*: 52: νβ′ Σῶμα μὲν χωρίσαι ψυχῆς, μόνου ἐστὶ τοῦ συνδήσαντος· ψυχὴν δὲ ἀπὸ σώματος, καὶ τοῦ ἐφιεμένου τῆς ἀρετῆς. Τὴν γὰρ ἀναχώρησιν μελέτην θανάτου καὶ φυγὴν τοῦ σώματος οἱ Πατέρες ἡμῶν ὀνομάζουσιν.

54 Ps.-Athanasius 2002, *Vita Syncleticae*: 111: τὴν οἰκείαν ἀνδρείαν.

55 Ps.-Athanasius 2002, *Vita Syncleticae*: 112: [...] τῇ τοῦ σώματος ἀσθενείᾳ· γυναῖκα ὁρῶν κατεφρόνει·

56 Ps.-Athanasius 2002, *Vita Syncleticae*: 112: ἠγνόει γὰρ αὐτῆς τὸ ἀνδρεῖον φρόνημα.

57 Ps.-Athanasius 2002, *Vita Syncleticae*: 111: μεγαλοψυχίαν.

Conclusion

This article took the Socratic definition of a true philosopher as its point of departure, i.e. the true philosopher practices death already in this life, which means that *he* works on setting *his* soul free. Socrates himself incarnates this ideal in *Phaedo* and shows no fear in the face of death. This Socratic ideal was taken over by early Christian authors who combined it in refined ways with their Christian faith in eternal life. In certain Christian contexts, also women could, at least in literature, be active in the otherwise almost exclusively male domain: philosophy. However, the Christian authors presented a new kind of philosophy: a blend of, on the one hand, classic Platonism with its body-soul-dichotomy and longing for transcendence, and, on the other hand, the particularly Christian message of taking up one's cross.

Socrates appears, like the idealized Christian women mentioned in this article, as a literary figure. We cannot really know him or them, but we can estimate from the way they are described what was going on in the world that produced such descriptions. Here it seems to me, that we can make two conclusions about the Christian communities of the fourth and fifth century that produced and read the *Lives* of Macrina, Marcella and Syncletica: in those communities there were ambivalent stances both to philosophy and to women as thinking agents.

Ambivalence I: What is the stance on Platonic philosophy? In the *Life of Macrina*, Gregory of Nyssa is working on replacing ancient classics with the biblical Scriptures and Christian examples, Macrina has the role of Socrates. Some Platonic features find their way into the description of Macrina, but on the surface of the text, she represents something far better, i.e. the perfected philosophy of Christian asceticism. Marcella, on the other hand, does not replace Socrates, she is well-educated and able to integrate Platonic and further literary wisdom into her superior biblical world-view. Finally, the Platonic heritage is inserted into the *Life of Syncletica*, without it being pointed out directly. In this case Christian ascetism has absorbed parts of Platonic thinking and made it its own. In the three texts, we are dealing with three different strategies of integrating classical and Christian philosophy. The Platonic heritage is used actively, but for the Christian authors it cannot stand alone.

Ambivalence II: What is the understanding of female abilities? We encounter women in the *Lives* of Macrina, Marcella and Syncletica, but they are literarily styled. The moulding of their images is very obvious when Socrates is evoked, but also when the women are described as passionless and fearless on the brink of death. What unites Macrina, Marcella and Syncletica is that their attitude towards death transcends common expectations towards their gender. They do not cry out and say "the kind of things that women usually do". Instead they present well-reasoned attitude that reflects the Late Antique ideal of both pagan philosophy and Christianity. The female figures prove the theory that it is possible to free the soul from the body, because they are freeing their own soul from a life defined by their female sex. The female body, like

any body, is inferior to the mind, and it is no ordinary achievement to overcome one's bodily inclinations. In fact, from a Christian perspective it takes something extraordinary, a level of holiness, to transcend one's bodily existence. The ideal presented in the texts is out of this world.

References

Sources:

Pseudo-Athanasius (2002), *Vita Syncleticae*, in Lamprine G. Ampelarga (ed.), *The Life of Saint Syncletica. Introduction, Critical Text, Commentary*, Byzantina Keimena kai Meletai 31, Thessaloniki. [Elizabeth A. Castelli (transl.), "Pseudo-Athanasius: The Life and Activity of the Holy and Blessed Teacher Syncletica", in Vincent L. Wimbush (ed.) (1990), *Ascetic Behavior in Greco-Roman Antiquity, A Sourcebook,* (Studies in Antiquity and Christianity), Minneapolis: Fortress Press.]

Aurelius Augustinus (1894), *De Genesi ad litteram*, in Joseph Zycha (ed.), *De Genesi Ad Litteram Liber Imperfectus, De Genesi Ad Litteram, Locutiones in Heptateuchum* (CSEL 28), Vienna: Tempsky.

Cicero (1927), *Tusculan Disputations*, J. E. King (transl.), Loeb Classical Library 141, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Evagrius Ponticus (1971), *Praktikos*, in Antoine and Claire Guillaumont (eds.), *Traité pratique ou Le Moine*, tome II, SC 171, Paris, Edition de Cerf.

Gregory of Nazianzus (1856-1866), *Oratio 8,* in J. P. Migne (ed.), MPG 35, Paris, 789–817.

Gregory of Nyssa (1971), *Vita Sanctae Macrinae*, in Pierre Maraval, (ed. and Fr. transl.), *Vie de Sainte Macrine* [par] Grégoire de Nysse, SC 178, Paris: Editions du Cerf. [Translation by Carolinne White (2010), *Lives of Roman Christian Women*, London: Penguin Books, 22–48.]

—. (2014), *De Anima et Resurrectione*, in Andreas Spira (ed.), *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, vol. 3, pars 3, Leiden: Brill.

Jerome (1910), *Epistulae I - LXX*, in Isidor Hilberg (ed.), *Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi epistulae*, pars I (CSEL 54), Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akad. der Wiss.

Jerome (1912), *Epistula* LXXI-CXX, in Isidor Hilberg (ed.), *Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi epistulae*, pars II (CSEL 55), Vienna: Tempsky; Lipsiae: G. Freytgag [Carolinne White (transl.) (2010), *Lives of Roman Christian Women*. London: Penguin Books, 57–70.]

Jerome (1969-1970), *Commentarii in prophetas minores*, in M. Adriaen (ed.), *Commentarii in prophetas minores*, CCSL 76A, Turnhout: Brepols. [Translation in: Thomas P. Scheck (ed.) (2016), *Commentaries on the Twelve Prophets*, vol. 1, InterVarsity Press.]

Plato (2017), *Phaedo*, in Chris Emlyn-Jones and William Preddy (eds.), *Plato. Euthyphro. Apology. Crito. Phaedo*. Loeb Classical Library 36, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Literature:

Apostolopoulos, Charalambos (1986), *Phaedo Christianus. Studien zur Verbindung und Abwägung des Verhältnisses zwischen dem platonischen 'Phaidon' und dem Dialog Gregors von Nyssa* 'Über die Seele und die Auferstehung', Frankfurt: Peter Lang.

Brakke, David (2009), *Demons and the Making of the Monk: Spiritual Combat in Early Christianity*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Burrus, Virginia (2001), "Is Macrina a Woman? Gregory of Nyssa's Dialogue on the Soul and Resurrection", in Graham Ward (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to Postmodern Theology*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, pp. 249–264.
Cain, Andrew (2009), *The Letters of Jerome: Asceticism, Biblical Exegesis, and the Construction of Christian Authority in Late Antiquity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Christensen, Maria Munkholt; Gemeinhardt, Peter (2019), "Holy Women and Men as Teachers in Late Antique Christianity", *Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum* 23, 288–328.
Clark, Elizabeth A. (1994), "Ideology, History, and the Construction of 'Woman' in Late Ancient Christianity", *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2: 155–184.
Clark, Elizabeth A. (1998), "The Lady Vanishes. Dilemmas of a Feminist Historian after the 'Linguistic Turn'", *Church History* 67 (1998): 1–31.
Clark, Elizabeth A. (2004), *History, Theory, Text. Historians and the Linguistic Turn*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
Cobb, L. Stephanie (2009), "Real Women or Objects of Discourse? The Search for Early Christian Women", *Religion Compass* 3: 379–394.
Delcomminette, Sylvain, Pieter d'Hoine, and Marc-Antoine Gavray (eds.) (2015), *Ancient Readings of Plato's Phaedo*, Leiden: Brill.
Hadot, Pierre (1995), *Philosophy as a Way of Life. Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
Harrison, Verna E.F. (1990), "Male and Female in Cappadocian Theology", *The Journal of Theological Studies* 41 (2): 441–471.
Hartmann, Udo (2018), *Die Lebenswelten der paganen gelehrten und ihre hagiographische Ausgestaltung in den Philosophenviten von Porphyrios bis Damaskios*, Band 2, Bonn: Dr. Rudolf Habelt GMBH.
Krueger, Derek (2004), *Writing and Holiness. The Practice of Authorship in the Early Christian East*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
Maraval, Pierre (ed. and Fr. transl.) (1971), *Vie de Sainte Macrine [par] Grégoire de Nysse*, SC 178, Paris, Editions du Cerf.
Marques, Marcelo P. (2018), "The Exchange of Pleasures and Pains in the Phaedo", in: Gabriele Conelli, Thomas M. Robinson, Francisco Bravo (eds.), *Plato's Phaedo*, Baden-Baden: Academia Verlag, pp. 133–149.
Matthews, Shelly (2001), "Thinking of Thecla. Issues in Feminist Historiography", *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 17 (2): 39–55.
Meissner, Henriette M. (1992), *Rhetorik und Theologie. Der Dialog Gregors von Nyssa De anima et resurrectione* (Patrologie 1), Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.
Muehlberger, Ellen (2012), "Salvage: Macrina and the Christian Project of Cultural Reclamation", *Church History* 81 (2): 273–297.
Novembri, Valeria (2010), "Philosophia and Christian Culture: an Antidote for Women Weakness in Jerome's Letters", in J. Brown, A. Cameron, M. Edwards, M. Vinzent (eds.), *Studia Patristica*, vol. 54, Leuven: Peters, pp. 471–485.
Smith, J. Warren (2001), "Macrina, Tamer of Horses and Healer of Souls: Grief and the Therapy of Hope in Gregory of Nyssa's 'De Anima et Resurrectione'", *The Journal of Theological Studies* 52 (1): 37–60.
Williams, Rowan (1993), "Macrina's Death-bed Revisited: Gregory of Nyssa on Mind and Passion", in Lionel R. Wickham, Caroline P. Bammel (eds.), *Christian Faith and Greek Philosophy in Late Antiquity*, Leiden: Brill, pp. 227–246.
Urbano, Arthur P. (2013), *The Philosophical Life. Biography and the Crafting of Intellectual Identity in Late Antiquity*, Washington: Catholic University of America Press.

Marija Munkholt Kristensen

Meditatio mortis
Meditacije o smrti, filozofiji i rodu u kasnoantičkoj hagiografiji

Apstrakt:

Prema Sokratu, opisanog u Platonovom *Fedonu*, definicija pravog filozofa je mudar čovek koji kontinuirano vežba umiranje i smrt. Već u ovom životu filozof pokušava da oslobodi svoju dušu od tela, kako bi stekao istinsko znanje kako se duša progresivno odvaja od tela. Vekovima nakon što je napisan, Platonov Fedon nije prestao da igra značajnu ulogu za neke ranohrišćanske autore, a ovaj članak se fokusira na tri slučaja u kojima hrišćanske žene oponašalje Sokrata i / ili njegovu definiciju filozofije. Ove slučajeve nalazimo u hagiografskoj literaturi iz četvrtog i petog veka na različitim lokacijama u Rimskom carstvu - u žitijima Makrine, Markele i Sinkletike. Sve ove žene su, na manje ili više direktne načine i prema različitim strategijama u vezi sa uticajem paganske filozofije na hrišćanstvo, pod uticajem platonske filosofije i muškog filozofa Sokrata. Kao žene koje se usavršavaju u filozofiji, one šire zajednička kulturna očekivanja ostalim ženama i otkrivaju kako su hrišćanski autori u određenim kontekstima pripisivali autoritet ženskim figurama.

Ključne reči: Makrina, Marcella, Sinkletika, Sokrat, Platon, filozofija, rod, emocije, Grigorije Niski, Jeronim

UDK: 27-42
https://doi.org/10.2298/FID2102194M
Original Scientific Article
Received 24.03.2021. Accepted 07.05.2021.

PHILOSOPHY AND SOCIETY
VOL. 32, NO. 2, 157–334

To cite text:
Mitralexis, Sotiris (2021), "An Attempt at Clarifying Maximus the Confessor's Remarks on (the Fate of) Sexual Difference in *Ambiguum 41*", *Philosophy and Society* 32 (2): 194–203.

Sotiris Mitralexis

AN ATTEMPT AT CLARIFYING MAXIMUS THE CONFESOR'S REMARKS ON (THE FATE OF) SEXUAL DIFFERENCE IN *AMBIGUUM 41*

ABSTRACT
Maximus the Confessor's *Ambiguum 41* contains some rather atypical observations concerning the distinction of sexes in the human person. There is a certain ambiguity as to whether the distinction of the sexes was intended by God and is 'by nature' (as found in *Genesis* and asserted by most Church Fathers) or a product of the Fall. Namely, Christ is described three times as "shaking out of nature the distinctive characteristics of male and female", "driving out of nature the difference and division of male and female" and "removing the difference between male and female". Different readings of those passages engender important implications that can be drawn out from the Confessor's thought, both eschatological implications and otherwise. The subject has been picked up by Cameron Partridge, Doru Costache and Karolina Kochanczyk–Boninska, among others, but is by no means settled, as they draw quite different conclusions. The noteworthy and far-reaching implications of Maximus' theological stance and problems are not the object of this paper. In a 2017 paper I attempted to demonstrate what Maximus exactly says in these peculiar and oft-commented passages through a close reading, in order to avoid a two-edged Maximian misunderstanding: to either draw overly radical implications from those passages, projecting decidedly non-Maximian visions on the historical Maximus, or none at all, as if those passages represented standard Patristic positions. Here, I am revisiting this argument, given that the interest in what the Confessor has to say on the subject seems to be increasing.

KEYWORDS
Maximus the Confessor, gender, body, male, female, sexual difference, nature

Introduction

Maximus the Confessor's *Ambiguum* 41 includes certain rather interesting remarks concerning sexual difference, which have attracted the attention of the contemporary debate on gender and patristics. In 2017 I had published a short note on the problem of sexual difference in Maximus the Confessor's *Ambiguum* 41 (Mitralexis 2017); this was neither the first nor the last examination of

Sotiris Mitralexis: Sabbatical Research Scholar, IOCS Cambridge; Research Fellow, University of Winchester; sm2267@cam.ac.uk.

Maximus' peculiar and rather untypical arguments in *Ambiguum* 41, an aspect of Maximian thought with which numerous scholars have engaged in their studies (some of which will be indicatively cited below). Rather than offering a comprehensive and analytical presentation or exhausting the considerable body of scholarship on Maximus or gender in late antiquity, I had merely attempted a close and brief reading of what *Ambiguum* 41 actually *says* on the matter, rather than what I think *about* it.

Overcoming Sexual Difference in *Ambiguum 41*

Maximus the Confessor's *Ambiguum ad Ioannem 41*[1] mainly concerns Maximus' fivefold cosmological division to be overcome by humanity through Christ, and contains a number of quite uncommon assertions concerning sexual difference, which may seem not to be in complete harmony with other passages in the *Ambigua*; for example, the assertion that the human person, following Christ, "shakes out of nature the distinctive characteristics of male and female" (*Amb. 41*: PG91, 1305C), "drives out of nature the difference and division of male and female" (*Amb. 41*: 1309A), and "removes the difference between male and female" (*Amb. 41*: 1309D). Apart from the treatments of gender, marriage, and cognate themes by classic Maximian scholars such as Hans Urs von Balthasar and Lars Thunberg among many others, and apart from Adam Cooper's study (Cooper 2005) dedicated to the Maximian conception of the body, a number of scholars have explicitly taken up this particular question, i.e. the challenge posed by the peculiarity of *Amb.Io. 41*'s passages: Cameron Partridge, in his dissertation *Transfiguring Sexual Difference in Maximus the Confessor* (Partridge 2008), Doru Costache in two articles (Costache 2013; 2014), and Karolina Kochańczyk-Bonińska in a book chapter (Kochańczyk-Bonińska 2017), as well as Dionysios Skliris (Skliris 2017). Emma Brown Dewhurst has also hinted at the subject in her dissertation (Brown Dewhurst 2017) and is currently working on a more comprehensive exposition thereof (including her paper here in *Filozofija i Društvo*). However, interpretations of what the Confessor exactly means in these passages differs considerably – and different interpretations entail different *implications*, some of which could be quite striking and of interest not only to Maximian and Patristic philosophical anthropology, but also to fields such as gender studies, as Partridge has demonstrated. In the main section of this short paper, I will simply attempt a close reading of these particular passages, without comparing them to other Maximian passages concerning (gender and) sexual difference or to secondary literature: I shall focus on those passages *exclusively*.[2]

1 "The natures are innovated, and God becomes man" (Maximos the Confessor 2014: 2:102–112).

2 In this close reading much is owed to Prof. Torstein Tollefsen (University of Oslo), Dr Sebastian Mateiescu (University of Bucharest), Dr Vladimir Cvetkovic (University of Belgrade), Prof. Christophe Erismann (Universität Wien/University of Lausanne), and Prof. Susumu Tanabe (Galatasaray University), with whom these passages have been

The big question is whether, in the context of Maximus' vision, sexual difference will be eschatologically retained (albeit transformed) or abolished – this is a debatable question despite the clarity of *Gal* 3:28, which enumerates sexual difference among other *social*, not natural or ontological, differences (like slave and free, Jew and Gentile) which are not present in Christ. Another question is whether sexual difference is prelapsarian or lapsarian, i.e. natural or a corruption-related effect of the Fall; while *Genesis* 1:27 and 5:2 are quite clear on this, advocating the former, it is quite startling that this can be seen as a debatable question in Maximus.[3]

Concerning the context: thematically, *Ambiguum 41* focuses mainly on cosmological and ontological themes. To quote Costache's presentation thereof,

> the argument of *Amb.Io. 41* develops in roughly five parts, namely, the prologue and the list of five divisions, which describe the whole of reality from the horizon of the created and the uncreated down to the human being (*Amb. 41*: 1304D–1305A); the project of the five unions, beginning from the narrowest point represented by humankind to end with the culminating synthesis of the created and the uncreated (*Amb. 41*: 1305A–1308C); the fall, its divisive nature, and the five syntheses accomplished by Christ (1308C–1312B); the factors that make unification possible (*Amb. 41*: PG 91,1312B–1313B); and the interpretation of the initial Gregorian saying that serves as a pretext for the chapter (*Amb. 41*: 1313C–1316A) (Costache 2014, 360–61).

The five cosmological divisions are: (a) the created–uncreated distinction, (b) the distinction between the intelligible and the sensible, (c) between heaven and earth, (d) between paradise and the inhabited world, and finally (e) the division into male and female (*Amb.Io. 41*, §1–2). These divisions are to be bridged by humanity after Christ in reverse order, so that the divine economy can be fulfilled.

In order for the proposed reading to take place, working definitions (not void of oversimplification) of key terms are in order:

- For Maximus, the *logoi of natures* are the uncreated *wills, intentions, and utterances* of God for created beings.
- *Substances* and *natures* are, of course, created, meaning that they belong to the second part of the first cosmological and ontological division.
- *Nature* and *according to nature* mainly and usually refer to a creature's *prelapsarian* state. (The Fall, a basic ontological term for Maximian ontology, need not necessarily be *historically* understood here for Maximus' *Weltanschauung* to be coherent; after all, the Confessor comments that the Fall takes place *simultaneously* with the creation of the human being [ἅμα τῷ γενέσθαι, *QThal* 61], whichever the implications or the potential contemporary interpretations of that might be).

discussed in a Maximian workshop at the Halki Seminary on the island of Halki/Heybeliada (May 2016).

3 Cameron Partridge traces Gregory of Nyssa's influence on Maximus as far as this issue is concerned in the second chapter of his thesis. Cf. Partridge 2008: 23–72.

The brevity of this paper dictates that only the crucial passages themselves be studied here: sexual difference is the *first* division to be transcended by the human person (it being the *last* cosmological division) after Christ who has first achieved this. In a tribute to the Ambiguum's own logic, let us start from the last passage:

> [1] Thus He [Christ] united, first of all, ourselves in Himself through removal of the difference between male and female, and instead of men and women, in whom this mode of division is especially evident, He showed us as properly and truly to be simply human beings, thoroughly formed according to Him, bearing His image intact and completely unadulterated, touched in no way by any marks of corruption. (*Amb.Io.* 41.9.10–18, transl. Constas 2014)[4]

There is a distinction in Maximian thought between *difference* and *division*, in which certain differences will be eschatologically retained, but *not* as divisions. It is crucial to see that this is *not* what Maximus proposes here concerning the transcendence of sexual difference in Christ and, by extension, the eschatological state of humanity: it is the *difference,* διαφορά, itself that is removed, not merely the division. The second passage:

> [2] In this way [i.e. by becoming man by virgin birth], He [Christ] showed, I think, that there was perhaps another mode, foreknown by God, for the multiplication of human beings, had the first human being kept the commandment and not *cast* himself down to the level of irrational animals by misusing the mode of his proper powers–and so He drove out from nature the difference and division into male and female, a difference, as I have said, which He in no way needed in order to become man, and without which existence would perhaps have been possible. There is no need for this division to last *perpetually, for in Christ Jesus,* says the divine apostle*, there is neither male nor female* [Gal 3:28]. (*Amb.Io.* 41.7.6–16, transl. Constas 2014)[5]

Sexual difference, "the difference and division into male and female" (τὴν κατὰ τὸ ἄῤῥεν καὶ θῆλυ διαφοράν τε καὶ διαίρεσιν – note the use of both 'difference' and 'division' together) and not only a misuse of that difference for post-lapsarian sexual reproduction, was "driven out from nature" by Christ [τῆς φύσεως ἐξωθούμενος].

---

4 *Amb.Io.* 41.9.10–18, original Greek text from (Constas 2014): "[...] καὶ πρῶτον ἑνώσας ἡμᾶς ἑαυτοῖς ἐν ἑαυτῷ διὰ τῆς ἀφαιρέσεως τῆς κατὰ τὸ ἄῤῥεν καὶ τὸ θῆλυ διαφορᾶς, καὶ ἀντὶ ἀνδρῶν καὶ γυναικῶν, οἷς ὁ τῆς διαιρέσεως ἐνθεωρεῖται μάλιστα τρόπος, ἀνθρώπους μόνον κυρίως τε καὶ ἀληθῶς ἀπέδειξε κατ' αὐτὸν δι' ὅλου μεμορφωμένους καὶ σώαν αὐτοῦ καὶ παντελῶς ἀκίβδηλον τὴν εἰκόνα φέροντας, ἧς κατ' οὐδένα τρόπον οὐδὲν τῶν φθορᾶς γνωρισμάτων ἅπτεται [...]"

5 *Amb.Io.* 41.7.6–16, original Greek text (Constas 2014): "ὁμοῦ τε καὶ κατὰ τὸ αὐτὸ δεικνύς, ὡς οἶμαι, τυχὸν ὡς ἦν καὶ ἄλλος τρόπος τῆς εἰς πλῆθος τῶν ἀνθρώπων αὐξήσεως προεγνωσμένος Θεῷ, εἰ τὴν ἐντολὴν ὁ πρῶτος ἐφύλαξεν ἄνθρωπος καὶ πρὸς κτηνωδίαν ἑαυτὸν τῷ κατὰ παράχρησιν τρόπῳ τῶν οἰκείων δυνάμεων μὴ κατέβαλε, καὶ τὴν κατὰ τὸ ἄῤῥεν καὶ θῆλυ διαφοράν τε καὶ διαίρεσιν τῆς φύσεως ἐξωθούμενος, ἧς πρὸς τὸ γενέσθαι, καθάπερ ἔφην, ἄνθρωπος οὐδόλως προσεδεήθη, ὧν δὲ ἄνευ εἶναι τυχόν ἐστι δυνατόν. Ταῦτα εἰς τὸ διηνεκὲς παραμεῖναι οὐκ ἀνάγκη. Ἐν γὰρ Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, φησὶν ὁ θεῖος ἀπόστολος, οὔτε ἄῤῥεν οὔτε θῆλυ."

While this difference and division does not need to last perpetually, it *is/was* part of humanity's *nature,* and not simply a post-lapsarian consequence.

> [3] This is why man was introduced last among beings–like a kind of natural bond mediating between the universal extremes through his parts, and unifying through himself things that by nature are separated from each other by a great distance–so that, by making of his own division a beginning of the unity which gathers up all things to God their Author, and proceeding by order and rank through the mean terms, he might reach the limit of the sublime ascent that comes about through the union of all things in God, in whom there is no division, completely shaking off from nature, by means of a supremely dispassionate condition of divine virtue, the property of male and female, which in no way was linked to the original principle of the divine plan concerning human generation, so that he might be shown forth as, and become solely a human being according to the divine plan, not divided by the designation of male and male (according to the principle by which he formerly came into being), nor divided into the parts that now appear around him, thanks to the perfect union, as I said, with his own principle, according to which he exists. (*Amb.Io.* 41.3.1–19, transl. Constas 2014)[6]

Now the reference is to humanity and the human person, after Christ-not Christ himself. Let us try to 'unlock' this:

[i] Man [is to] *completely* shake off from nature [..] the property of male and female[7] (the property, not only the *division* retaining a *difference*).

[ii] (which in no way was linked to the original principle of the divine plan concerning human generation),[8]

[iii] so that he might be shown forth as and become solely a human being according to the divine plan,[9]

[iv] not divided by the designation of male and male[10]

[v] (according to the principle by which he formerly came into being).[11]

---

6 *Amb.Io.* 41.3.1–19, original Greek text (Constas 2014): "Τούτου δὴ χάριν ἔσχατος ἐπεισάγεται τοῖς οὖσιν ὁ ἄνθρωπος, οἱονεὶ σύνδεσμός τις φυσικὸς τοῖς καθόλου διὰ τῶν οἰκείων μερῶν μεσιτεύων ἄκροις, καὶ εἰς ἓν ἄγων ἐν ἑαυτῷ τὰ πολλῷ κατὰ τὴν φύσιν ἀλλήλων διεστηκότα τῷ διαστήματι, ἵνα τῆς πρὸς Θεόν, ὡς αἴτιον, τὰ πάντα συναγούσης ἑνώσεως ἐκ τῆς ἰδίας πρότερον ἀρξάμενος διαιρέσεως καθεξῆς διὰ τῶν μέσων εἱρμῷ καὶ τάξει προβαίνων, εἰς τὸν Θεὸν λάβῃ τὸ πέρας τῆς διὰ πάντων κατὰ τὴν ἕνωσιν γινομένης ὑψηλῆς ἀναβάσεως, ἐν ᾧ οὐκ ἔστι διαίρεσις, τὴν μηδαμῶς ἠρτημένην δηλαδὴ κατὰ τὸν προηγούμενον λόγον τῆς περὶ τὴν γένεσιν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου θείας προθέσεως κατὰ τὸ θῆλυ καὶ τὸ ἄρσεν ἰδιότητα τῇ περὶ τὴν θείαν ἀρετὴν ἀπαθεστάτῃ σχέσει πάντη τῆς φύσεως ἐκτιναξάμενος, ὥστε δειχθῆναί τε καὶ γενέσθαι κατὰ τὴν θείαν πρόθεσιν ἄνθρωπον μόνον, τῇ κατὰ τὸ ἄρσεν καὶ τὸ θῆλυ προσηγορίᾳ μὴ διαιρούμενον, καθ' ὃν καὶ προηγουμένως γεγένηται λόγον τοῖς νῦν περὶ αὐτὸν οὖσι τμήμασι μὴ μεριζόμενον, διὰ τὴν τελείαν πρὸς τὸν ἴδιον, ὡς ἔφην, λόγον, καθ' ὃν ἐστιν, ἕνωσιν."

7 Κατὰ τὸ θῆλυ καὶ τὸ ἄρσεν ἰδιότητα πάντη τῆς φύσεως ἐκτιναξάμενος.

8 Τὴν μηδαμῶς ἠρτημένην δηλαδὴ κατὰ τὸν προηγούμενον λόγον τῆς περὶ τὴν γένεσιν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου θείας προθέσεως.

9 ὥστε δειχθῆναί τε καὶ γενέσθαι κατὰ τήν θείαν πρόθεσιν ἄνθρωπον μόνον.

10 τῇ κατὰ τὸ ἄρσεν καὶ τὸ θῆλυ προσηγορίᾳ μὴ διαιρούμενον.

11 καθ' ὃν καὶ προηγουμένως γεγένηται λόγον.

The property of male and female *is* a part of nature, which is to be 'shaken off' by mankind following Christ. (By 'nature' Maximus usually refers to the pre-lapsarian state as well.)

This part of nature was [ii] not foreseen (a) in the *logos* of humanity's nature/substance –meaning that God did *not* intend for sexual difference to exist *at all* and this would be a product of the Fall (contrary to Genesis, that is) – or (b) *was* foreseen, but *not* in the *logos* of human *generation*. Could this mean that only human *generation,* i.e. sexual reproduction, is post-lapsarian, sexual difference itself being pre-lapsarian?

The phrasing in [ii] suggests the latter, which would be much more mild, scriptural and 'mainstream' than the former.

However, this changes in [iii]: here, divine intention (θεία πρόθεσις for humanity, practically synonymous with the humanity's *logos*) dictates human persons *without the very property of male and female,* not only without their sexual reproduction.

One objection could be that θεία πρόθεσις in [iii] refers to God's providence and economy and *not* to humanity's *logos*. But this is not the case, as is made apparent in the phrasing of [v]: there, the extinction ("completely shaking off / πάντη ἐκτιναξάμενος") or rather inexistence of sexual *difference* (as we end up with ἄνθρωπον μόνον), and not only of sexual reproduction at the level of the *logos* of humanity, καθ᾽ ὃν καὶ προηγουμένως γεγένηται – i.e., not only an eschatological perspective, but a past reality pertaining to humanity's coming into being. Does the property of sexual difference exist at the level of *nature* (as [i] and the other passages would indicate), but not at the level of *logos of nature*, and if yes, how?

As we can see, the problem here is that Maximus, an indispensable Confessor for the Christian Churches, does not only assert that sexual difference *itself* (and not only sexual division or reproduction), will not endure the *eschata*, thus going beyond standard interpretations of *Gal* 3:28, but he also goes on to assert that the differentiation between male and female is not even part of humanity's *logos* of nature, of God's prelapsarian (or rather a-lapsarian) will and intention for humankind–quite contrary to Genesis.

The most noteworthy implications of this theological stance (and, apart from Patristic and philosophical anthropology, I name gender studies as an example), as well as its problems, are beyond the scope of this paper, which has a narrower focus. Here I am simply trying to demonstrate *what does Maximus exactly say* in these peculiar and oft-commented passages, in order to avoid a two-edged Maximian misunderstanding–which would either draw overly radical implications from those passages, projecting definitely non-Maximian visions on the historical Maximus, or none at all, as if those passages represented standard Patristic positions. As far as contemporary discussions of *Ambiggum 41* are concerned, the pressing question, to which the next section is dedicated, would be: where should we draw the line of anachronism in reading Maximus today?

Contemporary Readings and the Limits of Anachronism

Ambiguum 41 is by no means the *only* source from which one may extract an accurate reflection of Maximus' anthropology and/or understanding of sexual difference – far from it. And it is indeed true that a sizeable *caveat* lies in the need to understand Maximus' choice of words in their historical and wider intellectual context, not to mention the context of Maximus' own 'system' and thought. At the same time, it cannot be negated that Maximus' emphatic and intentional (given their repetition) phrases such as "shaking out of nature the distinctive characteristics of male and female", "driving out of nature the difference and division of male and female" and "removing the difference between male and female" are not quite characteristic of mainstream Christian patristic and late antique thought, in spite of the fact that 'potential interlocutors' may be found in the thought of Gregory of Nyssa and others. It is indeed this element that has driven scholars to offer the most varied interpretations to Maximus' remarks on sexual difference in *Ambiguum* 41, with the spectrum spanning from trying to 'explain them away' – by arguing that these truly untypical remarks are indeed fully compatible with the patristic mainstream or that they simply advocate marriage between a man an a woman – to arguing that they are closer to contemporary idea(l)s of gender fluidity or transgenderism – as in the case of Partridge's dissertation, for example.

Projecting any of those options onto the historical Maximus would, of course, amount to serious anachronism (which Partridge, among others, carefully avoids). However, the fine points of the history of ideas and of the evolution in the use of terms cannot lead us to the conclusion that Maximus *did not mean anything at all* with his emphatic, intentional and repeated statements; that Maximus could not have meant to say *this in particular* (whatever that might be, within the wide spectrum highlighted above) cannot mean *that Maximus did not intend to say anything.* While Maximus' remarks are not to be read *literally* in the sense that contemporary biblical literalism ascribes to the term, thinking that a seventh-century ascetic could provide solutions for twenty-first-century anthropological debates *mot à mot*, it would be perhaps imprudent to overlook their bizarre texture simply because they do not fit in the convenient boxes we are used to in our day-to-day engagement with patristic and late antique texts.

Conclusion

As I have tried to argue in this paper, Maximus *does indeed* quite clearly state, in the context of his cosmological *and* soteriological vision –since the human person is both 'microcosm' *and* 'mediator'– that, following Christ, the human person is to *completely* shake off from nature the property (and not only the division or difference) of male and female, a property not included in the original human *logos*. Without doing so, and being still "divided by the designation of male and male", the human person cannot "be shown forth as and become

solely a human being according to the divine plan". And since sexual difference *is* a part of nature *today*, the change called for is also a change *at the level of nature* (in the metaphysical sense the word bears in the Maximian vocabulary) so that the original natural plan and human *logos* as articulated before this intrusion of sexual differentiation – *contra* Genesis – may be repristinated. On top of that, the eschatological state is not to include sexual difference *itself* and not merely sexual division or reproduction, according to Maximus' own exposition. Yes: these Maximian assertions in the context of both his metaphysical anthropology and his cosmology are anything but standard. Yet, as far as what Maximus *says* (or rather, writes) is concerned, that's about it.

Apart from what Maximus *says/writes*, what *exactly* does Maximus *mean* by that, given its clear and not merely apparent inconsistency with his age's mainstream Christian witness? Confidently and conclusively answering this question is not within our purview, if we are to remain true to the historical Maximus. Admittedly, it is easier to show what the seventh-century ascetic *did not* quite mean – from explaining the eschatological *retainment* of sexual difference and asserting that this difference is in accordance with humanity's *logos* to endorsing contemporary gender fluidity or same sex relationships. However, what the historical Maximus meant is only part of the story. The study of patristic and late antique texts is not limited to an exercise in philology (hence journal titles such as *Philosophy and Society*). Intelligently drawing from pre-modern sources in order to argue on contemporary issues is indeed desirable, to the extent that untenable anachronistic distortions are not asserted, i.e. to the extent that the claim of bringing forth a faithful facsimile from the distant past is not raised. Were this not to be desirable, notions such as 'political theology' or even 'theological ethics' (in today's world) would be vacated of any meaning whatsoever. And, case in point, arguing that there were seminal voices in the Christian past whose witness would be wholly incompatible with the particular form 'gender essentialism' has taken during modernity would not be at all more anachronistic than arguing that this particular form of understanding of sexual difference echoes the unified and undifferentiated witness of the Christian past. If one desires to get creative, (emphatic, intentional, and repeated) remarks such as those by Maximus in *Ambiguum* 41 indeed abound with potential implications for today's world, the scope of which should by all means be wildly and creatively debated on the basis of a close reading of the philosophical Church Father's text - and on terrains other than that of patristic philology proper. After all, it is indeed the One sitting on the throne that says "Behold, I make all things new".

References

Brown Dewhurst, Emma (2017), "Revolution in the Microcosm: Love and Virtue in the Cosmological Ethics of St Maximus the Confessor", PhD diss., Durham: Durham University.

Constas, Nicholas (ed. and trans.) (2014), *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers: The Ambigua, Maximus the Confessor*, vol. 2, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library 29, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Cooper, Adam G. (2005), *The Body in St Maximus the Confessor: Holy Flesh, Wholly Deified*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Costache, Doru (2013), "Living above Gender: Insights from Saint Maximus the Confessor", *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 21 (2): 261–290.

Costache, Doru (2014), "Gender, Marriage, and Holiness in Amb. Io. 10 and 41", in *Men and Women in the Early Christian Centuries*, Wendy Mayer, Ian J. Elmer (ed.), Early Christian Studies 18, Strathfield: St Pauls Publications, pp. 351–371.

Kochańczyk-Bonińska, Karolina (2017), "The Philosophical Basis of Maximus' Concept of Sexes: The Reasons and Purposes of the Distinction Between Man and Woman", in *Maximus the Confessor as a European Philosopher*, Sotiris Mitralexis, Georgios Steiris, Marcin Podbielski, Sebastian Lalla (eds.), Eugene, Oregon: Cascade, pp. 229–239.

Maximus Confessoris (1863), *Ambiguorum* Liber (=*Amb.Io.*), in *Patrologia Graeca*, J. P. Migne (ed.), Paris.

—. (1990), *Quaestiones ad Thalassium II: Quaestiones LVI-LXV* (=*QThal*), Carl Laga, Carlos Steel (eds.), Corpus Cristianorum Series Graeca 22, Turhout: Brepols.

—. (2014), *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers – The Ambigua,* Nicholas Constas (ed. and transl.), vol. 2, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library 29, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Mitralexis, Sotiris (2017), "Rethinking the Problem of Sexual Difference in Maximus the Confessor's Ambiguum 41", *Analogia* 2: 107–112.

Skliris, Dionysios (2017), "The Ontology of Mode in the Thought of Maximus the Confessor and its Consequences for a Theory of Gender", in *Mustard Seeds in the Public Square: Between and Beyond Theology, Philosophy, and Society,* Sotiris Mitralexis (ed.), Wilmington, DE: Vernon Press, pp. 39–60.

Partridge, Cameron Elliot (2008), *Transfiguring Sexual Difference in Maximus the Confessor*, PhD diss., Harvard Divinity School.

Sotiris Mitraleksis

Pokušaj preispitivanja primedbi Maksima Ispovednika (o sudbini) polnih razlika u *Nedoumici 41*

Apstrakt:

Neodoumica (*Ambiguum*) *41* Maksima Ispovednika sadrži neka prilično netipična zapažanja u vezi sa razlikom među polovima u ljudskoj ličnosti: postoji određena dvosmislenost u pogledu toga da li je razlika među polovima Božija namera, to jest da li je ona „po prirodi" (kao što je to starozavetna knjiga *Postanja* i većina crkvenih otaca tvrdi) ili je ona proizvod pada, pošto je Hristos tri puta opisan kako „izbacuju iz prirode osobenosti muškog i ženskog pola", „istiskuje iz prirode razliku i podelu na muško i žensko" i „uklanja razlike između muškog i ženskog". Različita čitanja tih odlomaka rađaju važne implikacije koje se mogu izvući iz Ispovednikove misli, kako eshatološke tako i druge. Bavljenje ovom temom su, između ostalih,

odabrali Kameron Partridž, Doru Kostake i Karolina Kočanžik – Boninska, ali ni na koji način ona nije rešena, jer su formulisani sasvim drugačiji zaključci. Značajne i dalekosežne implikacije Maksimovog teološkog stava, kao i njegovi problemi, nisu predmet ovog rada. U radu iz 2017. godine pokušao sam detaljno da demonstriram šta Maksim tačno kaže u ovim neobičnim i često komentarisanim odlomcima, kako bi se izbegao dvosmerni maksimovski nesporazum – koji bi iz tih odlomaka povukao previše radikalne implikacije, projektujući definitivno ne-maksimovske vizije na istorijskog Maksima ili pak projektući gotovo nikakve vizije, uzimajući te odlomke kao standardna patristička stanovišta. Ovde, ponovo preispitujem ovaj argument, s obzirom na to da se čini da interes za ono što Ispovednik kaže na tu temu ne splašnjava, već raste.

Ključne reči: Maksim Ispovednik, rod, telo, muško, žensko, polna razlika, priroda

UDK: 271.2-284
https://doi.org/10.2298/FID2102204B
Original Scientific Article
Received 15.04.2021. Accepted 25.05.2021.

PHILOSOPHY AND SOCIETY
VOL. 32, NO. 2, 157–334

To cite text:
Brown Dewhurst, Emma (2021), "The Absence of Sexual Difference in the Theology of Maximus the Confessor", *Philosophy and Society* 32 (2): 204–225.

Emma Brown Dewhurst

THE ABSENCE OF SEXUAL DIFFERENCE IN THE THEOLOGY OF MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR

ABSTRACT
There has been much attention devoted in the last decade and especially in the last few years to Maximus the Confessor's beliefs concerning sexual difference and its removal. The most important text on this topic is *Ambiguum 41*. There has been mixed reception of this text, with some scholars advocating that Maximus believes that sexual difference was absent from original human nature and will return to such a state in the eschaton; and other scholars believing that this should be read as a metaphorical absence. This article re-evaluates the text in question and argues that the former position should be maintained. It goes some way to bring together current scholarship on the text and to answers questions that arise from the opposing reading.

KEYWORDS
Ambiguum 41, body, Byzantine theology, Byzantine philosophy, eschatology, gender, Maximus the Confessor, protology, sex

In the works of St Maximus the Confessor, and in particular in his *Ambiguum 41*, we find the proposition that, in the reconciliation of the cosmos to God, sexual differences between human beings will be removed. Maximus tells us that the cosmos is recapitulated in Christ, in whom there is no male and female, and consequently a part of what it means to become like God is to overcome sexual difference. Maximus' claim seems to refer to a bodily change, since he writes that God might have originally intended for human beings to reproduce in a different way, had the Fall not required the introduction of sexed parts to human bodies. There is some division in Maximus scholarship however, about whether Maximus really believed that humans were bodily changed as a result of the Fall, and will change again to be sexless in the next life. Some scholarly interpretations prefer to read Maximus as metaphorical at this point in the text, and referring to future change in humans as a state of mind that is beyond the need for a gender division, rather than a material change to human bodies. Clarification on Maximus belief concerning sex here is especially important since Maximus' theology is influential in contemporary theological

Emma Brown Dewhurst: Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Evangelisch-Theologische Fakultät, Ludwig Maximilians Universität München; emma.dewhurst@evtheol.uni-muenchen.de.

ethics, and elucidating his position will feed into contemporary discussions of sex and gender in theology.

In this paper, I argue that Maximus should be read as adhering to the belief that human bodies became sexed in connection to the Fall, and that the sexed parts of the human body will be removed in the life to come. I begin by presenting Maximus in his own words on this topic, briefly discussing the three parts of *Ambiguum 41* that cover the removal of sexual distinction. Following this, I build on the work done by Cameron Partridge, Karolina Kochańczyk-Bonińska, and Sotiris Mitralexis to explain the main arguments in favour of believing the removal of sexual difference to be a bodily occurrence. I close the paper by addressing the main opposing arguments and answer their objections or demonstrate why the propositions raised are not incompatible with the proposed bodily reading.

Whilst the central Maximian text of this paper is *Ambiguum 41,* reference is made to some of Maximus' wider corpus, with notable attention also given to *Ambiguum 42*. My main interlocutors committed to material bodily change are Partridge's 2008 doctoral thesis on the topic, Kochańczyk-Bonińska's 2017 chapter interrogating the philosophy of sex in Maximus, and Mitralexis's 2017 paper inspecting the Greek in *Amb. 41* more closely. On the other side, favouring a metaphorical reading, are Adam Cooper, who's book *The Body in St Maximus the Confessor* (2005) touches on this issue, with his 2013 chapter *Saint Maximus on the Mystery of Marriage and the Body: A Reconsideration* returning to it more fully, and Doru Costache's paper *Living above Gender* (2013) which treats with this topic specifically.

1. Maximus' *Ambiguum 41* on Sexual Difference

Maximus' *Ambiguum 41* is a text exploring Gregory of Nazianzus' phrase "the natures are innovated, and God becomes man". In the text, Maximus explains the cosmos in terms of five divisions (διαίρεσις) between natures (φύσις). These five divisions of nature are 1) uncreated and created, then created is then split into 2) intelligible and sensible, sensible is then split into 3) heaven and earth, earth is then split into 4) paradise and inhabited world, and finally humanity is split into 5) male and female (Maximus 2014b, *Amb. 41:* 102–103). It should be noted already at this point, that whilst each stage comes out of its preceding stage, the fifth division breaks with this pattern, with its subject not being the inhabited world (οἰκουμένη) but humans (ἄνθρωπος) (Maximus 2014b, *Amb. 41*: 102–105).

