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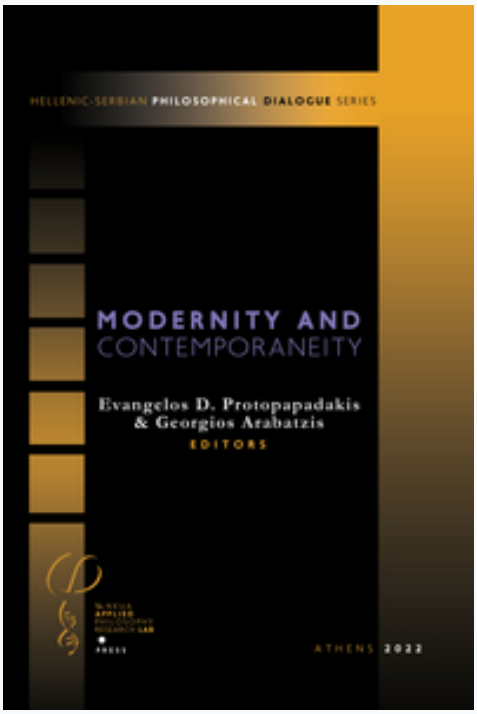

Modernity and Contemporaneity

Evangelos D. Protopapadakis, Georgios Arabatzis, Mina Đikanović, Georgios Iliopoulos, Nevena Jevtić, Željko Kaluđerović, Panagiotis Kormas, Antonia Moutzouri, Una Popović, Dragan Prole, Nikos Psarros, Konstantina Roussidi, Goran Rujević

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HELLENIC-SERBIAN **PHILOSOPHICAL DIALOGUE** SERIES

MODERNITY AND CONTEMPORANEITY

Evangelos D. Protopapadakis
& Georgios Arabatzis
EDITORS

The NKUA APPLIED PHILOSOPHY RESEARCH LAB
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Modenity and Contemporaneity: An Introduction

Evangelos D. Protopapadakis & Georgios Arabatzis, Editors

Modernity and Contemporaneity is the 3rd volume in the Hellenic-Serbian Philosophical Dialogue Series, a project that was initiated as an emphatic token of the will and commitment to establish permanent and fruitful collaboration between two strongly bonded Departments of Philosophy, this of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, and that of the University of Novi Sad respectively. This collaboration was founded from the very beginning upon friendship, mutual respect and strong engagement, as well us upon our firm resolution to establish a solid continuity in the editing project. The publication of this volume allows us to entertain feelings of contentment and confidence that this objective of the project has been accomplished.

Yet, next to the above, a parallel and equally significant project has also been initiated, i.e. one of philosophical reflection that is nourished by our collaborative effort, but has surpassed the self-referential mode that is inherent in the idea proper of a common project. In the series, a sincere attempt to think the present has been expanded by both the editors and the authors that they are kind enough to engage their writing production in the publication planning of the series. The 1st volume in the Series focused on *Thinking in Action*, while the 2nd discussed the notion of *Personhood*. This 3rd volume turns even more resolutely to the philosophical *hic et nunc*, as it is being understood in two cultural and philosophical environments of the European South with a solid tradition of association and reciprocal attachment. What can be said about contemporaneity, the historical and intellectual environment we live in, and still is not entirely within our grasp and control? This question is the one that provided the initial spark for our quest, and serves as the backbone of this volume.

Georgios Arabatzis' chapter bears the title "The Post-modern and Modernity from the Point of View of the History of Philosophy." According to the author, "the irruption of post-modernity into modernity produced the relativization of the modernist project. The new epistemic field conquered by post-modern thought points to the introduction of the joint explicative axes of Knowledge and Power under a new light that transforms the ways that we conceive of the history of philosophy."[1] As to the modernist project, the author notes that "a new science of the forms of representation was produced, in the light of the fact that the limit between presentation and representation had become particularly blurred."[2] Progressively, "life [became] just a study of the violent and non-livable relationships of the co-Beings, i.e., the culture,"[3] and thus was produced a culturalist philosophy.

For Mina Đikanović in her chapter titled "Modern Subjectivity and its History," "modern man is left to himself. He has no god or gods, no general beliefs or customs that will guide him through life without him needing to question them. He produces his own world and his own freedom; nothing is given to him as a firm ground that remains undoubted. Nature, society, science, philosophy equally are the product of consciousness."[4] For Đikanović "the concept of modernity is not self-evident."[5] The author places a problematic ethics in the center of this lack of contention: "so the question of motivation becomes the most relevant question of modern ethics, alongside with the problem of freedom. It can be said that beginning of modern

[1] Georgios Arabatzis, "The Post-modern and Modernity from the Point of View of the History of Philosophy," in *Modernity and Contemporaneity*, eds. Evangelos D. Protopapadakis, and Georgios Arabatzis, 21-31 (Athens: The NKUA Applied Philosophy Research Lab Press, 2022), 27.

[2] Ibid., 23.

[3] Ibid., 24.

[4] Mina Đikanović, "Modern Subjectivity and its History," in *Modernity and Contemporaneity*, eds. Evangelos D. Protopapadakis, and Georgios Arabatzis, 33-48 (Athens: The NKUA Applied Philosophy Research Lab Press, 2022), 47.

[5] Ibid., 33.

thinking of ethics shows similarity to epoch of sophists and Socrates."[6]

Georgios Iliopoulos in his chapter with the title "Hans-Georg Gadamer and the Contemporaneity of Classical Greek Philosophy" supports the view that "Gadamer's philosophy is distinguished by its steady concern to develop hermeneutics as an organic part of a virtually universal dialogical rationality which is prima facie inter subjectively structured and linguistically mediated and at the same time, in its core assumptions, it remains in principle committed to the necessity of acquiring and demonstrating reliable theoretical knowledge."[7] Within this critical project, "Gadamer's approach consists in mainly showing that humanities and especially philosophy do actually operate on the basis of their own way to conceive the truth without having previously solved all their methodological problems in abstracto and in advance."[8] The project is based on a major drive: "Gadamer develops his philosophy upon the fundamental tendency of humans to understand their own world or the world they live in."[9]

Nevena Jevtić has contributed a chapter under the title "Depersonalization of Absolute Knowledge?" where she argues "that the rising of limited and finite subjectivity into the element of speculative reason is not driven by the desire for narcissistic enjoyment. On the contrary, it is driven by the desire to be recognized by the universal and collective as its own."[10] Again, this tendency, "Following the exposition of Fredric Jameson's idea of depersonalization] in broad strokes, [the article lays] a claim

[6] Ibid., 37.

[7] Georgios Iliopoulos, "Hans-Georg Gadamer and the Contemporaneity of Classical Greek Philosophy," in *Modernity and Contemporaneity*, eds. Evangelos D. Protopapadakis, and Georgios Arabatzis, 49-63 (Athens: The NKUA Applied Philosophy Research Lab Press, 2022), 61.

[8] Ibid., 53.

[9] Ibid., 55.

[10] Nevena Jevtić, "Depersonalization of Absolute Knowledge?" in *Modernity and Contemporaneity*, eds. Evangelos D. Protopapadakis, and Georgios Arabatzis, 65-80 (Athens: The NKUA Applied Philosophy Research Lab Press, 2022), 78.

that the concept of absolute knowledge could be, in principle, reframed as an experience of rupture of subjectivity."[11] To this the author opposes a Hegelian nuance: "Even though historical development as such cannot be arrested, Hegel diagnoses the moments of inertia and ossification of historical social societies."[12]

Željko Kaluđerović in his chapter "Animal Protection and Welfare: Contemporary Examinations" defends the idea that "a reasonable care of the protection and welfare of animals, finally, does not mean that the author of this paper believes that to them should be entitled to a kind of 'moral status,' which would be in conformity with human moral phenomenon (…) after all, taking care of the 'dignity' and all present and future 'rights' and status of animals is basically man's task."[13] This imperative of human dignity must be seen together with the fact that "the last around fifty years on the European continent were marked by dramatic changes in the area of ethical-moral and legal-political regulation of the protection and welfare of animals."[14] Kaluđerović specifies that "the meaning of such animal protection was, and still is anthropocentric in nature, since in its center are not animals as such, but different interests of man and society as a whole, such as the protection of human health, economic development and development of various economic branches, animal husbandry, hunting, fishing, protection of public morality, order and good practice and feelings of man towards animals as well as the economic interests of animal owners."[15] This proves the centrality of the element of human dignity as to the crucial question of animal protection.

The next chapter by Panagiotis Kormas and Antonia Moutzouri, "Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare: Rethinking the No-

[11] Ibid., 66.

[12] Ibid., 76.

[13] Željko Kaluđerović, "Animal Protection and Welfare: Contemporary Examinations," in *Modernity and Contemporaneity*, eds. Evangelos D. Protopapadakis, and Georgios Arabatzis, 81-101 (Athens: The NKUA Applied Philosophy Research Lab Press, 2022), 96.

[14] Ibid., 83.

[15] Ibid., 85.

tions of Responsibility, Causal Inference and Empathy," discusses the moral issues that arise from the implementation of AI into healthcare. According to the authors "the development of AI systems, especially those employing deep learning technologies is accompanied with several challenges. On the ethical domain, the issues of explainability and causation have raised hard debates on whether AI ought to be understandable or to follow counterfactual reasoning in order to be implemented in the clinical practice."[16] The authors raise the subject of moral responsibility as to AI: "The prevalence of AI technologies in almost all domains of human life and its highly promising potential in healthcare have raised many debates on the ethical implications of its deployment. The clinical setting in particular constitutes a complex environment where AI could be entrusted with life-anddeath decisions."[17] A further caution would be that "apart from principally being a philosophical issue, since agency is connected to responsibility, the problem of responsibility attribution in the contemporary context is ultimately practical."[18]

In her chapter titled "The Overcoming of Aesthetics" Una Popović sets out to discuss Heidegger's views as opposed to the modern representational model in her effort to prove "that the overcoming of the representational image and aesthetics is essentially related to the question of Being and the ontological difference."[19] The author pinpoints that to Heidegger's overall philosophical system art has been of no minor importance; on the contrary, it was a means "to resolve the question of the true nature and essence of philosophy in a contemporary context

[16] Panagiotis Kormas, and Antonia Moutzouri, "Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare: Rethinking the Notions of Responsibility, Causal Inference and Empathy," in *Modernity and Contemporaneity*, eds. Evangelos D. Protopapadakis, and Georgios Arabatzis, 103-119 (Athens: The NKUA Applied Philosophy Research Lab Press, 2022), 115.

[17] Ibid., 105.

[18] Ibid., 108.

[19] Una Popovic, "The Overcoming of Aesthetics," in *Modernity and Contemporaneity*, eds. E. D. Prototpapadakis, and G. Arabatzis, 121-141 (Athens: The NKUA Applied Philosophy Research Lab Press, 2022), 121.

[so as] to question, criticize, discover and redefine philosophy as such."[20] To this purpose, Popović suggests that Heidegger "had to deal with the traditional models of relationship"[21] between philosophy and the arts. In what follows the author discusses Heidegger's idea of overcoming of aesthetics "the key issue for the project of renewing the question of Being,"[22] and – in accordance with Heidegger's own view – reaches the conclusion that "philosophy cannot resolve its contemporary tasks without the constructive relationship with the arts."[23]

Dragan Prole in his chapter with the title "From Modernism to Contemporaneity: On the Magic of the False Name" discusses the ontological connotations of contemporaneity as opposed to modernism and modernity. The author argues that "the notion of contemporaneity more fully expresses the temporal, historical, anthropological, and ontological deviations from modernity,"[24] since the latter differs significantly from the former in that, instead of celebrating "rationality, development, critique, and overcoming,"[25] it "favors an expanded mind, catastrophe prevention, post-critical time, and leveling […] a dystopia on the scene of preventing a cataclysm."[26] A key feature of contemporaneity, the author claims, is the "intertwining"[27] of several key notions that have been dominant over particular periods in the history of philosophy, due to which "at the same time, in the same place, mutual strangers live within each person."[28] In what follows, the author sets out to present instances in support of his view; to this purpose he engages into a fas-

[20] Ibid., 122.
[21] Ibid., 123.
[22] Ibid., 124.
[23] Ibid., 139.
[24] Dragan Prole, "From Modernism to Contemporaneity: On the Magic of the False Name," in *Modernity and Contemporaneity*, eds. Evangelos D. Protopapadakis, and Georgios Arabatzis, 143-159 (Athens: The NKUA Applied Philosophy Research Lab Press, 2022), 144.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid., 145.
[28] Ibid.

cinating journey through the most significant milestones in the history of ideas focusing on their current import and validity, ranging from truth to neutralization, and omitting no stop of significance in between.

Evangelos D. Protopapadakis' contribution to this volume bears the title "Is Morality Immune to Luck, after All? Criminal Behavior and the Paradox of Moral Luck," in which he sets out to discuss the issue of moral luck in the light of theories that emerged during the last century only to challenge modernity's conviction that "morality is within the agent's grasp irrespective of the circumstances."[29] To this purpose the author focuses on criminal behavior; he first discusses the views of Gabriel Tarde and Cesare Lombroso, that by and large explain criminality as either "spontaneous occurrences of atavistic recurrence,"[30] or "the outcome of either a certain paradigm, or the interplay of several paradigms, that are prevailing or, at least, are present in each social environment"[31] respectively. Then the author moves on to Nagel's and Williams' accounts, to whom, contrary to all dominant moral traditions, "that morality is not at all immune to luck, after all; on the contrary, according to them, luck has the power to affect decisively one's moral decisions, judgements and standing."[32] The author concludes by suggesting that even if there may be no "pure agency" after all, "impure agency, however, is still agency, and while moral luck cannot be denied its territory, there definitely have to be boundaries to its domain."[33]

Nikos Psarros participates in this volume with a chapter under the title "Dignity and the Forms of Human Existence," in which the author sets out to discuss "in which way does human dignity exist and in which way can it be violated, [and]

[29] Evangelos D. Protopapadakis, "Is Morality Immune to Luck, after All? Criminal Behavior and the Paradox of Moral Luck," in *Modernity and Contemporaneity*, eds. Evangelos D. Protopapadakis, and Georgios Arabatzis, 161-180 (Athens: The NKUA Applied Philosophy Research Lab Press, 2022), 172.

[30] Ibid., 164.

[31] Ibid., 168.

[32] Ibid., 173.

[33] Ibid., 178.

why should the state respect and protect it in such an absolute manner?"[34] The author, having from the outset ruled out any substance-as-causa-sui explanation of human dignity, as well as approaches in the light of which human dignity could be conceived as either human property, or abstract conceptual construct, the author suggests that "the only mode of existence of human dignity seems to be that of a relation,"[35] and puts his efforts in shedding light on this relation. After having exhaustively discussed other possibilities and shewed them insufficient, the author assumes that "human dignity can be defined as the relation of a human being to an existing universal that renders possible its individual existence as human being,"[36] and favors the concept that "in order for dignity to exist there must exist at least one full-fledged cognizing person."[37]

In her "Discussing Normative Ethical Reasons and Moral Realism with Kant: A Meta-Ethical Perspective" Konstantina Ch. Roussidi engages into the heated debate on ethical normative reasons, and especially on whether reasons as such may be discovered or just constructed, as moral realism and anti-realism maintain respectively. The author adopts "a metaethical approach to explaining ethical normative propositions and is mainly based on Immanuel Kant's critical theories"[38] in her effort to "discuss moral realism with Immanuel Kant's critical views, through an analysis situated in contemporary thought."[39] Obviously under the light of the Kantian tradition, but not ad-

[34] Nikos Psarros, "Dignity and the Forms of Human Existence," in *Modernity and Contemporaneity*, eds. Evangelos D. Protopapadakis, and Georgios Arabatzis, 181-196 (Athens: The NKUA Applied Philosophy Research Lab Press, 2022), 182.

[35] Ibid., 186.

[36] Ibid., 191.

[37] Ibid., 195.

[38] Konstantina Ch. Roussidi, "Discussing Normative Ethical Reasons and Moral Realism with Kant: A Meta-Ethical Perspective," in *Modernity and Contemporaneity*, eds. Evangelos D. Protopapadakis, and Georgios Arabatzis, 197-207 (Athens: The NKUA Applied Philosophy Research Lab Press, 2022), 198.

[39] Ibid., 205.

hering exclusively to it, the author concludes that "pure Reason, where the fundamental principles exist and can be discovered through self-conscience and experience, pre-supposes the ethical freedom of the rational mind so that it can discover its qualities through an intra-subjective journey."[40]

The last chapter of the volume is by Goran Rujević, and bears the title "Waxing Knowledge, Waning Moods," which is a rather poetic – but precise – depiction of the antinomies of contemporaneity, that boil down to being "at the threshold of the enlightened man's dream,"[41] and at the same time in need to explain "whence forth stems the discontentment of so many people."[42] The author seems to share Horkheimer's pessimistic – nevertheless, quite plausible – view that contemporaneity has failed to meet the high expectations it fostered, and has resulted in gradual dehumanization instead, due to "the manner in which knowledge is utilized [that is, because of] a misalignment between implementing knowledge outwardly […] and […] inwardly."[43] The author believes that "our arrival at the Moon […] nicely coincides with the shift from the modern view of knowledge to the more contemporary one," and sets out to trace the echoes of that shift in three landmark science-fiction works, to reach an implicitly optimistic conclusion.

As we did in the 1st volume of this series, we feel the need to mark once again at this point the distance that separates two noble intentions, that is, having great aspirations on the one hand, and meeting them on the other. Our wish is that this volume stands up to our expectations, as well as to those of the reader. We also hope that this series, as well as both the philosophical communities that support it, will maintain their definite critical and analytical drive.

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[40] Ibid., 206.

[41] Goran Rujević, "Waxing Knowledge, Waning Moods," in *Modernity and Contemporaneity*, eds. Evangelos D. Protopapadakis, and Georgios Arabatzis, 209-240 (Athens: The NKUA Applied Philosophy Research Lab Press, 2022), 210.

[42] Ibid., 211.

[43] Ibid., 218.

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The Post-modern and Modernity from the Point of View of the History of Philosophy

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Abstract: The article examines the irruption of post-modernity into modernity and in regard to the specific discipline of the history of philosophy. The first two perspectives for the study of the above mentioned relation are those of knowledge and power that permit the understanding of the process of historicizing philosophy. Of crucial significance is equally the element of phenomenological evidence or else the donation that delimits respectively the fields of phenomenology and philosophical constructivism. The phenomenological donation elaborated by Jean-Luc Marion constitutes a challenge to the cultural approach of constructivism in relation to the fact that the latter has become the major methodological horizon of the actual history of philosophy. The accusation that both the phenomenological donation and the philosophical constructivism direct against each other is the possible and troubling return of metaphysics either through donation or constructivism. The question that thus rises for the history of philosophy would be that of a possible renewed desire for metaphysics.
Keywords: modern; post-modern; knowledge; power; donation; phenomenology; constructivism; history of philosophy

I. Introduction

The final years of the 20th century were colored by a discussion concerning the post-modern era and its relation to modernity.[1] Different versions and ideas about this relation were advanced, moving from a kind of coextensive signification of the two terms to the idea of a total

[1] See Peter V. Zima, *Modern / Postmodern. Society, Philosophy, Literature* (London: Continuum, 2010).

rupture between the modernist project and the post-modern one. The epistemic field of the history of philosophy was also affected by this debate since the study of the relation of the different discourses was progressing from a kind of hierarchical codification toward the co-presence of various philosophical reasons to be apprehended through tolerant eyes and apart from any idea of axiological neutrality that would subjugate them to some form of instrumentality. Only the expressions of totality were to be set aside, especially those of the dialectical form. A co-Being of toleration and liberality was to be construed, quite apart from the discourses of totalization (dialectical or not).

There is also the conviction that the post-modern is to be placed inside the context of modernity since the latter remains the necessary ground for the success of the former. A first tension to be examined here, in regard to the history of philosophy and as to the presence of the post-modern within modernity, is the one between "archive" and "authority;" this has to be made on the limits of the philosophical requirements of our post-modern present. An even ontology like the one mentioned above, without sublime or profundity, requires consequently a reflection about the constant tension between abstraction and constitutionality within the historical philosophies. Up to now numerous philosophical finalities were inscribed within the context of the desirable life while the human passion should not be bound to any act of excess. Yet the unitary, transcendental archetypes were progressively abandoned either as distinct entities or as origins and in favor of multiplicity, either as individual desire or as situated co-Beings. The actual times, therefore, abandon both the speculative origination and the teleological views of the philosophical project. Time is immanentized in a most radical fashion and henceforth the prevailing idea is not that of the universe measured by high intellect but desiring motion and the tumult of the living beings while the rationalist mechanics is replaced by the rise of biotechnology. This is no doubt a new ontology of extremely radical immanence that refutes phenomenology or the autonomy of the phenomenon.

II. Knowledge

The element of relation constitutes the endless, finite and energetic constant factor that persistently creates new modes of ontological character. Yet, the post-modern tropism is not any kind of ontological reality but a temporary state of affairs and open possibilities for identifying differently its structure. Under the term "tropism," the modernist ontology expresses its immanent flatness in creating concepts (ontological extension) while the imaginary refers to nothing else than the decomposition of the mental mechanism that supported the old speculative ontologies.

However, the modernist ontology instead of being consumed in the critical extinction of idols proceeded to an attempt to construe a new episteme of dispositions and cognitions. In particular, a new science of the forms of representation was produced, in the light of the fact that the limit between presentation and representation had become particularly blurred so that the two terms, in the tradition of Nietzsche, appear as co-extant. If the modernist ontology reflects about being, the post-modern one is identified to the diagnostics of ontological symptoms where the whole point of the philosophical discussion is to embrace a new geometry of tropisms, i.e., without geometrical axioms of orientation – such refutation is to be seen in the Deleuzian rhizome.[2] The distinction between being and attributes was denounced as external to the world, against the idea of a being that was required to stay linked in an axiomatic manner to the attributes of the accidents and in order to be the being of beings; the modern being appeared mobile and ever-changing, vibrating along with the rhythms of life, coincidental and diversified. Actually, the post-modern being is mannered but its versions create knots of existence, relations rather than units or entities, in a non-deterministic way. Each

[2] See Simon O'Sullivan, *Art Encounters, Deleuze and Guattari. Renewing Philosophy* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), especially the chapter "Rhizomes, Machines, Multiplicities and Maps Notes Toward an Expanded Art Practice (Beyond Representation)," 9-37.

knot is the temporary center of a series of acts and actions and does not concern the intuition of causative, unique and essential beings.

In the post-modern ontology, power is the new center of ontological force. The being is action and behavior; the idea of power or rather the reality of power allows for the abolition of the need for surpassing the well-known tensions between rationality and metaphysics. The action follows encounters and interactions where the causality appears only *a posteriori*. The set of encounters and interactions is nothing more than the inventory of acts or, otherwise, an "archive" and thus we have the term "ontology of the archive."[3] The first record file of the archive is due to the thirst for knowledge, i.e., the will to survive of the archivist. Life is just a study of the violent and non-livable relationships of the co-Beings, i.e., the culture. The relationships of co-Beings are passionate, and the deep structure of their *pathos* is imitation while the passion is not drive but the field of imitative action. The co-Beings are not subjects but folds of power while the true being is nothing else than the joint space, the interactions and encounters of the so-called individuals. The archive ontology is in some respects the ontology of correlation. There is no desire without simulation as opposed to the older modernist view that there is no desire without prohibition and transgression; the simulation is nothing else than a mirroring game without reference. If we had to return to the idea of subjectivity, one should re-adopt a type of relationship between being and attributes or else a relationship of being and having while the totality of desire would be the desire to possess. Instead of establishing the relationships of unique entities (individuals), the research must turn to the history of becoming (a subject): how did I become what I am and how does the self becomes?

The diffuse, major politics of the living being is expansive and pervasive. The truth here is a strategy, a stake and an articulation of suffering and action. The living being is open, pierced

[3] See Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972).

by power, the subjective consciousness intersects with the elements of danger, experimentation and manipulation. The problem of the conscious choice will not be a priori since only the history is a priori. What does the care of the self may signify at this point? The philosophical iconology that takes the place of the old distinction between presentation and representation is a source of versions and varieties, a kind of teleology canceled. Normativity is the other name for the life-plans (narratives) of individuals. The choice of normativity meets the progression of the narrative. The substantial diffusion of power rises against the ideas of balance and harmony. The memory in the plural is nothing but the inter-personal memory of the life-narratives (otherwise, that which is popular).[4] The refutation here of the utilitarian vocabulary signifies a strong relationship between rupture and innovation. The iconological versions of a given culture are not structured rigidly, on the contrary they demonstrate the real elements of moral luck, the events and the errors of the co-Beings. The iconological versions are networked in order to avoid the tautological coincidence of one to the other. In regard to the relations of individuation and personalization, the subject should not be consumed in internal pursuits that are only the characteristic of regional modernism and in fact the products of iconological networking. The living being must always depend on power.

III. Power

The discursive practices of institutions are ubiquitous through the absolute difference between the events and their memorial formation. Instead of an omnipotent structure of (Freudian) censorship, we have the Nietzschean power of the weak. The diffusion of peripheral modernism re-unites the technique, the culture and consciousness where multiple narratives preclude the exception. The innovation of regional modernism is rising against the traditional ethos through the mechanism of erot-

[4] G. Arabatzis, "'Cosmos" et 'Politès': paradigmes païens et chrétiens," *Diotima* 40 (2012) : 193-198.

ic confessing and instead of the harmonious composition of the whole we have the seductions of diffusion. The strategy of the living being is therefore as much expansive as diffuse. The experience of the modernist transformation goes through urban desire and the normativity of life. The modernism becomes necessary and thus the sufferings of culture are reconciled with action. The practices of cultural *semiosis* may refer to Kafka's Penitentiary Colony or to the exile of Plato's poets, while the generalized *semiosis* opposes the romantic psychology. This strange duality of modernity and romanticism is due to the repulsion or memory. The technological radical immanence is a long canonized and thus forgotten historical process involving de-Christianization, humanism and the Enlightenment. The radical immanence is revealed in the heretical naturalism of the Marquis de Sade where the pleasure of matter is confided to all.

Ever since the first volume of the *History of Sexuality*, Foucault turns to a study of persistent asceticism, what he thinks of as the everlasting Victorian regime.[5] This can be seen in a Nietzschean style as a metaphor for the history of philosophy. It is Christianity that generates originally the modern forms of power, that is, the will to encompass a soul and an identity that can be corrected and transformed precisely by power. This means a process of continuous obedience and self-examination, the detailed confession of desires; these are the axes of force that that modern power invests. One can discern here the toils of the once supreme intellect. Foucault follows closely the parallelism of Christianity and history of philosophy as well as the brutal renunciation of Christianity by Nietzsche and in some ways the nostalgic return to the ancient Greeks and their care of the self. The genealogical analysis of the relation of Christianity to modernity gave birth to the problematizing rupture between self-control and sexuality that goes far beyond the Greek limits of the care of the self. Foucault in that also remains a true Nietzschean thinker. Instead of examining the spiritual uni-

[5] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*. Volume I: An Introduction (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978) 3ff.

verses like hermeneutical thinkers do, Foucault insists on concentrating upon the technologies of the self; instead of giving descriptions and interpretations, he insists on processes. The effects of power constitute a plunge into truth and the *epistemes* are the privileged concealed spaces for the development of the technologies of the self. A process is not, importantly, a dialectic evolution but the indeterminate history of violence and rupture. Foucault denies the idea of a coming-of-age novel of the human spirit like the Hegelian phenomenology, he stands against the history of ideas and moves toward a constructivist universe. The concept of technology of the self generates thus a series of interchangeable individualities.

IV. Donation

A collateral tension in the history of philosophy generated by the irruption of post-modernity into modernity is the one between time and subject. Nietzsche has criticized the philosophy of the western world as a kind of Christian Platonism based on the duality of consciousness and resentment. The Cartesian ego (*cogito*) is assumed by the being and in consequence by alienation while the duality idol-image becomes part of the movement of actuality. The idol objectifies the Godhead but the image reveals the negative theology of the distance from the divine. Thus, the apophaticism of the image goes beyond the Nietzschean critique of the Christian Platonism and Karl Barth's abyss between the humane and the divine. The phenomenon becomes a ground for anti-nihilistic thinking in the sense of figurative representation. Phenomena seem to be a kind of an unconditional gift (a phenomenal donation), a gratuitous appearing. The Husserlian phenomenology tries to relieve the phenomena from any metaphysical reductionism as much as from the Nietzschean perspectivism; the phenomena belong to an irreducible to psychology immanence of consciousness; in the sense of the above, a phenomenon is a donation to consciousness. Consciousness is not a condition of phenomena but the recipient of the donation of phenomena. The conscious intuition is

not an active faculty since the intuition exists only because there is the donation of phenomena. The fact that the consciousness is the consciousness of something (i.e. intentionality) must be understood in reference to the gift of manifestation. The donation, therefore, comes first and consciousness follows. The donation, however, is not the ground of phenomena since it is in itself exhausted in the phenomenon.

For Jean-Luc Marion, Husserl is a post-Nietzschean, but perhaps it would be more correct to say he is anti-Nietzschean. The phenomenological age, that is the world put in brackets, allows the identification of experience and immediate consciousness without any reductionism that would eliminate explicatively the phenomenon. No interpretative action can be more important than donation itself. The donation is not solely an act but a process, it is an endless donation which is revealed in a continuous intentional act. Yet, for Marion, the donation goes beyond intentionality which for Husserl remains the basic phenomenological structure. The superiority of the gift is, according to Marion, due to its a priori character; for him, the longer the phenomenological *epokhe* the more apparent becomes the donation which appears as a form of philosophical asceticism or philosophical fasting. Here one sees a critical difference with the idea of structure: for structuralism, the gift of appearance is a floating signifier. The floating signifier of manifestation seems to be the reason for dealing with the lack of meaning in the environing world or the *Lebenswelt*. Here lies the absurdity, the functionality and the epistemology of shamanism for Claude Lévi-Strauss.[6]

One question would be how the donation is combined with critical philosophy, especially the critical refutation of the virtue of wisdom by Kant in the context of his ethics, which is entangled in the repudiation of ancient aretaic ethics and in favor of the categorical imperative. For Marion, the donation is making everything clear and distinct. The consequences of the phenomenology of donation,

[6] Claude Lévi-Strauss, "The Sorcerer and his Magic," in Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, 167-185 (Middlesex: Penguin, 1963).

however, are different from those of the classical phenomenology. Furthermore, the phenomenology of donation is not associated to some radical ontology because the donation is considered as preceding being. The idea of donation imposes a transformation of phenomenology and ontology that is leading to a new philosophical era. The phenomenon, eventually, is identified with donation. The donation of phenomena releases them from any conscious activity, either supervision or understanding. Yet, it does not refer to any form of origin; whatever appears is to be understood in the sense of a given being. Even, the ontological difference is posterior to it. Thus, the donation goes beyond deconstruction.

It is no wonder that Derrida questioned the idea of a pure gift (pure in the critical sense, thus transcendental rather than transcendent). For Derrida, the pure gift cannot exist because it is given and thus is part of transaction economy and recognition, as in Hegel's *Phenomenology of the Spirit* according to Alexandre Kojève.[7] The gift is never pure, i.e. a donation, but it is part of a deferred fairness (as in the *Republic* of Plato where it comes with the establishment of the ideal constitution). Therefore, it is not pure irreducibility, as Marion claims, i.e., it belongs to a transaction. Marion argues that Derrida's idea of the gift is not about phenomenological donation; Derrida's gift, he adds, is anthropological and not phenomenological. Marion thus makes a move away from the sciences of man (*sciences de l'homme*), as opposed to Merleau-Ponty's dream of a conjunction of philosophy and the sciences of man[8] that gave French philosophy a prominent role in late 20th century thought. The donation for Marion cannot belong to an economy where the donation of the phenomenon produces an asymmetry since the mechanism of donation in itself remains undisclosed. The disclosing – undisclosing movement clearly points to Martin Heidegger, beyond any economy of recognition, in a completely anti-Hegelian manner. In

[7] Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit* (New York: Basic Books, 1969).

[8] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Phenomenology and the Sciences of Man," in Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*, 43-95 (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964).

this way, the economic cycle is broken. The donation of the phenomenon does not refer to any axiomatic anthropology, neither to the "donor," nor to the "given" nor to the one "accepting the gift." The donation is therefore non-reducible and self-referential. Marion comes to accuse Derrida for "metaphysicism," i.e., the reduction to foundations (economical-sociological-anthropological) and hence for a form of a philosophy of origins. Derrida, on the other hand, does not hesitate to accuse Marion also for "metaphysicism," i.e. the reduction to the immediacy of consciousness, which in fact would be very close to spiritualism.[9]

V. Conclusion

The irruption of post-modernity into modernity produced the relativization of the modernist project. The new epistemic field conquered by post-modern thought points to the introduction of the joint explicative axes of Knowledge and Power under a new light that transforms the ways that we conceive of the history of philosophy. The conjunction of philosophy with the sciences of man intended by Maurice Merleau-Ponty is challenged by the very idea of phenomenological donation promoted by Jean-Luc Marion. The opposition of Marion to Derrida in regard to donation marks a defiance to philosophical constructivism and some uncertainty as to the post-modern thought which can be thus perceived as a general relativization (beyond the relativizing of the modernist project).

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[9] See Jason W. Alvis, *Marion and Derrida on The Gift and Desire: Debating the Generosity of Things* (Cham: Springer, 2016).

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Modern Subjectivity and its History

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Abstract: The intention of this paper is to deliver some valuable insights upon the modern problems of practical philosophy and its correlation with modernity as such. Namely, we are interested in undeniable connection between the real social circumstances and actual moral and/or political theories. Although this connection – or these connections – truly is undeniable, its specific dimensions and relations aren't out of the question. In order to show characteristics of modern ethical life, it is necessary to compare it with earlier understandings of man's position in world. We will see that relations between moral and political purposes are prone to change during history of philosophy, although both are always understood as essential expressions of human will.
Keywords: modern; ancient; history; subjectivity; freedom; morals; philosophy

The concept of modernity is not self-evident. Of course, high-reaching concepts usually aren't. Its meaning largely depends on whether we are talking about modernity as such, or about more specific area, such as modern history, literature, science, philosophy etc. Yet, we can't actually analyze modern philosophy without analyzing modernity "as such" and all of the circumstances that moulded modern times. The truth is that modern philosophy is inseparable from *modernity*, and not just in the sense of Hegel's thesis that philosophy is a child of its time, but also in accordance with Adorno's attempt to "make the methodological point that we must try to overcome the sterile dichotomy between history and

its philosophical interpretation."[1] It is hard to decide whether revolution in thinking comes before the social revolution or after it. Was it necessary for different mode of self-understanding to arise in order to change real historical circumstances? Or the power of revolutionary changes all over the Europe indicated that old philosophies are not suitable for new circumstances? In both cases, the self-reflection of man and his redefining of basic social relations remained positively interconnected.

Ethics begins with Socrates. This is a usual way of interpreting history of ethics in the curriculums all around the world. Socrates role is of such a huge significance in history of morals, but also a history of mankind, that he is often being compared to Christ. And yet, if the stage wasn't already set for ethics to be born, maybe Socrates would be only known as unusual philosophical figure who had sort of a graphophobia (and was a remarkably ugly man).[2] Also, if Socrates is a father of ethics – maybe it's better to call him a mother, considering his maieutical method – the sophists were at least its uncles or aunts. It was necessary to determine that man is the measure of all things[3] before his true competences in measuring were to being investigated. Likewise, for a question of measure to be raised, it was absolutely necessary for social circumstances not only to allow that kind of question, but to encourage it. I assume that no one is that naive to believe that the sophists are really the first people ever who asked what is right and justice. I'm positively sure that in old Egypt, for example, many people asked if there is some kind of principle independent of pharaoh. Still, we do

[1] T. Adorno, *History and Freedom,* trans. R. Livingstone (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006), 40.

[2] Rawls says that "this is an aspect of history that Hegel emphasizes – that great men who had enormous effects on major events of history usually never understood the real significance of what they had done." J. Rawls, *Lectures on the History of Moral Philosophy* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2000), 348.

[3] According to Protagoras' famous statement (DK 80B1): "Of all things the measure is Man, of the things that are, that they are, and of the things that are not, that they are not."

not speak of old Egyptians as fathers of ethics. Why? Because historical circumstances haven't allowed them to raise their personal opinions into the moving force which will establish the new *Weltanschauung*.

Thus, the time must be prepared and mature enough for certain idea to flourish and ideas must "seize the day" and find their way into the mainstream discourse: "As for the individual, everyone is a son of his time; so philosophy also is its time apprehended in thoughts."[4] Philosophical apprehension of its time becomes more obvious as we move towards modernity. The breakage of classical Hellenic polis has shown that deeply collectivistic world couldn't stand the breach of subjective will into its core. In time that was about to come, beautiful Hellenic spirit, which strived towards a noble idea of being a good citizen of a good polis, transformed itself into the self-perceptive understanding of human will as almost buried in ethics. Paradoxically, ethics arises in the world of collective spirit and collective duties, in which the politics has its last word in matters of human behaviour and purposes. The concept of individual measuring and filtering of the general believes of justice had ruined the very root of collective idea of justice, as directed towards the wellbeing of polis. And yet, in the Hellenistic world, in which the unity of ethics and politics doesn't exist anymore, ethics itself becomes the true power of freedom, which will evolve into the infinite right to subjectivity. Of course, in those specific circumstances, that freedom is still only *internal*, but empowering of internal freedom and understanding the very essence of human being as internal freedom is a step towards the later understanding of freedom which must express itself in outer world in order for human being to confirm his own existence.

Although Fichte has "deduced the whole character of Modern Time"[5] from Christianity, Christian ethics is somewhat of *contradictio in adiecto*:

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[4] G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right,* trans. S. W. Dyde (Kitchener: Batoche Books, 2001), 19.

[5] J. G. Fichte, *Characteristics of the Present Age,* trans. W. Smith (Gloucester: Dodo Press, 2008), 174.

> In contrast with classical moral philosophy, the moral philosophy of the medieval Church is not the result of the exercise of free, disciplined reason alone. This is not to say that its moral philosophy is not true or that it is unreasonable; but it was subordinate to church authority and largely practised by the clergy and the religious orders in order to fulfil the Church's practical need for a moral theology.[6]

Ethics in fact can't stand any restrictions regarding its applicability onto human kind as a whole. Nonetheless, Christian ethics represents a significant "improvement" of relations between moral individuals. Now the main focus isn't anymore the question of my relation to myself, as, for example, in stoic philosophy, but my relation to Other (god) and others. By worshiping other beings, I simultaneously worship the god, so the "good morals" becomes the way of obeying god's will, not just nurturing my own freedom. The question of virtues and vices is experiencing its paroxysm and the problem of motivation is in the centre of attention. And precisely this problem of motivation, alongside with medieval concern for dissolution of conflict between the idea of human free will and god's providence, will become the focal point of the modern age, but from a rather different perspective.

In Luther's dispute with Erasmus, which is in a way a remake of Augustine's dispute with Pelagius,[7] it becomes obvious that question of Christian ethics had evolved into two separate directions, each of them setting its own way towards a modern epoch. While Protestantism strives to reach the lost unity of different levels of praxis through idea of *call* and priesthood of all believers, humanism tends to recreate antique understanding of complete human being whose will itself shall make a differ-

[6] Rawls, 6.

[7] Of course, social circumstances evolved enough to allow for both of these options to be plausible. Not without effort and fight, but both Protestantism and humanism have had the opportunity to develop, unlike pelagianism.

ence in the world(s). Luther thinks that there can be no good deed which can guarantee divinity, only faith will lead us to god. This concept is not directed against good deeds as such, but against the wrong motivation behind them. And eternal salvation proves itself as a wrong motivation for good deeds: "Ironically, Martin Luther, one of the most intolerant of men, turns out to be an agent of modern liberty."[8]

So the question of motivation becomes the most relevant question of modern ethics, alongside with the problem of freedom. It can be said that beginning of modern thinking of ethics shows similarity to epoch of sophists and Socrates. Ancients had to ask who the measurer was, so does the moderns. The great measurer – god – is no longer the measure of all things; man must again take that roll to himself. And just like Socrates tended to find firm ground which can resist to relativizations, so must the modern philosopher. Still, the overgrowing power of natural sciences makes philosophical efforts much harder in modern epoch because philosophers are now cut off from the great unity of investigation of world. Newton still names his explorations "philosophy," but in modern world philosophy will become separated from sciences, and man will be separated from philosophy:

> One could say that what differentiates ancient from modern philosophy is the fact that, in ancient philosophy, it was not only Chrysippus or Epicurus who, just because they had developed a philosophical discourse, were considered philosophers. Rather, every person who lived according to the precepts of Chrysippus or Epicurus was every bit as much a philosopher as they.[9]

When Luther asks all men to be preachers, he is – in certain amount – reviving that antique moment of which Hadot

[8] Rawls, 348.

