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Ethics & Bioethics (in Central Europe), 2020, 10 (3–4), 107–115 DOI:10.2478/ebce-2020-0012

The moral power of the word: Ethical literature in Antiquity

Przemysław Paczkowski[1]

Abstract

According to an old legend, during the Messenian Wars in Laconia in the 8th and 7th centuries BC, the Athenians sent the poet Tyrtaeus to the Spartans who were close to being defeated; he aroused in them the fighting spirit and renewed Spartan virtues. Philosophers in antiquity believed in the psychagogical power of the word, and this belief provided the foundation for ancient ethical literature, whose main purpose was to call for a spiritual transformation and to convert to philosophy. In this paper, I would like to demonstrate what tradition philosophy referred to in these efforts; what concept of man supported that belief; finally, what literary genres were used by ancient philosophers in ethics.

Keywords: Plato, dialogues, ancient rhetoric, literary genres

Ancient philosophers believed in the psychagogical power of words, and ethical literature in ancient times was based on this belief. Its goal was to cause spiritual transformation and conversion to philosophy. I shall attempt to show what tradition ancient philosophy referred to in this field; on what concept of human nature this belief was based, and what literary genres were developed in ethics by philosophy.

Belief in the power of words – educational, paraenetic, persuasive – accompanied Greek culture from its very beginnings. Poetry (but also music and performances on stage) was attributed with the power of tuning the *psvche*: evoking or soothing emotions and inspiring heroic deeds. It is illustrated by the following legend: when, during the Messenian wars in Laconia at the turn of the eighth and seventh centuries BC, the Spartans faced defeat, the Athenians, instead of an army, sent them the poet Tyrtaeus, who aroused their fighting spirit and renewed the Spartan virtues.[2] Much of the philosophical literature was written to cause moral effects, lead to a spiritual transformation, and the oldest texts which can, with all certainty, be called philosophical were *Sokratikoi logoi* – Socratic dialogues. Plato's dialogues occupy a special place among them because of the protreptic power that was attributed to them. In this respect, their role in ancient culture can be compared to the role played in Christianity by the Letters of St. Paul.

In Hellenistic times, the literary practice of philosophers was already supported by a refined theory of the influence the text had on the reader, which drew both on the achievements of rhetoric and ancient philosophy. Cicero saw the main purpose of philosophy in the treatment of the soul, perceiving its action in analogy to medicine (*Tusculan Disputations*, 3.5–6). The therapeutic power of the word is the discovery of Greek poetry, probably originating in earlier magical practices. We read in *Odyssey* (378 n.) that Odysseus' companions blocked the blood flowing from his wound with chants. Aeschylus in *Prometheus* speaks of healing words (*iatroi logoi*, 378), and Empedocles was supposedly the author of a poem entitled *Iatrikos logos* (D.L. 8.77). Laín Entralgo (1970, pp. 1–31), analysing early Greek literature, distinguished four varieties of persuasive speech that appear there: a request (*euche*), the deceptive word (*thelhterios logos*), the soothing word (*terpros logos*), the magic-healing song (*epode*). Gorgias based the idea of rhetoric on the concept of the magical and therapeutic effects of speech, and his contemporary, the sophist Antiphon, ran a practice in Athens that can be compared to

[1] University of Rzeszow (Poland); pacz.przem@wp.pl

[2] Tyrtaeus' activities and his influence on the culture of Sparta are a historical fact, but it may be just an element of the legend that he was sent to the Spartans by the Athenians.

modern psychotherapy offices: for a fee, he gave comforting speeches tailored to the individual needs of the clients.

Ancient rhetoric

The aforementioned Gorgias created a fascinating and highly influential theory of the irrational impact of the word on the soul of the listener. The stylistic elements he developed (Denniston, 1952, p. 8 n.), the rhythms and rhymes used, were to have a similar effect to magical incantations, for the task of the word is, according to Gorgias, persuasion (*peitho*). This concept later met with Plato's criticism, who, in his polemic against it, proposed his own idea of philosophical rhetoric (see below). However, it was Gorgias who strengthened the belief in the power of a skilfully used word in Greek culture and laid the foundations for the rhetorical model of education that became an inseparable element of ancient schooling. Rhetorical education was based on the claim that language and style influence the persuasive value of speech (text) at least as much as argumentation. One of the sections of the refined theory of rhetoric, *elocutio*, concerned the ability to present arguments using beautiful language; another, *dispositio*, taught the principles of proper composition of speech due to its persuasive qualities.[3] Rhetorically educated philosophers of the Hellenistic and Roman era, such as Cicero, Seneca, Plutarch or Marcus Aurelius, and even the first Christian philosophers, such as Saint Augustine, treated rhetoric as an effective tool in the philosophical work of psychagogy.