Humans have a special place within this order, fulfilling role of mediator. For Maximus, humans were introduced last among beings to act as a bond mediating between the extremes of these divisions. By forming a unity between the extremities of the cosmos and living virtuously, humans gather all of creation to God. At this point in the text, Maximus makes his first of three remarks specifically about the division of humanity into male and female. Humanity reaches the pinnacle of ascent

> by making of their own division a beginning of the unity which gathers up all things to God their Author, and proceeding by order and rank through the mean terms, they might reach the limit of the sublime ascent that comes about through the union of all things in God, in whom there is no division (διαίρεσις), completely shaking off from nature (πάντη τῆς φύσεως ἐκτιναξάμενος), by means of a supremely dispassionate condition of divine virtue, the property of male and female (τὸ θῆλυ καὶ τὸ ἄρσεν ἰδιότητα), which in no way was linked to the original principle (προηγούμενον λόγον) of the divine plan concerning human generation, so that they might be shown forth as, and become solely a human being according to the divine plan, not divided by the designation of male and female (according to the principle by which they formerly came into being), nor divided into parts that now appear around them, thanks to the perfect union, as I said, with their own principle, according to which they exist. (Maximus 2014b, *Amb 41*: 105–107)[1]

Of particular importance in this section, is the claim that the property of male and female is in no way linked to the *logos* of humanity. The *logoi* are the divine predeterminations, according to which all things were made.[2] They are the divine structuring of the universe, and, insofar as they belong to God's will, they are of God but concern creatures. If we live in accordance with our *logos*, we live according to God's plan for us, which is, through Christ, to become in full communion with God in the promise of *theosis*.[3] In saying that the property of male and female is in no way linked to the original *logos* of human nature, Maximus claims that male and female characteristics were never intended to be a part of human nature.

Next in *Ambiguum 41,* Maximus goes through each of the divisions, talking about how humanity brings each together, unifying them and gathering them to God. He then says that humanity has failed to move in the natural way just

1 I use Constas's (2014) English translation, but for clarity, I have replaced the pronouns 'he' with 'they' when referring to actions that the human person is doing. The subject of this section is ὁ ἄνθρωπος. In all future quotations that use this translation, I have replaced masculine pronouns and references to 'man' in a generic capacity with gender neutral pronouns and the term 'humanity', in order to leave it clear in the English when Maximus is and is not referring to men and humanity in general.

2 Maximus describes the *logoi* as 'predeterminations' (προορισμός) and 'divine wills' (θεῖα θελήματα), terms he borrows from Ps-Dionysius (Maximus 2014a, *Amb. 7*: 106.24–26). We can think of the *logoi* as akin in a way to blueprints – divine sketches in the mind of God, that, in and of themselves, have no reality, and yet represent the fullest potential of the subject they concern. They are both divine intention that can be realised, and representative of the relationship between Creator and creation, since to fulfil one's *logos* is to choose to live in accordance with divine will. Christ, as *the* Logos is the one who gathers the *logoi*, so to move in accordance with one's *logos* is draw close to Christ, like moving along the radius of a circle, toward Christ who is its centre point. On this last point especially see Maximus 2014a, *Amb. 7*: 101–102. Circle and radii analogy also to be found in Maximus 1931, *Myst.*, Ch.1. in Cantarella 1931: 122–214.; Maximus 1865a, *Cap. Theol.* PG 90 1125D–1128A II.4. The circle and radii analogy as a larger tool for unpacking Maximus' *logoi* theology was the subject of the following: Cvetković 2016: 265–279.

3 For further discussion on 'logos' and its importance in Maximus see Louth 2010: 77–84; and Bradshaw 2013: 9–22.

described, and has instead rent divisions deep into the cosmos. Because of this, natures had to be innovated, and thus God becomes human in order to save lost humanity (Maximus 2014b, *Amb. 41*: 108–109). Christ unites in himself "the natural fissures running through the general nature of the universe" (Maximus 2014b, *Amb. 41*: 108–109). Maximus then describes how Christ unites each division, but this time in the reverse order, beginning with the division of male and female. This is the second place he discusses sexual difference.

> To be sure, initiating the universal union of all things in Himself, beginning without our own division, He became a perfect human, having assumed from us, and for us, and consistent with us, everything that is ours, lacking in nothing, *but without sin,* for to become human He had no need of the natural process of connubial intercourse. In this way, He showed, I think, that there was perhaps another mode, foreknown by God, for the multiplication of human beings, had the first human beings kept the commandment and not *cast* themselves down to the level of irrational animals by misusing the mode of their proper powers – and so He drove out from nature the difference and division into male and female (τὴν κατὰ τὸ ἄῤῥεν καὶ θῆλυ διαφοράν τε καὶ διαίρεσιν τῆς φύσεως ἐξωθούμενος), a difference, as I have said, which He in no way needed in order to become human, and without which existence would perhaps have been possible. There is no need for this divisions to last *perpetually, for in Christ Jesus,* says the divine apostle, *there is neither male nor female*. (Maximus 2014b, *Amb. 41*: 110–111)

Two things of particular importance should be taken away from this section. One is that Maximus mentions that God had intended a way for humans to multiply that did not require sexual distinction. This will become important in discussions concerning material changes to the human body, since one interpretation of Maximus in this *ambiguum* is to read him as advocating a state of mind change, rather than discussing bodily change.

The second thing of importance concerns Maximus terminological choice to talk about driving out from nature both 'division' (διαίρεσις) and 'difference' (διαφορά). The relevance of the precise terminology will be returned to later, but this section stands in contrast to the previous one, where Maximus talked about the way that each division is overcome by humanity:

> Then, once they had united paradise and the inhabited world through their own proper holy way of life, humanity would have fashioned a single earth, not divided (μὴ διαιρουμένην) by them in the difference of its parts (μερῶν αὐτῆς διαφοράν), but rather gathered together, for to none of its parts would they be subjected. After this, having united heaven and earth through a life identical in virtue in every manner with that of the angels (as much as this is humanly possible), they would have made sensible creation absolutely identical and indivisible with itself, not in any way dividing it into places separated by distances [...]. (Maximus 2014b, *Amb. 41*: 106–107)

'Without division' (μὴ διαιρουμένος) is used throughout *Ambiguum 41* to describe the new relation that arises from human mediation of natures. The implication here (see also Maximus 2014b, *Amb. 41*: 108–109), as well as elsewhere

in Maximus' corpus,[4] is that the differences of its parts (μερῶν αὐτῆς διαφοράν) are retained, but that these no longer contribute to division and instead are gathered together in unity. When explaining the relationship between particulars and the natures that are being unified, Maximus demonstrates that the relationships of all components of creation are interwoven, so that even the most lowly creature shares by its nature in higher beings. In detailing this gathering together of natures, Maximus notes "For all things that are distinguished from each other by virtue of their individual differences (ἰδίως διαφοραῖς) are generically united by universal and common identities, and they are drawn together to one and the same by means of a certain generic principle of nature, like genera that are united with each other according to substance, and consequently have something one and the same and indivisible" (Maximus, *Amb. 41*: 116–117). Maximus' understanding of universals is one in which the fullness of the individual is allowed for. Universals are a unifying factor, but not in a way that obliterates each particular that makes it up. Each particular, though different, fully partakes of and *is* an instance of its universal. A lateral understanding of universals and commitment to the integrity of the particular is vital to Maximus' thought.[5] Individual difference is thus not jeopardized by the kind of unity Maximus is talking about, and the term διαφορά is chosen here and in many places elsewhere to illustrate these retained differences.

The terminology Maximus uses for his five divisions follows the language and logic of the Chalcedonian Definition. Relying on what has sometimes been termed 'Chalcedonian Logic',[6] we see the unity of Christ's singular personhood and the distinctness of his divine and human natures mirrored in all creation and how it relates to God. Without attempting to systematise a strict terminological distinction between the terms 'division' (διαίρεσις) and 'difference' (διαφορά), one can see the Chalcedonian Definition and Christ's bringing

4 Eg. Maximus 2014b, *Amb. 10*: 310–311: "[...] the harmonious conjunction of extremes through intermediaries (which comes about without any damage to them resulting from their polarity); the agreement of the parts with wholes, and the comprehensive unity of wholes with parts; and the clear distinction of the parts from one another in accordance with their individuating differences; as well as their unconfused union [...] the principle of each nature remains inviolate, without being confused with or confusing any other nature".

5 See further on this Tollefsen 2015: 70–92.

6 Maximus often discusses things in terms of their unity (ἕνωσις) and difference (διαφορά), the language used by the Council of Chalcedon to describe the unity of Christ's person and the retained distinction of his two natures. Christ is often at the heart of Maximus' meaning when he uses 'unity and distinction' as a theme in his theology. Von Balthasar first proposed that the Chalcedonian Formula underlay Maximus' work in a particularly important fashion in 1941, and the analysis was further developed by Thunberg twenty years later. The term later came under criticism by Törönen, who argued that the logic predated Chalcedon and that Maximus made use of older sources where union and distinction is also an important concept. Nevertheless, it is clear that Maximus intended us to think of Christ's union of natures, especially when it comes to *Amb. 41* where it is in Christ that the created and uncreated are brought together and creation restored. See von Balthasar 1941: 193; Thunberg 1965: 9; Törönen 2007.

together of God and humanity echoed in Maximus' Christological account of the cosmos. Whilst heaven and earth, for example, remain distinct so that the unique identity of each is retained, in Christ they are no longer split apart but are brought together in his person.

The final division into male and female has a special place within this cosmological account, since humans are mediators in whom the cosmos is gathered to God. Maximus calls humans a "workshop containing all things" (Maximus 2014b, *Amb. 41*: 104–105). The final division within humanity into male and female exists within this Christological context, but, whilst it shares similarities with other divisions, it also features some important differences arising from the special place that humanity itself occupies within the cosmos. The language in this last division breaks the mould of previous divisions, and we see both division (διαίρεσις) and difference (διαφορά), being removed, implying that no distinction between male and female will remain in human nature. I return to this in the next section.

The third mention of sexual difference comes after Maximus' demonstration of Christ recapitulating the natures, where Maximus returns to summarise Christ's activity again.

> Thus He united, first of all, ourselves in Himself through removal of the difference (διαφορᾶς) between male and female, and instead of men and women, in whom this mode of division is especially evident, He showed us as properly and truly to be simply human beings, thoroughly formed according to Him, bearing His image intact and completely unadulterated, touched in no way by any marks of corruption. (Maximus, *Amb. 41*: 114–115)

Maximus again chooses to make use of difference (διαφορᾶς) here when talking about the removal of male and female. Also important is the association of removing male and female with a human body not bearing the marks of corruption. As will be elaborated further, for Maximus, identifiers of sex are tied to the Fall and markers of fallen humanity that he anticipates being removed.

Arguments in Favour of Reading the Removal of Bodily Sexual Distinction

I have laid out the three places in *Ambiguum 41* where Maximus discusses the division of humanity into male and female, and the removal of these differences as human nature is restored through Christ. I drew attention to three components in particular: the choice to include both division and difference when discussing the removal of sexual difference; the choice to talk about the *logos* of human nature; and the mention of an alternative method of human reproduction along with the association of sexual difference with corruption. I next develop these observations with reference to existing literature and indicate why Maximus should be considered to be talking about the removal of sexual differences from the human body.

2a. Division and Difference

As mentioned earlier, the language of division and difference is different when it comes to division of male and female. I highlighted that Maximus echoes the Chalcedonian Formula in *Amb. 41,* choosing to use difference (διαφορά) to refer to identity, which is retained, and division (διαίρεσις) as a kind of enmity and separation, which is removed. Maximus' description of the removal of both difference and division in sexual distinction was the topic of Sotiris Mitralexis' paper, *Rethinking the Problem of Sexual Difference in Ambiguum 41*. Mitralexis' paper adheres to a close reading of the *Amb. 41,* in part credited to a collective contribution by a number prominent Maximian scholars who attended a workshop on the text in 2016.[7] Mitralexis points out that in this text sexual difference is 'shaken out', 'driven out', and 'removed'. In his analysis of the language of *Amb. 41,* Mitralexis concludes that "There is a distinction in Maximian thought between difference and division, in which certain differences will be eschatologically retained, but not as divisions. It is crucial to see that this is not what Maximus proposes here concerning the transcendence of sexual difference in Christ and, by extension, the eschatological state of humanity: it the *difference,* διαφορά, itself that is removed, not merely the division" (Mitralexis 2017: 142). Some previous scholarship (E.g. Cooper 2005: 157; 211) has maintained that the division between male and female is no different to that of the other divisions, and hence the logic of distinction remaining whilst division is removed has been carried over into analyses of this division. Mitralexis' analysis opens the door for reinterpreting the choice to read this division the same way as the other divisions.

Partridge meanwhile focusses on the peculiarity of the division into male and female itself, which alone is not a neat subdivision of the previous divisions of nature, as the others are (Partridge 2008: 133). Partridge points out that "Maximus is setting humans apart as distinctive within the created order. Further, Maximus is also distinguishing sexual difference from other kinds of difference" (Partridge 2008: 133). Humans as mediators through whom the cosmos has been broken and through whom it will be mediated to unity, have split themselves apart in the Fall in a way that is unique. In falling away from a more angelic kind of life, humans now reproduce in a manner akin to animals, hence the requirement for human bodies to exhibit male and female distinctions. I return to this shortly, but Partridge's point that the division into male and female itself is different in these other capacities from the other divisions, is one of cosmological importance. Indeed, Partridge says, "as I read Maximus, the purgation of sexual difference is an essential, if exceedingly challenging, part of both the 'geometry' and the reconciling trajectory of his thought, attention to which can illuminate the relationship of asceticism and synthesis within his thought as a whole" (Partridge 2008: 121).

7 See Mitralexis 2017: 140, ff9. The other scholars contributing to the close reading of the *Amb. 41* passages in question were Torstein Tollefsen, Sebastian Mateiescu, Vladimir Cvetković, Christophe Erismann, and Susumu Tanaba.

Similarly, at least on the topic this particular division, Karolina Kochańczyk-Bonińska writes that she "cannot agree with the suggestions that it is only a linguistic difference and Maximus claims that only the division will be dismissed but there will still be some kind of distinction between man and woman. The entire *Difficulty 41* should have been aborted in order to make this theory convincing" (Kochańczyk-Bonińska 2017: 237). Kochańczyk-Bonińska, drawing on Partridge, likewise also notes the different place that humans occupy within the created order, indicating that this is the starting place for understanding the markedly different way Maximus considers the division into male and female (Kochańczyk-Bonińska 2017: 233).

2b. Sexual Difference and Logos

In the first passage on sexual difference in *Amb. 41*, Maximus talks about male and female not being a part of humanity's *logos*. I briefly discussed what a *logos* was within Maximus' cosmology and highlighted some of the implications of such a statement. I expand upon those here. Reiterating that the claim that sexual difference has no part of a divine plan, is to claim that it was never how humanity was intended to be, and nor will it be a feature of perfected humanity in *theosis*. Contained in an understanding of *logos* is an understanding of how we relate to God as humans. When Maximus writes "the property of male and female (τὸ θῆλυ καὶ τὸ ἄρσεν ἰδιότητα), which in no way was linked to the original principle (προηγούμενον λόγον) of the divine plan concerning human generation [...]", he informs us that male and female were not an intended feature of human reproduction, human nature, or the way that humans relate to God.

Mitralexis notes that Maximus "not only asserts that sexual difference itself (and not only sexual division or reproduction) will not endure the eschata, thus beyond standard interpretations of *Gal* 3:28, but he also goes on to assert that the differentiation between male and female is not even a part of humanity's *logos* of nature [...]" (Mitralexis 2017: 144).[8] Mitralexis considers a number of possible readings of how *logos* is interacting with the shaking off of sexual difference, and draws attention also to the absence of the property of male and female, so that Maximus seems to be expressing a bodily difference and not only the absence of sexual reproduction at the level of the *logos* of humanity. This means, he writes, that it is "not only in an eschatological perspective, but a past reality pertaining to humanity's coming into being". Following this, Mitralexis asks: "Does the property of sexual difference exist at the level of *nature* (as (1) and the other passages would indicate), but not at the level of *logos of nature*, and if yes, how?" (Mitralexis 2017: 143–144).

An answer to where exactly sexual difference exists if not in the *logos* is posited by Partridge. On identifying that something different occurs in this last division within humanity itself, Partridge suggested that, if sexual difference

8 The absence of male and female from the *logos* of humanity is also discussed by Partridge 2008: 135.

is not considered part of human *logos* by Maximus, then it must instead be a 'mode' of human existence (*tropos*). Rather than following the Christological pattern of person and natures, the shaking off of male and female better fits the type of removal found in the restitution of human will in Maximus, Partridge suggests. For Maximus, when humanity fell, the human will became composite of *gnome (*γνώμη*)* and *proairesis* (προαίρεσις)*,* habitual deliberation and free choice respectively. *Gnome* and *proairesis* are modes of willing[9] – part of the process by which humans choose to act, with *gnome* being associated with a deliberation and an inclination that arises from repeated habitual choices, and *proairesis* being the free choice to then act on the decision that has arisen from *gnome*.[10] Fallen humans no longer act by using their single, natural faculty of will (θέλημα φυσική), but instead have different, fallen modes of willing, that involve deliberation and doubt over what the right thing to do is, and how one should act. As Blowers puts it, "Rational creatures must *learn* authentic freedom by conforming their personal choice (προαίρεσις) and 'inclination' (γνώμη) to the 'natural will' (θέλημα φυσική) and 'appetency' (ὄρεξις) for God with which God endowed them [...]" (Blowers 2016: 121). The indecision (or rather deliberation over what is right) represented in these *tropoi* is a feature of fallen human will. Maximus, in his later works on the will, says that in Christ they are not present, and instead there is a whole natural human will (alongside a divine will). In the course of the deifying process, there eventually will be no "intentional divergence" (γνωμικὴν διαφοράν) or differentiation between these human *tropoi* of will*,* and instead only a single *logos* will be observed.[11]

In typifying sexual distinction in a similar way, Partridge sets it within Maximus' larger understanding of human faculties divided as a consequence of the Fall. The division of the wills, like the division into the sexes, is not evil in itself, but introduced as a result of human distraction from God (Partridge 2008: 196).[12] Since sexual difference is absent from human *logos* and will be completely removed, both in difference and division, we can see it better typifying an instance of a change introduced into *tropos* that is anticipated to be removed from humanity eschatologically. Rather than being an outlier to the kind of Chalcedonian logic present in the rest of the divisions, Partridge's suggestion explains Maximus' linguistic choice to talk of this division in a different manner, as a conscious depiction of how the Fall has affected humanity in a markedly different way – fitting given that humanity was the cause of the Fall and are the mediators who through Christ will bring creation back to unity. The fact that the kinds of divisions and differences introduced into humanity are different to those found elsewhere in earth or in heaven, fits with Maximus'

9 The terminology Maximus uses develops in his work as his position on the will develops. For a discussion on the ambiguity of *gnome* as *tropos*, see Blowers 2016: 123–124.
10 The terms themselves have more complex meanings than this, the full extent of which is not necessary to rehearse for the argument in question. For a more in depth description of the component phases of the will in Maximus, see Blowers 2016: 121–123; 161.
11 Maximus 1980, *Q.Thal. 2* (CCSG 7:51); see also Blowers 2016: 121–122.
12 On this specifically in the wills, see Blowers 2016: 122–124.

larger anthropological theology. Partridge's proposal that sexual difference be considered a *tropos* of humanity then, makes for a compelling proposition,[13] and grants us a conceptual apparatus for understanding the removal of both difference and division in a similar fashion to the total removal of distinctions between *gnomic* and *proairetic* will. "Indeed", writes Partridge, "just as Christ's virgin birth enables him to transform γέννησις, a notion of generation without 'the distinctive properties of male and female', Christ transforms the natural will in accordance with his divine will without the distinctive properties of the γνώμη and προαίρεσις" (Partridge 2008: 175–176). Partridge makes a further point that *gnome* and *prorairesis* are tied to the personhood of the individual, since they concern the way a person acts and are therefore particular to that person (Partridge 2008: 190). If one does use the fracturing and restoration of human will as a model for understanding the male and female division in *Amb. 41*, then these personal modes of deliberation could serve as a means to understanding gender expression and ways in which people feel tied to expressing their gender and sexuality.

Whilst recognising that sexual difference for Maximus is tied to *tropos,* Kochańczyk-Bonińska expresses concern that, if personal identity is attached to sexual difference, then in what sense is the person in the eschaton human or themselves? Kochańczyk-Bonińska and Skliris propose that perhaps not all *tropoi* will be removed in the eschaton and that if sexual identity is key to someone's personal identity then it may remain in the life to come (Kochańczyk-Bonińska 2017: 237). However, I think Partridge's likening of sexual difference to human wills goes someway to answering this dilemma. In the eschaton, humanity will be transfigured and it may be concerning to think of those changes when we are used to a version of ourselves from a life lived in time and in a fallen world. How we will feel about transfiguration and what we think is essential to being human will surely change eschatologically. I believe that the way I currently think is essential to who I am and my humanity, but Maximus says that human will will change and that our current modes of thinking are the result of a division introduced in the Fall. Positing that a restoration will take away a division that might be considered typically 'human' is not a particularly controversial idea, and perhaps instead requires us to reflect on the weight of identity placed in sexual difference.

Another good answer to this dilemma is offered by Kochańczyk-Bonińska herself, who notes "Maximus stresses that this reconciliation must start with removing the distinction between man and woman. This is not connected with a negation of sexuality as such, but with an abandonment of the function related to the mode of existence which represent life after the fall" (Kochańczyk-Bonińska 2017: 237). Kochańczyk-Bonińska then says though that there seems to be confusion, because how could we be required to leave behind our gender whilst Maximus also affirms a bodily resurrection. As Kochańczyk-Bonińska also points out however, Maximus is not negating sexuality per say, so much as

13 Sexual difference as tropos was also explored in Skliris 2017: 50–59.

the functions of sexual difference. In fact, though avoiding the terminological distinction for chronological consistency, what we have here is tantamount to the modern distinction between gender and sex. When Kochańczyk-Bonińska asks, "If we are supposed to rise from the dead in our own transformed bodies, how can we abandon our gender?" she indeed, perhaps inadvertently, answers her own question. We are never required to leave behind our personal identity, which is what the word gender entails in modern parlance. The aspects of 'who' we are that we tie to sexuality are not erased. Instead, it is the body that is changed, the 'sex' of the body. This is still a daunting prospect, since body and soul together are one person, but as Gregory mused at length in response to Macrina in *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, what parts of my body are to be considered me, given that humans are always changing? If the human body will become perfect in the resurrection, will it really be mine?[14] These concerns are ancient as much as they are modern, and Macrina's response is both mysterious and reassuring – we will be known and we will be recognised even though the body will indeed be physically transformed.[15] Inevitably, there will also be things that we think of as 'us' that are misplaced and will be rooted out,[16] but the implication in Maximus and in Gregory and Macrina's thought, is that physical (bodily) sexual difference is not going to be of significance to personal identity in the eschaton.[17] Particularity and individual integrity are not reliant on sexual distinction in the thought of Macrina and Gregory,[18] or in Maximus. This in itself has a lot of implications to unpack for what human nature is considered to consist of for Maximus, and for how he conceived of virtuous living and expression of gender in his own lifetime, and for how we as recipients interested in his thought consider these implications in our own time.

2c. Sexual Difference, Reproduction, and Corruption

The final consideration I wish to expand on concerns how sexual difference and reproduction relate to corruption. We find theological speculation in the works of Gregory of Nyssa as well as Maximus on the seemingly contradictory statements about sex and gender found in the Old and New Testament. In *Genesis* 1:27 and 5:2, God creates humans as male and female, while in the New Testament we are told we will become like Christ, that in Christ there is no male and female, and that after we are resurrected we will become like the angels (1 *Cor*. 15, *Gal*. 3:28, *Matt*. 22:23-33, *Lk*. 20:27-39 and *Mk*. 12:18–27). Maximus follows Gregory and Macrina in pondering the implications of a

14 Gregory of Nyssa 2014, *De Anima*: 108.1–7 (PG46 141AB); 106.4–107.18 (PG46 140A–141A). See also Brown Dewhurst 2020.

15 Gregory of Nyssa 2014, *De Anima*: 113.7–114.19 (PG46 148B–149B). Macrina's position is derived from 1 Cor. 15:35–38 and 1 Cor. 15:43.

16 Gregory of Nyssa 2014, *De Anima*: 73.17–74.1.

17 Gregory of Nyssa 2014, *De Anima*: 113.12–114.7 (PG46 148C–149A).

18 For discussion of this relating to Gregory and Macrina see Brown Dewhurst 2020: 453; 460–461.

genderless humanity for both protological and eschatological theology.[19] *Gal.* 3:28, in particular, informs Maximus' language in the sections in *Amb. 41* where Maximus is talking about division between male and female: "there is no need for this division to last perpetually, for in Christ Jesus, says the divine apostle, there is neither male nor female" (Maximus 2014b, *Amb. 41*: 110–111; citing *Gal.* 3:28). The difference between male and female at the very least seems to encapsulate[20] the reproductive parts of the human body and is seen as linked to the curse of childbirth when Adam and Eve are cast out of Eden.[21] The material and bodily nature of reproduction and childbirth after the Fall, are particularly stressed as indicators of corruption. For Maximus, sexual difference was either introduced because of the Fall, or possibly because God foresaw and anticipated the Fall, giving humans reproductive organs in lieu of knowledge that they would need them.[22] Maximus does specify however that God perhaps originally intended for humans to reproduce in some other, non-sexual way.[23] This non-sexual way of procreating Maximus refers to is thus either a pre-lapsarian ability that humans had, or a theoretical way that was intended (according to *logos*) but never actualised. Gregory, from whom Maximus heavily draws here, goes into more detail on this potential other mode of reproducing. For Gregory, this form of reproducing was more spiritual, and must have been similar to how the angels in their multitudes reproduce (Gregory of Nyssa 1863, *De Hominis*: PG44 189A). Whatever the possible alternative, this form of reproduction became closed to humanity in connection to the Fall. Both sexual reproduction and sexual difference in humanity are tied to corruption and the Fall. This also explains sexual difference as a division in need of healing

19 See for example Gregory of Nyssa, *De Anima*: 113.12–114.7 (PG46 148C–149A). Cadenhead argues that Gregory is inconsistent on whether he believes humans will have no sexual organs in the eschaton, though Gregory does hold to an original creation (without sexual organs) and a 'second' paradisal creation (with sexual organs). Cadenhead 2018: 96–104.

20 As noted earlier, Mitralexis points out that all difference between male and female will be removed, not just a ceasing of reproduction. Partridge writes that it is better to think of sexual difference as behaviours as well as physicalities collected together under the term sexual difference, for both Maximus and Gregory. Partridge 2008: 27.

21 This is expounded upon further in Maximus 1982, *Q,Dub.*: *CCSG* 10, 3–170.

22 Maximus 2014a, *Amb. 8*: 142–145. With regards to a sexual difference being granted with foreknowledge of the Fall, Maximus follows Gregory of Nyssa in proposing that it may have been the case that humans were intended to be made without sexual differences, but that, anticipating the Fall, God made humans with sexual differences so that they could still procreate. Maximus is much more ambiguous than Gregory on whether he accepts this as a possible proposal however. Misuse of the senses, for example, is simultaneous with the Fall, and sexual difference is not explicitly excluded from this, whilst bodily reproduction is explicitly linked to the Fall. cf. Maximus 2014b, *Amb. 42*: 129; Maximus 1990, *Q.Thal.*: 61.8–21 (CCSG 22.85); Gregory of Nyssa 1863, *De Hominis*: PG44 189 BC. It should also be noted that, even in a reading that favours sexual difference being introduced in lieu of the Fall, it is not human bodies that are being associated with sin, but sexual difference.

23 Maximus 2014b, *Amb. 41*: 110.7.6–11.

in Christ – it is one of the divisions introduced by the rupture humans created when we turned away from God. It should be noted though, that sexual difference was introduced not because it itself is sinful, but as a way to rectify a problem created by sin.[24] Human reproduction was necessary; a more intelligible, angelic way of reproducing became closed to humanity in the Fall; and hence an alternative more bodily way of reproducing was introduced (at some point).

Maximus elucidates further on this in *Amb. 42,* where he writes that Christ "freed us from the bonds of birth and the law of reproduction".[25] The law of reproduction in this case refers to a particularly bodily and material kind of reproduction, that Maximus likens to being "in a manner directly akin to that of plants and irrational animals".[26] He asserts that humans have become orientated towards a much more bodily reliance on survival after the Fall. A balance between soul and body, where soul was the head of the body, has been usurped, and instead we are tied to sufferings of the flesh. The demands of the body occupy all our attention, drawing us away from a more spiritual way of life orientated toward God. It is not that we anticipate leaving the body behind, Maximus clarifies, since we have always been body and soul simultaneously,[27] but that before the Fall it was the soul that held pride of place and not the body. We have developed a propensity towards the passions as a result of the Fall,[28] meaning we have become orientated towards bodily things. One of the changes that we have undergone is a change in how we reproduce: reproduction has become a more bodily and less spiritual process.[29] Maximus explains that a spiritual birth is restored to us by Christ in baptism.[30] It is clear, however,

24 See further on this: Partridge 2008: 147–152.
25 Maximus 2014b, *Amb. 42*: 132.6.12–15. (Constas (trans.), *On Difficulties Vol 2*, 133).
26 Maximus 2014b, *Amb. 42*: 132.6.15–17. (Constas (trans.), *On Difficulties Vol 2*, 133).
27 This is an important anti-Origenist position that, amongst other places, is dealt with in detail in Maximus 2014b, *Amb. 42*: 136.9–142.12. Cf. Maximus 2014b, *Amb. 45*: 194.3.12–17.
28 Maximus notes that one of the things Christ takes on when he assumes human nature is "the capacity and indeed the propensity for all the passions" – passions that the human body took on as a result of the Fall, (Maximus 2014a, *Amb. 8*: 142.214–15) (Constas (trans.), *On Difficulties Vol I*, 143). Cf. Maximus 2014b, *Amb 45*: 196.4.
29 Cooper explains the way that this fallen 'second' type of birth is found in Maximus in a chapter of his book. Ultimately, Cooper believes that this does not correspond to a change in the physicality of humans, though his argumentation on bodily birth and its connection to Adam and sin is still useful for our purposes here (Cooper 2005: 212–218). Cooper does not identify a difference between the last division between male and female and the other divisions in *Amb. 41*. This leads him to claim that it is unlikely that Maximus intended to describe the doing away of genitalia, since differences in the other divisions will be united but distinctions will remain, so that there will be no "elimination of their distinct characteristics" (Cooper 2005: 211). In light of the difference Mitralexis points out between this last division and the others in *Amb. 41* however, it seems prudent to question Cooper's conclusion here. Cooper's analysis of spiritual birth (*genesis*) and bodily birth (*gennesis*) nevertheless remains useful however, as does his contributions expanding on Larchet and ancestral guilt (Cooper 2005: 215–217).
30 Maximus 2014b, *Amb. 42*: 182.32–40.

that the more spiritual form of reproduction Maximus envisioned in original creation is different from baptism, in the same way that transfiguration in the eschaton is different from baptismal rebirth. Maximus links the original human nature, absent of sex and sexually reproductive abilities as we understand them today, to this eschatological transformation. In the same way then that baptism and the new life on earth it precipitates prefigure the eschatological resurrection and new life in a new earth, so does a baptismal, spiritual reproduction prefigure a spiritual, eschatological reproduction that will be restored to us. The body without sexual difference then, is considered by Maximus to be a state we have fallen from, and that will eventually be restored to us.

Partridge writes that the status of the human body in the eschaton is ambiguous in Maximus's writings (Partridge 2008: 9), but Kochańczyk-Bonińska writes that, though there is an ambiguity in Maximus and every hypothesis is considered, it is clear from his writing that the division between sexes will eventually vanish[31]. Mitralexis also sees the absence of sexual difference as both a protological and eschatological feature of human nature for Maximus (Mitralexis 2017: 143–144). I likewise agree with Kochańczyk-Bonińska and Mitralexis that the prelapsarian state of humanity is inescapably linked with the teleological expectation of human nature for Maximus. The reason we are given an account of how humans may have originally reproduced when Maximus is talking about Christ restoring humanity, is because human nature is being reinstituted so that it can move in accordance with human *logos* as it was originally intended. The human nature that had no sexual characteristics nor reproductive distinctions is thus the one that Maximus seems to believe will be restored to us eschatologically.

To summarise thus far, Maximus discusses the division into male and female in a different way to the rest of the divisions of creation. The difference of male and female was never intended to be a part of human *logos* or nature, and is likely better described as a *tropos* or mode of existence currently available to humanity as a consequence of the Fall. Unlike other divisions, when it comes to male and female, both the division and the difference itself are to be removed. For Maximus, this removal or 'shaking off' of male and female is both a material and spiritual occurrence. It is material in the sense that it concerns the reproductive capabilities of our bodies changing, so that we will no longer reproduce in an animalistic fashion. It is spiritual both in the sense that we must walk a virtuous path in Christ in order to overcome this division, and in the sense that whatever 'reproductive' function still remains to humans will be spiritual in nature. In fact, it is not clear that any reproduction will exist in the eschaton, but Maximus at least posits that some spiritual form of reproduction was originally intended, and it is implied that whatever those bodies would have looked like will be the ones we anticipate in the eschaton.

I next turn to briefly consider some arguments against this position that have not yet been addressed.

31 A position also held by Skliris 2017: 50–52.

Arguments against Bodily Removal of Sexual Difference

One opposing position to the above reading is that one should consider Maximus not to be talking about a bodily removing of sex, but rather as meaning that difference between genders has been metaphorically overcome. Under this reading, sexual distinction would become unimportant rather than absent.

Doru Costache, for example, prefers to talk of a "metaphorically genderless identity" (Costache 2013: 276), where what Maximus writes of the division in *Amb. 41* should instead be understood as "the perfection to which all humans are called, irrespective of gender" (Costache 2013: 289). An initial difficulty with this position is that the language in Maximus, evaluated above, seems committed to the removing of sexual difference in much stronger terms than a metaphorical reading would allow. Maximus often expresses metaphor and speculation in his writing, using tentative terms of phrase when he wishes to draw attention to this. For example, when speculating about some other way in which humans might have reproduced, Maximus interjects with the qualifier ὡς οἶμαι, meaning 'I think' in this context, which we find used in conjunction with a form of τυγχάνω, meaning 'perhaps' or 'perchance' here (Maximus 2014b, *Amb. 41*: 110.7.6). By comparison, if we recall his language on sexual difference just a few lines later, we do not see this ambiguity presented: "and so He drove out from nature the difference and division into male and female, a difference, as I have said, which He in no way needed in order to become man, and without which existence would perhaps have been possible".[32] There is a tentative part of this phrase, but it is once more concerning that other potential form of non-sexual reproduction, not the removal sexual difference itself. Furthermore, we have other examples of Maximus' choice to be tentative with his interpretations. The *ambigua* following this one, *Ambiguum 42,* considers a range of possible interpretations of the passage Maximus is concerned with. He muses on different possible meanings since one contemplation would not be enough to demonstrate other viable thoughts on the passage in Gregory he is expounding. When it comes to more mystical and metaphorical meanings, we also have many examples where Maximus is happy to reveal the layers of meanings in his own writing – for example in the *Mystagogia*, especially its early chapters giving cosmological interpretations and a host of alternative contemplations on the Church.[33] We also find places in the *Mystagogia* where Maximus deems the spiritual import of his subject matter to be beyond words and his text to be unworthy of talking further – the silence when it comes to Holy Eucharist itself, which leaves itself as a noticeable gap in what is otherwise a commentary and breakdown on the meaning of the full liturgy. We have, then, plenty of examples of tentative phrasing, metaphorical reading, and reverent silence on topics intended to be replete with meaning. Maximus' discussion of male and female difference in *Amb. 41* does not seem to follow

32 Maximus 2014b, *Amb. 41*: 110.7.11–17.
33 Maximus 1931, *Myst.*: TCr. Chs. 1–7.

this pattern. The choice to read Maximus as metaphorical in his meaning here is not at all an obvious one, and thus a robust defence is needed to choose to read Maximus this way.

Drawing on *Amb. 42*, Adam Cooper suggested in his monograph on Maximus and the body that baptism is the place where division in human nature is overcome, and that this will be a spiritual death and spiritual birth, where spiritual dichotomies are overcome, not physical differences eradicated (Cooper 2005: 244–247). In locating the overcoming of the division of male and female solely in baptism however, much of the eschatological character of the overcoming of this division present in *Amb. 41* is removed. Whist for Maximus it is true that eschatological changes are never confined to an end time and are instead lived through the present and always being worked upon, there is also something distinct about the transformation in the eschaton. Whilst baptism prefigures eschatological change so that working towards a virtuous, spiritual overcoming of gender in this life is certainly encapsulated in Maximus' thought, it does not exclude the possibility of bodily eschatological change, as was mentioned earlier. The spiritual rebirth of baptism is linked to the Incarnation by Maximus in *Amb. 42* (Maximus 2014b, *Amb. 42*: 180–185), so that human spiritual rebirth is restored through Christ's bodily and spiritual rebirth. Maximus links this to bringing humanity towards its *logos* and setting humanity towards eternal well-being. Whilst prefigured in baptism, Maximus *also* talks about eternal wellbeing and *theosis* as being reached in the general resurrection, "through which humanity will be born (γεννώσης) into immortality" (Maximus 2014b, *Amb. 42*: 184–185). There is another 'birth' then in the eschaton. Whilst Cooper is right to point out that baptismal, spiritual rebirth does not feature the bodily removal of sexual difference, the final birth, and, indeed, final overcoming of all divisions, has an eschatological dimension in *Amb. 41*. It seems more contiguous with Maximus thought to locate the bodily removal of sexual difference in the eschaton, rather than to consider the process, which is certainly started in baptism, to also be completed at this point.

Another argument against reading the removal of bodily sexual difference, concerns the positive way in which Maximus discusses sexed bodies. Costache notes a number of places where Maximus talks about marriage as a holy calling alongside celibacy (Costache 2013: 288).[34] Celibacy is here equated with or at least compared to the non-sexual vision Maximus has of humanity: since there are ways of living particular to sexed instance of humanity, it seems unlikely that Maximus would advocate for the removal of sexual difference. Costache is right to point out that sexed modes of human life are considered holy by Maximus, but this position is consistent with Partridge's reading that sexed human life is a *tropos*, a mode of living that is fallen and will be removed. Like human gnomic and proairetic wills, and, indeed, like the passions, there are

34 Cooper similarly also brings discussion of marriage as non-sinful into a discussion of whether sexual distinction is removed, see Cooper 2005: 214–215.

aspects to human life that are a consequence of the Fall but that Maximus believes can be made holy or brought into line with a holy way of living. Blowers explains that despite not being a natural faculty, *gnome* has become a "'resource' of the passible creature in its postlapsarian life" (Blowers 2016: 123). The gnomic will can be trained so that humans can reach towards virtuous living. Similarly, we can see an example of fallen features of humanity put to virtuous use when Maximus discusses the way that human 'passions' can be directed toward God.[35] The passions belong to part of our fallen condition, but despite this can be orientated towards a virtuous way of living.[36] The existence of postlapsarian features of humanity that can be repurposed and reorientated towards God then, seems to better fit the way that sexual difference is treated by Maximus. It should also be borne in mind, as mentioned earlier, that Maximus never considers sexual difference in itself to be a sin, but only an outcome of sin. It seems that an affirmation of the holiness of marriage is thus still consistent with a belief that eventually such a relation will be removed in the eschaton, without undermining the holiness of this relation. This in turn is consistent with Scriptural claim that "in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven" (*Matt.* 22:30). Neither Scripturely, nor in Maximus, nor indeed in Gregory and Macrina, is there any implication of devaluing the holiness of a life lived in marriage despite a belief that human life will be transfigured to not include marriage in the life to come.

Another argument in favour of a metaphorical reading of Maximus on sexual difference relies on the assumption that the removal of sex is equivalent to the removal of bodies themselves. As demonstrated earlier however, reading Maximus as bodily removing sexual difference is understood to mean removing sexual parts of the body, not the body itself. Instead of focussing on this argument then, let us turn to its more convincing iteration offered by Costache. Costache argues that neither Maximus the Confessor nor Gregory of Nyssa subscribed to the human body becoming genderless or androgynous (Costache 2013: 273–274; 276), since there will never be "ontological obliteration of differences in the process of spiritual transformation, not even eschatologically" (Costache 2013: 276). Costache effectively argues that the bodily removal of sexual difference from humans is to alter human nature, and natures are never altered.

This difficulty has largely been resolved above, since it was demonstrated that Maximus does not locate sexual difference in human *logos* and thus it is not a natural faculty tied to *physis*. It should also be noted however, that

35 The link between sexual difference and the passions is also noted by Cooper, where he specifically likens the dichotomy between aggression and desire as analogous to male and female. He notes that for Maximus neither sexual differentiation not the passions were originally created with human nature. Cooper 2005: 222. See also Maximus 1980, *Q.Thal.*: 1.5–7. CCSG 7 47.

36 Maximus 1980, *Q.Thal.*: 1. CCSG 7 47–49.

physis is not a static principle for Maximus, devoid of alternation, but rather is dynamic. To borrow Blowers' words, "nature is the theatre of the actualisation of movement" (Blowers 2016: 129).[37] Even if one still wishes to tie sexual difference to human natural capacity, human nature for Maximus is not a rigid fixity but "the resource out of which the hypostasis is able, through a grace that pushes out its frontiers, to move towards deification with ever new virtuosity and creativity" (Blowers 2016: 130). The claim then that the human body *cannot* change to become genderless thus seems to be negated firstly by sexual differentiation not being a feature of *logos* and hence nature, and secondly because natures in Maximus are not fixed in such a way as to never undergo any form of transformation.

A variant of this argument is also set forth in Cooper's monograph *The Body in St Maximus the Confessor*, where he notes that the only elements that necessarily need removing in Maximus' theology when it comes to sexual distinction are the actual process of physical reproduction, since it is from this process of reproduction that Maximus' concerns about the perpetuation of sin and death arise. Cooper rightly points out that carnal reproduction is introduced as a result of the Fall and those aspects of pleasure and pain as well as the process itself are associated with sin, even if blameless in and of themselves. Cooper thus argues that "the reconciliation or union between male and female does not require the abolition of physical distinctions but is primarily a matter of knowledge and will; it is a matter of recognising the single human nature common to all, male and female, and of practising the dispassionate relating to one another such recognition entails" (Cooper 2005: 222). Whilst it can certainly be agreed that the metaphysical impact of male and female distinction drives Maximus' theology here, to say that his theology does not require a reading of the physical removal of male and female seems to downplay the language Maximus chooses to use particularly in *Amb. 41*. We can see that male and female in their reproductive capacities and capabilities were distinctions created *because* of this material form of reproduction. To say that only the process and not the physical distinctions themselves will be removed, seems to draw a division between human bodies and human soul that is not reflected in *Amb. 41*. The transfiguration of human bodies that is to come alters the characteristics and capabilities that that have been affected by sin and the Fall. Those who hold that Maximus follows Gregory in believing that these changes were introduced in lieu of the Fall, also agree that sexual distinction is inescapably tied to the Fall. To claim that a more accurate reading of Maximus will only remove a reproductive capacity and not genetalia themselves seems to introduce more contradictions in Maximus' thought than it resolves. If we follow the proposals above that sexual distinction is not a feature of *logos* but of *tropos* then the proposal Cooper leads us to seems to be that it is more likely that

37 See also von Balthasar 1941: 146, where nature is described as "a capacity, a plan (λόγος), a field and system of motion"; see also Loudovikos 2010: 10: "nature is an eschatological, dialogical becoming and not just a frozen 'given'."

a fallen *tropos* will be retained in the eschaton, than that the transfiguration of the human body could comprise something beyond male and female in its recapitulation to its divine *logos*. Indeed, Cooper's choice of phrase above "a matter of recognising the single human nature common to all" bear a similarity to Maximus' own choice of words, but the precise words Maximus uses in *Amb. 41* talk not of this division removal resulting in a single human nature, but "properly and truly to be simply human beings/ἀνθρώπους μόνον κυρίως τε καὶ ἀληθῶς" (Maximus 2014b, *Amb. 41*: 114–115). 'Anthropos' here is the choice word for human beings, distinct from the terms Maximus uses for men (ἀνήρ) and women (γυνή) in this line (Maximus 2014b, *Amb. 41*: 114), and distinct from talking about humans in a generic capacity (ἀνθρωπότης) (Maximus 2014b, *Amb. 41*: 112) a few lines earlier. The removal of male and female so that we become 'simply human beings' seems to be talking about the removal of differences so that we are instantiated persons who no longer exhibit those differences. This discussion of nature vs person, universal vs particular, also features in the final opposing argument I wish to consider.

Finally then, Cooper suggests that one can consider discussion of a sexless humanity as referring to human nature as a whole, where the overcoming of sexual difference is a favouring of humanity in its universal capacity over its particular capacity.[38] Cooper is understandably then sceptical of a position that would read humanity as somehow more perfect in this universal capacity, and discusses the need to love particular iterations of humanity as well as that genderless universal (Cooper 2013: 200, 219). It would seem remiss however to characterise Maximus as talking about overcoming particulars when discussing the removal of sexual difference. As established earlier, all the divisions of nature in *Amb. 41* preserve the identity and integrity of particulars and do not favour loving them only in a generic capacity. Cooper draws on chapter II.30 from *Centuries on Love (CL)*, where a person who has perfected love pays no attention to the difference between male and female and instead turns their attention to a single human nature where all are regarded equally. *CL* II.30 ends with a quotation from Paul in *Gal.* 3:28 on the overcoming of all divisions between humans in the love of Christ. However, this 'paying no attention' to gender in *CL* refers to the virtuous way in which humans are asked to live in this life, rather than describing a protological or eschatological overcoming of division as is the focus of *Amb. 41*. Whilst it is true that elsewhere Maximus wants to point out that we should love one another despite differences (Maximus 1865b, *De Char. II*.30. PG90 993B) (a love that has particularity and is never just directed at an anonymous, universal human nature), that does not seem to be the case in *Amb. 41*. As was clarified above, the language of removal is particularly strong in this *ambiguum* and does not carry the same 'overlooking' implication that the *Centuries on Love* do when Maximus implores fellow ascetics to love after Christ's fashion, without discrimination. *Amb. 41* is cosmological in its outlook and all its divisions feature something stronger

38 We see an early version of this argument outlined in Cooper 2005: 222.

than an overlooking of difference, but the final division between the sexes in particular seems characterised by a strong language that advocates the complete removal of both division and difference.