[9] P. Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life,* trans. M. Chase (Cambridge, MA, and Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 272.

speaks. But modern times treats philosophy as a sort of a spinster cousin who lives in past and is utterly outdated.[10] In such circumstances, philosophers at first took the *easier* or more obvious way – they themselves reached for natural sciences and its models of interpretation of reality. Although this approach has made possible for nature to become something substantial, rather than just a product of god, it also has made almost impossible to develop a systematic moral theory.

We will consult Descartes' conception as an example. In Descartes' philosophy, primary *method* of apprehending reality isn't any more faith, but the exact opposite: doubt is the only acceptable approach. What remains after *scepsis* is the pure thinking, the very core of subjectivity. Nonetheless, pure thinking remains not only after sceptical method, but beyond it. Subject is now in the centre of the Universe, subject understood as pure thinking, but the mechanism that stands in the ground of the subject's self-understanding remains hidden. In the conception that defines two substances as parallel and not mediate with one another except through divine intervention, it isn't possible to maintain moral as anything but obscure fluctuation between *perfect* and *provisory* moral concept. The "provisional moral code" that Descartes formed for himself, consisted of "only three or four" maxims:

> The first was to obey the laws and customs of my country, and to adhere to the religion in which God

[10] "The great intellectual revolution of the seventeenth century which brought to light modern natural science was a revolution of a new philosophy or science against traditional (chiefly Aristotelian) philosophy or science. But the new philosophy or science was only partly successful. The most successful part of the new philosophy or science was the new natural science [...] By virtue of its victory, the new natural science became more and more independent of philosophy, at least, apparently, and even, as it were, became an authority for philosophy." Leo Strauss, and Joseph Cropsey, "Introduction," in *History of Political Philosophy,* eds. Leo Strauss, and Joseph Cropsey (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 1.

> by His grace had me instructed from my childhood, and to govern myself in everything else according to the most moderate and least extreme opinions, being those commonly received among the *wisest* of those with whom I should have to live; […] My second maxim was to be as firm and resolute in my actions as I could, and to follow no less constantly the most doubtful opinions, once I had opted for them, than I would have if they had been the most certain ones; […] My third maxim was to endeavour always to master myself rather than fortune, to try to change my desires rather than to change the order of the world, and in general to settle for the belief that there is nothing entirely in our power except our thoughts, and after we have tried, in respect of things external to us, to do our best, everything in which we do not succeed is absolutely impossible as far as we are concerned; […] Finally, as a conclusion to this moral code, I decided to review the various occupations that men have in this life, in order to try to select the best one. Without wishing to pass judgement on the occupations of others, I came to the view that I could do no better than to continue in the one in which I found myself, that is to say, to devote my life to the cultivation of my reason and make such progress as I could in the knowledge of the truth following the method I had prescribed for myself.[11]

This provisional moral code is specific mixture of earlier ethical beliefs. Descartes' morality demands a man who is good citizen (but without a question of "goodness" of his country), true believer, consistent and constant in his actions, more willing to change himself than to change the world, and, finally, ready to fulfil platonic ideal of justice as a doing one's own.[12] Here

[11] R. Descartes, *A Discourse on the Method*, trans. Ian Maclean (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 21-24.

[12] Plato, *The Republic,* trans. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 2016),

we can see that moral consciousness is not capable to follow the same route of doubt and reach the goal of self-consciousness as "regular" one. The root of this incapability should be searched in hypostasis of theory over the praxis, which itself is the consequence of mathematization of philosophy. Spinoza's philosophy also shows that dogmatic position with only one substance can't give birth to legitimate moral conception, if the main assumption is *deterministic*. Neither Descartes nor Spinoza offers a possibility for human freedom as a mixture of rational and irrational element. Yet, this snowball of subjectivity as a self-made and self-guided entity will lead to avalanche that will transform ethics permanently.

Beside this current of *naturalization* in modern thinking, which doesn't show itself as particularly fruitful in the domain of practical philosophy, there is another, much more convenient for development of philosophy of praxis. This current has its roots in objective circumstances of transformation of feudal society into liberalistic paradigm. Most of philosophies of Modern Age find their objective in dissolution of a knot of feudal relicts, through the discussion on the questions of human nature and its role in political engagement. If human nature is intrinsically good, as Lock argued,[13] then legislation is necessary

433a-b. "Surely we set down and often said, if you remember, that each one must practice one of the functions in the city, that one for which his nature made him naturally most fit"; "this – the practice of minding one's own business – when it comes into being in a certain way, is probably justice."

[13] He defines the state of nature as "a state also of equality, wherein all the power and jurisdiction is reciprocal, no one having more than another, there being nothing more evident than that creatures of the same species and rank, promiscuously born to all the same advantages of Nature, and the use of the same faculties, should also be equal one amongst another, without subordination or subjection, unless the lord and master of them all should, by any manifest declaration of his will, set one above another, and confer on him, by an evident and clear appointment, an undoubted right to dominion and sovereignty." J. Locke, *Two Treatises of Government,* The Works of John Locke, vol. V (London: Thomas Tegg), 106.

for a private property to be guaranteed. If, on the other hand, human nature is in itself egoistic and hostile, like Hobbes believes,[14] then we need laws for protection of life itself. In both cases, lawful regimes that stand on the grounds of ideas of freedom and equality are being seen as a *conditio sine qua non* of social life. The most important question, therefore, isn't directed towards moral character and virtues, but towards political structures. What is happening in a dawn of a new epoch is actually on the other side of spectre regarding Hellenistic epoch. While in Hellenistic epoch whole range of human practical life was withdrawn in morality, in modern age political activity is sphere which absorbs in itself the whole experience of human freedom.

That kind of turn was inevitable. Firstly, the gain of inner freedom, which was attained in Hellenistic ethics, still had its mayor worth. A medieval transformation of cause of morality hasn't influenced the principle of internal freedom in a great deal. It means that devotion to permanent building of one's own character remains plausible cause, even if its *final* cause is determined in relation with transcendence. These circumstances have allowed modern theoreticians to be a bit insensitive when it comes to the question of final purpose of morals, considering the fact that its plausible cause was still plausible. Rawls defines it in this way:

> Let's agree that there is this difference between ancient and modern moral philosophy. So, to conclude, we say: the ancients asked about the most rational way to true happiness, or the highest good, and they inquired about how virtuous conduct and the virtues as aspects of character – the virtues of courage and temperance, wisdom and justice, which are themselves good – are related to that highest good, whether as means, or as constituents, or both. Where-

[14] Although he claims that government is necessary not because man is naturally bad, but because he is by nature more individualistic than social.

> as the moderns asked primarily, or at least in the first instance, about what they saw as authoritative prescriptions of right reason, and the rights, duties, and obligations to which these prescriptions of reason gave rise. Only afterward did their attention turn to the goods these prescriptions permitted us to pursue and to cherish.[15]

Secondly, actual political circumstances were of such a revolutionary nature that they have absorbed most of the practical philosophical strivings. In other words, question on possibility of learning the individual virtue was largely overshadowed by a much more urgent question: What should we do with our society?

Plato is motivated by the same intention and his *Republic* tends to answer on exactly the same question – what Helens should do with their society. But context of that question is quite different. Plato is trying to discover what individual justice is, and that quest leads him into the discussion on general, political justice. He tends to show that moral character and (just) organization of state are inseparable. On a contrary, modern thinkers are trying to prove that *just* organization of the state is almost undependable of human character – good men or not, they all must live in a good state. As mentioned above, Hobbes and Locke can't be more different in their definitions of human beings in "natural state." However, they are both utterly convinced that social contract is necessary: "The mere social instinct implies a conscious purpose of security for life and property; and when society has been constituted, this purpose becomes more comprehensive."[16] Thus, it is urgent to define what the grand elements of sociality are, and grand elements of individuality can be left for individuals to work on.

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[15] J. Rawls, *Lectures on the History of Moral Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 2000), 2.

[16] G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (Kitchener: Batoche Books, 2001), 39.

Modern western societies are anchored in this soil even in contemporary circumstances. What are you going to do with your own moral character is up to you, as long as you are respecting what is defined as freedom of others. No more, no less. Your moral character is a space of your infinite subjectivity and society – state – would not interfere, unless you directly endanger some of the state rules. How different is this picture compared to Plato's! Paradox is that Plato's own work enabled this kind of dissolution. If it wasn't for his attempt to strengthen Socrates' conception of subjective will, it wouldn't be possible for subjective will to become purpose by itself, parallel to general purpose but not subjected to it. As Adorno notes:

> Modern history begins with the discovery of the individual, and this has a quite different pathos and what might be called a quite different three-dimensionality form the manifestation of individuality in antiquity.[17]

Modern states are built on the principle of subjective freedom as a necessary element. Objective of the state is to make individual freedom untouchable at the widest possible range, bordering it only with other individual freedoms. That is the concept of modern liberal democracy. As we saw, the roots of this state of the affairs could be found in ancient Greece and "discovery" of the subjective will, i.e., discovery of morals. Ever since the subjective will has shown its head from the eggshell of Greek *ethical life*, it was meant for it to become the most powerful force of one's self-confirmation. And yet, it has been years and centuries until both social circumstances and philosophical reflections recognized individual freedom and freedom of believes as the most important task of every society:

> [...] That a State is then well constituted and internally powerful, when the private interest of its citizens is

[17] Adorno, *History and Freedom,* 86.

> one with the common interest of the State; when the one finds its gratification and realization in the other. [...] The epoch when a State attains this harmonious condition, marks the period of its bloom, its virtue, its vigor, and its prosperity.[18]

Of course, whole of this perspective is in its roots Hegelian: if we accept the thesis that people don't have the idea of freedom, but they *are* that idea, then all transformations in history must lead to conscience of one's own freedom as essential objective of development of the spirit: "The History of the world is none other than the progress of the consciousness of Freedom."[19] And all endeavours, transformations, negations and contradictions are part of the same work of the spirit on his way to freedom. From such perspective, what seems as a paradox is simply the way of transforming the apparent necessity into the freedom.

Philosophers of rationalism thought that there can't be anything in experience which wasn't in the mind before. Philosophers of empiricism thought exactly the opposite. Neither option was productive enough for the moral philosophy. Kant was the one who broke the vicious circle of oppositions of mind and experience, necessity and freedom, determinism and indeterminism.[20] He has shown that every option has its own field of competence. Taken isolated from one another, they couldn't be successful, neither of them can't be the whole truth. Nature and freedom both have their own fields of *extension*. Freedom

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[18] Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, 38-39.

[19] Ibid., 33.

[20] Although Adorno claims that in certain respect Kant himself is a rationalist, precisely: "I have already argued that in this respect Kant is to be found in the mainstream of modern rationalist thought because he infers even the existence of God form reason, which is identical with the moral law, and does not postulate God as an absolute." T. Adorno, *Problems of Moral Philosophy*, ed. Thomas Schröder, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 85.

can't beat the gravity, for example. But gravity also can't determine human actions.

It is quite simple, actually. I can decide to fly – jump through my window and fly away. The decision is within the competence of my free will. But fulfilment of my intention, transforming this decision into the real act, must come under the laws of nature. Freedom allows me to decide that I want to jump through window and fly, but gravity has the last word. And both realms can and must exist together. Natural laws can't make my will to be obedient, but my will can't ignore the laws of nature, although it can understand natural laws and find the way to use them in its favour. That is a huge lesson of development of natural sciences in modernity and the true significance of this development for morality. My decision to fly is absurd, because my body can't fly, and yet – my will to fly can use natural laws in my favour and help me to make an airplane, so that my will to fly can be satisfied. Thus, the will has certain advantage to nature, i.e., practical reason has certain advantage to speculative one.

Maybe it looks like oversimplification of Kant's conception. Of course, we do not have intention to claim that primacy of practical reason tells us merely that men's will can find the way to subject the nature to itself. Nevertheless, primacy does also lead to that conclusion.

> Thus, in the union of pure speculative with pure practical reason in one cognition, the latter has primacy, assuming that this union is not *contingent* and discretionary but based a priori on reason itself and therefore *necessary*. For, without this subordination a conflict of reason with itself would arise, since if they were merely juxtaposed (coordinate), the first would of itself close its boundaries strictly and admit nothing from the latter into its domain, while the latter would extend its boundaries over everything and, when its need required, would try to include the for-

> mer within them. But one cannot require pure practical reason to be subordinate to speculative reason and so reverse the order, since all interest is ultimately practical and even that of speculative reason is only conditional and is complete in practical use alone.[21]

Primacy of practical reason enabled both Fichte and Hegel to move towards the idea of freedom as productive force. Thinking is no longer subordinated to will, they are both only expressions of freedom and only world is the one that man produces. In Kant's philosophy, world is still divided onto phenomenal and noumenal, but latter philosophers will erase demarking line between them and define human conscience as an ultimate productive force. First move towards this solution was made into Kant's thesis that practical reason has primacy over the speculative one.

In our flying example, speculative reason helps us to understand that jumping through the window would be at least very painful, but it is practical reason that helped us to invent airplanes. And what this got to do with modernity? Everything. The very concept of modernity can't be properly understood if it isn't for this turnover. For centuries, *being* was prior to what *ought to be*. Descartes' intervention made subjective form the only certain form. We can doubt in everything, except in the fact that we are in the process of doubting. This act of subjectivity is even more radical by its consequences than that of Socrates. Socrates' invention of subjective will was 'only' of practical nature, it made changes into the world of social relations. Modern concept of subjectivity extends itself onto the *whole* reality. So Protagoras' claim, that man is the measure of all things, in modern philosophy gets its complete fulfilment. Now the subject produces its own objectivity, in every meaning.

Of course, the road that leads from doubt in reality to concept of production of reality by subject was neither simple nor

[21] I. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason,* in *Practical Philosophy. The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant,* trans. by Mary J. Gregor (London and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), A 5:121.

straightforward. It took a great effort to overcome an absolute belief in objectivity and abandon the pattern of knowledge in which thinking is merely a reflection of what actually exists. On that road, there are many stations and also many sideways, alongside with frightening landscapes of ever-growing freedom. Modern man is left to himself. He has no god or gods, no general beliefs or customs that will guide him through life without him needing to question them. He produces his own world and his own freedom; nothing is given to him as a firm ground that remains undoubted. Nature, society, science, philosophy equally are the product of consciousness and latter the product of self-consciousness. Modern man can't blame it on god, nature, obvious truth etc. It is only his very own freedom he can blame for every mistake, badly organized state, poor marriage, poverty, destroy of nature, lack of human rights. It is an unprecedented burden on his shoulders.

The opening sentence of Rousseau's *The Social Contract* summarizes this painful experience of modernity. "Man was born free and everywhere he is in chains."[22] And what is even more painful, these chains prove to be of a self-made sort. But what is important is that one who knows how to make chains also must know how to break them.

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[22] J-J. Rousseau, *The Social Contract and the First and Second Discourses,* ed. Susan Dunn (New Haven and London: Yale University, 2002), 156.

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Hans-Georg Gadamer and the Contemporaneity of Classical Greek Philosophy

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Abstract: This paper examines Philosophical Hermeneutics – in the way it was established by Hans-Georg Gadamer – as an original philosophical current of the 20th century which on the one hand relies on the preexisting practice of interpretation in the humanities as well as in nearly all fields of social interaction but on the other hand has a specifically philosophical significance as it emerged out of an attempt to solve in a synthetic manner a crucial problem already posed by the antecedent Neo-Kantian School(s), namely the problem of the specificity and the autonomy of philosophy towards exact sciences. After outlining the main traits of Philosophical Hermeneutics we try to highlight an important dimension of its relevance in today's world by focusing on the way it develops an essentially dialogical approach to truth through an updated understanding of key elements of Plato's dialectics and Aristotle's ethics.
Keywords: philosophical hermeneutics; method; classical Greek philosophy; tradition; dialogue; dialectics; phronesis; contemporaneity

Hans-Georg Gadamer has gone down in the history of philosophy – beyond any doubt – as the founder and the key figure in the development of twentieth century philosophical hermeneutics. Initially trained in neo-Kantian scholarship and a little later in classical philology but also decisively and profoundly influenced by the fundamental ontology of Martin Heidegger,[1] he developed a distinctively and

[1] Noteworthy is also that in the introduction to his *Truth and Method* Gadamer seems obliged to state his indebtedness towards major philosophical

thoroughly dialogical approach to certain philosophical issues, grounded in Platonic-Aristotelian thinking as well as in central elements of major currents of the German philosophical tradition. We will attempt to give a brief account of the main traits of his philosophical standpoint in order to subsequently examine, in connection with its strongly present ancient Greek origins, its relevance for a necessarily open-minded approach to contemporaneous problems and challenges.

I. Origin and orientation of Gadamer's hermeneutics

Hermeneutics in general existed already before Gadamer and can be grosso modo defined as a discipline of implemented theory which aims to interpret certain notions, concepts and ideas or even whole texts considered as parts of a broad written tradition. This kind of intellectual activity is essentially proper to the science of jurisprudence, to the Biblical exegesis or to the reception and understanding of classical literature.[2] What eminently distinguishes Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics from other currents and tendencies which deal with older texts is his proclaimed

figures of his time as regards certain aspects of his own approach: Husserl is thus praised for the conscientiousness of his phenomenological description, Dilthey for his conception of the historicity of all philosophizing and finally Heidegger for the deep interconnection of both impulses. Cf. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, Second Revised Edition, trans. Joel Weinsheimer, and Donald G. Marshall (London and New York: Continuum 2004), xxiv; German original: Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode, Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr – Paul Siebeck, 1990), 5. For a concrete account of the differences between the similar programs of Heidegger and Gadamer cf. Jean Grondin, *Von Heidegger zu Gadamer, Unterwegs zur Hermeneutik* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2001), 81-99. As regards the older and – at least for him – more influential figures of the philosophical tradition, Gadamer mentions Greek antiquity, Kant and Hegel; cf. Kai Hammermeister, *Hans-Georg Gadamer* (Munich: Verlag C. H. Beck, 2006), 93.

[2] Cf. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, xx-xxi; Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, 1-2; Chris Lawn, *Gadamer. A Guide for the Perplexed* (London and New York: Continuum, 2006), 44-46; Grondin, *Von Heidegger zu Gadamer*, 17.

intention to actualize the valuable elements of written tradition[3] in connection with the historically determined self-consciousness of the interpreter;[4] in other words, hermeneutics is constantly striving to make the implicit sense of the texts explicit and even, as Gadamer puts it, to let the language of the texts speak to us as contemporary interpreters.[5]

In order to achieve this goal Gadamer does not just declare solemnly and superficially the importance of the highly praised classical texts – with which he is at any rate accustomed as a professional – but he posits and develops at various levels certain presuppositions from a systematic point of view. We will attempt to outline these presuppositions while trying to show the main ways in which they are mutually interconnected.

First of all, we should keep in mind that Gadamer was concerned with the question of the autonomy of philosophy and the human sciences in general. Apart from the plausible biographical background of this concern – the author himself hints in his *Philosophische Lehrjahre* (*Philosophical Apprenticeships*) that his interests had been shaped partly out of his quest for emancipation from his father's legacy, who was a Professor of Pharmaceutical Chemistry and considered his colleagues in the humanities to be idly talking professors (*Schwätzprofessoren*)[6] – it has been on

[3] "Even the most genuine and pure tradition does not persist because of the inertia of what once existed. It needs to be affirmed, embraced, cultivated." Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 282; Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, 286.

[4] Gadamer sees historical tradition in general as a "forum (...) to which we all belong." Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, xxiv; Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, 5.

[5] Cf. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Der Anfang der Philosophie* (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1996), 143, 169.

[6] Cf. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Philosophische Lehrjahre* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1995), 9-10, 15. "Isaiah Berlin's notion that all seminal thinkers essentially effect parricide by seeking to kill the ideas of a symbolic or actual father may be a helpful thought" when we seek to determine the profound motivation of Gadamer's orientation, although on the other hand it would be "an oversimplistic judgment" to accuse him

the other hand of decisive importance that at about the same time, i.e. in the first decades of the 20th century, this very issue stood in the epicenter of theoretical discussions within the German academia: It was at that time that the Neo-Kantians tried to gain support for their position that the philosophy should be concerned with a differentiated range of functions and activities that were taken to be quite distinguishable from the main job of the (natural) sciences, with special emphasis upon the determination of the values necessary for the sustainability of culture as a whole. This means that within the spectrum of Neo-Kantianism most of its representatives sought for the philosophy a role substantially complementary to the equivalent one of the sciences.[7] A certain turn – which essentially pointed to the limits of this current – was brought about by Wilhelm Dilthey, who dealt systematically with the issue of the autonomy of human sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*) and made some further distinctions in this direction, to the extent that he introduced the element of understanding (*Verstehen*) as the key interest of the humanities.[8]

as a philosopher "of being anti-science." Lawn, *Gadamer. A Guide for the Perplexed*, 18.

[7] This failure to secure an autonomous position for philosophy concerns in different ways both Neo-Kantian schools: On the one hand most representatives of the Marburg School considered the methods of the exact sciences to be the source of inspiration for philosophy as well, which obviously meant a degradation of philosophy. On the other hand, the Southwest (Baden) School tried to develop a philosophy of culture along the notion of values (*Werte*) that would encompass all particular fields and disciplines of knowledge; this step at first sight opened the way for a peaceful and respectful coexistence between philosophy and science. The problem lay in the fact that the main notions and distinctions of this School did not substantially include the dimension of time and temporality in the development of thought. This meant in fact that they remained attached to a point of view common among most scientists in their habitual practice but unproductive for philosophy. Cf. Hans-Ludwig Ollig, "Einleitung," in *Neukantianismus. Texte der Marburger und der Südwestdeutschen Schule, ihrer Vorläufer und Kritiker*, ed. Hans-Ludwig Ollig, 46-51 (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam Jun., 1982).

[8] Cf. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 225-226; Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*,

Gadamer on his part recognizes Dilthey's approach as valuable but he sees its main weakness in its failure to eliminate the dependence of the humanities on requirements of external origin, for when Dilthey talks about the necessity of establishing a sound method for the humanities, as a prerequisite which would enable them to secure the status of sciences deserving this name, this amounts – according to Gadamer – to the fact that he quits prematurely the struggle for the autonomy of his own field inasmuch as he tries to solve a problem posed outside the scope of the humanities themselves.[9]

Gadamer's own approach consists in mainly showing that humanities and especially philosophy do actually operate on the basis of their own way to conceive the truth without having previously solved all their methodological problems *in abstracto* and in advance. He insists that in reality the point of departure – inherent in any philosophy worth talking of – is a conception of truth not always finely elaborated but nonetheless actual, practically relevant and historically effective, without which the immediately visible function of philosophy – and in consequence of the whole culture in general – would be practically unimaginable. This is par excellence the case with three special fields where mental activity is somehow involved:

a. firstly, with the work of art, whose initial and final perception relies decisively upon individually differentiated capacities and subjective points of view, but on the other hand it does not lose its main "objectively" existing characteristics over the diversity of its reception. Gadamer argues against the Kantian "subjectivization of aesthetics"[10] in the sense that in the long run it confines our relation to works of art to the attainment

235-236.

[9] Cf. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 232-235; Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, 243-246.

[10] Cf. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 37ff; Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, 48ff.

of a "heightened state of individual feeling"[11] while overseeing that art is actually a special field of human creativity that enables a distinct relation of humans to truth, revealing and concealing at the same time.[12]

b. secondly, Gadamer considers history to be a constitutive source of hermeneutic experience. The historicity of understanding is an important viewpoint of the philosophical hermeneutics and consists in the double insight that any act of understanding has a necessarily historical dimension as it refers to preceding forms of thought and secondly through its very externalization becomes a part of history in itself.[13] The singularity of any act and any form of understanding constitutes a specific horizon, a modus of seeing reality within distinctive and unavoidable limits which nevertheless are themselves movable[14] and thus subject to influences from external factors and from history as a whole. The constant and though dynamic relations between the subject and the object of interpretation constitute the pragmatic condition of what Gadamer calls history of effect or effective history (*Wirkungsgeschichte*) and lead to his demand of the development of the appropriate consciousness.[15] The diversity of several forms of understanding on the other hand is the primordial condition for transcending them and bringing about

[11] Lawn, *Gadamer. A Guide for the Perplexed*, 87.

[12] Cf. ibid., 90.

[13] "If we are trying to understand a historical phenomenon from the historical distance that is characteristic to our hermeneutical situation, we are always already affected by history." Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 300; Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, 305.

[14] This refers back to important insights Husserl's and Nietzsche's. Cf. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 237-238, 301; Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, 250, 307.

[15] Cf. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 299ff.; Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, 305ff.; effective history means in any case an enlargement of the initial horizon of the interpreted text – cf. Hammermeister, *Gadamer*, 66.

their convergence – at least through intersubjective and at the same time substantial communication and exchange.

c. the third major pillar of Gadamer's hermeneutics is his stance towards language. Herein lies an essential part of Gadamer's philosophical standpoint; he actually deals with language as a central factor of understanding inasmuch as every interpretive practice is by necessity linguistically articulated and mediated (a dimension termed as linguisticality or *Sprachlichkeit*). This opens up possibilities of concrete considerations of the philosophical and cultural phenomena and goes along with Gadamer's detachment from any inclination to abstract methodology. Gadamer's manifest intention consists in developing a theoretical stance aiming at the concrete examination of any particular case as such without on the other hand leaving the way open to subjectivism and relativism. He has a strong and proclaimed sense for intersubjectivity instead as he puts forward his notion of the fusion of horizons (*Horizontenverschmelzung*) as the outcome or the flexible result of the interdependence of the singularity and the diversity of the many possible and actual acts of understanding.[16]

In general terms, Gadamer develops his philosophy upon the fundamental tendency of humans to understand their own world or the world they live in (i.e. their *Lebenswelt*) by steadily forming and transforming their proper conception(s). This process takes place from the starting point of certain judgments which generally prove to be of vital importance regarding the orientation in life. This kind of judgments was also considered as indispensable by Immanuel Kant in his third "Critique" in terms of a special encounter of theoretical and practical philosophy and this is a crucial stance that Gadamer also takes up in the perspective of

[16] Cf. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 385ff.; Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, 387ff.

substantially pursuing his main goal of a major project of philosophical autonomy, so to say. The internationally acknowledged German philosopher analyzes critically and systematically the conditions and presuppositions of the judgments which form our understanding – that is our way of grasping the truth and coming to terms with the surrounding world – in its concrete function. An obviously important role in this process is played according to our philosopher by early or preliminary forms of judgment (termed as pre-judgments [*Vor-urteile*], not necessarily constituting prejudices, i.e. ways of conception that are impeding our understanding) which on the one hand are deeply rooted in the dominant views and on the other they serve as the initial stages of what in the further course of the process of understanding tends to become an elaborate form of our mental relationship to reality – on the condition that we make use of our ability to reflect upon them. It should be noted that the apparent partial acceptance of uncritical and immature points of view according to Gadamer is connected with a positive stance towards philosophical tradition as a whole; this stance has nothing to do with an undifferentiated syncretism or eclecticism and as such it remains essential for the activation of our thinking on the basis of the fundamental insight that we are part(s) of the tradition we live in whether we are conscious of it or not.[17] Other approaches, for instance "a purely theoretical attitude to the world, in the manner of Descartes and subsequent philosophers, may well be possible but it must not be taken to be fundamental," because "it depends upon a more basic relationship to the world."[18] This more ba-

[17] A possibly negative consequence of this stance could be a certain conservatism towards cultural authorities (not only) of the past. For Chris Lawn "Gadamer's work is conservative in a literal sense of 'keeping', but what is kept, the tradition, is not unchanging and frozen in the past but constantly making its claim upon the present and the future." Lawn, *Gadamer. A Guide for the Perplexed*, 25.

[18] Ibid., 56-57. From the hermeneutical point of view the critical stance to classical rationalism results from the insight that "the transparency of consciousness is anything but a certain and incontestable point of departure." Jean Grondin, *The Philosophy of Gadamer*, trans. K. Plant (Chesham:

sic relationship is the "hermeneutical circle," i.e. the unavoidable shift of understanding from the parts to the whole and vice versa, a process that can also be reconstructed as "the interpretive projection of Dasein upon the world in the form of individual projects and activities and the background fore-structure that informs the projects and is in constant movement with them."[19]

II. The constructively dialogical search for truth and its significance

After having outlined these basic assumptions of Gadamer's hermeneutics and having reached the intermediate conclusion that for the German philosopher the inherited culture is firmly and concretely inscribed into his *Weltanschauung* we are now able to focus on a certain conception which may result from the philosopher's attitude to the past – especially to classical Greek philosophy – but on the other hand it connects past and present in an essentially practical manner. If the task of hermeneutics is to revive tradition within present discourse independently of the constraints of a strict implementation of scientific method, it might seem at first sight that its adherents do not have to be particularly selective while studying what has come down in written form to them. This is actually to some extent the case because hermeneutics, due to its distanced relationship to habitual methodological exigencies, must in fact show an open-minded stance towards various currents and schools of thought without scholastically dealing with their content and without subjecting them to exhaustive formal controls. But apart from this fundamental openness, hermeneutics has indeed some privileged partners in its deeply dialogical understanding of philosophizing and

Acumen, 2003), 2. For Gadamer, accordingly, it is tradition that plays a fundamental role in shaping our worldview for it "has a justification that lies beyond rational grounding and in large measure determines our institutions and attitudes." Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 282; Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, 285.

[19] Lawn, *Gadamer. A Guide for the Perplexed*, 57.

the classical Greek and especially the Athenian Philosophy is for certain reasons one of the most important among them – in Gadamer's interpretation – due to its very approach to the role of dialogue in unfolding and manifesting the essence of philosophy or – in a less traditionalist terminology – in focusing on the originality of concrete intersubjective achievements.

As the philosopher points out in his *Der Anfang der Philosophie* (*The Beginning of Philosophy*) and in other writings related to Ancient Greek Philosophy, the Greeks did not know some key conceptual distinctions and oppositions of Modern Philosophy – such as the distinction between spirit and matter or, more importantly, the difference between the knowing subject and the known or knowable object[20]: therefore it is exactly along these traits that Greek Philosophy proves to be essentially compatible with crucial attempts to surpass the narrowness or even the deadlocks of modernity – and hereby Gadamer has mainly the Hegelian[21] and the Heideggerian Philosophy in mind. But what is mostly important on the route of discovering and bringing to the forefront the rather neglected treasures of the Greek legacy is the way Gadamer develops his conception of constructive and historically effective discourse.[22]

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[20] Cf. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Der Anfang der Philosophie*, 89; Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Der Anfang des Wissens* (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1999), 154-156; Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Beginning of Knowledge*, trans. Rod Coltman (London and New York: Continuum, 2001), 121-122.

[21] Such an approach is also facilitated by the viewpoint that even the complex and elaborate Hegelian conceptual constructions have an intrinsically dialogical character – considering both the context that led to their emergence as well as their concrete inner connections. Cf. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 362-363; Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, 375.

[22] Gadamer succeeded with his mature work in delivering original interpretations of the Platonic (and subsequently of the Aristotelian) philosophy by focusing on the importance of the dialogues as such. "The standard view that Plato's work defends a universalist account of truth is challenged by Gadamer's stress upon the provisional, tentative and fallible nature of human knowledge and that the dialogue makes this position apparent." Lawn, *Gadamer. A Guide for the Perplexed*, 26. Far from any dogmatism and

Such positions underscore indirectly the importance of the principle βοηθεῖν τῷ λόγῳ, upon which Plato insists a lot, while considering it as an important guideline.[23] By this principle – literally translated it means to support, to enhance or to promote the (strength of the) argument – it is implied that the partner of the dialogue must overcome any selfish and short-sighted intentions and, instead of that, intensify his efforts to grasp the strong points of the argument and consequently concentrate on what can bring the whole procedure some steps further. So in the end the stated principle comes to bring about not only a stronger argument as an achievement of one or the other interlocutor but in general an upgrade of the discourse as a whole.[24] It is clear that

any antiquarian interest, Greek Antiquity as a whole lives on through the persisting dialogue it initiated through the ages; cf. Hammermeister, *Gadamer*, 93, 105 – especially on the significance of Plato's dialogues cf. James Risser, "Gadamer's Plato and the Task of Philosophy," in *Gadamer verstehen / Understanding Gadamer*, eds. Mirko Wischke, and Michael Hofer, 87-100 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2003).

[23] Cf. Thomas Alexander Szlezák, *Platon lesen* (Stuttgart: frommann-holzboog, 1993), 85.

[24] "A person who possesses" the art of questioning "will himself search for everything in favor of an opinion. Dialectic consists not in trying to discover the weakness of what is said, but in bringing out its real strength. It is not the art of arguing (which can make a strong case out of a weak one) but the art of thinking (which can strengthen objections by referring to the subject matter. The unique and continuing relevance is due to this art of strengthening, for in this process what is said is continually transformed into the uttermost possibilities of its rightness and truth, and overcomes all opposition that tries to limit its validity." Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 361; Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, 373. Dialectic thus emerges as a process of critical and self-critical truth-oriented dialogical exchange. These traits stay also in accordance with the criticism against the written speech in *Phaedrus* (274 c 5 – 276 a 9) and in the *Seventh Letter* (344 a 2-d 2), where Plato attributes to dialectic the task to "come to the aid" of written speech, in order to contribute, as far as possible, to the elimination of misunderstandings coming from poorly educated or malevolent readers. Cf. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 394; Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, 396-397.

by doing this the dialogue partner adopts a genuinely hermeneutical stance, the more so as what plays a dominant role is not the determination of a (supposedly) objectively valid knowledge but the application of meaningful and practically relevant principles.[25]

The connection between theory and practice becomes also evident as regards the significance of the Aristotelian notion of *phronesis* (φρόνησις / *prudentia*) in the determination of the issues and contents that according to Gadamer mostly characterize the specificity of philosophical thinking. The agents possessing *phronesis* are at the same time the ones who play a dominant role in the productive and solution-seeking discourse and practicing *phronesis* is an essential precondition for gaining social recognition. Hermeneutics has to pay special attention to principal concepts of the Aristotelian ethics (notably *phronesis* and *techne*) because in both cases the issues at stake can be summed up as the right connection between theoretical knowledge in general and its application(s) to properly understood particular cases.[26]

On top of all this it should be noted that the theoretical approach to the dialogically articulated Platonic philosophy is also supported by biographical evidence with exemplary significance, for it has been trustworthily testified that Gadamer as a person lived according to his own principles inasmuch as he showed "friendliness and attentiveness in the discussions," an "ability to follow other people's ideas as if he were always ready to learn something from them," and a "constant willingness to question

[25] Cf. Grondin, *The Philosophy of Gadamer*, 104.

[26] "Admittedly, hermeneutical consciousness is involved neither with technical nor moral knowledge, but these two types of knowledge still include *the same task of application* that we have recognized as the central problem of hermeneutics." Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 313; Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, 320. In fact, the application Gadamer has in mind is not external to the content that takes up a special form, for this is the case with the production of artifacts or works of art, appertaining to the realm of *poiesis* and not to that of *praxis*. Cf. Michael Hofer, "Hermeneutische Reflexion? Zur Auffassung von Reflexion und deren Stellenwert bei Hans-Georg Gadamer," in *Gadamer verstehen / Understanding Gadamer*, 60.

himself and his own opinions."[27] Therefore, Gadamer's hermeneutics can also be seen as a "self-questioning openness," as "resistance against dogmatism" and as "a form of ethical life" based on the relations to others.[28]

In conclusion, Gadamer's philosophy is distinguished by its steady concern to develop hermeneutics as an organic part of a virtually universal dialogical rationality which is prima facie intersubjectively structured and linguistically mediated and at the same time, in its core assumptions, it remains in principle committed to the necessity of acquiring and demonstrating reliable theoretical knowledge. Along these lines it is in my view evident that such aspects indicate both its relevance for our present universal dialogically proceeding and oriented multi-facetted culture as well as its capability to shed new light on the most fertile and productive parts of the Ancient Greek legacy – mainly the Platonic and the Aristotelian.[29]

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[27] Cf. Riccardo Dottori, "Introduction," in Hans-Georg Gadamer, *A Century of Philosophy. A Conversation with Riccardo Dottori*, trans. Rod Coltman, and Sigrid Koepke (New York and London: Continuum, 2006), 3.

[28] Cf. Dennis J. Schmidt, "Sokrates mit Gehstock," trans. Matthias Luetkeherrmoelle, in *Begegnungen mit Hans-Georg Gadamer*, ed. Günther Figal (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 2000), 143.

[29] About the relevance of a fresh look at the Ancient Greek culture for the sake of the self-awareness of European culture in the contemporary world cf. Gadamer, *Der Anfang der Philosophie*, 13.

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Depersonalization of Absolute Knowledge?

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Abstract: This article is divided in two parts which are dealing respectively with Fredric Jameson's idea of depersonalization and Hegel's concept of absolute knowledge. Jameson developed this idea mainly in contrast to the modernist narratives centered around categories of subjectivity. Following the exposition of this idea in broad strokes, the article will lay a claim that the Hegelian concept of absolute knowledge could be, in principle, reframed as an experience of rupture of subjectivity. Hegel's methodology leads philosophical inquiry towards the dismantling of finite self in the element of pure thinking, which is then attentive only to its own historical development.
Keywords: Jameson; Hegel; philosophy; subject; depersonalization; absolute knowledge

"Today, ignoring the absolute bone in the throat of knowledge, everyone has become a Hegelian."[1]

This article is divided in two parts which are dealing with Fredric Jameson's idea of depersonalization and Hegel's concept of absolute knowledge respectively. Jameson developed this idea mainly in contrast to the modernist narratives centered around categories of subjectivity. It proposes a different interpretive pattern, that arises from conjunctural historical material, focused on the literary and artistic

[1] R. Comay, and F. Ruda, *The Dash – The Other Side of Absolute Knowing* (Cambridge and London: The IMT Press, 2018), 2.

expressions of longing for a revolutionary transformed world. The concept of absolute knowledge, however, presupposes Hegel's monumental interpretation of historical and philosophical continuity of the narrative of "grasping and expressing the True, not only as *Substance*, but equally as *Subject*."[2] Following the exposition of Jameson's idea in broad strokes, this article will lay a claim that the concept of absolute knowledge could be, in principle, reframed as an experience of rupture of subjectivity. Being polemical in its nature, the article is an attempt to assess the fruitfulness of such a discussion.

I. Jameson's idea of depersonalization

Fredric Jameson attacked postmodern culture of late capitalism for its lack of narrative faculty. Those immersed in the postmodern culture are drowning in postmodern present without meaningful relation to the narrative past and future. But the logic of capitalism brought about with time postmodernist condition. This structure came about in the ever-vanishing transitional moment of the birth of modernism and gradually effected the new consumer society.

In his essay *A Singular Modernity*, Jameson gave his analysis of that pivotal moment which philosophers usually take as a breakthrough of modernity. He claims:

> Descartes was so often taken to be the inaugurator of that subject-object split which constitutes modernity as such (…) which is to say that in some fashion, with Descartes, we should be able to witness the emergence of the subject (…) the modern subject as such, the subject of modernity.[3]

Jameson starts from this philosophical trope only to cast doubt

[2] G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 10.

[3] Fredric Jameson, *A Singular Modernity* (London and New York: Verso, 2002), 43.

on it. In his opinion, we could witness the emergence of the subject if this subject could be represented. He claims: "There are any number of reasons why consciousness should be pronounced to be unrepresentable."[4] After recollecting the objections toward representation of consciousness already put out by numerous philosophers, like Kant, Freud, Heidegger, Lacan, Jameson concludes that this pivotal moment, as a narrative regarding the beginning, functions as a (philosophical) myth of origin[5] and not so much as actual historical evidence.

However, if we follow the consequences of the thesis that consciousness simply evades each and any representation, we must conclude that every theory of modernity in terms of subjectivity becomes obsolete. However, there are three distinct motives that persevere seemingly through such criticism: 1. a type, as Jameson puts it, of Western freedom that is defined in connection to subjectivity and consciousness; 2. the idea of individuality as "an illicit representation of consciousness;" 3. and self-consciousness in a Western philosophical sense. His negative attitude towards the perseverance of these motives is expressed via negatively formulated (third) maxim of his essay: "The narrative of modernity cannot be organized around categories of subjectivity."[6] Nevertheless, he acknowledges how hard it is to break with old habits to draw from the categories of consciousness, reflexivity, subjectivity (intersubjectivity as well). "Only situations of modernity can be narrated" is one of the most important maxims that Jameson developed in this essay and based on it we could understand his own approach to modernity.

He opts for Sartrean term "situation" to accentuate conjunctural nature of his account and to escape the allure of falling back on well-known narratives premised upon subjectivity.