Nevertheless, at the beginning, rhetoric was defined by its negative attitude to the possibility of reaching and conveying the truth, or as demagogy, the art of convincing the crowd. In his famous treatise *On Nature or the Non-Existent*, Gorgias argued that nothing exists in the way Parmenides wrote about "the existent", and thus as unchanging, knowable and definable, as thinkable and utterable (D.L. 9.22). There is no "correspondence" (medieval *adaequatio*) between the word and the object; the purpose of language is not referentiality. This made the field of the word completely autonomous, a kind of a game whose goal is to win over the opponent, and victory in this case means to convince them. Gorgias' signature speeches, such as *Encomium of Helen*, were an illustration of this theory, and also an advertisement for the art he prided himself on teaching. In practice, they showed how to seduce with words, enslave listeners to accept any theses; how to invoke deceit (apate) in them. Gorgias' rhetoric, however, was not an art (*techne*) in the strict sense of the word, because a rhetorician should always adapt their speech to a specific audience. Therefore, the action of the word can be compared to the action of a medicine that cures one person but can harm another. Rhetorical art – like medical art – derives its value from experience and requires talent. Moreover, the most important rule that the speaker should follow is *kairos*, the rule of the right moment, emphasising the role of improvisation in rhetorical art.

The most outstanding disciple of Gorgias, Isocrates, departed from this principle. Plato's great rival, the founder of the influential rhetorical school competing in Athens with the Academy in the field of education, did not have any talent for public speaking. He directed rhetoric towards literature, writing speeches intended for reading, in which non-verbal persuasion, so important in Gorgias' concept, was replaced by a sophisticated style. His activities contributed largely to the transition of Greek culture from orality to literacy (Bons, 1993, p. 161). Isocrates believed that rhetoric was to serve the purposes of education, and consciously referred to the tradition of educational poetry. He condemned the contemporary sophistic practice that was focused on eristic effectiveness instead of developing *arete*. In fact, he had similar ideals to Plato (Panhellenism), he adhered to similar values (moral reconstruction of the *polis*), he believed himself to be a true philosopher, except that he used the term in the traditional sense (unlike Plato).

[3] Other sections of ancient rhetoric are *inventio* (finding arguments), *memoria* (the art of remembering) and *actio* (appropriate performance).

Isocrates not only wrote educational speeches, but also practised the theory of the influence of the text, calling himself the Phidias of rhetoric (*Antidosis* 2).[4] Written speech, he argued, is characterised by the fact that you can re-read it, interpret it again and in a deeper way. An educational text works by example (*paradeigma*) and imitation (*mimesis*), presents the virtues and deeds of great people to the reader, encouraging him or her to compete with them in this field. The educational role is played by such literary genres as praise (*enkomion*), funeral speech (*epitaphion*) or paraenesis (*parainesis*) – the lives of historical figures who serve the purpose of encouraging a virtuous life. At the same time, literature has a higher value than visual arts, because words imitate character virtues better than shapes and colours do (*Euagoras* 74n.), being able to convince people of what is righteous and to conquer what is base (*Nicocles or the Cyprians* 7.4–5).

This theory was developed in the literature of Hellenistic and Roman times. Cicero combined the achievements of old rhetoric and philosophy. Rejecting Gorgias' cognitive nihilism, he decided that wisdom and knowledge of truth (*scil*. philosophy) must be accompanied by the art of speech (rhetoric) so that it could help the state (*De inventione* 1.1.10) – *vir bonus* should combine the virtues of a philosopher and a rhetorician. The work of Plutarch, who in ethical writings declared the possibility of teaching virtue by presenting lofty *paradeigmata*, and implemented his educational programme in numerous *Lives*, can be considered a continuation of Isocrates' idea. Both the reader and the author himself can derive from historical biographies the ability to order their lives and make their character similar to the virtues of great people (*Moralia*: *How a man may become aware of his progress in virtue* 85b). Educational literature overcomes time, summons the ancestors, allowing us to associate with them and study their lives. The writer has the power to present this life in the most effective paraenetic way. It can also present the lives of despicable people – as a deterrent, prompting one to reflect on one's own weaknesses.