Furthermore, the argument that Maximus must be talking about universals when he talks of removing sexual difference rather than particularised bodies, does not seem consistent in the face of Maximus choice to talk about bodily reproduction. Maximus is talking about the way that particulars will be altered, to the point where they will not have the same reproductive capabilities due to the removal of their sexed characteristics. This does not seem like a dismissal of particular existence at all, but rather particular transfiguration. As has been established, Maximus tells us that personhood is never abolished as we enter into closer communion with God (Maximus 2014a, *Amb. 7*: 88.12.1–90.12.4), so we must ask what *is* it that is being abolished, and thus concede that sexual difference itself is abolished and is something that can be isolated from human personhood without jeopardising it.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper has been to inspect again the text of *Ambiguum 41* and to interrogate what precisely Maximus seems to think is occurring in the division between male and female. The text has received much attention over the last ten years, and it has been the intention of this article to bring this scholarship together in order to give a more comprehensive overview of Maximus' position.

It has been argued that Maximus holds that the division of humanity into male and female is a feature added to humans as a consequence of the Fall. The division differs from the other divisions in *Amb. 41* in a number of ways, with the language of removing difference and division setting it apart from the Chalcedonian pattern found in the other divisions. Looking more broadly at Maximus' system of thought, it seems the best way to characterise male and female characteristics is to consider them to belong to *tropos* or mode of existence, introduced to fallen human nature, as humans would otherwise lack a capacity to reproduce, since spiritual reproduction had been closed off as a result of the Fall. Whilst this *tropos* is not blameworthy and can be set to good and holy use in this life, its removal is anticipated in the eschaton, as humans will no longer have need of bodily reproduction or those bodily features added in order for physical reproduction to be possible. A number of arguments opposing this reading were considered, and some explorations and answers to the issues they posed were addressed. It is thus the conclusion of this paper that it is more contiguous with the thought of Maximus the Confessor to maintain that he believed that sexual difference and division would be bodily removed from human beings in the eschaton.

References

Primary Sources

Gregory of Nyssa (1863), *De Hominis Opficio*, in J. P. Migne, *Patrologiae Graecae*, vol. 44, Paris: Garnier fratres, pp. 123–257.
—. (2014), *De Anima et Resurrectione*, in Andreas Spira (ed.), *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, vol. 3, pars 3, Leiden: Brill.
Maximus the Confessor (1865a), *Capita theologica et oeconomica* (=*Cap. Theol*), in J. P. Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 90, Paris: Garnier fratres, 1083–1174.
—. (1865b), *Centuriae de charitate*, in J. P. Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 90, Paris: 959–1080.
—. (1931), *Mystagogia* (=*Myst*.), in Raffaele Cantarella (ed.), *Massimo Confessore. La mistagogia ed altri scriti*, Florence: Testi Cristiani.
—. (1980), *Quaestiones ad Thalassium I: Quaestiones I-LV* (=*Q.Thal*), Carl Laga & Carlos Steel (eds.), Corpus Cristianorum Series Graeca 7, Turhout: Brepols.
—. (1990), *Quaestiones ad Thalassium II: Quaestiones LVI-LXV* (=*Q.Thal*), Carl Laga & Carlos Steel (eds.), Corpus Cristianorum Series Graeca 22, Turhout: Brepols.
—. (1982), *Quaestiones et Dubia* (=*Q.Dub*), in J. H. Declerck (ed.), *Maximi confessoris quaestiones et Dubia. Corpus Christianorum. Series Graeca*, vol. 10, Turnhout: Brepols.
—. (2014a), *Ambigua 1–22* (=*Amb*.), in Nicholas Constas, *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers: The Ambigua*, vol. 1, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library 29, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
—. (2014b), *Ambigua 23–71* (=*Amb*.), in Nicholas Constas (ed. and transl.), *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers: The Ambigua*, vol. 2, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library 29, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Secondary Sources

Blowers, Paul (2016), *Maximus the Confessor: Jesus Christ and the Transfiguration of the World*, Oxford: OUP.
Bradshaw, David (2013), "The *Logoi* of Beings in Greek Patristic Thought", in John Chryssavgis, Bruce V. Foltz (eds.), *Toward an Ecology of Transfiguration: Orthodox Christian Perspectives on Environment, Nature and Creation*, Fordham: Fordham University Press, pp. 9–22.
Brown Dewhurst, E. (2020), "On the Soul and the Cyberpunk Future: St Macrina, St Gregory of Nyssa and Contemporary Mind/Body Dualism", *Studies in Christian Ethics* 33 (4): 443–462.
Cadenhead, Raphael A. (2018), *The Body and Desire: Gregory of Nyssa's Ascetical Theology*, Oakland, CA: University of California Press.
Costache, Doru (2013), "Living above Gender: Insights from Maximus the Confessor", *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 21 (2): 261–290.
Cooper, Adam (2005), *The Body in St Maximus the Confessor: Holy Flesh, Wholly Deified*, Oxford: OUP.
—. (2013), "Saint Maximus on the mystery of Marriage and the Body: a Reconsideration", in Maxim Vasiljević (ed.), *Knowing the Purpose of Creation Through the Resurrection*, Belgrade: Sebastian Press, pp. 195–221.
Cvetković, Vladimir (2016), "Maximus the Confessor's Geometrical Analogies Applied to the Relationship between Christ and Creation", in George Dion Dragas, Pavel Pavlov, Stoyan Tanev (eds.), *Orthodox Theology and the Sciences*, Sofia: Sofia University Press, Columbia MO: New Rome Press, pp. 277–291.

Kochańczyk-Bonińska, Karolina (2017), "Chapter 14: The Philosophical Basis of Maximus' Concept of Sexes: The Reasons and Purposes of the Distinction between Man and Woman", in Sotiris Mitralexis, Georgios Steiris, Marcin Podbielski, Sebastian Lalla (eds.), *Maximus the Confessor as a European Philosopher*, Oregon: Cascade Books, pp. 229–238.
Loudovikos, Nikolaos (2010), *A Eucharistic Ontology: Maximus the Confessor's Eschatological Ontology of Being as Dialogical Reciprocity*, Elizabeth Theokritoff (transl.), Massachusetts: Holy Cross Orthodox Press.
Louth, Andrew (2010), "St Maximos' Doctrine of the *logoi* of Creation", in *Studia Patristica*, vol. 48, Leuven: Peeters Publishers, pp. 77–84.
Mitralexis, Sotiris (2017), "Rethinking the Problem of Sexual Difference in *Ambiguum 41*", *Analogia* 2 (1): 139–144.
Partridge, Cameron Elliot (2008), *Transfiguring Sexual Difference in Maximus the Confessor*, PhD diss., Harvard Divinity School.
Skliris, Dionysios (2017), "The Ontology of Mode in the Thought of Maximus the Confessor and its Consequences for a Theory of Gender", in Sotiris Mitralexis (ed.), *Mustard Seeds in the Public Square: Between and Beyond Theology, Philosophy, and Society*, Delaware: Vernon Press, pp. 39–60.
Thunberg, Lars (1965), *Microcosm and Mediator*, Copenhagen: C.W.K. Gleerup Lund.
Tollefsen, Torstein T. (2015), "The Concept of the Universal in the Philosophy of St Maximus", in Antoine Levy, Pauli Annala, Olli Hallamaa, Tuomo Lankila (eds.), *The Architecture of the Cosmos. St. Maximus the Confessor. New Perspectives*, Helsinki: Luther-Agricola-Society, pp. 70–92.
Törönen, Melchisedec (2007), *Union and Distinction in the Thought of St Maximus the Confessor*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
von Balthasar, Hans Urs (1941), *Kosmische Liturgie: Maximus der Bekenner*, Freiburg i. B.: Herder.

Ema Braun Djuherst

Odsustvo polne razlike u teologiji Maksima Ispovednika

Apstrakt:

U poslednjoj deceniji, a posebno u poslednjih nekoliko godina, posvećeno je mnogo pažnje stavovima Maksima Ispovednika u pogledu polnih razlika i njihovog uklanjanja. Najvažniji tekst na ovu temu je *Nedoumica* (*Ambiguum*) *41*. Različita je recepcija ovog teksta, jer neki naučnici stoje na stanovištu da Maksim veruje da polne razlike nisu postojale u izvornoj ljudskoj prirodi i da će se u takvo stanje vratiti na eshatonu, dok drugi naučnici koji veruju da ovo treba čitati kao metaforično odsustvo. Ovaj članak preispituje dotični tekst i tvrdi da bi trebalo zadržati prethodni stav, uzimajuću u obzir sva relavantna istraživanja teksta i odgovarajući na pitanja koja proizlaze iz suprotstavljenih čitanja.

Ključne reči: *Nedoumica* (*Ambiguum*) *41*; telo, vizantijska teologija, vizantijska filozofija, eshatologija, rod, Maksim Ispovednik, protologija, pol

II

STUDIES AND ARTICLES

STUDIJE I ČLANCI

UDK: 159.93
https://doi.org/10.2298/FID2102229G
Original Scientific Article
Received 09.05.2021. Accepted 30.05.2021.

PHILOSOPHY AND SOCIETY
VOL. 32, NO. 2, 157–334

To cite text:
Gehring, Petra (2021), "The Empiricism of Michel Serres. A Theory of the Senses between Philosophy of Science, Phenomenology and Ethics", *Philosophy and Society* 32 (2): 229–245.

Petra Gehring

THE EMPIRICISM OF MICHEL SERRES A THEORY OF THE SENSES BETWEEN PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE, PHENOMENOLOGY AND ETHICS

ABSTRACT
The paper presents the philosophy of the French philosopher Michel Serres, with an accent on his working method and unusual methodology. Starting from the thesis that the empiricist trait of Serres' philosophy remains underexposed if one simply receives his work as that of a structuralist epistemologist, Serres' monograph The Five Senses (1985) is then discussed in more detail. Here we see both a radical empiricism all his own and a closeness to phenomenology. Nevertheless, perception and language are not opposed to each other in Serres. Rather, his radical thinking of a world-relatedness of the bodily senses and an equally consistent understanding of a sensuality of language – and also of philosophical prose – are closely intertwined.

KEYWORDS
Michel Serres, empiricism, parcours, structuralism, phenomenology

> *La connaissance vient du langange, certes; et si la philosophie nous venait des sens? (Of course, knowledge comes from language; but what if philosophy came to us through the senses?)*
>
> Michel Serres[1]

Michel Serres is probably the most well-known 'unknown' contemporary french philosopher. He has been writing since the late 1950s – writing a lot, fluently, and creating his own *écriture*. His works do not fit into any format, they cross the boundaries of formats. One may ascribe that to Serres' academic background: He was as a trained mathematician; he gained a mathematical-technical experience, because he went to sea; at university he then changed his field of work to *épistémologie*, we would say history of science. And then he turned from history to philosophy. This wandering through the disciplines, of course, did not

1 Serres: 1985: 211; Serres 2008: 195. – In the following I quote from the English edition (Serres 2008) (abbreviated: FS) and add the French passage (Serres 1985) with reference (abbreviated: CS) as a footnote.

Petra Gehring: Professor, Institute for Philosophy, TU Darmstadt; gehring@phil.tu-darmstadt.de.

just happen. It follows decisions – movements of departure – and it has its own program, at first originated perhaps in a search movement, but then as an astonishing, even stubborn persistence on Serres' own themes, on his own ways of working. In fact, Serres is a programmatic theorist. His claim is not only to make philosophical contributions to a defined subfield. He wants no more and less than to reinvent philosophy, its forms and to some extent also its goals. I refer here less to Serres' own statements, they contain recognisable stylisation. In a publication of interviews – which is worth reading – Bruno Latour was able to persuade Serres to make such retrospective self-assessment, but Latour rightly also questioned them (Latour; Serres 1992). I will limit my own approach on Serres' methodology, his choice of topics and statements – as they can be found in his (in many ways astonishing) works. And especially I will carve out the quite radical empiricist trait that is inherent in his philosophy, although Serres usually neither is perceived as associated with the philosophical tradition of phenomenology nor as an empiricist, be it in the tradition of Hume, be it or Deleleuze.

Before we delve into Serres' theory of perceiving and perception – a theory which is notably represented by the book *Les Cinq Sens* (*The five senses*) from 1985 – I would like to briefly try to classify his work as a whole. In doing so, I will first introduce Serres as a historian and a philosopher of science – which he still is and as which he is rightly seen in the main. In addition, however, more will have to be added to the picture, namely aspects of aesthetics, technology and especially ethics, of which it is difficult to say whether it really should be interpreted as 'ethical': They may also be meant in a culturally diagnostic, political or even religious way. How in *The Five Senses* a theory of sensual perception, a downright empiricism, fits with this cultural-critical trait of Serres's work will have to be considered in more detail.

1. Parcours and the Re-surveying of Knowledge

Serres becomes known in the 1960s, on the one hand as a structuralist-inspired – that is unorthodox, anti-hermeneutic – reader of ancient cosmological texts. He examines greek geometry, the mathematical models in Leibniz, the physics of Lucretius based on flows and vortices. On the other hand, he is active (by way of a very similar approach) as a reader of *belle lettres*: He writes monographs about Jules Verne, Émile Zola, a novella on Hermaphroditism by Balzac. In addition, there are works about painting, architecture, about angels, about Chinese landscape and other travel impressions; the city of Rome is the leitmotif of one of his books – and so on. Furthermore, there are works that completely break away from canonical authors as well as from historico-cultural scenes. Again only some titles: *Genèse* (*Genesis*), *Le Parasite* (*The Parasite*), *Le Contrat naturel* (*The Natural contract*), *Hominescence*.

The alleged arbitrariness of the choice of topics shows one thing above all: that Serres' theoretical interests lie on a different level than is reflected in the order of scholarly subject fields as we tend to group them. He is an expert in the *sciences*, the so-called rigorous disciplines of mathematics, physics, chemistry

and biology, as well as the electro-technical information theory and cybernetics, together with their history. But he also sees himself as a philosopher of 'knowledge' in general, without the need for a methodological change of perspective. This unbroken expansion of the field of his research contains a double thesis that creates distance in, again: two respects. Namely, first: supposedly rigorous scientific disciplines are cultural goods, historically bound and to be understood only in comparative terms, just like all other phenomena in our living environment. And secondly: supposedly 'softer' disciplines, non-empirical forms of knowledge or even everyday culture itself are in turn permeated by 'hard', 'rigorous' forms of order. These orders may be more complex, but they are no less precise and do not in principle obey less relevant rationalities than science itself. The first insight may sound like a cultural studies platitude – everything has developed, everything is relative. However, Serres is not at all concerned with relativism. Thus, more emphasis may perhaps be placed on the second insight. This is also quickly stated: Logics, forms of extra-scientific kind can be taken so seriously as if they were mathematics themselves. But it is then all the more unclear how to take this assumption methodologically into account and how to implement it epistemologically. Can we generate knowledge on this basis? Serres' answer is clear: The pre-eminence of universal earnestness over universal relativism – is precisely where the the "confluence of the formal and cultural"[2], the Serresian project, begins. A by no means arbitrary but boundless transfer.

Mathematics, models of the rigorous science and epistemological observations are being exported – but at the same time, things like the everyday knowledge of the so-called non-scientific world – farming, cooking, mountain hiking, kite-flying – are being treated at the same level. From science to knowledge: We tend to associate this broader understanding of the epistemic domain with the work of Michel Foucault, who formulated the concept of the 'historical apriori' of experience – preceding all scientific conditions verification[3]. Serres, however, goes further in some ways. He takes Bachelard's expansion of the search space of cultural reflection – not just science but knowledge (Gehring 2004) – perhaps even more comprehensively at its word. At an essential level, the world, heterogeneous as it is, including its archives, is a single stock. And one that can and should be remeasured. Serres is said to have a penchant for all-encompassing, encyclopedic projects, and this is true insofar as he became famous as an editor in addition to his own works: He released an anthology *A History of scientific Thought* and initiated an extensive series of books under the title *Corpus des Œuvres de Philosophie en Langue française*. While Foucault examined the ordering of particular disciplines, Serres embraced, as it were, the entire realm of knowledge accessible to us. I hold above all that Serres relativises the borders of disciplines (in favour of comparatively

2 Cf. Serres 1968: 27: "le confluent demeure, du formel et du culturel [...]" (my translation, pgg).

3 Cf. Foucault 1969: 166 ff.; dt. Foucault 1973: 183 ff.

'individualising' them), as well as he relativises (and characterises) scientificity in favour of the nevertheless dense and structured 'rationality' of everyday life and cultural phenomena. Even in abundance, not everything has to do with everything. The world can be read.

But: Serres doesn't strive for a transcendental philosophy. Inspite of being a structuralist, he avoids rigid 'structures'. Rather, he is concerned with a radical renewal of Descartes' *Regulae*: a 'method' does not need an order. It is at best a path. And it is an open, perilous, wild path: here Serres mobilises his experience as a sailor. Thinking pushes itself away from the ordered like a boat from the shore. It is at most a procedure. A heuristic. And its paradigm is the movement through the unknown. The voyage. Specifically: the sea voyage. Or the wandering, abandoning oneself to the terrain. Serres has elevated the term *randonée*, ambling about, to a concept of method. It is directed not least against the idea of knowledge as a more or less clearly configured *discours*. Serres pits the concept of *parcours* against that of *discours*, propagated by Foucault and others. This appears where order falls back on stories, where even the orders of antique myths were still broken. So that only diversity, the unknown – and improvisation – remain: "an invariant which forms the graph of a parcours"[4]. Of a passage, that is. A crossing that knows no predetermined paths.

> The bridge is a path that connects two banks with each other or transforms the discontinuous into a continuum. Or leads over a break or joins a tear. The space of a parcours is torn asunder by the river, it is no space for transport. Furthermore, there is not one space, but two multiplicities without a common edge. They are so different, that a difficult or dangerous operator is needed to join the two edges together.[5]

> And suddenly I speak with many voices, I am unable to designate the border between storytelling, myth and science. Is this bridge in Königsberg the one, on which Euler invented topology, the bridge over the Viorne or the Seine of the Rougon-Macquart cycle or even the totality of bridges represented in the mythical discourse?[6]

Kant, according to Serres, "committed two errors":

> He recognised only one space, whereas one may define a multitude of different ones (and may do so repeatedly). On the other hand he makes the senseless

4 Serres 1977: 199: "il reste un invariant qui est le graphe d'un parcours".
5 Serres 1977: 200: "Le pont est un chemin qui connecte deux berges, ou qui rend une discontinuité continue. Ou qui franchit une fracture. Ou qui recoud une fêlure. L'espace du parcours est lézardé par la rivière, il n'est pas un espace de transport. Dès lors, il n'y a a plus un espace, il y a deux variétés sans bords communs. Si différentes qu'il est besoin d'un operateur difficile, ou dangereux, pour connecter leurs bords."; dt. Serres 1993: 209.
6 Serres 1977: 200: "Et, tout d'un coup, je parle à plusieurs voix, je ne sais plus marquer la limite entre le récit, le mythe et la science. Ce pont est-il celui de Kœnigsberg, où Euler inventa la topologie, le pont sur la Viorne ou la Seine, au cycle des Rougon-Macquart, ou l'ensemble des ponts exposés aux discours mythiques?"; dt. Serres 1993: 210.

> attempt of justifying orders within the transcendental subject, whereas we could extract everything from language and practice.
>
> Thus we arrive at the following interim result: I have at my disposal operators, which I have extracted from naive symbols. These operators act upon something that philosophy at least doesn't express, i.e. the accidents and catastrophes of space and the multitudes of spatial varieties. What is that which is closed? What is that which is open? What is a connecting path? What is a tear? What is the continuum and what is discontinuous? What is a threshold and what is a border? This is the elementary program of a topology.[7]

Discours: knowable order and *parcours*: a path "which [only: pgg] opens up in the discretion of its elements and their combinations"[8]; these terms (*discours, parcours*) stand side by side on an equal footing. And Serres opts for the second. It is true that he also has studied discourses. But above all he investigates how recombinations and completely unexpected paths open up between them.

Only very briefly, I will indicate here how Serres implements this program of a kind of alternative and, from the outset, subversive-constructivist discourse research. In the five-volume anthology *Hermès* he tests the work with various – nearly always spatially illustrated – paradigmatic concepts: the communication network, the interference (overlay or disturbance), the translation (transfer), distribution or transport systems, and the North-West Passage, the passage through the pack ice, which would pave a new way between two separate continents, of which captain who dares it, however, cannot yet be sure whether it is navigable or whether it exists at all. What does Serres do now when he proceeds to the re-survey of scientific knowledge by means of such paradigms, which are undoubtedly very general? I pick out an example that starts from the so-called 'law of diminishing returns' – illustrated by the economist Turgot by means of a physical analogy (the loading behaviour of a feather). Serres chooses another, far more complex analogy. "I'm comfortable calling the Concorde", he writes, the famous French supersonic airplane thus,

> an obsolete model. If we want to fly even faster, we will soon need to eliminate all passengers in order to make space for additional fuel tanks. In other words, in order to arrive at a slight increase in speed, we would need to apply a great deal more input. And this 'slight increase' decreases, while the 'great deal more

7 Serres 1977: 201: "[I]l ne repérait qu'un espace, alors qu'on peut en definer de varies, de nimbreux, et en nombre croissant; il tentait d'autre part le sot projet d'une foundation dans le sujet transcendental, alors que nous pouvons tout recevoir dans le langage et les pratiques. D'où ce bilan temporaire. Je dispose d'opérateurs, tires de symbols naïfs, qui travaillent sur un non-dit, au moins par la philosophie, savoir les accidents ou catastrophes de l'espace et sur la multiplicité des varieties spatiales. Qu'est-ce qu'un chemin de connexion? Qu'est-ce qu'une déchirure? Qu'est-ce que le continu et le discontinue? Qu'est-ce qu'un seuil, une limite? Programme élémentaire d'une topologie."; dt. Serres 1993: 210 f.

8 Cf. Serres 1977: 203: "[un chemin parallèle `celui, qui] fut ouvert dans le discret des elements et leurs combinaisons".

> input' increases enormously. In the extreme case, we would be transporting at an optimum, if we weren't transporting anything at all. And that's exactly what happens in military planes, which are much faster and more advanced than their civilian counterparts, but only carry one pilot and death. [...] It is a well-known fact that efficiency and returns have no place in the production of armaments. The reciprocal insight, unfortunately, is not as well-known: when returns decrease significantly, production heads towards death. Its only interest is in the art of war. Does the Concorde stand for a general law?[9]

From agriculture and physics (Turgot) to engines to war and peace – and then on to the knowledge economy of scientific inventions, in which, as is well known, military use also plays a role. The passage in question doesn't deal with the latter aspect in more detail. Instead, it is then about the yield curve of innovations in the history of mathematics. *Hermès 5* is preceded by a rewriting of the ancient story of Zenon, who competes with the tortoise. The Zenon of the North-West Passage tries different algorithms of locomotion, which always slow him down in the end. All methods build unknown obstacles in front of him. Then he discovers this new method: *randonnée*. He turns off, leaves himself to chance. Even the scale and step length, which he had previously varied individually, he now mixes up case by case, always differently. And what happens?

> Suddenly the mountain lay close to the atom, and the compass rose close to the small angle, the mite dawdled a few angstroms from the tights of a giant, the hard cape shrouded itself in the broken froth of the wave. The orders were in order no more, the orders of magnitude were un-ordered, as were the types of forms [...]. This disorder, introduced into likeness, produced only the customary and the habitual. The space of reason did not say no to the space of life and of things themselves anymore. Zenon does not renounce reason in the mad abundance of the tangible, instead he learns that reason is a singular case in a lottery draw, one amongst other singularities [...]. He smiles, softly: I may be far from my destination, it doesn't matter, he says. But I do believe that I am not too far distant from reality anymore; don't repeat it. – The new Zenon, from Paris or London, called his method 'randonnée' [...].[10]

9 Serres 1980a: 132: "J'appelle volontiers l'aéronef Concorde un fin de série. A supposer que nous voulions aller plus vite, il faudra bientôt expulser tous les passagers pour faire place aux reservoirs de kerosène. En d'autres termes, pour acquérir un peu de vitesse, il faut consenter beaucoup plus de dépense. Et cet 'un peu' décroît beacoup, lorsque ce 'beaucoup' croît énormément. A la limite, nous transporterons optimalement, à la condition de ne rien transporter du tout. Et c'est bien ce qui se passé dans l'aviation militaire, bien plus rapide et avancée que son homologue civile, mais qui ne porte rien qu'un opérateur et la mort. [...] Il est connu qu'en matière de production militaire, la rentabilité, le rendement ne comptent plus. La reciproque, hélas, est moins connu: lorsqu'un rendement décroît fortement, alors la production plonge vers la mort. Elle n'intéresse plus que l'art militaire. – La loi Concorde est-elle générale?"; dt. Serres 1995: 172 f.

10 Serres 1980a: 13 f.: "La montagne, tout à coup, fut voisine de l'atome, et la rose des vents de l'angle menu, le ciron se traînait de quelques angstroms sur des chausses de géant, le cap dur se constellait des embruns brisés de la vague. Les ordres n'étaient plus en ordre, les orders de grandeur n'étaient plus ordonnés, ni les genres de formes [...]. Ce

In part, as pointed out, Serres proceeds very concretely (almost playfully), in part, however, in a very abstract manner – but mostly both at the same time. The most impressive book for me, an encyclopedia of possible logics in which the very tangible and highly formal problems are masterfully interwoven with each other, is *Le Parasite* (*The Parasite*). The topic here are logics not of the excluded, but precisely of the included third, of the irritating power of a third party: logics of an at least a trivalent asymmetry (Gehring 2010).

2. Aesthetics, Technology, Ethics

This brings me only briefly to those fields of works which Serres has increasingly turned to in the course of the years and which go beyond the field of epistemology – be it ever so broadly defined. On the one hand there is art. In a small volume on the paintings by the Venetian Renaissance painter Carpaccio, Serres experiments with philosophical interpretations of images. Perhaps one should say, he fabulates or creates models refering to paintings – for the booklet does not pursue an art-historical approach. Even painted artifacts Serres rather takes as a system, if not as an implicit theory. In an opulently illustrated book about angels he groups texts and images egalitarian next to each other in order illuminate the theme of the messenger – aiming at the media-theoretical questions behind it. Needless to say, Serres already alludes to messenger and mediation technologies with his use of the leitmotif of 'Hermès' in his early works. As everyone knows, the demigod Hermes is also known to be responsible for thieves and for travellers – which points once more this other paradigm in Serres' modeling games: locomotion as a journey into foreigns worlds. Preferably the journey by ship.

Serres' artful work with recurring motifs, his scientific prose has developed into an unmistakable idiom: formulaic, symbolic language and poetry at the same time – but this would be a topic in itself (Gehring 2006). Returning to aesthetics as a subject, I mention only that he also wrote on music. Mathematicians and musicians are "born under the same sky and at the same moment, like twins", he writes in *Le Parasite*. "Without always being aware of it, they are forever together." But only musicians know "what a chord is and how to put it into practice".[11]

---

désordre introduit dans la similitude produisait simplement l'état de l'habitude et de l'accoutumée. L'espace de raison ne disait plus non à l'espace de la vie et des choses ellsmêmes. Zenon ne renounce point à la raison dans la profusion folle du concret, mais il apprend que la raison est un cas singulier dans un tirage au sort, une singularité parmi autres. [...] Il sourit, alors, doucement: peut-être suis-je loin de ma destination, il n'importe, dit-il. Mais je crois bien que je ne suis plus trop éloigné du réel; ne le répétez pas. – Le Zénon nouveau, de Paris ou de Londres, appelait randonnée sa methode [...]"; dt. Serres 1995: 12 f.

11 Serres 1980b: 173: "[...] nés sous le même ciel et au même moment, jumeaux" – "Sans le savoir toujours, ils sont toujours ensemble." – "[...] [Eux seul savent, parmi nous,] ce qu'est un accord et comment le realizer." – Cf. Petra Gehring 2020.

Serres loves beauty without loving purity, and he loves harmony, but not the harmony of unity or unanimity, rather that of polyphonic totality. A devoted enthusiasm for the never-ending variety – the non-trivial, the irreducible variety – also determine his aesthetic choices. The fact that, in addition to art in the narrower sense, technology, namely today's complex technologies, have advanced to become the almost miraculous realm and source of diversity, stands sharply before his eyes. Here, too, he is fascinated by almost everything. On the one hand his curiosity is directed especially at vehicles, transport techniques of all kinds, and on the other hand by communication technologies: smoke signals, semaphores, the morse apparatus – and above all in his later works: the internet. Serres can be read not only as a topologist or as a media theorist, but also as a theorist of technology. This should be underpinned, without my being able to deepen this as well.

Onward to moral philosophy and to politics. Here Serres has set a break with his book *Le contrat naturel* (*The natural contract*). This text is akin to a fire call. It takes a look at the ecological situation of the Earth and, in a very fundamental way, at the social that has led to it. There is not only a dramatic exhaustion of nature by culture and monstrous artifacts that threaten us together with our natural environment. But our very own and most basic relation to the world around us can be considered as failed. Because with what we imagined as 'nature', we created a fatal, a false category. Serres therefore demands nothing less than a new social contract – a social contract that would be made with nature itself and would include it in a new coexistence to be established. There are no examples in legal philosophy for such a 'natural contract' with a mute partner who cannot form a willingly decision or sign. Nevertheless, we need it – and its obligations we must execute with our bodies and actions. They must be more than letters on paper.

> Henceforth, we will refute the word politics as inaccurate, because it only refers to the city, the public spaces, to the administrative organisation of groups. But he who stays within the city – formerly known as a bourgeois – knows nothing of the world. Henceforth, the one who governs must escape from the humanities, from the streets and walls of the city and become a physicist, emerge from the social contract, invent a new natural contract by giving the word nature back its original meaning of the conditions into which we are born – or will be reborn in tomorrow. Inversely, the physicist, in the most ancient greek sense of the word, but also the most modern, will approach the politician.[12]

12 Serres 1990: 75: "Désormais nous répouterons inexact le mot politique, parce qu'il ne se réfère qu'à la cite, aux espaces publicitaires, à l'organisation administrative des groups. Or il ne connaît rien au monde, celui demeure dans la ville, jadis appelé bourgeois. Désormais, le gouvernant doit sortir des sciences humaines, des rues et des murs der la cite, se faire physician, émerger du contrat social, inventer un nouveau contrat naturel en redonnant au mot nature son sens original des conditions dans lesquelles nous naissons – ou devrons demain renaître. Inversement le physician, au sens grec le plus ancient, mais aussi le plus modern, s'approche du politique."

As we know, (Serres' disciple) Bruno Latour took up the idea of an autonomy of things in his own way (Latour 1999). Serres, on the other hand, turned more to anthropological considerations. Mind you, a new type of anthropology. He speaks with an artifical term of *hominescence*, a demanded becoming human, which so far hasn't taken place.

3. The Five Senses

Les Cinq Sens, *The five Senses*, published as the first volume of a so far discontinued series called *Philosophie des corps mêlés* (*A philosophy of Mingled Bodies*). It is – even by Serres' standards – an exceedingly lavish book. For long stretches, it reads like a hymn branching out into stories, a tribute to the senses, a series of essays which are devoted to the facets of feeling, perceiving and, of course, to the body as the great and mysterious entity that initiates us into all this.

Indeed, the breadth and modulability of sensory experience itself is to some extent the subject of the book, plus its power to ground all that lies beyond perception. But I think the book has at least two other major themes. One is the role, possibilities, and limits of language confronted with the silent realm of the senses: how are perception and language related, and what does language do in the face of the force of sensory experience? Is it able to grasp them? The second theme is of interest to the scholarly reader: *Les Cinq Sens* is a discussion of the challenges of radical empiricism and its subtler (but perhaps weaker) variants in the philosophical tradition of phenomenology. Serres opts here ... in the end probably for both. For a radicalised phenomenology, one that does't turn away from language. But also for one that has to be grounded anew in empiricism – at least that would be my thesis.

The order of the book is somewhat confusing. However it does contain five chapters: at the beginning it is about skin and sense of touch, then the ears, the tongue with nose (taste and smell), the eyes and finally as fifth sense the sense of balance. But as for the rest, one is already at a loss. The five parts differ strongly in their extent, their headings said at first sight nothing and also the sections are completely heterogeneously headed, for example: "Tattooing", "Subtle", "Fog", "Cells", "Animal spirits". The heading "Birth" occurs twice, the heading "Fur" is in quotation marks. In the chapter "Boxes, Cases" there is a section "Healing in Epidaurus", in the chapter "Joy" there is a section "Healing in France". Possibly corresponding. Or not? It seems to be undecidable. Three successive sections contain the additions 'local', 'global' as well as 'global and local': a rascal who thinks of Hegel, and who then does not notice the small reversal that the third stage ('global and local') doesn't neutralise the two previous ones, but ends again with the first term. Such jumping divisions, to which one cannot make a rhyme, are often found in Serres' books. Wheter we have a denial of order before us or a riddle (i.e. one or more coded orders) has, to my knowledge, not yet been clarified by anyone.

If we stick to the theme: our body has *five* senses, from these five senses our experience springs, that much becomes clear from the reading. But all

the rest is a "but …". The inordinate copiousness of the book, the order that is only hinted at, the crowded image of small cross-references – what Serres examines isn't a world of discrete sensory perceptions, just the opposite: the complex, equally dense as well as mobile interrelationship of synaesthetically interacting fields. In an active zone of wonder called body, the five only supposedly exist as separate. And while we grasp, perceive and act, they lay ahead of objects and language in a mysterious way. Moreover, they are nonetheless always already intimately conspiratorial with both – the world of expression as well as the world of objects. It is only as if they knew more of both, words and thing, than these know of themselves – and than we can say. In this respect the senses are nothing pre-communicative. Instead, they are downright masters of communicating. And the bodily perception, though mute, is also abundant in reflected subtleties: a paradise, a primordial sea, a universe of communication.

[3.1.] That the senses are thus initial, but not original in the way that the body – initially empty – would have in them quasi filler necks, sensors, plugs, interfaces that let the world in, Serres already makes clear in the very first section.

Under the heading "Birth", the book begins with a gripping scene that initiates the theme of perception as well as corporeality in an elementary way – namely right at the border of life and death. What we read is the account of the narrow escape of a first person narrator, Serres himself, from a burning ship. But the report also works as a subtle frontal attack against all forms of naive sensualism, as well as against the guiding difference of cognitive theory – inside and outside. The former – sensualism – supports the idea of a blank waxboard or of an automaton, including the corresponding genetically-constructed idea of incarnation (i.e. developmental psychology). The latter – cognitive theory – divides the nature of external stimuli from the nature of the internal stimulus processing (possibly with resulting reactions).

With Serres, in the first discovery of such a never before experienced, incomparable situation, we do not perceive like a child (receiving impressions) but it is an adult man who finds himself enclosed in the ship, physically connected with it, wedged between inside and outside, struggling to press his body through a much to small porthole – and then, as it were, flushed or washed out by a wave: born or newborn. But this is probably not due to certain sensory external information. Rather, most likely because the senses are already there. 'There' in the sense of 'in that place': thanks to an archaic knowledge, a wise complicity of the body with the technical artifacts and with the elements: fire, air, water. It is crucial for the rescue that the senses, in their cross-linked totality with the world, are always already on the outside. Our bodies reach all the way to the stars, that is what Henri Bergson has put it.[13] Serres'

13 "Car si notre corps est la matière à laquelle notre conscience s'applique, il est coextensif à notre conscience, il comprend tout ce que nous percevons, il va jusqu'aux étoiles.", Bergson 2003: 138.

opening movement sets the scene and at the same time makes clear how this insight is not followed by a feeling of omnipotence, but by humility and grateful amazement.

That *The Five Senses* also demonstratively rejects any cerebralism right at the beginning - localization of the sensory clearing center in the brain, in the head, or fixed localization at all – I mention only in passing. "The soul resides at the point where the I is decided."[14], the text says. And this point, that is what the story revolves around, manifests itself in the course of a transitory movement, somewhere beyond the center of the body – all the while being threatened with fragmentation. It emerges case by case. It is mobile. And it expends itself, spends itself. Just like my breath: "This internal sense proclaims, calls, announces, sometimes howls the I [...]"[15]

[3.2.] The section "Tattoos" takes up the theme of localisation again. And in does so radically decelerated and in an almost ethnographic mode: we study, without existential pressure, how the body does it.

> The soul, not quite a point, reveals itself through volume, with precision in a ship, in the space traced by unusual displacements. Can we find it superficial now?[16]

The cutting of one's own nails, the touch of lips – what Serres describes here is what the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (taking up a neurological term) has called 'chiasmus' and what Edmund Husserl already investigated using the example of our two hands: the attempt to touch one's own touching (for instance when I touch something with one hand and then touch this touching hand with my second hand) – this attempt fails: either I feel 'myself' in one hand or else in the other. There is no reflexivity, which is ulterior to the *gestalt* that I am accustomed to inhabit wholly and completely; no reflexivity which now additionally once more unites the perception (detached from 'itself', as it were). The body plays ball with the soul 'locally', so Serres turns it. Furthermore Serres describes how we can discover that the zones of inner accessibility of our skin – the degrees of preparedness for this reversible self-perception – are unequally distributed.

> There are zones where this contingency does not come into play. I touch my shoulder with my hand, but it is not possible to enable my shoulder to touch my hand.[17]

---

14 FS: 20/CS: 16: "L'âme gît au point où le je se decide."
15 FS: 19/CS: 16: "Le sens interne clame, appelle, annonce, hurle parfois le je."
16 FS: 21/CS: 18: "L'âme, quasi-point, se découvre dans le volume, exactement dans un vaisseau, par l'espace de déplacements extraordinaires: peut-on la chercher de manière superficielle [...]."
17 FS: 25 (translation modified, pgg)/CS: 19: "Il existe des lieux où cette contingence ne joue pas. Je touché mon èpaule de ma main, et je ne peux pas faire que de l'épaule je touche ma main."

Instead of rough, sweeping categories such as 'person' or 'subject', complex topologies result of parts of the body in which a lot of 'I' oscillates and those which have inert object status, belonging to the 'I' rather in certain borderline cases. The soul extends "in patches"[18] and, just as in early romanticist philosophies, it is not somewhere deep inside, but like a tattoo directly under the skin. As a "mingled body"[19], as a colourful thing and as something that can be transmitted through touch beyond the borders of the body. Let us forget incorrect dualisms.

[3.3] Serres also writes about hearing, the noise that even the deaf hear, noise distributed around the world that we do not hear either because it tells us absolutely nothing, or because we would not endure it if we allowed it to tell us something. Our bodies make noise, nature makes noise, society, the collective, makes a tremendous noise.

In one scene of the book, we can see – but especially hear – the Amphitheatre of Pinara, surrounded by a mountain backdrop and a cemetery, and at the same time open to the sky like an auricle: A kind of sound machine in which the fact is multiplied that self-awareness arises from being able to hear ourselves, that we in turn only hear ourselves when something is thrown back at us, that we therefore need a city to make a collective audible, and that we need the dead to hear the past.

Again, we are faced with a chiasmatic structure, but one that is not reserved for the body, but is technically mediated: insofar as it is (merely) nature, the body is noise in the same sense as (merely) roaring sociality or the (merely) dead city. to separate noises, voices, sounds, to filter them, to amplify them, to transmit them. Perception theory cannot be other than information and telecommunication theory.

[3.4] Finally another section. It opens the chapter devoted to the sense of taste, where again we come across the analogy of the map, just as in the case of our body – being quasi tattooed by different levels of preparedness for perception. Similarly, yet abstractly as sensory phenomenologically unfolded into an entirely different form. In or more precisely: on the tongue time gathers. There already the wine list is an encyclopedia, before then catacombs bring to light an old bottle, which one can do justice for its part only by forgetting any hurry or haste:

> It took us so long to finish this bottle that we are still talking about it.[20]

Old wine gives us a new mouth. And it makes us speak in new ways, it awakens the tongue to nothing but itself. In the image of the second tongue, which is

18 FS: 25/CS: 22: "par flaques".
19 Cf. FS: 25/CS: 22: "le corps, mêle".
20 FS: 152/CS: 166: "Nous avons pris tant de temps pour boire ce verre que nous en parlons encore."

able to add a silent, sensual wisdom to what the first tongue says, Serres dares a kind of inverse image of what we know as the metaphor of the lie: the forked tongue as the one that speaks deceitfully and therefore double-tongued. However, the tongue that knows wine does not speak at all, it coexists with the silver of speech like the proverbial gold. From the drug that forces silence, the good wine differs in that it definitely inspires the words. "Aesthetics or anaesthesia", is Serres's laconic theory of the intoxicant, but "there is no third tongue".[21]

As far as cognitive logic is concerned, the special thing about taste is its almost unbelievable capacity for condensation: although the sensual impression itself is quite fleeting, nothing adds up, nothing accumulates, it incomparably concentrates the past. Nothing can be visualised there. A fan emerges from a bottle: "I can draw a thousand maps, but I am only ever talking about time."[22] The smell, Serres calls it a third mouth, is added. This results in yet another model for the interplay of sensory perception and language. No transition, but a parallel action with marriage: three ways to speak, all are guests with all. A communion, three at a time. Modern tempo, chattering or consumerist repetition (as well as the renunciation of guest culture and friendships) are opposed to this form of – as we might call it – sensual intelligence. When Serres, in the question of wine culture, again gains a critical argument for the present from the fact that he confronts – as with Concorde – the maximum of a yield with the limits to which its realization must come, the punch line is turned around straight away:

> Anyone who drinks a good wine will not talk of brands, cannot say fully what flows over the palate, or lingers in the mouth. A finely detailed watered-silk map is drawn there, lacking ready-made words to designate it or sentences to describe it, for want of experience, apart from feeble vocabulary which everyone ridicules. [...] If we had to set out what the wine contains, the list would be as long as our admiration of the wine was profound, the label would cover the bottle, the cellar, the vines and the surface of the countryside, mapping them all faithfully, point by point. [...] Concreteness resides in such density, reality in this summation, like a singular essence.[23]

21 FS: 155/CS: 169: "Esthésie ou anesthesia, pas de tierce langue."
22 FS: 158/CS: 172: "Je dessine milles cartes, je ne parle que du temps."
23 FS: 222/CS: 240: "Qui boit de bon vin ne saurait parler de marque, ne peut dire intégralement ce qui passé ou reste dans son palais. S'y dessine une carte finement détaillée, une moire, sans mots canonisés pour la designer ni phrases pour la decrier, sauf lexique débile, don't tout le monde se moque, faute d'expérience. [...] S'il fallait y énoncer ce que contient le vin, la liste s'allongerait d'autant qu'on estime le vin, le papier recouvrirait la bouteille, la cave, la vigne, la surface du paysage, comme une carte fidèle point par point. L'excellence ouvre une suite descriptive don't on imagine qu'elle court à l'infini. Boire envelope cette liste et ce temps interminable: la singularité du cru, de la date et du flacon lui-même enroule cette immense série sur un lieu réduit, exactement sommaire. Le concret gît dans cette densité ou le reel en cette summation, comme une essence singulière [...]."

Here, not the increased technology (of the transport flight) advances to a weapon, but the increased technology (of the written recording) returns, as it were, to the earth and to what the mixture in the bottle – if one gives it time – always already knows, can and does.

4. Conclusion

It is hard to do justice to a book like *The five Senses*. Plea for diversity and the irrepressible generosity of the real. Scarcity in the strict sense of the word does not exist here - sensory impressions are free, not all are pleasant, but their abundance knows no comparison. The body has an almost paradisiacal economy, language, art and also technology are not its opponents, they are its more or less happy (for their part more or less inspired) guests. The only opponent of the senses and the body, their mysterious regent, is death alone – and the written, printed word. This as far as writing – in a truly platonic fashion – is able to live beyond death, while at the same time losing an elementary relation to the senses, to those five that can only speak for themselves. "Here is the tomb of empiricism, clad in engraved marble"[24], Serres remarks. "Empiricism" on the other hand, "marvels at profusion, a philosophy of wellsprings, whereas economics, the calculation of equilibrium in exchange, suppresses it".[25] While those economies that rely upon negation and abstraction – probably smarter in a certain sense – repress abundance, calculate exchange processes in a state of equilibrium and cannot truly bear a state of plenty. Nor the confusion. Nor that which is mixed.