[4] Ibid., 43.

[5] Ibid., 45: "But *muthos* in Greek means narrative or story; and I would therefore prefer to conclude that this version of modernity's absolute beginning is also a narrative that to fall back on the sceptical and unproductive formula that it is simply a myth."

[6] Ibid., 54.

These narratives have had two dominant ideological axes: "Either modernity becomes an idealist tale of the rise of freedom, individuality and self-reflexivity, or a mournful narrative of Spenglerian decline, Weberian disenchantment, or some more pervasive 'alienation.'"[7] Regardless of the side one could take up in the philosophical argument, the subjective and reflexive categories of 'private,' 'individualistic' or 'personal' remain culturally dominant liberal *ideologeme* under capitalism.

"Privacy and elbowroom of Western middle-class society" is a rather privative way of defining a person, starting from the delineation from others, by psycho-physical border and an ethereal "cushioning void"[8] between the members of society. On the other side from the private stands the "public sphere." Following Marx's analysis in *On the Jewish Question*, we could say that dualism "private – public" stands in leu of his "burgois – citoyen" categories. Marx claims:

> [M]an as a member of civil society is held to be man *in the proper sense*, *homme* as distinct from the *citoyen,* because he is man in his sensuous, individual, *immediate* existence, where as *political* man is only abstract, artificial man, man as an *allegorical*, *juridical* person. The real man is recognised only in the shape of the *egoistic* individual, the *true* man is recognised only in the shape of the *abstract citoyen*.[9]

In the last sentence Marx is underlying that monadist, egoistic individualism, which forms the conceptual basis of modern liberalism, represents reductionist view of the 'real man.' And the category of the 'true man' presupposes the idealist divide between the concept and reality of human being, framing the

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[7] Daniel Hartley, "The Jamesonian Impersonal; Or, Person as Allegory," *Historical Materialism* 29, no. 1 (2021): 176.

[8] Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and Form* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971), 305.

[9] Karl Marx, *Collected Works of Marx and Engels*, Vol. 3 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975), 167.

question of human political agency in terms of abstract principles.

Having an immediate private space or a "cushioning void" around individual existence seams so undeniable concrete that it is hard to see it as, according to Marx, 'a fictious phenomenon.' How do I view myself? As an individual and multidimensional person with lively inner life and many meaningful relationships and unalienable rights. However, my individual outlook, according to Marx, is fictious in the sense that is only a formal reflection that remains outside of the world of economy and labour. Expressed negatively, under capitalistic mode of production, I as an individual – a 'real woman' or 'real man' and all in between – is an abstract unit of labour power.

Furthermore, I as a person, according to Marx's claims, represents the 'imaginary membership' of an 'illusionary sovereignty' and being a *citoyen*, *juridical person* or *subject* endows us with nothing other than 'an unreal universality."[10] The precise meaning of Marx's phrase 'unreal universality' can be understood with the help from Pashukanis' analysis, according to which juridical person or subject is a legal counterpart to the commodity-form.[11] Juridical categories, as any other social form, are the product of the historical development, therefore they are explainable in their materiality, that is, regarding the historical conditions of their formation. Seemingly, Pashukanis' insight is very simple. If acknowledged fully, the relational form of the concept of 'subject' would need a counterpart, i. e. an object. Historical development of the 'subject' should relate to the historical development or conditions of objectivity. He states:

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[10] Ibid., 154.

[11] "And this idea of separation, the inherent proximity of human individuality, this "natural condition", from which "the infinite contradiction of freedom" flows, entirely corresponds to the method of commodity production in which the producers are formally independent of one another and are bound by nothing other then the artificially created legal order." Evgeny Pashukanis, *The General Theory of Law and Marxism*, https://www.marxists.org/archive/pashukanis/1924/law/ch04.htm#f28.

> A commodity is an object; a man is a subject who disposes of the commodity in acts of acquisition and alienation. It is in the exchange transaction that the subject first appears in the full totality of its definitions (…). Only in the conditions of a commodity economy is the abstract form of a right created, i.e. the capacity to have a right in general is separated from specific legal claims. Only the constant transfer of rights taking place in the market creates the idea of their immobile bearer (…). Thus, the possibility is created of abstracting from the concrete differences between these subjects of legal rights, and of putting them under one generic concept.[12]

We are now able to understand why the subject is, in Marx's opinion, "an unreal universality," because we have the historical development in mind: the category of the subject had, in actuality, very little to do with the immediate existence or an abstract essence of an individual human being, or her individual outlook. Rather, its connection to the individual was always already mediated by the social relationships and it represents a fixated abstraction of those relationships.

Furthermore, this is also the reason why we should not fall back to the "private" and the immediate, for we would only be switching one "abstract artificial man" for even more powerless and fictitious "natural condition" of an "independent" individual agency. When forced to consider the 'monad' of society, we tend to exclude the collective perspective or make it harder to reimagine it politically. To transcend the dominant ideological framework and articulate collective political perspective or action is, therefore, naturally in "suspicion" of trespassing and invasiveness, since it goes against the grain of "fetishism of individual isolation."[13] Therefore, if we succumb to alure of modernist narratives centered around the subject, we find our-

[12] Pashukanis.

[13] Jameson, *Marxism and Form*, 305.

selves inevitably entrenched between the 'bourgeois' and 'citoyen,' 'private' and 'public' etc. "But the fate of the bourgeois subject is by no means and adequate framework in which to tell the story of that global 'situation of modernity,'"[14] Jameson repeats his warning. Nevertheless, it could be taken as an "allegorical" of the modernist literary and artistic longing for the transformation of the world, and revolution:

> The forms of this allegory are multiple; yet all the anecdotal psychologies in which it finds itself dressed – in their stylistic, cultural and characterological differences – have in common that they evoke a momentum that cannot find resolution within the self, but that must be completed by a Utopian and revolutionary transmutation of the world of actuality itself.[15]

And he cites such explosive fragments in the poetry of Rilke, D. H. Lawrence, Arthur Rimbaud. Misleading character of the "older ideologies of the modern," as Jameson puts it, is best seen in their insistence on "some 'inward turn'" or its increasing subjectivization of reality. At best, there stirs here everywhere an apocalyptic dissatisfaction with subjectivity itself and the older forms of the self.[16] The allegorical focus of Jameson's interpretative endeavor should pick up multifaceted "situational" historical evidence of the process of dissolution or 'ossification' of the subject that has revolutionary underlining.

Jameson proposes a "coordinated model" of interpretation, which utilizes, on the one side, the insights of Frankfurt School's depiction of historical process of desubjectification and depersonalization by socio-economic factors, and, on the other, elements of poststructuralist emphasis on the "death of the subject" as an event of upstaging the bourgeois individualism. The way to bridge the gap, however, Jameson sees in figure

[14] Jameson, *A Singular Modernity*, 134.
[15] Ibid., 136.
[16] Ibid., 135.

of Lacan, who articulated self and ego psychoanalytically as a defense mechanism:

> In which modern individuals (most often bourgeois individuals) tended to entrench and immure themselves, thereby cutting themselves off from the world and from productive action at the same time that they sheltered themselves from it.[17]

This model would, therefore, be able to catch the glimpses of modernist experiences of depersonalization of the subject, as a way of escaping the passivized, silenced, traumatized self, and as a way of liberation from the condition of its reproduction.

Of course, it must be said that the notion of depersonalization gets more frequently used with a negative connotation and tone in contemporary political discourse. Jameson's polemical framing of depersonalization is, far from any totalitarian praxis, an interpretative strategy of following the trail of "ossification of subject" to indicate narrative continuity with our "postmodernist" present. These interpretative tactics also have a political goal to give a more progressive scope for the political actions in future. His intention is to show

> [E]verything, that is energizing and active about depersonalizing tendency that has too often been discussed in terms of loss and incapacitation: in demonstrating how such a renunciation of subjectivity, far from amounting to some resignation to an impossibly 'alienating' condition, stands on the contrary as an original and productive response to it.[18]

II. Absolute knowledge and depersonalization

After the exposition of Jameson's concept of depersonalization, we will turn our attention toward Hegel's concept of ab-

[17] Ibid., 134.
[18] Jameson, *A Singular Modernity*, 132-133.

solute knowledge and try to assess could it be understood as a part of Jameson's refocused modernist narrative. The first clue is a rather negative one. In the book *The Hegel Variations*, which elaborately deals with almost every part of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the chapter concerning the absolute knowledge is only a couple of pages long. This chapter is titled 'Narcissism of the Absolute' and only renames "what may sometimes be felt to be repulsive in the Hegelian system as such."[19] It is not the overreaching ambition of Hegel's philosophical project to grasp totality. Nor it is its idealistic translation of the world into consciousness. Jameson writes: "No, the most serious drawback to the Hegelian system seems to me rather the way in which it conceives of speculative thinking as 'the consummation of itself' (namely, of Reason)."[20] The reason why he called Hegel's notion of the absolute "narcissist" lies in a such circumstance that it, almost, does not let us get away and escape ourselves:

> We thereby search the whole world, and outer space, and end up only touching ourselves, only seeing our own face persist through multitudinous differences and forms of otherness. Never truly to encounter the non-I, to come face to face with radical otherness.[21]

This charge of being a philosophy of narcissism, or of identity, rests on the many philosophical voices from Kierkegaard to Adorno and onward, and therefore, it is not something new. However, could something as a Jamesonian argument of depersonalization be formulated to defend Hegel's philosophy against such accusations?

We could safely say that, however otherwise understood Hegel's philosophical system was, it was almost always understood as a philosophy of the becoming, movement and development.

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[19] Jameson, *The Hegel Variations*, 130.
[20] Ibid., 131.
[21] Ibid.

His way of thinking was very keen on grasping historical nature of institutions, laws, and ideas. They are susceptible to change, and their development must be viewed against the background of the complex historical development. However, Jameson repeats the argument that Hegel's accent on development is obfuscating the fact that it is development of the same – what was in the beginning, so shall be in the end. What develops is one and the same, without the way to find any escape and relief from self in something other. It seems that, to the detriment of Jameson's otherwise sympathetic vision of dialectics, Hegel's sensitivity to historical change means little if this change does not bring something new or radical. According to this general character of Hegel's way of thinking, depersonalization should be envisaged as a phenomenon in movement, but, more importantly, it should allow the possibility of the relief and escape. The true question is should this escape be conceptualized only as a transcendence, or is there a way to escape "immanently"?

Monty Python's *Gospel of Brian* had a wonderful scene in which a revolutionary movement announce the struggle for the recognition of their male member's right to have babies. Their male member, acted by Eric Idle, reveals his wish to be a woman and to have babies. It is quite telling that his female comrade suggests, after other male members protested that such a thing is not possible, to actively support him and struggle for his *right* to have babies. Woman in this sketch is in a diabolical position to advise, from the position of experience, on a struggle for a formal right that might historically mean little in terms of actual political power. Somehow, the moral of the story is articulated by the play of retorts: (by Michael Palin's character) that this struggle is in case "a struggle against the oppressor," and that this is in effect "a struggle against reality" (noted by John Cleese's skeptical character). Of course, the "right" in question is probably chosen to render greater comical effect, but it could very well be taken to present how formalistic the political position of a "revolutionary" is: to go against the reality or *Sein*, and invoke what *ought* to be, or *Sollen*. That means to go against

all that is ingrained by education and social conditioning and exclaim: "This is how things *ought* to be!" Hegel famously criticized this position of "rebellious" voice that demands, as a unilateral affair, the change of historical and political status quo. He criticized it for its lack of necessity: "If it builds itself a world *as it ought to be*, then it certainly has an existence, but only within his opinions – a pliant medium in which the imagination can construct anything it pleases."[22] The content of *right* understood only from the standpoint of *Sollen*, therefore, could be any content, which does not amount to much if bereft of any means to enforce it.

Much more interestingly, therefore, this "rebellion" is, in Hegel's view, politically ineffective. It presupposes a certain brake with political actuality and the historical "present," and it seems that the most immediate response is to "escape" inwards, not from but towards the self:

> The tendency to look inwards into the self and to know and determine from within the self what is right and good appears in epochs when what is recognized as right and good in actuality and custom is unable to satisfy the better will. When the existing world of freedom has become unfaithful to the better will, this will no longer finds itself in the duties recognized in this world and must seek to recover in ideal inwardness alone that harmony which it has lost in actuality.[23]

This escapism, however, Hegel allows only as a temporary measure or a transitional phase: "Only in ages when the actual world is a hollow, spiritless, and unsettled existence [Existenz] may the individual be permitted to flee from actuality and retreat into his inner life."[24] Furthermore, this brake or retreat of moral subjectivity into

[22] G. W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 22.
[23] Ibid., 166.
[24] Ibid., 167.

itself, caused by the fact that it no longer recognizes itself in the existing world of *Sittlichkeit*, should be an impetus or "stimulus" to create an adequate moral and political order.[25]

Even though historical development as such cannot be arrested, Hegel diagnoses the moments of inertia and ossification of historical social societies. The existing order, be it a social system, a form of consciousness, or a dominant culture (Bildung), resists change, ossifies, and persists longer than the fount of its vitality. Even though it seems like a straightforward expression of longing after the different reality, subject's rebellious retreat inward is not the escape we are trying to sketch. This has its reason in the serious doubt weather it can amount to the movement that will change anything:

> Every regime not only tolerates but even requires for its own maintenance a reserve of thuggish negativity to absorb or overcome: capitalism's need for crisis; liberal democracy's need for (at least a show of) contestation in order to prove the resilience of the system; the 'totalitarian' need for a steady supply of dissidents that it can demonstrably suppress by a show of force. Resistance thus seems to be parasitical on what it opposes. It is caught up in the repetitive cycle of action and reaction – the circle of reciprocal solicitation described by Hegel in the third chapter of the Phenomenology and elaborated in his exposition of reflexive determinations in the Logic – the reciprocal binary logic of inside and outside, position and opposition, thesis and antithesis.[26]

It turns out that this retreat, with its parasitic and obstinate nature, precisely represents the ossification of the modern subject from which we should find a way to escape.

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[25] Domenico Losurdo, *Hegel and Freedom of Moderns* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 243.

[26] Rebecca Comay, "Afterword: Antinomies of Resistance," *Hegel and Resistance* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 198.

Hegel gave an ambiguous account of rebellion or resistance. This is the reason why some saw him as the philosopher who "favors obedience over resistance."[27] However, it is not truly the question of preference. On the contrary, he targets precisely the ambivalent and oscillating nature of the resistance. Too often the position of perennial *Sollen* offers no positive agenda and rather immobilize than gives a decisive stimulus towards the action. Too often, furthermore, it can promulgate reactionary commitment: "[I]t invests everything in its own powers of contestation, conveniently obscuring its own unwavering commitment to the status quo."[28] No. The much-needed relief from the potential enclosure into oneself and subjectivity is precisely the escape to the realm of immanence, that of "absolute knowledge." For those who have heard the calling of philosophy, the urgent and dissatisfied voices of multitudes of individuals, those who are oppressed and those who are colluding with the oppressor, should abate "in the dispassionate calm of a knowledge dedicated to thought alone."[29]

Hegel's early idea that reason is one, and that, therefore, it could only be one philosophy,[30] is not the repulsive, narcissistic trait of his philosophy. On the contrary, it could be envisaged as an ecstatic and liberating dissolution of finite thinking and subjectivity:

> The essence of philosophy (…) is a bottomless abyss for personal idiosyncrasy. In order to reach philosophy, it is necessary to throw oneself into it *á corps perdu* – meaning by 'body' here, the sum of one's idiosyncrasies. For Reason, finding consciousness caught in particularities, only becomes philosophical

[27] Losurdo, 83.

[28] Comay, 199.

[29] G. W. F. Hegel, *Science of Logic* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 22.

[30] G. W. F. Hegel, *Werke*, Band 2 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkampf Verlag, 1971-1979), 172.

> speculation by raising itself to itself, putting its trust only in itself and the Absolute which at that moment becomes its object. In this process Reason stakes nothing but finitudes of consciousness (…). Reason, therefore, does not view the philosophical systems of different epochs and different heads merely as different modes [of doing philosophy] and purely idiosyncratic views. Once it has liberated its own view from contingencies and limitations, Reason necessarily finds itself throughout all particular forms (…). The particular speculative Reason [of a latter time] finds in it spirit of its spirit, flesh of its flesh, it intuits itself in it as one and the same and yet as another living being.[31]

It could be argued that the rising of limited and finite subjectivity into the element of speculative reason is not driven by the desire for narcissistic enjoyment. On the contrary, it is driven by the desire to be recognized by the universal and collective as its own. To leave *corps* behind, to relinquish yourself to the immanence of "absolute knowledge" is a choice to effectively relinquish each and every choice: "[A]ll that we have to do to ensure that the beginning will remain immanent to the science of this [pure – N. J.] knowledge is to consider, or rather, setting aside every reflection, simply to take up, *what is there before us*."[32] Therefore, those who head the calling of philosophy will choose to relinquish the choice altogether, since there is no ambition anymore to posit oneself as the one who one-sidedly *demands* his choices to be acknowledged and gratified. Subject's renunciation of itself must be the absolute abandonment to "pure knowledge": "Relinquishing all foundations and every transcendental guarantee, including even the power of its own conviction, thinking abandons itself to the contingency of its own unfolding."[33]

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[31] G. W. F. Hegel, *The Difference between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1977), 88-89.
[32] Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 47.
[33] Comay, and Ruda, 24.

It is an old wisdom that philosophy needs the calm element, a moment or two of "peace" to engage with its object. We could trace it to the times of Descartes. He did not like to read books, although he was compelled to say that reading meant conversing with the best minds of bygone eras.[34] Descartes uses the metaphor of traveling. Reading is like traveling, as in leaving your own place and situation to visit and experience something different, to lose yourself in a way. However, this reading induced a "fugue state," an amnesiac immersion in the historical element, and it bears a danger of estrangement from oneself or of complete loss of oneself. To get as close to his own self as possible to find that solid ground, *fundamentum inconcusum*, Descartes stopped reading and broke off his ties with the historical element of thinking. Here, the danger seems to be a methodological one. Having an opposite direction, Hegel's methodology leads philosophical inquiry towards the dismantling of finite self in the element of pure thinking, which is then attentive only to its own historical development. Saying himself that the explication of *Phenomenology* is the "path of despair,"[35] Hegel urges philosophers not to get attached to any particular outlook and ideological investment. In the world that has subjectivity as its principle, to head the calling of philosophy means to resolve yourself from the purely subjective perspective. Finally, interpretation of this episode as fragmental evidence of Jamesonian longing for a different world could follow as soon as we acknowledge the implicit ideological charge of any such "universal" and "disinterested" claim and philosophical position.

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[34] Réne Descartes, *A Discourse on the Method of Correctly Conducting One's Reason and Seeking Truth in the Sciences* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 7-8.
[35] Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 49.

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Animal Protection and Welfare: Contemporary Examinations

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Abstract: Advocates of the questioning of the dominant anthropocentric perspective of the world have been increasingly strongly presenting bioethical demands for a new solution of the relationship between humans and other living beings, saying that adherence to the Western philosophical and theological traditions has caused the current environmental, and not just environmental, crisis. The attempts are being made to establish a new relationship by relativizing the differences between men and animals, often by attributing specifically human traits and categories, such as dignity, rights and moral status to the so-called non-human living beings. According to the author, most controversies in the modern environment are caused by the intention to mix up the justifiable care for the protection of animals with attempts to include them into the area of par excellence human moral phenomenon. In this context, these are attempts to recognize a kind of their moral status, i.e. to attribute to them emotional, spiritual, and intellectual characteristics that are similar or identical to the ones that humans have. Difficulties are reflected in the fact that such a bioethics cannot set up and justify moral principles that would apply only to non-human living beings, as it is still justly claimed that man is the only living being that can act morally. In other words, the author believes that solutions or mitigation of the mentioned crisis are not in the simple Aesopeian levelling of animals "upwards," but in an adequate paideutic approach which in humans will develop an inherent bioethical model of accepting them as creatures who deserve moral and decent treatment and respect.
Keywords: anthropocentrism; non-anthropocentrism; mankind; animals; contemporary examinations

The dignity of an individual is usually viewed from the perspective of the reasonableness of one's nature, and such nature is attributed primarily to man. Only he is considered to be liberated from the empire of goals, while the so-called non-human living beings associated to rela-

tions and relationships that exist in nature. Only men are aware of themselves and able to distance themselves from themselves in favour of higher goals, to relativize their own interests, up to self-surrender.[1] This gives him, as a moral being, an absolute status that justifies his characteristic dignity,[2] which entitles him not to be "enslaved" by anyone and that as a moral person he is not deprived of his own goals.

His unique dignity also generates his unique rights. In that sense, Article 1 of the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" from 1948 states: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights."[3] And in Article 23 of the "Constitution of the Republic of Serbia" („Ustav Republike Srbije") the constitution-maker states (trans. Željko Kaluđerović): "Human dignity is inviolable and everyone is obliged to respect and protect it."[4] This is not only an ontological statement, but at the same time a source of the law and therefore Article 3 of the "Constitution" stipulates (trans. Željko Kaluđerović): "Rule of law is a fundamental prerequisite for the Constitution which is based on inalienable human rights."[5]

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[1] Consult Jacques Derrida, "The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)," *Critical Inquiry* 28, no. 2 (2002): 369-418.

[2] Human dignity has often been linked to Immanuel Kant's second formulation of the categorical imperative (trans. Allen W. Wood): "Act so that you use humanity, as much in your own person as in the person of every other, always at the same time as end and never merely as means." (Original passage: Handle so, dass du die Menschheit sowohl in deiner Person, als in der Person eines jeden andern jederzeit zugleich als Zweck, niemals bloß als Mittel brauchst). Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 46-47, also available at https://www.projekt-gutenberg.org/kant/sitte/sitte.html. See also Igor Eterović, *Kant i bioetika* (Zagreb: PERGAMENA, Centar za integrativnu bioetiku Filozofskog fakulteta Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, 2017), 104-110.

[3] *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/.

[4] *Ustav Republike Srbije* (Beograd: Kancelarija za saradnju s medijima Vlade Republike Srbije, 2006), 9.

[5] Ibid., 4.

The highest ranking legal act of Serbia seems to be written on the postulates of Kant's ethics, which strived to reach the highest ethics, while it developed the dignity of living beings and the rights stemming from it only for people, and thus indirectly contributed to the fact that until relatively recently the "dignity" of animals[6] and "rights"[7] of animals[8] were never mentioned.[9]

The last around fifty years on the European continent were marked by dramatic changes in the area of ethical-moral and legal-political regulation of the protection and welfare of animals.[10] They are the result of legislative activities of individual

[6] The definition of "animal" cannot be easily or unambiguously determined. According to the *European Convention for the Protection of Vertebrate Animals used for Experimental and Other Scientific Purposes*, "Animal [...] means any live non-human vertebrate, including free-living and/or reproducing larval forms, but excluding other foetal or embryonic forms." In the Preamble of this convention it is stated that animals have capacity not only for suffering but also for memory, so therefore man has a moral obligation to respect all animals. Available at https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/rms/090000168007a67b.

[7] On the relationship of the "rights" of animals and "welfare" of animals consult *Encyclopedia of Bioethics* I, ed. Stephen T. Post (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004), 183-215.

[8] See Boris Sirilnik, Elizabet de Fontene, Piter Singer, *I životinje imaju prava* (Novi Sad: Akademska knjiga, 2018), 15-97.

[9] Consult Hrvoje Jurić, "Životinjska duša i životinjska prava," *ARHE* VI, no. 12 (2009): 107-120.

[10] Animal welfare is usually, however estimated based on internationally accepted concept of the so-called "Five Freedoms." 1. Freedom from hunger and thirst: by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour, 2. Freedom from discomfort: by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area, 3. Freedom from pain, injury or disease: by prevention through rapid diagnosis and treatment, 4. Freedom from fear and distress*:* by ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering, and 5. Freedom to express normal behaviour: by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal's own kind. See https://www.aspcapro.org/sites/default/files/ASPCA_5Freedoms_Vertical1_0.pdf.

states[11] as well as of the transposition into the national legislation of a large number of relevant documents adopted under the auspices of the European Council and the various decisions of the bodies of European Union, and of the standardizing of the legislations of European countries.[12]

During this period, at least seven conventions dedicated to the welfare of animals were adopted: "European Convention for the Protection of Animals during International Transport" (1968);[13] "European Convention for the Protection of Animals kept for Farming Purposes" (1976);[14] "European Convention for the Protection of Animals for Slaughter" (1979);[15] "Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats" (1979);[16] "European Convention for the Protection of Vertebrate Animals used for Experimental and other Scientific Purposes" (1986);[17] "European Convention for the Protection of Pet Animals" (1987),[18] and

[11] Germany is the first country in the European Union, which based on an amendment to its "Constitution" from 2002 provided the highest standards of legal protection of animals at the federal level. See https://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/may/18/animalwelfare.uk.

[12] For more detailed consultations on the perspectives and achievements of bioethical institutionalization in the European Union see Iva Rinčić, *Europska bioetika: ideje i institucije* (Zagreb: PERGAMENA, 2011).

[13] *European Convention for the Protection of Animals during International Transport*, https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/065.

[14] *European Convention for the Protection of Animals kept for Farming Purposes*, https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/087.

[15] *European Convention for the Protection of Animals for Slaughter*, https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/102.

[16] *Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats*, https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/104.

[17] *European Convention for the Protection of Vertebrate Animals used for Experimental and other Scientific Purposes*, https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/123.

[18] *European Convention for the Protection of Pet Animals*, https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/125.

"Convention on the Protection of Environment through Criminal Law" (1998).[19] In the context of the treatment of animals, it is important to mention the "Protocol on Protection and Welfare of Animals" (1997), which recognizes animals as sentient beings, and "the Community and the Member States shall pay full regard to the welfare requirements of animals."[20]

The majority of the adopted laws and regulations reflect the predominantly practical-ethical or bioethical[21] understanding of animals, i.e. the evolution of attitudes of legislators towards the environment, animal life as its integral part, and even towards animals as individual beings or creatures by themselves, their overall integrity and well-being. The meaning of such animal protection was, and still is anthropocentric in nature, since in its center are not animals as such, but different interests of man and society as a whole, such as the protection of human health, economic development and development of various economic branches, animal husbandry, hunting, fishing, protection of public morality, order and good practice and feelings of man towards animals[22] as well as the economic interests of animal owners.

The dominant anthropocentric[23] image of the world, and the ensuing consequentialist relation of man to nature and animals, has been questioned over the last decades by non-anthropocentric expansion of ethics, and by ever louder posing

[19] Convention on the Protection of Environment through Criminal Law, https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/172.

[20] *Protocol on Protection and Welfare of Animals*, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A12006E%2FPRO%2F33.

[21] Consult Ivana Zagorac, *Bioetički senzibilitet* (Zagreb: PERGAMENA, Znanstveni centar izvrsnosti za integrativnu Bioetiku, 2018), 155-167.

[22] About what an animal is to man and what is man to animal see Nikola Visković, *Kulturna zoologija* (Zagreb: Jesenski i Turk, 2009).

[23] Aristotle's paragraph from the *Politics* (1256b15-22) is emphasized as a paradigm of the leading western tradition and its unquestionable anthropocentrism. Consult, for example Peter Singer, *Oslobođenje životinja* (Zagreb: Ibis grafika, 1998), 158. See also Жељко Калуђеровић, Ана Миљевић, „Стагиранин, Ерешанин и не-људска жива бића," *ARHE* XVI, no. 31 (2019): 106-118.

of bioethical demands for a fundamental and new settlement of relations between humans and other living beings.[24] Attempts are being made to establish a new relationship by relativizing the differences between man and non-human living beings, i.e. by attributing specifically human qualities and categories, such as dignity, rights and moral status, to animals,[25] but also, especially in regards to plants, of the ability of sight, feeling, memory, communication, consciousness and thinking.[26]

The question may be raised as to how this, by non-anthropocentrists increasingly bioethically required "dignity" of animals, and the resulting animal "rights" are regulated,

[24] Some of the leading authors, whose views are representative of contemporary discussions about the new regulation of the relationship between humans and animals are undoubtedly Peter Singer (*Animal Liberation*, *Writings on an Ethical Life*), Tom Regan (*The Case for Animal Rights*, *All That Dwell Therein*) and Klaus Michael Meyer-Abich (*Praktische Naturphilosophie*, *Wege zum Frieden mit der Natur*). They, to put it briefly, believe that animals are beings capable of suffering, which have their own interests and needs that are partly similar to the basic needs of men; if there is such a similarity, then, the principle of equality requires that the interests of animals are respected equally as the similar interests of humans; animals finally have their own value, which for some derives from their consciousness, while for others additional importance lies in the kinship of humans and animals. Consult Željko Kaluđerović, "The Reception of the Non-Human Living Beings in Philosophical and Practical Approaches," *Epistēmēs Metron Logos* 4, no. 4 (2020): 18-31. See also Džozef R. de Žarden, *Ekološka etika* (Beograd: Službeni glasnik, 2006), 193-200; Jeff McMahan, *The Ethics of Killing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 194-203.

[25] About the concept of co-called "Animal ethics" consult: *Encyclopedia of Environmental Ethics and Philosophy*, ed. John Baird Callicott, and Robert Frodeman (Farmington Hills, MI: Macmillan Reference USA, 2009), 42-53; Dale Jamieson, *Ethics and Environment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 112-120.

[26] More elaborately on these and similar dilemmas see in the book of the prominent biologist Daniel Chamovitz. Daniel Chamovitz, *What a Plant Knows, A Field Guide to the Senses* (Scientific American / Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2017, first published 2012).

and whether they are aligned with the consideration of the "moral status" of animals. According to the "Law on Animal Welfare of the Republic of Serbia" („Zakon o dobrobiti životinja Republike Srbije"),[27] Article 4, the basic principles of the protection of animal[28] welfare are based on the so-called pathocentric concept, since it focuses on the "universality of pain," and Article 2 states that the welfare of animals, that is regulated by this law, refers to the (trans. Željko Kaluđerović): "Animals that can sense pain, suffering, fear and stress."[29] When the second point of Article 4 of the "Law on Animal Welfare" stipulates that the principle of caring for animals (trans. Željko Kaluđerović): "implies a moral obligation and the duty of man to respect the animals and take care of the life and welfare of animals,"[30] it only shows that it is the obligation of man to protect animals, and it does not entitle the animals the "right" to that protection. This, therefore, refers to the moral duty of man, and not to the "right" of the ani-

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[27] The "Law on Animal Welfare of the Republic of Serbia" was posted on the website of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management of the Republic of Serbia (Ministarstvo poljoprivrede, šumarstva i vodoprivrede Republike Srbije) on 19 January 2009 and became effective on 10 June 2009. *Zakon o dobrobiti životinja Republike Srbije*, https://www.vet.minpolj.gov.rs/legislativa/zakoni/Zakon_o_dobrobiti_zivoitnja.pdf. However, the idea of a human relationship to animals and their protection was regulated in Serbia in 1850 i.e. 1860. Consult Ana Batrićević, *Krivičnopravna zaštita životinja*, http://www.prafak.ni.ac.rs/files/disertacije/Ana_Batricevic_Krivicnopravna_zastita_zivotinja_2012.pdf, 66-75.

[28] In Article 5, point 13 of the *Law on Animal Welfare of the Republic of Serbia*, the "animal" is defined reductively but unambiguously as any vertebrate which has a capacity to feel pain, suffering, fear and stress. *Zakon o dobrobiti životinja Republike Srbije*, https://www.vet.minpolj.gov.rs/legislativa/zakoni/Zakon_o_dobrobiti_zivoitnja.pdf.

[29] *Zakon o dobrobiti životinja Republike Srbije*, https://www.vet.minpolj.gov.rs/legislativa/zakoni/Zakon_o_dobrobiti_zivoitnja.pdf. Besides the pain, suffering, fear and stress, it is usually added that animals can feel panic as well.

[30] Ibid.

mals.[31] The rights holder can only be a man, because he alone has the dignity of personality, which is an attitude that is in accordance with the usual anthropocentric theses, and it does not differ much from the majority of similar norms in other European countries.[32]

Article 7, paragraph 1, of the "Law on Animal Welfare" states that it is forbidden "to abuse animals,"[33] while in paragraph 3 of the same Article it is prohibited to (trans. Željko Kaluđerović): "Deprive an animal of life, except in cases and in the manner prescribed by this Law."[34]

Such argumentation is substantially getting closer to the recognition of the "dignity" of animals. Of course, the trouble with such regulations is an animal is not a legal subject pursuant to the laws of the state, and therefore it cannot even sue anyone, despite the law on their welfare being adopted in

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[31] See Evangelos D. Protopapadakis, "Animal Rights, or Just Human Wrongs?" in *Animal Ethics: Past and Present Perspectives*, ed. Evangelos D. Protopapadakis, 279-291 (Berlin: Logos Verlag Berlin GmbH, 2012).

[32] For example, *Law on Animal Protection of the Republic of Croatia* (Zakon o zaštiti životinja Republike Hrvatske), https://www.zakon.hr/z/257/Zakon-o-za%C5%A1titi-%C5%BEivotinja, *Law on Animal Protection and Welfare of Bosnia and Herzegovina* (Zakon o zaštiti i dobrobiti životinja Bosne i Hercegovine), https://www.paragraf.ba/propisi/bih/zakon-o-zastiti-i-dobrobiti-zivotinja.html, or *Law on Animal Protection and Welfare of Montenegro* (Zakon o zaštiti dobrobiti životinja Crne Gore), https://epa.org.me/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/zakon-o-zastiti-dobrobiti-zivotinja.pdf.

[33] Article 1 of the *Law on Animal Welfare* states (trans. Željko Kaluđerović): "This law regulates the welfare of animals, rights, obligations and responsibilities of legal and physical persons, i.e. entrepreneurs, for the welfare of animals, treatment of animals and protection of animals against abuse." *Zakon o dobrobiti životinja Republike Srbije*, https://www.vet.minpolj.gov.rs/legislativa/zakoni/Zakon_o_dobrobiti_zivoitnja.pdf. For more details about the concept of responsibility consult Željko Kaluđerović, "Bioethics and Hereditary Genetic Modifications," *Conatus – Journal of Philosophy* 3, no. 1 (2018): 31-44.

[34] *Zakon o dobrobiti životinja Republike Srbije*, https://www.vet.minpolj.gov.rs/legislativa/zakoni/Zakon_o_dobrobiti_zivoitnja.pdf.

the National Assembly. Lawsuits cannot be filed on behalf of injured parties that are pigs or hens, since they are animals, and animals cannot participate in any court proceedings.[35]

Article 6, paragraph 1 of the "Law on Animal Welfare" states that the owner or holder of the animal is obliged to (trans. Željko Kaluđerović):

> Treat the animal with the care of a prudent owner and to provide conditions for keeping and care of animals that correspond to the species, breed, sex, age, as well as physical, biological and production specifics and characteristics of the behaviour and health of the animal; ... The owner or keeper of the animal is responsible[36] for the life, health and welfare

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[35] Consult, for instance, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1988/08/07/european-seal-herd-perishing/232cffdb-9d38-4fee-b710-bf371965ad06/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.9408f6d6c3f6, and https://www.cbsnews.com/news/chronology-of-mad-cow-crisis/.

[36] Ante Čović believes that most of the discussions about the responsibility of man for non-human living beings occur within the so-called ethics of animals, whose task is to determine the "moral status of animals," and in the framework of advocacy for "animal rights." He adds that in this context, the "absurd method of speciesistic levelling" has been established, which appears in two of its forms (trans. Željko Kaluđerović): "As the Aesopian approach of 'levelling in ascending order,' which consists in anthropomorphic adherence to non-human living beings specifically of human qualities and categories, such as dignity, moral status, rights, etc., and as a Singer's approach of "levelling in descending order," which consists in zoomorphic reduction of specifically human characteristics and categories. Both methods have the same goal – to level differences between man and other living beings with the ability to sense based on the wrong assumption that this is a good way to develop moral considerations and legal obligations towards non-human members of the sensitive community." See Ante Čović, "Biotička zajednica kao temelj odgovornosti za ne-ljudska živa bića," in *Od nove medicinska etike do integrativne bioetike*, ed. Ante Čović, Nada Gosić, Luka Tomašević (Zagreb: PERGAMENA / Hrvatsko bioetičko društvo, 2009), 37.

> of the animal and must take all necessary measures to ensure that no unnecessary pain, suffering, fear and stress or injury is inflicted on the animals.[37]

Despite this very well-conceived and harmonized with the highest European standards text, the life of animals in the stays or their position during transport is still quite poor.[38] The answer to why this is so partly lies in the fact that there is no concretization of general legal norms of such laws in the legislation, and partly because the adopted regulations limit the minimum standards that are not consistent with the high goals that are postulated by such laws. The rest happens simply because the state control is weak and/or because of the logic of capital, namely these things happen because it is necessary to produce as much meat as possible with as little cost as possible.

Regardless of the fact that the "Law on Animal Welfare" is "a matter of general interest," because the need for it is imposed by the process of integration of the Republic of Serbia into the European Union and harmonization of the regulations with the EU directives, in itself it does not prohibit any injury or damage to animal health, but only prohibits (trans. Željko Kaluđerović): "Stunning, or depriving the animal of life contrary to the provisions of this Law."[39]

After all, Article 15 of the "Law on Animal Welfare" sets out the nine bases on which an animal may be deprived of life "in a humane manner." These include points 3 and 4, according to which an animal can be slaughtered if it is to

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[37] *Zakon o dobrobiti životinja Republike Srbije*, https://www.vet.minpolj.gov.rs/legislativa/zakoni/Zakon_o_dobrobiti_zivoitnja.pdf. Consult Article 5 of the *Universal Declaration of Animal Rights*: "Any animal which is dependent on man has the right to proper sustenance and care." Available at https://constitutii.files.wordpress.com/2016/06/file-id-607.pdf.

[38] On industrial livestock production see Tomislav Krznar, *Znanje i destrukcija* (Zagreb: PERGAMENA, 2011), 158-162.

[39] *Zakon o dobrobiti životinja Republike Srbije*.

be used for food, and if it is used for scientific and biomedical purposes.[40] In the collision of rights, traders of cattle and scientific institutions are favoured, since they can rely on their basic rights to freely exercise their own profession, as well as to the freedom of scientific research,[41] namely to the rights guaranteed to them by the highest legal act of the state, the "Constitution," while the "Law on Animal Welfare" is an act of a lower ontological rank, that is, a derived act.

If there is an intention to really take care of the protection of animals, it is certainly not enough to devote to them one state goal that protects them so to say indirectly; instead, according to non-anthropocentrists, they should be given the "rights" that are similar to basic rights, to which a lawyer could refer to on their behalf when filing a lawsuit, and which can directly compete with the basic rights of sci-

[40] Except in the *Law on Animal Welfare of the Republic of Serbia*, experiments with experimental animals are also regulated in the various rulebooks, such as the *Rulebook for working with experimental animals at the University of Novi Sad* (Pravilnik za rad sa oglednim životinjama Univerziteta u Novom Sadu). This *Rulebook* states (trans. Željko Kaluđerović): "Protected animal species, experimental procedures (ethical and non-ethical), principles of ethics of experimental work on animals, competence of researchers for such work, composition and manner of establishment of the Ethics Committee for the protection of the welfare of experimental animals at the University of Novi Sad as well as the scope of work, tasks and rules of work of the committee (hereinafter: the Ethics Committee), the procedure for obtaining an opinion on experimental work on animals by the Ethics Committee, as well as the procedure in case of non-compliance with the rules of operation of the Ethics Committee and decisions made pursuant to the Rulebook." See https://www.uns.ac.rs/index.php/univerzitet/javnost-rada-2/dokumenti/aktiuns/send/35-pravilnici/141-pravilnik-za-rad-sa-oglednim-zivotinjama-2.

[41] Consult AAAS Committee on Scientific Freedom and Responsibility, *Scientific Freedom and Responsibility* (Washington, DC: American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1975), 5, https://www.aaas.org/sites/default/files/SRHRL/PDF/1975-ScientificFreedomResponsibility.pdf.

entists, meat producers and those who carry out the transport of animals. How could these basic "rights" of animals look like?[42]

Firstly, animals should be granted the "right" of respect for their animal "dignity," "the right" that will protect them from abuse in experiments.[43] The conflict between monkeys, dogs and cats harassed in experimental laboratories,[44] on the one hand, and the interests of medicine, pharmaceutical industry, and researchers on the other hand, could induce people to finally seriously assess whether animal suffering[45] is in a proper relationship to the benefit for man that comes out of it.[46] In

[42] Parts of explanations and comments that follow have been taken and paraphrased from: Kristijan Zajler, "Dostojanstvo životinja i zakoni ljudi," *Sloboda za životinje* 1 (2006): 15.

