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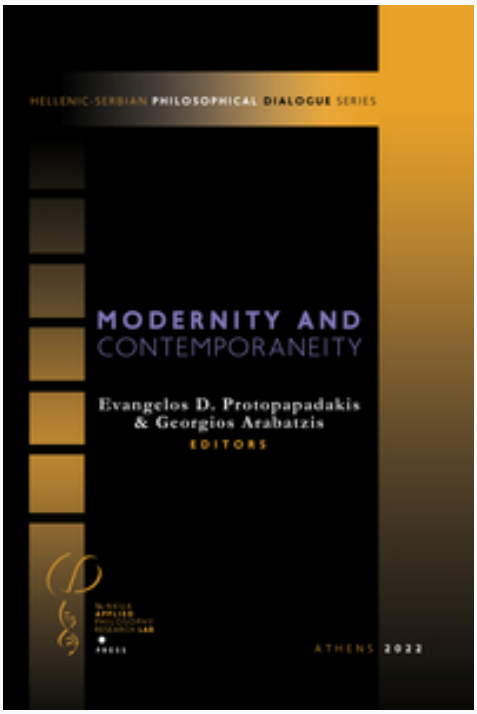

Chapter

Modenity and Contemporaneity: An Introduction

Evangelos D. Protopapadakis, Georgios Arabatzis

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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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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