"We have difficulty speaking about mixtures or rationalising them"[26] as Serres points out in a passage of *The five Senses*. In fact it appears to me that Serres' philosophy of *mixtures* goes a small but important step beyond phenomenologies of the previous type – as a philosophy of multiplicities and manifolds. However, I doubt whether this philosophy of mixtures is itself an empiricism (only and especially this). For that, Serres' motif of the entanglement of words and perception is too much at the center of the theory of perception and the theory of bodies itself. And for that, the book is also too much itself a rehearsal for a poetry that is perhaps even more than sensual. Indeed, *The five Senses* can also be read as a contribution to the problem of scientific language. Serres puts his finger on the price one pays for formal gains in abstraction-as far as language is concerned. "Behold science, fully developed now, mature, powerful, reveling in its triumphs, celebrated above all else, do you imagine it cares what it looks like, at this stage?"[27] Serres' answer is: No. Prose gets

24 FS: 199/CS: 217: „Voici le tombeau de l'empirisme, recouvert de marbre gravé."
25 FS: 216f./CS: 234: "L'empirisme s'émerveille de la profusion, philosophie des sources, l'économie la supprime, calcule des échanges équilibres."
26 FS: 219/CS: 236: "Nous avons du mal à parler des mélanges, ou à raisonner sur eux."
27 FS: 195/CS: 212: „Voici la science plus d'adulte, mûre, puissante, au faîte des triomphes, prèmiere partout, va-t-elle s'inquiéter, l'âge venu, de son visage?"

ugly. It does not a satiate. It seems, then, that language has no chance on two accounts: because it is language and because, in addition, a rational discourse alienates it from the world.

Empiricism always re-appears, according to Serres. As a belief in the senses as well as an enthusiasm for the world, it keeps turning up – and thus it defends itself against the resumptive forces of a language that remains *logos* and puts '-logies' into gear. Against doctrines of abbreviations, against doctrines of direct connections between two or more points, but also against doctrines, which deny the difference between language and non-language. "Empiricism", says Serres in the second part of "Birth",

> is a tailor, working locally, basting, thinking in extensions, from near vicinities to vicinal proximities, from singularity to singularity, from seed to layer, from well to bridge. It draws detailed maps as it traces paths, maps the body, the world and dressmaker's patterns: cuts out, pins, sews. Subtle and refined, it loves detail, its creations fragile. It is a topologist, having a sense for borders and threads, surfaces and reversals, never assuming that things and states of affairs are the same, more than a step in any direction, a weaver of varieties, in detail. Language on the other hand does not go into detail, instantly occupying a homogeneous space: voice carries and echoes afar. A cymbal within the resonating thorax, it rises like a column above the throat, a whirling cone out front, its base planted behind the uvula, trumpet, clarion, announcing itself and flying into the surrounding volume, unifying it. through the mastery of its vibrating force, lending the body a hasty and wide-ranging synthesis, global and urgent, dominant. Acoustics, through its harmonies, erases the seams that came before it and makes us forget them. [...] Empiricism, tailor of our skin, has the same relationship to topology as the sonorous word has to geometry. The latter pair dominates and hides the former.[28]

Topology on one hand, geometry on the other – the one rationalises experience, the other the word. In this cross-table, two formalisation strategies suddenly face each other. Furthermore, language finds its place in the senses and in corporeality. So, once again, we have no dualism an no clear separations

28 FS: 227/CS: 245 f.: „L'empirisme, couturier, bâtit localement, pense par prolongements, de proche voisinage en proximité vicinale, de singularité en singularité, de germe en nappe, de pits en pont, dessine des cartes fines par chemins de chèvres, cartographie le corps, le monde, les patrons: découpe, épinge, coud. Subtil et raffiné, il aime le detail et fabrique fragile. Topologue, il a le sens des bords et des fils, des surfaces et des retournements, jamais assure qu'à moins d'un pas d'ici les choses ou états de choses demeurent les memes, tisserand de varieties, au detail. Le verbe au contraire ne fait pas le detail, il occupe instantanément l'espace homogène: la voix porte et retentit au loin. Cymbale dans son thorax de resonance, elle monte comme une colonne au-dessus de la gorge, cône tourbillonnant, devant, pointe plantée derrière la luette, trompette, clarion qui s'annonce et vole dans le volume tout autour et le rend unitaire sous l'emprise de sa force vibrante, donnant au corps une synthèse hâtive et large, globale et pressée, dominante. L'acoustique pas ses accords efface les coutures precedents et les faits oublier. (...) L'empirisme couturier de peau a la même relation à la topologie que le verbe sonore entretient avec la géométrie. Les deux derniers nommés dominant et cachent les premiers."

before us, the situation is complex. Thus, Serres' prose looks again for a deviating, a dissident path.

The last pages of *The Five Senses* revolve around the paradoxical position that thinking has between the senses, the words and the necessity for abstraction. They also deal with the paradoxical position of philosophy between body, language and manuscripts. The Sciences have changed everything: the world, objects, history. And they also uprooted language:

> We can no longer speak the common language. Precision and rigour have definitively abandoned it to emigrate towards knowledge with its countless disciplines [...].[29]

Serres' advice amounts to freeing language from discursive commitments – and start anew with that which was "once the primary object of traditional philosophy" – the "given"[30]. "To the things themselves!" This was the not identical but electively related appeal, stated by phenomenological philosophy a century ago.

Neither a religion of the senses nor a thinking without words can be the answer to the situation evoked by empiricism. But it would be a matter of reestablishing our linguistic relation to the world – and this in conscious distance to science. According to Serres, the good news is that we have a firm base to start from. There is always already something that supports language. Formal knowledge, however isn't enough anymore – "[n]o matter how powerful it makes us" Serres adds, and elevates music to a metaphor not only for "structure" but also for the movement of thought itself „the universal musicality of language, beneath our utterances, seems to speak to our senses more than the sense of the words themselves".[31] Thus the adventure of philosophy begins afresh – as a kind of multilingual music in writing.

References

Henri Bergson, Henri (2003), *Les deux sources de la morale et de la religion (1932)*, Quebec: Chicoutimi [Edition electronique].

Foucault, Michel (1969), *L'Archéologie du savoir*, Paris: Gallimard. [dt. *Archäologie des Wissens*, Ulrich Köppen (transl.), Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1973].

Gehring, Petra (2004), Art. „Wissen VII", in Gerhard Ritter, Karlfried Gründer, Gottfried Gabriel (eds.), *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* 12. Basel: Schwabe, Sp. 900–902.

29 FS: 339/CS: 376: „Nous ne pouvons plus parler en langue usuelle, precision et rigueur l'ont à jamais quittée pour émigrer vers le savoir aux mille disciplines [...]."

30 Cf. FS: 344: "[...] the given. Once the primary object of traditional philosophy [...]"; CS: 381: "[...] le donné. Objet traditionellement premier de la philosophie [...]."

31 Cf. FS: 195/CS: 212: „Moment où le savoir formel ne suffit plus, quelque pouvoir qu'il donne, où la musique de la langue, par exemple, universelle sous les phrases, semble en dire plus aux sens que le sens des vocables meme [...]."

—. (2006), „Politik der Prosa. Schreibverfahren bei Michel Serres“, in Reinhard Heil, Andreas Hetzel (eds.), *Die unendliche Aufgabe. Perspektiven und Kritik der Demokratietheorie*, Bielefeld: transcript, pp. 169–183.
—. (2010), „Der Parasit: Figurenfülle und strenge Permutation“, in Eva Eßlinger, Tobias Schlechtriemen, Doris Schweitzer, Alexander Zons (eds.), *Die Figur des Dritten. Ein kulturwissenschaftliches Paradigma*, Berlin: Suhrkamp, pp. 180–192.
—. (2020), „Liebeserklärung ans Universale: Serres' Musikphilosophie“, in Reinhold Clausjürgens, Kurt Röttgers (eds.), *Michel Serres: Das vielfältige Denken. Oder: Das Vielfältige denken*, München: Brill/Fink, pp. 89-101.
Latour, Bruno; Serres, Michel (1992), *Eclaircissements*, Paris: François Bourin.
Latour, Bruno (1999), *Politiques de la nature*, Paris: Le Découverte.
Serres, Michel (1968), *Hermès I – La communcation*, Paris: Minuit.
—. (1977), *Hermès IV – La distribution*, Paris: Minuit. [dt. Serres, Michel (1993), Hermes 5: Verteilung, Michael Bischoff (transl.), Berlin: Merve.]
—. (1980a), *Hermès V – Le Passage du Nord-Ouest*, Paris: Minuit. [dt. Serres, Michel (1995), *Hermes 5: Die Nordwest-Passage*, Michael Bischoff (transl.), Berlin: Merve.]
—. (1980b), *Le Parasite*, Paris: Grasset.
—. (1985), *Les Cinq Sens* (=CS), Paris: Grasset. [engl. *The five Senses: A Philosophy of Mingled Bodies (1)* (=FS), Margaret Sankey and Peter Cowley (transl.), London: Continuum Books 2008].
—. (1990), *Le contrat naturel*, Paris: François Bourin.

Petra Gering

Empirizam Mišela Sera
Teorija čulnosti između filozofije nauke, fenomenologije i etike

Apstrakt:

Rad nam predstavlja filozofiju francuskog filozofa Mišela Sera, sa akcentom na njegov radni metod, te krajnje neuobičajenu metodologiju. Polazeći od teze da empirijska crta Serove filozofije ostaje nedovoljno eksponirana ukoliko se njegova dela naprosto recipiraju kao dela epistemologa strukturaliste, prelazi se na detaljniju analizu Serove monografije *The Five Sense* (1985). Tu vidimo i radikalni empirizam, sam za sebe, ali i bliskost sa fenomenologijom. Pa ipak, percepcija i jezik, kod Sera nisu suprotstavljeni. Umesto toga, njegovo radikalna misao o povezanosti telesnih čula sa svetom i podjednako dosledno razumevanje osećajnosti jezika – a takođe i filozofske proze – duboko su isprepleteni.

Ključne reči: Mišel Ser, empirizam, parkur, strukturalizam, fenomenologija

UDK: 165.2
https://doi.org/10.2298/FID2102246T
Original Scientific Article
Received 12.11.2020. Accepted 15.03.2021.

PHILOSOPHY AND SOCIETY
VOL. 32, NO. 2, 157–334

To cite text:
Todorović, Tanja (2021), "The Manifold Role of *Phantasie* in Husserl's Philosophy", *Philosophy and Society* 32 (2): 246–260.

Tanja Todorović

THE MANIFOLD ROLE OF *PHANTASIE* IN HUSSERL'S PHILOSOPHY[1]

ABSTRACT
Husserl's concept of imagination has been systematically presented in *Husserliana XXIII*, in which its manifold role has been set out. Through the different texts, the author shows that *phantasy* (*Phantasie*) should be considered as one of the modifications of *pure re-presentation* (*Vergegenwärtigung*). The article first tries to underline the distinction between Husserl's deliberation on this phenomenon and the traditional concept of imagination. Second, it shows the fundamental moments of constitutional consciousness in order to relate the notion of imagination to perceptual apprehension. At the very end, the notion of phantasy is connected with the idea of *first philosophy* and the question of possibility of its realization.

KEYWORDS
first philosophy, imagination, phantasy, perception, re-presentation

Introduction: Overcoming the Traditional Concept of Imagination

The trouble with understanding the *notion of imagination* lies in the fact that *Husserlina XXIII* leaves room for discussion of the different interpretations of this phenomenon. Although this edition has brought together a systematic and posthumous text on perception, phantasy, image consciousness, memory, time, and a variety of related topics, many authors have noticed that a unified definition of phantasy has not been delivered here, which leads to many different approaches to this question (Cavallaro 2017: 163). Husserl never manages to establish a complete theory of imagination, as some of his predecessor philosophers, such as Aristotle, David Hume, or Immanuel Kant did. This is the reason why we approach Husserl's question of imagination as an uncompleted task that invites us to respond to its unfinished conceptions. There are authors

1 This article was realized with the support of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia, according to the Agreement on the realization and financing of scientific research for 2021.

Tanja Todorović: Teaching Assistant, Department of Philosophy, University of Novi Sad; tanja.todorovic@ff.uns.ac.rs.

that try to underline this systematic role of phantasy by showing its place in the constitutional scheme of consciousness; Husserl's intention in delivering this notion was not descriptive, but a systematic one (Erhard 2014: 402, § 1). Regardless, although his intention was to found the complete science of consciousness, the role of phantasy is left for various interpretations to resolve.

At the very beginning, we need to underline some terminological distinctions. Although Husserl tries to provide a fundamental basis for the imaginative processes, he avoids the standard philosophical term for imagination, *Einbildungskraft*, and instead speaks of *Phantasie* (Jansen 2016: 69). In his philosophical conception, this differentiation is very important because his concept of imagination surpasses traditional understandings of this phenomenon, such as the correspondence theory and the reflections on this notion in German idealism, by showing its mediative role. For Husserl, imagination and phantasy has an almost *self-contained status* and represents the *third fundamental moment of consciences*. The task of the phenomenological method is to provide descriptions of concrete *acts of imagining* in an attempt to identify its essential characteristics.

Unlike traditional reflections on the notion of imagination, Husserl tries to define the term of phantasy (*Phantasie*) by comparing it to two basic modes of apprehensions: *presentation* (*Gegenwärtigung*) and *re-presentation* (*Vergegenwärtigung*). In a phenomenological analysis of the pure consciousness, this notion should not only be considered by showing and describing the way that object appears in the consciousness, but also, this consideration must show the different ways of subjective apprehension in order to show the active and constitutive role in understanding the object. In this context, the notion of phantasy is, on the one hand, a *self-contained moment* of consciousness, because the world of phantasy is an independent world, but, on the other hand, phantasy is dependent on the re-presentational consciousness. The object of phantasy is not a "real" object, so Husserl uses different syntagmas to refer to the way that an object appears in this apprehension, such as: "as it were" (*gleichsam*), "as if" (*als ob*), and "quasi". Phantasy is in *opposition* to the existing world, while perception, memory, and expectation relate to *the way things are*.

Husserl's notion of phantasy should be interpreted by showing its role in the time-consciousness structure. Notwithstanding that Husserl shows that the rudimentary idea of imagination can be found in Saint Augustine's notion of the *inner sense,* which is founded on the new inner time conception.[2] In his later writings, we can see how he manages to find the inspiration for phantasy conception in Aristotelian philosophy. His movement toward history was slow and perhaps we could say that his *Crisis* was the turning point in his investigational process from a pure transcendental to an ontological position. Regardless, we can see how in the text from 1926, his concept of imagination

2 Already in the introduction of his lectures, Husserl shows that Saint Augustine was the first to discover the complex role of temporality and the difficulty to define it as something "subjective" or "objective" (Husserl: 1928).

was already brought into relation with Aristotelian philosophy. He shows that Aristotle already discovered the *re-productive use of phantasy* - not necessarily as something negative, which was the case in the Platonist's use of *mimesis* (Husserl 1980: 575, ff. 10). Aristotle was the first to show how the notion of imagination should be reconsidered in a subjective structure because it is related trough the question of *pure possibility*, which will later be one of the fundamental considerations in the phenomenological approach to this notion.

Aristotle's concept of imagination is ambiguous. He appeals to phantasy to explain not just behavior that seems to be guided by reason, but also in those cases where the agent lacks the capacity for rational judgment. He also appeals to phantasy to explain the human mind's ability to transition seamlessly between perception and thought, urge and thinking (Mondrak 2017: 15). He was the first to show the *manifold role of phantasy*. In his text *De anima se*, he deliberates on some of these functions. He shows that no action could be possible without the process of imagination (Aristotle 1984: 4, 403a3–403a25), that imagination is different and more fragile than sensation (Aristotle 1984: 50, 428a5–428a18), and that as much as we are free in thinking we cannot escape the truth by being able to imagine a different outcome (Aristotle 1984: 49, 427b7–427b27).[3] Phantasy is a special form of imagination for him:

> As sight is the most highly developed sense, the name phantasia (imagination) has been formed from phaos (light) because it is not possible to see without light. (Aristotle 1984: 51, 429a3–429a)

The role of phantasy is fundamental in the subjective knowledge process because it is the guidance of all different possibilities for action and reflection. For Aristotle, phantasy does not have just a *poetic*, but also an *epistemic* role, and it is fundamental for the *world of praxis* too. The metaphor of light will be also used later by Nietzsche, who will show the connection of imagination with the Apollonian principle. This shall be discussed later in the chapter "*Phantasie* and the promise of the time". Here we just need to underline the ambiguous meaning of imagination. In other texts, Aristotle also shows a connection between phantasy and possibility, emphasizing its poetic role in the creative process. He presented how imagination is connected with searching for τέλος and that it also has a role in defining the *purposefulness* of things. Husserl also presents this role of imagination:

> Phantasy is the realm of purposelessness, of play. (Husserl, 1980: 577, ff. 20; transl. and modif. by author)

He showed that phantasy is not just one formal part of an epistemic structure, but the potential of a subject to *construct the theme*, to give purpose to an appearing object, as much as for the things themselves. This means that

3 Brentano especially emphasizes Aristotle's notion of imagination in the role of "wandering from the truth" (Brentano 2007: 65).

phantasy does not have just a poetic, but also a metaphysical role in constricting the truth. Husserl only later directly affirms some of the Aristotelian insights into these questions:

> Phantasy in the normal sense is neutral re-presentation, re-presenting 'objectivation in phantasy' [*Vorstellung*]. (Husserl: 1980: 579, ff. 25; transl. and modif. by author)

The similarity between these two conceptions lies in the fact that both Husserl and Aristotle manage to show that phantasy does not have just an aesthetic role, but also other constitutive roles; such as the role in the world of actions, in which it finds its place between the sensible and rational sphere in both a theoretical and practical way. Also, they both show the role of phantasy in a commonplace perspective. The most important role shall be discovered later – its role in the metaphysical construction of the truth.[4] Ergo, the *manifold role of phantasy* was not discovered by Husserl, but he was the first to show the possibility to interpret it differently and to show its different use. All these manifold roles come from the subjective possibility to *neutralize* content. This will be a topic later on.

Husserl affirms Aristotelian insights to these questions only in a few places. He also wrangles with Hume and Brentano in many places in order to define imagination. Although very different, these two conceptions of imagination have some similarities. Brentano appeals to the difference between presenting an act and content, and he also recognizes that there is a difference between perceptual and phantasy apprehension, but he never manages to deliver all of the different modes of apprehension, such as believing, doubting, wishing, possibilities, etc. (Husserl 1980: 8, § 3, ff. 30). This is the reason why he and Hume were not able to overcome a completely objectivistic presumption, assuming that the criterion for the differentiation of objective relations lies in themself, in *graduality* and *intensity* of appearance. This approach, from a phenomenological standpoint, reveals itself to be insufficient because this methodology shows that differentiation also lies in a subjective way of grasping and apprehending what has been given. Phantasy, according to this position, is not just mediation, but also the third fundamental mode of apprehension:

> The interpretation of Humean vivacity, vitality, as intensity by Brentano and other innovators does not please me. (Husserl 1980: 95, § 46, ff. 35; transl. and modif. by author)

Methodologically, the difference must be found not just in the graduality and intensity of an object, but also in the *different kinds of apprehension*. The way of apprehending appearance in phantasy is radically different from

4 De Warren emphasizes that already ancient Greek philosophers had discovered this manifold role of phantasy. Plato and Aristotle had differenced at least two roles of imagination, such as power of image-formation and questioned the possibility for the concept of imagination to be unified. Cf. de Warren 2014: 94.

presentational and re-presentational consciousness. Here we have an object as something *present* but it is given in *in-actual* mode. The subjective modes of apprehension are changing. Modification of belief is present. In cases of presentation, memory, which has a great degree of certainty, is also a form of belief; in the case of phantasy, we have two streams of consciousness (presentational and imaginational) co-existing and interfering; they collide and tend to exclude one another. However, later on we can see that a phantasy world can only exist within this battle, in this urge of the consciousness to harmonize differently appearing objects. In the case of phantasy, we do not have an objectifying act, but an object as a *quasi-object*, as something that could or could not exist but doesn't appear in the mode of certain belief. Traditional philosophical reflections on imagination, including Brentano's, never managed to show the possibility of a manifold role of phantasy. Only Aristotle and Kant find its role in the play of the different forms of subjective correlations. Aristotle's contribution is already emphasized. Now we will try to demonstrate the role of phantasy for Husserl as potential and variance and, later, the relation of this form with the question of *Erste Philosophie*.

The Manifold Role of *Phantasie*

The manifold role of phantasy shall be found in its different functions. Husserl shows that the notion of phantasy is usually understood as ability and possibility in a wider sense, like a mental disposition or in an artistic sense (Husserl 1980: 2; § 1, ff. 5). According to this ordinary understanding, the notion of phantasy is reduced to descriptive mental processes and an aesthetic role in a broader sense. Later, it becomes prominent that these functions are just a part of the process of imagination. Phantasy itself has a more diverse role. First, Husserl shows that differentiation between phantasy and other forms of apprehension cannot lie just in the object, but also in the way that the subject grasps the different phenomena. Consequently, we need to underline several distinctions between *phantasy* and *perceptual apprehension*.

The first distinction between *phantasy* and *perceptual apprehension* lies in the way that an object appears to the subject. While the object of perception is clear and independent, the object of phantasy is obscure and fragile. *Figment*, the phantasy object, is something *vague* and *obscure* (Husserl 1980: 70, § 33, ff.20). Husserl shows how the object of phantasy exists only as a *figment*. The subject in the case of phantasy doesn't have a positional act, but it only "hovers before us". It is just a "pure possibility" and its actualization must be questioned. Not every phantasm has the potential for realization, but some of them do. We need to neutralize the positing, i.e. to think of it as neutralized in order to be able to contemplate the object (Husserl 1980: 507, ff.5).

The second difference lies in the way that objects stand in correlation with other objects and the subjective modes of reflection. A figment has no strong correlation with the phantasy world or with the subject itself. The world of phantasy is a world of re-presentation in which the object of sensation has

been nulled, but the perceptual field cannot be ruled out. This means that in phenomenological investigations of modes of re-presentation there are no clear and certain objects, such as exist in sensational content. In perception we have the origination of experience, and the visual field of sensation is not isolated, but objects stand together *in unity*. In the visual field, sensations appear not as isolated phenomena, but are tied up and stand together in unity (Husserl 1980: 73; § 34, ff. 35). On the other hand, phantasms also have some sort of unification, but it is completely separate from the visual field. Because of this, we can often come across a line of thought that the world of phantasy is independent of reality and that the *notion of phantasy has a self-contained status*. This second distinction and almost independent status of imagination shall be emphasized.

In the phantasy world, *the essential unity of the perceptual field is missing*. Objects of phantasy are real objects, but they have a different mode of appearance than physical objects. There is a different kind of objectivity in phantasy than the kind found in a perceptual field. For Husserl, one can't speak of objectivity in any way without showing its essential grounding in subjective relations. However, a physical object is the subject of perceptual apprehension, and it presents itself differently than a phantasm. The essential unity of the phantasy world is also different. This unity has its origin only in the subjective grounding of the phantasy world. There is no outness that gives it truthfulness. The field of phantasms is almost independent from the other forms of apprehension. But, because of the temporal structure of consciousness, a phantasy object doesn't have a completely self-contained status - it exists in the world of imagination only for as long as the subject presents it to itself. Although the phantasy field has its own logic of appearance, it does not have an absolute status of independence. The phantasy field doesn't annul the perceptual world. There *is coexistence and conflict* between these two fields (Husserl 1980: 76, § 36, ff. 10). This conflict is the reason why subjects can have apperception and awareness of the different modes of appearance of the objects. A consciousness that would not be able to maintain this conflict would be schizophrenic and hallucinated. Paradoxically, Husserl shows that *the possibility of conflict is what makes the consciousness be unified*. According to this, we can come to the third distinction between perceptual and phantasy apprehension and that is the way that these two fields interfere with one another.

The perceptual field is the genuine way of presenting the object. Here we have an object that appears in the mode of givens; it reveals itself as a phenomenological occurrence. On the other hand, the phantasy world has a non-genuine mode of appearance; the appearing object is mediated through the image and its significance:

> Only this mediated process produces as insertion into present, which is already present objectivated by means of mediation, not the present that is genuinely sensed. (Husserl 1980: 78, § 37, ff. 25)

Previously, Hegel managed to show that the phenomenological process makes subjects live in an "inverted world" (Hegel, 1971). For him, in the sensual process itself, there is already a non-genuine approach to sensible objects, because an object always appears in one of its modes. Imagination in his phenomenological position has a mediative role. The possibility of re-presentation itself belongs to imagination, which is the mediator between the world of the sensible and the possibility for reflectivity. On the other side, Kant had discovered not just a mediative but also a manifold role of imagination (*Einbildungskraft)* in constitutive processes. For him, imagination has a synthetic role, and it is the mediator between a pure notion and the perceptual field. But his concept of imagination has a different role in the first and third *Critique*. This is the consequence of his first definition of this notion, which has been reduced to a theoretical role; later, it would not be adequate to explain its aesthetic function completely and re-discover other possibilities for its manifold use.[5] Unlike an idealistic approach, Husserl shows that there is a fundamental distinction between perceptual apprehension and the other forms of re-presentation, such as memory and phantasy. For him, imagination should not have a mediative or synthetic role that leads to a unified truth, but he shows its potential for *reversibility* in the dialectical process. This means that for Husserl, imagination will have a synthetic role only conditionally, and not in the same sense as for Kant.[6]

Perception and sensual experience are originated experiences in which an object is presented to a subject genuinely, but only through the process of mediation can it reveal itself intuitively. This means that unlike Brentano's descriptive position, Husserl manages to show that the basis for a conceptual foundation are not just the modes of the sensible, but also the subjective modes of *belief*. The field of perception has the most certain manner of appearance - this means that the verity of the object here is un-doubtful. On the other hand, the world of phantasy is re-presentational and its objects have different modes of belief than the ones in perceptual reflection. Their appearance is vague and fragile, as are their unification grounds. But the totality of apperception which is founded in a time-consciousness nature enables subjects to put all of these different ways of apprehension in a totality of reflection and to maintain their oneness, even in their different modes of appearance. Here, we come to the point where we need to show how the phenomenological method is the only one that is able to underline the differences between all of these different modes of apprehension, because only it can show the time-foundation of consciousness.

This third mode of distinction between perceptual and phantasy apprehension leads us to their time-consciousness basis, in which all of their similarities and distinctions should be founded. For Husserl, consciousness is a *stream*, a *nexus* of different modes of appearance and the possibility of a subject to focus on a particular object or the manner of its appearance; this is one of the

5 Heidegger in particular appeals to Kant's notion of imagination, showing its manifold use and some inconsistencies Kant had in trying to define this term (Heidegger 1991).
6 Husserl compares it with his own passive synthesis. Cf. Katz 2018: 68.

fundamental characteristics that he discovers. Husserl's criticism doesn't just bring into question psychologistic conjecture which never manages to show this distinction, but also his early position, which at first was not able to show all of these manifold layers of apprehension (Prole 2006: 450). In his latter texts, we can see how time-consciousness is not linear and how, in practice, pure and empirical ego always operate together. So, he shows that one of the abilities of the subject is to focus its attention on a particular object, while at the same time maintaining awareness of the difference between the modes of appearance of the object. Knowledge is possible only where intention comes to its fulfillment, so it is particularly important to show the autonomous role of the subject in the constitutional process. As he later manages to show, unity for Husserl always means *paying attention*, *being present* in order to fulfill the subjective intention:

> Now if we live in this consciousness of unity, we are paying attention. (Husserl 1980: 259, § 1, ff. 25; transl. and modif. by author)

Via the investigation of differences between perception and phantasy representation in the phenomenological process, we can show that phantasy is phantasy only for as long as we are aware that its object is something that is given as *present* but in the *in-actual* mode of *appearance*. This unity enables us to show the distinctions between the two modes of apprehension and to show their unified basis. From here, we can see that phantasy has an almost self-contained role. It is dependent not just on perceptual appearance, but also on the time-consciousness foundation. Phantasy is only secondarily dependent on perceptual apprehension, because sensual experience is a condition for phantasy deliberation. Previously, Descartes managed to show that empirical experience is conjecture for a free imaginational process. For Husserl, the world of the sensible only reveals to subjects the possible material and formal modes for creation. But, phantasy itself is primarily dependent on the time-consciousness structure, because it gives the basis for the subject to maintain its object as *something present*.

We can show how phantasy is a form of apprehension, but it is not re-collection and unity in the original sense. Phantasy apprehension is a modification of perceptual apprehension:

> In the meantime, I have made considerable progress. I have recognized that phantasy apprehension is not apprehension proper but simply the modification of the corresponding perceptual apprehension, that image apprehension understood as illusion is perceptual apprehension annulled by conflict, in which the 'annulling' is a matter of qualification and presupposes the 'competition' or 'interpenetrating' of simple apprehensions; in the means of physical-thing apprehensions. (Husserl 1980: 277, ff.20; transl. and modif. by author)

Unlike Descartes and later Leibnitz, Husserl shows that the differentiation between imaginative phantasy objects and objects of hallucination is not only

contained in the degree of perceptual awareness or apperception, but also in the fundamental way that consciousness maintains all different modes of apprehension. Based on the *third moment,* which shows the way that the stream of consciousness holds in dynamic unity all of these modes, we can show how the possibility to focus on one subject comes from the possibility of *annulment* – one of the fundamental methodological steps in the phenomenological process. Descartes had already discovered this first moment (showing the role of skepticism in the mediative process), but he never managed to present all of the different layers of consciousness. On the other hand, phenomenological examination had led Husserl to the point where he was demonstrating how the idea of *annulment* is connected with the phantasy notion. Although at first Husserl (Husserl 1983: 260) was trying to connect the *possibility of annulment* with the imaginative process, later on he stresses that phantasy modification differs fundamentally from the phenomenological *epoché* (Cavallaro 2017: 169).

In his investigations of phantasy, Husserl emphasizes how living in a mere phantasy without taking a position doesn't mean ingesting a hypothetical attitude (Husserl 1980: 360, ff. 15). It means abstaining from judgment and examining the new field of pure possibilities. In order to overcome the common and traditional role of imagination, phenomenological investigation must demonstrate the pure phantasy field. The intentional structure of phantasy is different from presentational and re-presentational consciousness. Phantasy is not only a stream of re-productions but also of free subjective imaginations, in which intentionality, in order to create something new, never manages to come to its complete fulfillment. The role of pure phantasy is to neutralize, modify all belief. In phantasy, the position of actual belief becomes as if: the being actual turns into being-as-if (as if it were reality):

> Phantasy surely constitutes 'ideal', 'pure' possibilities. (Husserl 1980: 559, ff. 25; transl. and modif. by author)

Because of this specific role, the world of imagination is completely different from the sensual world. It has its *own field of play*. We need to stress that Husserl sharply differentiates between the perceiving and imagining process (Moran 2005: 63). Imagining itself is not an integral part of sensual perception. It has its own logic of constitution. Its role can be in filling out and supplementing perception, but it is not just a part of the sensual experience. Surely, the role of sensible experience should not be neglected. It is the main condition for constituting acts in a broader sense. Phantasy experience could also not be possible without perceptual experience. Image consciousness is modification of perceptual experience. De Warren emphasizes this transit:

"The underlying perceptual apprehension is modified in its manner of presentation by the imagination, transformed from a perceptual presentation (*Gegenwärtigung*) into a "re-presentification" (*Vergegenwärtigung*) of something other-than-visible – the depicted and "spiritual" *(geistig*) image-subject seen in the image. This opening of perceptual experience is in conflict with itself,

stamped by the interjected character of the virtual" (de Warren 2014: 104; underlined by author).

He underlines the second important role of phantasy apprehension which has been pointed out by Husserl: the phantasy is at the same time independent of the others forms of presentation, such as perception and re-presentation, but on the other side, on the fundamental ground of pure consciousness it has to be delivered as a pure modified form of representation. The difference between memorial re-presentation and phantasy is in its intentionality, in the way of apprehension, where in the phantasy filed object is non-existing (*ein Nichts*), there is no real existence of the object, the previous step of neutralization defines it.[7] Husserl believed that the role of the sensory field had been radically misunderstood in traditional philosophy. Due to some modern philosophical conceptions, the body itself is being neglected. One of the consequences of searching for the *First Philosophy* and its rational grounds is the dualistic philosophical construction in which the body and soul have been separated. Although his philosophical conception seeks to establish philosophy as a transcendental science, we can see how his conception reveals the importance of the sensible process for all spheres of knowledge.

Epoché puts aside not just materialistic, but also idealistic presumptions and leaves phenomenology the space to show how objects appear in their pure sense without the sediments of beliefs. This doesn't mean neutralizing the bodily process itself, but all of the assumptions of a unification basis, for which it has been believed establishes these processes. This leads to questioning the modern philosophical conceptions which believe that res (*cogitans* or *extensa*) can be the underlying subject for every particular modus of appearance. From Husserl's standpoint, if we are to speak of a subject as the grounds for establishing the clear forms of constitution, first we need to show that we don't understand subjectivity in the traditional way. The subject here is not *res*, or an *underlying thing*.[8] Revealing the spheres of subjectivity does not give us a finished product; they only represent the beginning of a research which only starts to examine new forms of content. Husserl was demonstrating that the self-folding of Ego which has been properly derived must concretely lead to transcendentalism. This methodology overcomes psychologism and Kantian idealism[9], in order to finish the uncompleted project of a subjective constitution

7 De Warren emphasize that both image-consciousness and imagination are "the consciousness of non-present" (*Nichtgegenwärtigkeits-Bewußtseins*) and that they are forms of "re-presintification" (*Vergegenwärtigung*) (de Warren 2014: 108).

8 For Husserl, every aspect of conscious life that affirms empirical existence (every 'positional act') permits, ideally, a conversion into an 'as-if existing' mode of imaginative consciousness. Furthermore, he suggests two stages involved in this potential universal conversion of sense-experience: first, the transformation from actual to quasi-experience and, second, a transition from quasi-experience to pure imaginative possibility (Eliot 2004: 47).

9 In order to reconcile Husserl's concept of transcendental phenomenology and Heidegger's ontology Fink compares the conception between the pure ego relation and

of a system; for the subject, it shall unravel the path to pure egology and the meaning of Being, which should also have meaning for me as ego (Husserl 1963: 33, ff. 35). In addition to this, I tempt the world not just as a singular, empirical subject. The world is revealed to each subject as an intersubjective construction and is presented to every monad equally:

> First, through epoché we must lose the world, in order to gain it back in universal self-reflection. (Husserl 1963: 39, ff. 25; transl. and modif. by author)

Although in *Cartesians meditations* Husserl was underlying Descartes' contribution to the idea of subjectivity as a possibility for a new beginning, in some later works he will emphasize the Greek contribution to these questions. In the addition to his *Ideas* (Husserl: 1983), he presented the importance of the traditional path of phenomenological methodology; also, in *First philosophy*, he elaborates on the impact of the oldest philosophical reflections (Prole 2005: 447). The role of phantasy will only later be delivered in its manifold constitutional role.

Phantasie and Promise of the Time

Husserl was not the first philosopher who diagnoses a rising crisis and the need to refrain from the passable values of the present. In philosophy of life and avant-garde movement, these motifs were also present, especially in fantastic art and in a gesture of returning to primitive forms. This need for return has been present already in Nietzsche's philosophy, especially in his monumental attitude towards Greek philosophy and admiration for pre-Socratic thought. In order to show the beginning of the European crisis, he underlines how the notions of *imagination* and *body* have been neglected in whole philosophical tradition and used to as a metaphysical escape from reality. Nietzsche was metaphorically sketching how a human being is only a *rational animal* who can promise something to others. But he forgot to mention that it is also the only being who can try to accomplish its own promises. He didn't have trust in European civilization and its primordial idea of philosophy as the answer to the crisis of the Greek world. His reflections on crisis are completely different from Husserl's, who manages to save faith in the idea of subjectivity. Nietzsche was presenting that for the first time the idea of a new and better world had been brought into consideration in Greek philosophical reflections and that here the r*eal world had been neglected*. For him, Platonic considerations on the new and better *world of ideas*, which has nothing in common with the real world, were already a symptom of the advancing crisis. Paradoxically, he was showing that the philosophy which was initially founded on the Apollonian principle is nothing *purely rational*, but represents *the world of dreams*. For him, Apollo

---

the objective question of the world and Being, in which the notion of imagination can have a mediating role as in Kant's philosophy, but in a completely new way. Cf. Fink 1985: 114.

is a "God of figure" (Nietzsche 1930: 47), "Predictor" and, most importantly, "interpreter of dreams" (Nietzsche 1930: 49)[10]:

> He who by its origin represents 'visible luminosity', the Deity of light, rules by great illusion of the inner world of imagination. (Nietzsche 1930: 49; transl. and modif. by author)

He was demonstrating that when Greek civilization was not able to withstand the horror of real life and the intensity of the pain, it needed to create some form of *escape from reality*, some Good of dream, which should represent itself as metaphysics and reflection, to help people find shelter from life's storms (Nietzsche 1930: 33). For him, metaphysic is nothing but a construction that represents the weakness of the civilization and its inability to face actuality. He was showing that living in the Apollonian culture is like "living in a dream which one wants continuously to dream" (Nietzsche 1930: 61). *Phantasy*, from this philosophical standpoint, is nothing but an *escape from reality* and philosophy has been built on the imaginative foundation in order to run away from its own actuality.

In this same Platonic gesture of creating a new, ideal world, other authors, such as Jan Patočka, will find a completely different manifestation of philosophy. For him, philosophy is nothing but caring for the soul of the self and the community, and there is no better way to answer a crisis but through imagination, which will lead us to the possibility of the correct path to overcome the crisis (Patočka: 2002). From this standpoint, reflection is just one possible answer to a crisis, but as long as we continuously try to find the answer, we are caring not just about the present circumstances but also about the future. He stresses that phenomenology must free itself from its epistemic foundations and show an essential connection to life. This was the manner in which Plato moved forward to overcome Socrates' epistemic function of philosophy. However, according to Patočka and Nietzsche, modern philosophy had forgotten its own original basis. Its seeking for the truth has no better purpose than to progress for itself - knowledge that shall be used just for epistemic gratification.

Husserl's trust in philosophy is open and real. Unlike Nietzsche, who in Greek philosophy finds the beginning of decadence, he shows that the original philosophical reflections had discovered the idea of 'first philosophy'. The term 'first philosophy' refers to a long philosophical tradition and the Aristotelian idea of philosophy as a fundamental science (Prole 2002: 33). For him, tradition constitutes itself by trying to realize the original idea of a universal mind, and the whole history of philosophy was oscillating around this idea in order to complete this conceived project. In the chapter which reflects on the historical beginning of the subjective foundation of science, Husserl appeals firstly to Aristotelian philosophy, in which he finds the root of modern subjectivist conceptions:

10 In other places, he was also using the same syntagmas, such as "Apollonian artist of the dreams" (Nietzsche 1930: 53), and also "interpreter of dreams" (Nietzsche 1930: 61).

> This is already the case in ancient Greeks philosophy; in Aristotle's powerful spirit the first project of the universal science of subjectivity started to grow, mainly as psychology, which should have been arguing about all of the functions of the soul, but also about the possibilities of the human mind. (Husserl: 1992: 52; transl. and modif. by author)

Although he emphasizes that the first philosophical reflections had discovered the idea of universal science, he also underlines that these conceptions had stumbled on to the naturalistic self-understanding hypothesis. Because of this, real criticism and skepticism were not founded here, but just one dogmatic consideration (Husserl: 1992: 56). By all means, philosophy for Husserl has its origin in the ancient idea of the first philosophy which has never been realized through history because it wasn't able to reveal its own subjective foundational basis. Here, phantasy has the role to help the subject escape itself, its own potentialities, in order to help him construct the 'truth' as one finite and completed project. But the difference between his transcendental phenomenological ontology and other historical conceptions should lie in the fact that Husserl tries to establish *subjective science as an infinite project*. Phenomenology gives to subjects only the basics for starting investigations, not complete answers. Paradoxically, the first philosophy is possible only as an unfinished project which should find its basis for answers in the idea of subjectivity and its logic of constitution.

Husserl appeals to the history of philosophy in order to show how different philosophical conceptions were close or far from the idea of universal subjectivity. Notwithstanding that Aristotle never managed to accomplish this formal idea of the mind, he discovered the universal motivation for its foundation and managed to relate the notions of time and the soul, which shall later be fundamental to phenomenological research:

> Aristotle explicitly notes in *De memoria* that the immediate past cannot be the object of memory, and should be considered, instead, as part of the now, since a now possesses a certain span, and includes within itself experiences which one has just had. (de Warren 2009: 63)

He was the first to discover that consciousness is 'bringing in present' objects for analyzing and that re-presentational apprehension is one of the fundamentally different modes of constitution from perception. But, this also leads to the idea that the time stream is an underlying basis for thematization and a condition for constructing objects. This means that to overcome an existing crisis we need to reflect on the past and bring into the present some philosophical conceptions in order to investigate which of them had been the key point for starting the crisis. He later shows that modern conceptions had forgotten the idea of universal subjectivity and reduced their methodology to naturalistic frames (Husserl 1993). However, time itself is only an un-thematic stream that enables us to apprehend everything else. Because of this, our concepts of the world should not be confined, but open for possible interpretations and

realizations. Living in a phantasy is not being able to face reality and usually means avoiding oneself, avoiding responsibilities. A positive meaning of phantasy can be found in the ability to try and find the possibility of a different path.

We can conclude that phantasy itself can be sharply distinguished in its positive and negative role. The negative role of phantasy is close to its psychological function and it is used to escape reality through different conceptions that only seemingly save us from the world, but cannot save the world from us. Its positive role has a place in exploring pure possibilities, in searching for a different connection to the world if the existing ones don't serve us anymore. Husserl's notion of phantasy has manifold roles in the constitutional process: it has epistemic, practical, aesthetical, ethical, methodological, and other roles. But the most important role of phantasy is its possibility to overcome reality, to negate it, and to seek for a new criterion of the truth. We need to re-think traditional concepts in order to find possibilities that are not confined to existing things. The world of the sensible and the world of phantasy are two independent worlds. Although the sensible dictates its own truth, the human-life world is open to refurbishment because it belongs to a shared intersubjective world basis (Ricoeur 1997: 166).

References

Aristotle (1984), "On the Soul", in J. Banes (ed.), *Complete Works of Aristotle*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Brentano, Franz (2007), *Sobre los múltiples significados del ente según Aristóteles*, M. Abella (transl.), Madrid: Encuentro.

Cavallaro, Marco (2017), "The Phenomenon of Ego-splitting in Husserl's Phenomenology of Pure Phantasy", *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 48 (2): 162–177.

de Warren, Nicolas (2009), *Husserl and the Promise of Time: Subjectivity in Transcendental Phenomenology*, Cambridge University Press.

—. (2014), "Towards a Phenomenological Analysis of Virtual Fictions", *Metodo. International Studies in Phenomenology and Philosophy* 2 (2): 91–112.

Elliott, Brian (2004), *Phenomenology and imagination in Husserl and Heidegger*, New York – London: Routledge.

Fink, Eugen (1985), *Einleitung in die Philosophie*, Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann.

Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich (1971), *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, Jena: Friedrich-Schiller-Universität.

Heidegger, Martin (1991), *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*, Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Clostermann.

Erhard, Christopher (2014), *Denken über nichts – Intentionalität und Nicht-Existenz bei Husserl*, Berlin-Boston: Walter de Gryter GmbH.

Husserl, Edmund (1928), *Vorlesungen zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewußtseins*, Halle: Max Niemeyer Verlag.

—. (1963), *Cartesianische Meditattionen und Pariser Vorträge*, Haag: Martinus Nijhoff.

—. (1980), *Phantasie, Bildbewusstsein, Erinnerung. Zur Phänomenologie der anschaulichen Vergegenwärtigungen*, The Hague – Boston – London: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.

—. (1983), *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy. First Book: General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology*, The Hague – Boston – Hingham: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.
—. (1992), *Erste Philosophie*, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag.
—. (1993), *Die Krisis der Europäische Wissenschaft und transzendentale Phänomenologie*, Dordricht – Boston – London: Kluwer Acadmic Publishers
—. (1980), *Phantasie, Bildbewusstsein, Erinnerung. Zur Phänomenologie der anschaulichen Vergegenwärtigungen*, The Hague – Boston – London: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.
Jansen, Julia (2016), "Husserl", in Amy Kind (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Imagination*, New York – London: Routledge, pp. 69–81.
Katz, Azul (2018), "The Defiance of the Transcendental by Phantasy and Imagination in Husserl and Kant", *HORIZON. Феноменологические исследования*, 7 (1): 57–78.
Mondrak, Deborah (2016), "Aristotle's phantasia", in Amy Kind (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Imagination*, New York – London: Routledge, pp. 15–26.
Moran, Dermot (2005), *Edmund Husserl – Founder of Phenomenology*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
Nietzsche, Friedrich (1930), *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, Leipzig: Alfred Kröner Verlag.
Patočka, Jan (2002), *Plato and Europe,* Stanford: Stanford University Press.
Prole, Dragan (2002), *Huserlova fenomenološka ontologija*, Novi Sad: Pokrajinski sekretarijat za kulturu, nauku i obrazovanje.
—. (2006), „Filozofija kao istraživanje", *Arhe* 5–6: 446–453.
Ricœur, Paul (1997), *A Key to Husserl's Ideas I*, Milwaukee: Marquette University Press.