[43] On scientific experiments on animals see Michele Aramini, *Uvod u bioetiku* (Zagreb: Kršćanska sadašnjost, 2009), 403-405; Raymond G. Frey, "Animals and Their Medical Use," in *Contemporary Debates in Applied Ethics*, ed. Andrew I. Cohen, and Christopher H. Wellman (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 91-103.

[44] At the universities in the Great Britain only, around 1,300,000 animals were killed in 2012 for research purposes. A little less than one million killed animals were mice, and among other animals there were fish, rats, frogs, birds, hens, reptiles, as well as 124 monkeys, 10 dogs, 2 cats and 6 emus. See https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2503359/British-universities-killed-1-3m-animals-research-year-including-million-mice-10-dogs-emus.html. On the occasion of the World Day for Animals in Laboratories (WDAIL) of the associations Fenix, Hope for animals - Riska and Link Plus informed the public that every year around 150 million animals are killed in various experiments in the world. See https://www.telegraf.rs/vesti/1537818-jezivo-150-miliona-zivotinja-strada-svake-godine-zbog-surovih-eksperimenata-uznemirujuci-video.

[45] At the end of the well-known passage about the non-human part of animal creatures, which, as is often stated, is a departure from the mainstream of Western philosophy, Jeremy Bentham claims "The question is not Can they reason?, or Can they talk?, but Can they suffer?" See Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, 144, available at https://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/bentham1780.pdf.

[46] Article 6 of the *Universal Declaration of Animal Rights* states: "Experi-

this assessment, it will be also significant whether the dignity of man justifies to deprive other living beings of their "dignity" in order to carry out experiments[47] on them, whose expediency is questionable at least in some situations.

Animals should, furthermore, be guaranteed the basic "right" to life[48] appropriate to their species, the view that is based on the parts of the fourth and fifth articles of the "Universal Declaration of Animal Rights:"

> Wild animals have the right to live and reproduce in freedom their own natural environment [...] Any animal which is dependent on man has the right to proper sustenance and care.[49]

This also applies to the fundamental "right" of animals to life. As long as modern societies are, for various reasons, meat-eating societies, it will be possible only to gradually implement this

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ments on animals entailing physical or psychological suffering violate the rights of animals. Replacement methods must be developed and systematically implemented." *Universal Declaration of Animal Rights*, https://constitutii.files.wordpress.com/2016/06/file-id-607.pdf.

[47] Some philosophers (Clement of Alexandria, Moses Maimonides, Tomas Aquinas, Immanuel Kant and some contemporary authors) as an argument why animals should not be experimented with, stated the subsequent potential dehumanization of man himself. In a similar way, the 'father' of European bioethics Fritz Jahr claims: "[...] Senseless cruelty towards animals is an indication of an unrefined character becoming dangerous towards the human environment as well." See Fritz Jahr, "Animal Protection and Ethics," in *Fritz Jahr and the Foundations of Global Bioethics. The Future of Integrative Bioethics*, ed. Amir Muzur, and Hans-Martin Sass (Berlin, Münster, Wien, Zürich, London: Lit Verlag, 2012), 10.

[48] Ivan Cifrić writes in detail about the right of animal species to life, different theoretical approaches, as well as the results of the research of the respondents on this subject. Ivan Cifrić, *Bioetička ekumena* (Zagreb: PERGAMENA, 2007), 209-232.

[49] *Universal Declaration of Animal Rights*, https://constitutii.files.wordpress.com/2016/06/file-id-607.pdf.

basic "right" of animals and therefore anchor it only in the vicinity of closer legal regulations. This basic "right" would primarily prohibit the excessive production of animals for slaughter, which then also leads to their destruction. Then, in order to gradually achieve the protection of life for the benefit of animals, a different programming of eating habits of new generations of people would have to occur.[50]

In guaranteeing the basic "rights" to animals, which, in addition to determining the state's goal, should also enter into the "Constitution,"[51] all of this could be taken into consideration

[50] The facts that vegetarianism and veganism are not types of diet that have appeared in modern times, but that they have roots in ancient Greece are well illustrated by examples from the Presocratic era. Pythagoras' and Empedocles' followers, for example, indicate that men are kin not only to each other or with the gods, but with living beings which do not have the gift of speech. Something common that connects them all is a breath (πνεῦμα), as a kind of soul (ψυχῆς), which extends throughout the entire *cosmos* and unites men with all of them. Therefore, if man would be killing or eating their flesh, they would commit injustice and sin towards deities (ἀσεβήσομεν) to the same extent as if they destroyed their relatives (συγγενεῖς). For that reason the 'Italian' philosophers advised man to abstain from ensouled (living) beings (ἐμψύχων) arguing that it is a sacrilege (ἀσεβεῖν) committed by "those who drench altars with warm blood of the blessed" (βωμὸν ἐρεύθοντας μακάρων θερμοῖσι φόνοισιν) (DK 31B136). For more details consult Željko Kaluđerović, "Ancient Assumptions of Contemporary Considerations of Nature, Life and Non-Human Living Beings," *forthcoming*; Željko Kaluđerović, Orhan Jašić, "Pitagorejska i arapska recepcija ne-ljudskih živih bića," *Nova prisutnost* 13, no. 1 (2015): 25-33; Gary Steiner, *Anthropocentrism and Its Discontents: The Moral Status of Animals in the History of Western Philosophy* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005); Daniel A. Dombrowski, *The Philosophy of Vegetarianism* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1984).

[51] On the basis of the 1992 plebiscite, in Switzerland, the *Constitution* guarantees the inherent value of animals, i.e. it already speaks of "dignity of Creature" (die Würde der Kreatur). See also the latest version of the *Federal Constitution of the Swiss Confederation*, Article 120, paragraph 2 (Non-human gene technology), available at https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/1999/404/en#a120.

together with the statement that any vertebrate has the right to have its dignity respected, and to a life that is suitable to its species. According to this interpretation, man would be permitted to intervene only for reasons of public interest, certainly within the framework of the law.[52] The first of these two sentences, in which in the form of a basic "right" animals are granted the "right" to "dignity" and life appropriate to the species, would probably mean that the keeping of animals in massive farming, which is being practiced today, due to the "Constitution" would have to, at some point be abolished and replaced by keeping animals in the manner appropriate to their species. The second sentence, according to which man is permitted to interfere in the life of animals for reasons of public interest, would be a regulation between the absolute protection of the life of animals and the relative readiness of a society which to some degree tortures animals, to take care of this protection of life.[53] Movement of the society in that direction should represent an intention of the state which is to protect the animals, which is connected with the continuous flow of smaller and larger steps of the legislator, who will take care of that state's goal by promoting the appropriate way of life.

All this can seem pretty utopian, but time will show if people are mature for such a step in evolution. The present ecological, and not only ecological, crisis urges mankind to, among other things, determine in a new way its attitude towards animals. *Homo sapiens* is the first species that has ever been able to freely decide whether they will give up eating other living beings. The first step has been made - people have ceased to eat each other for a long time, and cannibalism is barely present in the so-called "primitive" tribes. Whether man will soon make a second step by stopping to eat animals, to respect the funda-

[52] In order to make this proposal be legally and dogmatically viable and practical for implementation, it would be necessary to implement a specific and serious research.

[53] See https://www.worldanimalprotection.org/.

mental "right" animal to life?[54] It is highly unlikely that this will happen in the foreseeable future, but this does not mean that we should not continue to work on strengthening their protection and welfare.

A reasonable care of the protection and welfare of animals, finally, does not mean that the author of this paper believes that to them should be entitled to a kind of "moral status," which would be in conformity with human moral phenomenon. He, moreover, follows the traditional ethical view that moral status can belong only to man, since he is the only natural being that can act morally. After all, taking care of the "dignity" and all present and future "rights" and status of animals is basically man's task.[55]

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[54] Joan Dunayer claims that people deny the right to life, liberty, and other fundamental rights to non-human living beings for only one reason which is speciesism. Joan Dunayer, *Specizam* (Zagreb . Čakovec: Institut za etnologiju i folkloristiku Zagreb, D. D. Čakovec, 2009), 202.

[55] Consult Peter Carruthers, "The Animals Issue," in *Today's Moral Issues*, ed. Daniel Bonevac (Boston: McGraw Hill 2002), 101-106.

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European Convention for the Protection of Animals kept for Farming Purposes. https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/087.

European Convention for the Protection of Pet Animals. https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/125.

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Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare: Rethinking the Notions of Responsibility, Causal Inference and Empathy

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Abstract: Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems have demonstrated precision at similar or superior degree in relation to healthcare professionals. However, several ethical debates have focused on the issues of accountability, explainability and clinician-patient trust. Deep Learning systems generate largely uninterpretable results, thus directly challenging the concept of responsible agency and moral responsibility. Furthermore, epistemologically, it is different to identify a correlation between symptoms and diseases than to demonstrate a causal explanation. The incorporation of causal reasoning seems critical in harnessing all the benefits and surpassing human expert capability in demanding clinical decisions. The physician-patient relationship is also of paramount importance in the therapeutic outcome and how empathy is reproduced in systems may be crucial for the delivery of moral medical care. The dynamics of AI in healthcare urge for a rethinking of notions of responsibility, causal inference and empathy as they are key constructs in framing the proper ethical foundation.
Keywords: artificial intelligence; deep learning; ethical AI; responsible agent; causality; cognitive and emotional empathy; trust

I. Introduction

The technological progress experienced by humanity today is known as the 4th Industrial Revolution, or Industry 4.0. As the term itself indicates, the adaptation of new technologies is accompanied by an abrupt and deep change within the economic systems and the social

structures. This era's Industrial Revolution pertains to the development and exploitation of holistic digital systems that have the capacity to integrate the digital, the physical and the biological realms across all sectors.[1]

Among the driving forces for implementing artificial intelligence algorithms in the medical practice are the increasingly digital collection methods of health data, the excellent early results of imaging analysis and the need for fast decision making in the case of extremely urgent and critical conditions. Moreover, the parallel development of personalised solutions in the healthcare domain has increased the interest for AI-driven recommendations.[2] On the ethical implications, the technological advances on the healthcare sector are of particular interest not only because of the sensitivity of private health-related data of individuals but also because of the critical importance of diagnostic and therapeutic decision-making processes.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a broad domain that encompasses fields such as Machine Learning (ML), Artificial Neural Network (ANN) and Deep Learning (DL). It is devoted to building artificial entities and, as a self-standing discipline, it has its origins in the mid-20th century.[3] However, it has seen significant development over the last decades while today's importance is mostly understood when referring to intelligent machines endowed with learning, reasoning and adaptation capabilities. ML gives the capability to AI to solve problems based on data acquired from a given context while not demanding explicit programming. ANN is an evolved process of ML inspired

[1] Klaus Schwab, "The Fourth Industrial Revolution: What it Means, How to Respond," *World Economic Forum*, January 14, 2016, https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/01/the-fourth-industrial-revolution-what-it-means-and-how-to-respond/.

[2] Adam Bohr, and Kaveh Memarzadeh, "The Rise of Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare Applications," in *Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare*, 25-60 (London: Academic Press, 2020), 25-27.

[3] John McCarthy, et al., "A Proposal for the Dartmouth Summer Research Project on Artificial Intelligence, August 31, 1955," *AI Magazine* 27, no. 4 (2006): 12.

by the model of the human brain.[4] Ultimately, DL is large neural-network-style model with multiple layers of representation.[5]

A plethora of scientific publications underscore the precision of AI medical tools, demonstrating that algorithms can achieve precision at similar or superior degree in relation to humans in detecting skin cancer, heart arrhythmia, and Alzheimer Disease. The hope is that AI will facilitate timely detection, allow for improved diagnosis, and enhance human reasoning and clinical decision-making capacity.[6]

The prevalence of AI technologies in almost all domains of human life and its highly promising potential in healthcare have raised many debates on the ethical implications of its deployment. The clinical setting in particular constitutes a complex environment where AI could be entrusted with life-and-death decisions. The unprecedented technical achievements of AI alongside the dynamic contemporary environment urge for a rethinking of notions of responsibility, causal inference and empathy as they are key constructs in framing the proper ethical foundation.

II. Explainability and responsibility

Many state-of-the-art AI models are constructed on DL techniques which, by nature, enclose inner workings into which it is difficult or even impossible to gain insight. In contrast to more conventional ML approaches, deep neural networks, inspired by the human biological neural system, operate by propagating the input data through multiple layers while not just executing the pre-determined instructions. Thus, within their so-called

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[4] Wesam Salah Alaloul, and Abdul Hannan Qureshi, "Data Processing Using Artificial Neural Networks," in *Dynamic Data Assimilation - Beating the Uncertainties*, ed. Dinesh G. Harkut (London: IntechOpen, 2020).

[5] Brenden M. Lake, et al., "Building Machines that Learn and Think like People," *The Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 40 (2017): 1.

[6] Angeliki Kerasidou, "Artificial Intelligence and the Ongoing Need for Empathy, Compassion and Trust in Healthcare," *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* 98, no. 4 (2020): 246.

"black box," they make predictions and reach decisions similar to how humans do but without 'communicating' their reasons to do so.[7] In fact, the established belief that there is a trade-off between accuracy and interpretability[8] may have intensified the development of AI black boxes in the name of increased performance.

On the one end of a neural network there is the input layer which receives data from the outer environment and transfers it in the inner structure of the network while on the other end the output layer produces the results on the basis of the processing conducted by the system. Between input and output, there are intermediate layers, namely hidden layers, which perform the processing of the ANN. Each layer is a linear array compiled of various nodes, similar to neurons, which correspond to the various inputs introduced either by the external environment (for the input layer) or by the previous layer (for any intermediate and the output layer). The number of hidden layers (depth), as well as the number of nodes in each layer (width) together with the designed path determine the network's topology.[9]

Hence, DL advances have led to complicated AI networks that generate inherently uninterpretable models to human users, sacrificing interpretability for prediction accuracy.[10] Nevertheless, there is a consensus among the research community that the concept of responsible agency and – in turn – moral responsibility, is closely related to the degree of explainability of AI algorithms.

Especially in the healthcare sector, how clear the functioning of a model is, possesses a key importance as it is connected to accountability and transparency issues. Logistic or linear

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[7] Yavar Bathaee, "The Artificial Intelligence Black Box and the Failure of Intent and Causation," *Harvard Journal of Law and Technology* 31, no. 2 (2018): 893.

[8] Reubern Binns, "Algorithmic Accountability and Public Reason," *Philosophy and Technology* 31 (2018): 553.

[9] Alaloul, and Qureshi.

[10] Mengnan Du, Ninghao Liu, and Xia Hu, "Techniques for Interpretable Machine Learning," *Communications of the ACM* 63, no. 1 (2019): 69.

regression models can be interpreted when a human attempts to understand the relationship between variables as there are certain statistical parameters that one can refer to. In an ANN, how any given output affects the final outcome depends on the complex interaction of values embedded in a highly entangled web of connections system. Human-scale cognition is lacking the capacity to understand how and most of the ANNs arrive at any particular decision.

Several articles have been published on issues of interpretability or explainability, and, despite being two terms that are frequently used interchangeably, they actually describe different features of AI. An interpretable system is one where "a user cannot only see but also study and understand how inputs are mathematically mapped to outputs." Explainability describes the "capability of understanding the work logic in the ML algorithms."[11]

The origins of the requirements for moral responsibility date back to the Greek ancient philosophy; following the Aristotelian requirements for responsibility, namely control and knowledge, we infer that one is responsible if they have a sufficient level of control over an action and be knowledgeable of what is pertaining to the action.[12]

The traditional responsibility ascription cannot be applied in the case of ML algorithms as the developer of the model is, in principle, not capable of intervening in the course of action of the process. This incompatibility between the moral framework of society and the design principles of machine learning models has been characterised as a "responsibility gap."[13]

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[11] Amina Adadi, and Mohammed Berrada, "Peeking Inside the Black-Box: A Survey on Explainable Artificial Intelligence (XAI)," *IEEE Access* 6 (2018): 52141.

[12] Mark Coeckelbergh, "Artificial Intelligence, Responsibility Attribution, and a Relational Justification of Explainability," *Science and Engineering Ethics* 26, no. 4 (2020): 2054.

[13] Andreas Matthias, "The Responsibility Gap: Ascribing Responsibility for the Actions of Learning Automata," *Ethics and Information Technology* 6 (2004): 177.

Apart from principally being a philosophical issue, since agency is connected to responsibility, the problem of responsibility attribution in the contemporary context is ultimately practical. Building on the concept of the 'responsibility gap,' the more advanced the technology – reaching to the point of carrying intelligence that may be initiated by an algorithmic design but then evolved 'on its own learning,' – the harder it is to ascribe blame to any human or corporate entity along the chain of development, employment and decision-making of the AI system. Furthermore, in the healthcare sector there are multiple actors, among whom the algorithm designer, the data provider, the healthcare institution implementing the AI system and the healthcare professional who uses it. This multiplicity further obscures the attribution of responsibility. What should also be mentioned is that accountability does not exclusively apply in the cases of something going wrong when following AI outputs but also when physicians decide to override the recommendations.[14]

In the last decades, considering the aforementioned landscape and in view of the breadth of practical circumstances in which AI tools and autonomous robots are present in our lives, the concept of artificial or virtual moral agency and responsibility has been proposed and much debated.[15] On the one hand, the argument that the inability of AI to understand the shared moral values among a human community renders it ineligible for moral responsibility, and on the other, the search for less anthropocentric definitions for moral agency,[16] have shaped a dynamic and highly fluid environment in which traditional philosophical concepts have been revisited.

III. Correlation vs. causation

The medical sector is overwhelmed with an ever-increasing amount of biologic, biometric and electronic health data. Big

[14] Kerasidou, 247.

[15] Dorna Behdadi, and Christian Munthe, "Normative Approach to Artificial Moral Agency," *Minds & Machines* 30 (2020): 212.

[16] Mihaela Constantinescu, et al., "Understanding Responsibility in Responsible AI. Dianoetic Virtues and the Hard Problem of Context," *Ethics and Information Technology* (2021): 3.

data in medicine has the potential to reveal formerly unidentified health patterns and ultimately new therapies.[17] Improving predictions as to when an individual is at risk of an acute health event or a chronic disease or even relying on highly accurate digital diagnostic tools is of paramount importance in delivering healthcare. Notwithstanding, it is not the data *per se* but the algorithms encoding reasoning and knowledge that can actually be game-changing in the medical sector.[18]

Beyond the issue of interpretability and explainability, but closely related to the notion of statistical inference, is causal inference. AI models have the capacity to identify patterns within enormous datasets, but its capacity to go beyond data-driven association is now considered instrumental in qualitatively transforming medicine.[19]

The employment of AI, and particularly ML models, may carry the danger of conflating causation with association. In the diagnosis procedure, it is another thing to identify correlations between patient data and disease occurrences and another to determine the underlying cause of a patient's symptoms. The definition of diagnosis is reminder of this distinction: "the identification of the diseases that are most likely to be causing the patient's symptoms, given their medical history."[20] In the scope of the definition of this medical practice, the drawing of a causal model of how a disease relates to the outcomes (symptoms) is fundamental in the subsequent clinical decision-making process.

According to the "ladder of causation," proposed by Judea Pearl, there are three defining levels of cognitive ability – name-

[17] Mary Mallappallil, et al., "A Review of Big Data and Medical Research," *SAGE Open Medicine* 8 (2020): 1.

[18] Ziad Obermeyer, and Ezekiel J. Emanuel, "Predicting the Future – Big Data, Machine Learning, and Clinical Medicine," *The New England Journal of Medicine* 375, no. 13 (2016): 1217.

[19] Yoshihiko Raita, et al., "Big Data, Data Science, and Causal Inference: A Primer for Clinicians," *Frontiers in Medicine* 8, (2021): 11.

[20] Jonathan G. Richens, Ciaran M. Lee, and Saurahb Johri, "Improving the Accuracy of Medical Diagnosis with Causal Machine Learning," *Nature Communications* 11 (2020): 2.

ly seeing, doing and imagining – which, accordingly, entail association, intervention and counterfactuals.[21] In order to perform counterfactual-based tasks, one has to first be able to respond to association and intervention problems. Expert knowledge is what would then make the shift to the upper level; one has to be able to specify the question and to describe the causal structure. In the clinical setting, biological knowledge is necessary to shift from association and intervention to the counterfactual framework, as without it no causal effects could be defined and the causal structure could not be specified.[22]

The truth of counterfactuals denotes a causal link between a 'cause' and an 'effect.' However, causal effects cannot be measured by technology systems that operate exclusively on data alone, even if data are vast and learning algorithms are very deep. Maybe it is for this reason that diagnostic algorithms have not delivered the desired outcomes on what concerns the accuracy in differential diagnosis, one of the most important but also challenging tasks in a physician's clinical practice.[23]

Causality as a concept has been of paramount importance in the long history of human effort to explain and understand phenomena in the universe. It is a concept intimately relating to intellectual understanding and one that has fostered long-standing debates in the history of philosophical literature. Causality stretches back to the times of Aristotle and extends to modern debates in contemporary sciences. Aristotle, in his theory of causality, recognised four causes: the material, the formal, the efficient and the final, all of which are involved in the explanation process and shape the theoretical framework for the study of the natural world. In analysing causation, David Hume in the 1700s acknowledged regularity as the major feature of causation; hence,

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[21] Mark J. Bishop, "Artificial Intelligence Is Stupid and Causal Reasoning Will Not Fix It," *Frontiers in Psychology* 11 (2021): 10.

[22] Raita, et al., 6.

[23] Stuart F. Leeds, et al. "Teaching Heuristics and Mnemonics to Improve Generation of Differential Diagnoses," *Medical Education Online* 25, no. 1 (2020): 1.

beyond a cause temporally preceding its effect and being contiguous to it, it is necessary that "all objects similar to the cause are in a 'like relation' to objects similar to the effect."[24] Hume has also identified causation through the notion of counterfactual: "… where, if the first object had not been, the second never had existed." However, it is after the work of David Lewis that the concept became elaborated and more important.[25]

In the healthcare arena, the early 20th century was a period when studies of cancer and chronic diseases shifted the interest from strictly identifying causes of the diseases to recognising patterns and identifying groups of people at increased risk. In fact, epidemiology is described "the study of the distribution and determinants of disease patterns in human populations" in contemporary definitions.[26] This strategic turn was systematic and aimed at more targeted healthcare interventions. These new models of causation may have created an environment where the concept of causation experienced a radical change and the distinction between prediction and causal inference may have been de-emphasized.

However, recent results highlight the importance of counterfactual reasoning in the medical diagnosis field, showing that counterfactual algorithms can be designed that position the accuracy in the top 25% of physicians, contrary to merely associative AI tools which achieved accuracy in the top 48%.[27]

Anyhow, data-driven prediction AI can only indicate towards a decision, but it is causal inference that can support the deci-

[24] Andreas Holger, and Mario Guenther, "Regularity and Inferential Theories of Causation," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* Fall 2021, ed. Edward N. Zalta, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2021/entries/causation-regularity/.

[25] Yu-Liang Chou, et al., "Counterfactuals and Causability in Explainable Artificial Intelligence: Theory, Algorithms, and Applications," *Information Fusion*, pre-proof.

[26] Mark Parascandola, "The Epidemiologic Transition and Changing Concepts of Causation and Causal Inference," *Revue d' Histoire des Sciences* 64, no. 2 (2011): 244.

[27] Richens, Lee, and Johri, 2.

sion-making process. The incorporation of causal reasoning, and thereupon the human domain expertise, in machine learning algorithms may be crucial in harnessing all the benefits that AI can provide and in surpassing human expert capability, especially in certain domains.[28, 29]

IV. Humanization and empathy in medical care

One expected benefit from AI in the healthcare sector is that improvement of efficiency will allow clinicians to focus on the human side of care, directly engaging with patients, building a relationship of trust, exercising empathy while using judgment to guide and advise.[30] This is particularly meaningful as it has been shown that establishing a relationship of mutual trust is central for effective medical care while the patient enjoys an improved experience and clinical outcomes.[31] Apart from considerations that have to do with the challenges to actually realise such a potential, e.g. driven by the profit-oriented business models in healthcare,[32] it has been argued that AI inherently lacks the potential to demonstrate empathy characteristics.

In the history of scientific research, empathy has progressed from a predominantly cognitive construction to one that also includes affective, imaginative and relational dimensions.[33] As

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[28] Ibid., 7.

[29] Rama K. Vasudevan, et al., "Off-the-shelf Deep Learning Is Not Enough, and Requires Parsimony, Bayesianity, and Causality," *npj Computational Materials* 7, no. 16 (2021): 5.

[30] Alexander L. Fogel, and Joseph C. Kvedar, "Artificial Intelligence Powers Digital Medicine," *npj Digital Medicine* 1, no. 5 (2018): 1.

[31] John M. Kelley, et al., "The Influence of the Patient-Clinician Relationship on Healthcare Outcomes: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Randomized Controlled Trials," *PLOS ONE* 9, no. 4, e94207 (2014): 1.

[32] Matthew Nagy, and Bryan Sisk, "How Will Artificial Intelligence Affect Patient-Clinician Relationships?" *American Medical Association Journal of Ethics* 22, no. 5 (2020): E397.

[33] Laurence Tan, et al., "Defining Clinical Empathy: A Grounded Theory Approach from the Perspective of Healthcare Workers and Patients in a Multicul-

described in the *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, empathy encompasses "a wide range of psychological capacities that are thought of as being central for constituting humans as social creatures allowing us to know what other people are thinking and feeling, to emotionally engage with them, to share their thoughts and feelings, and to care for their well-being."[34] Although the observer's emotional state is isomorphic with the other person's state, the observer is aware that the other person is the source of their state, thus differentiating empathy from emotional contagion.[35] Compassion and sympathy are analogous terms in so as the representation of the emotions of others is present, however empathy is distinct in that requires the synchronisation of the emotional states.[36] Empathy includes feelings that are similar to what the other feels and not feelings for how the other person feels. Moreover, these concepts represent different neurobiological phenomena.

Empathy is a complex phenomenon, and its contemporary notion is divided into a cognitive (cognitive empathy) and an affective (emotional empathy) element; cognitive empathy relates to the capacity for taking another individual's perspective, also referred to as mentalising, perspective-taking or theory of mind. On the other hand, affective empathy is caused by sharing the emotions of another agent through observation or imagination of their experience.[37, 38] Although emotional and cognitive

tural Setting," *British Medical Journal Open* 11, no. 9, e045224 (2021): 1-2.

[34] Karsten Stueber, "Empathy," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Fall 2019, ed. Edward N. Zalta, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2019/entries/empathy/.

[35] Frederique de Vignemont, and Tania Singer, "The Empathic Brain: How, When and Why?" *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 10, no. 10 (2006): 435.

[36] Minoru Asada, "Development of Artificial Empathy," *Neuroscience Research* 90 (2015): 43.

[37] Patricia L. Lockwood, et al., "Individual Differences in Empathy are Associated with Apathy-Motivation," *Scientific Reports* 7 (2017): 1.

[38] Meghan L Healey, and Murray Grossman, "Cognitive and Affective Perspective-Taking: Evidence for Shared and Dissociable Anatomical Sub-

aspects are largely acknowledged as distinct processes taking place in separate brain regions, they may engage in a more complicated relationship, as e.g., in cases of metacognition where one can observe their selves from another's perspective.[39] The extent of the empathic experience is further regulated by executive functions, such as attention and self-regulation, resulting in empathic concern, i.e., sympathy.[40]

Empathy is an essential component of healthy human social interactions, stimulating prosocial and caregiving behaviours. It is acknowledged as fundamental in the development of moral behaviour, while absence of it may result in serious social and cognitive dysfunctions and has been associated with psychopathic personality.[41]

Drawing on the features of empathy and on research findings suggesting impairment in the affective but not in the cognitive aspect of empathy in psychopathic criminals, scholars have raised concerns on the risk of manufacturing 'psychopathic,' yet intelligent and cognitively empathic, AI machines.[42]

Cognitive empathy, entailing comprehending rather than feeling, is based on the perception of bodily expressions and behaviours of others and the subsequent process of inference. However, despite laying the ground for the notions of openness and other-directedness to build upon, it has been suggested that cognitive empathy can, in reality, be concurrent or even auxiliary to immorality. It is in this respect that this type of empathy does not work as a facilitator for moral agency. AI, limited to representing the situation of a hypothetical patient and applying a reliable algorithm

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strates," *Frontiers in Neurology* 9, no. 491 (2018): 2.

[39] Asada, 45.

[40] Josanne D. M. van Dongen, "The Empathic Brain of Psychopaths: From Social Science to Neuroscience in Empathy," *Frontiers in Psychology* 11 (2020): 3.

[41] Ibid., 2.

[42] Carlos Montemayor, et al., "In Principle Obstacles for Empathic AI: Why we can't Replace Human Empathy in Healthcare," *AI & Society* (2021): 1.

for the rule of inference, is constrained to this type of empathy. On the contrary, affective empathy is more interrelated to moral agency as it is evocative of openness and other-directedness.[43]

In a study using resting-state fMRI, the researchers examined how differences between cognitive and affective empathy are reflected in the brain's intrinsic functional dynamics and found that affective empathy is associated with stronger functional connectivity among social–emotional regions (ventral anterior insula, orbitofrontal cortex, amygdala, perigenual anterior cingulate).[44]

In conclusion, what is concerning on the application of AI in the clinical setting is if and how empathy can be reproduced in the systems. Up to today, it seems that close relatives of empathy, like compassion and sympathy can be demonstrated by AI[45] 'agents' but the issue of affective empathy remains to be elucidated, if not yet accepted as impossible. Real human empathy is absolutely necessary in order to provide genuine healthcare in which a sense of connection is grown between the healthcare workers and patients.[46] Moral medical care cannot be dissociated from demonstrating empathy in response to human suffering.

V. Conclusion

The development of AI systems, especially those employing deep learning technologies is accompanied with several challenges. On the ethical domain, the issues of explainability and causation have raised hard debates on whether AI ought to be understandable or to follow counterfactual reasoning in order to be implemented in the clinical practice. As to today, achieving consensus on the meaning and implications of AI-related responsibility has proven difficult, while newly coined terms challenge traditional con-

[43] Elisa Aaltola, "Varieties of Empathy and Moral Agency," *Topoi* 33 (2014): 247.
[44] Christine L. Cox, et al., "The Balance Between Feeling and Knowing: Affective and Cognitive Empathy are Reflected in the Brain's Intrinsic Functional Dynamics," *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience* 7, no. 6 (2012): 727.
[45] Montemayor, Halpern, and Fairweather, 3.
[46] Tan, et al., 8.

cepts in the domain of philosophy. At the same time, advances in neurocognitive research have revealed that empathy also includes affective, imaginative and relational dimensions, thus suggesting that a moral therapeutic relationship in medicine may not be reached via a machine, albeit intelligent.

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The Overcoming of Aesthetics

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Abstract: In this paper I will present Heidegger's idea of the overcoming of aesthetics, as a particular manner of a metaphysical way of thinking. The analysis will show that the overcoming of aesthetics is related to the new understanding of philosophy and the new view on thinking, opposed to the modern representational model. Also, I will present Heidegger's interpretation of painting as his attempt to learn about this new thinking following the artistic model of the image. Finally, the analysis proves that the overcoming of the representational image and aesthetics is essentially related to the question of Being and the ontological difference.
Keywords: Martin Heidegger; aesthetics; metaphysics; overcoming; image; painting

One of the most influential philosophers of the 20th century, Martin Heidegger, was also the one to redefine the traditional relation between philosophy and art. Although art was not one of the major issues Heidegger was concerned with during his early lectures and philosophy before *Being and Time*, it has become one of the most significant problems of his later thought, after the so-called turn (*Kehre*), marking the immanent change of his approach to the question of Being. Also, although there are several remarks on the arts in his early thought – the first one ever being the short analysis of Franz Mark's painting *Deer in the Forest* in his *Logik. Die Frage nach der Wahrheit* (*Logic. The Question of Truth*), lectures he held in Marburg in the winter semester in

1925-1926,[1] the German philosopher truly showed interest in the arts during the thirties and after, under the strong influence of Nietzsche and Hölderlin. This, however, was not a matter of small significance; art was not just one of many problems Heidegger was interested in. On the contrary, in his later philosophy, art became the issue upon which Heidegger tried to resolve the question of the true nature and essence of philosophy in a contemporary context. In other words, Heidegger's dealings with art have a special purpose: to question, criticize, discover and redefine philosophy as such.

Heidegger's questioning philosophy has been a mark of his thought from the very beginning. In his early works and lectures, he often pointed out to the institutional context philosophy was situated in at the universities, and he often criticized the consequences of the prevailing hegemony of the positive sciences. Going against such trends, Heidegger was a strong advocate of the autonomy of philosophy; that is, he was of the opinion that philosophy – and only philosophy – can decide upon its essence and determine its own role and meaning in the contemporary world. So much so, that he took over famous Husserl's idea of philosophy as a strict science, claiming that the strictness in knowledge originally belongs to philosophy, and that it has been deviated in the sciences.

However, another important issue of early Heidegger's philosophy was also his strong conviction that contemporary philosophy is strongly – and wrongly – burdened by its past, with its tradition. In other words, Heidegger believed that philosophers today are not just overwhelmed by the ideas and concepts of the tradition, but also, and perhaps more than anything else, with the traditional ways of thinking, especially the ones related to logic and metaphysics. Even when dealing with new and contemporary problems, philosophers think in the way of tradition, therefore only seemingly making any progress at all. Moreover, as it is well known, Heidegger believed that the tradition of philosophy

[1] Martin Heidegger, *Logik: Die Frage nach dem Wahrheit*, GA 21, ed. W. Biemel (Frankfurt am Mein: Vittorio Klostermann, 1976).

has forgotten the most important question of philosophy, the question of Being, thus endangering it entirely.

Having all this in mind, it is hard to reconcile two ideas – philosophy today being autonomous in its self-determination, and philosophy today being unable to freely approach its own essence, due to the inherited conceptual matrices of the past. The problem was resolved in Heidegger's later philosophy, through an unexpected displacement: the essence of philosophy today is to be found and determined through the dialogue with the arts. The famous dialogue between poeticizing (*Dichten*) and thinking (*Denken*) – the neighbourhood of philosophy and art – thus became the light motif of Heidegger's philosophy of art; the task of the philosophy involved in such dialogue is to discover both its own essence and the essence of the arts. Heidegger's later philosophy is filled with examples of the sort, most of which relate to poetry (Hölderlin, Trakl, George and others), but also to painting (Van Gogh, Cezanne, Klee), sculpture and architecture.

Nevertheless, if there is to be any chance to rediscover the essence of philosophy in contemporary context – and to do so in a dialogue with the arts, Heidegger also had to deal with the traditional models of relationship between the two. The question of art in philosophy is not a contemporary one; on the contrary, in this form or the other, art has been an issue of importance for philosophy since the times of ancient Greece. Having in mind Heidegger's problems with traditional philosophy, it is only to be expected that he would disregard such approaches and try to build up a new one. In fact, that is the true meaning of the mentioned dialogue between poeticizing and thinking, with both words being Heidegger's own new terms for the old and the traditional ones – poeticizing for the newly envisaged art, and thinking for the philosophy. However, the new dialogical relation between the two goes hand in hand with the critique of the old one; and that is what the formulation (the formal indication) of *the overcoming of aesthetics* is all about.[2]

[2] Marius Johan Geertsema, *Heidegger's Poetic Projection of Being* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 4.

In this paper, I would like to present Heidegger's idea of overcoming of aesthetics, as an example of the way in which he understands the relation between the traditional – especially modern - and contemporary (philosophy). In my opinion, this particular example is both the model of understanding Heidegger's philosophy between the tradition and contemporary thinking, and also the key issue for the project of renewing the question of Being as the main philosophical problem of our time.

I. The overcoming of aesthetics: A metaphysical problem?

Heidegger's approach to the traditional relation between philosophy and the arts is a critique directed to the philosophical discipline of aesthetics; since aesthetics was established in the 18th century by Alexander G. Baumgarten, it is clear enough that Heidegger here deals with the modern philosophy. Although well aware of the fact mentioned before, that art was a philosophical issue of importance since the ancient times, Heidegger still chooses to focus on the very discipline of aesthetics, and thus to proclaim it – in its modern form and idea – as an exemplar of the traditional philosophical approach to art in general. Therefore, the phrase *the overcoming of aesthetics* is meant to cover all traditional relations between philosophy and art, and not just the modern ones; the phrase is to be understood in its wider meaning.

The discipline of aesthetics, however, would have to have some special property which would elevate it as a proper example of all the other similar cases – Plato's critique of arts in *the Republic*, Aristotle's *Poetics*, medieval and Rennaissance understanding of the arts, etc. This is the case indeed: for Heidegger, modern aesthetics – although it is *an aesthetics* – is, in fact, *metaphysical*. Or, to put it closer to his words, *modern aesthetics is of a metaphysical character*; and quite obviously so, to be confirmed with the works of its founder Baumgarten. By this, Heidegger means the following: although the subject of this philosophical discipline is, at least according to Baumgarten, beauty, art, and

sensory (aesthetic) experience, the way it approaches and thinks about this subject is metaphysical – it is translated from the metaphysics to aesthetics. Therefore, the true nature of modern aesthetics is not aesthetical, but metaphysical, since regardless of *what* it is concerned with, it always acts in the manner of metaphysics.[3]

In fact, this is not a novel idea in Heidegger's philosophy, nor is it restricted to the matter of aesthetics only. On the contrary, even in his early works Heidegger claims that the entire traditional philosophy, including the modern one, is metaphysical. To put it more simply, Heidegger says that all the different matrices of philosophical thinking until his own time are merely instances of the one and the same model – the model of metaphysical thought. By metaphysics, therefore, Heidegger does not refer to the special field of philosophy, one of its disciplines, along with aesthetics, ethics, logic, etc. only. On the contrary, he refers to all of them equally and jointly, in the same way previously mentioned regarding the case of aesthetics. So, according to Heidegger, regardless of the subject a particular philosophical discipline is concerned with, traditional philosophy always acts in the manner of metaphysics. Moreover, it is exactly because of this that philosophy has forgotten its most important and primary question, the question of Being: by metaphysical thinking and metaphysics, therefore, Heidegger aims at those philosophies which are marked by the loss of this primary question.

As it is well known, most of Heidegger's early and later philosophy is directed to the endeavor of reclaiming and rediscovering of this primary question, in order to redefine philosophy and, once again, to put it on solid grounds. His remarks on the very first page of *Being and Time*, where he speaks about contemporary philosophy being in a worse position than Plato's, whom he cites, since it has forgotten not only the answer to the question of Being, but the question as such, confirm this. The task he commits himself to is, therefore, the renewal of philosophy which would

[3] Gianni Vattimo, "Aesthetics and the End of Epistemology," in *Heidegger Reexamined.* Volume 3: Art, Poetry, and Technology, eds. H. Dreyfuss, and M. Wrathall (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), 7-8.

not be determined by the metaphysics; in his later thought, the same task is formulated as *the overcoming* (or *overturning*, *Überwindung*) of metaphysics, and, in some cases, as *the getting over* the metaphysics (or *coming to terms with*, or *winding back*, *Verwindung*).[4]

The overcoming of aesthetics is, thus, to be understood in terms of the overcoming of metaphysics, as an instance of the same process. However, the case of aesthetics is a special one: although it is to be expected that the overcoming of metaphysics implies the overcoming of all traditional disciplines of philosophy, since they all share the metaphysical character or manner of thinking, Heidegger explicitly speaks only about the overcoming of aesthetics. Moreover, if we take into account the important role the dialogue with art is to have in his attempt to rediscover and redefine the essence of philosophy, it becomes clear that the overcoming of aesthetics is also to be considered as a necessary aspect of the overcoming of metaphysics. Namely, if the renewal of philosophy depends on its dialogue with the arts, then the way it approaches the arts has to be changed. However, to change it means to overcome the metaphysical character of the philosophical approach to the arts, and by doing so, to overcome metaphysics at the point where it could be the most dangerous – at the point which, as Heidegger puts it in *The Question Concerning Technology*, *saving power* (of art) is to be found.[5] And so he says in his second major work, *Contributions to Philosophy*:

> The question of the origin of the work of art is not intent on an eternally valid determination of the essence of the work of art, a determination that could also serve as a guideline for the historiological survey and explanation of the history of art. Instead, the question stands in the most intrinsic connection

[4] Daniel O. Dahlstrom, *The Heidegger Dictionary* (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 152; Dominique Jaicaud, *From Metaphysics to Thought* (New York: SUNY Press, 1995), 8-9.

[5] Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," in Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. W. Lovitt (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1977), 34-35.