Philosophy's agon with rhetoric and poetry

It can be guessed that Plutarch not only learnt from the literary theories of Isocrates, but also carefully read Plato, who was able to confront the wisdom and virtue of Socrates with the appearances of the wisdom and virtue of his interlocutors in an extremely vivid way that was exemplary in terms of protreptics. The power of influence of Plato's dialogues relied on breaking conventions and rejecting tradition; it was based on paradox and surprise. Plato had a real poetic and dramatic talent, which he decided to use in the service of philosophical paideia (Kahn, 1996, p. 36). This is illustrated by a well-known anecdote according to which the young Plato, after meeting and talking with Socrates, burned his poetic works and decided to devote himself to philosophy (D.L. 3.5). In fact, Plato entirely fulfilled himself as a writer in the new literary genre of *Sokratikoi logoi.*

The literary shape of the dialogues, on the one hand, was the result of Plato's polemics with sophistic rhetoric – philosophy was to become a "real" rhetoric in which beauty serves to convince us of the truth and supports argumentation in this. On the other hand, however, when composing dialogues, Plato made use of the achievements of poetry, tragedy and comedy (and rhetoric), employing their devices, techniques, conventions and characteristic elements. Plato skilfully used comparisons, proverbs, examples, apostrophes, the rhetorical principle of homology; he was able to create a mood, evoke and release emotions of the reader, mock and ridicule. He knew how to present a tragic hero in a new way and cause moral outrage. In this way, he included philosophy in the struggle for human souls, in the agon with poetry, sophistic and rhetoric (politics), and, at least within Greek culture and its sphere of influence, led philosophy to victory in this struggle.

[4] Phidias was not only an excellent sculptor, but also the author of theoretical treatises on the art of sculpture.

Let us start with the agon with rhetoric. In the dialogue *Gorgias*, Plato shows readers that rhetoric is essentially the art of flattering; the rhetorician must either say that which does not harm his interests as a teacher of rhetoric (the case of Gorgias) or what the crowd likes (the case of Polos). As a result, rhetoric is neither knowledge nor does it give true power. It would be necessary to create such an art of speaking that would make the souls of the listeners the best possible, telling them good things, regardless of whether they seem pleasant to them or not (503a n.).[5] In a dialogue later than *Gorgias*, *Phaedrus*, Plato proposed a concept of philosophical rhetoric analogous to medical art based on these conclusions (271c n.). Medicine was a model of true wisdom for Plato. Plato's Socrates often compares the activity of an educator to that of a doctor (cf. *Protagoras* 313 d–e; *Gorgias* 464a n; *Sophist* 228e n.). At the turn of the 5th and 4th century BC, medicine was already a widely recognised component of education, besides gymnastics, poetry and music, and a Greek doctor offered his patient something more than just a temporary remedy for their ailments; he would prescribe them a diet or "hygiene", so he acted as a teacher of a proper way of life. Plato saw in it a pattern of scientific therapy, a model for philosophy. Medicine is knowledge which, based on the knowledge of human nature, works for the human good. Health is a state of excellence achieved through adequate dietetics, treatments and a proper lifestyle. This model defined the tasks of philosophy: the philosopher is a doctor of the soul. Ethics would follow in the footsteps of medicine even in determining the moral condition of a person: using the language typical for describing the physical condition, it says that the soul may be susceptible to certain ailments, that it may be temporarily weakened, or that its disease may be acute and chronic. In *Phaedrus* (270 b–d), learning about the nature of the soul is modelled on the knowledge of the nature of the whole, which Hippocrates relied on (Paczkowski, 2005, p. 40 n.).

Plato's philosophical rhetoric was, in fact, a proposal to unite the fields that Greek culture had previously separated: paideia, the domain of poetry, and science. Interestingly, Greeks in pre-Platonic times separated these fields according to formal criteria, not those related to the subject. Anaximander was a "physicist" as the author of the treatise *On Nature* – the first Greek work written in prose that created the canon of this type of literature. In turn, Parmenides, who, in the opinion of modern scholars, was the greatest pre-Socratic philosopher, was called a poet by the Greeks, because in his work about the nature of what exists, he used hexameter. Democritus, who was still Socrates' contemporary, would strictly adhere to the rule that he should speak about various matters in different (appropriate) literary forms. Democritus' paraenetic works, preserved in fragments, are so different from his treatises on nature that an uninformed modern reader would never have guessed that they were the work of the same author. This dictate of the canon in Greek literature was only broken by Plato, but it was also affected by the cultural atmosphere in which he had grown up. In Athens of the fifth and fourth century BC, the previously separated fields of creativity became inventively combined: poets, philosophers and politicians began to conduct intellectual discourse with each other, and theatre, people's assembly and gymnasium (the traditional place of philosophical discussions in Athens) became a single stage (MacIntyre, 1985, p. 255). From this moment, one can speak of a close relationship between philosophy and literature in antiquity. However, thanks to Plato, philosophy proposed something radically new: the idea of a perfect life, realising the highest possibilities of human nature, and this ideal was presented as the most sublime alternative to every other possible way of life.