Tanja Todorović

O mnogostrukoj ulozi *fantazije* u Huserlovoj filozofiji

Apstrakt:

Huserlov koncept imaginacije je sistemski izveden u ediciji *Husserlina XXIII* u kojoj možemo pratiti njenu mnogostruku ulogu. Autor kroz različite tekstove pokazuje kako pojam fantazije (*Phantasie*) treba razmatrati kao jednu od modifikacija čiste re-prezentacijske svesti (*Vergegenwärtigung*). Na samom početku rada pokušaćemo da istaknemo neke ključne sličnosti i razlike između Huserlovog koncepta imaginacije i tradicionalnog razumevanja ovog pojma. Nakon toga ćemo pokazati fundamentalne momente konstitucinalne svesti u kojima ćemo fataziju porediti sa pecepcijom. Na samom kraju ćemo ovaj pojam fantazije dovesti u vezu sa Huserlovom idejom prve filozofije i pitanjima mogućnosti njenog ostvarenja.

Ključne reči: fantazija, imaginacija, percepcija, prva filozofija, re-prezentacija

UDK: 111.62
https://doi.org/10.2298/FID2102261P
Original Scientific Article
Received 20.10.2020. Accepted 14.02.2021.

PHILOSOPHY AND SOCIETY
VOL. 32, NO. 2, 157–334

To cite text:
Perunović, Andrea (2021), "From Devotion to Commitment: Towards a Critical Ontology of Engagement", *Philosophy and Society* 32 (2): 261–281.

Andrea Perunović

FROM DEVOTION TO COMMITMENT: TOWARDS A CRITICAL ONTOLOGY OF ENGAGEMENT[1]

ABSTRACT
This article approaches the notion of engagement from the perspective of critical ontology. With language as the starting point of its hermeneutic task, it commences with an etymological analyses of diverse Indo-European words gravitating around the semantic field of the notion of engagement. From these introductory insights obtained by an exercise in comparative linguistics, *devotion* and *commitment* are mapped as two opposite, yet inseparable, *modes of being* of engagement. Both of these modes seem to condition engagement in an ontologically disparate manner. While examining their fundamental structures, some of the canonical concepts of history of philosophy such as being, existence, subjectivity, or world – and also some of its constitutive binary oppositions such as body/mind, individual/collective, transcendence/immanence, light/darkness and sacred/secular – will be reconsidered through the prism of different ontological dispositions that devotion and commitment impose respectively on engagement. The overall aim of this investigation is to bring forth the main existential characteristics of *being-engaged*, by interpreting the roles of *who*, *where*, and *what* of engagement, and in order to provide a fundamental conceptual apparatus for a *critical ontology of engagement*.

KEYWORDS
engagement, commitment, devotion, being, subject, collectivity, world, ontology

Introduction

What do we mean when we speak of *engagement*? Certainly, this peculiar notion contains meanings that are multiple and layered. In the everyday life, in our *everydayness* Heidegger would say, the first thing that might come to our minds when we think of engagement is a *pledge*, a solemn *promise*. More formally, we understand engagement as an *act* that ties its *subject* to a certain future. Furthermore, engagement is a *commitment* of oneself that is to be

1 This article was realized with the support of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia, according to the Agreement on the realization and financing of scientific research for 2021.

Andrea Perunović: Research Associate, Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory, University of Belgrade; andrea.perunovic@instifdt.bg.ac.rs.

faithfully and responsibly respected before the others, a *devotion* or *dedication* that comprises an inherent debt, but also guarantees future gain if fulfilled. Arguably, those are some of the ways through which the semantics of the common sense, formed mostly by western philosophical tradition, makes us think of engagement. These formulations describing engagement could multiply themselves here, but that wouldn't be of great use for our examination, as we have already started to grasp the shell of opinion that envelopes the notion of engagement. Albeit, what we can already see as more useful is that, following this semantics, engagement seems to be a highly complex *fiduciary* mechanism – a mechanism depending on *trust* – that involves connection and attachment of the 'individual' to its presupposed 'social realm', a specific relation of 'subjects' to 'things' and 'others', in the 'world'. In order to shake and revive what seems to be taken for granted in the presupposed definitions of engagement mentioned above, one can think of it further as of a *multiple*, *singular plural* phenomenon in constant *becoming*, that has a number of different *modes of being*; modes that are always already preceded by their correlation, their *being-together*. In other words, we will propose a *critical ontology of engagement* that would subsequently lead us to rethink the well-worn ways of considering some of the canonical concepts of philosophy.

Our first methodological question appears to be: are there to be found multiple and diverse sorts of engagement, or is all engagement basically one and the same thing? Is there 'engagement', or are there 'engagements'? If we decide to examine the phenomenon of engagement empirically, from the standpoint of *existence*, a number of different *types* of engagement will be immediately given at hand – social, political, civic, activist, artistic, religious, academic, and many other forms of engagement promptly appear to us as suitable for many kinds of categorizations. As to put things simply: empirically seen, there are many different *types* of engagement. But the ambiguity of this kind of approach lies in the presupposition of oneness and homogeneity of the engagement itself – when it is taken 'independently' from the adjectives that characterize it. For empiricists, there are many types of engagement, but the underlying concept is always the same, unquestioned, even repressed. On the other hand, if one decides to examine the engagement speculatively, from the standpoint of the *notional being*, it can no longer be the question of *types* of clearly distinct engagements. Rather, there is a *multiplicity of modes* that the notional unity of the engagement encloses *in* its polymorphic, porous and protean membrane. Somewhat unfaithfully departing from different perspectives as Badiou's hypothesis of the *being as a multiplicity*, and/or from the Nancy's understanding of being as *singular plural*, but also echoing Deleuze by positioning *becoming* before *being* – we will strive to analyze and disclose different modes of being of engagement. On the level of its *notional being*, as we will argue later on, engagement is one and multiple, singular and plural – its notional totality is built on an oppositional, fundamentally bipolar tension, that encapsulates a multiplicity of ontological modes. That totality never obtains a determinate, petrified being-in-itself, but is rather constantly in an intense becoming of

what it is. So instead of categorizing all different *types* of engagement that can be perceived empirically, we will prefer to disclose the 'inner' tension of engagement, a silent multiplicity that this notion possesses. If *types* are different engagements that empiricists perceive as existing on an *ontic* level, than the *modes* express something more basic, something that is to be found on an *ontological* level of the notion of engagement.

Finding the Way around the Notion of Engagement

How can one *access* then to the ontological level of the notion of engagement? Does one have to break the mentioned shell of opinion, to pierce the membrane lining the notion in order to access its ontological disposition? Let's stop here for a moment. Isn't this a false question in the first place, a mirage that the common opinion creates? The very first thing to ask would rather be: why have we chosen the term 'notion', in order to speak of engagement? The explanation of this choice is an important step that calls for a brief digression. The term 'notion' is similar to the term 'concept'. But a notion, unlike the concept, seems to take into account its own context, historicity, and non-linear, disruptive timeliness – what Foucault would call, its *discursive formation.* Also, the term notion stands for a changing opinion, a widespread understanding, as well as it stands for a rigorous theoretical articulation of sense. The 'notion' blurs somehow the limits between critique and what is being critiqued, between the ontic and the ontological level of a phenomenon. By observing a phenomenon through the kaleidoscopic lens of *notionality*, all of its aspects become not only *present-at-hand*, but also, they become perfectly *handy* (or ready-to-hand, if we are to express this claim rigorously in Heideggerian terms).

We propose that the 'notion' has a higher potential for exposing the plasticity of the phenomenon, than does the term 'concept'. When considering something as a notion, there is suddenly no more the gap that separates the immediate knowledge, and the 'hidden', deeper sense, the 'essence' that is somehow laying in the depths that are to be revealed. Instead, there are no longer any depths, and a surface is the only thing that's left – a surface made of *traces*. All meanings are always already there, and by 'there' we mean *in the language*. On that linguistic surface of a notion, where the depths of the concept are being reflected onto the superficiality of the opinion – in form of traces of intensive passages, thus making the conceptual bottom inessential – the ontological level of any phenomenon is fairly easily accessible. On the notional surface, everything is always already there. Although, what announces itself then is a work of discernment, a proper hermeneutic enterprise. To articulate different senses of a notion, is to transform it from its everyday determination to a philosophical one, and vice versa. To grasp a notion (the word in German is *Begriff*) is, as Gadamer writes in *Truth and Method*, not only to go from word to concept, but also from concept to word, as well as to keep that path open in both directions (Gadamer 2004: 565). It is precisely in that round-trip (*aller-retour*), in this back and forth (*va-et-vient*), that the notion (of engagement)

discloses itself, neither merely as a thing, nor as an abstract idea, but as an unstable and misty bunch of traces.

Let's start then from the '*aller*' – from the word. What we have already presupposed as definitions of engagement in the first lines, converges with Adriana Zaharijević's findings, discussed in the article entitled *Engagement: thinking and acting together*. In particular, this occurs when she writes that engagement is implying inherently the ideas of 'publicity and commitment': "Contracts, companies, endeavors and wedding engagements are such recognized forms of engagement, that in some European languages they function as synonyms for the later term. Each of these initiatives demands mutuality and formal promise, whose formality is assured by the public domain. In a similar vein, *commitment* ['*posvećenost*'] is woven in the very tissue of this word" [My translation from Serbian] (Zaharijević 2017: 20). In this definition, we see engagement as an important *subjects/object/others* mechanism, that organizes the social existence of *homo fidei*; and the notion that is of central importance for our investigation on *modes of engagement*, is the one of *commitement*, because commitment appears here to be an inherent *condition* of engagement. Or shall we say rather the one of *devotion*? Or, even of *dedication*, *allegiance*, or *loyalty*? How do we translate the serbo-croation word '*posvećenost*'? The starting point of our ontology of engagement will be, as it occurs, language. Language as the skin of a notional surface that hides no depths, comparable to the libidinal skin that Lyotard famously describes in his *Libidinal economy*. By resisting to the general linguistic domination of English – the *lingua franca* of our days, and also by avoiding falling into the trap of what Derrida calls *mondialatinization* (Derrida 2000: 23), we will now shift our attention to Slavic languages, in order to reveal the intense relation between *commitment* and *devotion*, and designate them as diverse ontological modes of *engagement*.

Examining the Serbo-Croatian Word '*posvećenost*'

The words *commitment* and *devotion* are commonly translated to serbo-croatian as '*posvećenost*'. To understand the polysemy of this word, heavily charged by its semantic and/or cultural heritage, we must stress in the first place, that we are dealing here with an *untranslatable* term (Cassin 2004: XVII-XXIV). Having therefore dismissed the possibility of a direct, unanimous and unique translation of the word '*posvećenost*', we are brought to perform its morphological and etymological linguistic analyses. The term '*posvećenost*' builds from the prefix *po-* (similar to english prefix *co-*, french *con-* and german *ver-*), which means both 'on top of' and 'together', thus showing the auto-reflexive character of the term in which it takes part; it has for its etymological root the Slavic noun '*svet*' (practically translated in English as 'world', but hiding a much more complex semantic structure, as we will show), and the suffix *-ost* (comparable the french *-ance*, german *-keit*, english *-ity* and *-ness*) meaning 'having the quality of'. The etymological root of '*posvećenost*', the substantive '*svet*', is of major interest for our archeological investigation – given the ambiguity that it

engenders in all of its variations across Slavic languages (while the prefix *po-* and the suffix *-ost* provide us with more peripheral, more subtle conceptual tools).

The first, and the oldest division in the heterogeneous semantic field of the word '*svet*', distinguish '*svet*' as 'light' and '*svet*' as 'world'. As it is noted in the entry defining the term '*svet*' in the *Vocabulaire européen des philosophies,* this ambiguity is a common phenomenon to all Slavic languages. The idea of 'light' is, without dispute, considered by linguists as primary meaning of '*svet*', which determines all of its other meanings. The secondary meaning of '*svet*' is 'world'. Thus, in Slavic languages the concept of 'world' contains, and even presupposes, a visual intuition, by which *to be* (someone or something), is *to be at the light*. Following this etymology we could say that through the lens of Slavic languages, the world is defined as 'a space on an open light'. Theoretical implications that this conception of the world engenders will be taken into account later on, but for the moment we must stress that '*svet*' differs importantly from the Anglo-Saxon '*world*' and German '*Welt*', which both share etymological meanings such as 'human existence' and 'age of men', and the french '*monde*' deriving from Latin '*mundus*' and meaning 'something arranged, distinct and pure'.Yet another meanings derive from the word '*svet*', offering an entirely different pathway for pursuing our investigation. Namely, the slavic 'light' has also parented the serbo-croatian adjective '*sveti*', meaning 'saint, sacred'. This semantic affinity is also without doubt relevant for the majority of other Slavic languages, but there are more theological explanations to this philological phenomenon, then there are linguistic ones. The 'saint' and the 'sacred' are 'luminous' and 'bright', because the "element of *light* is itself the divinity that tolerates no obscurity, impurity or (according to later meaning) sin" (Cassin 2004: 1260). Those metaphysical approximations, perpetuated mostly by the orthodox Christian theology, can be dismantled linguistically by showing, as A. Brückner does in his *Etymologic dictionary of polish language,* that the root '*svet*' as 'light' derives from the avestan *spaēta* – 'white'; and that '*svet*' as 'sacred' derives from the avestan *spenta* – 'sacred' (which is the equivalent of greek *hagios* and Latin *sanctus*). But still, the approximate meanings that theology has imposed, are deeply inhabiting the modern slavic languages, and as such must be seriously considered. Even more so, having in mind that this ambiguity is to be developed and used in a great number of literary texts, from Russian folk tales (as shown by V. Propp) to Dostoevsky, confirming always anew its symbolic power and its decisive role in the construction of a specific *Weltanshauung*. We shall not neglect that this *Weltansauung* will, in extension, give linguistic birth to many other complex words that range from '*posveta*' meaning 'dedication' (equivalent to Latin '*sacrare*' or '*sanctifiare*') to '*osveta*' meaning 'revenge' (equivalent to Latin '*vindicare*'), but also '*svetac*' which stands for 'saint', '*sveštenik*' meaning 'priest' or '*Prosvetiteljstvo*' designating the 'Enlightenment' (Skok 1971: 370, 371) and many others. All those meanings and derivates of the substantive 'svet', and especially the ones introduced by theology, haunt the untranslatable word '*posvećenost*' – itself corresponding only imperfectly to the English words *commitment* or *devotion* – that stay hidden

for the *immediate* consciousness of the contemporary speakers, and attain, as such, the perfidious aims of, not only modeling the dominant discursive formations, but also determining engaged political and social practices.

Articulating the Modes of Engagement

What we retain from this short linguistic inquiry is decisive for our further ontological examination of engagement. The etymology of the word '*posvećenost*' offers us powerful tools for articulating what we have already designated as modes of engagement. The linguistic fact that the notion '*posvećenost*' can be understood both as *commitment* and *devotion*, is providing us with the very archeological structure of the ontology of engagement. In other words, the contradictory unity that commitment and devotion find in the notion of '*posvećenost*', is to be taken as the very condition of engagement. All engagement requires devotion/commitment, which is not the case in the opposite sense. Without this correlative semantic field, there is no ground on which engagement can build its multiple senses, thus sliding into nothingness. The paradoxes of that field become thus the paradoxes of engagement, and it's different, often opposed senses, can be taken as modes of being of engagement. Furthermore, it is through this archeological structure that an important phenomenological difference between *commitment* and *devotion* is disclosed. Seen in the *light* of the serbo-croatian untranslatable word '*posvećenost*', the presupposed synonymity of commitment and devotion is put into question. A confirmation of that doubt comes swiftly from an examination of the very Indo-European heritage of those two words.

So, how does all that looks in the linguistic praxis? The infinitive of the reflexive verb 'posvetiti se', deriving from the noun 'posvećenost' and meaning formally 'to dedicate' and/or 'to commit oneself', can be understood literally in two ways: on the one hand, it means to become 'sacred' and/or 'saint' by enacting personal *devotion*; on the other hand, it means to 'become the world', 'to *worldize* oneself', to show personal *commitment in* the *worldly* affairs. If we consider now the etymology of the words 'devotion' and 'commitment', we will see that they are somewhat converging with those two literal meanings. Let's observe the word 'devotion' in the first place. This term derives from the Latin *devotionem* (nominative *devotio*), composed from the prefix *de-* 'down, away' and the substantive verb *vovere* 'to promise solemnly, pledge, dedicate, vow,". In its later significations devotion will also stand for 'piety', 'profound religious emotion, awe, reverence' and 'an act of religious worship, a religious exercise'. Finally, the Latin verb that corresponds to the action of devotion is *devovere*, and it means to "dedicate by a vow, sacrifice oneself, promise solemnly". This seems to correspond closely, but not without subtle differences, to the meaning of '*posvećenost*' as 'becoming sacred'. On the other hand, the word 'commitment', a presupposed synonym of 'devotion', shows utterly different etymological and semantic features. Built from the substantive verb *to commit*, itself deriving from the Latin *committere* 'to unite, connect, combine;

to bring together' (from prefix *com-* 'with, together' and substantive verb *mittere* 'to release, let go; send, throw'), the word commitment will later render meanings such as 'an action of officially consigning to the custody of the state', 'the pledging or engaging of oneself, a pledge, a promise' or later 'an obligation, an engagement'. Commitment thus seems to correspond to the literal meaning of '*posvećenost*' which is 'to become the world'. On the one hand thus, we have *devotion* as a mode of engagement that is characterized by a religious worldview, presupposing the ontological centrality of the religious faith, the sacred and the divine; when on the other hand we have *commitment*, which reflects a rather secular image of the world – a fiduciary world to which the engaged subject must nonetheless be loyal.

Before going further into details, we should briefly pay attention to the way that those two modes of engagement are articulated. What seems to 'lack' in the convergence between the two ways of understanding '*posvećenost*' on the one hand, and devotion and commitment on the other, seems to be the original meaning of the substantive '*svet*' which is '*svetlost*' – *light*. Rather unexpectedly and nonetheless quite adequately, the idea of light seems to serve well as an explanation of the original articulation of different modes of engagement which are devotion and commitment. In devotion and commitment, the light is a hidden element which is to be deduced from a hermeneutic enterprise of those two notions. The different roles which the idea of light plays in the semantic and cultural context of those two modes of engagement, determine firstly their ontological characteristics (as far as they are considered strictly on a notional level), but also subsequently determines the being of the engaged subject, the subject structured through its own engagement. We shall thus observe that *subjectivation through engagement* is not quite the same process when it comes to devotion or when it comes to commitment. The idea of light in devotion and commitment has different natures, sources, directions and consequences, thus articulating the differences between those two modes of engagement. Let's take now a closer look at this problematics of engagement and shed some light on each of its modes separately.

The Transcendent *Lights* of Devotion

As it was pointed out already, the term devotion derives from the religious discourse. But how does that shape the phenomenon of engagement? How this indication helps us to understand its notional being? We propose take one notorious example from the Judeo-Christian tradition in order to discern the proceedings of the devotional engagement. Our example is situated in the very first lines of the Gospel of John, and it reads: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God'. If we remember that we have shown that 'to devote' (*devovere*) means to 'dedicate by a vow', we see clearly the correspondence between this definition and the cited passage. When dedicating the absolute primality to the Word, God is commanding it through an imperative clause (*genetho*) – the perfect ontogenetic grammatical

form, as Agamben points out (Agamben 2013: 18). God proclaims the *logos* not only by promising it, but also by being himself *Logos*. God is his own *speech act*, God is a *performative being*, and his devotion to the commandment of *logos* is so intense, that they are to be taken as identical and one. God is devotion without subjectivity, he *is* the Word, a being generated on its own command. In consequence, the divine entity commands the devotion of humans to *logos*, as devotion to himself. But how the 'ignorant human flock', the imperfect yet constitutive *others of God*, could perceive and understand the Word? To what and how should they vow? The idea of light will be coupled to these proclamations very quickly, through the figure of Jesus, to resolve this problem. Few lines further in the prologue of the Gospel of John, the vow (Word and/or God), will be translated in the idea of light: "In him [Jesus] was life; and the life was the light of men. / And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not". Yet, Jesus is not a figure of the devotional subject, but the *light*, the devotion (Vow-Word-God) itself – as it will be repeated multiple times through the text. Therefore, another character must be introduced to fulfill that function: "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. / The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. / He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. / That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world". That man named John, "the disciple whom Jesus loved", is the prototypical witness of the divine Light, a paradigmatic figure of the subject of devotional engagement, a prototype of a devoted subject. His devotion is a matter of passive receiving of the divine light and active bearing witness to it, the act of an absolute voluntary servitude that will enable the light to reach "every man that cometh into the world".

Human coming into the world is in this context always already an exposure to the divine light. But devotion is the presupposed 'second birth', in the sense that the subject accepts this light and the devotion to it. Ritually, the moment from which the subject becomes devoted corresponds to baptism. John was baptizing first christians in the lake just so they could see the light when pulling their heads out of water. More concretely, in an ontotheologic sense, this devotional engagement will structure the human subject as *sacred*, thus enabling it to transmit the light further – of course, firstly on the unfaithful ones. The structuring of a solid, total, and unquestionable subject is the main point for grasping devotion as a mode of engagement. Its unavoidable correlate is of course the radical annihilation of the world, because still – "the darkness comprehended it not". Finally, the devoted transmission of the *light*, the '*religare*' of the religion, is only the means in service of an end that consists in building the specifically engaged subjectivity. Therefore, the devoted subject is to be considered as a disciple, and the good disciple becomes a saint – simply by being a *good witness*.

As we have clearly stipulated already, our aim is not here to examine the *types*, but rather the *modes* of engagement. Therefore, our inquiry on devotion is not an inquiry on the religious type of engagement, but rather on what

modality of being the religious field gives to the engagement through devotion. Our next step will be thus to discern the philosophical implications of devotion. And this is not a purely methodological or formal decision to make, but a decision that has historical and epistemological arguments to rely on. Nietzsche (all too) famously wrote in fragment 125 of *The Gay Science*: "God is dead! God remains dead! And we have killed him. How can we *console* [my italics] ourselves, the murderers of all murderers! The holiest and mightiest thing the world has ever possessed has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood from us? With what water could we clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what holy games will we have to invent for ourselves? Is the magnitude of this deed not too great for us? Do we not ourselves have to become gods merely to appear worthy of it?" (Nietzsche 2001: 120) From these lines we can imagine how devotion has detached itself from the religious field, how it has repressed its own religious origin, but stayed nonetheless amongst humans as a principal way of building subjectivities and societies on trust, rather than on belief – just as Nietzsche, the thinker of the eternal return of the same, could propose. That repeated appearance of devotion reflects itself clearly in the philosophical tradition. The proof that devotion has survived the murder of God is exactly to be found in the idea of light, which seems to repeat itself after the 'death of God', notably in the Age of En*light*enment. So, firstly there was a divine light, and the repetition of that light is situated in the Enlightenment. Solely, this light is no longer divine, but it is the light of *reason*, a *rational light*. The human subject which was previously constituted through the devotion to God, is then constituted through devotion to Reason. Just as in the religious field where the divine light was structurally divided from the world of darkness, in the foundational doctrines of the Enlightenment such as the cartesian one, the reason is divided from matter. The paradigm of this idea is to be found notably in Descartes who, in the *Principles of Philosophy*, makes a famous distinction between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*. This substance dualism, highly compatible with the Christian tradition, introduces a substantial hierarchy in which mind prevails over body, reason over matter, and subject over object. It is clear therefore on which side is the light, and on which side is the darkness, and thus, what is worthy of subject's devotion, and what is not. The light of reason is the cause to which a good cartesian subject should be devoted and the world is thus reduced to a pure extension, deprived of all possibility to be taken otherwise than as an indifferent physical space. The enactment of doubt is the baptism of the devoted subject in the context of the Enlightenment. The 'only' flaw of that doubt is that its cartesian paradigm represents a mere methodological *detour*, leading to an inevitable fall into certitude... Certitude of the existence of *reason*, of *subject* and finally, all over again, of *God*. The substantial counterparts of those three categories – *matter*, *object* and *world*, aren't even considered as worthy of attentive philosophical reflection, or at least, it goes so for Descartes who will not consider much the term 'world', except in his book very interestingly entitled *The World, or Treatise on Light*. In this early text which was published only posthumously,

Descartes will dismiss the subject, the *Man*, from the material *World*, in order to consider physics of matter, space, light, cosmos, etc. He will justify that move by showing in particular the "difference between our sensations and the things that produce them". From this 'hidden' starting point, the philosopher will later deepen this separation and affirm the primordial position of the subject in his later works, such as the *Principles of Philosophy* and the *Passions of the Soul*, thus building his metaphysics and theory of mind separately from the material human condition. The consequences of his theory will be considerable, as practically all modern philosophies will somehow rely on it. If we fast-forward through the history of philosophy, we will see that, having a solid foundation in the cartesian doctrine, the centrality of the subject and its *sacred* status will endure all through the Enlightenment. In consequence, devotion will prevail as the predominant mode of engagement that we can deduce from a whole set of theories conceived by a number of (irrefutably important) thinkers, from Locke to Kant, with a noteworthy exception of Spinoza who was clearly refusing the anthropocentric standpoint. This disposition will remain relevant at least until Hegel, whose theory of subjectivity could be considered as an announcement of a turning point, an announcement of the shift that is to come. Still, one will have to wait for the upcoming of Marx and his dialectical materialism on the one hand, and the philosophy of Nietzsche on the other, to see this reductionist approach to the *world* generally changed.

Instead of going further into an overview of this era of centrality of the subject, we should rather ask now: how this helps us to understand the contemporary meanings of the notion of engagement? The devotional subject, as we have seen it until now, is a subject 'blinded by the lights' – whether this light is divine or rational. The devotional engagement (from the point of view of Christianity and Enlightenment) is an engagement with a blind spot. And it seems that it is a considerably tremendous spot that remains blind in devotion. Whole *worlds* are out of its sight. Subjectivity and subject's transformation to the status of *sacred*, are the only instance and process that count in devotional engagement. All *worldly* reality and its proceedings remain out of site and hidden paradoxically behind the light. They are *there*, they *exist*, but they remain *unseen*. We have given some examples of what that meant in the two above mentioned different discursive formations, but what does it mean today?

In the late capitalism, the divine and the rational seem to be sublated (*aufheben*) in the idea of capital. How could that be explained through the notional apparatus of devotion that we have introduced until now? Where are to be mapped the notions of *light*, *sacred* and *world* in the capitalist discourse? Let's take them into consideration one by one. The only, however, hidden symbolic light in capitalism, is to be found in the phenomenon of *fiduciary money*. How come, one could ask? Fiduciary money is the money based uniquely on *social, interpersonal trust*, a general belief that is without God; or rather, the trust that is between humans as they were gods – *weak gods*. Our hypothesis that the symbolic source of light in capitalism is money, can be explained only *objectively* and *materially* (very unlike in divine or rational light), and not

abstractly as one could expect. Gold, shiny as it is and light-reflecting, comes to mind immediately. In different historical epochs, gold has served to measure monetary value. From the end of the 19th century, the values of currencies were internationally and formally based on the value of gold, accordingly to the famous 'gold standard'. In brief, what shined with this specific light in the developing stages of capitalism was gold. Nowadays this light is hidden much better. It is practically imperceptible, because the contemporary capitalist light is nothing else but the light of the electronic blip on the bank server. This minimal materiality of physical light is however the measurement unit of a general *interpersonal trust*, which translates itself into the symbolic register of trust as money. And as one could suspect, this ontological circle is hermetically closed, as the users of money, its subjects, are also a sort of a kind of monetary entity, as it is proposed by Pierre Klossowski in his genuinely provocative little book, *The Living Currency*.

We already see thus that there is no place for a *world*, neither for a transcendent figure of God, in the auto-reflexive relation between the light of capital and the capitalist subject. The contemporary devotional subject is a good witness of that light and could become *sacred*. He never sees the light, but unconditionally believes in it and attributes infinite credit to it. He doubts many things, but never puts into question the monetary system. His devotion is limited to an unquestionable servitude. In the hidden shine of the almost immaterial object (in a *trace*, perhaps?) that constitutes the fiduciary money[2], lies a whole symbolic order of the capitalist project of annihilation of the world. This absence of world to be attained is the very condition of devotional (inter)subjectivity in capitalism. The 'light of the capital' is reflecting strictly human desires, judgments and values, and not the world or some material reality, which it destroys without even taking into the acount. In that manner, the world is easily repressed in capitalism, but yet another important devotional entity disappears, or rather, becomes incorporated in the subject. Unlike in the previous appearances of devotion, in capitalism, God is neither 'transcendent' nor 'death', he is "drawn into the fate of man", as Walter Benjamin famously proposes in his short essay named *Capitalism as Religion*. How could Benjamin help us to understand devotion and its specific subjectivity in the capitalist context? Firstly, he sees the capitalism as a permanent religious cult that "knows no specific dogma, no theology". Also, he sees that capitalism is a blaming cult, unlike any other that has preceded it. Benjamin writes, and we cite lengthy:

2 Banknotes and coins have obviously become secondary monetary objects a while ago. But even those pieces of metal and paper, as Benjamin considers, had a religious aspect : "Compare the holy iconography [*Heiligenbildern*] of various religions on the one hand with the banknotes of various countries on the other: The spirit that speaks from the ornamentation of banknotes" (Benjamin 1996 : 289). How could he describe the presence of spirit in the light of the electronic blip – we will never know, but somehow we could imagine he would provide us with ingenious insights.

> In the essence of this religious movement that is capitalism lies – bearing until the end, until the finally complete infusion of blame into God – the attainment of a *world of despair still only hoped for* [my italics]. Therein lies the historical enormity of capitalism: religion is no longer the reform of being, but rather its obliteration. From this expansion of despair in the religious state of the world, healing is expected. God's transcendence has fallen, but he is not dead. He is drawn into the fate of man. This passage of 'plantetary man' [*Planeten Mensch*] through the house of despair is, in the absolute loneliness of his path, the ethos that Nietzsche describes. This man is the *Übermensch*, the first who knowingly begins to realize the capitalist religion. The fourth characteristic [of the religious structure of capitalism] is that its God must become concealed and may only be spoken of in the zenith of his culpability. The cult becomes celebrated before an immature deity, [while] every image, every idea of it injures the secret of its maturity. (Benjamin 1996: 289)

What does this tells us about the capitalist devotional subject? This tells us that the human subjects are living on the planet 'Human', a *worldless* planet, hoping for a world of despair to come. The *Stimmung* of that being consists paradoxically in guilt and absolute loneliness. The non-dogmatic and strictly cultic capitalist religion doesn't promise an atonement, but promotes the perpetuity of moral guilt and economic debt. Likewise, this subjectivity is woven uniquely out of intensities of despair. The despair comes from the fact that this subjectivity is itself an 'unmatured deity', a weak deity with no world, a child without a playground. Instead of a playground, there is rather a theater scene, which is set in front of a big mirror, standing on the place where the spectators should. Humans are the artists and the consumers of their own art, godly only inasmuch as they are tragic.

How does that look concretely? One of the paradigms of the contemporary devotional subjectivity is the figure of the so called *populist leader*. In our capitalist reality, populist leaders are the perfect witnesses of the capital, devoted to reflect the logic of capitalism by being its blind counterparts. From their state institutional positions, they 'realize the capitalist religion' by embodying the paradoxical figure of a deeply failed and weak *Übermensch*. Their devotion can be completely resumed in the enhancing of social trust (or mistrust, if needed) in the ideas which are presumably blind for the light of the capital, while being nothing else be its mere reflections. These discriminatory ideas are often nationalistic, racist and conservative, but their content is not their end – they are forged with one only aim, which is to preserve the domination of the capital. Populists are likewise witnessing the light of the capital, and they do comprehend it, they are event the saints of the capital, but they share that light only as transformed to the level when it becomes unrecognizable, shaped by a perfectly desperate cynicism of a devotee, as the capitalist religion commands. We could say much more here about the phenomenon of populist leaders, but that would lead us to consider the type of engagement that this devotional figure represents, and not the mode of being of engagement that it reflects. Let's take then one seemingly very different example: the

ordinary, middle class, non-activist subject, devoted to ecology. Generally, its devotion to ecology as a mode of engagement which structures it as an 'ecologist', is nothing else but a set of rituals that correspond to the cultic religion of capitalism. What is commonly perceived as eco-responsible behavior nowadays is, for example, having a compost bin on the balcony or in the garden, buying eco-responsible goods, having an electric car, etc. All those consumerist behaviors never put into question the main enemy of ecology, which is the capital and its monetary system. So, as Benjamin could propose, we can say that this is a tragically desperate behavior. This behavior, which can be nonetheless considered as engaged, builds in one devotional movement the subjectivity of a devotee and annihilates the world, both symbolically and materially. The devotionally engaged subject in capitalism paradoxically finds comfort in the trust on which the 'house of despair' is built. Capitalist religion offers no redemption, just on the contrary, its founding principle is that the change is impossible. This still unshaken trust in the eternality of the capitalist system is possible, in return, thanks to the devotion as a predominantly present mode of engagement. But are those claims sufficient to refuse the notion of engagement altogether, to deny its radical subversive potential? Certainly not so. The pharmacological semantics of the word '*posvećenost*' impose that on us. How is then commitment different from devotion?

Committed Engagement: The Collectivity as a *Clearing*

The notion of commitment presupposes an entirely different ontological structure of engagement – of the 'engaged' and the '*gage*'[3] itself – than the one presupposed by devotion. In commitment, the engaged is no longer a separate subject, an 'I, myself', but rather, a *collectivity*, a 'we' or a 'with'. The 'gage' in commitment is also no longer a subjective destiny, but rather a destiny of a world. This structure is traced on the very semantic surface of the word 'commitment', that is, as we have already shown, deriving from the latin *comittere*, meaning 'to unite, connect, combine; to bring together' from *com* 'with, together' + *mittere* 'to release, let go; send, throw'. If we turn back anew also to the the serbo-croatian word '*posvećenost*', we will remember that its literal meanings — 'to become a world', 'to *worldize* oneself' — somewhat correspond to those of 'commitment'. What all these insights bring to the table when it comes to our *critical ontology of engagement*? Or else, what do they remove from that 'table' in order to set a different ontological disposition? In the following lines we will try to respond to those two resolutely interconnected questions. The response to the second question (which is fairly easy compared to the first one) seems to be obvious already. For the ontology of engagement conditioned by commitment, the whole traditional vocabulary of metaphysics that was fueling devotion becomes obsolete, unusable, it becomes an obstacle on the pathway of interpreting engagement as commitment. Traditional concepts such as subject,

3 The french word 'gage' can be translated for the purposes of this text as 'guarantee'.

object, nature, spirit, reason, matter, others, world, and maybe even more so *being* or *existence*, need to be radically reconsidered in order to perform the hermeneutics of commitment – the very semantics of the word imposes this.

We will start to sketch our ontology of commitment by firstly analyzing its prefix *co-*. In complete contrast to the ontological structure of devotion, where there is firstly a 'subject' which by the means of devotion obtains the 'with' and joins the 'others' (thus paradoxically obtaining an even more stable subjectivity), in commitment, the *with*, the *co-*, precedes the subjective being and puts it radically into question. This turning point in the history of first philosophy is undoubtedly introduced by Martin Heidegger, who characterizes the *Being-with* (*Mitsein*) as one of the constitutive modes of human existence, or of the *Dasein* to be more precise. But furthermore, it is Jean-Luc Nancy, initially inspired by Heidegger, who will resolutely posit the *with* as a minimal ontological premise. In *Being Singular Plural* he writes: "Heidegger clearly states that being-with (*Mitsein*, *Miteinandersein*, and *Mitdasein*) is essential to the constitution of *Dasein* itself. Given this, it needs to be made absolutely clear that *Dasein*, far from being either 'man' or 'subject', is not even an isolated and unique 'one', but is instead always the one, each one, with one another [*l'un-avec-l'autre*]. If this determination is essential, then it needs to attain to the co-originary dimension and expose it without reservation" (Nancy 2000: 26). Nancy explains this co-originarity of Being by introducing a concept articulated in three apposite words, pronounced in one single stroke – *Being Singular Plural*. We cannot help but cite him again: "*Being singular plural* means the essence of Being is only as coessence. In turn, coessence, or *being-with* (being-with-many), designates the essence of the *co-*, or even more so, the *co-* (the *cum*) itself in the position or guise of an essence. In fact, coessentiality cannot consist in an assemblage of essences, where the essence of this assemblage as such remains to be determined. In relation to such an assemblage, the assembled essences would become [mere] accidents. Coessentiality signifies the essential sharing of essentiality, sharing in the guise of assembling, as it were. This could also be put in the following way: if Being is being-with, then it is, in its being-with, the "with" that constitutes Being; the with is not simply an addition" (Nancy 2000: 30).

This ontological reversal that transforms the *ego sum* into *ego cum*, gives to commitment, as far as it is a mode of being of engagement, a peculiar political dimension. From this dimension emerges what Nancy calls collective [*collégial*] power, a power which is "neither exterior to the members of the collective [*collège*] nor interior to each one of them, but rather consists in the collectivity [*collégialité*] as such" (Nancy 2000: 30). In commitment, the subject is dispersed, shattered, dis-posed, which doesn't mean it is simply dismissed as impotent. It is rather translated and transformed, replaced by the term *singular*, that keep its significant place in the co-ontology of Nancy. But, not without another twist: the force of the singular resides only in its *plurality*. The subjective can therefore be seen only through the prism of collectivity, fundamentally as a *being-with*, as a knot in the web of coexistence. The *ego sum* thus

finds its truth in *nos sumus*, the 'we' takes the primordial ontogenetic position that was once held by the 'I' and the 'me'. But then, *who* is engaged in commitment? The fact that Nancy redefines what is used to be called 'subject' as a *singularity* that appears always already as exposed to *sharing*, as a *being-shared* that is foremost *between us*, doesn't mean that he is entirely rejecting the figure of *Dasein*, for example. At least, not necessarily. Refusing the possibility of a (real) philosophical solipsism, doesn't mean refusing altogether the idea of Dasein; quite on the contrary – Dasein is the *with* of multiple, equiprimordial modes that compose its ontological structure – *Dasein is co-determined*.

We can ask now our question anew: *who* is engaged in commitment? In *Being and Time*, Heidegger consecrates an entire chapter to the analyses of the 'who' of an average Dasein, providing us with some precious insights for our own analyses of the 'subject' of commitment, or rather of a *committed plural singularity*. In the paragraph 25, he starts his analysis by seemingly accepting the traditional conception of the subjectivity, with one only aim in view though – its complete *destruction*: "Dasein is an entity which is in each case I myself; its Being is in each case mine" (Heidegger 1962: 150). Anyway, he draws the reader's attention to the fact that this definition only "*indicates* an *ontologically* constitutive state", being in fact nothing else but a rough *ontical* observation. And still, he continues: "The question of the 'who' answers itself in terms of the 'I' itself, the 'subject', the 'Self'. The 'who' is what maintains itself as something identical throughout changes in its Experiences and ways of behavior, and which relates itself to this changing multiplicity in doing so" (Heidegger, ibid). This substantiality of the 'subject' is indeed an ontological clue for determining the entity of the Dasein's 'who' in Heidegger's view, yet what prevents him to draw an ontological conclusion from that clue, is the very givenness of the 'I' (the givenness of the 'thinking thing', concept that he reproaches to the cartesian theory of subjectivity as misleading), its 'presence-at-hand' which belongs to "entities whose character is not that of Dasein". Having dismissed this stance as incompatible with Dasein's character, finally, Heidegger writes: "It could be that the 'who' of everyday Dasein just is *not* the 'I myself'" (Heidegger 1962: 150). And effectively, the Dasein, the 'who' of commitment that we are searching for here, is co-determined by its various co-originary, equiprimordial modes of being, amongst which the most important for us are named Being-in-the-world and Being-with Others. While we have already exposed some insights on the meanings of *Being-with* and its significance for understanding commitment, and having in mind that we will later on focus on some characteristics of *Being-in-the-world*, we shall now analyze the meaning of *Being-in* as such – in order to answer the question of 'who' is committed in engagement. What already announces itself as a pathway to follow in our upcoming analyses, is that we will rather speak about the 'there' than about 'someone', because, as Heidegger writes: "[...] man's '*substance*' is not spirit as a synthesis of soul and body; it is rather *existence*" (Heidegger 1962: 153).

So, how does the always already *committed* Dasein of engagement factually *exist*? The very root verb of the latin word *comittere*, which is *mittere*, meaning

"to release, let go; send, throw" drives us directly to Heidegger's definition of Dasein as *thrown projection*, which in return provides a theoretical explanation of the given philological fact. Let's dive briefly into chapter 5, division 1 of *Being and Time* to try to expose the ontological concept of *thrownness*. The Dasein is "unveiled in Being-delivered-over to the 'there' [to the *Da* of Dasein]. In the evasion itself the there *is* something disclosed. This characteristic of Dasein's Being – this 'that it is' – is veiled in its 'whence' and 'whither', yet disclosed in itself all the more unveiledly; we call it the '*thrownness*' of this entity into its 'there'; indeed, it is thrown in such a way that, as Being-in-the-world, it is the 'there'. The expression 'thrownness' is meant to suggest the *facticity of its being delivered over*" (Heidegger 1962: 174). Simon Critchley explains what Heidegger means when writing with complexity about the phenomenon of *thrownness* in clear and simple terms: "Thrownness (Geworfenheit) is the simple awareness that we always find ourselves somewhere, namely delivered over to a world with which we are fascinated, a world we share with others" (Critchley, internet). But furthermore, this thrownness is, as Heidegger explains, 'disclosed': in the Dasein's state-of-mind (*Befindlichkeit*) and through its mood (*Stimmung*). We find ourselves always already in a state-of-mind that discloses our Dasein in its thrownness, and simultaneously, we are always already 'assailed' by a certain mood, an attunement that comes "neither from 'outside' nor from 'inside', but arises out of Being-in-the-world, as a way of such Being" (Heidegger1962: 176). What could that teach us about the committed entity and about the *being-committed* in general? Firstly, this shows that in committed engagement, we are not away from the risk of an 'unreflecting devotion to the 'world' because the states-of-mind discloses Dasein in an evasive turning-away which is also called the *falling* of Dasein; and *falling* is characterized by idle talk, curiosity and ambiguity. In this case, the trownness is disclosed in its very veiling. Heidegger gives us also the example of *bad moods* such as fear, boredom and more fundamentally *anxiety*, to depict how Dasein can become blind to itself, to the others and to the environment with which it is concerned. Effectively, one can be committed in an 'inauthentic' way. But also, if commitment presupposes the thrownness of Dasein into a state-of-mind, it also "*implies a disclosive submission to the world, out of which we can encounter something that matter to* us" (Heidegger 1962: 177) – and we commit ourselves by definition to something that *matter* to us.

By pursuing this rhythm of veiling and unveiling, we can see that the Dasein, as it were to resist to the overall domination of its primordial thrownness, has another equiprimordial mode of being. Heidegger calls it *understanding*. But, what that has to do with *commitment*? Being-there *is* understanding, and understanding 'has in itself the existential structure which we call '*projection*'. The word '*Entwurf*' that Heidegger uses is translated in English as 'projection'. Translators of *Being and Time*, Macquarrie and Robinson, explain that this noun and cognate verb '*entwerfen'* mean basically to 'throw' something 'off' or 'away' from one, which once more coincides with the meaning of the Latin root verb '*mittere*' ('to release, let go; send, throw') on which the term

commitment is built. Also, like 'projection', '*Entwurf*' stands for 'designing' or 'sketching' some 'project' which is to be carried through, but this sense rests secondary for Heidegger. So how all of that helps us to grasp the specificity of a committed entity of Dasein and the commitment as engagement in general? In projection, Dasein throws forth its own thrownness, which could be considered as an initial and fundamental *act* of commitment. This operation resumes itself in the idea of understanding, in which Dasein, as Being-in-the-world, projects itself essentially upon *possibilities*. Let's see this step by step. Firstly, as Heidegger writes, Dasein is disclosed as *Being-possible* in *anxiety*. "Anxiety makes manifest in Dasein its *Being towards* its ownmost potentiality-for-Being — that is, its *Being-free for* the freedom of choosing itself and taking hold of itself" (Heidegger 1962: 232). So the anxiety, as a fundamental mood through which the Dasein is attuned to the world, opens the possibility of *individuation*. It discloses Dasein as a *solus ipse*, although not in a traditional way which we have seen in the case of devotion: in commitment, the existential 'solipsism' is the bringing of Dasein "face to face with the world as world", and face to face with Others (a point that Emmanuel Levinas conceptualizes so powerfully), rather than a "displacement of putting an isolated subject-Thing into the innocuous emptiness of a wordless occurring" (Heidegger 1962: 233). Only 'after', or only *with*, this particular individuation, understanding as projection becomes possible and opens up to *possibilities*. Thus, in commitment, we recognize the world and the others in it, just as we recognize ourselves – through understanding. Furthermore, in projective understanding, Dasein is a *Being-ahead-of-itself*, it is always *ahead* of itself, *ahead-of-itself-in-already-being-in-a-world*, where the *others* are always already encountered *in the world*. At this point of Heidegger's ontology, the anxiety is 'overthrown' by *care* (*Sorge*). In the world in front of which we are fundamentally anxious, there are *others* for which we *care*, and thus for-the-sake-of-which *we are*. In this sense, commitment is radically different from devotion, which is condemned to anxiety, solitude, and finally, as we have seen before with Benjamin, despair. And this isn't only a formal difference, it is an ontological difference, because *care* as Dasein's mode of Being belongs to *projection*, a "disclosive Being towards its potentiality-for-Being. As something that understands, Dasein *can* understand *itself* in the terms of the 'world' and Others or in terms of its ownmost potentiality-for-Being" (Heidegger 1962: 264). On the contrary to this committed projection and care, in devotion, we see rather retrieval and despair. With those remarks being exposed, commitment can now be seen as *caring*, in which *care* is a fundamental mode of the Being of Dasein. Furthermore, we should stress that the two essential modes of care are: *concern* (*Besorgen*) and *solicitude* (*Fürsorge*). The first one corresponds to our dealings with the equipment which are ready-to-hand, the 'stuff' the we encounter in the world and find potentially useful, while the second represents our care for Others, as other Daseins that we encounter equally within-the-world. Likewise, care *doesn't* stands for a special attitude towards the Self and *isn't* simply care-for-oneself. This characteristic represents a fundamental feature of commitment

that differentiates it from devotion, which entirely depends on a desperately egoistic care-for-oneself. Care for Self is for Heidegger a mere tautology, because "the Self has already been characterized ontologically by 'Being-ahead-of-itself', a characteristic in which the other two items in the structure of care —Being already-in... and Being-alongside...— have been *jointly posited* [*mitgesetz*]" (Heidegger 1962: 237). Finally, we can say that Dasein is the *who* of commitment that we were searching for. Dasein is the *thrown projection*, it is thrownness *with* projection; and the core of Dasein is this very articulation, the *with*, which represents the condition and the structure of *care* thus making commitment *possible*.