> to the task of overcoming aesthetics, i.e., overcoming a particular conception of beings – as objects of representation. The overcoming of aesthetics again results necessarily from the historical confrontation with metaphysics as such.[6]

As we can see, the overcoming of aesthetics is explicitly tied to confrontation with metaphysics, and so it is necessarily related to the overcoming of metaphysics. The quotation also shows more precisely the meaning of such confrontation: the overcoming of aesthetics is directed to *the conception of beings as objects of representation*, which clearly points out to the modern philosophy. Moreover, since metaphysics for Heidegger is characterized by the forgetting of the question of Being, i.e. forgetting of the ontological difference – the difference between beings and Being, it is also clear that the overcoming of metaphysics implies the new understanding of beings, now as different from Being, and – especially in later philosophy – understood in the light of Being.[7] The case of aesthetics is, therefore, aiming at a particular modus of the equation of the beings/Being difference, at the modern conception of beings as objects of mental representation, or, to put it in terms of modern philosophy, as objects of ideas.

In his seminal work on art, *The Origin of the Work of Art* from the 1935, to which Heidegger refers in the above quoted citation, but also elsewhere in *the Contributions*, he addresses the same issue so:

> Almost as soon as specialized thinking about art and the artist began, such reflections were referred to as

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[6] Martin Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)*, trans. R. Rojcewicz, and D. Vallega-Neu (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2012), 396.

[7] Friedrich-Wilchelm von Hermann, *Subjekt und Dasein- Interpretationen zu "Sein und Zeit"* (Frankfurt am Mein: Vittorio Klostermann, 1985), 25; Karl Lehmann, *Vom Ursprung und Sinn der Seinsfrage im Denken Martin Heideggers. Versuch einer Orthestimmung,* Band I (Freiburg i.Br.: Universitätsbibliothek, 2003), 135.

> 'aesthetic.' Aesthetics treated the artwork as an object, as indeed an object of αἴσθησις, of sensory apprehension in a broad sense. These days, such apprehension is called an 'experience.' The way in which man experiences art is supposed to inform us about its essential nature. Experience is the standard-giving source not only for the appreciation and enjoyment of art but also for its creation. Everything is experience. But perhaps experience is the element in which art dies.[8]

As we can see, the idea about modern aesthetics being essentially related to a specific understanding of beings as objects of ideas, i.e., representations or sensory apprehension is at stake here too. And it is the same idea which shows the metaphysical character of modern aesthetics: it is defined around the issue of how beings are understood, around the metaphysical matrix which is in advance inscribed in its approach to any particular subject. Contrary to how it may seem, aesthetics is not metaphysically neutral, although metaphysical issues are not its primary concerns. As Heidegger sees it, the fact that modern aesthetics is determined by a rather particular understanding of beings makes it even more metaphysical, exactly because those metaphysical matrices of thinking it activates are hidden and not easily recognized.

Modern aesthetics, of course, is an instance of a specific kind of metaphysical thinking, the one characteristic of modern philosophy in general, such is to be found in Descartes, Leibniz, Wolff, but also Kant or Hegel. In all these cases, regardless of their differences, there is one single idea or a worldview to be found – *the world as a picture*, or, better say, the world as an image, as a representation, as Heidegger puts it in *The Age of the World Picture*. What Heidegger aims at is the general approach of the

[8] Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," in Martin Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, ed. and trans. J. Young, and K. Haynes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 50.

modern philosophy to any kind of philosophical inquiry: one has to start with how the world is given to our minds, and to inspect this with regard to the limits, inner function and organization of the cognitive powers (of the soul). In this respect, the cognitive subject is confronted with a problematic outer object, it can never fully reach, because the object is given to the subject only through the mediation of these cognitive powers, that is, his own consciousness. Therefore, the object gradually becomes the image or the representation of the object – *the object as it is given to the subject*. Moreover, the very constitution of the thinking subject, or the thinking as such, is understood in terms of representation, as being grounded in the simplest units of consciousness (ideas), whether their origin is to be found in perception only, or in the autonomous workings of reason as well.

The representational character of thinking, typical for the modern philosophy, is what should be overcome in this particular case; along with it, therefore, the modern metaphysics would be dealt with too. As we can see, the point here is to make an intervention not merely upon the contents and claims of modern metaphysics, but also – and more importantly – upon the way of thinking that results in such positions. So, Heidegger is interested in the new non-representational way of (philosophical) thinking, which he names *Gelassenheit*: such thinking is not constituted by the presence of its object (in the representation), but by its absence.[9] Also, it is not the reference point of its own legitimacy, as is the case with Descartes, for example. The legitimacy of such thinking comes from the phenomenon to which

[9] Daniela Vallega-Neu, *Heidegger's Contributions to Philosophy, An Introduction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 97-98, 102; Kenneth Mally, *Five Ground-Breaking Moments in Heidegger's Thinking* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020), 189-190; Jean-Luc Nancy, "On a Divine Wink," in *French Interpretations of Heidegger: An Exceptional Reception*, eds. D. Pettigrew, and F. Rafford (New York: SUNY Press, 2008), 179-180; Andrew J. Mitchell, "The Fourfold," in *Martin Heidegger: Key Concepts*, ed. B. W. Davis (New York: Routledge, 2010), 216.

it is intentionally directed, and which it should follow – obviously, in unpredictable ways. So, *Gelassenheit* is the name for the way of thinking directly opposed to the modern conceptions of thinking as self-determining and a self-constituting activity.[10]

However, to get to the new way of thinking – the new method of thinking, we could say – Heidegger needs not only to criticize the core element of modern metaphysical thought, its representational character, but also to offer an alternative to it. In this case, he needs to find a different model of understanding of a picture, or an image – such that would not be related to representations of consciousness. In other words, the new thinking requires a new kind of image it could be determined and defined with; in the case of later Heidegger, and keeping in mind the role of the dialogue between poeticizing and thinking mentioned before, the new image chosen is the artistic one – painting.

II. The overcoming of representation: The saving power of art

Heidegger's philosophy of art, as I have mentioned before, is often and almost exclusively related to his interpretations of poetry and poets. The poetry has a special role in Heidegger's later philosophy indeed, and its predominant status over the other arts has to do with its medium – language, which it shares with philosophy.[11] To put it simply, if there is to be a dialogue between art and philosophy, it is only natural for this dialogue to be placed on the ground common to both parties; even the notion of a dialogue suggests the language as the proper candi-

[10] Martin Heidegger, "Zur Erörterung der Gelassenheit. Aus einem Feldweggespräch über das Denken," in Martin Heidegger, *Aus der Erfahrung des Denkens (1910–1976)*, GA 13, ed. H. Heidegger (Frankfurt am Mein: Vittorio Klostermann, 1983), 51; Friedrich-Wilchelm von Hermann, *Wege ins Ereignis. Zu Heideggers 'Beiträgen zur Philosophie'* (Frankfurt am Mein: Vittorio Klostermann, 1994), 375.

[11] Marc Froment-Meutice, *That is to Say: Heidegger's Poetics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 92-93; John J. Kockelmans, *Heidegger on Art and Art Works* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1986), 188-189.

date in this respect.[12] Heidegger also points out to the etymological relation between the Greek word for arts in general – poiesis – and poetry; on such basis, he confirms poetry as more important than other arts, at least for philosophy, adding that poetry is the origin of every (historical) language.[13]

However, the case of painting also has an important role to play in Heidegger's philosophy of art, as well as in his later philosophy in general. Apart from the famous interpretation of Van Gogh's painting *A Pair of Shoes*, offered in *The Origin of the Work of Art*, painting is severely neglected in this respect, exactly due to the overstressing of the role of poetry.[14] Nevertheless, as mentioned before, the case of painting is closely tied to the task of overcoming of the aesthetics, because paintings – artistically made images – are the possible candidates for the alternative way of thinking about the images. In other words, if there is to be a different way of thinking about the image, due to the struggle for the new non-representational understanding of thinking, opposed to the modern representational model, and if such transfiguration of philosophy is to be achieved through the dialogue with the arts, we should look in the direction of the painting.

Actually, Heidegger was deeply interested in painting, especially in artists and novel ideas of his own time; however, he did not write much about it. Apart from several dispersed comments here and there,[15] one can find four particular examples of importance – the short analysis of Franz Mark's *Deer in the Forest* (*Logik*.

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[12] von Hermann, 234

[13] Kockelmans, *Heidegger on Art and Art Works*, 188.

[14] Denis J. Schmidt, *Between Word and Image: Heidegger, Klee, and Gadamer on Gesture and Genesis* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 70.

[15] For example, Heidegger considered Picasso to be a remarkable painter and artist, although he thought that Picasso had no essential role in the development of painting. Heinrich W. Petzet, *Encounters and Dialogues with Martin Heidegger, 1929-1976* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 144-145; J. Young, *Heidegger's Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 164-165.

Die Frage nach der Wahrheit, 1925-1926), an interpretation of Van Gogh's *A Pair of Shoes* (*The Origin of the Work of Art*, 1935), two poems on Cézanne (1971, 1974),[16] and the unfinished *Notes on Klee* (1956).[17] These four cases – these four painters and their works – mark and define Heidegger's dialogue with painting, which has lasted for about fifty years. Moreover, his interpretation of Cézanne and Klee belong to the last decades of his work, that is, to his mature efforts to resolve the question of Being.

Characteristic for all four cases is Heidegger's opposition to the modern understanding of art – to the modern representational model of image, valid for both arts and the thinking.[18]

> Aesthetics treated the artwork as an object, as indeed an object of αἴσθησις, of sensory apprehension in a broad sense. These days, such apprehension is called an 'experience.' […] Experience is the standard-giving source not only for the appreciation and enjoyment of art but also for its creation,[19]

as he says in *The Origin of the Work of Art*. To oppose this, Heidegger continuously speaks about the relation of painting and the question of Being; this is especially stressed in his views on Mark and Van Gogh. For example, in his analysis of Mark's painting he is explicit about it: Heidegger says that artistic representing is about the presentation of a hermeneutic notion, which offer an understanding of being of a thing presented.[20] Painting specifi-

[16] Martin Heidegger, "Cézanne," in *Gedachtes*, GA 81, ed. P.-L. Coriando (Frankfurt am Mein: Vittorio Klostermann, 2007), 327, 347.

[17] Martin Heidegger, "Notizen zu Klee/Notes to Klee," *Philosophy Today* 61, no. 1 (2017): 7-17.

[18] For example, in his analysis of Mark's painting he confronts three models of understanding the image – as a picture (painting), as an illustration, and as photography – photography here being a symbol for modern understanding of representation. Martin Heidegger, *Logik*, 363-364.

[19] Martin Heidegger, "The Origin," 50.

[20] Martin Heidegger, *Logik*, 363. The case of Van Gogh is obvious in this respect, since the interpretation of the painting is inherently related to the

cally, as well as the art in general, is to be interpreted with regard to the question of Being, that is, ontologically – but not metaphysically.

However, Heidegger's works on Cézanne and Klee radicalize this tendency, and in the direction of the new way of thinking – the new idea of philosophy. Although the poems on Cézanne are written almost twenty years after the notes on Klee, Heidegger's view of these two artists give precedence to Klee: Cézanne is to be understood as the one who prepares what Klee is actually doing. On the other hand, he is the one who changes Heidegger's views on painting from the positions given within the interpretation of Van Gogh in the direction of the overcoming of aesthetics and metaphysics.[21]

What Cézanne is actually preparing is the new relation between philosophy and painting, the one conceived in the spirit of the dialogue of *Denken* and *Dichten*. Namely, the notion mentioned before – *Gelassenheit*, the notion marking the non-representational way of thinking Heidegger is eager to achieve, has a significant role in both of these poems. In the one from the 1971, in the second verse Heidegger says:

Das nachdenksam Gelassene,
das inständig Stille
der Gestalt des alten Gärtners Vallier,
der Unscheinbares pflegte
am chemin des Lauves.

A similar verse is to be found in the poem from the 1974 as well.[22] Now, the notion of *Gelassenheit* is here directly related to Heidegger's description of Cézanne's painting (or paintings). The same notion is in the second poem introduced with fol-

definition of art and the truth of beings represented.

[21] Otto Pöggeler, *Bild und Technik: Heidegger, Klee und die Moderne Kunst* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2002), 171.

[22] Heidegger, "Cézanne," GA 81, 327.

lowing words: "*Gesammelt winkend: / das nachdenksam Gelassene*,"[23] after which again the description of the painting follows.

What this means is that it is the painting that gives signs to philosopher regarding the new way of thinking he is searching for and is striving to get to: the painting is literally winking, pointing out to the direction philosophy should follow in the future. The painting is showing and embodying a certain way of thinking, which is presented to philosophy inasmuch the painting is presented to the philosophy as a specific phenomenon; therefore, the dialogue between painting and philosophy is at work here – Heidegger actually mentions "ahnenden Bildens und Denkens."[24] However, this dialogue is not realized within the language, but in-between the language and visibility; so, philosophy is about to learn how to see, and only consequently how to speak.

In the poem from 1974 Heidegger also explicitly compares Cézanne's painting in general, that is, the core issue of Cézanne's painting in Heidegger's opinion, with his own problem of the ontological difference. Namely, according to Heidegger, the key problem of Cézanne's painting – the single artistic thought presented and articulated with all his painting – is the very ontological issue of the presence. More precisely, Heidegger believes that Cézanne is painting the essence of the presence – the being of the presented.[25] Moreover, according to Heidegger, Cézanne's paintings are overcoming the difference between the presence and the presented, Being and beings.[26] And so he says:

> Was Cezanne la realisation nennt, ist
> das Erscheinen des Anwesenden in der Lichtung
> des Anwesens – so zwar, dass die Zweifalt beider

[23] Ibid., 347.

[24] Ibid., 327.

[25] Young, 155.

[26] Actually, he uses the notion of *coming to terms with* (*Verwindung*) – and not overcoming. Nevertheless, as mentioned before, the two notions are closely related and the difference has no impact on the argument here.

verwunden ist in der Einfalt des reinen
Scheinens seiner Bilder.
Für das Denken ist dies die Frage nach der
Überwindung der ontologischen Differenz zwische
Sein und Seiendem.[27]

Now, the overcoming of the presence/presented difference in Cézanne's painting is not a sort of artistically articulated loss of the ontological difference, similar to the one Heidegger accused the tradition of philosophy for. On the contrary, this 'ontological' difference is overcome by his paintings; it is not neglected and forgotten, but pushed into the entirely new direction of thinking, one that completely escapes philosophical approaches to the matter. Or, to put it differently: by taking part in the dialogue with Cézanne's painting, philosophy can learn to see things differently, so that it can go a step forward – away from its own tradition, and closer to the ontology which could think Being and beings in their difference and their unity at the same time.[28] Such "two folded unity" (*die Zweifalt beider verwunden ist in der Einfalt*) is exactly the model of thinking about the Being of beings Heidegger proposes in his later philosophy.[29]

The overcoming of metaphysics – that is, the overcoming of the ontological difference – is, however, here still understood in terms of a philosophical task; it is philosophy, that should learn from Cézanne's painting and build the new approach to the question of Being. However, with *Notes on Klee* Heidegger pushes the problem into an entirely unpredictable direction: the overcoming of metaphysics, and, therefore, the overcoming of aesthetics, is now presented as an issue that belongs to the art and which should be resolved within the art. Needless to say, for Heidegger, Paul Klee is the one who is *overcoming the art*!

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[27] Heidegger, "Cézanne," GA 81, 347

[28] Pöggeler, 176.

[29] John J. Kockelmans, *On the Truth of Being: Reflections on Heidegger's later Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 83-84, 92-93; Daniela Vallega-Neu, *Heidegger's* Contributions to Philosophy, 30, 40, 92-93.

According to Heidegger's friend and art historian, Heinrich Wiegent Petezet, upon going to an exhibition of Klee's paintings in 1956, Heidegger commented how he should write the second part of *The Origin of the Work of Art*. Petzet also informs us how Heidegger considered Klee to be an exceptional event in art and painting, so exceptional, that no one yet understands it (including himself).[30] For Heidegger, Klee is a painter who is trying to inspect, question and understand the painting as such using the artistic media and means of painting; the exemplary case for this, again according to Petzet, is Klee's panting *Bunter Blitz* (1927).[31]

In *Notes on Klee*, one can find several indications that this painter is offering a new understanding of art – at least for Heidegger. For example: "'Art' as such [is] of a metaphysical essence" (fragment 13); "Art of today: surrealism = metaphysics; abstract art = metaphysics; objectless art = metaphysics" (fragment 15); "Transformation of art" (fragment 20); "'Art' [An X should be placed over 'Art' here]" (fragment 22).[32] What is interesting here is that Heidegger is speaking of the *metaphysical character of art* – much in the same manner he commented on the metaphysical character *of aesthetics*. In other words, while previously he was focused on the critique of philosophy and its approach to art, demanding for a new way of thinking about the arts, now he claims that the art itself is in the same position, that it is equally problematic as philosophy is. To stress this even more: it is more or less comprehensible that aesthetics, as a branch of philosophy, can be metaphysical, but it is rather confusing to claim that art shares in the character of philosophy.

What Heidegger means is that the same manner of thinking, same view on reality is shared between traditional philosophy and art; the one related to the ontological difference problem. In other words, art is metaphysical because it does not reflect

[30] Petzet, 149-151.

[31] Ibid., 156; Pöggeler, 129.

[32] Heidegger, "Notizen zu Klee/Notes to Klee"; Pöggeler, 149.

the difference between Being and beings, because it presents us with the understanding of reality which follows metaphysical worldview. Nevertheless, with Klee Heidegger finds an example of art which is not metaphysical – which is *overcoming the metaphysics within the art*, and with it, *overcoming the art* in its usual meaning and form. The overcoming of art is, then, complementary to overcoming of aesthetics, them being the same issue viewed from two different perspectives. Moreover, if all art is metaphysical, then the dialogue between poeticizing and thinking is futile; for it to become viable again, art would have to change in the same direction Heidegger is trying to change philosophy.

Therefore, if Klee is overcoming the old understanding of art with his paintings, then he also offers a new kind of image – a new mode of picture, which could not possibly be of a representational nature and which could, thus, serve the purpose of inciting philosophy to think in the manner of *Gelassenheit*.[33] Indeed, Heidegger says: "these are not images, but states; Klee is capable of letting attunements be 'seen' within the configuration" (fragment 25).[34] And also: "Can there still be 'works?' Or is art destined for something else?" (fragment 21).[35] What this means is that the essence of painting, as it is presented with Klee, is not about the representation of beings – not about the mimesis of any kind or form. On the contrary, the essence of painting is about Being as such: since Being could not possibly be presented in an audible or visible form – since Being is not any of beings – the essence of painting is about presenting (continuously) what cannot be seen.[36]

Now, since Being cannot actually be presented, Klee is, according to Heidegger, doing the only thing that could be done

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[33] Stephen H. Watson, "Heidegger, Paul Klee, and the Origin of the Work of Art," *The Review of Metaphysics* 60, no. 2 (2006): 345-346.

[34] Heidegger, "Notizen zu Klee/Notes to Klee."

[35] Ibid.

[36] Stephen H. Watson, *Crescent Moon Over the Rational: Philosophical Interpretations of Paul Klee* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 97.

– he presents it *as unpresentable*, in its absence. Therefore, Heidegger will agree with Klee's own comment how his painting is neither abstract and non-objective, nor objective, but somewhere in-between; exactly this kind of *being in-between* – moving back and forth between objects and their absence – is what allows Klee to present the absence, to make visible what cannot be seen.[37] So, Heidegger will gladly support Klee's own credo; "Art does not reproduce the visible; rather, it makes visible" (fragment 3).[38]

III. Concluding remarks

Heidegger's view of the relationship between philosophy and art is, as we have seen, problematic, complex, interesting and provoking. His efforts to overcome the traditional ways of philosophical thinking in the direction of the new and yet unseen paths remained a task for Heidegger himself. It was never finished, nor – I may add – could it ever be finished. Nevertheless, the dialogue between the traditional and contemporary philosophy realized in his project of the new thinking is quite remarkable; it leaves us with many points to inspect and, perhaps, follow.

The way the art was involved in this project is, in my opinion, particularly important. Heidegger opposes the traditional idea that art is merely an object for a philosopher to exercize his rational, dialectical or logical thinking, considering himself, in advance, to be able to define the essence of the art more or less easily. Heidegger was the first one to acknowledge the utter mystery of the arts, the utter impossibility of philosophy to ever conquer it. Instead, Heidegger advocates for the relationship between two equals, such that, if there is anything to be learned and claimed from the experience of such relationship, it has to be confined in the realms of the philosophy – it has to be a word on philosophy, and not

[37] Schmidt, 91-92.

[38] Heidegger, "Notizen zu Klee/Notes to Klee."

on the arts. For Heidegger, the dialogue between poeticizing and thinking is not merely a matter of philosophy exploiting the novelty brought about by the arts. On the contrary, it is about the respect for this strange and wonderful phenomenon, which can never be excerpted, and which is always to be acknowledged as a phenomenon of the highest importance.

Therefore, the prominent role the overcoming of aesthetics is given in Heidegger's later philosophy, in view of his struggle against the metaphysics, should not surprise us. Nevertheless, the fact that his final word about it – again, the acknowledgement that philosophy cannot resolve its contemporary tasks without the constructive relationship with the arts – is pushed one step further with Heidegger's interpretations of the painting. The fact that we can hope for the overcoming of metaphysics only if the art itself overcomes it, with its own means and tools, leaves us in a much humbler position than it was typical for the self-understanding of the philosophy within the tradition. However, it also brings hope: for Heidegger, with Klee certainly *the saving power grows*.

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From Modernism to Contemporaneity: On the Magic of the False Name

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Abstract: The article argues that the notion of contemporaneity suits our time better than the notions of postmodernity, or modernism. The former desire for change, progress, and development has today become a mere instinct to maintain, in order to prevent the cataclysm before futuristic forecasts. The key turning point from modernity to contemporaneity is seen in relation to time. With the time horizon narrowed down to the present, we are witnessing a global rise in hedonism and consumerism. The author analyzes the phenomenon of leveling as one of the crucial signatures of time, following the path in which the neutralization, starting as a promise of freedom and a just community (Husserl) becomes a threat to the freedom itself and a mechanism of enslavement of the modern man (Adorno).
Keywords: modernism; postmodern; contemporaneity; Edmund Husserl; Theodor Adorno

This article argues that the concept of contemporaneity is a far more appropriate denotation of our age than modernism or postmodernism. The *terminus technicus* of literary and art theories modernism represents only a slight variation of modernity. The impression is that this label is insufficient, almost arbitrary because it indirectly suggests acceleration, breakthrough, and innovation, and all these definitions are significantly present in the register of modernity: "Modern is understood as something new and valuable, something significantly different in content and clearly

separated from what is old, less valuable, or simply obsolete."[1] On a conceptual level, modernism is not in a position to signal complex relations to early modernity, but it is also too narrow to integrate the ideological richness of the early avant-garde movements. However, we may sketch it, the relation between modernity and modernism insufficiently points out the differences, not to mention the epochal changes of subjectivity, time, and history, according to which our time no longer follows the fundamental ideals of modernity.

As imperfect as it may be, the notion of contemporaneity more fully expresses the temporal, historical, anthropological, and ontological deviations from modernity. In the notion of contemporaneity, we will try to emphasize heterogeneous moments, epochal diversity that does not fit into the patterns of the overcoming, prevailing, or transformation, so characteristic of modernity. Even though it is often mentioned in literature that these are not temporal, but qualitative concepts, we argue that there is an unbridgeable difference in attitude towards time. The keywords of the two epochs are therefore significantly different. On the one hand, modernity is characterized by rationality, development, critique, and overcoming, while contemporaneity favors an expanded mind, catastrophe prevention, post-critical time, and leveling. Instead of a utopia of progress, there is a dystopia on the scene of preventing a cataclysm.

Unlike Wolfgang Welsch, we do not consider this to be a confrontation of the "monolithic character of modernity" with the democratized, post-totalitarian forms of "pluralism of rationality" as the most notorious characteristic of postmodernism.[2] Modern is by no means monolithic, but it rather represents a series of intertwined ideological and historical periods. Rationalism, empiricism, enlightenment, idealism, romanticism, are all modern movements among which it is very difficult to find

[1] Slobodan Žunjić, *Modernost i filozofija. Razmatranja o duhu vremena sa razmeđa vekova* (Beograd: Plato, 2009), 109.

[2] Wolfgang Welsch, *Unsere postmoderne Moderne* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2008), 7.

a single common denominator. The pluralism of the various characters of rationality is modern par excellence. Nevertheless, we agree with Welsch that the "magic of the false name" has been at work for a long time. The miracle of the wrong name is most often realized as an overlapping of heterogeneous, mutually incomparable ideas and life attitudes. Contemporaneity, above all, is characterized by that intertwining, thanks to which, at the same time, in the same place, mutual strangers live within each person. Starting from the imperative of rationality of Descartes in the 17th century, the Enlightenment ideal of freedom and autonomy, the romantic dream of a complete man living "to the fullest," the early avant-garde call to open to the primitive, childish, and "alternative" rational, to the latest expectations of healthy eating and unpolluted environments – they all live together within the same people.

Perhaps one of the first wizards of this idea should be recognized in Charles Baudelaire, who sees modernity as a combination of the transient and the eternal. In his famous essay "Painter of the modern Life," the French poet formulates the secret of modernity in an unusual intertwining of the temporal and the timeless. The key to modernity is in the short-lived and the unpredictable, viewed relative to eternity rather than time: "transient, the fleeting, the contingent; it is one half of art, the other being the eternal and the immovable."[3]

Many misunderstandings have arisen with this unheard-of "Platonization" of modernity. As strange as it may sound, amid the modern paradigm, Baudelaire intervenes through the classical ancient opposite. The combination of the former ideal of eternity and the "ephemeral experience of life" was only meaningful in the wake of reevaluation, in which contingency frees itself from the stigma of lower reality and thus creates the conditions for perpetuating the transient. Plato's opposite of the eternal, as true and more valuable, and transitional, as second-class and less valuable, practically remains in force, but the

[3] Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life*, trans. P. Charvet (London: Penguin, 2010), 31.

signs change: ephemeral and transient are recognized as lasting attention and indefinite validity. The eternal is no longer only eternal, but the contingent also receives a residence permit in the eternal. Baudelaire's "new" modernity, that is, modernism, was conceived together by adapting Plato to modern circumstances. Eternity turned out to be the first victim: once it received the symptoms of the contingent and ephemeral, it agreed to lose its former ontological status. Paradoxically, thanks to Plato's opposition, one of the most precious idealistic notions from Plato to Hegel was deconstructed.

"Sobering up" from eternity, but also disappointment in the ideology of progress are the first features of contemporaneity. As on an ontological seesaw, there has been a disturbance of the former balance. The culprit is the downfall of the future and a dramatic change in its shift of values. The utopian energy of a "better tomorrow" has given way to cataclysmic predictions of impending doom. Once a promise of more dignified and better humanity, it has become a signature of endangered life, either in overpopulation, or scarce resources, ecological endangerment, climate change, or nuclear catastrophe. Ontological and existential "fall" of the future – it prepared a gift for other time dimensions. After the ideology of future progress was exposed as an unfounded construction, the price of the present necessarily rose, but confidence in the once despised past also grew. Deprived of the horizon of the future, the modern man has put all the money on the present. The impression is that the narrowing of the temporal horizon from a synergy of the three-time dimensions to now and here could be considered responsible for modern consumerism and worldwide hedonism. The scale of spending aimed at boosting current enjoyment today is incomparable in its scale to any period of civilization: "The key word of this century is not a decision, but an experience […] The world is a menu, which means order and do not despair."[4]

On the other hand, the current cultural heritage turns out to be too narrow for the needs of the time. To fill that gap in

[4] Peter Sloterdijk, *Falls Europa erwacht. Gedanken zum Programm einer Weltmacht am Ende des Zeitalters am Ende des Zeitalters ihrer politischen Absence* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1994), 20.

time, all we have to do is turn to the legacy of the past. The one who no longer believes that the future itself will be better than the present won't be inclined to nurture the view of the past as a dark specter. The one who no longer sees the support of their development in the vision of a promising future can no longer seek crucial points of reference even in the respect for the wholeness of the past. Deprived of the criteria found in the present, subjectivity remains without orientation in the shoreless sea of the past. The support, Nietzsche constantly emphasizes, is no longer in the epochal totality of a tradition, but in the chosen past. In its motives, in a careful selection of steps that we no longer intend to copy and imitate. The present and the past thus enter a complex relationship, without fixed touches and supports. Undoubtedly, the interaction takes place in the present, so possible effects should be expected in it.

The logic of modernity sees the genesis of humanity in progress, which comes about through overcoming and intellectual triumph over delusions, dogmas, and backwardness. On the contrary, contemporary genealogy reckons with the total negation of the subject, which is necessary to establish the civilization of subjectivity in general.[5] At a time when freedom is above all legitimized by confronting the concrete forms of non-freedom, subjectivity also sees the possibility of its own emancipation only after rejecting its inauthentic forms. Hence, it is not surprising that for Marx's modernity, alienation was interpreted only as an expression of barbaric economic circumstances, and for the contemporaneity of Heidegger and Camus, it represents a quasi "natural state," an elementary confirmation of the *conditio humana*. The naturalness of human innocence is also uncorrupted, as corruption, according to modern epistemology, occurs only through unnatural, artificial, "inhuman" relations created by the economic or political order, while contemporaneity sees the man as homeless, "thrown away," as a kind of stranger in his own house.

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[5] Gerhard Gamm, *Der unbestimmte Mensch. Zur medialen konstruktion der Subjektivität* (Berlin and Wien: Philo, 2004), 227.

I. Truth regime change

The categorical peculiarities of the notion of contemporaneity are usually recognized in the transformation of language, subject, and reality. The unavoidable result of these changes has also brought an epochal modification of the truth regime. More specifically, in modern times there has been a dramatic abandonment of the traditional constellation, according to which truth meant agreement, correspondence, non-contradiction. It is in truth that we can find one of the borderlines between the modern and the contemporary. Even truth no longer rests in the harmony of concepts and reality, words and things, *les mots et les choses*. There is no harmony between them, and it truly rests on gestures of revealing and openly showing what was originally hidden. In short, according to Kierkegaard, "direct" philosophizing is not possible, because "the method must become indirect."[6] The character of the transformation of the modern canon is twofold in its nature. On the one hand, it is characterized by a drastic change in the very mechanism of criticism, according to which negation has lost its creative power. In short, to deny no longer meant to change. It is as if the denied has become resistant to the pressure of negation. Instead of negation, Karl Marx opts for the critical capacities of denunciation, the revolutionary method first affirmed by Jean-Paul Marat. The old term rooted in espionage suggests that the veil should be removed from people, actions, and things. They should be demystified, their true faces should be shown by removing the false, artificial, untrue ones. Denunciation is no longer a shameful business, but the highest act of the search for truth. Consequently, the most important task of the indirect method becomes directly related to denunciation:

> Criticism itself needs no further self-clarification regarding this object, for criticism already understands it. Criticism is no longer an end in itself but now

[6] Søren Kierkegaard, *The Point of View form my Work as an Author*, Kierkegaard's Writings XXII, trans. H. Hong, and E. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 52.

> simply a means. Indignation is its essential pathos, denunciation its principal task.[7]

The contemporary thinker has only one task – no less and no more than to offer an alternative to their time, to sketch the contours of humanity that are yet to emerge. They are guided by the initial hypothesis that the insight into modernity is blocked in advance by those who have successfully adapted and fit into the current framework. Those who are blind to contemporaneity are precisely those who consider themselves to be closest to it and the authentic representatives of the contemporary world should be recognized in them. To that extent, the attitude of contemporaneity implies a kind of balance, even a reconciliation of the oldest and the newest. Hence, contemporaneity manages not to succumb to the dictates of the latest, fashionable, "daily fashion." A contemporary can be in love with their time only after they have gotten rid of the clinch with it. The origin of the conflict, however, has nothing to do with forced relocation, much less with the imposition of anachronisms. The contemporary aims to meet their time by focusing on shortcomings, fighting against shortcomings, spreading a revolt around themselves against the "darkness of time." To them, the horizon of the present does not satisfy cultural needs, so paradoxically, they need a library more than ever before, at a time when it is being visited less and less. If "something is rotten" in the present, then the reasons should be sought in the "fall in time," in the scattered indulgence of the moment, in isolation from communication with the past, which alone can fill the scarce options of cultural modernity.[8]

Giorgio Agamben confirms and continues the Nietzschean guiding thread when he denies the connection between the effort to be contemporary and the perception of contempora-

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[7] Karl Marx, "A Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right," in Karl Marx, *Early Political Writings*, eds. J. O'Malley, and R. A. Davis, 1-27 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 59.

[8] Manfred Fuhrmann, *Der europäische Bildungskanon des bürgerlichen Zeitalters* (Frankfurt am Main and Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 2000), 33.

neity. A contemporary is the one who manages to assess and understand their time only when they move away from it to a satisfactory distance. Therefore, to be contemporary, contrary to the suggestion of the word, actually means to be at a distance from time, far enough away from it to be understood. Simultaneously, the starting points of understanding are not directed towards the biggest, but towards the controversial, problematic, towards the "dark" sides, and what is most problematic in time:

> A contemporary is one who perceives the darkness of his time as something that concerns him or her, and doesn't stop questioning it, something that addresses him or her directly and personally more than any light.[9]

II. Conservative spirit of technique

Paradoxically, contemporaneity above all loves what appears for the first time, what suddenly emerges, what arises without ever being seen or experienced before. However, the same contemporaneity also nurtures the spirit of technology that prevents any step forward, confirming in contrast to the new one that is rounded, stabilized, established, and defined. Far from modern sensibility is the idea that not in spite of technology, but thanks to it, what is already defined and determined acquires an incomparable advantage over everything that arises.[10] The core of the technique is extremely rigid and conservative, not pro-modernization and subversive.

Contemporaneity is inevitably ready to destroy what it loves the most as soon as it appears. The spirit of contemporaneity extinguishes and burns everything new and fresh that is revealed in it. Much more decisively than Heidegger, and with an incomparably more

[9] Giorgio Agamben, *Che cos'è il contemporaneo e altri scritti* (Milano: Nottetempo, 2010), 39.

[10] Martin Heidegger, *Zur Auslegung von Nietzsches II Unzeitgemässer Betrachtung*, Gesamtausgabe Band 46, ed. H.-J. Friedrich (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2004), 78.

pronounced political point, Nietzsche warns of the colorless repetitiveness of the technical world, because he recognizes in it the threat of lack of freedom, and thus a valuable incentive to win future freedom. Finally, if we agree with Heidegger, the technique will act as the embodiment of the monstrosity of modern rationalism. This unusual offshoot of the weird way of thinking will surrender itself to beings, but in turn, will neglect the being. Instead of devoting oneself to the ontological difference between beings and being, the thought will exhaust itself in mastering and ruling over the objects of thought.

It is as if contemporaneity does not tolerate anything that fails to offer excitement, that does not move, that does not offer either laughter, or upset, or wit, or verbal eccentricity. No matter how much they are "operated" by admiration, the contemporary subject of empty temporality knows how to react to a stimulus, they know how to delight. Moments of delight are especially appreciated by the contemporary subject because they serve as a testimony to them that they have escaped the rule of nihilism. The pursuit of personal fulfillment has become more important than anything else, and it has become completely irrelevant whether it is sought through the most banal forms of hedonism or impressive examples of work ethic: "Romantic models of fulfilment can contribute to the self-justification of this civilization."[11]

Nihilism is not just one of the topics of the philosophy of reevaluation, this phenomenon is crucial for the insight into the civilizational stumble of European subjectivity. Nihilism is a historical phenomenon, a creation of time. It is unique in that it creates "empty" time. Where it triumphs, nihilism creates an unhappy awareness of time. Unhappy consciousness emerges because the subject feels their own split is, above all, characterized by an intimate distance from themselves.

Unhappy is the consciousness which lacks itself. Self-awareness, the immediate sense of self is neither acceptable nor bearable to them, while the notion of self-fulfillment seems

[11] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self. The Making of the Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harward University Press, 1989), 458.

unattainable and elusive. This is why, in contemporary times, we encounter nihilism more frequently than we realize. The secret of contemporary insecurity is manifested in the hesitation between the tendency towards perpetuation and the opposite renewal of contact with what is born and disappears, what s transient and fleeting. Moreover, one could speak of the originality of contemporary perpetuations in the transitory. When we have them in mind, the inconsistency of the subject with themselves becomes clear, as the first feature of contemporaneity. Max Stirner's insight is only the first in a rich series: "I always see my Self above myself and outside myself, so I can never really come to myself."[12]

III. Being under neutralization's spell

In *neutralization*, we recognize the keyword of contemporariness, the follower of the concept of negation, which marked the idealistic philosophy of the early 19th century. The concept of negation is the product of the world that still believed in the creative power of ideas. A world that perceived the movement of reality as a phenomenon inevitably leading towards self-improvement. The positivity of the negative is implied in the powers of rising towards the higher through deflation, cancelling, and the critical attacks of the lower. Such a concept of positivity was seriously questioned by the nihilist provocations, but also with the reality of the latter historical experience. They grew on the denial of all possible transcendental ideals, including the ideology of progress. Existing simply no longer means being established through the spirit. Moreover, the sheer reality of the ideas has been denied proving that they are desperately lacking embodiment (Leibhaftigkeit).[13] The world whose foundations are no longer founded on reliable ideas becomes radically foreign. One no longer feels at

[12] Anselm Ruest, ed., *Stirnerbreviar. Die Stärke des Einsamen. Max Stirner's Individualismus und Egoismus mit seinen eigenen Worten wiedergegeben* (Berlin: Seemann Nachf., 1906), 44.
[13] Ibid., 93.

home with it. Together, the Dadaistic and Heidegger's "existential" of thrownness (Geworfenheit) remarkably reflects such a constellation, from which the concept of neutrality branches into three different sides.

Husserl's concept of neutralization is positively marked, as it signifies the capacity of the subject not to submit to the direct contact with their everyday surroundings. As a disinterested spectator, the phenomenologist continuously experiences the adventure of the beginning, and it is enabled through the *modification of neutralization*. With the intent of reaching things themselves, phenomenology wishes to restore the unity and brilliance in our mediated relationship with reality. Neutralization helps it in that by suspending the validity we have of it. It's not about imagining that there is no reality in front and around us. It's about a suspension of everything that reality means for us, how we measure it and what meaning it has for us. It would appear that the crucial thing for that suspension is the inclusion of the heritage that, for the modern man, most commonly takes a form of a burden, unwanted load whose weight he would most gladly get rid of. The existing, the mere positivity, is coloured in striking dark colours, in a manner unheard of until then. Do we need a better illustration than Levinas' concept of *il y a*, or Sartre's *être en soi*?

This is why the concept of neutralization in Husserl's philosophy has a direct relationship with the concept of freedom. *A human world which does not have the possibility of neutralization could be likened exclusively to the world of a priori inhibition and looming non-freedom*. The difference between *freedom from* and *freedom for* turns out to be insufficient, at least when talking about their mutual cancelation. Formally speaking, neutralization is undoubtedly expressed as *freedom from*, asking independence from the existing, freedom from others, but only to enable a different, truer sense of connection, emancipated, devoted, independent, and mature till the end. Quite an appropriate version of *freedom for*.

Unlike negation, neutralization is unable to "fix" reality and raise it to its higher form. Reality by itself does not have the power of affirmation through negation. It is no longer con-

ceived on the principles of being able to overcome yourself. Still, where the world is not recognized as a friendly and hospitable place, but as the source of human corruption, the possibility of transcendence inevitably appears quite appealing. Transcendence leads us beyond the corrupt interlacing with all that we find in our immediate vicinity. The human world whose products are not the modifications of the mind, but instances of subjugation and defacement, does not deserve anything better than distance, break, or retreat. Thanks to neutralization, contemporary subjectivity presents itself as a distant individuality, which will, according to Marinetti's predictions, take the form of *magnificent anarchy* sometime in the future, while with Husserl's will remain the form of a promise of a *reasonable community founded on a newly established rationality*.

Of course, the interpretation which places neutralization before negation is not one you could consider to be a prime, usual or mainstream strategy of thinking about contemporaneity. This idea could be confronted with the fact that the concept of negation has a larger presence in contemporary philosophy, and that the concept of neutralization is quite marginal, and it does not even occupy the front seat in the works of Husserl and Heidegger. In addition to this, surely the most significant examples would be those of Sartre and Adorno, who made negation one of the most operational concepts, written in the titles of their most important works. Still, when we analyze their concepts more closely, we will note that they are not talking about 19th-century negation. For example, in Sartre's case, we can identify an excellent translation of Husserl's neutralization, in the sense of its transfer from the register of philosophy of the consciousness to the registry of practical philosophy. During this process of translation, the key role was played, understandably, by Fichte's concepts of *positing* (Setzung):

> As for negation, it testifies to the capacity of the mind to de-pose what actually is, or what it has itself

> judged 'to be the case,' in order to posit instead what is not (the possible, the future, the desirable).[14]

To sum it up: the spirit is positing something, that is, neutralizing the value of the existing to "posit" the absent and possible? It is hard to shake the feeling that Husserl's *neutralization* with Sartre becomes an *engaged negation*.

Heidegger's concept of neutralization takes us to the dynamic face of the everyday. More precisely, it is formed on the premise of the exploration of the functioning of contemporary intersubjectivity. Unlike Husserl's concept of neutralization, which explicitly is of transcendental origin, Heidegger's witnesses the mundane, trivial, everyday plain of the interhuman. Entwined with the present desire for the new (Neugier), neuralization shows the dark side of that desire. The will for the new, different, original, and authentic in the modern context is not governed by the insatiable need to search for a true breakthrough, but, on the contrary, lead by the desire to level it. When talking about leveling, we turn our attention to the process of likening to the known, average, used, and already seen. It is unusual how in the contemporary world, the newest of the new expressly becomes old, outdated, and uninteresting.

In other words, the forced nearing of the distant, the averaging of the above average, the leveling of the extraordinary, mark what Heidegger called neutralization. Unlike the Serbian words *radoznalost* and *znatiželja* (curiosity and inquisitiveness, the construct of both words implies desire for knowledge – rado (gladly) + znanje (knowledge) and želja (desire) za znanjem (for knowledge), which are almost interchangeable, as they name the need/desire for knowledge, or knowing, Heidegger's *Neugier* has nothing to do with knowledge. It looks as if it has information in its focus, including the larger spectrum that follows the actual information era. Neugier gives a name to the infinite modern appetite for the new. It is above all characterized by

[14] Vincent Descombes, *Modern French Philosophy*, trans. L. Scott-Fox, and J. M. Harding (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 24.

casualness and absentmindedness, the impossibility to find refuge in anything. In the end, Heidegger confirms that Jacobi's criticism of contemporary nihilism has hit the bullseye:

> The tendency to enjoy one's own existence is an absurdity, and in truth, a terrifying absurdity. The [human] existence which is not the sign of a transcendence is empty and cannot inspire anything else but disgust.[15]

The consequence is the lack of focus, absence of a firm idea and ideological structure. Phenomenologically speaking, the intentionality deprived of intention, mere desire deprived of the object of desire. *Modus vivendi* of desire for the new is a frivolity. To it, it is really all the same, everything is good enough, it does not even consider a permanent relationship with anything. The end result is a current business, unlimited diligence without a purpose or goal. As if Heidegger long before others anticipated the ideas of ontology and anthropology of the contemporary world of information technologies and through that concept marked the mental profile of the majority of users of social networks. It is above all defined by pleasant anxiety, lack of attention which constantly wanders in search for fulfilment but does not find it anywhere. The entertainment in forgetfulness, pleasantness in the pointless submission to indifferent contents, the passion of losing oneself in mindlessness, are the crucial existential peculiarities of the contemporariness. They have not been, however, recognized only by the experts of the informational era, but the first theoreticians of the cinema, dance halls, "light palaces" of the contemporary spectacles. Krakauer, Benjamin, and Heidegger were the first to describe the phenomena of *dispersedness* (Zerstreuung), which has, in the past 100 years, only become more developed, differentiated, and widespread.

[15] Patric Cerutti, "'Le n'ai fondé ma cause sur rien': nihilisme et subjectivité de Jacobi à Stirner," in *Le configurations du nihilisme*, eds. M. Crépon, and M. de Launay, 11-28 (Paris: Vrin, 2012), 17.

Phenomenologically presented, *dispersedness* could be described as a desertion of immanence without transcendence. The exodus from the self which comes in touch with nothing, the escape from the inner with no permanent refuge, the experience of nothingness which does not bring discomfort, but an appealing illusion of pleasure. If the everyday human communication is presented as mere jabbering, the everyday human consciousness is presented as a pointless wandering through the world web, an appetite for novelty.[16] In essence, it operates in the manner of Plato's desire and represents a bag with no bottom, which inevitably remains empty, whatever may be put in it.

For Adorno's concept of neutralization, it appears as if it is characterized by even more dramatic colours. Unlike the mundane structure of contemporary consciousness, Adorno sees the source of the problems in the conglomerate of mass media and the capitalist system. The coupling of the desire for profit and the absence of humanity creates a powerful modern mutant – the *industry of culture*. Its point is not tied to the industriainl character of the production and mass distribution of modern products of culture but to a kind of a neutralization effect, that is, to the production of a *uniformed structure of contemporary consciousness*. The place of uniformity is no longer just in the systems of the communist East, but also in the metropolises of the liberal West. It's not just that the industrial way of thinking and working got to a place it does not belong. Adorno does not warn only about the breach of industrial logic into the field of cultural production. Furthermore, following the Marxist teachings of the transfer of the production system onto the world that has nothing to do with production, Adorno points out that the human consciousness gets shaped in an industrial fashion. What Husserl presents as the absolute source of being, with Adorno gets an off the peg, identic, recognizable, and predictable character:

[16] Marlène Zarader, *Lire Être et Temps de Heidegger* (Paris: Vrin, 2012), 289.

> In contrast to the Kantian, the categorical imperative of the culture industry no longer has anything in common with freedom. It proclaims: you shall conform, without instruction as to what; conform to that which exists anyway, and to that which everyone thinks anyway as a reflex of its power and omnipresence. The power of the culture industry's ideology is such that conformity has replaced consciousness.[17]

It would appear that Heidegger's conjunction of the appetite for novelty and neutralization got its invisible producer in the concept of industrial culture. The general impression is that in the field of the critique of the phenomena which make our reality is the key for seeking the lowest common denominator between the standpoints that usually one cannot bring into contact with each other. The path of neutralization seems unusual and tempting for exploration, as it originates in the necessity of the contemporary subjectivity to break free from the claws of the ordinary, to try not to be defined by it. As if in that human capacity hides a single surviving utopia in the post-utopian age. It is not, however, by chance, that this, at first, a promising phenomenon ends up as a symbol of the invisible machine of the system, media, and capital. Does this necessarily point to the necessity of the primordial subject of neutralization becoming its object, by being not the one who neutralizes, but the one neutralized?

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[17] Theodor W. Adorno, "Culture Industry Reconsidered," in *The Culture Industry*, trans. J. M. Bernstein, 98-106 (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), 104.

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Is Morality Immune to Luck, after All? Criminal Behavior and the Paradox of Moral Luck

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Abstract: Both the genetic endowment we have been equipped with, and the environment we had to be born and raised in, were not – and never are – for us to choose; both are pure luck, a random ticket in this enormously inventive cosmic lottery of existence. If it is luck that has makes us the persons we are, and since our decisions and choices depend largely on the kind of persons we are, it seems that everything we do or fail to do may only be attributed to luck. This paper focuses on criminal behavior, with special emphasis on Tarde's and Lombroso's views, to discuss free will and agency, and their interplay with moral luck, that is, the fixed boundaries set by our nature and the circumstances that surround us.
Keywords: moral luck; free will; agency; Gabriel Tarde; Cesare Lombroso; Bernard Williams; Thomas Nagel

I. Introduction

What makes us be what we are, and do what we do? Is it our unique genetic endowment, is it the environment we live in, or is it the choices we make – choices dependent only upon free will and deliberation? No doubt the question is misleading. Probably we become – or, better, keep becoming – the persons we are, and do what we do due to a unique for each one of us interplay of all these factors, and maybe even due to some

further ones. "No man is an island entire of itself,"[1] as John Donne famously put it; Donne's concern was hardly moral luck, of course; still, his aphorism perfectly fits the discussion. We are by all means endowed with the genetic allowances and limitations our progenitors have passed on to us; this means that we can only have specific features, capabilities, tendencies etc., and not those of other people with different genomic constitutions; next to this, even from the womb and as long as we live, we exist as a part of a specific natural, historic, cultural, and social environment; the environment has a decisive say on us by providing allowances and imposing restrictions of its own, allowances and restrictions that can chisel raw genetic material into shape, personality and character. Both the genetic endowment we have been equipped with, and the environment we had to be born and raised in, were not – and never are – for us to choose; both are pure luck, a random ticket in this enormously inventive cosmic lottery of existence. If then it is mere luck that has made us the persons we are, and since our decisions and choices depend largely on the kind of the persons we are, it seems that everything we do or fail to do can only be attributed to luck; this is what Thomas Nagel[2] and Bernard Williams[3] call *moral luck*, and their view is a rather frustrating one, especially for ethicists: admitting moral luck into agency makes moral accountability an impossible enterprise, a *flatus vocis* totally devoid of any possible meaning. What is more frustrating, is that this view seems to be also in line with some key recent findings of the sciences.

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[1] "No man is an Iland, intire of itselfe; every man is a peece of the Continent, a part of the maine." John Donne, *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions and Seuerall Steps in my Sicknes*, ed. John Sparrow, with a bibliographical note by Geoffrey Keynes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1923), Meditation XVII [old English].

[2] Thomas Nagel, "Moral Luck," in *Mortal Questions*, ed. Thomas Nagel, 24-38 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

[3] Bernard Williams, *Moral Luck* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

II. The stuff criminals are made on

Cesare Lombroso, the founder of positivist criminology, and Gabriel Tarde, in his time among the most prominent figures of social criminology, are commonly taken to be in direct opposition to each other, at least as far as their views concerning the origins and the causes of criminal behavior are concerned: contrary to Tarde, who stressed the effect that various environmental factors may have on the formation of the criminal personality, Lombroso famously claimed that criminal behavior is owed to spontaneous genomic expression, the atavistic revival of an once dominant, but since long obsolete and now unwanted genetically imposed behavior that is connected with – and manifest in – certain bodily features.[4]

Cesare Lombroso in his *The Criminal Man* introduced the notion of *born* – or, *congenital* – criminals; such individuals personify, in Lombroso's view, "an anomaly, partly pathological and partly atavistic, a revival of the primitive savage."[5] Lombroso invested substantial effort to provide an impressively detailed and documented examination of both social evolution and personal development with regard to criminal behavior; this examination lead him to conclude that criminal behavior is only due to a certain evolutionary stage, one that in certain cultural and social environments – as well as in the early stages of psychological and moral development of any individual – is anticipated as normal. In Lombroso's words,

> […] children manifest a great many of the impulses we have observed in criminals; anger, a spirit of revenge, idleness, volubility and lack of affection. We have also pointed out that many actions considered criminal in civilised communities, are normal and

[4] Cesare Lombroso, *The Criminal Man*, briefly summarized by his daughter Gina Lombroso Ferrero, with an introduction by Cesare Lombroso (New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1911), especially chapter "Origins and causes of crime," 125ff.

[5] Ibid., "Introduction," xii.

> legitimate practices among primitive races. It is evident, therefore, that such actions are natural to the early stages, both of social evolution and individual psychic development. In view of these facts, it is not strange that civilized communities should produce a certain percentage of adults who commit actions reputed injurious to society and punishable by law. It is only an atavistic phenomenon, the return to a former state.[6]

It is obvious that to Lombroso the tendency towards criminal behavior is one among the most persistent characteristics in the evolutionary history of the human species; however, through cultural evolution and individual development this feature can either be annihilated or rendered idle; that is, as far as the species in general is concerned. But when it comes to single individuals, there is still room for spontaneous occurrences of atavistic recurrence. This is what criminal behavior is all about, according to Lombroso's account: the random, atavistic manifestation of genetically-driven tendencies and traits that belong to earlier evolutionary stages of the species, and are always indicative of defective or degenerated individuals that could barely be classified as humans, since certain phenotypic features that are common to such individuals are reminiscent of – and much closer to – those "found in the lower types of apes, rodents, and birds."[7] Anomalies of this kind are usually connected to certain psychological defects such as moral insanity, epilepsy, melancholia, hysteria, etc.[8] In a nutshell, according to Lombroso's social-Darwinist account, criminal behavior can be reduced to the defective genetic outset shared by – and common to – almost sub-human, degenerate individuals; it follows that, in Lombroso's view, certain physical characteristics like the size of the skull, the shape of the nose, height, and others as such, are indicative of potentially criminal personalities. The upshot

[6] Ibid., 134.

[7] Ibid., 6.

[8] See ibid., Part III, Chapter II.

is that, in one way or another – and contrary to what ethicists who insist that morality is utterly dependent on agency and free will claim – in the light of Lombroso's account the perpetrators of criminal acts are merely the victims of our species' genetic evolutionary history that is not at all linear after all, at least as far as individuals are concerned.

Contrary to Lombroso, Gabriel Tarde provides a much more nuanced explanation of antisocial activity. Better versed into philosophical ethics than Lombroso, and an ardent ontological determinist, Tarde chose to target the very foundations of ethics, that is, agency and free will. Tarde's argument no doubt would sound familiar to the ears of any Spinozist:

> Can God create a free being? […] "No," for he would not know how to create an uncreated being. In fact, to be an absolute and first cause to one's acts one has to be eternal from at least one aspect.[9]

Since it is only God, however, that is by definition eternal, and nothing apart from God, it follows that the individual may only be allowed the *false impression*, or a *veneer* of freedom. This metaphysical viewpoint finds an unexpected ally in contemporary science: "To sum up, the great objection to free will was formerly based upon the divine prescience, and is today based on the conservation of force."[10] Far from being free, individuals according to Tarde are only the *loca* for the manifestation of eternal forces that operate repeatedly according to stable patterns; that is, assuming that there are indeed individuals after all: "The great question […] is not whether the individual is free or not, but whether the individual is a reality or not."[11] In the light of the above

> […] one is perfectly right in affirming the existence of a universal predetermination, and in denying the actual am-

[9] Gabriel Tarde, *Penal Philosophy*, trans. Rapelje Howell, with an editorial preface by Edward Lindsay, and an introduction by Robert H. Gault (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1912), §3, 17.
[10] Ibid., 23.
[11] Ibid., 18.

> biguity of a certain future. […] Thus, predetermination in the last analysis means the same thing as repetition.[12]

The ontological and metaphysical views endorsed by Tarde, of course, leave no room for any kind of freedom, including freedom of the will: "Thus the preposition that freedom of the will is the cornerstone of morality cannot be sustained."[13] Instead, in Tarde's view, the concept of free will is an "[…] essentially Christian principle" only purposed to establish "[…] the idea of personal responsibility as a substitute for the idea of family or genetic responsibility."[14] It is the interplay of forces that are beyond our control that should be held responsible for every human action, and this applies equally to criminal acts:

> The criminal act, like every other act committed in the midst of a society, is the combination of two combinations which are themselves combined together: one combination of physiological and psychological attributes accidentally met with and transmitted by heredity, the character, and one combination of examples crossing one another, the social surroundings.[15]

Tarde calls this process *imitation*, as it consists in the repetition of preexisting examples that are dominant within the vital circle of the agent. Examples as such are at some point of time *invented* by individuals, or, better, *in* individuals. As I implied above, Tarde seems to perceive the individual only as the *medium* for the actualization – or substantiation – of collective powers that far exceed its grasp. That is, while to the common understanding the theory of communism was *conceived* (or, in Tarde's idiom, *invented*) *by* Karl Marx, which makes Marx its necessary cause, to

[12] Ibid., 20.
[13] Ibid., 19.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid., 31.

Tarde communism was *conceived in* Marx, that is, Marx has been merely the *means*, or the *locus* for its emergence. This, however, doesn't mean that Tarde endorses the view that ideas exist independently of the human intellect. As Tonkonoff pinpoints in the illuminating analysis he provides,

> Imitation is a key notion in this sociology, as the way that this 'becoming similar' takes place is linked to the elemental social action of repeating an example. Here the language, the nation, the economic market and the government are nothing but imitative networks. And, as we shall see, the same can be said of the practices of fraud, robbery and murder. But in no case is the individual the final cause of these phenomena. According to Tarde, the imitable and the imitated are not so much a person as the beliefs and desires that a person bears or produces – whether she or he wants to or not, whether consciously or otherwise. Where, then, do these imitated beliefs and desires come from? The answer is in the concept of invention. Tarde (1902: 563) understands that all forms of doing, feeling, or thinking spring from an invention and have the tendency to propagate as fashion and take root as custom. All invention is individual, but once again, the individual is not its source: what is new happens in an individual, but she is not exactly its origin. The individual is a place of passage and sedimentation of collective desires and beliefs that repeat themselves in the form of judgments, will, memory and habits.[16]

Any behavior, any pattern of action, once *invented in* an individual, will find its place in the vast network of human and social interaction; through *imitation* it will be established as dominant within a certain social environment, and it will henceforth *de-*

[16] Sergio Tonkonoff, "Crime as Social Excess: Reconstructing Gabriel Tarde's Criminal Sociology," *History of the Human Sciences* 27, no. 2 (2014): 62-63.

termine the decisions and actions of those who belong to this environment. In Tarde's words, "Socially, everything is either invention or imitation."[17] After all, "[…] a society is a group of people who display many resemblances produced either by imitation or by counter-imitation."[18] For Tarde, imitation in its positive as well as its negative form, that is, counter-imitation, is analogous to heredity with regard to physical expressions; invention, in turn, is analogous to the spontaneous emergence of a new species.

> And now my readers will realise, perhaps, that the social being, in the degree that he is social, is essentially imitative, and that imitation plays a role in societies analogous to that of heredity in organic life or to that of vibration among inorganic bodies. If this is so, it ought to be admitted, in consequence, that a human invention, by which a new kind of imitation is started or a new series opened, the invention of gunpowder, for example, or windmills, or the Morse telegraph, stands in the same relation to social science as the birth of a new vegetal or mineral species (or, on the hypothesis of a gradual evolution, of each of the slow modifications to which the new species is due), to biology, or as the appearance of a new mode of motion comparable with light or electricity, or the formation of a new substance, to physics or chemistry.[19]

In the light of the above, criminal behavior – exactly as any other behavior – is the outcome of either a certain paradigm, or the interplay of several paradigms, that are prevalent or, at least,

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[17] Gabriel Tarde, *The Laws of Imitation*, trans. Elsie Clews Parsons, with an introduction by Franklin H. Giddings (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1903), 3.
[18] Ibid., xvii.
[19] Ibid., 11-12.

present in any given social environment. The freedom of the will seems to be, after all, just a comforting illusion, a concept that flies in the face of reality: it is the environment that sets the rules, and agents just have to play along. The criminal man was never free to choose; at the end of the day the only crime one could be held responsible of, is that the sets of rules that happened to apply within one's environment and shaped one's moral character and personality, turned out to be far from favorable by some particular society.

Both Lombroso's and Tarde's accounts of antisocial and criminal behavior intent to provide a causal explanation of the phenomenon; although their views seem to be contrary to each other, since while Lombroso considers genetic atavism as the main cause for criminal behavior, to Tarde the only relevant factor in the establishment of any criminal personality is the environment(s) the criminal has found himself in, both approaches have a major implication in common: criminal behavior can be reduced to external factors and, hence, it is open to prediction and causal explanation. Crime is neither a *lapsus* of reason, nor an *anomaly*, as ethicists had been so eager to assume so far; instead, it is the offspring of the peculiar interplay of random factors that are external to the agent, independent of the agent's will and far beyond one's control, be it a traceable set of genetically inherited predispositions and tendencies, or the particular environment that has shaped the personality and the character traits of the criminal. In any case, in the light of Lombroso's and Tarde's views, what has always been the cornerstone of ethics, the possibility of free will – as well as everything that comes along with it, that is, moral judgement, responsibility and accountability, are being questioned; morality, after all, might be as dependent on contingency as anything else in the domain of human affairs.

III. Morality as immune to luck

What Tarde and Lombroso seem to advocate is a germinal version of the concept of *moral luck*, to wit the assumption that specific aspects of our moral personality and behavior have been

formed in ways that are beyond our control, and, instead, are totally dependent upon contigency. Traditional ethicists, no doubt, would disregard such a claim as utterly unsubstantiated or, even better, as the most impossible of all oxymora,[20] since, as Daniel Statman puts it:

> …there is at least one area where luck seems to be lacking or irrelevant, that is, the area of morality. The idea of one's moral status being subject to luck seems almost unintelligible to most of us, and the expression *moral luck* seems to be an impossible juxtaposition of two altogether different concepts.[21]

Statman here summarizes a view that not only lies at the very core of ethics as a concept, but also – and most importantly – makes possible all moral evaluation. Unlike what applies to any other area in the domain of human affairs, morality is acknowledged a unique kind of immunity to luck, since the agent's will is unanimously considered to be invulnerable to the capriciousness of fate. In Adam Smith's words it is "[…] the sentiment or affection of the heart, from which any action proceeds, and upon which its whole virtue or vice depends […]."[22] Smith further elaborates in this view:

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[20] Bernard Williams himself, who spared no pains to challenge morality's alleged immunity to luck, confessed: "When I first introduced the expression moral luck, I expected to suggest an oxymoron." See Bernard Williams, "Postscript," in *Moral Luck*, ed. D. Statman (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 251.

[21] Daniel Statman, "Introduction," in *Moral Luck*, ed. D. Statman (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 1.

[22] Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), II, i, 2, 78. See also ibid., II, ii, 1, 108: "Whatever praise or blame can be due to any action, must belong either, first, to the intention or affection of the heart, from which it proceeds; or, secondly, to the external action or movement of the body, which this affection gives occasion to; or, lastly, to the good or bad consequences, which actually, and in fact, proceed from it."

> The only consequences for which he can be answerable, or by which he can deserve either approbation or disapprobation of any kind, are those which were someway or other intended, or those which, at least, show some agreeable or disagreeable quality in the intention of the heart, from which he acted. To the intention or affection of the heart, therefore, to the propriety or impropriety, to the beneficence or hurtfulness of the design, all praise or blame, all approbation or disapprobation, of any kind, which can justly be bestowed upon any action, must ultimately belong.[23]

Immanuel Kant is probably the most iconic advocate of the view that it is only the 'intention of the heart' that is relevant when it comes to moral approbation – only that in Kant's words it is the 'good will' that shines. The following passage from the *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* bears striking resemblance to Smith's:

> The good will is good not through what it effects or accomplishes, not through its efficacy for attaining any intended end, but only through its willing, i.e., good in itself, and considered for itself, without comparison, it is to be estimated far higher than anything that could be brought about by it in favor of any inclination, or indeed, if you prefer, of the sum of all inclinations. Even if through the peculiar disfavor of fate, or through the meager endowment of a stepmotherly nature, this will were entirely lacking in the resources to carry out its aim, if with its greatest effort nothing of it were accomplished, and only the good will were left over (to be sure, not a mere wish, but as the summoning up of all the means insofar as they are in our control): then it would shine like a

[23] Ibid., II, iii, 3, 109.

> jewel for itself, as something that has its full worth in itself. Utility or fruitlessness can neither add to nor subtract anything from this worth.[24]

What both Adam Smith and Immanuel Kant stress has always been considered as the cornerstone of ethical reasoning: morality is within the agent's grasp irrespective of the circumstances, even against any possible 'peculiar disfavor of fate' and all 'meager endowments of a stepmotherly nature.' In that sense, any external explanation of criminal behavior, such as those introduced by Tarde and Lombroso, can only be seen as a superficial, simplistic, reductionist analysis, that fails to take into account the unique character of morality: unlike anything else, morality is grounded – and, hence, dependent – solely upon reason; it is reason that makes agents capable of determining the golden mean between deficiency and excess, or making out what duty commands, or telling which decision seems more likely to maximize utility. This means that, as far as one partakes in reason, one should be acknowledged equal access to morality as any other, regardless of one's circumstances, external or internal – and, of course, be held equally accountable for one's deeds. In a sense, *morality is the only area where everybody is equal to any other*: while it is not entirely up to us if we live long or brief lives, acquire wealth, enjoy a good reputation, or stay healthy, our moral personality still remains entirely within our control, as long as we are rationally capable of either distinguishing the golden mean, or deciding where the best possible consequences are most possible to result from, or, finally, understanding what duty compels us to do. Since reason is an inherent part of ours that is absolutely immune to all external factors, and since morality is conceived as dependent on reason alone, it follows that morality should be absolutely immune to luck. What Tarde and Lombroso assume, to wit that under specific circumstances rational agents may have

[24] Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, ed. and trans. Allen W. Wood (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 4:394.

no control on their moral behavior, would sound as absolutely preposterous to all ethicists who, following Kant, believe that a good will may still shine even in spite of any disfavors of fate or the meager endowments of nature.

IV. The paradox of moral luck

Against this all-pervasive, dominant view, Bernard Williams and Thomas Nagel set out to shew that morality is not at all immune to luck, after all; on the contrary, according to them, luck has the power to affect decisively one's moral decisions, judgements and standing. This is what the notion of *moral luck* is about: what we decide to do as well as what we eventually do is largely dependent upon contingency, therefore it cannot be "the proper object of moral assessment, and no proper determinant of it, either."[25] According to Williams,

> One's history as an agent is a web in which anything that is the product of the will is surrounded and held up and partly formed by things that are not, in such a way that reflection can go only in one of two directions: either in the direction of saying that responsible agency is a fairly superficial concept, which has a limited use in harmonizing what happens, or else that it is not a superficial concept, but that it cannot ultimately be purified – if one attaches importance to the sense of what one is in terms of what one has done and what in the world one is responsible for, one must accept much that makes its claim on that sense solely in virtue of its being actual.[26]

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[25] Bernard Williams, *Moral Luck: Philosophical Papers 1973-1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 20.

[26] Bernard Williams, "Moral Luck," in *Moral Luck*, ed. Daniel Statman, 35-55 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 44-45; initially published in Bernard Williams, *Moral Luck* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), chapter 2.

At the heart of Williams' argument there is the connection of moral justification to rational justification. Since rational justification, Williams claims, can only be granted *after* our choices have proven either successful or unsuccessful – but not before that, and since no choice as such provides any guarantee whatsoever either for success or failure, luck should be admitted as a decisive parameter of rational and, therefore, moral justification. In other words, what rationally justifies our choices is the extend to which they succeed or fail; and since human affairs are, to some extent anyway, dependent on luck, luck is after all a decisive variable for the assessment of the moral merit of our choices.

In Thomas Nagel's view the paradox of moral luck consists in that "[…] a significant aspect of what someone does depends on factors beyond his control, yet we continue to treat him in that respect as an agent of moral judgement."[27] Nagel identifies four factors that are external to agents and far beyond their control, yet determine decisively their choices and actions, as well as their overall moral assessment: [a] the random circumstances an agent happens to find himself in, [b] the arbitrary outcome of one's actions, [c] one's temperament, character and personality, and [d] the unique chain of events that precede and determine one's actions. Accordingly, Nagel distinguishes between four types of moral luck, that is, [i] circumstantial, [ii] resultant, [iii] constitutional, and [iv] causal. To the degree one's choices and actions are determined by the factors mentioned above, as Nagel argues, one's morality as well as the moral judgements we may pass on him is not at all immune to luck, since none of these determinants lies within any agent's control. The following thought experiment – one that is nevertheless based on facts – would provide crucial insight on how Nagel's four-dimensional concept of moral luck works in real-life scenarios.

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[27] Thomas Nagel, "Moral Luck," in *Moral Luck*, ed. Daniel Statman, 57-71 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 44-45; initially published in Thomas Nagel, *Mortal Questions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), chapter 3.

Consider the case of Al-haji Sawaneh,[28] who was abducted by rebels as a child during the ten-years civil war in Sierra Leone, and was forcefully recruited by the Revolutionary United Force (RUF) as a member of the infamous Small Boys Unit, a tactical force consisting of child soldiers trained as ruthless killers and responsible of numerous despicable crimes.[29] According to Al-haji, in the age of twelve he was issued with a light-weight AK47 automatic rifle, and was commanded to take part in several tactical ambushes; he and his fellow child soldiers had already gone through intensive training so as to develop unquestioned obedience to their superior commanders paired with extreme cruelty towards the enemy, troops and civilians alike. Al-haji reported several instances of overwhelmingly violent crimes perpetrated by child soldiers, including children cutting "pregnant women's bellies open just to see what the sex of the fetus was."[30]

Drawing upon this last morbid mention, let us consider now the case of two child soldiers entering an enemy village just seized by their guerilla regiment. Among the captives they spot a woman in advanced pregnancy; they ask her whether the child she is with is a girl or a boy and, when she answers that she couldn't know, they cut her belly open with their knives to find out themselves, killing thus both the pregnant woman and her fetus. What the two children do may seem despicable and sick, but to Nagel this would have been a rough sketch of his account of moral luck: all his four factors are here at play.

[a] The perpetrators *just happened to be children*; in case they were adults they would probably rape the pregnant woman, or beat her, or just leave her alone. But children are by their nature

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[28] See BBC Worldservice, "The Child Soldiers of Sierra Leone," http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/programmes/global_crime_report/investigation/soldiers1.shtml.

[29] See Human Rights Watch, "Sierra Leone Rebels Forcefully Recruit Child Soldiers," May 31, 2000, https://www.hrw.org/news/2000/05/31/sierra-leone-rebels-forcefully-recruit-child-soldiers.

[30] Supra note 25.

curious, playful and stubborn when it comes to unanswered questions – but this is never their fault.

[b] The children *just happened to spot the pregnant lady*; if they had spotted a ball instead, or a cute little puppy, or even some fancy clothing, nothing of the kind would have happened.

[c] Suppose, and this is a quite plausible hypothesis, that both had already in the past witnessed their parents slaughtered by enemy soldiers the same way they slaughtered the pregnant woman – and tens of people ever since, or any other atrocity of the kind; if this be so, the kids of the narrative hadn't been as lucky, yes, I say lucky, as to have been born, let's say, in Athens to middle class parents who would put them to bed every night whispering sweet kitty; instead, they were born amidst a ferocious civil war to parents who probably would have already killed and raped others, and by the time they slaughtered the pregnant villager and killed her fetus, their parents would have probably also been slaughtered by others who had suffered the same misfortune. This is what Nagel calls resultant moral luck – the fact that it happened to spot a pregnant woman; what Nagel calls circumstantial moral luck is the fact that both happened to be born and raised in the eye of the hurricane; what Nagel calls constitutive moral luck is the fact that the perpetrators just happened to be children. It is clear that nature and its laws, together with a state of affairs – or, better, many states of affairs that had developed through time – that have been absolutely outside of those children's control are a fairly good explanation for what they did, and probably the only one we can have; and this is causal moral luck according to Nagel's account.

Now suppose that both children were lucky enough to stay alive and reach adulthood – just to become accomplished criminals. Would there be any place for moral accountability for whatever they may do? Would morality still be the area where everybody is equal, unlike what applies to any other field of human affairs? Williams and Nagel seem to have a point here; Tarde and Lombroso may, after all, have captured two different aspects of the same truth: agency and accountability do not apply in all cases.

V. Postscript: A possible line of demarcation

It is hard to deny that cases of moral luck may indeed occur, that is, to disagree with the view that morality may indeed be affected – or even determined to some degree – by factors that are far beyond our reach, most notably the environment we are born and raised in on the one hand, and the genetic traits we are endowed with on the other, but also the random circumstances one may encounter in one's life, together with the random outcome of one's actions. If this is so, if we adhere to the so-called 'control principle'[31] there seem to be instances in which one's actions may indeed not be offered to moral assessment, since what one does depends on factors that are beyond one's control; this seems to be the case with the two child soldiers in the thought experiment above. There are indeed various other circumstances in which moral agency and accountability may be significantly diminished, if not altogether absent: dementia, extreme poverty, living under dehumanizing conditions, just to mention a few of them.

The question, of course, concerns the possibility of drawing any distinct line of demarcation; for it is one thing to assume that there may be cases or circumstances in which agency and accountability do not apply, and a totally different thing to suggest that free will is never possible: the former sounds plausible, the latter more like an arbitrary generalization. While moral intuition tends to accept the view that the two children in the narrative are neither blameworthy, nor culpable, or even responsible for what they did, we would need to go to great pains to assume the same about *any* mentally sane sex offender, or dodger, or someone who knowingly does evil that one could have easily avoided.

The recent findings in the fields of social psychology[32] but

[31] For an excellent discussion of the control principle see Martin Sand, "A Defense of the Control Principle," *Philosophia* 49 (2021): 765-775. Also, David Enoch, and Andrei Marmor, "The Case Against Moral Luck," *Law and Philosophy* 26 (2007): 405-436.

[32] See, for instance, Stanley Milgram, *Obedience to Authority: An Experimental View* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974); also, Thomas Blass, "Under-

also in genomics[33] imply that there may be no such thing as "pure agency;"[34] after all, it may be true that, although the "will is a species of causality for living beings, insofar as they are rational" indeed, Kant is not absolutely right in claiming that "freedom would be that quality of this causality by which it can be effective independently of alien causes determining it."[35] Impure agency, however, is still agency, and while moral luck cannot be denied its territory, there definitely have to be boundaries to its domain.

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[33] See, for example, Clare Barker, "Warrior Genes," *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* 66, no. 4 (2020): 755-779.

[34] The term belongs to Margaret Walker; see Margaret Urban Walker, "Moral Luck and the Virtues of Impure Agency," in *Moral Luck*, ed. Daniel Statman, 235-250 (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993).

[35] Kant, 4:446.

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Dignity and the Form of Human Existence

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Abstract: This paper aims at showing that human dignity is neither something that exists separately from human being, nor a property, or an abstract idea, but as a relation between a human being and their own knowledge of the form of human existence, which can be expressed as the form 'I.' In other words, human dignity means that a person acknowledges that they owe the formed aspect of her existence to the form 'I.' Because human beings cannot actualise the form 'I' in a self-sufficient manner, the violation of the dignity of one person derogates also the dignity of the person or the persons who are causing it. This means that if I debase someone, I debase also myself because I impair my own knowledge of the form 'I.' In other words, my dignity relation to the form 'I' obliges me to acknowledge and to respect the dignity relation of any other human being. The problems arising from the cognitivist concept of dignity disappear if one takes into account that this concept only says that in order for dignity to exist there must exist at least one full-fledged cognizing person. As long as one human being in the world is able to have direct knowledge of the form 'I' every other human is entitled to dignity, even if the rest of humanity were not in position to realise this fact. Human dignity cannot thus be determined as an individual human right, but as a duty of every person against herself and any other human being.
Keywords: dignity; dignity commandment; human existence; form; I; person

Human dignity shall be inviolable[1] declares the first article of the Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany states, adding: "To respect and protect shall be the duty of all state authority." I will call both statements together the 'Dignity Commandment.' This commandment is not a special feature of the German Federal Con-

[1] *Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany*, Art. 1.

stitution, it can be found in several variations in the constitution of every modern 'ethical' constitutional state.[2] Indeed, it can be said that the Dignity Commandment defines a state as an *ethical constitutional state*, i.e., as a state that does not only provide a mere legal frame for deliberation and decision-making on a daily political basis, but a state that is above all committed to the highest end of human life, which the Antiquity called 'eudaemonia.'[3]

Both sentences of the Dignity Commandment are quite clear as imperatives. Are they, however, true? And if yes, why? Do they describe a fact? Do they describe a real object and the consequences of its existence? If so, why is this object of such a profound value so that the protection of its value makes up the uppermost obligation for the state? Or, does the Dignity Commandment commit the State and the citizens to an end? Is this end within reach? If not, why should we nonetheless try to achieve it? And, last but not least, how do we know that this end exists?

One thing is certain about the Dignity Commandment: The meaning of the second sentence depends on the meaning of the first. For, if the expression 'human dignity' would not refer to anything then it would be nonsensical to respect and to protect it. However, if 'human dignity' has a meaning, in which way does human dignity exist and in which way can it be violated, so that the authors of the constitution were urged to declare, 'it is inviolable?' And, even if human dignity needs the protection of such a power like the state, why should the state respect and protect it in such an absolute manner?

One idea would be to think of human dignity as something that exists separately from us, perhaps as a being that accompanies us during our lifetime – like Jiminy Cricket who accompa-

[2] Cf. Graham Walker, *Moral Foundations of Constitutional Thought: Current Problems, Augustinian Prospects* (Princeton University Press, 2014); Paul Raffield, "Bodies of Law: The Divine Architect, Common Law, and Ancient Constitution," *International Journal for the Semiotics of Law* 13 (2000): 333-356; Gerard E. Lynch, "Constitutional Law as Moral Philosophy," *Columbia Law Review* 84, no. 2 (1984): 537-557.

[3] Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2014), 1095a15-22.

nies Pinocchio on his adventures acting as his moral counsellor. However, since we have no evidence that this could be the case, this idea seems quite implausible. It is more plausible to think of human dignity as a property of human beings of a certain quality that has to be specified, and of a certain quantitative magnitude, which – because of the quality of human dignity – must not be altered. If this concept of human dignity is correct the Basic Law resp. its authors owe an explanation of this obligation. There are many human properties – bodyweight, health condition, freedom or material wealth the quantity of other properties of humans – that can be altered by external or internal causes, e.g. actions of the persons themselves, actions of other persons, or actions of the State and of other institutions. What is then wrong with altering the dignity status of a person? Even if one agrees that a change into the negative is not good, it cannot be ruled out that a positive change, e.g. an enhancement or augmentation, is both possible and desirable.[4]

Obviously, the authors of the German constitution were convinced that human dignity is a property that *cannot* be altered quantitatively. This can be the case because human dignity is either immutable in an absolute sense, or because it is a property that has only two qualitative statuses: it can be possessed by a person or not.[5] If this were the case, then violating human dignity would mean destroying it. The fact that the State is committed to protecting human dignity seems to suggest that the latter is the case, and that the privation of this property is of such a grave consequence for human life that the authors of the German constitution saw the necessity to commit the State to its unconditional protection.

In this light human dignity appears to be a strange good, since it is on the one hand a fundamental property of any hu-

[4] John Harris, "Moral Enhancement and Freedom," *Bioethics* 25 (2011): 102-111; Thomas Douglas, "Moral Enhancement," *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 25 (2008): 228-245.

[5] Immanuel Kant, *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, in *Immanuel Kant, Werke in 12 Bänden*, Vol. VII, ed. Wilhelm Weischedel (Frankfurt am Mein: Suhrkampf, 2000), BA 78.

man being,[6] but on the other hand it is constituted in such a way that makes it very difficult for a single human being to keep this property unaltered without the aid of the State. At this point it could be objected that the Dignity Commandment is solely addressed to the State because only the State could – in the course of the fulfilment of its duties – violate the dignity of its citizens or of other human beings that fall into the realm of its power.[7] This is so since the State can restrict every property of an individual it can affect[8] up to the point that this property ceases to exist, as for example in the case of the loss of individual freedom or even the loss of life following a legal sentence.[9] However, the Dignity Commandment commits the State to do this in such a way that the dignity of the persons affected by such a restriction is not violated. Thus, human dignity, by being explicitly exempted from the right of the State to restrict it, seems not to be a human property, albeit being something that is somehow connected intrinsically with human life, and something that is in a certain way vulnerable. Otherwise, the Dignity Commandment would be meaningless, inapplicable, or superfluous.

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[6] Ibid.

[7] Cf. the discussion of the so called 'bridge passage' in John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (Kitchener: Batoche Books, 2001), chapter 5.

[8] Obviously, there are properties of humans that cannot be affected by state action, for example the fact that they are subject to the law of gravity, or that they belong to the species homo sapiens or that they breath oxygen, etc.

[9] For example, in article 2, par. 2 of the Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany is stated: 'Every person has the right to life and physical integrity. Freedom of the person is inviolable. These rights may be interfered with only pursuant to a law.' This means that the Basic Law does not grant the unconditional inviolability even to human life. This article is deployed to justify the legitimacy of so-called 'shoot-to-kill' regulations in German police laws and also the legitimacy of downing by force captured airplanes that are used as weapons. The absolute right of the State to restrict any personal right makes also understandable that capital punishment has to be abolished by special constitutional or legal norms, in the case of Germany by article 102 of the Basic Law.

What other conceptions of human dignity remain possible if it can be ruled out that it is a substance – an independently existing thing, the existence of which is due to its own nature (and not to due to the conception of someone else – or a property of humans? According to a certain tradition in metaphysics that goes back to Aristotle, there are two modes of existence: Existence as a reality and existence as a mere truth.[10] Existence as reality means that the truth of statements regarding a given thing can be demonstrated either directly by pointing to the entity in question, be it a substance or a property. However, if something exists as a mere truth, then statements about this entity can be verified only by reference to other true statements, that is indirectly. Apart from substances and properties, other real existences are relations between substances or between properties, or between substances and properties. To the entities that exist in the mode of mere truth belong privations and privative states,[11] for example illnesses, or the absence of some properties, or the defective state of something that exists in the mode of reality, and also abstract conceptual constructions – numbers and geometrical figures are often regarded as prominent examples of abstract conceptual constructions.[12]

So, one possibility would be to regard dignity as an abstract conceptual construction that is constituted within social practice, i.e., as a mere truth, another to regard it as a real existing relation – to regard human dignity as privation is obviously nonsense. A definition of dignity as a conceptual construction seems to evoke more problems than it could resolve, since we had then to justify the universal validity of the Dignity Commandment. If, on the other hand, we waived the claim of universality then the occurrence of the Dignity Commandment in fundamental documents of humanity, as for example in the Charter of the United Nation would be rendered completely inapprehensible.[13]

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[10] Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2016), 993b30-31.