In spite of these clear convergences between the etymology of the word commitment and Heidegger's ontology, something seems to lack in our analyses of committed engagement. This lack is firstly methodological, but it is also substantive. We haven't yet mapped the ideas of light and world in the phenomenon of commitment. In order to repair this analytic insufficiency, we shall turn once more briefly to the semantic field of the word '*posvećnost*'. One of its literal meanings which is 'to become a world' or 'to *worldize* oneself' interestingly find once more its echo in Heidegger's ontology. As we have already mentioned, one of Dasein's primordial modes is *Being-in-the-world*. Dasein is not 'in the world' as the water is in a glass, or the chair is in a room, etc. Also, the world isn't a mere container collecting the entities that are to be found in it: "As Being-in-the-world, Dasein has already discovered a 'world' at any time. This discovery, which is founded upon the worldhood of the world, is one which we have characterized as freeing entities for a totality of involvements" (Heidegger 1962: 145). Therefore, on the contrary to the proceedings which construct subjectivity in devotion through an annihilation of the world, in commitment, the Dasein frees the entities in the world and *discovers* a world simply in order to *be*. The appearance of Dasein is simultaneous to the appearance of the world. In *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, Heidegger pushes this position even furhter: "World-understanding as Dasein-understanding is self-understanding. Self and world belong together in the single entity, the Dasein" (Heidegger 1982: 297). This feature of Dasein imposes to commitment an inevitable responsibility for the world, as if it was a responsibility for the self, because Dasein and world are equiprimordial. How come one could ask? Once again, the idea of light is there to save the day. In *Being and Time*, we encounter the concept of *Lichtung*, translated as 'clearing' or even 'lighting', explaining this eqiprimordiality quite well: "When we talk in an ontically figurative way of the *lumen naturale* in man, we have in mind nothing other than the existential ontological structure of this entity, that it *is* in such a way as to be its 'there'. To say that it is 'illuminated' ['erleuchtet'] means that *as* Being-in-the-world it is cleared ['gelichtet'] in itself, not through any other entity, but in such a way that it *is* itself the clearing" (Heidegger 1962: 171). Here we can clearly distinguish the main difference between commitment and devotion: the lights of devotion are always exterior to the subject, they are by definition transcendent, subjectifying lights – whether they are divine, rational

or capitalist; inversely, the light in commitment is a light that cannot be assigned to any entity, it isn't a light with a single localized source, but rather the light of an assemblage, of an encounter, of a short circuit maybe. The figure of light in commitment stands for the primordial *disclosedness* of Dasein which is nothing else but an articulation of selfhood and worldhood through *othering*. Therefore, the only possible answer to the question 'Who is committed in engagement?' is simple: 'We'. Only a 'we' is capable of committed engagement, a mode of being which is unreachable for the *solus ipse* of the 'I'.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we shall somehow refine what has been proposed through the text and point out how our analyses further helps us to critically understand what is engagement. It seems that we have made a rough division between the two modes of being of engagement, a rupture between devotion and commitment. Although this methodological maneuver was beneficial for developing a clearer argumentation, it doesn't reflect faithfully the reality of *being-engaged*. In engagement, generally speaking, both of these modes are necessarily present and cannot simply exclude one another. There is no such thing as a purely committed or purely devotional engagement. The question is rather, to what level will one of them prevail? The very engaging aspect of engagement lies exactly in this resonance between the two modes. There are two ways to consider engagement: 1) simply as a being engaged, and 2) as one's acting in an engaged manner. In an ontological sense, we are always already being engaged – from our birth, we are engaged with the world that surrounds us and that we discovered, and furthermore, all of our relations with others presuppose engagement. In that sense, we are always already *committed*. On the other hand, when we act in an engaged fashion, we make reference to certain values and ideals, exposing our positions publicly and thus putting at stake our subjectivity while simultaneously petrifying it. So, we can say that, in order to act – one must be *devoted*. The paradox arises when we understand that, as living beings, we are fundamentally *active beings*. On the one hand, we observe that in commitment, as an ontological mode of engagement, we seem to lack the necessary tools for acting; while on the other, in devotion, taken as a predominantly ontic modality of engagement, our Being is obscured, or rather dazzled by an exterior light. However, in order to exist fully, we must engender both of these modes of engagement at any time. The only way to critically apprehend this is to embrace the paradox. To recognize the existential necessity of correlation between devotion and commitment is the first step towards a critical engagement. The second one is to engage in an (auto)reflective endeavor in such a way, that it will necessarily and always augment the intensity of commitment and reduce the one of devotion. In the historical era that we are living in, this can become should be considered even as a moral maxim. Because in his time, Descartes could let devotion take an advantage over commitment, an keep its engagements intellectually brilliant. In our historical context of late

capitalism, commitment is almost a moral imperative and engagement's mode of being that must prevail in order to preserve nothing less than our coexistence. Heidegger writes that we are beings for whom the very Being is an issue. We can say now that we are *engaged beings* for whom the very *being-engaged* is an issue. Thus, it is only through committed reflection on the phenomenon of engagement, that we can achieve to render possible our very existential paradox, which is to say, to become able to *act critically*.

References

Agamben, Giorgio (2013), *Qu'est-ce que le commandement*, Paris: Rivages.
Benjamin, Walter (1996), 'Capitalism as Religion', in Martin Bullock, Michael W. Jennings (eds.), *Selected Writings, Volume 1: 1913-1926*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, pp. 288–291.
Cassin, Barbara (ed.) (2004), *Vocabulaire européen des philosophies*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil/Dictionnaires Le Robert.
Critchley, Simon (2009), "Being and Time, part 4: Thrown into this world" (internet), available at: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2009/jun/29/religion-philosophy (viewed 2 September 2020).
Derrida, Jacques (2000), *Foi et Savoir, suivi de Le Siècle et le Pardon*, Paris: Seuil.
Descartes, René (1970), *Principes de la philosophie*, Paris: NRF Gallimard, La Pléiade
Gadamer, Hans-Georg (2004), *Truth and Method*, London – New York: Continuum.
Heidegger, Martin (1982), *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
Heidegger, Martin (1962), *Being and Time*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
Nancy, Jean-Luc (2000), *Being Singular Plural*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.
Nietzsche, Friedrich (2001), *The Gay Science*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Skok, Petar (1971), *Etimologijski rječnik hrvatskoga ili srpskoga jezika*, Zagreb: Jugoslovenska akademija znanosti i umetnosti.
Zaharijević, Adriana (2017), "Angažman: misliti i delovati zajedno", in Adriana Zaharijević, Jelena Vasiljević (eds.), *Angažman: uvod u studije angažovanosti*, Novi Sad: Akademska knjiga; Beograd: Institut za filozofiju i društvenu teoriju, pp. 17–33.

Andrea Perunović

Od predanosti do posvećenosti: ka kritičkoj ontologiji angažmana

Apstrakt:

Ovaj članak prilazi pojmu angažmana iz perspektive kritičke ontologije. Sa jezikom kao polazišnom tačkom svog hermeneutičkog zadatka, on započinje etimološkom analizom različitih indoevropskih reči koje gravitiraju oko semantičkog polja pojma angažmana. Iz ovih uvodnih nalaza stečenih kroz jednu vežbu u komparativnoj lingvistici, *predanost* [devotion] i posvećenost [commitment] su mapirani kao dva suprotstavljena, ali pak nerazdvojiva, *modusa bivstvovanja* angažmana. Ispostaviće se da ova dva modusa uslovljavaju angažman na ontološki različite načine. Tokom ispitivanja njihovih fundamentalnih struktura, neki od kanonskih koncepata istorije filozofije, kao što su biće, egzistencija, subjektivnost ili svet – ali takođe i neke od njenih konstitutivnih binarnih opozicija kao što se telo/duh, individua/kolektiv,

transcendencija/imanencija, svetlo/tama i duhovno/svetovno – biće preispitane kroz prizmu različitih ontoloških dispozicija koje predanost i posvećenost, svaka na svoj način, nameću angažmanu. Opšti cilj ovog istraživanja je isticanje glavnih egzitencijalnih karakteristika *bivanja-angažovanim*, interpretirajući tako uloge *koga*, *čega* i *gde* angažmana, s idejom predstavljanja jednog bazičnog konceptualnog aparata *kritičke ontologije angažmana*.

Ključne reči: angažman, posvećenost, predanost, biće, subjekat, kolektivitet, svet, ontologija

UDK: 179.3
https://doi.org/10.2298/FID2102282T
Original Scientific Article
Received 10.19.2020. Accepted 22.03.2021.

PHILOSOPHY AND SOCIETY
VOL. 32, NO. 2, 157–334

To cite text:
Todorović, Zorana S. (2021), "The Moral Status of Animals: Degrees of Moral Status and the Interest-Based Approach", *Philosophy and Society* 32 (2): 282–295.

Zorana S. Todorović

THE MORAL STATUS OF ANIMALS: DEGREES OF MORAL STATUS AND THE INTEREST-BASED APPROACH

ABSTRACT
This paper addresses the issue of the moral status of non-human animals, or the question whether sentient animals are morally considerable. The arguments for and against the moral status of animals are discussed, above all the argument from marginal cases. It is argued that sentient animals have moral status based on their having interests in their experiential well-being, but that there are degrees of moral status. Two interest-based approaches are presented and discussed: DeGrazia's view that sentient animals have interests in continuing to live, and that their interests should be granted moral weight; and McMahan's TRIA which similarly postulates that animals have interests and that in a given situation we should compare the human and animal interests at stake. Finally, the paper concludes that the anthropocentric approach to animal ethics should be abandoned in favour of the biocentric ethics.

KEYWORDS
animal, sentient, moral status, well-being, interest, human, person

Introduction: Arguments for and against the Moral Status of Animals

The purpose of this paper is to question the view that non-human animals do not have moral status, and to provide compelling arguments for their moral considerability. Specifically, it is argued that sentient animals should be morally considerable based on their having interests in their experiential well-being. Even though sentient animals have interests that should be granted moral weight, there are morally relevant differences among different animals, so there seem to be different degrees of moral status. These differences should be taken into account when comparing the interests of humans and animals in a specific situation, as suggested by the interest-based approach that will be discussed below.

The problem of moral status of non-human animals and the question whether humans as moral agents have duties to animals is examined in a branch of ethics called animal ethics. The central issue discussed in this field is whether (at

Zorana S. Todorović: PhD, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade; zoranatod@gmail.com.

least some) animals are beings that are due moral consideration, and whether humans should take into account their interests or well-being when making moral decisions. Different ethical theories vary in terms of their answers to this question and arguments they provide to support their theses. The traditional view is that animals, unlike humans, do not have moral status (or have slight moral status) because they have no characteristic features of moral beings – rationality, autonomy, self-consciousness, use of language – and thus humans do not have moral duties to animals.

One of the most convincing arguments for moral considerability of animals is *the argument from marginal cases* or marginal humans (the AMC), which challenges the traditional view that animals do not have moral status. The term 'marginal humans' refers to humans who lack some of the characteristics that are traditionally considered relevant to moral status (rationality, etc.), which is why they are not full members of the moral community. Some philosophers distinguish among three subtypes of marginal humans: 'pre-moral' humans (infants) – potential moral beings who will become moral or full members of the moral community if they develop normally; 'post-moral' – human adults who used to be moral but are no longer so because of their old age or illness (dementia); lastly, 'non-moral' human adults who have never been nor will they ever be members of the moral community due to serious mental illness or accident (Scruton 2000: 42).

The main problem pointed out by the argument from marginal cases is that not all humans are completely rational, autonomous, etc., and that so-called marginal humans do not have these morally relevant characteristics to a degree that is sufficient for moral status, while some animals have these capacities more developed than some humans. The point of this argument is that if marginal humans are morally considerable, then animals that have similar morally relevant capacities should be morally considerable too. Accordingly, in order to be consistent, we have to admit either that marginal humans have slight moral status like animals, or that animals have the same moral status as marginal humans. In other words, the moral status of animals should be, for the sake of consistency, same as the moral status of marginal humans. Therefore, if marginal humans are thought to be morally considerable, then moral considerability of relevantly similar animals cannot be denied; on the other hand, if animals are not morally considerable, then neither are marginal humans (Tanner 2006: 50).

The view that animals have moral standing and that they should have the same moral status as marginal humans is challenged by contesting the argument from marginal cases. One of the attempts to counter this argument is with *the argument from kinds*: it is argued that humans are such a kind of beings that are usually morally considerable, which does not depend on the characteristics of an individual being but on the characteristic features of its kind. In normal circumstances, human beings are members of the moral community and the fact that some humans, such as marginal cases, lack some capacities (e.g. rationality) does not cancel their moral considerability. Unlike human beings,

animals do not belong to the moral community, nor do they have the potential for belonging to it, because they are not that *kind of thing* (Scruton 2000: 43).

But this argument is clearly speciesism[1] – all humans are thought to deserve moral consideration while no animals do, because they are not of *the right kind* – the human kind, regardless of the fact that some animals have similar capacities as marginal humans. However, it is not clear why belonging to the human kind should be morally relevant; humans belong to different natural kinds, for example, mammals, living being, etc. Besides, the human kind could have evolved quite differently and humans could have been less rational, etc. than other species, and yet they would still be morally considerable while members of other species would not, which is contradictory (Tanner 2006: 55).

A more appropriate criterion of moral considerability would be possession of some characteristic or capacity, which is the basis for ascribing moral considerability to a being. However, scientific evidence currently available indicates that all the characteristics and capacities that human beings have can be found to some degree in non-human animals too. Many scientists point out that the difference between humans and other animals is only a difference in degree and not in kind, which also applies to mental capacities (Darwin 1871/1981; Panksepp 2011). The differences between humans and non-human animals are not sufficient grounds for denying non-human animals moral consideration. With this in mind, those who argue that only humans have moral standing should show that all humans, including marginal cases, have some morally relevant characteristic or characteristics that no animals have, which is why they are not morally considerable. Only in this way could the argument from marginal cases be refuted and that is precisely its strength, because it requires taking a consistent attitude towards animals, thereby effectively shifting the burden of proof to proponents of the view that animals are not morally considerable.

The Moral Status of Sentient Animals: Are there Degrees of Moral Status?

First of all, the concept of moral considerability or moral status should be clarified. In DeGrazia's view, to have moral status means to have independent or direct moral importance, and the moral importance of a being with moral status is closely related to interests or well-being of that being. A being X has moral status if: "(1) moral agents have obligations regarding X, (2) X has interests, and (3) the obligations are based (at least partly) on X's interests" (DeGrazia 2008: 183).

When discussing the moral status of animals, it seems crucial to examine their mental life more thoroughly, in order to understand what their interests

1 Speciesism is a term coined by analogy with other forms of discrimination, such as racism or sexism. The term became widespread after Singer used it in his book (Singer 1975), although, by his own admission, he did not coin it but a British psychologist Richard Ryder in 1970.

are and what it really means to take their interests into account. Our attitude about how we should treat animals depends on what kind of mental capacities we attribute to them; thus we can differentiate between animals that are *not sentient*, those that are *sentient nonpersons*, and animals that could qualify as borderline cases of *persons* - such as great apes and dolphins (DeGrazia 2016: 511). Sentience can be defined as the capacity to feel or experience feelings – sensations, emotions, and moods, which implies the existence of conscious experience. Many scientists believe that the capacity to feel pain is sufficient for sentience. DeGrazia points out that the available evidence supports the thesis that mammals and birds are typically sentient beings, while there is convincing evidence that all vertebrates are mostly sentient beings too, and among invertebrates at least cephalopods. Examples of sentient nonpersons to keep in mind when discussing the moral status of animals are cats, dogs, cows, rodents, eagles, etc.; this category also includes some human beings, such as infants and people in advanced stages of Alzheimer's disease, which are so-called 'marginal' or contested cases, as DeGrazia calls them.

Sentient animals by definition have an *experiential well-being* or *welfare*, which is common to all sentient beings, as well as interests in their experiential welfare. Interests are understood as a component of one's well-being (*welfare interests*) and not something a being is interested in. Since they have interests, animals can be harmed, because the basic interest as regards one's well-being is in not suffering. Of course, we refer here to sentient animals, which also applies below when we discuss the interests of animals and their moral status. DeGrazia argues that sentient animals have moral status (at least some degree of moral status) since they can be treated cruelly, because that can be the only plausible explanation why it is wrong, and this thesis is supported by most of the leading studies in animal ethics (DeGrazia 1996: 43). Instead of the moral status of animals, we could talk about our obligations to them, such as the obligation not to harm them needlessly, which is grounded in their interests in their own experiential welfare.

However, there are different views about whether animals have the same moral status as humans or they differ in moral status, and whether we should extend equal consideration to their interests. The view that we should give equal consideration to interests of human persons and sentient animals (Equal Consideration View) grants *equal moral importance to their comparable interests* (DeGrazia 2008: 189). The example of such an interest shared by many different species is in the above experiential well-being. This really means that it is equally wrong to cause suffering to a sentient animal and a human person, which is certainly contrary to our usual everyday treatment of animals. Within this approach, it can be argued that although all sentient beings deserve to be granted equal moral consideration to their comparable interests, many of their interests are not comparable, which justifies different moral protections (Unequal Interests Model). Thus, the interests of persons and animals when it comes to life are not equal because persons have a greater interest in staying alive, so it is worse to kill a human person than a sentient animal.

This view is consistent with the intuitions of most people, including animal lovers and animal rights activists. In cases of conflict, when one has to decide whether to save a person or an animal, people would generally agree that a person should be saved and not an animal. A well-known example of such a case is a lifeboat scenario, in which either a man or a dog has to be tossed overboard, otherwise the boat would sink and everyone aboard would drown. Another example is when one has to choose whom to rescue from a burning building – a person or a dog[2]. This approach clearly implies that human persons have higher moral status than sentient animals. Contrary to this view, some theorists who argue for equal consideration given to human persons and sentient animals believe that there are no degrees of moral status and that a being either has moral status or lacks it (Harman 2003: 183). Their explanation of the common belief that it is worse to kill a person than an animal is that death harms persons more than animals, and it is generally worse to cause more harm.

Another model of positing the difference in moral status between humans and animals are theories that give unequal consideration to persons and sentient animals (Unequal Consideration Model). According to these theories, even though sentient animals have moral status and we should give moral weight to their interests (such as the interests in their experiential well-being), *animals' interests have less moral importance than persons' comparable interests*. This means that it is morally worse to cause suffering to a person than to cause equal suffering to a sentient animal because, even though their interests in not suffering are comparable, the person's interests have greater moral importance than those of a sentient nonperson.

There are two different versions of the view that humans have higher moral status than animals, which asserts degrees of moral status. The "two-tier model" attributes one level of moral status to persons and another, lower level of moral status to sentient nonpersons. The "sliding-scale model" posits that there is a scale of degrees of moral status, depending on the degree of cognitive, affective, and social complexity of a being; while all persons have equal moral status, sentient nonpersons vary in degrees of their moral status (DeGrazia 2008: 192). According to this model, persons have the highest moral status, followed by great apes and dolphins, then other monkeys and elephants, other mammals, and so on down the phylogenetic scale all the way to barely sentient beings.

Various arguments could be provided in favour of the sliding-scale view that there are degrees of moral status. It could be said that persons are special in their moral status because they are moral agents – beings who have moral obligations and responsibilities, which justifies their higher moral status. Animals are not moral agents but, as sentient beings, they have moral status. Furthermore, if sentience is considered to be the fundamental criterion of moral status, and different kinds of sentient beings have different degrees of sentience, this supports the thesis that there is a scale of degrees of moral

2 Also, we can think of a version of the well-known trolley problem, so that a person is standing on one track, and on the other there is a sentient animal or even a couple of them.

status. Additional arguments refer to our common sense beliefs that humans and animals do not have the same level of moral status, and that sentient animals differ among themselves in terms of their moral importance or the degree of moral status.[3]

Animals' Moral Status Grounded in Their Interests

A rather nuanced view about the moral status of animals has been elaborated by the above-mentioned David DeGrazia. DeGrazia agrees with the view that animals are due moral consideration and that we have obligations to them based on their interests or welfare. He believes that many animals have moral status, but there are morally relevant differences among different animals; thus we can speak of degrees of moral status, depending on whether animals could qualify as borderline cases of persons like great apes and dolphins, or sentient nonpersons such as other mammals and birds, or they are not sentient beings at all.

Since many animals are sentient beings – even if they are not persons – who have moral status and whose interests should be granted moral weight, DeGrazia questions whether it is morally justified to kill them, for example after their use as laboratory animals in experiments. If sentient animals have moral status, humans as moral agents have obligations to them, not to harm them needlessly. DeGrazia points out that death harms not only persons by depriving them of the net good their lives would have contained, but it also harms sentient nonpersons for the same reason, because it deprives them of lives that contain prudential goods[4] or would have contained them. Having conscious experiences is a precondition for an animal's life to contain prudential goods, which makes life worth continuing for that animal (DeGrazia 2016: 512). Accordingly, if lives of sentient animals (and other sentient nonpersons) are worth continuing and if they have interests in continuing to live, death harms them by depriving them of the goods or the net good within their lives.

The next relevant question that is raised is whether death in fact harms sentient animals less than it harms persons, which is a common opinion of most people. DeGrazia discusses the theoretical basis of this view and its arguments. Objective theories are based on the claim that persons have certain capacities (cognitive and emotional) that sentient animals lack, which enable them activities and experiences that are highly valued in assessing one's well-being; this explains why a person has a higher quality of life than a sentient animal.

3 This can be illustrated in the following way; most people would agree that it would be acceptable to kill an animal (which would involve some degree of suffering), if it would save a person's life or if it was necessary to preserve a person's health. When it comes to our beliefs about different moral status of different animals, a good example would be killing rats as part of pest control, which most people would find acceptable, even if it causes their suffering.

4 The term 'prudential goods' is used to refer to the goods that subject's life has to contain in order to be worth living. It relates to what is *good for someone* whose life it is and not in itself (Sumner 1995: 769–770; Višak, Garner 2016: 5).

DeGrazia challenges the explanation that uses an objective account of well-being, pointing out that the *subjective quality of life* of a sentient animal who is faring well (for example a dog) does not have to be lower than the quality of life of a person who is faring well. There is an implicitly made distinction here between *well-being* or welfare and *faring well* or being well-off, which will be discussed further in the next section (McMahan 1996: 9–10).

In DeGrazia's view, it would be wrong to assume that persons' lives are more valuable than lives of sentient animals on the grounds that persons have certain capacities that sentient animals lack. This would imply attaching greater value to typically human capacities and associated activities or experiences, while undervaluing animals' capacities and experiences that are less developed in humans or that humans lack. In fact, some animals have more developed senses than humans, such as the auditory and olfactory senses, so they are likely to have richer sensory experiences than humans, which contribute to their well-being and faring well. Thus, DeGrazia believes that the well-being of a being is determined by the type of functioning characteristic of that kind of being. There is no objective list of values that applies to all kinds of beings, and the assessment of the value of life is relative to the kind of being in question and the innate capacities of such being.

DeGrazia's approach is clearly on the right track in that he rejects an objective account of well-being and asserts that the subjective quality of life of a sentient animal is not necessarily lower than a person's quality of life, which also applies to the value of life. The loss of life that is worth living harms sentient animals, since it deprives them of the goods their future lives would have contained. Also, DeGrazia points out that humans as moral agents have obligations to sentient animals because they have moral status. However, if different sorts of sentient animals have varying degrees of moral status, does that mean there are varying degrees of obligations that humans have to different animal species? In a specific situation, how could we assess what our obligations to a particular sentient animal are?

The theory that, in DeGrazia's opinion, explains satisfactorily the assertion that death harms persons more than sentient animals is Jeff McMahan's *Time-Relative Interest Account* or TRIA.[5]

> The basic idea of the TRIA, applied to the harm of death, is that in determining how harmful a particular death is to the individual who dies, we must take into account not only (1) the value of the life that the individual would have had, had he not died at that point – what I've here called the net good of the life – but also (2) the extent to which the subject is psychologically related to his possible future life at the time he dies. (DeGrazia 2016: 515)

According to this account, the value of the life lost is a function of the quality of that life and its quantity. Quantity is measured in the length of time of

5 DeGrazia points out that some McMahan's ideas come from Derek Parfit, including the concept of psychological connectedness or relatedness.

life lost, while quality is a function of the subjective quality of life that is experienced and the psychological connectedness of the subject at the time of death to herself in the possible future. The concept of psychological connectedness refers to a feeling of connection to oneself in the past and the future, and it could also be called psychological unity or psychological continuity over time. The value of the life lost or the harm of death could be assessed using the following formula: "HoD[6] = [(Subjective q. of life[7] x Time) of life lost] x Psychological unity" (ibid.: 516).

When this formula is applied to a sentient animal, for example a dog, it can be explained why death harms an animal less than it harms a person (with the exception of animals that are persons, if there are any). If we compare the harm of death of a pet dog and a grandmother, who both die five years earlier than they would otherwise have died, the quantity of life lost would be the same, and it could be said that their subjective quality of life would be similar; only the psychological connectedness would be different – grandma would have much more psychological unity, assuming she is not demented. DeGrazia points out that most of the animals we come across every day – pets, domestic animals, most animals in zoos and laboratories – are sentient animals who have some psychological unity to a greater or lesser degree, because they have the capacity to feel pain, but also a lasting desire not to feel pain, which brings about psychological connectedness to oneself over time. Accordingly, although killing those animals is less harmful than it would be in the case of persons, death still deprives them of lives that would have been worth continuing. In DeGrazia's view, our current practice of using animals is largely morally unacceptable, and he argues for discontinuing at least the practice of routine killing of animals after their use in experiments.

Comparing Relative Interests of Sentient Beings

Another elaborate view on the degrees of moral status has been developed by Jeff McMahan, whose Time-Relative Interest Account (TRIA) was already introduced in the previous section. Like DeGrazia, McMahan believes that moral status is not 'all-or-nothing' phenomenon, and that there is a range of degrees of moral status. Sentient beings or individuals that have basic consciousness, on the basis of which they have interests, have a minimal moral status and our treatment of them should be guided simply by our concern for their interests. Animals are such sentient beings that are capable of physical suffering like human beings, but they are not self-conscious – or their self-consciousness is only rudimentary. They have no desires or intentions concerning the future and are incapable of making plans, which is why they are weakly psychologically connected to themselves in the future (McMahan 2008: 67).

6 HoD - Harm of death
7 Subjective quality of life

There are various degrees of psychological connectedness of animals – weaker and stronger psychological connectedness, as well as psychological unconnectedness, but McMahan suggests that only some lowest forms of animals are totally unconnected (McMahan 2015: 84–85). Weakly connected animals have consciousness but a low degree of self-consciousness, and they can experience suffering and pleasure but have no memory of it. More strongly connected animals, such as great apes, have a higher degree of self-consciousness, but even those animals are weakly connected to themselves compared with psychological connectedness of human persons. Whether it is permissible to kill an animal or not depends on the degree to which it is psychologically connected to itself, because even though they are not persons and they have lower moral status than persons, they have interests and it would be against their interests to be killed.

The common belief of most people that it is worse to kill a human being than an animal and that in cases of conflict, a human should be saved and not an animal, is explained by asserting that human beings have a higher level of well-being than animals. In McMahan's view, the level and form of well-being that an individual can have is determined by his or her cognitive and emotional capacities and potentials. Since animals do not have many of the capacities that humans have, they have a lower level of well-being than (normal) human beings, and certain dimensions of well-being are not accessible to them. Nevertheless, an animal (for example a dog), even though it has a relatively low level of well-being compared to a normal human adult, can be well-off and have a good life. McMahan distinguishes between the level of *well-being* and being *well-off* or fortunate, a distinction that was already mentioned in the previous section. This notion of *fortune*, or how an individual's life is going, is "a relation between an individual's level of well-being and a standard against which well-being is assessed" (McMahan 1996: 9). Specifically, how well-off a being is depends on the relation between its level of well-being and the levels of well-being accessible to beings with the (highest possible) cognitive and emotional capacities that are characteristics of its species.

McMahan's account of why death is bad for an individual who dies is based on the magnitude of the loss suffered by the individual. When a person dies, it involves the loss of a great deal of future good, and the person would have been strongly connected to the subject of the good that is lost (McMahan 2002: 171). Unlike human beings, most animals live mainly in the present and are largely psychologically unconnected to themselves in the future, like human beings in the early stages of their lives. The strength of an animal's interest in continuing to live depends not only on the amount of future goods it is deprived of through death, but also on the degree of its psychological connectedness to itself in the future. Although the loss of future goods contributes to the badness of death, animals are very weakly psychologically connected to themselves in the future so they have no desire for the future goods at the time of death. The weaker psychological connectedness to oneself in the future, the

weaker one's interests in continuing to live, and less bad death is. This is the above-mentioned Time-Relative Interest Account:

> [...] the extent to which death is a misfortune for an individual is a function primarily of two independent factors: (1) the amount of good life of which the individual is deprived by death and (2) the extent to which the individual at the time of death would have been psychologically connected to himself at those times in the future when the good things in his life would have occurred. (McMahan 2015: 70)

Using TRIA, McMahan seeks to explain why death is less bad for animals than for human beings - not only because their future lives would have been less good, but also because of a weaker degree of their psychological connectedness to themselves in the future. This explanation could be used as an argument for 'benign carnivorism' or 'humane omnivorism', which refers to the practice of rearing animals humanely to be used for human consumption. This practice is usually considered humane because animals are raised in humane conditions and killed painlessly, so they do not suffer or experience fear. Unlike intensive animal farming that involves their suffering and unnatural living conditions, it seems that such 'humane' way of raising animals might be good for them, regardless of the fact that the ultimate goal is to use them for human consumption. However, McMahan challenges the justifiability of this practice and questions whether it is morally permissible.

The main argument (the so-called *benefit* argument) put forward in favour of the practice of benign carnivorism is that animals raised in this way would not have existed without this practice, and that these animals have good lives, so it is good for them overall – for these animals it is better to exist and to have lives worth living, even though they are killed later, than never to exist at all. On the other hand, death is bad for them because they are killed much earlier than they would have died of natural causes, so it deprives them of lives that are worth living and the goods they would have had in their future lives. However, the loss suffered by animals and its significance must be discounted for their weak psychological continuity in their lives.

Since animals are not persons, in McMahan's opinion, they do not have rights as human persons, so that cannot be an objection to this practice or used as grounds for its rejection. However, although they have no rights, animals have *interests*, and McMahan believes that this practice should be re-examined by taking into account the interests at stake. In a specific situation, we should compare the interests of beings affected by the situation, and weigh all of them to see whose interests are stronger. These interests should be compared in line with the above TRIA:

> [...] Consider an animal whose flesh could provide one meal each for twenty people. How might the human and animal interests compare? It seems that we have to compare the animal's interest in continuing to live – a function of both the amount of good that its life would contain were it not killed, and the

> degree to which it would be psychologically connected to itself in the future – with twenty people's interests in the pleasure they would get from eating the animal. (McMahan 2008: 70)

In the above example, when the interests of an animal (for example a pig) are compared with the interests of people in that situation, it is obvious that the interest of the animal in continuing to live and all the good it would have in life outweighs the interests of the people in enjoying a meat dish. Even if we only compare the pleasure that twenty people would get from eating the animal, say a pig, with the pleasures that the pig would get from eating several meals a day for several years (which the pig would have were it not killed), it is clear that the pig's pleasures would outweigh the difference in pleasure that twenty people would get from eating that pig instead of eating a vegetarian meal. Of course, the strength of the animal's interests should be discounted for its weak psychological connectedness to its future interests; still, the animal's interests in not being killed – the pig in the above example – would outweigh the people's interests in eating it. Accordingly, McMahan argues that the practice of raising animals "humanely" and killing them painlessly cannot be justified by referring to the interests of everyone affected, because the loss caused by killing animals far outweighs the benefits that "humane" carnivores or omnivores have (McMahan 2015: 85).

But there is a problem with the existing farms where animals are raised this way. Suppose farmers who practice this kind of animal husbandry realise that it is not justifiable to kill animals as part of the practice, because the interests of these animals in continuing to live outweigh the interests of people in eating them. What should they do then? Would they have an obligation to feed them until they die naturally? If not, would it be justifiable to release them, even though it is a well-known fact that domestic animals could not survive in the wild? Keeping this in mind, it seems that it would be better for these animals to be painlessly killed than to suffer and die slowly in the wild. If it would be better for these animals to be euthanized, would in that case be permissible to use their meat, i.e. for people to eat them? This would bring us back to where we started and thus prolong the practice of breeding animals for human consumption. McMahan points out that the problem could lie in the disputable assumption that it is permissible to cause an individual to exist for one's own purposes without acquiring obligations to this individual. In his opinion, if we cause the existence of a being that is dependent and cannot survive on its own, that *makes us responsible* and under an obligation to take care of it (McMahan 2008: 72).

This argument against the practice of raising animals and killing them prematurely seems convincing; since human beings started the practice that involves causing animals to exist for human needs and killing them much earlier than they would have died naturally, humans are responsible for these animals and should bear the cost of caring for them, even to the natural end of their lives if this practice is discontinued. This is in fact another option in the event

of discontinuing the practice of 'humane' carnivorism, which McMahan does not really take seriously: there is a choice not only between the option of not bringing animals into existence at all, and the option of causing animals to exist and then killing them; there is also a possibility that these animals are raised and not killed. Given his comparison between the interests of animals and people in the situation, McMahan should take this option into consideration, bearing in mind his view that most animals that are raised for human consumption are psychologically connected to themselves to a greater or lesser degree – pigs more than cows, and cows more than chickens (McMahan 2015: 85). Consequently, their interests in continuing to live would in most cases outweigh the interests of people in eating them. A recent real-life example points precisely to such a possibility of giving up animal breeding for human consumption and continuing to take care of them; at the Larkspur cattle farm in Colorado, the owners quit selling cattle for slaughter, and turned the farm into an animal sanctuary.[8]

Despite some weaknesses in McMahan's account, the advantage of his TRIA is that it enables us to compare the interests of animals and humans on equal terms, which opens a possibility that the interests of animals could outweigh the interests of people in a specific situation. Still, the most important value of his theory is that it recognizes the responsibility of humans and their duties to take care of animals they brought into existence for their own needs, thus paving the way for discontinuing animal husbandry, including the practice of 'humane carnivorism'.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to show why the traditional view that animals do not have moral status is no longer tenable. An alternative view has been put forward that sentient animals are due moral consideration on the basis of their interests. This interest-based approach provides a much better explanation of why it seems wrong to treat animals cruelly and to cause their suffering.

The present-day understanding of morality is extremely anthropocentric – only humans are considered to be moral subjects, while animals are excluded from the moral community. The view that the moral community should be expanded to include other species points to the fact that the boundary of moral considerability does not coincide with the boundary of our species. The boundary of human species is based on mere biological data and is morally irrelevant, and a sound ethic should not be based on bias or arbitrary discrimination that favours our own species - speciesism (Cavalieri, Singer 1993: 304). Evidence shows that some morally relevant characteristics of members of the human species and members of other species overlap, and that many animals have these morally relevant characteristics or capacities. Sentience is generally considered to be a morally relevant characteristic, and different views vary

8 It is The Surf and Turf Animal Sanctuary (Stratostinetskaya, internet).

only in terms of the question whether the moral status of animals is the same as the moral status of humans or not.

An endeavour to overcome the anthropocentric approach and shift towards a biocentric view of the world around us would imply the awareness that man is not the centre of the world and that all living beings have their own value, their *raison d'être*. Taking a different, biocentric approach is especially important when it comes to ethical dilemmas concerning the moral status of animals. Given that scientific findings suggest that a multitude of non-human animals experience emotional feelings, it calls into question the anthropocentric approach to ethics and the exclusion of animals from the moral community. Biocentric ethics respects the life of every sentient being, both human and non-human, because all sentient living beings have an experiential well-being and can fare better or worse. Applying moral principles of biocentrism for the sake of protecting the welfare of non-human animals, assuming that we do care about their welfare and that we deem it important just how we treat other sentient beings even though they do not belong to our species, would enable us to create conditions for a higher level of well-being of all sentient animals.

References:

Cavalieri, Paola; Singer, Peter (1993), "The Great Ape Project – and Beyond", in Cavalieri, Paola and Peter Singer (eds.), *The great ape project: Equality beyond humanity*, New York: St. Martin's Griffin.

Darwin, Charles (1871/1981), *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

DeGrazia, David (1996), *Taking Animals Seriously: Mental Life and Moral Status*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

—. (2008), "Moral Status As a Matter of Degree?", *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* XLVI: 181–198.

—. (2016), "Sentient Nonpersons and the Disvalue of Death", *Bioethics*. 30 (7): 511–519.

Harman, Elizabeth (2003), "The Potentiality Problem", *Philosophical Studies* 114 (1): 173–198.

McMahan, Jeff (1996), "Cognitive Disability, Misfortune, and Justice", *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 25 (1): 3–35.

—. (2002), *The Ethics of Killing: Problems at the Margins of Life,* New York: Oxford University Press.

—. (2008), "Eating Animals the Nice Way", *Daedalus* 137(1): 66–76.

—. (2016), "The Comparative Badness for Animals of Suffering and Death", in Tatjana Višak, Robert Garner (eds.), *The Ethics of Killing Animals*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Panksepp, Jaak (2011), "Cross-Species Affective Neuroscience Decoding of the Primal Affective Experiences of Humans and Related Animals", *PLoS ONE* 6 (9): e21236.

Scruton, Roger (2000), *Animal Rights and Wrongs*, London: Demos.

Singer, Peter (1975), *Animal Liberation*, New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc.

Stratostinetskaya, Anna, "Colorado Beef Ranch Turns into Vegan Animal Sanctuary", *VegNews.com*, available at: https://vegnews.com/2017/9/colorado-beef-ranch-turns-into-vegan-animal-sanctuary (19 September 2017).
Sumner, L. Wayne (1995), "The Subjectivity of Welfare", *Ethics* 105 (4): 764–790.
Tanner, Julia (2006), "Marginal Humans, the Argument from Kinds and the Similarity Argument", *Facta Universitatis Series: Philosophy, Sociology and Psychology* 5 (1): 47–63.
Višak, Tatjana; Garner, Robert (eds.) (2016), *The Ethics of Killing Animals*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Zorana S. Todorović

Moralni status životinja: stepeni moralnog statusa i pristup zasnovan na interesima

Apstrakt:

Tema ovog rada je problem moralnog statusa ne-ljudskih životinja, tj. pitanje da li osećajne životinje imaju moralni značaj. Razmatraju se argumenti u prilog i protiv moralne relevantnosti životinja, pre svega argument marginalnih slučajeva. Zastupa se tvrdnja da osećajne životinje imaju moralni status na osnovu toga što imaju interese u pogledu svoje iskustvene dobrobiti, ali da postoje različiti stepeni moralnog statusa. Predstavljaju se i razmatraju dva pristupa zasnovana na interesima: Degrasijino gledište da osećajne životinje imaju interes da nastave da žive i da treba pripisati moralni značaj njihovim interesima. i Mekmanova TRIA teorija koja slično tome postulira da životinje imaju interese i da bi u datoj situaciji trebalo uporediti interese ljudi i životinja u pitanju. Najzad, zaključak je da bi trebalo odustati od antropocentričnog pristupa zarad biocentrične etike.

Ključne reči: životinja, osećajna, moralni status, dobrobit, interesi, ljudi, osobe

UDK: 316.75
https://doi.org/10.2298/FID2102296B
Original Scientific Article
Received 20.10.2020. Accepted 28.02.2021.

PHILOSOPHY AND SOCIETY
VOL. 32, NO. 2, 157–334

To cite text:
Balunović, Filip (2021), "Social Movements and Critical Discourses in former Yugoslavia: Structural Approach", *Philosophy and Society* 32 (2): 296–317.

Filip Balunović

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND CRITICAL DISCOURSES IN FORMER YUGOSLAVIA: STRUCTURAL APPROACH[1]

ABSTRACT
Until a decade ago, a comprehensive contestation of the so-called "transitional" paradigm was largely missing in the post-socialist era. This reality changed in the last ten years, especially in the region of former Yugoslavia. Some social movements in this region have started questioning the very essence of the economic and social misconceptions of the post-socialist condition. This paper first provides an elaboration of the very conceptual edifice of the ruling paradigm (hence the object of the critique of the three social movements in question), as well as a theoretical and methodological framework. It goes on to map out the epistemic discursive content of the respective social movements in Belgrade, Zagreb and Sarajevo, thereby assessing the conceptual content of their critique of the post-socialist transitional paradigm. Finally, given the similarities between Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the paper seeks to explain variations in the critique by how the structural and contextual features impact the perspective from which it is constructed.

KEYWORDS
post-socialism; social movements; critical discourse; former Yugoslavia

Introduction

Before the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the socialist regimes in Eastern Europe, social movement studies were mainly focused on Western Europe and North America. Unlike France or the United States where big social and political changes throughout their national histories were, to an extent, pushed forward by social movements from below – East-European states lagged behind with respect to the development of so-called "movement society" (Meyer and Tarrow 1998). The first sign of discontinuity, with respect to direction from which social change usually occurs in these societies, appeared in the late

1 This article was realized with the support of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia, according to the Agreement on the realization and financing of scientific research for 2021.

Filip Balunović: Research Assistant, Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory, University of Belgrade; filip.balunovic@instifdt.bg.ac.rs.

1980s, when socialist regimes were contested by social movements. Among the most researched and certainly paradigmatic cases of East-European resistance against the socialist regimes was the Polish movement *Solidarnošć* (*Solidarity*).

Until recently, stream of research of social movements in this part of the world did not go too far from the point of the collapse of socialism. In some cases such as Serbia, the most researched movement was *Otpor* (*Resistance*) against Slobodan Milošević in the late 1990s. Anyway, the 'anti-authoritarian' movements of Eastern Europe remained in the focus of social movement scholarship. Currently, we are once again witnessing authoritarian tendencies in countries like Hungary, Poland, and Serbia. It turned out that the perspective of turning into a 'movement society' did not materialize after the collapse of the socialist regimes. On the contrary, post-socialism was often legitimized as 'painful but necessary transition' from real-socialism to liberal capitalism.

This is why the comprehensive contestation of so-called 'transnational' paradigm[2] was, in most cases, missing in the post-socialist era. People would go out protesting against different government's decisions, or against different rulers. Serbian *Resistance* from the second half of the 1990s was one of such movements which tended to confront the 'leftovers' of authoritarianism in Serbia, as if the era of Slobodan Milošević, the former president, represented continuation with socialism rather than the first stage of transition. All in all, no social movement or any other socially or politically relevant actor with a holistic critical approach towards transitional paradigm occurred in the period between the initiation of transition (in 1991) and the recent past.

This reality changed in the last decade, especially in the region of former Yugoslavia. After approximately two decades of uncontested rule of transitional paradigm, with occasional particularistic remarks which may all fall under 'give us real liberal democracy' or 'give us real capitalism' type of complaints, some social movements in this region started questioning the very essence of the economic and social misconceptions of the post-socialist condition. Some ten years ago, different aspects of various 'side-effects' of transition surfaced: lack of real political participation, powerful ethno-nationalism, corruption, commodification of education, high unemployment (due to privatization of factories and companies), violation of labor rights, and general social and economic deprivation. The appearance of social movements in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia opened the door for addressing all these issues as parts of a bigger whole, as compounding elements of the doctrine of transition and, thereby, articulating a systemic critique of the *status quo*.

2 At the general level, transitology is "drawing its origins from the turbulence of the Latin American context of the 1970s, [...] and has established itself as a specific scientific domain after 1989. It, further on, places the social sciences in direct service to neoliberal capitalism - measuring the 'adequacy' of the transformations towards market economy, as well as the adequacy of the introduction of forms of parliamentary democracy which support the former" (Pupovac 2010).