[11] This is the idea that underlies the second part of Parmenides' poem 'On Nature.'

[12] Cf. Hartree Field, *Science without Numbers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Peter Janich, *Euklids Erbe* (München: C. H. Beck, 1989).

[13] Preamble of the Charter of the United Nations: 'We the Peoples of the

If human dignity then cannot be determined as a substance, as a human property, or as abstract conceptual construct and if nonetheless the expression 'human dignity' describes something existing then the only mode of existence of human dignity seems to be that of a relation. Since it is attributed to humans, i.e., substances, it must be a relation between humans and something else. Our task is then to find and characterize this relation and the hitherto unknown relatum. This relation is apparently of a fundamental importance for human existence, but it is constituted in such a way that it cannot be recognised and maintained easily by everyone. According to this theory the authors of the constitution have realised the existence and the vulnerability of this relation and also the restricted capability of human individuals to recognize and to preserve it and have thus committed the State to the obligation to protect every human individual from the consequences of such a failure. The first sentence of the Dignity Commandment, "Human dignity is inviolable," recognises and describes the essence of this fundamental relation and the second charges the State with the duty (and the right) to preserve it.

The question we now are facing is about the nature of the second relatum of the dignity relation (the first is the human being) and about the nature of the relation itself. We have further to ask why this relation is of such a fundamental importance and why does its constitution render its misconception possible? Did the authors of the constitution belong to some privileged ones who realised the existence of this relation? Finally, why are the citizens in position to fulfil this task when acting on behalf of the State if they – as mere humans – are not able to realise what the issue is? Since it is obvious that as part of the constitution the Dignity Commandment is not addressed to a distinct social stratum of the state, but to every single participant in civic life, what has to be preserved must be recognisable by everyone. If,

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United Nations determined […] to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the *dignity and worth* of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small" (italics by the author).

however, this is the case then everyone has to know in advance what the issue is, i.e. everyone has to know how to recognise cases of debasement. This means that every human with normal cognitive capabilities has to have certain knowledge both of the relation called 'human dignity' as well as of the relatum, to which she is linked by this relation. This means also that the violation of dignity as a conscious act cannot be the result of not knowing what this relation is, but is rather the consequence of its misconception.

On the background of the above-mentioned considerations the following reading of the Dignity Commandment is plausible: Because human beings often misconceive the dignity relation the State is obliged to provide a life framework that minimises the possibility of such a misconception. In order to achieve this, it is not necessary that the State has a privileged access to the proper conception of the dignity relation and to the second relatum, nor it is necessary that the State must employ people who are in possession of some special cognitive capabilities regarding dignity. The only necessary thing is that the State – including its servants and its citizens – endeavours to preserve and to promote the existence of the dignity relation by issuing laws and other legal norms that protect human dignity as best as possible.[14]

The results we have achieved so far are that every human being is one part of a two partite relation called dignity, that the existence of this relation is fundamental for the good life of every singe human being, and that every human has a knowledge of this relation and of its second relatum, a knowledge, however, that can be distorted or can be erroneous.

These clarifications do not provide any information about the essence of the second part of the dignity relation as well as about the essence of the relation itself. One possibility is that the second relatum is a single natural existence – a substance – that can be perceived either directly by means of our sense organs or indirectly via its effects on our lives. There are two arguments against this assumption: First, if this were the case

[14] I think that this is the idea underlying any rationalist theory of the state, be it explicitly contractualist or Spinozist/Hegelian.

then it wouldn't be necessary to build up and to preserve a relation to this existence, but we should preserve and protect this existence directly. Since a substance as an independent natural existence is more valuable than any of its particular properties or its particular relations to other substances it would be sufficient to become aware of the existence of this one paramountly important substance in order to become aware of our relation to it and to act accordingly – even if we weren't able to identify completely its essence. Second, if dignity consisted in a relation to a substance then the preservation of this substance would make up the entire meaning of our lives. The case is, however, that there is no single substance in the world that makes up the entire meaning of our lives, despite the fact that there are a lot of substances that are necessary and indispensable for our lives, for example air, water, food and a great number of other material and immaterial things. All these substances are indispensable for our lives rather as means for achieving the goal of our lives, which according to the Dignity Commandment includes the respect and the protection of human dignity. If there existed actually a substance to which we establish the dignity relation then this substance would be at the same instance means and aim of our lives. In this case we wouldn't need any other item of the world in order to realise our lives. Our experience with natural things tells us, however, that this is not true. Hence the second relatum of the dignity relation cannot be a substance.

Could this relatum then be something extramundane? In this case we had to explain how we could have any experience of such an entity since we are not able to perceive anything that is not part of the world – and if we cannot have any experience of something we cannot establish any relation to it. So if there is something extramundane that is necessary for establishing the dignity relation, this 'something' has to reveal itself to us – by its own impetus. In such a case the dignity relation would be literally inviolable, since it were not to our disposition to change it. Obviously, we can chance our attitude to this relation, but not the relation itself – in analogy to the fact that

a person can affect her attitude to her relation that she is the child of given father (i.e., she can like or dislike it, be proud or ashamed of it etc.), but she cannot affect the relation of being-the-child-of this-father. because she was put in this relation by her father. Thus, if dignity was a relation enforced upon us by an extramundane entity the Dignity Commandment would be redundant or reduced to the mere coercive imperative to take an attitude of awe towards this revealed extramundane entity. Such an imperative contradicts, however, our understanding of dignity, which entails the idea of being free to take any attitude we choose towards anyone or anything. This is the reason why the Dignity Commandment itself is not a penal law. There are penal laws that are derived from it, but the Dignity Commandment itself does not exert any positive coercion to do or to refrain from doing something. It only allows the citizens to resist any decision of the State that urges them to violate the dignity of any other human being.

If the second relatum of the dignity relation cannot be determined neither as a worldly nor as an extramundane entity, then the only remaining alternative is apparently to locate it in us. Does this mean that we are two-component existences? Under the assumption that body and soul exist as two separate substances, the complex of which forms a human being, could the dignity relation be the cement that keeps both together?

Leaving the 'technical' metaphysical problems of the body-soul approach apart, regarding the dignity relation as the cement between body and soul does not explain why is it addressed also to the State and cannot also explain how the State could fulfil any duty derived from it. Let us suppose that the dignity relation is a sort of collective label for every activity necessary for keeping upright the coherence between body and soul: eating, drinking, taking care of oneself, associating with others, keeping oneself healthy, etc. The question then is, how many and which of these activities are necessary for the coherence of body and soul? What is the limit that demarcates a violation of human dignity? What shall the State do in order to prevent a

dignity violation? Is the duty of the State to urge the citizens to perform some of the dignity preserving activities and to oversee their proper accomplishment? How shall one proceed with human beings who are for any reason not able to perform any of them? Shall they be characterized as undignified and granted lesser rights or excluded from civic life?[15] Shall they be excluded completely from life? Is at the end necessary to consider the costs and the benefits of such a procedure in order to determine the 'socially optimal' number of 'dignified' persons?

It seems that these considerations lead us to a path that departs gravely from the spirit of the Dignity Commandment. For, the Commandment does not distinguish between normal and disabled, healthy and ill, autonomous and dependent human beings. It bestows dignity on every human being and commits the State to guarantee also the dignity of humans who are not in position even to be aware of their dignity let alone to defend it (such humans being among others: comatose and mentally retarded persons, but also human embryos in every stage of their development).[16]

The proponent of the body-soul theory could object that there is still a possibility to regard dignity as the cement that keeps body and soul together because it is not a label for any sort of life sustaining activities, but a relation *sui generis* that is

[15] Cf. Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[16] Regarding the moral treatment of embryos, it is so that since the State has the right to constrict any factual human property – including life – it can also determine the conditions, under which an embryo is not allowed maturing to a human being. This means that the impunity or even the explicit permission of abortion is in the discretion of the State and does not violate the Dignity Commandment or article 2 of the Basic Law, although the State is not obliged to permit explicitly abortion. However, the Dignity Commandment forbids the 'deviation' of the normal maturing process of an embryo, in order to integrate parts of it in another human organism as a therapeutic measure. The State is thus obliged to prohibit the use of human embryonic stem cells for therapeutic aims.

necessary *and* sufficient for the coherence of body and soul. Its impairment would result in the destruction of human existence since it would mean cutting the ties between body and soul. If this were the case, however, then it would be difficult to understand both why the above-mentioned life activities (eating, associating etc.) are necessary for a dignified human life and why the State should see to it that humans living under its protection should be provided with sufficient food, good education, adequate salaries, a functioning health care system and psychological support. The fact that human dignity is dependent on the various activities that preserve and sustain human life without being reducible to any set of such activities refutes both the assumption that the second relatum of the dignity relation is an immaterial component of human existence besides its material body and that dignity is the relation ensuring the coherence between body and soul.

Our considerations have so far led to the conclusion that human dignity is not a human property, but a relation between a human and something else. This second relatum, on the other hand, cannot be a worldly existence, or an extramundane entity or an immaterial component that is attached to a material human body to form a human existence. If there is no such relatum then there is no relation – is human dignity just a sweet dream, an illusion?

A last possibility remains: Namely, human dignity can be defined as the relation of a human being to an existing universal that renders possible its individual existence as human being. Such existing universals are traditionally called forms. According to the theory of forms, every singular thing that belongs to a kind or species exists as a composite of its form and matter, the former being its differentiating and the latter the its individuating principle.[17] Forms of natural things, i.e. things that belong to natural kinds, realise themselves through their interac-

[17] Cf. Aristotle, *Physics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986); David Oderberg, *Real Essentialism* (New York and London: Routledge, 2009).

tion with matter as single natural things with various degrees of complexity, as animals, plants, stuffs (chemical, biological and geological substances) and constellations of physical objects. Human beings are also realisations of a natural form.

The particularity of the human form is that its realisations, i.e. the individual human beings, have a more or less clear and *direct* knowledge both of the fact that they realise this form and of the content of it in contrast to every other living thing. 'Direct knowledge' means that this knowledge is not mediated by any sense organ, but that it results directly from human intellectual activity. Thus, this direct knowledge can be unclear or erroneous as any cognition, but the error does not result from the malfunction of a given sense organ (as for example errors in colour perception caused by the malfunction of the eye). The mechanism of acquiring this knowledge is of no concern for our considerations. It is sufficient to accept that every mentally developed human being, every person, knows that the human form bestows certain properties on her, properties that she has in common with other persons, the most important of which is self-consciousness. The possession of self-consciousness is displayed by the fact that humans command the use of the personal pronoun 'I' in a way that transcends mere spatiotemporal indexicality. The direct knowledge of the human form enables a person to realise that she and all other human beings are actualisations of this form. So, every person can understand for example that between 'I beat you' and 'you are hurt by me' there is an inferential link. This understanding of the pronoun '*I*' entails also the knowledge that being an 'I,' an individual person, is the fundamental content of the human form. This means that the essential part of the human form is to be an *I*, a *person*. The other properties of human beings are modifying factors that give self-conscious beings on earth the concrete life of humans, despite the fact that they may be essential for this mode of existence. The human form itself is part of a more comprehensive form, in the same way that the form of, say, a Labrador dog is part of the more comprehensive form 'dog.'

Humans like Labrador dogs are *modes* of a species, the latter of the species *canis lupus* and the former of the species *I*. Thus the essential forming factor of human existence is not the human form, but the form 'I.' In other words, the members of the terrestrial species *homo sapiens* form a subgroup of the species *I*. Traditionally this truth is expressed by defining man as *animal rationale*, the specific difference 'rationale' being regarded as the necessary and sufficient differentiating moment of humans from the rest of all other species of living things.

The direct knowledge of the form 'I' entails the knowledge that every human being is in principle constituted as an *'I.'* This means that insofar I have realised that I am an actualisation of the form 'I' I have realised that other individual existences displaying properties and behaviour similar to mine are also actualisations of the form 'I' and have the same constitution, including the same basic needs, like me. From this knowledge and the premise that no one acts against her insight, it follows that the actualisation of the form 'I' can be achieved only by in a non self-sufficient manner by mutual help, because since everyone knows what the fundamental needs of human existence are, one is obliged to assist everyone having these needs to fulfil them. The actualisation of the form 'I' can only succeed embedded in a social environment, so that any impairment of sociality affects directly the fulfilment of individual human life as actualisation of the form 'I.'

On this background human dignity consists in the realisation that one has a direct knowledge of the form 'I,' i.e., human dignity is the relation of a human being to their own knowledge of the form 'I.' In other words, human dignity means that a person acknowledges that they owe the formed aspect of their existence to the form 'I.'[18] This relation is indeed inviolable in the sense of the Dignity Commandment because any violation

[18] A human being owes her factual existence not only to the form '*I*' but also to the fact that she is the result of the parental act of procreation. Traditionally the former is called the *formal* and of the latter the *effective cause* of a formed existence.

of it impairs directly a person's knowledge of the form 'I' and because the impaired the knowledge of the form 'I' is, the imperfect is the conduct of individual human life as actualisation of this form. Furthermore, because human beings cannot actualise the form 'I' in a self-sufficient manner, the violation of the dignity of one person derogates also the dignity of the person or the persons who are causing it. This means that if I debase someone, I debase also myself because I impair my own knowledge of the form 'I.' In other words, my dignity relation to the form 'I' obliges me to acknowledge and to respect the dignity relation of any other human being.

Against the cognitivist concept of dignity presented here could be objected that it is inapplicable to every human being who is not able to have any knowledge of the form 'I,' e.g., comatose persons, embryos and so forth, so that this concept misses the idea inherent to the Dignity Commandment. To avoid this 'flaw,' one could be inclined to determine dignity as belonging to the content of the form 'I,' bypassing thus the mediation by knowledge. This, so the proponent of this position, would explain both the universality of human dignity and its normative power independently of the ability of a human being to have a knowledge of it.

If dignity belonged indeed to the content of the form 'I' its actualisation would be subject to the gradation of perfection, i.e. its factual value could vary from human to human like any other factual value of any human essential property. The form 'I' contains a great number of potential properties that in many human beings are either not actualised at all or to a various degree of perfection. Human dignity, however, is not actualised as a factual property of human beings or as a part of such a factual property, being thus not a subject of gradation whatsoever. So, we must assume that either human dignity is a content of the form 'I' that is not actualised at all – which seems to be at least strange –, or that dignity cannot belong to the content of the form 'I.'

The apparent problems arising from the cognitivist concept

of dignity disappear if one takes into account that this concept only says that in order for dignity to exist there must exist at least one full-fledged cognizing person. As long as one human being in the world is able to have direct knowledge of the form 'I' every other human is entitled to dignity, even if the rest of humanity were not in position to realise this fact. Human dignity cannot thus be determined as an individual human right, but as a *duty* of every person against herself and any other human being.

Since an individual person is not always in position to recognise if her actions are in accordance with the fulfilment of this duty – even under the assumption that she has the good will to fulfil it – there is the necessity to organise human life in such a way that some persons are charged with the duty to help any other human being to conduct a dignified life. This organisation of human life is the State. The Dignity Commandment obliges the State resp. the persons that are acting on its behalf, to take care that the conduct of a person's life does not affect – intentionally or unintentionally – the dignity of other human beings. A State that is not subject to the Dignity Commandment is thus only a vehicle for the realisation of arbitrarily prevailing political aims. This was the bitter and blood-soaked lesson of the failure of the mere formal European democracies in the first half of the 20th century.

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Discussing Normative Ethical Reasons and Moral Realism with Kant: A Meta-Ethical Perspective

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Abstract: This chapter aims to provide a brief but thorough view of the central ideas of moral realism regarding ethical normative reasons. Moral realism contains the concept of discovery of normative moral reasons and, along with antirealism, serves a prominent role in the contemporary philosophical debate on normative ethics. This essay will follow a metaethical interpretation of explaining ethical normative propositions. It will mainly be based on Immanuel Kant's critical theories and will aim to comprehend the foundations of the generally accepted normative reasons of wider scope, such as respect for human beings. Such fundamental reasons constitute of an ontological unit that is not affected by the psycho-physiological conditions of the rational ethical actor and thus perceived as having a regulative and objective status. This objectivity signifies the existence of a transcendental place different and beyond the empirical experience. This is an a priori way of moral Reason's functioning; it transcends individuality and selfish dispositions, having a form of law, namely the Ethical Law. If external experience ultimately determines the ethical decision, then the reasonable will of the actor will be dependent on passions such as personal interests. It is emphasized that moral agents need to function under the spontaneity of logical reasoning to naturally act in an ethical manner and not on the basis of various exogenous factors.
Keywords: normative; reason; ethical; metaethics; rational; transcendental; moral realism; antirealism

I. Introduction

This chapter aspires to provide a brief and comprehensive analysis of the structure and essence of ethical normative reasons, i.e., principal reasons that determine the wrongness or rightness of moral facts. In particular, the main concept of *discovery* of normative moral rea-

sons derives from moral realism. At the same time, it remains in a constant and productive dialogue with antirealism, in which the central argument is that of the *construction* of ethical reasons. These viewpoints serve a prominent role in the contemporary philosophical debate on normative ethics and its applications. Therefore, this chapter will attempt to combine features and parameters from both of these theories. The answer to whether normative ethical reasons' existence corresponds to a transcendent state of mind or is perceived as such due to the moral freedom of rational beings that we are called upon to discover, is not absolute and needs constant investigation.

This essay follows a metaethical approach to explaining ethical normative propositions and is mainly based on Immanuel Kant's critical theories.[1] Specifically, the first level of analysis for moral truths and ethical criteria was, traditionally, the normative level that presented rules of actions, thoughts, and knowledge of moral status with direct practical implications. Following modernity and *contemporaneity*, the second level of analysis, the metaethical, completes the deontic[2] character of the first with a hermeneutical approach. As Scanlon[3] explains about the metaethical approach, it begins with questions about the logical structure and the semantics of logical ethical reasons that define the proper motive of each rational action, as a duty to do what is right and was directly related to the field of

[1] Immanuel Kant's work in the fields of epistemology, ethics, and aesthetics had immense influence on those who followed. In this essay Kant's thought is interpreted in a realistic way, based on the works of his critical period of writing (see his *Critique of Pure Reason*, also the *Critique of Practical Reason* etc.). Kant attempted to establish morality and practical Reason through the concept of categorical imperative, that is, of the unifying principle which describes the rational ethical act in a necessary, pure and categorical way.

[2] Stelios Virvidakis, "Dimensions and Perspectives of Modern Ethical Philosophy," in *The Return of Ethics: Old and New Questions* (Athens: Artos Zois, 2013), 405-437, 405-408 [in Greek].

[3] Thomas M. Scanlon, *Being Realistic About Reasons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 1.

Ethics *par excellence* [*Moral*], as it is called in the work of Immanuel Kant.[4] The latter defined as *Moral* the field of rational acts that bears an ethical content, and falls within the broader field of Ethical Science [*Ethik*]. Later, metaethics was transformed into a more demanding field, showing great development in understanding moral judgments, being enriched with questions of ontological conception, interpretive and epistemological indications of moral reasoning.[5] The method to be used in this chapter will be systematic, without following historical or spatio-temporal order but considering the relevant considerations in a non-chronological way.

Before the main analysis, it is necessary to further explain some of the central concepts that will be mentioned:

i. *Reason (ratio)* in this text concerns the Logical causal relations between acts and their subjects and serves to answer why subject A must do action B whether he/she wants it or not,[6] namely the governing principle of the world.

ii. *Normativity*[7] can be perceived as the derivative of the most fundamental ethical normative reasons, in the context of Reason (the rational mental capacity of the ethical actor).

iii. *Ethical reason* indicates an obligation.[8] This obligation indicates a moral life within a framework, subject to limitations,[9] which defines fundamental duties of the rational being that bears respect for him/herself and other beings.

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[4] Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, transl. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 4:388.

[5] Scanlon, 1, and Virvidakis, 1.

[6] Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, transl. Mary Gregor (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 6:375.

[7] The term *normativity* is here used in its ethical sense.

[8] Scanlon, 10.

[9] Stelios Virvidakis, *The Texture of Moral Reality* (Athens: Leader Books, 2009), 251 [in Greek].

iv. *Ethics* illustrate the practice of the *actors*, i.e., the actors of the purposeful action that brings a result to the empirical world.

II. Examining the nature of normative ethical reasons

a. The transcendental *topos*

Aiming to discern the foundations of the generally accepted normative reasons of wider scope,[10] such as respect for human beings, this paper argues that it would be implicit that there must be a state of normative (objective) reasons different from the subjective inclinations of humans. Essentially, the existence of such reasons constitutes an ontological unit, which is not affected by the psycho-physiological conditions of the rational ethical actor. The recognition of the authority of that objective state of reasons is a trait of human nature and close to the Platonic *Idea*,[11] which implies a transcendental *topos*[12] different from the empirical experience and beyond it.[13] Interestingly, Immanuel Kant[14] believed that the foundation of normative ethical principles is Reason, which is not preconstructed by other reasons and understood as the actor's ability to act rationally, an ability that is beyond his/her propensities.

This meta-empirical functional system[15] highlights the truth of the moral facts despite of experience, in a discovery of a transcendental world of intellect. Within this world, Reason and

[10] Paul Formosa, "Is Kant a Moral Constructivist or a Moral Realist?" *European Journal of Philosophy* 21, no. 2 (2011): 170-196, 177.

[11] See Plato's Theory of Forms (or Ideas), in which Plato stands for the per se existence of ideas in relation to the tangible objects.

[12] The word *topos* in this essay indicates a transcendental *place*; it is used as the Greek root topo- is being used. And, according to Pelegrinis, 630, Ainesedimus used the term *topos* to refer to the cognitive ways of forming arguments and notions.

[13] Vassilios Karasmanis, "Plato's Philosophy," *Deukalion* 34, nos. 1-2 (2020): 5-37, 5-7 [in Greek].

[14] Costas Androulidakis, *Kantian Ethics, Fundamental Issues and Perspectives* (Athens: Smili, 2018), 37 [in Greek].

[15] Ibid., 42.

rationality reveal their supersensible existence, in a way that the moral agent (for example a rational mature person) follows[16] their invincible rules in a categorical way, without questioning their validity. This world can be trespassed through mentality and intellect and consists of the representations and reflections of the human experiences which are being assessed through the symbolic mental consciousness of Moral. The transcendental character of this inner knowledge and ethical judgment actually entails the potentials of realising the tangible and non-tangible ethical facts and reasons. It can be interpreted as ways of a conceptual elaboration of the normative concepts of intellect pure from personal interests and as rational forms of supervision of the phenomena of experience or thoughts of the moral subject, who is going to decide on what is right to do and what feels right to do.

b. Considering the aprioristic nature of normative ethical reasons

Being obvious that moral normative reasons act in a substantial place, where moral judgments are accountable to Logic while transcending the human senses, one can remember what Plato asked in the *Republic*: "… and it will not ever be actually finished, that regime which we are shaping like a fairytale with our Reason?"[17] In this citation, Plato perceived the ideal State, which included the fundamental moral qualities of justice, as concerning an area beyond the perceived empirical stimuli. This way of conceiving entities, facts and reasons, namely as existing also in a place beyond vision, is completely different from the material world but is realistically true and can be felt or realised. Consequently, any normative ethical principle upon which the Ethical Law can be established is perceived as such if the moral subject has that ethical freedom of thought that antirealism

[16] Evangelos D. Protopapadakis, "Could I Wish to Be a Courtier?" in *The Courtier Philosopher*, ed. G. Arabatzis, 65-76 (Athens: National and Kapodistrian University of Athens Press, 2017), 70 [in Greek].

[17] Plato, *Republic,* transl. M. Skouteropoulos (Athens: Polis, 2002), 501e 4-5 [translation mine]. Original sentence in ancient Greek: "πολιτεία ἣν μυθολογοῦμεν λόγῳ ἔργῳ τέλος λήψεται."

stands for, and which makes him/her susceptible to those reasons.[18] The authority of these reasons is inevitably recognized whether or not the rational ethical actor confirms it.[19] One such principle is the principle of equal respect, which Kant considers in his work as the cornerstone of the teleological moral claim of humans.[20]

Specifically, Kant argues that, if the subject's inclinations can control the will, then the rational subject of the reasons is not independent and capable of following the imperative laws of Reason. Kant states clearly that "... man finds within himself a capacity to understand his intellect and the normative laws by which his sensual representations are defined."[21] It can be concluded that, the fundamental ethical normative principles are those which can determine other principles' value[22] and render human mind capable of understanding moral categorical imperatives, as if they preexisted in the place of noesis.[23]As Virvidakis characteristically mentions in *The Texture of Moral Reality*,[24] Kant argues for the preexistence of that *topos* of human Reason, where the ethical subject can realise the concepts of normativity without having it preconceived. Nonetheless, according to the Platonic theory of cognitive power that comes through the perceptual power of empirical vision,[25] it is extracted that the *a priori* way of reaching normative ethical judgments can combine its ethical qualities with the moral principles through the

[18] Charles Larmore, and Alain Renaut, *Debate on Ethics: Idealism or Realism,* transl. Mich. Pagkalos (Athens: Polis, 2004), 8 [in Greek].
[19] Ibid.*,* 88.
[20] Kant, *Groundwork*, 4:439; this opinion is usually taken as antirealistic, but in this paper, I discuss it realistically.
[21] Ibid., 4:108.
[22] Spyros I. Ragkos, "The Dual Metaphysics of the First Principles in Plato: Written Dialogues and Oral Teaching," *Deukalion* 34, nos. 1-2 (2020): 38-74, 47 [in Greek].
[23] Noesis means mental understanding, intelligence; see Pelegrinis, 446. It is the opposite of *sense.*
[24] Virvidakis, *The Texture,* 249.
[25] Plato, *Republic,* 508e 1-6.

ethical imperatives that already exist in the transcendental place. It is thus understood that there are such ethical principles, independent of the ethical being and able to act as foundational ones;[26] rational beings can approach those principles through their Moral.[27]

Similarly, Plato in the *Republic* mentions that, the approach of principles such as the geometric ones[28] which constitute an ontological spatial unit, are only accessible through the intellect and can be perceived by rational actors only through mental processes. Respectively, the Greek philosopher implies in *Menon*[29] the *a priori* existence of the perfect mathematical principles.[30] Furthermore, Peacocke argues that for every moral principle known to humans, it must be accepted that they are either aprioristic in their content or follow aprioristic moral principles.[31] And, as stated by Virvidakis, purely antirealistic views, due to their fear of Platonism, fall short of proving the truth of their reasoning, because they cannot explain the foundations of normative moral principles necessary to justify the general normative reasons.[32]

c. The connection between ethical freedom and normative reasons

The ethical criteria for the purposeful moral action and explanation of moral reasoning can be found in Kant's theory of the different formulations of the categorical imperative, namely the normative ethical laws that should determine the will, decision and action of rational beings. According to these, humans must act in such a way that their act can apply as a universal law to

[26] Larmore, and Renaut, *Debate on Ethics,* 91.

[27] Ibid., 89-91; in this passage Larmore mentions the objectivity of the normativity of the place of Reason's realisation and the independent validity of its existence.

[28] Karasmanis, 18.

[29] In *Menon* (or *On Virtue*) Socrates and Menon seek the definition of virtue and examine whether it can be taught.

[30] Karasmanis, 30.

[31] Virvidakis, *The Texture*, 342.

[32] Virvidakis, ibid., 365.

all rational beings[33] and treat other agents with unquestioning respect for their personalities. Humans should always "see humanity in the face of others, see it as an end-in-itself,[34] namely to act with self-legislation towards the exercise of rational thought and ethical action. If the moral agent is not self-legislated, he/she ceases to belong to this "...State[35] of free ethical actors..." who bear the ethical freedom to choose the path to Reason.

According to Androulidakis, ethical freedom is aprioristic,[36] that is, it presupposes experience and needs experience to unfold,[37] but also exists before and beyond it; it is thought to be internal[38] and independent[39] from the empirical and embodied passions.[40] This *a priori* way of functioning of moral reasons is a quality that human brain uses *sponte*[41] and transcends the individual dispositions.[42] It has the form of the Ethical Law.[43] The latter is the pure practical Reason,[44] which is free from empirical stimuli. Its' realisation[45] from the human mind[46] motivates the ethical actor through logical procedures,[47] in which this prin-

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[33] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason, transl.* Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett, 2002), 5:58.
[34] Kant, *Groundwork*, 4:420.
[35] Ibid., 4:433.
[36] Androulidakis, *Kantian Ethics,* 68.
[37] Ibid., 67.
[38] Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:407.
[39] Thomas Hill Jr, "Kantianism," in *The Blackwell Guide to Ethical Theory,* ed. Hugh LaFollette, and Ingmar Persson, 311-331 (West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2013), 312.
[40] Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, 6:408.
[41] Androulidakis, *Kantian Ethics,* 63.
[42] Hill, 312.
[43] Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason,* 5:56, also in Kant, *Groundwork,* 4:403.
[44] To Kant 'pure' practical logic means independent of empirical stimuli.
[45] Stelios Virvidakis, "The Presence of Kant in Contemporary English Philosophy: The Transformation of the Transcendental Approach," in *Tribute to Immanuel Kant*, 798-848 (Athens: Nea Estia, 2004), 794 [in Greek].
[46] Androulidakis, 63.
[47] Ibid., 63.

ciple is presented as *"*... decisive reason, of which no sensory term can prevail..."[48] Consequently, if experience and external conditions determine the normative choice of the rational actor, then his/her will is not going to stem from the categorical laws of Moral but from psychological or materialistic interests. Such interests are completely different from the *per se* nature of normative reasons that stand for all the other general ethical propositions as a stable intellectual ground.

III. Epilogue

In conclusion, this chapter briefly examined the nature of ethical normative reasoning, in an attempt to discuss moral realism with Immanuel Kant's critical views, through an analysis situated in contemporary thought. The analysis followed a meta-ethical framework of explaining ethical normative propositions in hermeneutical way. The basic concept of 'discovery' of the normative laws of moral reasons defends the position that moral judgments and evaluations are captured in an *a priori* way,[49] as if they were a conceivable order of reasons and values not affected by the human psychological transitions, but determined from the rational actor's state of mind (capacity of Reason and ethical reasoning).[50] Any normative principle that can act as a foundation for other principles of rational actions, such as the principle of equal respect for rational ethical actors however, can only be understood as such if the ethical subject has the moral freedom that gives him/her the capacity to recognize those reasons, regardless the person's interests, feeling and being in absolute compliance with it.

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[48] Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:53.

[49] The term *a priori* is found in Kant's work, denoting the *a priori* meaning and origin of the most fundamental moral rules. The expression comes from the Latin prior, comparative of primus (first) and literally means in advance. In this chapter means the knowledge that pre-exists without the need for proof or experience.

[50] Larmore, and Renaut, 79-81; on the pragmatic mild Platonism of Larmore see also Virvidakis, *The Texture,* 367.

The transcendental place of existence of pure Reason, where the fundamental principles exist and can be discovered through self-conscience and experience, pre-supposes the ethical freedom of the rational mind so that it can discover its qualities through an intra-subjective journey, regardless of the external stimuli of experience. However, if exogenous factors determine the choice of the rational actor, then the ethical subject ceases to choose with accountability to the Moral laws of Reason that are pure from empirical influences. Every motive of the rational being's action is Reason, which gives birth to the very idea of any action and its possibility. If external experience ultimately determines the ethical normative decision, the reasonable will of the actor will be dependent on *passions*.[51] Overall, the moral agent needs to function under the spontaneity of his/her logical reasons towards what is right or not to do; in this way the actor will naturally act in an ethical manner. In this part of the normative ethical endeavor, respect for all rational beings and acceptance of limitations of human action play an essential role. The regulatory ideas of pure Reason, which direct the rational being to a continuous expansion of knowledge of the physical world and towards a reasonable orientation of thoughts, can vividly depict Moral in a graceful human life.

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[51] Such as hunger, or lust, or personal interest.

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Waxing Knowledge, Waning Moods

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Abstract: A prominent difference between the modern age and the contemporary age is the overall attitude towards the idea of progress. This includes the idea of the progress of knowledge (arguably scientific progress), which seems to stand in stark contrast to the actuality of ever growing scientific and technological capacities of present times. Modern age was decidedly optimistic regarding the outlook of scientific progress, but contemporary times are a lot more pessimistic. A motif useful for understanding this peculiarity can be found in the evolution of science fiction through these ages. To that end, three representative works of science fiction that are plot-wise directly related to the Moon are analysed: Johannes Kepler's *Somnium*, Arthur Clarke's *A Fall of Moondust* and Neal Stephenson's *Seveneves*. Their comparison reveals that the plot points in these works become progressively more catastrophic, which only correlates with the rising pessimism of contemporaneity, but is more directly linked to the greater knowledge about the Moon that is available. In *Somnium*, Kepler could only work with telescopic observations; *A Fall of Moondust* was written just before the Moon landings and appropriately deals with a local crisis on the Moon; finally, *Seveneves* explores a global critical event that is an existential risk to the entire humankind. This shows a progressive maturing of our world view, from an early naive optimism, towards sobering realizations about significant risks that humanity can face. In that context, current pessimism is seen as a stage in which our kind acknowledges that progress and betterment are not guaranteed of themselves. This pessimism, however, ought to be eventually overcome in an assertive way with prudent plans for a sustainable future of humanity.
Keywords: existential risk; pessimism; progress; science fiction; utility of knowledge

I. Contemporary pessimism

Few would be willing to argue against the idea that recent generations possess quantitatively greater knowledge than their predecessors. We know more. More natural phenomena are understood; more facts are readily accessible to more people than ever; more abundant are our

archives and libraries. Many would agree that our knowledge is qualitatively better as well, although there might be slightly less unanimity on that front. We know better. Our instruments are better today than in the past; our scientific methodology has been refined and improved through many iterations of trials and errors and brilliant flashes of insight; our experimental capacities are greater, not to mention that the computing power available to us is steadily increasing.

One could say we are at the threshold of the enlightened man's dream, or, at the very least, that we are on a steady course towards it. Yet for all the hypothetical mirth our seventeenth-century ancestors might express upon seeing our world, the attitude of contemporaneity is far more subdued, perhaps even reserved. Things are improving, but not nearly as reliably as we expected, or, perhaps, hoped. We produce far more food than we need, and still there are people who go hungry;[1] there are still fatal diseases taking many lives, not necessarily for the lack of cure, but for the lack of infrastructure or, worse, lack of trust in the cure;[2] we have witnessed remarkable breakthroughs that augment the free flow of information, but misinformation is also adept at flowing through these channels.[3] The likes of Steven Pinker would optimistically remind us that we live in the best of times by so many parameters: longer average lifespan, fewer violent deaths, greater literacy.[4] But this is of little consolation for those who are still hungry or poor in this world of abundance. The very concept of progress is often called into question. With all the blessings of today in mind, whence-

[1] Eric Holt-Giménez, et al, "We Already Grow Enough Food for 10 Billion People... and Still Can't End Hunger," *Journal of Sustainable Agriculture* 36, no. 6 (2012): 595-598, https://doi.org/10.1080/10440046.2012.695331.

[2] Eve Dubé, et al., "Vaccine Hesitancy: An Overview," *Human Vaccines & Immunotherapeutics* 9, no. 8 (2013): 1763-1773.

[3] Victor Suarez-Lledo, and Javier Alvarez-Galvez, "Prevalence of Health Misinformation on Social Media: Systematic Review," *Journal of Medical Internet Research* 23, no. 1 (2021): e17187.

[4] Steven Pinker, *Enlightenment Now* (New York: Viking, 2018).

forth stems the discontentment of so many people? The mood of modernity was that of optimism for the future; why is the mood of contemporaneity so opposedly sombre, pessimistic?

Is it perhaps due to man's hubris, our primal greed driving us to covet what we do not have evermore? Is the improvement of human welfare an exercise in futility, whereby as soon as one issue is resolved, another is found and put in its stead? There are certainly some contemporary grievances that can be ascribed to people getting used to greater creature comfort of today – these would be pejoratively called "first-world problems": having to wait minutes rather than seconds to download the latest film, not being able to reserve a table at the favourite restaurant because it is overbooked and so on. But these are trivialities, at worst annoyances for an affective moment and at best used as points of comedic self-reflection.

Is it perhaps that *conditio humana* is marred by some kind of eternal curse, akin to the biblical punishment for the original sin, that leaves our souls constantly restless? Maybe it is the ubiquitous fear of death, of loss ("for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return"[5]), or the realization that pain and suffering cannot be eliminated from our lives ("in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children"[6]), or the constant reminders that nothing is gained without significant effort ("In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread"[7]). But these are issues humanity has been facing for millennia, and there is little reason to think those problems would cause more grief today than in the past. If anything, the abundant opportunities for distraction that exist today would provide an effective method of escapism. Furthermore, this hypothetical unremitting nature of these aspects of human condition is barely provable. That which was once thought damning may yet be conquered, as we have already done in the case of eradication of smallpox. It is precisely the advancement of medical science that opened the door for such a possibility.

[5] *Genesis*, 3:19

[6] *Genesis*, 3:16

[7] *Genesis*, 3:19

But there's the rub. Far more devastating for our morale are the issues which are neither trivial (restaurant seating) nor seemingly insurmountable (death), but rather those for which the solution is just above the horizon, and somehow still out of reach. Consider, for instance, the proliferation of nuclear armaments during the Cold War. We can leave aside the chilling calculations of using nuclear weapons to shorten the length of World War II, and focus on the issues that arose afterwards. The nature of these dreadful weapons is such that the only sensible way of defence against them was seen in deterrence. This lead to the emergence of the MAD doctrine ("Mutually Assured Destruction," a Nash equilibrium in which two opposing sides each possess the capability to utterly destroy the other, resulting in no side wanting to initiate the conflict for fear of maximum retaliation), prompting the United States and the Soviet Union to enter into an arms race. The only position in which the entire world was safe was when it was teetering on the razor-thin edge of this mutually assured destruction. And this wasn't some natural calamity, a work of a higher power, but something we brought about with our own hands. Somehow, during the Cold War, the best defender of life was the possibility of a gruesome death.

II. Reframing the question

In the previous example we may have stumbled upon a crucial clue. The situation that was just described is, simply put, contradictory, absurd. It is easy to imagine how an abundance of such situations would cause discontent. Of course, there are plenty of authors who spoke of human condition as a conflict between opposing forces[8] or a perpetual state of absurdity.[9] The scope of our interest is far narrower at this moment. We do not wish to diagnose the entirety of human existence, we merely

[8] Sigmund Freud, *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* (Wien: Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, 1921).

[9] Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus* (New York: Vintage International, 2018).

wish to inquire into the roots of a peculiar phenomenon: why do we today tend to be less optimistic than our predecessors, in spite of being more knowledgeable than them? Shouldn't greater knowledge lead to more possibilities and thus to better outlook towards the future? Indeed, but not all possibilities are created equal, and not all of them shine a light on a desirable tomorrow. The only thing we can claim for certain is that the greater the knowledge we possess, the more numerous the known consequences of that knowledge will be. Perhaps there is a particular set of consequences that all share a common nature which would explain the contemporary pessimism. Let us try and bring these specific consequences into focus.

Firstly, the consequences that we speak of must somehow be self-imposed, that is, they must be an appreciable result of humanity's own actions, in order to differentiate them from the circumstances that are simply encountered and thought of as inevitable. The frightful prospect of inexorable death isn't emblematic of our time, but of all times. In other words, a scenario must be conceivable in which the consequences do not occur; for instance, the overabundance of food we produce is worth little when the distribution of wealth in the world is so unequal and a better one can be imagined. Secondly, the consequences must be of a contradictory nature, specifically such that they cannot be removed by simple negation. The Cold War nuclear arms race fulfils both of these criteria: nuclear weapons are a scientific, technological and political product of humanity, had we not discovered how to split the nucleus of an atom, these weapons would be unknown; nuclear threats could not be solved by one-sided reduction of the number of warheads, as it would place one conflicting party, as well as the whole world, at a catastrophic disadvantage.

An important note must be made here: the grim consequences that we are linking with the contemporary world are not to be understood simply as new, never-before-seen challenges, but rather as challenges the nature of which is seemingly at odds with all the improvements made in a certain area so far. For instance, climate change, as dreadful an issue as it is, is

merely new, but not truly contradictory to the idea of industrial, economic and scientific progress. It is only sensible that the greater our technical capacity grows, the greater impact it will have on the surrounding world. Even the "opponents" of climate change cannot deny that human activity has an effect on the environment, they mostly dispute the extent of the impact. And this opposition, while undoubtedly detestable, isn't without its own twisted reasons. Scientific consensus on the issue of climate change is clear and climate change deniers are, simply put, representatives of a conflicting interest. On the one hand, there is the long-term interest of sustainability of Earth's biosphere, on the other hand there is the short-term interest of using fossil fuels to turn a quarterly profit. In the current state of affairs, these two interests are conflicted, and in due time, one side will ultimately have to surrender. The uncertainty of which side will emerge victorious is terrifying, but not unfathomable. Climate change is self-imposed, but the path to its elimination is quite clear except for the lack of willingness of the most offending contributors to undertake it.

The grim circumstances we are talking about are cut from a whole different cloth. It is the absurd case of more weapons being the only way to no weapons used. The uncanny rise of conspiratorial and paranoid modes of thinking is arguably of a similar origin. The Internet is rightfully one of the most impactful breakthroughs in communication technologies. It has connected a vast number of people in the world in an unprecedented way. But it has also opened the doors for a number of terrors to escape into the world. Previously, if an errant paranoid thought emerged in a single mind, more often than not it would fizzle out because its sustenance wasn't readily available and it couldn't be shared effectively. Now, all it takes is a couple of clicks both to find similar thoughts for it to feed on and to offer it as food for other kindred thoughts. Furthermore, social media platforms have an inherent incentive to foster such activity, as controversial content garners more user engagement.[10]

[10] Luke Munn, "Angry by Design: Toxic Communication and Technical Archi-

This was perhaps a most convoluted way to describe the so-called "echo chambers" of the Internet, but it was essential to illustrate how the rise of pseudoscientific beliefs such as the flat Earth movement and anti-vaccination movement fulfils the aforementioned criteria. First, they are self-imposed, as they wouldn't be nearly as prominent or numerous if it weren't for the contemporary free flow of information. Second, they cannot be simply refuted (negated), as any opposition to such ideas is by definition seen as an instrument of "the powers that be" in the eyes of the adherents of these movements.

So here we are today: after years of space travel, after decades of developing inoculation techniques, after centuries of research into orbital mechanics and pathology, all of which is relatively easily available, the world still has to deal with naysayers in these areas. Some might say that an occasional case of paranoia is inevitable. However, where once we encountered but pockets of errant noise, now we face a clamour of rising pitch that is difficult to ignore as it is beginning to affect the practical outcomes of our daily lives. To make matters worse, the most extreme versions of these narratives are not the ones that do the most damage, but rather those that seem more moderate, more credible, more believable. The lower-than-expected rates of vaccination against COVID-19 in some parts of the world are not to be blamed solely on flippant ideas that vaccines are some method of alien mind-control; in fact, most hesitancy can be linked with the fear that vaccines are not sufficiently tested.[11] Not every conspiracy needs to be outlandishly comical to have a noticeable effect.

And there we find the most insidious aspect of these conspiratorial movements. Most of them are obviously anti-intellectual because their core ideas are at odds with what is accepted by the wider scientific community, yet some wear the trappings of intellectualism. Both the flat Earth movement and the anti-vaccination movement will claim that they espouse a healthy

tecture," *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* 7, no. 53 (2020): 1-11.

[11] Marie Pierre Tavolacci, Pierre Dechelotte, and Joel Ladner, "COVID-19 Vaccine Acceptance, Hesitancy, and Resistancy among University Students in France," *Vaccines* 9, no. 6 (2021): 654-667.

scepticism towards authority, open-mindedness towards unconventional ideas and importance of discovering things on one's own. These would all be admirable qualities of an enlightened person, a freethinker, so to speak. And anyone questioning the tenets of their movements is favouring dogmatism, close-mindedness and gullibility – thus is evidently an enemy of the light of reason.

To a certain extent, these anti-intellectual movements are both the cause and the result of pessimistic tendencies of the contemporary world. As a cause, their very existence can bring despair into the hearts of others, who might now worry that both education and common sense failed mankind. But this can be explained away as simple optics: these movements are so prominent not because they are numerous, but because their ideas are so grotesque that they become instantly visible even if a minority. It is a lot more fruitful to regard these tendencies as symptoms of pessimism in itself and to ask what would drive another person towards such outrageous ideologies, even when the evidence for the opposite is so readily available.

A similar issue was famously explored by Max Horkheimer in his work *Eclipse of Reason*. Motivated by the question of how Nazi ideology managed to garner assent of so many regular people in spite of all the civilizational advances made thus far, Horkheimer poignantly notes:

> The hopes of mankind seem to be farther from fulfilment today than they were even in the groping epochs when they were first formulated by humanists. It seems that even as technical knowledge expands the horizon of man's thought and activity, his autonomy as an individual, his ability to resist the growing apparatus of mass manipulation, his power of imagination, his independent judgment appear to be reduced. Advance in technical facilities for enlightenment is accompanied by a process of dehumanization.[12]

[12] Max Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason* (London: Continuum, 2004), v.

Horkheimer's conclusion is that this crisis is the result of objective reason (one that regards universal truths and goals) being supplanted by subjective reason (one that focuses on immediate means in an isolated situation). This upending was, in his view, principally supported by positivist and pragmatist philosophies, and these bear the greatest brunt of Horkheimer's critique in the entire book. Instrumentalisation of thoughts and ideas ultimately lead to situations in which any end, no matter how revolting in itself, can find justification merely by providing adequate means of its own realization.

With the focus of the book being directed at over-reliance on pragmatism and broader susceptibility to manipulation by political ideologies that can stem from it, Horkheimer's account does not provide an angle for the more specific circumstance in which utilized knowledge leads to reduced trust in its utility. If anything, scepticism towards the contemporary perversion of a modern ideal would itself be a sign of disenchantment, a prequel to pessimism.

Horkheimer provided several admirable insights, and a particularly poignant one asserts the risk of pragmatist criterion of "truth as usefulness" becoming twisted into a tool for control where truth is measured by usefulness to some established group.[13] Unfortunately, there are other arguments to be found there that are at best dated views. For instance, Horkheimer's equating of contemporary science with the positivist doctrine of verification[14] is now an antiquated position in philosophy of science. Consequently, his claim that acceptance of scientific method represents a *petitio principii* with regards to finding scientific truth[15] loses a significant edge. With such constraints, *Eclipse of Reason* is more of another instance of contemporary pessimistic mood (albeit more thoroughly thought through than other examples) than an explanation for it that we seek.

[13] Ibid., 59.

[14] Ibid., 29, 52.

[15] Ibid., 52.

What Horkheimer's critique does reveal well is that the trouble stems from the manner in which knowledge is utilized. Ostensibly, there seems to be a misalignment between implementing knowledge outwardly (applying it to the outside world) and implementing it inwardly (interiorising it into understanding). One might be tempted to explain this misalignment by calling out overspecialization of sciences or the inability of any one individual to possess the sum total of human knowledge, but neither of these explanations can account for the core issue, the simultaneous rise of effectiveness and loss of perceived trust in knowledge. If anything, overspecialization would stimulate increased trust, as each person from their own narrow field could appreciate the extent of knowledge other specialists possess, confirmed by effectiveness of each of those fields. The rift between the mood of the modern era and the mood of the contemporary era is still shrouded in mystery.

III. Every tale holds a morsel of truth

In the attempt to approach this issue from another standpoint, instead of analysing knowledge and science of these eras themselves, we will rather consider how humanity *wrote* about knowledge and science in these eras. After all, our primary concern is not the actual state of these activities (as already mentioned, they are thriving), but more so the mismatch between that state and how they are *perceived*. To that end, fictional works that have science and technology as core topics ought to prove more useful than academic papers or historical records. Certainly, *science fiction* would be the genre we are looking for.

There are multiple subgenres of science fiction. The best-known division is by "hardness": *hard science fiction* encompasses works where the author adhered as strictly as it was possible to the known laws of nature and limits of technology and tended to explain the workings of fantastical elements of the story in greater detail; and *soft science fiction* covers works in which the author took more liberties with fantastical elements, either by offering insufficient explanations ("hand-waving"), using mean-

ingless jargon ("technobabble") or downright ignoring the reasons for out-of-the-ordinary pieces of the story. Of these two, hard science fiction seems more suited for the needs of this paper, and the harder the better – the more rigorously the author has to follow the rules of science and logic, the more clearly we will be able to glean what is the author's attitude towards them.

Still, analysing all of the works of hard science fiction would be a monumental task. We ought to find a specific topic, perhaps one that is somehow meaningfully connected with the transition of the periods we are regarding. Horkheimer might be useful here once again. In one of the more poetic visions in *Eclipse of Reason*, he comments how the utilitarian outlook can pervert even the most tranquil of sights:

> The story of the boy who looked up at the sky and asked, 'Daddy, what is the moon supposed to advertise?' is an allegory of what has happened to the relation between man and nature in the era of formalized reason. On the one hand, nature has been stripped of all intrinsic value or meaning. On the other, man has been stripped of all aims except self-preservation. He tries to transform everything within reach into a means to an end. Every word or sentence that hints of relations other than pragmatic is suspect. When a man is asked to admire a thing, to respect a feeling or attitude, to love a person for his own sake, he smells sentimentality and suspects that someone is pulling his leg or trying to sell him something. Though people may not ask what the moon is supposed to advertise, they tend to think of it in terms of ballistics or acrial mileage.[16]

The Moon – our eternal companion; a fairly reliable timepiece; the first and so far only celestial neighbour we set foot upon; it is our visit to Luna that definitely shattered the crystal spheres

[16] Ibid., 69.

of the sky and confirmed Sir Isaac Newton's conviction that the world beyond is, in fact, just the world. Surely the day we look upon the Moon with utter cynicism will be the low point of humanity, when jadedness will have taken the place of wonder. And, in a convenient order of events, our arrival at the Moon in the second half of the twentieth century nicely coincides with the shift from the modern view of knowledge to the more contemporary one.

If we suspect we might find echoes of that shift in fiction, then hard science fiction stories about the Moon are a good place to conduct the search. There are a couple of other benefits from choosing this topic, both stemming from the Moon's relative vicinity. First is the fact that our familiarity with the Moon gives authors the possibility to write *very hard* science fiction about it; second, this familiarity also guarantees that there will still be a wide array of appropriate works to choose from. With that in mind, we ultimately narrowed our selection to three representative works written by some of the most prominent names in science fiction history. The first work is chosen to represent the pure modern view, the time when Moon was still only seen and not yet touched. The second work represents the transitory period, the time of the first lunar landing, and the slow change from modern to contemporary view. The final work is the most recent and it represents the contemporary view and the condition in which we find ourselves today.

a. *Somnium*

The first hard science fiction work about the Moon that is going to be considered, and arguably the first science fiction story about the Moon altogether, is Johannes Kepler's *Somnium* (*Dream*). In this story, written by the astronomer at the beginning of the seventeenth century, the author recounts an unusual dream involving a fantastic journey. In this dream we meet a youth from Iceland called Duracoto and his mother Fiolxhilde. The young man, although clever, never learned how to read or write and instead helped his mother in gathering cere-

monial herbs. However, after an unfortunate accident, his irate mother sells him to some seafaring merchants who happen to take him all the way to meet Tycho Brahe himself, whereupon the astronomer teaches Duracoto both Danish and astronomy. During this stay, the young man notices that many things he learns about the Moon from Brahe were already told to him by Fiolxhilde. After five years, Duracoto returns to his mother in Iceland, who is overjoyed to see that her son has become a follower of science.

An interesting image of knowledge is painted at the beginning of this story: both Duracoto and Fiolxhilde are knowledgeable, but in significantly different ways. Fiolxhilde, although never explicitly stated as such, is evidently a witch or a medicine woman, as she works with medicinal and ceremonial herbs, of which she knows not through education, but through some inherent wisdom of hers. In fact, she made sure her son didn't learn how to write, though not because she thought writing was bad in and of itself, but because "there are many pernicious despisers of the art who would slander that which they do not understand."[17] Apparently, rulers of their communities did not look favourably upon those who sought to expand their horizons of knowledge, and passed laws penalizing such acts. However, Duracoto (who is, notably, a male) manages to eschew these laws and receive strict scientific education in the safety of a foreign land. The only danger that Kepler is willing to link with knowledge is the danger posed by those who lack of it; otherwise, to know is to be in a better position to learn even more about the world. This is seen when Fiolxhilde decides that only after five years of study under Brahe is her son worthy of learning the mysteries she was privy to for many years of her long life.

And how would an uneducated witch possess knowledge about the Moon greater than even that of the world's greatest astronomer? Why, by revelation, of course: Fiolxhilde regular-

[17] Johannes Kepler, *Der Traum vom Mond* (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1898), 3 (translation mine).

ly converses with spirits that frequent Iceland, who tell her of many distant shores. One of these shores is the land of Levania, or as we know it, the Moon. Fiolxhilde then summons this spirit (at a crossroads, no less), so that her son can learn about this amazing place.

The spirit's account of the Moon is very detailed, and includes its size, distance, climate and even the way other stars and constellations look like when observed from the surface of the Moon. There is also the description of the denizens of the different regions of the Moon: "the Subvolvans" live on the hemisphere that always faces the Earth ("Volva" as they call it), they experience milder climate and are commensurably milder people; "the Privolvans" live on the hemisphere always facing away from the Earth and are a lot tougher people due to more extreme weather they must endure (direct sunlight and utter darkness without Earth's mitigating influence).[18]

The majority of Kepler's descriptions of Levania are founded in astronomical observations of the Moon, and in fact would not require a revelation by an alien spirit. Even the most complex accounts of how the sky looks like from the various points on Moon's surface is merely a matter of taking how the sky looks like from Earth and then applying appropriate astronomical adjustments. Some of the most amusing moments from the story are Kepler's attempts to describe how the Earth's geography looks from the Moon: instead of describing the usual shapes of continents, the Lunar spirit uses the images of a young lady blowing a kiss, of a cat, a bell and so on.[19]

True fantastical elements of this story occur towards its end, when Kepler begins to speculate on how the other side of the Moon looks like and what kinds of creatures would inhabit it. One must keep in mind that in Kepler's time, nobody has even laid eyes upon *the dark side of the Moon*. Namely, our satellite is tidally locked with Earth such that its one side always faces towards it and the other always faces away. First images of the

[18] Ibid., 11-12.
[19] Ibid., 15-16, and 114-117.

Moon's other side were taken in 1959. Before that, this "dark" or "far" side was always a synonym for something unknown, and a perfect place where authors could let their fancy run wild. Kepler, however, was rather conservative in his imagination: he reasoned that the Privolvans that live there must be hardy and resourceful folk, seeking shelter underwater and underground and riding various beasts or sometimes even using airships.[20] Apparently, even the most hostile of Moon's environments still enabled exciting lives. Unfortunately, before more of these scintillating accounts could be expressed, Kepler suddenly awakens, and his dream vanishes from his mind.

The Moon of this Kepler's story is a tranquil place. There are only two instances when it was depicted as inhospitable: first time, when the spirit describes how difficult the journey from Earth to Levania is, due to distance, travel speeds, cold and lack of breathable air; the second time is when the spirit describes the extreme weather that occasionally befalls the far side of the Moon. Neither of these instances is an active obstacle for the story, as there are already ample ways of ameliorating these unfavourable conditions: Earthlings must be of peak physical strength before attempting the trip and are put in a state of suspended animation for its duration; the Privolvans have developed the capability of living underwater and their technology helps them overcome the hostilities of nature.[21] There may be challenges on the Moon, but solutions are also readily available.

After all, is that not what would happen when denizens of a world acquire great knowledge about their home? Kepler seems to present Selenites as both exotic and exemplary, and their mastery over the Moon is quite understandable: Luna is a lot smaller than the Earth, so her secrets are quicker to be uncovered by the native people. The task of humanity, both literal and metaphorical, is now to rise to the occasion and reach these Moonfolk. With such a perspective, Kepler's outlook is markedly modern: optimistic regarding the capabilities of knowledge

[20] Ibid., 20.
[21] Ibid., 20.

and the upward direction of the development of mankind. And he is not alone in this vision. There are other early science fiction stories that depict alien cultures as "humanity only more mature." For instance, *The Man in the Moone* tells of Lunars who are impeccable Christians,[22] quite unsurprisingly as the author, Francis Godwin, was a bishop. Naturally, there will be works of science fiction that will soon break away from this mould, and it is precisely these differences that will be in the focus of our attention onwards.

b. *A Fall of Moondust*

The second piece of science fiction about the Moon that we are going to analyse here is Arthur Clarke's *A Fall of Moondust*. Widely considered one of his best works, this novel was written in 1960, several centuries after Kepler's *Somnium* and Godwin's *The Man in the Moone*. And those were rather eventful centuries, both with regards to the development and popularization of science fiction as a literary genre, and with regards to improved astronomical observations and a substantial increase of our knowledge about our natural satellite. During that time, we learned a lot about the Moon: its visible surface was mapped with telescopes and later extensively photographed; the far side of the Moon was only just observed the year prior and no longer symbolized something unknowable; the Moon's geographic (perhaps more accurately *selenographic*) features were documented and theories of their nature and origin began to form. However, one crucial element was missing. All of the findings about the Moon during that period were made at a distance. Sight was almost the exclusive way of gathering empirical evidence about the Moon, and no matter how highly sophisticated instruments were used to do that, relying on a single channel for information is never foolproof. Many lunar theories of those times would remain underdetermined, hypothetical, even speculative, until different kinds of data were available. We simply couldn't know for sure until we got there.

[22] Francis Godwin, *The Man in the Moone* (London: Joshua Kirton, 1657), 73.

A Fall of Moondust appeared at a crucial time, just a few years before Neil Armstrong became the first man on the Moon, before even the first robotic probes landed there. That makes this novel extremely relevant to our inquiry, because it was written at the time when our knowledge-at-a-distance about the Moon was at its highest, when we had an abundance of possible theories about the Moon just waiting to be verified or falsified. One of these theories claimed that lunar surface is covered by extremely fine dust, so fine that vehicles and personnel that find themselves on it might be at a risk from sinking into it with fatal consequences. Clarke comments on this very issue himself:

> Yet, in 1960, such an outcome was a very real fear. Through a powerful telescope, vast areas of the lunar plains appear exceedingly flat and smooth, and a number of astronomers (notably Dr Thomas Gold) had maintained that they were indeed composed of extremely fine dust. Over billions of years, they argued persuasively, the ferocious changes of temperature between day and night would break up and eventually pulverise the local rocks. [...] When the Luniks and Surveyors landed on the Moon during the mid-60s, the designers of the Apollo spacecraft were able to relax. All the robot probes remained just where they landed, their footpads barely denting what looked like perfectly ordinary dirt.[23]

The novel is centred on the disaster that befell *Selene*, a luxury tourist vessel that sails the fictional "Sea of Thirst" on the Moon. This sea is not filled with water, but with very fine dust, which, in conjunction with the Moon's low gravity and lack of atmosphere, behaves in some aspects as a fluid and in some as a solid. On one of *Selene's* voyages, an unexpected moonquake causes the dust to shift dramatically and swallow the ship whole with her crew and passengers. The novel then follows the strug-

[23] Arthur Clarke, *A Fall of Moondust* (London: Gollancz, 2002), 5.

gles of these people to escape a dire fate, as well as the efforts of people on the surface helping them. Of note is that the cast includes diverse but competent and knowledgeable characters: key actors inside the ship are not just the veteran spacefarers, but also a detective and a physicist, while surface rescuers are not limited to on-site first responders, but also include astronomers, geophysicists, habitat governors and the like. More often than not, specialized knowledge of these characters will play a vital role in furthering the plot of this novel.

As we came to expect from Arthur Clarke, the novel is scientifically very accurate. However, the entire plot of the novel hinges on the possibility that lunar surface has at least areas covered in superfine dust that might swallow a large vessel. We now know that such a place does not exist on the Moon, but at the time of this novel's inception, we knew and didn't know just enough about it that such a scenario was plausible. Distance was an operative factor, and Clarke offers a rather poetic reverse reflection on that:

> Everyone of the twenty-two men and women aboard *Selene* looked up at that blue-green crescent, admiring its beauty, wondering at its brilliance. How strange that the familiar fields and lakes and forests of Earth shone with such celestial glory when one looked at them from afar! Perhaps there was a lesson here; perhaps no man could appreciate his own world, until he had seem it from space.[24]

Even the very familiar Earth seems foreign when viewed from a sufficient distance. What the lunar tourists thought they knew well appeared as not known at all. As a matter of fact, the way Clarke addresses the aspects of knowing and not knowing in this novel is rather telling and representative of the general attitude towards this new frontier in science, technology and exploration.

[24] Ibid., 18.

Arguably, the Moon as we know it today is less dangerous than the one in this novel, at least for the lack of a "Sea of Thirst." This isn't to say other hazards hadn't been discovered later. What is notable is that the Moon from *A Fall of Moondust* is significantly more actively deadly than the one from *Somnium*. Apparently, even before we set foot on it, we gathered enough knowledge to be able to quite convincingly speculate about what might go wrong. It is as if the more we know how things *are*, the more we are aware how we would rather things *wouldn't be*. Knowing does not only entail mastery, but even more so the awareness of how easily that mastery would be lost. But even with the growing awareness of unfavourable outcomes, the sentiment of the novel is ultimately optimistic. It may be suspenseful at times, but quick wit and ingenuity always seem to prevail.

This optimism is not unconditional, however. Towards the final quarter of the novel, a tragic complication occurs: just as the rescue team was about to reach the buried moonship, the water that was slowly evaporating from *Selene* and entering the surrounding dust, causes it to sink further away from rescuers' reach. This event is effectively contrasted with the initial catastrophe that buried the vessel: "It had taken nature a million years to set the trap that had snared *Selene* [...] The second time, she was caught in a trap that she had made herself."[25] So, for all the human ingenuity, this final twist in the story effectively reminds us that some challenges we face are of our own doing − not necessarily a direct or intended consequence, but still inextricably linked with our actions. An optimistic view of mankind's abilities was warranted, but it had to be tempered, bridled so to speak.

No other character in the novel exemplifies this bridled optimism better than Tom Lawson, a skilled and headstrong astronomer with a poor outlook on other people and even poorer social skills. He was instrumental in rescue team's efforts of locating *Selene* under the dust, however, the reason for his unbreakable spirit was quite peculiar:

[25] Ibid., 180.

> Tom hated to admit defeat, even in matters far less important than this. He believed that all problems could be solved if they were tackled in the right way, with the right equipment. This was a challenge to his scientific ingenuity; the fact that there were many lives involved was immaterial. Dr. Tom Lawson had no great use for human beings, but he did respect the Universe. This was a private fight between him and It.[26]

But even such an indomitable spirit would be humbled in the course of this novel. While testing an infrared scanning device, Lawson directed it towards the Earth and saw, much like the lunar tourists previously, a strikingly unfamiliar sight:

> It was a reminder of the fact, which no scientist should ever forget, that human senses perceived only a tiny, distorted picture of the Universe. Tom Lawson had never heard of Plato's analogy of the chained prisoners in the cave, watching shadows cast upon a wall and trying to deduce from them the realities of the external world. But here was a demonstration that Plato would have appreciated; for which Earth was 'real' – the perfect crescent visible to the eye, the tattered mushroom glowing in the far infra-red – or neither?[27]

Much of the novel has the same mildly cautionary tone. As was noted earlier, this fictional scenario was perceived as possible, if not probable, at the time of its inception. There are things that can go wrong in everyday events. Things can even more easily go wrong around delicate and extraordinary things such as a tourist voyage in a remote region of another celestial body.

[26] Ibid., 31.
[27] Ibid., 77.

But weaving a story about such a specific chain of events as the one that befell *Selene* requires knowing many minute factors and their complex interplays. There are many *similar* tales that involve ships sinking underwater, or people getting stuck in quicksand or otherwise being buried alive, but there aren't many other tales in which a moonship sinks into a sea of dust in such a plausible a way. For Clarke to even conceive of such a possibility, we first had to accumulate a lot of knowledge about the Moon. Only this time, gaining this knowledge didn't result in a story about a rosy utopia. The knowledge gathered presented an insight into a potential disaster.

In this aspect we can see how *A Fall of Moondust* diverges from the pure optimism of early science fiction. However, inasmuch as our increased knowledge makes us more observant of possible harm, it is at the same time the source of salvation from that very same harm. In that aspect, this novel is similar to early science fiction about the Moon. *A Fall of Moondust* is thus representative of a transitory state between modernity and contemporaneity. Not naively optimistic, but not yet pessimistic about the future, it carries itself and its vision of mankind's future with a sort of cautious optimism.

c. *Seveneves*

The final work of science fiction about the Moon that is going to be analysed here is also the most recently published, Neal Stephenson's *Seveneves* from 2015. Unlike the previous works that were available to the public for decades or centuries, there is a reasonable possibility that the readers of this article hadn't had the opportunity to read *Seveneves*, so the analysis will be as vague about the plot details as possible, so as not to spoil anyone's enjoyment of this work. Fortunately, the most important event for this topic is encountered in the very first line of the book, arguably one of the most dramatic openings in science fiction: "The Moon blew up without warning and for no apparent reason."[28] It may seem strange at first that the plot that

[28] Neal Stephenson, *Seveneves* (New York: Harper Collins, 2015), 3.

follows the sudden absence of the Moon should be considered in this investigation, but there is no denying that *Seveneves* is, among many other things, also about the Moon, even if the Moon is nowhere to be seen.

For those who encountered Stephenson's work before, *Seveneves* will be a quite expected sight. Sprawling at over 850 pages and filled to the brim with detailed and accurate technical descriptions, this book is an exemplar of *very* hard science fiction. Stephenson is well-known for devoting great effort into researching a particular topic and then writing voluminous works that are firmly planted in that knowledge. What his *Cryptonomicon* is for cryptography and *Anathem* is for classical philosophy, *Seveneves* is for aeronautics and orbital mechanics: a treasure trove of familiar references for those in the know and a deep well of detailed explanations for laypersons.

The core plot of the book is comprised of the many challenges humanity has to face in order to survive in the aftermath of such a cataclysmic event as the disintegration of the Moon. The character of Doctor Dubois Harris, a famous scientist and science popularizer, explains why Moon breaking up into several chunks is so catastrophic for everyone:

> We'll see an increasing number of meteorite impacts. Some will cause great damage. But overall, life is not going to change that much. But then [...] we are going to witness an event that I am calling the White Sky. It'll happen over hours, or days. The system of discrete planetoids that we can see up there now is going to grind itself up into a vast number of much smaller fragments. They are going to turn into a white cloud in the sky, and that cloud is going to spread out. [...] A day or two after the White Sky event will begin a thing I am calling the Hard Rain. Because not all of those rocks are going to stay up there. Some of them are going to fall into the Earth's atmosphere. [...] By 'some' I mean trillions. [...] It is going to be a

> meteorite bombardment such as the Earth has not seen since the primordial age, when the solar system was formed. Those fiery trails we've been seeing in the sky lately, as the meteorites come in and burn up? There will be so many of those that they will merge into a dome of fire that will set aflame anything that can see it. The entire surface of the Earth is going to be sterilized. Glaciers will boil. The only way to survive is to get away from the atmosphere. Go underground, or go into space.[29]

And so begins a massive endeavour of mankind trying to avoid extinction, as Dubois' predictions are eventually realized. Unlike *A Fall of Moondust*, where the lives of some twenty-ish people were in jeopardy, *Seveneves* presents us with an even more dire scenario: an existential catastrophe, an extinction event. There are several other points of divergence between these two works.

Firstly, the characters in Stephenson's book are a lot more realistic and flawed. In *A Fall of Moondust*, most personae were exemplary of their expertise and virtue; space pilots are brave and composed, scientists can crunch numbers in the most difficult situations, and even if a character fault was exposed, it is most often overcome in a display of competence. The obstacles that the heroes of Clarke's novel have to face mostly come from the Sea of Thirst itself, and only very rarely from other humans. People in Stephenson's book are far more imperfect. There is treachery, paranoia, hunger for power, and, of course, violence complicating an already impossible challenge.

Secondly, the prospective outlooks in these works are very different. While *A Fall of Moondust* ends without a single casualty, in *Seveneves* only a little over a thousand people manage to escape Earth before the literal sky falls. And this number will only be dwindling because the state of technology Stephenson chose is just a smidgeon more advanced than what we have available today. There are no interplanetary vessels to be used

[29] Ibid., 30-31.

for evacuation, there is only a space station not unlike the present-day ISS.

Thirdly, Stephenson sometimes leaves even the readers' knowledge incomplete for specific purposes. Both Clarke's and Stephenson's works rely on knowing what would happen in some extreme circumstances, and this knowing is definitely used as a direct source of suspense. But, while the passengers of *Selene* do not know why they sank into the Sea of Thirst, Clarke explains to the readers that the fateful moonquake was a result of a millennia-long build-up of gas within the Moon. Stephenson, although very detailed in his technical descriptions, never actually reveals what had caused the Moon to break up:

> What astronomers didn't know outweighed, by an almost infinite ratio, what they did. And for persons used to a more orderly system of knowledge, with everything on Wikipedia, this created a certain perception of incompetence, or at least failure to perform, on the part of the astronomical profession whenever weird things happened in the sky. Which was every day, actually. But most of them could be seen only by astronomers and so they were able to keep them a sort of trade secret.[30]

Several theories on what was the Agent of Moon's destruction are proposed in the book, but none of them were confirmed or denied, or even paid much attention at all, mostly because the tatters of humanity had more pressing matters to attend to.

Lastly, it would be remiss not to mention a small detail from *Seveneves* that so fortuitously lines up with the introductory analysis that was performed at the beginning of this article. One of the major crises that happens in the book is precipitated by what will later be called "Tavistock's Mistake" by the survivors. Without spoiling much of the plot, it refers to the circumstances that an over-reliance and overexposure to media, in particu-

[30] Ibid., 22.

lar social media, can lead to unwelcome fomenting of paranoid sentiments and eventual fateful breakdowns of unity and communication. As was previously noted, this nearly paradoxical result is something that can be witnessed even today.

This admittedly highly selective description of Stephenson's book may have presented it as grim and dour. On the one hand, this is the result of the efforts made to avoid the spoiling of the book's plot, but, on the other hand, *Seveneves* can sometimes indeed be pessimistic. There are, thankfully, bright moments of love, self-sacrifice and cooperation that defies all odds. But overall, the tone of this work is markedly darker than the other two that were considered previously. And therein we can recognize an emerging pattern.

IV. Fact in fiction

The three works of science fiction about the Moon were created in different times, and between them, our knowledge about the Moon has steadily increased. What also increases between these works is the amount of pessimism in them. The plots are driven by escalatingly worse events: Duracoto was merely sold to the sailors, passengers of *Selene* were buried alive, and in *Seveneves* the whole world was ending. Even the results and prices that had to be paid are progressively more difficult. The correlation between these aspects certainly isn't the result of chance. But why is it that the more we know about something the worse images of future our imagination is able to conjure? Shouldn't we expect that our increased knowledge will supply us with reliable ways to avoid disaster? The answer may be very simple. Human existence depends on many different factors: air, water, food, shelter, and so on, and a lack of any of these may prove fatal. Human happiness depends on even more: absence of pain, joyous experiences, fulfilling relationships with others and a myriad of other individually valued factors such that missing them can lead into a deep pit of misery. And these conditions seem to be *sine qua non* – one can have all the food and air in the world and still die of thirst; happy memories of a painless past do not help much the person

who is enduring and excruciatingly painful illness. Considering all of this, we become aware there are only so many ways in which some given circumstances develop favourably for mankind and so many more ways in which they can develop badly. It is only to be expected that our increasing knowledge will, in time, reveal more potential hells than possible paradises.

The story of *Somnium* is so optimistic, it may even seem naive at times. It perfectly captures that sense of wonder and awe when manifold possibilities unfold in front of us for the very first time. Kepler was aware that we are only beginning to learn about the Moon. If we can predict its position in the firmament so precisely and for so many years in advance with nothing more than pen, paper, a telescope and clear skies, who is to say what wonders will be uncovered with more sophisticated means? This is the wide-eyed optimism of a new beginning and it is not limited to astronomy. Promises of a new scientific age are established all to well in the ideals of the Age of Enlightenment. And while human hardships were neither denied or ignored, the sight was set for the remote horizon of the far future, the distance of which tends to obscure the details that house many devils.

The perspective has changed once the direct experience of the Moon was no longer a dream of a distant future, but a looming eventuality. Once humanity was actively working on reaching the surface of the Moon, all those previously blurred details began to come into focus. The practical complexities of a lunar landing demand that our attention is focused on preventing as many disasters as possible, and the only way to do that is to be aware of them: avoiding a disaster unwittingly isn't a thing of good planning, but of sheer luck.

Thus the vision of knowledge in *A Fall of Moondust* slowly moves towards that which we can recognize as contemporary attitude, but still retains optimism of modernity. Photographs of lunar surface showed that the Moon *could* have vast stretches covered with ultra-fine dust. These areas *might* swallow an entire vessel in the right circumstances. The vessel in that case *would definitely* face problems due to overheating and lack of oxygen.

Finding the distressed vessel *would definitely* be a major challenge in these circumstances. Notice how the low probability was only tied up with the setup of the plot, whereas the events that followed are quite compelling. This reflects the nature of scientific knowledge in a rather veracious manner. Scientific knowledge is borne of hypotheses: as long as specific conditions are met, we can very reasonably predict many things in our world; the more these initial conditions diverge, the less reliable our knowledge might be, though it is never utterly useless. The more we know, the better we are at linking causes and effects, but, at the same time, we are also more aware of the limits of our knowing.

This change of perspective may at first seem like a narrowing, a focusing on means for immediate ends, much like Horkheimer claimed. However, the plot of *Seveneves* shows how this practical focus can be expanded once again. Unlike the lunar landings, lunar disintegration is not something that is being planned nor is it expected to happen anytime soon. Yet, on astronomical timescales, such an event isn't inconceivable. Going by sheer numbers, humanity is likely to one day witness the breakup of *a* moon somewhere in the cosmos, and there is a slim chance that it might be *the* Moon. Not only is the perspective once again wide, wider maybe than it has been before, the gravitas of the scenario in *Seveneves* is also increased. A tourist tragedy on the Moon would be sad for everybody, but the loss of the Moon would become an existential issue for all.

Stephenson's book also sheds light on another dimension of knowledge that wasn't covered by previously analysed works. Most of the drama in *Seveneves* happens in the shape of conflicts between the 1500 survivors aboard the ISS. In principle, this might seem odd, as every single one of these people share a common goal (individual and collective survival) – surely such a small group with such an essential mission would be able to arrive at a rational consensus about how to achieve that goal. What Stephenson shows well is that, sadly, even the unity required for survival may fracture under the strain of particular and isolated perspectives on how that unity is to be maintained

and which issues ought to be prioritized. There are no true malevolent villains in *Seveneves*, most characters do advocate for what they genuinely believe is the best course of action. Horkheimer would definitely interject: this is precisely the failing of subjective reason! However, we would like to propose here a far simpler explanation, which will be the culminatory conclusion that we draw from this extensive analysis of these several works of science fiction.

Whenever an argument would come to a dramatic head in *Seveneves*, it was usually because one party would (often justifiably) perceive the plans of another party as fatally flawed and would be compelled to intervene in order to stop a disaster. For when the remnants of humanity are just over a thousand people all in one place, a previously moderate risks become existential. And the thing with existential risks is that they needn't even be likely to be significant.[31] In other words, the end of the world may come in various shapes, and each of those may be individually unlikely, the world still only needs one of them to end. Our growing knowledge about the world also grows our knowledge about existential risks. Furthermore, the threat of some of those risks is or was very palpable in everyday life (irreversible climate change, nuclear apocalypse). Not only do we know how things can go *bad*, we are becoming more and more aware of how things can become *the absolute worst*.

Interestingly enough, the most prominent existential risks humanity faces fulfil the previously mentioned criteria for pessimistic consequences. Nanotechnologies and superintelligent artificial intelligences may seem outlandishly fictional, yet they top well-known conventional warfare in existential risk estimations.[32] Self-culpability in all of these cases is easy to recognize,

[31] Nick Bostrom, "Existential Risk Prevention as Global Priority," *Global Policy* 4, no. 1 (2013): 15-31.

[32] Anders Sandberg, and Nick Bostrom, "Global Catastrophic Risk Survey," *Technical Report #2008-1* (Oxford: Future of Humanity Institute, 2008), 1. The existential risk from nanotechnologies is found, for example, in the possibility that self-replicating molecular machines run amok

as these are all technologies that humans may prospectively develop, but their contradictory nature is a bit more elusive, at least until we look into how world-ending technologies come about. Naturally, the initial motive for creating these technologies would be the betterment of humanity, but now that we are aware of the risks, surely the world would be unanimous in banning development of such perilous technologies. But the world is vast and not nearly compact enough to enforce such a measure, and new discoveries are quite like a gas: they can slip through tiniest cracks and once released, they are nearly impossible to be contained. Even if the majority of the world adheres to the decision to stop developing dangerous technologies, all it takes is one rogue nation, perhaps even one rogue laboratory to make these efforts futile. Knowing that, just like in the case of nuclear weapon proliferation, fewer actors would be willing to self-sabotage their own research capabilities when an unscrupulous competitor may be covertly or overtly exploiting that. Does this mean contemporary pessimism is completely justified? Are we the inevitable architects of our own demise?

Nick Bostrom calls this idea the *Technological completion conjecture*, and to it he retorts: "What matters is not only *whether* a technology is developed, but also *when* it is developed, by *whom*, and in *what context*."[33] Even if we accept the supposition that risky technologies are inevitable (which is in no way guaranteed), there are still other measures humanity may undertake to at least lessen the existential risk. There may be other new technologies just around the corner that may significantly ameliorate these risks. For instance, the very same superintelligent AI is the best measure for reducing the existential risks from all other sources, as such intelligence would be capable of ar-

and convert all matter on Earth into copies of themselves (the "grey goo" scenario). The existential risk from superintelligent AIs may come in many different shapes and sizes, but it fundamentally boils down to the possibility that such an AI would be exceedingly competent at whatever it is doing, but its goals won't necessarily align with our interests.

[33] Nick Bostrom, *Superintelligence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 282.

riving at solutions humans can't even think of. Who is to say even better solutions (that aren't existential risks themselves) can't be found? With our increased knowledge, we may know how things can go wrong and we may know that things can go very wrong, but we still cannot claim that we know absolutely everything.

The fact that the unfavourable outcome only needs to happen once does not entail that a favourable outcome is similarly concentrated in a single event. It is a rather morbid false dichotomy to posit that the impossibility of a completely carefree future necessarily commits us to a doomed one. A negative attitude has its uses, though. Being pessimistic, thinking about possible bad outcomes of certain situations and actions, can lead to more careful deliberation, perhaps even to taking steps to prevent the unwanted outcomes. With an overly optimistic attitude, one might overlook or underestimate important risks and thus create great problems in the future. A better future is theoretically possible, but it is in no way guaranteed. Great efforts must be made to reach it, and even then, it must be reached in a sustainable way, lest we risk having it slip through our collective fingers.

Naturally, an overly pessimistic attitude can be equally damaging, particularly if it escalates into paralysing fear or languishing despondency. As is the difference between a brooding teenager and a cautious adult, a right measure of pessimism can be an indication of the maturity of a society. In line with this metaphor, we conclude that perhaps this peculiar difference between the modern and contemporary sentiment towards knowledge, science and technology is a sign of our "growing up." Our first outlook at the possibilities of systematized knowledge was that of a wide-eyed child, eager and optimistic about the future. As we grew and as we learned more, we encountered more limitations and frustrations, which planted seeds of ill temper. Finally, now that we can envision the absolute worst-case scenarios, we have this adolescent tendency to dwell upon them – as well we should, provided that we ultimately decide on a course of

action; in other words, provided that we decide to grow up assertive. Yearning for the quaint days of innocence past may be soothing, but it cannot provide all the answers, as most genies will refuse to go back into the bottle.

The good news here is that we have already made first steps towards the new adult era of prudent planning and foresight. The probability of a nuclear apocalypse now may not be exactly zero, but it is definitely a lot lower than it was some fifty years ago, at the height of the Cold War. Not so long ago, acid rains were a major bugbear among environmental issues, and now this problem is considered to be "in many ways solved successfully."[34] The bad news is, these are only the first steps, and some of the issues we have anticipated for so long are beginning to catch up with us. If we hope to grow up from our contemporary attitude, there is still plenty of work to be done. And just like it was for the survivors in *Seveneves*, chances are that things will become a lot worse before they start getting better.

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