The newly arisen social movements across the region of former Yugoslavia pushed contesting ideas forward and launched the struggle against *neoliberal transition*. Some authors labeled them as the 'new left' in the post-Yugoslav space. Štiks (2015) places these movements in the post-socialist, post-conflict – but also the post-crisis context. The reason why he calls these new actors 'new left', is because he directly refers to the League of Communists of Yugoslavia as the 'old left'. Even though similarities with the 'new left' of the 1960s are admitted, the author nonetheless indicates more specific characteristics of the post-Yugoslav 'new left', including "the critique of electoral democracy [...] critique of the neoliberal capitalist transformation of the post-Yugoslav societies and the so called 'new left' [...] critique of the conservative, religious, patriarchal, and nationalist ideological hegemony [...] defense of common and public goods [...] and an internationalist approach to the post-Yugoslav and wider Balkan region, often coupled with an anti-nationalist and antifascist attitude [...]" (ibid.: 137). In different (national) contexts this struggle got different shapes which consequently pushed different issues to the forefront.

In Croatia the 'ice-breaker' was the student movement. While 'catching the wave' of the global student resistance against the neoliberal turn in the sphere of higher education (see more in Dolenec, Doolan 2013), this movement grew out of the student struggles at the Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb. In Serbia, the most prominent social actor in critically assessing the post-socialist transition was the municipal movement around the group *Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own*. This group sought to intervene into the public space through involvement in the local authorities' urban policies (Domachowska 2019). In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the uprising that was initiated by the workers in Tuzla resulted in the rise of the popular movement in Sarajevo and several other cities. Chiara Milan (2020) rightfully emphasizes that the major characteristic of this movement was "social mobilization beyond ethnicity". One should certainly bear in mind that the three cases occurred within the same post-socialist space and time. The common feature of all three cases is that the main object of their critique was paradigm of transitional post-socialism. This general common feature, however, should not prevent us from bringing up the question of variations in terms of discursive performances upon which the critique was set and potential explication for these variations.

So, what made certain conceptual apparatuses employed within their discourses more appropriate than others? To an extent, these variations are to be explained by the fact that we are talking about three different types of movements – one being student, the second being municipal and the third being 'popular'. The question that still remains is what factors influenced that Belgrade got a municipal, Sarajevo a popular and Zagreb a student movement as the 'ice-breakers'. Out of three possible levels of explanation for these variations, namely micro, meso and macro – I am hereby covering the macro perspective. While the micro perspective would tackle the level of individual activists and meso perspective the organizational level (of collective identity formation), the macro perspective is concerned with different structural and

contextual features of the three nation states which could have affected variations in critical discursive performances. Systemic characteristics of the three nation states, as well as local contextual specificities can therefore tell us something about divergences in the starting position from which these three social movements sought to contest the dominant paradigm.

In this paper thus, I am dealing with mapping the epistemic discursive content of the three social movements, in Belgrade, Zagreb and Sarajevo and thereby assessing the conceptual content of their critique of the post-socialist transitional paradigm. Secondly, I am looking at the structural and contextual features in order to explain the variations with respect to the perspective from which this critique is constructed, while keeping in mind similarities shared by Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Before engaging in this research endeavor, I am providing the elaboration on the very conceptual edifice of the ruling paradigm (hence the object of the critique of the three social movements in question), as well as theoretical and methodological framework.

Post-Yugoslav Context

Arguably, the Yugoslav transition is perceived as the most complex of all the Eastern European "post-socialisms" (Ritter, 2012/2013). On the one hand, former Yugoslavia shares general features with other Eastern European regions and states. Aspiration towards the so-called 'democratic transformation' is one of them. Capitalism, on the other hand, was not a 'grass-roots' phenomenon but the end result of democratic transformation (Mujkić, 2015: 626). Narratively, it was democracy that was directly opposed to socialism. With the downfall of socialism, one could not hear much about 'capitalism' replacing 'socialism'. "Early revolutionary slogans of 1989 demanded 'socialism with human face', 'human rights and freedoms', 'freedom of movement' and not 'capitalism', or 'the establishment of a sharply divided class society' or a 'trickle-down economy'" (ibid.). When reality turned out to be capitalist, with sharp class divisions, the national elites in Eastern Europe had to find an ideological solution for it. This ideological solution was supposed to serve as justification for sharp social and economic differences. Justification is partially found in the narrative of modernization and its three main pillars: civil society, industrialism and capitalism.[3] However, this was not enough and could not secure smooth capitalist transformation without creating a mechanism for drawing attention away from social and economic problems. In Yugoslavia, the perfect solution had already been there, rooted among certain segments of population including intellectual elites and writers, already during socialism. This is ethno-nationalism that existed in the wider post-socialist space, but showed its most explicit face in former Yugoslavia.

Ethno-nationalism thus represents a political side of the post-socialist medal. It is often defined as 'cultural' or 'Eastern', as opposed to 'civic' nationalism

3 As a matter of fact, industrialization already took place during socialism.

of the 'Western' type (Kohn 1994). Other authors emphasize that such categorical differentiation between the two 'nationalisms' contains a strong normative component. The former is often perceived as 'bad' and the latter as 'good' (Porter-Szücs 2009: 4; Jaskulowski 2009: 95-127; Jaskulowski 2010: 290). The dichotomy could be also posed around different periods (or centuries). The former is the product of the late 20th and the 21st century, and the latter as the 19th century phenomenon. Finally, the former is usually associated with the post-socialism heading towards 'democratic transition' and the latter with 'stabile' democracies. Regardless of one's academic positioning within this normative debate, ethnic nationalism is a dominant category through which post-socialist – and especially post-Yugoslav experience is to be addressed.

The result of playing on the card of ethno-nationalism was ethnically driven conflict in Croatia, Bosnia and later Kosovo and Macedonia. Gagnon's claim that "ethnic conflicts are happening when the elites are making ethnic belonging to be the only politically relevant identity" (Gagnon 2002: 134), found its remarkable realization in the Yugoslav conflicts. With ethnic/national/religious identities becoming the most appropriate distractors from difficult social and economic condition in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the post-conflict former Yugoslavia became the region of constant ethnic tensions. Hostile relations between the newly independent states, as well as among ethnic majorities and minorities within single states colored social, political and cultural reproduction of the post-Yugoslav societies.

In spite of the dominance of the ethno-nationalist narrative, the political side of the "transitional coin" was eventually split into two camps: civic (liberal) and (ethno) nationalist. Even though the nationalist stream has often been presented as incompatible with modernization, civic and nationalist streams turned out as equally good executers of the neoliberal (economic) reforms. In the post-war period, 'civic' political forces insisted on political 'pacification' – but the relation of complementarity between nationalism and economic (neo) liberalization became sooner or later, clear in all former Yugoslav republics. In Croatia, for instance, it was the nationalist leadership of the 1990s (embodied in *Croatian Democratic Union* (HDZ) and the first president of independent Croatia, Franjo Tuđman) that linked, both practically and narratively, neoliberal economic reforms to the far-right nationalism. In Serbia, this 'tandem' was initially blurred under Milosević[4] but became clearer after his fall. In contemporary Serbia, the champion of economic liberalization is no other than President Aleksandar Vučić, the former secretary general of the ultra-right *Serbian Radical Party* (*SRS*).[5] In Bosnia, a country that represents the most paradigmatic

4 See more about the blurry ideological condition in Serbia in the graph "Serbian Ideological Paradox" bellow.

5 *Serbian Radical Party* (*SRS*) has been established and led by the convicted war criminal Vojislav Šešelj. After leaving SRS, Vučić and Tomislav Nikolić (president of Serbia 2012-2017) founded a new *Serbian Progressive Party* (*SNS*), which took a moderate turn, but never gave up on the nationalist rhetoric. Instead of open promotion of 'Greater

case of internal tension between different ethnic groups, a 'non-ethnic' politics is nearly impossible due to the convocational model of state organization[6]. The three dominant (and most of time ruling) parties, *SDA*, Bosnian branch of *HDZ* and *SNSD* (but also *SDS*)[7], all have 'modern' and 'pro-European' agendas. Moreover, they often accuse other parties for 'anti-Europeanism' in order to discredit them.

Nearly two decades after dissolution of the common state in some parts of the former Yugoslavia this blurry signifier called 'transitional post-socialism' was challenged. Both sides of the transitional coin, nationalism and economic neoliberalism, its discursive apparatus and practical social and economic consequences were put into the same discursive basket as objects of the critique. And when it seemed like there was "no end to the beginning"[8] of transition, the combination of some old and some new (radical) democratic ideas (re)emerged.

Theory, Methodology and the Research Question

The only research aim of this paper is concerned with mapping the presence of critical, counter-hegemonic concepts and ideas in discourses of the new social movements in the former Yugoslav region (traceable in the documents issued by the three movements) – and assessing macro-level (structural) factors affecting divergences in discursive performance of the three cases. In order to accomplish this research task, I am hereby coming up with the theoretical framework and methodology.

Serbia', Vučić (and Nikolić) simply accepted a more modest or more realistic version of Serbian nationalism.

6 This is a consequence of the Dayton peace agreement. The annex four of that agreement, which represents Bosnian constitution, divided the country into two entities and one district. While the entity called *Republika Srpska* includes 49 percent of the territory, the second entity called *Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina* contains 51 percent of the territory. In addition, the later entity is divided into 10 cantons. See more in the document of Dayton peace agreement here: https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/BA_951121_DaytonAgreement.pdf

7 *SDA* is short from *Party of Democratic Action*. The founder was the first president of BiH and the war leader of Bosniaks, Alija Izetbegović. Today, the president of this party is his son, Bakir Izetbegović. *HDZ BiH* is short from *Croatian Democratic Union* of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This party is a major Croatian party in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The president Nebojša Čović is the former member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina. *SNSD* is short from the *Union of Independent Social-Democrats*, led by the curent member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Milorad Dodik. This is the major party in the entity of *Republika Srpska*. *SDS* is short from *Serbian Democratic Party*. It is currently opposition to *SNSD* in *Republika Srpska*. This was the major Serbian party during the war and it was led by the convicted war criminal Radovan Karadžić.

8 This phrase is used by the Croatian philosopher Ozren Pupovac in order to point out one of the most often used justifications for damaging economic and social effects of transition: "We have just started [...]", Pupovac 2010.

Theoretical framework includes theory of discourse and related theory of frames from the social movement studies. Namely, in social movement studies the process of discursive consolidation and accommodation of various types of knowledge and 'cognitive inputs' is called 'framing'. The concept of frame "refers to interpretative schemata that simplifies and condenses the "world out there" (Benford, Snow 1992: 137). In Goffman's words, frames allow "individuals 'to locate, perceive, identify, and label' events within their life space or the world at large" (ibid.). There are different forms of frames recognized in the literature. The most common for is the so called 'collective action frame', which "serve as accenting devices that either underscore and embellish the seriousness and injustice of a social condition or redefine as unjust and immoral what was previously seen as unfortunate but perhaps tolerable" (ibid.). Collective action frames are important because they make diagnostic and prognostic attributions (ibid.), which is something they share with master frames, another type of frames – central to this work. Unlike collective action frames, master frames function at the more universal level, they include frames such as 'justice' or 'rights'. In Benford and Snow's words, "master frames are to movement – specific collective action frames, as paradigms are to finely tuned theories" (ibid.: 138). Master frames therefore include a wide range of ideas and operate at the higher level of abstraction. The so called 'elaborative' master frames are especially to be focused on in this work, since they are defined as "flexible forms of interpretation, and as a consequence, they are more inclusive systems that allow for extensive ideational amplification and extension" (Benford and Snow, ibid.: 140)[9].

Master frames are, furthermore, often linked to the issue of resonance, so the authors emphasize that master frames are usually comprised of "ideas of age", such as "freedom" or "self-determination" (Sanbridge, 2002: 530). One should nonetheless wonder whether master frames may launch the initiation of 'a new age' by themselves and thereby create a new reality, instead of reacting to what had already been the dominant perception of reality beforehand. Through such analysis one may investigate the conceptual apparatus used, the complex set of imageries and their connection to the material/structural conditions standing behind as reasons and incentives for seeking social change (through action).

As to the general understanding of discourse, I take the widely accepted view about it being generated by the combination of cognition and interaction. On the one hand, cognition involves processes of meaning attribution, knowledge production, and opinion and belief formation. On the other, it is a compound of interaction mostly expressed through language (but not only), or the so-called "talk in interaction" (van Dijk 2007: xxiv). It is, therefore, a part

9 Elaborative master frames, according to Bernstein's classification, come from elaborative linguistic code. On the opposite side is the so called 'restricted code' which is highly particularistic with respect to meaning and social structure (Benford and Snow 2002: 139).

of "social practice" (Fairclough, Wodak 1997: 258; van Dijk 1997). Discourse is here, furthermore, understood as "the structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice" (Laclau, Mouffe 1985: 105). My specific theoretical and methodological focus is on the epistemic discourse which tackles the "ways in which knowledge is presupposed, expressed, formulated, organized and managed in language use, communication and interaction" (van Dijk 2014: 9). I am looking at discourses from the perspective of *knowledge management* which represents management of complex schemata of *social interrelations* through which conceptual knowledge (ideas, categories, concepts, prototypes, domains, and scripts) become constitutive of movements' discourses and hence – form the dominant conceptual stream within those discourses.[10] Conceptual knowledge should be seen through the lenses of interaction between the exposure to theoretical influences and direct experience or, better said – between knowledge based on experience and generic knowledge.

Methodologically speaking, I combine epistemic discourse (analysis) with Fairclough's critical discourse (analysis), which aims at revealing "the role of discursive practice in the maintenance of the social world, including those social relations that involve unequal relations of power" (della Porta, 2014: 63). This combination is useful at the macro-level in dealing with the interaction (or specific relationship) between (critical) ideas and systemic and/or specific social contexts. Fairclough's approach also refers to the way in which the 'new knowledge' is managed with respect to the 'old knowledge'. I shall interpret this feature as feasible for looking at how *counter-hegemonic knowledge is managed with respect to hegemonic knowledge*. This approach may also be useful for assessing those discourses that *challenge* existing power relations (or the *ruling order of discourse* in Fairclough's terms), structures and specific institutions and thereby compete with other discourses seeking to reproduce the *status quo*. Hence, the role of discursive practices may be, overall, significant both "in the maintenance of social order and in social change" (ibid.: 70) and my focus is on the later.

The discourse analysis is conducted on the sample of documents in which the conceptual positioning of the three social movements was detectable. I chose, in other words, documents in which the macro level of (epistemic) discourse is best represented: "The Occupation Cookbook" (specifically the chapter on the "Meaning of Democracy") and "Educational Brochure" In Croatia; "Plenums, not Political Parties" "In the Name of the Citizens" and "Plenum Takes Over" in Bosnia and Herzegovina; the segment "About us" from the official website, "Local Community: Local or Community" in Serbia.

Case Presentation and Mapping Epistemic Discourse

I shall briefly introduce the case studies and present the conceptual means through which the three social movements contested the post-socialist reality.

10 More on 'conceptual knowledge' see in van Dijk 2014: 86.

When I say "conceptual means", I refer to the front-running and supporting concepts constitutive of the epistemic (conceptual) discourses of the three movements in question. In accordance to the theoretical framework and the social movement studies tradition, I used specific terms of front-running master-frames and supportive master-frames. Results of the epistemic discourse analysis are presented as they came out from analyzing the abovementioned documents. Before indicating the results of the epistemic discourse analysis, let me first introduce a direct circumstances under which the three movements occurred.

Firstly, the student movement in Zagreb has become famous for its "free education for all" struggle in 2009.[11] The most important endeavor conducted by the movement was the occupation of the Faculty of Philosophy[12], which started on the 20th of April at noon. Around 300 students gathered in front of the faculty and carried the "One world one struggle" and "Education is not for sale" banners with them. Soon they started interrupting lectures and exams and uttering the "Free education" rallying cry. The students never canceled the educational function of the faculty. Even though they prevented professors from teaching, they organized alternative lectures and activities. The unlucky circumstance for the faculty management was that the dean was not in Zagreb at the time. He was in Brazil, spending time in Copacabana beach. This gave the students an advantage, because the management was neither complete nor ready and organized – whereas the movement was. Its activities, moreover, inspired others and the struggle diffused from Zagreb to 20 other faculties across Croatia.[13]

On the other hand, the wave of protests and plenary meetings of citizens in the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo was directly triggered by the workers' struggle in the former Yugoslav industrial capital, the city of Tuzla. On Wednesday, February 5th 2014, Tuzla's (mainly industrial) workers from privatized and destroyed factories took to the streets, as they had done many times before. Had the workers not been joined by the unemployed and other supporters from the town, that Wednesday would have probably looked like all of the previous ones, and would have had similar (zero) effects. But the workers' voice claiming the right to social security, work, pension and healthcare payments got louder as the crowd got bigger. Sarajevo, along with other cities such as Mostar or Zenica, heard it as well. The images of police repression against the ever larger mass of people on the streets of Tuzla became viral. The gathering of the protestors in Sarajevo started on the 7th of February at around 1.00 p.m. in front

11 See more in Popović 2015: 105–106.

12 English translation of the Faculty of Philosophy is "Faculty of Humanities and Social Studies". In this paper however, I will use a direct translation from the local language.

13 Apart from Zagreb, students from seven other cities launched blockades in their hometowns: Zadar, Rijeka, Split, Osijek, Pula, Varaždin and Slavonski Brod. Thereby Croatia was at the time the third most rebellious student country in Europe, just behind Greece and France.

of the Cantonal Government. Soon thereafter, they moved to the front of the Presidency building. Both buildings were secured by the police and the television camera recorded a remarkable statement from an elderly protester, who said: "Had you been safeguarding factories like this, we would have been importing the workforce today". The protestor stressed, in other words, that the police should have taken care of factories and local production before these were destroyed by privatization, the same way they did with the institutions (and the political elite) on the day of protest. By the end of the day the protests escalated and the poorly organized crowd created an inflamed atmosphere – both metaphorically and literally, as institutional buildings were set on fire. This time, unlike in the 1990s, it was not an external aggressor who was responsible for it. The inhabitants of Sarajevo themselves did it, targeting the symbols of 'self-colonial' domestic aggression of the ethno-nationalist political elites against their own people. Thus, Sarajevo's Cantonal government and the Presidency building burst into flames. The state was ready, and reacted in Sarajevo in the same way as in Tuzla – with pure repression.[14]

Finally, the "*Don't let Belgrade D(r)own* (*NDB*) movement, finally, sits in between the two previous cases with respect to triggers and repressive response by the state. It reached the peak of public support after an event which might be considered a direct trigger for mobilization. Namely, in the night between the 24th and the 25th of April 2016[15], a couple of buildings (over 1,000 square meters) in Belgrade's downtown were knocked down by heavy machinery. People who witnessed the event were kept in custody for a couple of hours. Their phones were taken and checked by unknown people with masks. Citizens who lived in the area called the police, but no one showed up. The whole endeavor was conducted in the part of Belgrade where an exclusive area called *Belgrade Waterfront*[16] (*BW*), by the Sava River, was going to be built. Then prime minister and today's president of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, said that the highest officials of Belgrade's administration stood behind this action and that each and every one of them would be prosecuted. Almost four years later, while I am writing these lines, no public official has been charged or prosecuted.

The conceptual essence of the critique constructed by the *NDB* was set around the claim that the state is occupied and its institutions coopted by the ruling structures. Their purpose is, according to the activists, to fulfill "private interests of individuals". "They sold out everything" they stress out, and thereby deprived people of common goods, pauperized the ever-greater majority and brought it to the edge of existence. Even though power was moving from one clique to another, they claim, most of those who have been among the usurpers of public goods "still belong to the top". Instead, they argue, the state and its concrete institutions should serve the interests of its constituency, its people.

14 See more about Bosnaian protests and plenums in Arsenijević 2014.
15 See more about this case in Bieber 2019: 51–52.
16 The project is worth three billion dollars and the investor is *Eagle Hills*, the well-known company from United Arab Emirates.

This is how they come to start reclaiming what is 'taken away' from the people and initiate struggle for re-appropriation of common spaces and public goods in order to enhance democratic process through (primarily) local participation. The concepts of 'commons', 'public good', 'participation' and 'democracy' thereby became the front-running master-frames of the *NDB*'s epistemic discourse. The supportive conceptual apparatus included the above-mentioned concepts such as state or power (used both as 'power to the citizens' and negatively as 'power of the elite' which took over the state and its institutions). The last supportive master-frame relies on the socialist heritage, and its most important conceptual pillar – that is self-management. This concept is not recalled (only) because of its socialist connotation, but (also) because it is complementary with the overall discursive performance of the *NDB* movement. All the paradoxes of (electoral) post-socialist democracy, including discontents with the lack of inclusion and participation in social and (especially) political processes (of decision-making), are indeed likely to be remedied by a solution that encourages participation. This comes as a logical common sense, rather than as an open claim about the superiority of socialism over post-socialism. The revival of self-management from the past does not play the role of a call for going back to the past. Rather, it calls for looking into the future while remembering and taking from the past what seems to be plausible for resolving current social and political problems and tensions.

In the first statement released by the informal group of activists who (latter) stood behind the Sarajevo's plenums, they are pointing at the social and economic deprivation, the violation of human dignity, and the need to (re)introduce welfare and social justice for all strata in society. One may, furthermore, notice how *politics* is blamed for cloaking the larceny of society. This '(party) politics/society' cleavage may be understood in classical populist terms as a division between the elite and the people. Considering the absence of a potential 'radical' subject, this is to be understood as the first step towards a possible occurrence of such subject. The call for participation at the first Sarajevo plenum goes into the same direction. In this text, we learn that "us" stands for 'the citizens', which gives a civic tone to the discourse. "No political brokering" represents an exclusivist standpoint whereby the activists pose an ultimate line of demarcation between them and the political elite, which is blamed for the distorted social image of Sarajevo and the whole Bosnian society. Behind this demarcation line posed through the statement "there is no party or organization behind us whatsoever" one may notice the presence of a sort of disclaimer which should have represented a sort of *sine qua non* of any progressive social change. Unlike politicians who have gotten richer in the past decades, behind the activists there are "years of humiliation, hunger, helplessness and hopelessness". These four features delved deeper into the "violated human dignity", thus concretizing its meaning. So hunger stands for economic deprivation; helplessness for disempowerment of those who have been economically deprived; humiliation for the violated self-esteem due to the previous two features; and hopelessness for the vicious circle of the political, institutional and general

systemic framework which prevents any sort of intervention of the deprived into mechanisms which determine the conditions of their own lives. Overall, we may say that the discursive performance of the popular movement in Sarajevo rested upon the two front-running master-frames: *social justice* and *human dignity*. Alongside these front-running master-frames, one could also trace concepts such as *transition* (specifically *transitional theft*), corruption or nepotism which are to be blamed for lack of social justice and violation of human dignity. These master-frames fall under the category supportive master-frames.

Finally, the epistemic discursive content of the student movement from Zagreb represented the avant-garde in terms of systemic critique of the post-socialist paradigm. They did it through the niche of higher education and the issue of tuition fees – but never missed a chance to make a point about higher education as a part of the wider problem called the post-socialist neoliberal transition. The key concepts from the domain of the post-socialist paradigm, used in order to challenge it, were *modernization, socialist legacy, European Union / European standards* and the *transition process*. These 'transnational' master-frames are portrayed as pure legitimizing means which serve for suppressing critical thinking in general. The activists claimed that the hegemonic narrative thus constitutes and legitimizes itself on the basis of a newly established dichotomy between 'the modern' and the 'European' on the one hand, and the 'socialists' and (hence) 'backward', on the other. In light of this dichotomy, the introduction of tuition fees for higher education is (dominantly) conceived as being on the 'modern' side. From the hegemonic paradigm's perspective, feeless higher education becomes a synonym for backward logic typical of socialism, whereas the introduction of fees becomes automatically progressive. The main task of the movement was to deconstruct this sort of hegemonic discourse. They start from the supportive conceptual apparatus that is, the discourse of rights. The activists argue that the neoliberal transition has affected negatively social and economic rights, both within the EU and outside its borders (in 2009, Croatia was still outside European Union). They illuminated the contradiction between people's expectations driven by the hegemonic discourse (the story about welfare and the European Union), and the 'real', 'welfare-free' neoliberal structure of the EU. In the section titled "The Attack on the Acquired Social Rights" within the "Occupational Cookbook", the activists deconstruct the structural framework under which their struggle for free education takes place. The concept of 'capital' is introduced for the first time. By referring to 'the majority' as 'working majority', which stands in opposition to a "tacit consensus among the political elites in favor of capital", the critique becomes more radical and, furthermore, labor-oriented. The activists highlight the way in which "political elites work against the interest of the majority". In their view, representatives of the general interest are only nominal representatives, and hence get easily corrupted by the power of capital. The rule of the people consequentially appears as 'alleged' and democracy becomes its own opposite. The mistrust in representative democracy comes from its practical failure to meet real needs of the people. Direct

democracy is therefore presented as a consequence and/or reaction to the "unfulfilled promise of representative democracy". It appears, in the authors' words, as a "security measure", as a "specter that does not stop to haunt".[17] It is argued that the interests of capital stand behind the "ideological justification" of the degradation of social rights. The abstract concept of capital and its "interests" is illustrated through mentioning its social and economic effects (such as layoffs, manufacturing consent for decreasing social rights etc.). Activists here translate 'flexibilization' of labor as the process of enabling employers to lay off workers more easily. This remark highlights the interconnectivity of the student struggle with other socio-economic issues and shows a degree of solidarity with other struggles (such as labor struggle), which reflects the same logic applied in the case of tuition fees in higher education. In addition, they touch upon the concept of "learning society"[18] and argue that even hegemonic master-frames stay unfulfilled due to commodification of education. Finally, they prevent possible attacks (typical of the Croatian public space) by touching upon the concept of "Yugo-nostalgia", and argue that such labels in the hegemonic narrative, primarily serve the purpose of legitimizing the degradation of social and economic rights that were guaranteed in the Yugoslav period. Instead of a "demander of basic rights" (including the right to free education), everyone who calls for these rights thus becomes 'Yugo-nostalgic', 'Serbo-Communist', 'Serbo-Yugoslav' or alike.

Table: Master Frames

Social Movement	Zagreb	Sarajevo	Belgrade
Front-running Master Frames	(Rule of) capital; neoliberalism	Social justice; human dignity	Commons; public good; participation; democracy
Supportive Master – Frames	Human rights; legal discourse; learning society;	Transition; corruption; nepotism	Self-management; power; (occupied) state

Discursive Variations: Macro Perspective

Variations in discourses could, as indicated in the introduction, be explained from different perspectives. Before, potentially, engaging in explication at the level of individual activists or collective identity formation, one should first pay attention to structural and contextual specificities which imposed certain

17 This is a clear reference to the famous Marxian notion of the "specter of communism haunting Europe".

18 If one should choose among the different definitions of learning or "knowledge society", the Croatian context most probably corresponds to the following one: "Economic success which is now determined by the ability of individuals and firms to accumulate and transform information in such a way as to produce and market goods efficiently and flexibly" (Smith 2002: 39–40).

limitations or opened up space for given discursive expressions. The three lines along which I am about to show divergences between the three social movements, are set up after I had already had a closer look at the final versions of all three discourses. These three indicators include:

1. The specific type of social movement
2. Structural divergences
3. Divergences of specific (social and political) contexts

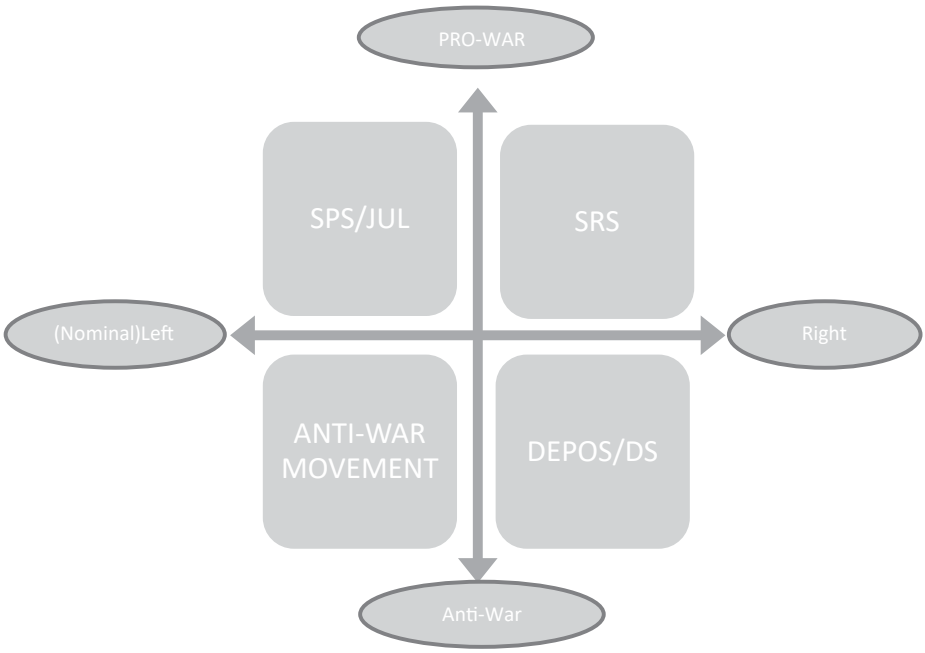
Table: Case studies

Lines of divergence	Type of movement	Structure	Social/Political Context
Belgrade	Municipal	Authoritarian tendencies	Ideological Paradox/ Confusion
Sarajevo	Popular	Structural/ Constitutional Ethno- nationalism	Post-Conflict Collective Trauma
Zagreb	Student	Domination of the Right Wing (HDZ) Political Culture	Strong anti-Yugoslavism/ anti-communism

Let me start with the municipal concepts which could end up at the forefront of *NDB*'s macro discourse in Belgrade due to the specific type or 'nature' of this movement. On the other hand, the fact that it was municipal type of movement that was the 'ice breaker' of the relevant and systemic critique of the status quo, owed pretty much to the specific national context. As to the movement's affiliation, *NDB* managed to catch the wave of municipal ideas and municipal social movements which had been spreading across Europe. The movement started its endeavors as a collective of several enthusiasts whose professional affiliation or personal (activist) interest relied on issues related to the 'commons' and the like. No wonder that the conceptual level of discursive performance reflected this type of specific affiliation of the movements' activists. At the same time, the occurrence of such a movement in Belgrade owed something to the fact that Serbia had gone through a sort of proliferation of ideological confusions in the 1990s, where the nationalist leader Slobodan Milošević was (self-) portrayed as an embodiment of the "(dark) communist rule".[19] The left-leaning ideas were usually demonized by equalizing former President Milošević with socialism. This is why the context of post-Milošević's Serbia was highly hostile towards any discourse which would directly refer or reproduce the socialist discourse.

19 I call this situation a "Serbian ideological paradox".

Graph: The Serbian (Ideological) Paradox[20]



Secondly, the time of the occurrence of *NDB* overlaps with the rise of authoritarian tendencies in Serbia. The ruling *Serbian Progressive Party* led by its president Aleksandar Vučić, namely, started its dominanation in 2014, when Vučić became the prime minister (and later President of the Republic in 2017). By 2016 when *NDB* gains significant visibility, municipalism represented one of the rare discursive 'way-outs' from the contextually driven division of society along the lines of binary opposition – pro or against the 'ruler'. By pushing concepts such as commons or public good forward, the movement aimed at circumventing this unbearable simplicity of the political discourse and imposition of something new for the given context. Until nowadays however, the context has not change for the better. To the contrary, this division remained the only politically relevant one.

20 *SPS* is short for *Socialist Party* of Serbia, which was founded as a legal successor of the *Communist Party of Serbia*, from the socialist times. *JUL* is short from the *Yugoslav Left*, the sister party to the *SPS*, founded by Mirjana Marković, Slobodan Milošević's wife. *SRS* is short for *Serbian Radical Party*, founded by Vojislav Šešelj, later convicted by the *International Tribunal for war crimes* in The Hague. *DS* is short from *Democratic Party*. *DEPOS* is short from *Democratic Movement of Serbia*, the first oppositional coalition against Milošević. It was composed of four center-right political parties, including the most serious opposition to Milošević at the time, *Serbian Renewal Movement* (*SPO*) which was led by the monarchist and a right-wing writer and politician Vuk Drašković. The coalition contested Milošević in 1992 and 1993 elections.

On the other hand, the front running master-frames of Zagreb's student movement reflected the influence of a different national context, as well as the difference in the type of social movement. Even though the specific accent was on "free education for all", concepts such as (the rule of) *capital* and *neoliberalism* were set as the dominant conceptual 'satellites' placed around the main demand. Starting from a different specific time period in which the movement occurred, one should firstly emphasize that the period of 2008/9, when the student movement occurred, were years when the concepts of *capital* or *neoliberalism* hit a peak in public attention due to the global economic crisis. This is why such master-frames could 'land' more safely even in countries of post-socialism, despite their hostility towards any left-leaning (critical) ideas. Croatian context, unlike Serbian, had not had a proliferation of ideological confusions, whatsoever. It was quite clear from the beginning that the right wing had taken over after the dissolution of Yugoslavia. The only obstacle to the revival of critical discourses and ideas was the (dominantly) negative perception of the Yugoslav period, whereby the accent has primarily been on its political (identity) dimension (Yugoslavia has been perceived as 'Serbo-Yugoslavia', hence dominated by the Serbs). Within such a context, master-frames like *neoliberalism* or *capital* could have possibly resonated with certain segments of society, under the condition that Yugoslavia stayed somewhat 'out' as an explicit point of reference.

Secondly, the fact that it is a *student* movement that we are talking about, allowed for such (critical) ideas to be brought up much "easier" than for the majority of other social (and political) actors. The reasoning behind this claim is twofold. Firstly, student movements have had the tradition of operating with and within critical discourses, not only in Croatia but worldwide. They are usually more immune to attacks from the political mainstream. Publics are usually less likely to 'buy' arguments such as "someone is paying them" and the like. Primarily, students are seen as voices of the youth, so that political messages coming from them are in a sort of privileged position. They cannot be so easily dismissed, in spite of their radical content. Secondly, student movements are more likely to develop such radical discourses due to their internal dynamics and the specific habitus of university (especially the Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb).

Finally, in Sarajevo, the most decisive structural factors had to do with the limitations imposed by its constitutional post-conflict configuration. Bosnia, namely, suffers from a dysfunctional state character. Its constitution, the annex four of the Dayton peace agreement (which divided the country into two entities, ten cantons, and one district with a special status), as well as the permanent perpetuation of ethnic tensions (primarily by the elites), have created enormous rigidity of political and (thereby) social structures. This rigidity has mostly been reflected through a high level of structural resilience with respect to any sort of non-ethnic politics. Under such circumstances, every statement and every social or political action has to be carefully communicated. Any move outside the ethno-national 'box' in which Bosnia was put by its own constitution has proven to be nearly impossible.

The social and economic degradation that has followed from these structural shortcomings has, nonetheless, created a little bit of a maneuvering space for critical discourses. The attempt was precisely to overcome, or circumvent the structural obstacles and get out of the ethno-nationalist 'cage'. The intention of the 'front-running' duo was clear: it is not about Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks, but about the 'winners and losers' of transition, about the human beings whose dignity has been violated by those who enjoy undeserved privileges. The usage of *human dignity* as a concept is specifically remarkable taken the Bosnian post-war context. Similarly to the post-WWII period in Europe, the relevance of this concept comes from the essentialist value of the human being, which obliges others to treat him/her as a value in itself. The main context in which this concept's relevance has reoccurred is the 1990s war and the atrocities committed against civilians, including the genocide in Srebrenica. This is symptomatic, because the concept likewise covers, as the activists argued, the period of "transitional theft, corruption, nepotism, privatization of public resources, and the implementation of an economic model that favors the rich and financial arrangements that have destroyed any hope for a society based on social justice and welfare". This means that the violation of human dignity through war crimes and atrocities during the war has been prolonged in the post-war era by using different means. The main causes of the violation of human dignity in the post-war Bosnia are thus found in the economic model and structurally determined political practice established after the Dayton Peace Agreement. At the same time, the concept of *human dignity* reveals the need for discursive coverage of a wide spectrum of causes affecting the violation of each and every aspect of human existence in Bosnia.[21]

When it comes to the concept of *social justice*, its discursive role could be assessed by referring to the specific type of social movement. The popular character of a movement usually carries both opportunities and dangers. Opportunities concern greater mobilization capacity which may overcome barriers typical for more narrowly set activist collectives. Dangers, on the other hand, come from the overly general character of such movements, which usually cannot fully benefit from the greater mobilization capacity, due to lack of a stable and clear social basis. Popular movements often suffer from overgeneralizations of discourse, which come from the vagueness of their social base. Master-frames in Sarajevo thus came from the very nature of this popular movement, whereas the nature came from the effort to circumvent contextual and structural obstacles. The whole endeavor aimed at making both the social base and the discourse more solid and politically potent. In the case of Sarajevo, this was indeed tried. Structural obstacles however, turned out to be too strong.

When it comes to the set of supportive master-frames, the three cases showed three possible scenarios, depending on contextual and structural specificities.

21 The usage of the concept of *dignity* may likewise be assessed by using the emotional/affective, instead of cognitive approach in social movement studies. For looking at the concept from this perspective, see Eklundh 2019: 114.

Starting from Sarajevo, the activists had to supplement the main discursive focus (expressed in the front-running master frames of social justice and human dignity) with demands such as 'expert government'. This was a direct response to the popular 'anti-political' sentiment coming from a huge disappointment, which made citizens highly mistrustful towards the entire political elite. The combination of these two factors, the absence of a clear social base and the 'anti-political' sentiment, brought the overall discourse to a certain contradiction between the supporting and front-running master-frames. This contradiction was embodied in the groundlessness of the relationship between dignity and social justice, on the one hand, and the historically and recently proven inability of 'expert governments' to inherit these kinds of values, on the other.

The supporting master-frames of *NDB* were more compatible with the front-running master-frames. Self-management, power, (occupied) state and the like indeed supplemented *NDB*'s 'front-runners'. Yet, the reasoning behind the choice of supplementary concepts (such as self-management) has only partially to do with the type of movement and partially with the specific context of Serbia and its relationship with the socialist past. Even though the Yugoslav legacy has been demonized and to a large extent delegitimized, some of its (conceptual) elements have nonetheless remained unsoiled. In Yugoslav times, self-management was introduced as a conceptual response to the growing tendency of bureaucratization and divergence from the ideal of democratic socialism. As the 'father' of the concept claimed, "the working masses which had once gained their right to decide for themselves through the national liberation struggle, were not ready to give up that right so easily and leave it to some new state bureaucracy" (Kardelj 1978: 17). Considering that Serbia has not become as hostile towards Yugoslav heritage as, for instance Croatia, such concepts which glorify participation and democracy (in both politics and economy) were suitable for the new municipalist tendencies. On the other hand, such concepts could resonate with the public if applied without a direct reference to the entire Yugoslav context. Self-management is undoubtedly 'safer' as a supportive, than as front-running master-frame.

Finally, Zagreb's student movement incorporated legal and human rights' discourse within the set of supportive master-frames. At first sight, the legal discourse embodied in referring to the (Croatian) constitutional principles or the human rights discourse (which recalled the *UN* charter on human rights from 1948) do not fit the more radical and clearly anti-capitalist essence of the epistemic discourse. Structurally speaking, however, one should bear in mind that Croatian society has become a mirror image of the state – driven normalization of the agenda imposed by the most powerful right-wing party, *Croatian Democratic Union* (*HDZ*). Oftentimes, internal conflicts and lines of division within *HDZ* reflect lines of division in the public debates, as well. The narrative about national liberation in the war for independence, and a strong influence of the Catholic Church on social and political life, made Croatia and almost uncontestable right-wing national state. Even though there was no signs of authoritarianism in the past 20 years, the cult created around Franjo Tudjman,

the first President of the Republic (and *HDZ*) and the war leader, has been established as undisputable. Even the oppositional *Social Democratic Party* (the successor of *the Communist Party of Croatia*) has been often reproducing this reality. Under such circumstances, the liberal side of the transitional medal, relying upon concepts such as human rights, has been often front-lined narratively – but sidelined practically. Even though the student movement was clearly profiled as a left-wing, even anti-capitalist movement, the structural features made them using legal and human rights discourse as supportive to their more radical front-running conceptual apparatus. The function of this, supportive set of master-frames was contextualizing the main conceptual pillars (of neoliberalism, capital and the like). It was a way of saying, "we also beat you on your own discursive field". Conceptual inconsistencies of the dominant transitional paradigm are thereby illuminated not only from the standpoint of the opposite discursive camp, but also from within the very dominant paradigm. A similar trend may be detected in the case of the use of concepts such as *learning society*. Playing the card of revealing the inconsistencies between narratives and political practice served for showing that the front-running master-frames were not out of touch with reality and that counter-hegemony should not be equalized with utopia. Through such a discursive maneuver, in the light of the misconceptions of the hegemonic concepts, the counter-hegemonic conceptual apparatus gained more solid and context-driven ground.

Conclusion

I started the paper with a reference to the fall of the Berlin wall. This event undoubtedly announced, both symbolically and practically, the end of an era and the beginning of a new one. Since then, the often-repeated catchphrase related to the new world order became the phrase "the only game in town". This means that the announced victory of neoliberal capitalism did not only become evident, but almost final and irreversible. Globally speaking, this alleged irreversibility was soon brought into question. During the late 1990s, protests started spreading from Seattle to Genoa and intensified throughout the following decade. By the end of the first decade of the 2000s, "the only game in town" was significantly discredited across the globe, arguably due to its numerous social and economic (but also political) misconceptions and side-effects.

The post-socialist space, post-Yugoslav area included, was at first lagging behind with respect to these trends of global resistance. Keeping in mind the context, it was difficult for 'post-socialist' activists to come up with a convincing critique of the system to which their states were (still) trying to catch up with. Soon after the socialist systems disintegrated, the narrative about a 'brighter' future was closely tied to the (nation) state building, market liberalization and privatization. In some parts of the post-socialist world such as former Yugoslavia, the 'nation state building' brought about ethnic cleansing, mass killings and genocide. Ethnic nationalism became the most relevant political category. Liberalization and privatization, on the other hand, exposed the already

devastated economies to much more powerful competitors and economic 'tigers' (multinational companies included) that managed to suck even the last drops of 'blood' from its fragile 'veins'. While privatizations, left hundreds of thousands of workers jobless, ethnic nationalism kept their anger at bay. 'National freedom' and 'modernization' represented the key pillars of a narrative which secured hegemony of the post-socialist political and economic elites. Almost two decades after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the resistance was born in this part of the world as well. The hegemonic paradigm proved to be contestable.

Keeping in mind the context, coming up with a convincing critique of the system to which their states were (still) trying to catch up with, was not an easy task for the activists in former Yugoslavia. As each discourse reflected structural and contextual constrains and specificities, this paper was set to illuminate the conceptual 'backstage' of this resistance and address structural and contextual factors which affected discursive variations of the critique to which the peripheral version of neoliberal capitalism in former Yugoslavia was exposed to. Apart from the shared anti-hegemonic 'nature' of the three discourses in question, the three social movements illustrated three different types of the critique of the post-socialist paradigm. The conceptual apparatuses used by three social movements covered various fields of potential contestation: from higher education, to the 'commons' and general notions such as social justice and human dignity. Master-framing in each of the three discourses in question reflected structural and contextual features of Serbia, Bosnia and Croatia. Through the analysis conducted at the macro level, I found that characteristics such as constitutional set up, type of rule (authoritarian vs. non-authoritarian) or ideological constellation among the relevant political actors played an important role in epistemic discursive performances of the new actors who expressed discontent with the ruling paradigm. In Bosnia, the ethnically divided country and the Dayton peace agreement significantly constrained the popular movement's choice of master-frames. The trauma from war, especially in Sarajevo, likewise colored the epistemic discourse and the very (popular) nature of this movement. In Serbia, authoritarian regime and the 'ideological paradox' inherited from the 1990s were influential factors when it comes to master-framing of the *NDB* municipal movement. The social movement in Croatia used the advantages of being a student movement and made discourse more radical. On the other hand, it could not circumvent the strong anti-Yugoslav sentiment, imposed from above.

While explaining discursive divergences between the three social movements, I was, finally, fully aware that critical discursive 'worlds' were not created by a 'big bang'. They first had to be created in both micro (individual) mindsets and meso level of collective identity creation. Under specific circumstances, the activist groups sought to conduct a dialectical endeavor, both to resonate with given contexts and to launch a more tangible social change and transform these contexts. This article did not go deeper into the way in which these critical endeavors and discourses became possible in the first place. Instead, it offered macro explanations on how structures and contexts affected critical discursive expressions, once they had already mobilized individuals and consolidated activist groups.

References

Arsenijevic, Damir (ed.) (2014), *Unbribable Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Baden Baden: Nomos.

Benford, Robert; Snow, David (2002), "Master Frames and Cycles of Protest", in Aldon D. Morris, Carol McClurg Mueller (eds.), *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory*, New Haven: Yale University Press, pp. 133–155.

Bieber, Florian (2019), *The Rise of Authoritarianism in the Western Balkans*, Gratz: Palgrave Macmillan.

Della Porta, Donatella (ed.) (2014), *Methodolocal Practices in Social Movement Research*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dolenec, Danijela; Doolan, Karin (2013), "Reclaiming the Role of Higher Education in Croatia: Dominant and Oppositional Framings", in Pavel Zgaga, Ulrich Teichler, John Brennan (eds.) (2013), *The Globalisation Challenge for European Higher Education. Convergence and Diversity, Centres and Peripheries*, Frankfurt: Peter Lang, pp. 225–246.

Domachowska, Agata (2019), "'The Yellow Duck' Attacks: An Analysis of the Activities of the 'Ne da(vi)mo Beograd' Initiative in the Serbian Public Space", *Slavia Meridionalis* 19: 2–16, https://doi.org/10.11649/sm.1818.

Eklundh, Emmy (2019), *Emotions, Protest, Democracy: Collective Identitites in Contemporary Spain*, New York: Routledge.

Jaskulowski, Krzysztof (2010), *Western (Civic) versus Eastern (ethnic) Nationalism. The Origins and the Critique of the Dichotomy*, Polish Sociological Review 171: 289–303.

Kardelj, Edvard (1978), *Pravci razvoja politickog sustema socijlističkog samoupravljanja*, Beograd: Komunist.

Laclau, Ernesto; Mouffe, Chantal (1985), *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Theory*, London: Verso.

Meyer, S. David; Tarrow, Sidney (1998), *The Social Movement Society*, Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Millan, Chiara (2020), *Mobilization beyond Ethnicity: Civic Activism and Grassroots Movements in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, London and New York: Routledge.

Mujkić, Asim (2010), "In Search of a Democratic Counter-Power in Bosnia–Herzegovina", *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 15 (4), 623–638, DOI: 10.1080/14683857.2015.1126094.

Popović, Milica (2015), "Parliaments or Streets?", in S. Bergan, M. Klemenčič, R. Primožič. (eds.), *Student Engagement in Europe: Society, Higher Education and Governance*, Council of Europe Higher Education Series No. 20, Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.

Pupovac, Ozren (2010), *Present Perfect or the Time of Post-socialism*, online source: http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2010-05-12-pupovac-en.html

Ritter, Daniel P. (2012/2013), *Nationalism and Transitions: Mobilizing for democracy in Yugoslavia*, EUI SPS, COSMOS, http://hdl.handle.net/1814/26176

Smith, Barry (ed.) (2002), *Liberal Education in a Knowledge Society*, Chicago: Open Court.

Štiks, Igor (2015), "'New Left' in the Post-Yugoslav Space: Issues, Sites, and Forms", *Socialism and Democracy* 29 (3): 135–146, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08854300.2015.1089094

van Dijk, A. Teun (2007), *Discourse as Social Interaction*, London: Sage Publications Ltd.

—. (2014), *Discourse and Knowledge: A Sociocognitive Approach*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Filip Balunović

Kritički diskursi društvenih pokreta u bivšoj Jugoslaviji: strukturalistički pristup

Apstrakt:

Do pre desetak godina, sveobuhvatna kritika takozvane 'tranzitološke paradigme' je u dobroj meri izostajala u eri post-socijalizma. Ovakva realnost promenjena je u poslednjoj deceniji, a posebno u bivšoj Jugoslaviji. Pojedini društveni pokreti su u ovoj regiji počeli da propituju suštinu ekonomskih i društvenih protivrečnosti post-socijalističkog stanja. Ovaj članak počinjem elaboracijom konceptualne konstrukcije vladajuće paradigme kao objekta kritike tri društvena pokreta kojima se bavim – a onda i elaboracijom teorijskog i metodološkog okvira. Potom nastavljam sa mapiranjem epistemološkog diskursa tri pokreta u Beogradu, Zagrebu i Sarajevu – i time ispitujem konceptualni sadržaj njihove kritike post-socijalističke paradigme. Konačno, uzevši u obzir sličnosti između Srbije, Hrvatske i Bosne i Hercegovine, ovaj članak teži da objasni varijacije u prirodi kritike – imajući u vidu način na koji su strukturne i kontekstualne karakteristike ove tri zemlje uticale na perspektivu iz koje su kritike bile konstruisane.

Ključne reči: post-socijalizam, društveni pokreti, kritički diskurs, bivša Jugoslavija

III

INTERVIEW

INTERVJU

Stevan Bradić

CONSCIOUSNESS IS AN ACTIVE PRINCIPLE
An Interview with Nicholas Brown[1]

During the summer of 2019, I was a Fulbright research scholar at the University of Illinois at Chicago, analyzing the relationship between literary labor and the market in American modernist poetry. My research was framed to a large extent by the insights developed by UIC professor Nicholas Brown, in particularly in his essay "The Work of Art in the Age of its Real Subsumption under Capital" (nonsite.org) which was to be included in his latest book *Autonomy: The Social Ontology of Art Under Capitalism* (Duke 2019). As soon as I settled in Chicago we met up and started our conversation on the topics of autonomy of art, commodification, totality, artistic labor, and the relevance of Marxism in literary studies today, which was developed in the following months through an email correspondence into this interview.

Nicholas Brown teaches Modernism, African literature, and critical theory in the English Department and in the Department of Black Studies, with an affiliate position in Art History, at the University of Illinois at Chicago. His research interests include Marxism, Hegel studies, the history of aesthetics, Lusophone literature and culture, and music studies. His first monograph, *Utopian Generations: The Political Horizon of Twentieth-Century Literature* (Princeton 2005), examined the relationship between postcolonial literature and European modernism, and the relationship of each to continuing crises in the global economic system. His book, *Autonomy: The Social Ontology of Art Under Capitalism* (Duke 2019), asserts the resumption of the modernist sequence — not always in the expected places — in the era after postmodernism. He is working on a book on Brazilian concretism. Former President of the Marxist Literary Group, Professor Brown chairs the editorial board of the journal *Mediations* and is a founding editor of the electronic/print press MCM'.

1 Nicholas Brown: Professor, Department of Black Studies, University of Illinois, Chicago; cola@uic.edu.

Stevan Bradić, Assistant Professor, Department for Comparative Literature, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Novi Sad; stevan.bradic@ff.uns.ac.rs.

Bradić: In your latest book *Autonomy: The Social Ontology of Art Under Capitalism* (2019) in the tradition of Hegel, Lukács, Adorno and Jameson, you build a case for the autonomy of the work of art, as a self-legislating, immanently purposive artefact. This appears to be a continuation of your previous work on the topic, seeing how you successfully navigate between what you (with Imre Szeman) have described in the "Introduction" to the *Pierre Bourdieu: Fieldwork in Culture* (2000) as an understanding of artworks as "ineffable objects demanding infinite interpretation" (3) on the one hand, and the reduction of the aesthetic to an "effect of the cultural field" (4), on the other. Why is it important today to defend the autonomy of the work of art and the irreducibility of the aesthetic?

Brown: Our historical moment is characterized by skepticism toward the revolutionary idea that consciousness is an active principle, not something that can be coherently accounted for by a description confined to the order of cause and effect. The very notion that people are actively engaged in creating the world we live in — in short, the idea of politics — presupposes this principle. It is the core insight of German Idealism, a philosophical translation of, and attempt to come to terms with and endorse in the field of thought, the French Revolution and its aftermath. The account of the artwork as something autonomous — that is, something that solicits interpretation and judgment rather than responding to external demands — arose from this impulse and is an entailment of its core insight.

As is well known, this tradition, Hegel's followers in particular, were criticized by Marx for failing to account for the boundary conditions set by the metabolism of human life, in short political economy. This error is fundamental to Hegel, but it can be traced to his time and place, where the nature of industrial capitalism and the problem it would pose for his whole system remained historically obscure. The naïve condescension with which Hegel treats the entrepreneurial class in *Philosophy of Right* is breathtaking, but not historically surprising. But Marx did not abandon — could not have abandoned — the fundamental insight of German Idealism. The first half of his famous dictum that people make their own history, but not under conditions of their own choosing, paraphrases that insight, even as the second half corrects it. But this correction has repeatedly been understood on the Left undialectically, as though "materialism" and "idealism" were opposites, and as though "idealism," the idea that consciousness itself is a determining power, were something that materialist or any other politics could do without. Material conditions structure any concrete situation. But these are the cards we are dealt, not the game, and distinguishing the two is a practical matter that does not require ostentatious theoretical modesty about the limits of human agency. Indeed, a great deal of the work of Left analysis consists in figuring out which conditions are relevant — what in fact is the state of the game — and this is always a postulate, an idea, not a mere registration of givens. Anyway, my contention is that to defend the autonomy of art is to defend the principle of consciousness as an active principle, which is on my view to defend the idea of politics as such.

Bradić: But this skepticism about the limits of human agency originates on the Left, does it not?

Brown: The idea that the course of human events is not subject to conscious intervention but is rather determined by god, history, evolution, custom, norms, race, geography, culture, brain structure, or whatever else, has its natural adherents in the defenders of the status quo. So a certain kind of center-right market determinism, one of the phenomena lumped under the term "neoliberalism," is an entirely unsurprising development. What is more unexpected, and historically new and specific, is the way the anti-humanism of the 1960s French intellectual Left, which in the 1990s became a kind of lingua franca for self-consciously advanced thought in the U.S. and elsewhere, eventually putting down roots here and becoming affect theory, object-oriented ontology, and cognate "spinozist" tendencies, turns out to fit hand in glove with this aspect of neoliberalism. Very well, market absolutism and theoretical anti-humanism in various forms coincide in calling for a certain modesty about the role of the giving, disputation, and accepting of reasons in human affairs. But if we are going to take Marx's insight seriously, we should entertain the possibility that the market is in every sense prior. Marx understood that commodification is a crucial tendency of capitalist production. Our contemporary market absolutism is clearly implicated in the acceleration of the commodification dynamic. But, in a more mediated fashion, so is the deflation of intentional action into the interplay of human and inhuman "agency." So while spinozist theory generally imagines itself to be on the left, it is objectively a center-right phenomenon.

Bradić: Is your defense of "consciousness as an active principle" a version of Enlightenment individualism?

Brown: What is at stake in this debate is not personal autonomy. Spinoza's critique of personal autonomy as an egocentric view on ordinary causality is in general correct. If a thermostat could feel, it would no doubt feel like it was making decisions all day. What is at stake is the role of consciousness, the giving, disputation, and accepting of reasons, in human affairs. Like forces, reasons can be compelling. But differently from forces, reasons are only compelling within an institutional or quasi-institutional framework in which those reasons normatively matter. So personal autonomy is not at stake there either. The concept of art is one of those frameworks. "Aesthetic autonomy" refers to the capacity of the work of art to establish its own law, internal to itself, thereby setting aside, as not determining its meaning, those conditions that are otherwise determining. Our role as readers or beholders or critics is to discover that law, in other words to interpret the work, and interpretation is always subject to dispute. Without making any great claims for the political efficacy of art, I will say again that the assertion of autonomy is on the side of politics as such, and the critique of aesthetic autonomy — and the critique of the institutions and para-institutional norms that sustain it — is, today, of a piece with market absolutism.

Bradić: I have to return here to Bourdieu. You obviously find some of his work on culture compelling, but you do not seem to accept some of his central axes.

Brown: Fredric Jameson at one time took a lot of flak for claiming that the Bourdieusian "reduction of the aesthetic to an effect of the cultural field" is objectively anti-intellectual. Bourdieu himself was at the same time a defender of intellectual autonomy. But it is the deflationary aspect of Bourdieu's work that has been taken up in Canada and the United States, and I am not sure in any case that Bourdieu's practical politics squares as well as he imagined with his theoretical intervention. His major works repeatedly evade the problem with fancy footwork. But what I am trying to say is that a fraction, I would say a hegemonic fraction, of humanities scholars in the U.S. are objectively anti-intellectual. That is a naturally conservative position no matter that some in this fraction also imagine themselves to be "defenders of the humanities" and liberals or even leftists. So it is really Bourdieusians and contemporary spinozists who have to "navigate" the contradiction between determination and interpretation. My solution to it is a classically Hegelian-Marxist one, at least as I understand that tradition.

But Bourdieu's work on art, starting with "The Market in Symbolic Goods," is indispensable. Certainly I could not have written *Autonomy* without the idea of the "restricted field," without an account of the struggle of artists and scientists to build institutional or para-institutional buffers against the anonymous market. I think you cannot understand a great deal of art after, say, 1880, in a robustly historical way, without understanding that from a certain point art's relation to history is absolutely mediated by its relation to the market, which is not at all static, nor does it undergo uniform change, but can rather be distinctly periodized. Squaring this insight with a basically Hegelian, rather than a basically sociological, view of art is not difficult.

Bradić: So would you say that the suspension of the commodity form is a significant characteristic of the artwork, even when it does not address it openly? Would this be then an essential characteristic of what we consider to be art, at least since the late nineteenth century?

Brown: Absolutely. The open confrontation with the artwork's commodity character is rare, but all art since the end of the nineteenth century has to contend with it in some way. I might even be tempted to date that exigency rather precisely, to the revolutions of 1848 and the crack-up of the universalist aspirations of the revolutionary bourgeoisie. But that would be a much longer story. In the modernist period, this confrontation takes place in a sense outside the work of art, in the construction of restricted fields that keep the commodity dynamic at bay. But even in the modernist period works of art are not guaranteed to count as interventions in a restricted field, they have to claim a place in it; and claims are subject to judgment. In this way modernist artworks suspend the operation of the commodity form, but without addressing the commodity form explicitly. It's before and after modernism, when restricted fields

offer no protection, that the relationship to the market becomes interesting and fraught, and is often more legible on the interpretive surface.

Bradić: The central issue of *Autonomy* is the question of commodification of art. In it you "confront the commodity character of the artwork in five media: photography, Hollywood film, the novel, popular music, and television" (27). You accomplish this through what I would describe as procedure of intersection – namely, each of the chapters is devoted to one of the media, and at the same time it begins with another. What intrigues me here is your claim how this "whole is thus intended to present a kind of totality" (27). In one of your earlier works, *Utopian generations* (2005), in somewhat different context (anti-colonial and postcolonial struggle) you also discuss the necessity of the (Marxist-Hegelian) concept of totality. How do you see its relevance today, both in relation to art and social reality?

Brown: Totality is one of those words in the Marxist-Hegelian lexicon that is easily misunderstood, partly because it is, on my view, not a concept but rather a cluster of related concepts that shade into one another. Ironically, the one concept it does not include is the one that it is anathematized for, namely the submission of a heterogenous field to a single rule. In one sense, totality is just the commitment to thinking, the idea that while there are countless things that haven't been understood and an only slightly smaller countless number of things that will over the span of human history continue not to be understood, there is nothing that is in principle beyond the reach of thought. The Althusserian-Lucretian commitment to the aleatory swerve or "clinamen" and Adorno's heterodox understanding of negativity are two examples on the Left of a distrust of totalization in this sense, and they are both, in declaring a kind of taboo — totality must not be thought! — essentially reactionary. In another sense, and this is the one I was primarily drawing on in *Utopian Generations,* it refers to the notorious Hegelian "identity of identity and difference," which just means that for anything to be compared with anything else there must be a ground of comparison. Ambitious African literature from the anti-colonial period shared a representational project with Modernism, but went about it in different and sometimes opposed ways. Meanwhile the soon-to-be-former colonies and their soon-to-be-former colonizers are also part of the same world economy, and in that sense form a functional, conflictual whole. *Utopian Generations* attempts to mediate between these two sets of relations.

But the meaning of the word that is foremost in *Autonomy* is perhaps best translated simply as "normativity." This is a tricky concept because... where is it? Actions are only intelligible against a background of normative expectations. But you can't directly read these normative expectations out of the actions, partly because the norms are themselves are in conflict and different actors are acting under different presuppositions. The wager of totality is that these sets of expectations are not just different, but in conflict; that is, they are related to each other in ways that are determinate and determinable. That's why this meaning of totality is cognate with the others.

In the context of culture, I understand commodification as a normative presupposition, one that responds to sociological conditions but cannot be simply read out of them. That is, what characterizes our current situation is that commodification forms an unavoidable part of the normative background against which artworks are intelligible.

Bradić: While discussing the autonomy of the works of art, particularly in relation to music industry and television, you address the significance of the social conditions under which the artworks are being produced and consumed. This is, for instance, visible in your analysis of the shift from the bossa nova to Tropicália movement, as well as, although in a different manner, in your analysis the shift between the British and the American versions of *The Office*. Throughout your book you approach the issue of commodification of art through Marx' opposition of real and formal subsumption of labor under capital. But unlike Marx you apply it primarily to the products of (artistic) labor, namely, the artworks, and not to the conditions of labor itself. Why do you choose this angle?

Brown: This is a tricky point but it is crucial. On one hand, we are dealing with a social tendency, what Marx called the real subsumption of labor under capital. In the classic text from which that terminology is taken, this takes place, as you say, in production; what is at stake is precisely the subsumption of labor under capital, not the subsumption of its product. But there is a complementary account in the *Grundrisse* that takes place at the level of the product of labor, via the universalization of market circulation. These processes are complementary; one could not exist without the other.

For reasons that Marx assumed but did not spell out — reasons that Dave Beech has thoroughly explored — artistic labor is not universally and directly subsumable under capital. (Though it is more subsumable than Marx suspected — Marx could not have envisioned, for example, sequencing software taking the place of a live orchestra in a theatrical performance). The artwork, on the other hand, seems in its social facticity to offer no such resistance to the market.

Bradić: So the artwork has to confront its commodity status no matter what, while some artistic labor is more easily subsumable under capital than others. Does this mean that, no matter the relations of production, the artwork establishes itself as an artwork through the negation of the commodity form?

Brown: Yes — assuming we're within a hegemonically capitalist cultural field. The relations of production matter, but they matter because normative presuppositions respond to them, not because they are sociologically determining. This is a crucial but difficult distinction. In his *Aesthetics*, Hegel explains the increasingly explicit thematic content of then-contemporary literature by pointing out that modern life is itself characterized by reflexive knowledge, and that "no artist could, merely by resoluteness and force of will, abstract herself from it." This is what I am trying to say about commodification. Not

that total commodification is an economic fact, though it is certainly an economic tendency. Rather, contemporary life is characterized by the universality of commodity exchange, and no artist can, merely by resoluteness and force of will, abstract herself from it. Commodity exchange presupposes what the economists call "consumer sovereignty," and consumer sovereignty precludes the self-legislation of the work of art, and therefore precludes its meaning. So artists find themselves obliged to devise stratagems or ruses that turn aside the barrier to meaning posed by the commodity form. Even when sociological conditions are in place that block the immediate pressure of commodity exchange — even when relations of production are congenial to the production of art — artworks are not simply exempted on the basis of their location in social space. Rather, they have to claim admission to the Bourdieusian restricted fields that still obtain, and this claim is coterminous with the work itself. In the U.S., artistically ambitious jazz musicians maintain important aspects of a restricted field. But the work of art still has to account for its relation to commodity exchange, precisely by claiming its exclusion from the commodity dynamic, by asserting its participation in the restricted field.

Bradić: In your book you maintain that the work of art is "not itself emancipatory" (37) although it does oppose capitalism. Similarly, for Kant, aesthetic judgement could not be equated with a moral one, but at the same time it could not be separated from it either, since it functions along the same axis, and therefore could be considered as preparatory for it. Schiller on the other hand reframes the entire relationship between the sensory and reason through his concept of the "aesthetic state," and enables us to think of art as necessarily politically active. If his positions are "untenable now as they were then" (37), what can art hope to attain in our context?

Brown: Against his apparent intention, Schiller showed that there is no way to distinguish between art as a propaedeutic to freedom and art as a substitute for freedom. So what can art attain or oppose? What I meant by saying that the work of art is not itself emancipatory is that works of art have no material levers to operate. Whatever artworks attain or whatever they oppose, they attain or oppose by successfully soliciting interpretation and judgment.

Art's real, material enemy, the universalization of commodity exchange, cannot be opposed by it in an unmediated way. The artwork is what Brecht called a "foreign body" within our total exchange society, but it lacks the means to oppose it actively. Art's proximate, ideological enemy is the post-1968 anti-dialectical theoretical counter-revolution and its American appropriation, whose "spinozist" suspicion of meaning evacuates the specificity of the work of art. If art is (like everything else) an ensemble of affective relations, or (like everything else) a social precipitate, or (like everything else) a nexus of human and non-human "agency," then it is (like everything else) a commodity. The relationship between artists and theorists of art in the postmodern period was in retrospect far more conflictual than it appeared at the time. If in this

ideological struggle the victorious camp among the theorists played a reactionary role, the role artists played was far more complex. Among the pasticheurs have been those determined to lodge a foreign body within the cultural logic of late capitalism. Some of those artists have had, as Brecht did, powerfully political things to say. But even Brecht acknowledged that before his plays could succeed as politics, they had to succeed as plays.

Bradić: If a work of art entails "internal suspension of the commodity form, which nonetheless does not cease to operate" (182), in what ways does its mediation through the institutions and the market affect its social existence?

Brown: This is precisely what I was getting at. The artwork's active relation to the commodity is purely an internal relation. The external relation to the commodity is passive; externally, it is just a commodity. This means that its social facticity is ratified through the market. It is the relations internal to the work, which comprise a meaning and solicit interpretation, that invoke a mode of social ratification to which the market is hostile, thereby constituting a foreign body within commodity society. Judgment and interpretation are, before any judgment and interpretation, built into artworks as their horizon. There is a lot to be said about how judgment and interpretation are empirically mediated by institutions, but I'm not the one to say it. There is a danger in examining up close how the sausage is made that leads to cynicism. In principle, artworks are addressed to everyone, but this address is easily obscured. Part of my job is to teach, for example, college sophomores how to understand George Eliot. Eliot is in the scheme of things not that distant from us historically, and the things she cares about are often of interest to us in a fairly unmediated way. But it takes a significant effort on the part of a college sophomore in 2021 to figure out what Eliot is asking her to do. Without an institutional framework, those kinds of meanings would be accessible only to enthusiasts.

Bradić: Are you saying that the institution of art disarticulates use-value and exchange-value, which are otherwise totally imbricated in the commodity form?

Brown: In a capitalist society, use-value is the necessary and sufficient condition for exchange, and therefore the necessary and sufficient condition for a product's commodity-character. So the two cannot really be disentangled: any use-value will immediately take the form of a commodity. To realize its exchange value, a product must have a use; for a product to be socially ratified as useful, it must be exchanged. But the dual character of the commodity is not the dual character of the artwork, because meaning is not the same as use.

Bradić: Why not?

Brown: Meanings are not a special kind of use, but something other than use. If someone finds a new use for a widget, we don't say that that person misunderstood widgets, that account of the widget was unconvincing, that they mistakenly ascribed to widgets a use they do not have. They simply found a new use

for widgets. But we can and do insist that novels can be misunderstood, that a person's account of a novel can be unconvincing, that a student or a colleague or a friend can ascribe a meaning to a novel that it does not have. A novel of course also has a use and therefore is exchangeable: it has the ordinary doubleness of the commodity. But it also has the "dual character" of the artwork insisted upon by Adorno in his *Aesthetic Theory*. Adorno and Brecht agreed at least on this, that works of art are capable both of having a use (e.g. entertainment) and of being about that use, and that these are ontologically distinct.

If meaning is equated with use, then all readers of a novel are entitled to their own private meanings just as all buyers of widgets are entitled to their own private uses, and in that case literature professors and seminars aren't much use. As far as the commodity-character of the artwork is concerned, that's not false. But if you believe that's all there is to it, then there is nothing further to talk about. Our interpretations will be as little relevant to each other as our dreams.

Bradić: In an essay "One, Two, Many Ends of Literature" (2009) you claim that "the forms of attention required by literary analysis are particularly congenial to Marxism." What is, then, the role of interpreters and interpretation in the process of social recognition of a work of art?

Brown: What I'm trying to say in that essay I still think is true, but it was a sad attempt. Since then I have read Lukács's book on *The Young Hegel*, and his essays collected in *Goethe and His Age*. These do a much better job. But the point I was trying to make is that the Hegelian dialectic and the modern concept of art were born at more or less the same time, in more or less the same place, and that the living branch of the dialectical tree is Marxism. There is that crazy document we call the "Oldest System Program of German Idealism," in Hegel's hand, but it sounds more like Hölderlin, and Schelling was also somehow involved in writing it when the three of them were at seminary together. It is a conceptual mess, totally useless as a guide or clue to anyone's mature thinking, but it shows how closely aesthetic and inchoately dialectical ambitions were tied together, even if incoherently, at the end of the eighteenth century among ambitious young thinkers in Germany. In fact, Hegel's attempt to disentangle them, the well-known "end of art" thesis from the lectures on fine art, is deeply problematic.

In the early pages of his lectures on fine art, Hegel claims that what distinguishes the artwork from other forms of human activity is that in its very mode of being it solicits interpretation and judgment. We ratify the social existence of commodities by buying them, but we ratify the social existence of artworks by interpreting them. Of course specialists have a role in this ratification, especially in a society as stratified by class as ours are. But the solicitation to interpretation embodied in the work of art is radically universal. Ratification by the market, on the other hand, has no need of specialists; therein lies its apparently democratic appeal. But the market is radically particular: that is, stratified by price.

Bradić: As a student of Frederic Jameson and a graduate of Stanford and Duke Universities, you have been working in the tradition of Western Marxism since the 90's. One could claim how you have started your career in the period of an almost absolute triumph of the neoliberal capitalist doctrine, marked by the famous statement of "end of history". How would you describe the changes that have happened since then in the configurations of knowledge and capital?

Brown: Stevan, this is too big a question for me! I had no idea what Stanford was when I was there. I had my group of friends, I was in a band, there was a good bookstore in Palo Alto. I liked some professors, too: Sylvia Wynter and Marjorie Perloff were there, two scholars who couldn't be more different from each other, but both fearless and heterodox and electrifying lecturers, and I spent a wonderful three years learning Swahili from a linguist who was there at the time, Ndinzi Masagara. The people I argued about philosophy and literature and music with were mostly not the people from my philosophy and literature classes, whom I found too serious without really being able to say (then or now) precisely what I meant by that. A lot of my friends were computer scientists, but I had no idea that they or people like them were about to drive a massive — partly fictional and ideological, but still massive — reorganization of capital. But I don't have any special insight into it. I will say that whatever the theorists might have thought or hoped, there was no sense among the computer scientists I knew that the revolutionary-libertarian view that "information wants to be free" was remotely incompatible with capital accumulation. They believed in the former, and were eagerly looking forward to the latter.

Similarly at Duke I was ignorant of where I was. I had never lived in the South, and I hated it. The Literature Program was a very competitive place for students in ways that were not conducive to debate as I understood it. I learned a lot from Fred and from Valentin Mudimbe, and what might not be as obvious is that I learned a lot from Michael Hardt and Frank Lentricchia. In a complicated but not simply negative way I learned a lot from Barbara Herrnstein-Smith and Eve Sedgwick, and Toril Moi forced me to learn Portuguese, which made me furious at the time but I owe her a huge debt of gratitude for that. In educational terms, it was ridiculously rich. But I spent very little time on campus and I left as soon as I could. Of course the intellectual density of Duke and the miserable state that Durham was then in were both conncected to the acceleration of private accumulation and public disinvestment that is the primary goal of neoliberal ideology. But I wasn't aware of that at the time and couldn't give a good, specific account of it now.

It does seem to me that the period since I finished graduate school — that is, since the end of the 1990s — has been marked by neoliberal decadence. On the material side, capitalism's chickens have been coming home to roost for the past twenty years at an accelerating pace, making the old justifications for the neoliberal offensive seem more and more transparent and ridiculous. On the theoretical side, the "spinozist" reaction that was hegemonic in the 1990s even at Duke — a reaction that Fred opposed but tried to accommodate — is still dominant, but its dominance has become hollow. Recent well-received books

in this vein don't even appear to be trying to grapple substantively with real theoretical problems. The basic coordinates have been assumed for so long that their original justification has been forgotten, and straightforward questions of a fundamental nature cause a kind of panic. This decadence suggests that there is opening for new developments in politics as well as in theory — but of course it doesn't guarantee that these new directions will be positive ones.

Bradić: What role have the universities played in these changes? Would you agree with Bourdieu's assessment that we still need an "internationale of intellectuals" (*Rules of Art*, 344) in order to defend the autonomy of cultural production?

Brown: In the humanities, a strain of thought hegemonically considered advanced within the academy has been responsible for the lack of coherence in our understanding of what art is, and therefore for our lack of a basis for defending the standing of art as a subject worthy of disciplinary study. Bourdieu's work is implicated in this dynamic. His defense of intellectual autonomy is of course the other side of the contradiction that he has to navigate, and a number of our illustrious "defenders of the humanities" find themselves in the analogous situation of defending their autonomy on heteronomous grounds.

Do we need an international of intellectuals? We certainly need a strong and organized Left built around the working class, by which I mean the vast majority of people who are not owners of capital. This is probably more important than a cohesive intellectual class. It may be that an organized working class would be better for intellectual life than an organized intellectual class! At this moment, proposals for university funding coming from the political left in the U.S. are far more radical than anything coming from the intellectual left, whose administrative ranks have, at every turn, been willing to buy their way into the ruling class by sacrificing their own institutions. I have already said enough about the cognate accommodationism of contemporary theory.

But the way this question is taken up is, ironically, going to have a national basis. Specifically, this is going to look different in countries that are or expect to be in the E.U., as opposed to a large and hegemonic but intellectually isolated country like the United States. There is a spontaneous esprit de corps among scholars that can be witnessed at any international conference or colloquium, and this is something to build on. But in the U.S. only a very privileged stratum of intellectuals gets to witness, much less experience, this kind of international intellectual competition and camaraderie. In the U.S, real, conscious political organizing of intellectuals as a class or professional fraction with common interests that include intellectual autonomy but also more mundane things like job security and safe working conditions, has to take place first at a more provincial, national level. More specifically, the limited, but real and substantial successes that unions have had at U.S. universities when they organize across the division between the permanent and itinerant faculty need to be expanded upon. But this is, as I said, a more provincial matter and probably does not have a great deal to say to the European context.

Bradić: What does it mean for you to work in the Marxist tradition today?

Brown: In a recent interview, the great Brazilian critic Roberto Schwarz said that if Marxism had never developed a practical-revolutionary program, it would still be the right way to do history, the right way to do political science, the right way to do literary analysis. This is shocking coming from him — he was exiled for his political activities as well as his views — but I think it's right. Of course there are lots of ways to do Marxist literary analysis, and many of them are bad. Roberto was talking about the core of the Hegelian-Marxist tradition: Adorno, Benjamin, Lukács, Brecht, and you would now have to include Jameson and Roberto himself. In other words, Hegelian-Marxist criticism isn't the right way to do literary analysis because it contributes to social liberation, though it may do that, but because it grasps literature in a more productive and powerful way than other approaches.

Bradić: Does this mean there is no political program for Marxism today?

Brown: What I mean to say is rather that its relation to criticism is highly mediated. The re-entry of socialism into electoral politics in the United States has been an unexpectedly electrifying phenomenon, but the socialists are an embattled minority in the Democratic Party and the Communist Party is effectively nonexistent. Black Lives Matter is undisciplined by design, not a movement in the ordinary sense. It doesn't propose a practical-revolutionary program but serves rather as a slogan that crystallizes urban and liberal dissatisfaction, which is widespread and intense but widely disparate in the interests and goals that motivate it. The union movement is working hard to rebuild but is a shadow of its former self after savage neoliberal onslaught that was, as is well known, undertaken alike by the right and by the "left." And what is genuinely of the left today is not uniformly intelligent. All this is to say that it is far from obvious what a Marxist politics looks like when there is no practical-revolutionary Marxist politics going on at scale. This appears to be a problem, since not only did Marxism develop a practical-revolutionary program, but such a program arises logically from the same set of presuppositions that undergirds the Marxist production of knowledge.

But one of Marxism's deepest commitments, which it shares with Hegel, is that any politics, no matter how apparently radical, is in practical terms deeply conservative if it does not intervene in the conditions that actually pertain: *hic Rhodus, hic salta!* In a neoliberal present where the left is weak and often confused, this means supporting social democratic tendencies militantly, but with a distance I would call pedagogical. That is, with the explicit reservation that social-democratic proposals, which are in themselves often popular even in this supposedly center-right country, cannot succeed in any robust way without the support of a practical-revolutionary politics – an organized alliance of the more secure and more precariously employed or unemployed sectors of the working class. Marxism is fundamentally a set of postulates about how capitalism works and how the world works under capitalism; history is its teaching lab.

Bradić: What affirmative trends do you see in art and theory today?

Brown: I wish this were an easier question. A colleague of mine, an art historian, recently told me that her most difficult task as a scholar was finding art worth talking about.

I think the successes one encounters in heteronomous fields, which are largely what concern *Autonomy*, are always going to be ephemeral; anything that works is going to become a mere technical-industrial means almost immediately. For a brief moment it seemed like the American telenovela — *The Sopranos*, *Mad Men*, *The Wire*, and so on — was going to be a serious art form. People were talking about long-form televisual narrative, only quasi-facetiously, as possibly becoming the new Victorian novel. That lasted maybe five years. Now "quality television" is, predictably, just a market niche: good actors and passable dialogue, sometimes really expensive costumes and sets, to go with your premium media subscription. One recent exception is the first season of the TV series *Homecoming*. But that came out of left field: originally it was a podcast, and the TV show is a nearly verbatim visualization. That the second season, written for television, is insupportable just emphasizes the point. Musicians like Prince and Jack White are sui generis — their solutions don't work once they have been incorporated into the culture-industry toolbox. The novel, by its nature not capital-intensive, may be an exception. The distribution problem can be overcome quickly if a book starts to catch on with a few critics or even scholars. Can you imagine a few scholars' essays making a difference in the popularity of a pop song? I didn't mention it in *Autonomy* but the latest wave of African novelists, especially but not only among the Francophone writers, have taken an ambitious turn: Zoë Wicomb, Fiston Mujila, Alain Mabanckou, Abdourahman Waberi, all writers with markedly original relations to the medium. Meanwhile contemporary art photography continues to be a bright spot, partly because in places it operates according to the logic of a Bourdieusian restricted field. It is exhilarating to witness the dialectical, leapfrogging development of photography as its own problem playing out in real time among younger (and very different) artists like Viktoria Binschtok, Phil Chang, LaToya Ruby Frazier, and Dan Shea.

Another positive thing I have noticed, and this may only in my immediate perceptual field, is that young people seem to become disenchanted with what are sold to them as generationally "their" cultural goods at an earlier age than my generation did; in a corresponding way, they seem to be more interested and aware of things they think are worth preserving and understanding in the cultural goods of the past, which already suggests an interest in something in them exceeds their status as cultural goods. For what it's worth, my own children, like most people their age, are deeply invested in popular culture. But they have very little enthusiasm for contemporary popular culture, and this does not seem to have anything to do with their upbringing — it seems quite general among their peers. It also seems to me that young people — and now I'm talking about my undergraduate students, mostly working class, mostly

first-generation college students, at an urban, public university — are more interested in erudite culture, perhaps because of the same feeling of disenchantment with the prevailing cultural standard, than my generation was. But this all may be just wishful thinking on my part, I haven't looked into data that might support it.

In the field of theory, there has been a small but a clearly perceptible shift in thinking about Hegel and German Idealism more generally, so that the idealist sequence is neither anathematized, as it was for the Foucauldian generation, nor so little-studied and exotic as to be thought susceptible of admixture with an entirely contrary figure like Lacan. There has been a rapprochement, not without friction but highly productive, between Hegelians and followers of certain figures in Anglo-American philosophy like Elizabeth Anscombe and Donald Davidson. Enthusiasm for Marxism as a Left identity is increasingly attractive; the commitment to Marxism as a conceptual discipline is less frequently encountered but one is permitted to hope that it is a lagging indicator.

SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

All submissions to Filozofija i društvo must conform to the following rules, mostly regarding citations. The Referencing Guide is the modified Harvard in-text referencing style. In this system within the text, the author's name is given first followed by the publication date and the page number/s for the source. The list of references or bibliography at the end of the document contains the full details listed in alphabetical order for all the in-text citations.

1. LENGTH OF TEXT

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

2. ABSTRACT

Between 100 and 250 words.

3. KEY WORDS

Up to 10.

4. AFFILIATION

Full affiliation of the author, department, faculty, university, institute, etc.

5. BOOKS

In the bibliography: last name, first name, year of publication in parentheses, book title, place of publication, publisher. In the text: last name in parentheses, year of publication, colon, page number. In a comment: last name, year of publication, colon, page number. Books are cited in a shortened form only in comments.

Example:

In the bibliography: Moriarty, Michael (2003), *Early Modern French Thought. The Age of Suspicion*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

In the text: (Moriarty 2003: 33).

In a comment: Moriarty 2003: 33.

6. ARTICLES

In the bibliography: last name, first name, year of publication, title in quotation marks, name of publication in italic, year of issue, in parentheses the volume number within year if the pagination is not uniform, colon and page number. In the text: last name in parentheses, year of publication, colon, page number. In acomment: last name, year of publication, colon, page number. Do not put abbreviations such as 'p.', 'vol.', 'tome', 'no.' etc. Articles are cited in shortened form only in comments.

Examples:

In the bibliography: Miller, Johns Roger (1926), "The Ideas as Thoughts of God", *Classical Philology* 21: 317–326.

In the text: (Miller 1926: 320).

In a comment: Miller 1926: 320.

In the bibliography: Byrd, B. Sharon; Hruschka, Joachim (2008), "From the state of nature to the juridical state of states", *Law and Philosophy* 27 (6): 599–641.

In the text: (Byrd, Hruschka 2008: 603).

In a comment: Byrd, Hruschka 2008: 603.

7. EDITED BOOKS

In the bibliography: last and first name of editor, abbreviation 'ed.' in parentheses, year of publication in parentheses, title of collection in italic, place of publication, publisher and page number if needed. In the text: last name in parentheses, year of publication, colon, page number. In a comment: last name, year of publication, colon, page number. Collectionsare cited in shortened form only in comments.

Examples:

In the bibliography: Harris, John (ed.) (2001), *Bioethics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

In the text: (Harris 2001).

In a comment: Harris 2001.

In the bibliography: Vieweg, Klaus; Welsch, Wolfgang (eds.) (2008), *Hegels Phänomenologie des Geistes: Ein kooperativer Kommentar zu einem Schlüsselwerk der Moderne*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

In the text: (Vieweg, Welsch 2008).

In comment: Vieweg, Welsch 2008.

8. ARTICLES/CHAPTERS IN BOOK

In the bibliography: last name, first name, year of publication in parentheses, text title in quotation marks, the word 'in' (in collection), first and last name of editor, the abbreviation 'ed.' in parentheses, title of collection in italic, place of publication, publisher, colon, page number (if needed). In the text: Last name of author in parentheses, year of publication, colon, page number. In a comment: last name of author, year of publication, colon, page number. The abbreviation 'p.' is allowed only in the bibliography.

Examples:

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).

In a comment: Anscombe 1981: 82.

In the bibliography: Romano, Onofrio (2015), "Dépense", in Giacomo D'Alisa, Federico Demaria and Giorgos Kallis (eds.), *Decrecimiento. Un vocabulario para una nueva era*, Barcelona: Icaria editorial, pp. 138–142.

In the text: (Onofrio 2015: 139).

In a comment: Onofrio 2015: 139.

9. NEWSPAPER AND MAGAZINES ARTICLE

In the bibliography: last name, first name, year in parentheses, title of article in quotation marks, name of newspaper in italic, date, page.

Example:

In the bibliography: Logar, Gordana (2009), „Zemlja bez fajronta", *Danas*, 2 August, p. 12.

In the text: (Logar 2009: 12).

In a comment: Logar 2009: 12

10. WEB DOCUMENTS

When quoting an online text, apart from the web address of the site with the text and the text's title, cite the date of viewing the page, as well as further markings if available (year, chapter, etc.).

Example:

In the bibliography: Ross, Kelley R., „Ontological Undecidability", (internet) available at: http://www.friesian.com/undecd-1.htm (viewed 2 April, 2009).

In the text: (Ross, internet).

In a comment: Ross, internet.

UPUTSTVO ZA AUTORE

Pri pisanju tekstova za *Filozofiju i društvo* autori su u obavezi da se drže sledećih pravila, uglavnom vezanih za citiranje. Standardizacija je propisana *Aktom o uređivanju naučnih časopisa* Ministarstva za prosvetu i nauku Republike Srbije iz 2009. U *Filozofiji i društvu* bibliografske jedinice citiraju se u skladu s uputstvom *Harvard Style Manual*. U ovom uputstvu naveden je način citiranja najčešćih bibliografskih jedinica; informacije o načinu citiranja ređih mogu se naći na internetu.

1. VELIČINA TEKSTA

Do dva autorska tabaka (60.000 karaktera) s apstraktom, ključnim rečima i literaturom; napomene se ne računaju.

2. APSTRAKT

Na srpskom (hrvatskom, bosanskom, crnogorskom...) i jednom stranom jeziku, između 100 i 250 reči.

3. KLJUČNE REČI

Do deset.

4. PODACI O TEKSTU

Relevantni podaci o tekstu, broj projekta na kojem je rađen i slično, navode se u fusnoti broj 1 koja se stavlja na kraju prve rečenice teksta.

5. AFILIJACIJA

Puna afilijacija autora, odeljenje i fakultet, institut i slično.

6. INOSTRANA IMENA

Sva inostrana imena (osim u bibliografskim jedinicama) fonetski se transkribuju u skladu s pravilima pravopisa, a prilikom prvog javljanja u zagradi se navodi njihov izvorni oblik. Imena geografskih i sličnih odrednica takođe se fonetski transkribuju bez posebnog navođenja originala u zagradama, osim ukoliko autor smatra da je neophodno.

7. CRTA I CRTICA

Kada se navode stranice, od jedne do neke druge, ili kada se to čini za godine, između brojeva stoji crta, *ne crtica*.

Primer:
33–44, 1978–1988; ne: 33-44, 1978-1988.

8. KNJIGE

U spisku literature: prezime, ime, u zagradi godina izdanja, naslov knjige, mesto izdanja, izdavač. U tekstu: u zagradi prezime autora, godina izdanja, dvotačka, stranica. U napomeni: prezime autora, godina izdanja, dvotačka, stranica. U napomenama, knjiga se citira isključivo na skraćeni način.

Primer:
U literaturi: Haug, Volfgang Fric (1981), *Kritika robne estetike*, Beograd: IIC SSO Srbije.

U tekstu: (Haug 1981: 33).

U napomeni: Haug 1981: 33.

9. ČLANCI

U spisku literature: prezime, ime, u zagradi godina izdanja, naslov teksta pod navodnicima, naslov časopisa u italiku, godište časopisa, u zagradi broj sveske u godištu ukoliko paginacija nije jedinstvena za ceo tom, dvotačka i broj stranice. U tekstu: u zagradi prezime autora, godina izdanja, dvotačka, stranica. U napomeni: prezime autora, godina izdanja, dvotačka, stranica. Ne stavljaju se skraćenice „str.“, „vol.“, „tom“, „br.“ i slične. U napomenama, članci se citiraju isključivo na skraćeni način.

Primeri:
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

10. ZBORNICI

U spisku literature: prezime i ime priređivača, u zagradi skraćenica „prir.“, u zagradi godina izdanja, naslov zbornika u italiku, mesto izdanja, izdavač i strana po potrebi. U tekstu: u zagradi prezime autora, godina izdanja, dvotačka, stranica. U napomeni: prezime autora, godina izdanja, dvotačka, stranica. U napomenama, zbornici se citiraju isključivo na skraćeni način.

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

U tekstu: (Espozito 2002).

U napomeni: Espozito 2002.

11. TEKSTOVI IZ ZBORNIKA

U spisku literature: prezime, ime autora, u zagradi godina, naslov teksta pod navodnicima, slovo „u“ (u zborniku), ime i prezime priređivača zbornika, u zagradi „prir.“, naslov zbornika u italiku, mesto izdanja, izdavač, dvotačka i broj stranice (ako je potrebno). U tekstu: u zagradi prezime autora, godina izdanja, dvotačka, stranica. U napomeni: prezime autora, godina izdanja, dvotačka, stranica. Skraćenica „str.“ dopuštena je samo u spisku literature.

Primer:
U literaturi: Nizbet, Robert (1999), „Jedinične ideje sociologije“, u A. Mimica (prir.), *Tekst i kontekst*, Beograd: Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva, str. 31–48.

U tekstu: (Nizbet 1999: 33).

U napomeni: Nizbet 1999: 33.

12. ČLANAK IZ NOVINA

U spisku literature: prezime, ime, u zagradi godina, naslov članka pod navodnicima, naslov novina u italiku, datum, stranica.

Primer:
U literaturi: Logar, Gordana (2009), „Zemlja bez fajronta“, *Danas*, 2. avgust, str. 12.

U tekstu: (Logar 2009: 12).

U napomeni: Logar 2009: 12.

13. INTERNET

Prilikom citiranja tekstova s interneta, osim internet-adrese sajta na kojem se tekst nalazi i naslova samog teksta, navesti i datum posete toj stranici, kao i dodatna određenja ukoliko su dostupna (godina, poglavlje i sl.).

Primer:
U literaturi: Ross, Kelley R., „Ontological Undecidability“, (internet) dostupno na: http://www.friesian.com/undecd-1.htm (pristupljeno 2. aprila 2009).

U tekstu: (Ross, internet).

U napomeni: Ross, internet.

CIP – Каталогизација у публикацији
Народна библиотека Србије, Београд

1+316+323

FILOZOFIJA i društvo = Philosophy and Society /
glavni i odgovorni urednik Željko Radinković. - 1987,
[knj.] 1- . - Beograd : Institut za filozofiju i društvenu teoriju,
1987- (Novi Sad : Sajnos). - 24 cm

Dostupno i na:
https://journal.instifdt.bg.ac.rs/index.php/fid
Tromesečno.
Drugo izdanje na drugom medijumu: Filozofija i društvo
(Online) = ISSN 2334-8577
ISSN 0353-5738 = Filozofija i društvo
COBISS.SR-ID 11442434