As I have already mentioned, in the pre-Socratic era, human nature and educational efforts were the domain of poetry. Particular literary genres differed not only in form, but also in the subject and the lesson they wanted to teach. Within lyrical poetry, for example, erotic passion (the lyrics of Sappho) was expressed with a different metre than recognition for the ideal of

[5] Aristotle makes a similar remark in the context of the discussion about democracy: what is good for democracy is not necessarily what democracy likes.

kalokagathia (Pindar). It would also occur that some form of creativity replaced another in its functions. In Athens in the 5th century BC, tragedy took over and developed the vision of man and human fate presented in Homer's epic, using many of its literary devices. The dramas performed in the theatre exerted an enormous – unimaginable for modern man – influence on Athens' ethical and political life, and the "tragic" concept of human nature consolidated its position in Hellenic culture. It was mainly (though not only) against this concept that the philosophical model of life was created, and philosophical literature from the beginning of the 4th century BC was also supposed to compete with drama.

The classical Greek tragedy addressed ethical and political issues, and above all it presented a certain vision of man and of human fate. Euripides, whose tragedy is sometimes claimed to have been a polemic with Socrates' ethical intellectualism (Snell, 1953), showed the drama that was the result of evil inherent in man and of the victory of passion over reason. The basic moral message of the tragedy was, however, that all the efforts of mortals can be broken at any moment against things stronger than human will (Nussbaum, 2003, p. 218), and the greatest moral fault of man is to forget about it. The Greeks called this error *hvbris*. Aristotle similarly assessed the possibility of achieving happiness; man can possess *arete*, perfection, defending him against mistakes resulting from character defects, that is, from the "internal" evil; however, he can never be completely independent of fate (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1100a). Festivals at which tragedies were staged were religious holidays. Almost all residents of Athens participated in them, some as spectators, others as actors; the entire life of the *polis* was transferred to the theatre during these days. We do not know much about the music and scenography of the performances, but they engaged the audience emotionally, causing laughter, crying and screams of terror. They did not provide aesthetic but moral impressions, which often had practical effects, for example by influencing political decisions (Nussbaum, 2003, p. 221).

In the Aristotle's *Poetics*, he analyses tragedy very carefully, listing its types, elements, formal devices and the moral purpose (1449b n.). Moreover, he fully appreciates the philosophical value of tragedy, which allows the audience to directly experience an important truth about human nature (1451a–b).[6] The philosophical message of tragedy emphasised the futility of human endeavours to find happiness in the world ruled by the gods. To achieve this purpose, the tragedy used a plot element called *peripeteia* – a sudden turning of the wheel of fortune, casting the happy (and good) hero down into a life disaster. The emotional reaction of viewers to the fate of the hero of the tragedy is pity and fear, which allow them to become deeply aware of the truth about the limitations of human nature and about fate that can befall any man. The experience of these emotions is therefore accompanied by a certain kind of ethical cognition (*anagnorisis*, *Poetics* 1450 a34), which is the goal of every poetic *mimesis*, and which in tragedy is achieved by *katharsis* of these feelings (1449 b28). Aristotle's analysis of tragedy proves that he treats poetry in general as a field of *techne* in which rational rules and schemes apply, and not as an art of a manic nature.

In *Rhetoric*, he claims that every speaker should have knowledge of the nature of feelings that poetry evokes and the means by which it evokes them (1356 a23). Poetry has the power to change the soul; it shapes permanent dispositions (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1177b), refines feelings, allows us to find pleasure in things which are worthy of it. In tragedy, both the stage design and the arrangement of events (plot) can arouse desirable feelings; the latter is better. The most important rule when creating a plot is that the story told, even if it never happened, should be "likely" because only such a story conveys the philosophical truth about the human nature (*Poetics* 1451 a35). The Aristotle also notes that the language of the tragedy should be varied – refined in episodes, but as simple as possible in solemn scenes, so that it does not overshadow the character and the actions of the protagonists. An excessively sophisticated style

[6] Modern thinkers, such as Hegel, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, will follow in the footsteps of Aristotle (Nussbaum, 2003, p. 222 n.).

creates a distance that prevents the viewer's emotional involvement, while a simple one evokes stronger emotions. It should also be borne in mind that the Greek tragedy avoided showing drastic things; the viewer would learn about them from simple accounts and felt their horror by watching the reaction of the characters to them.

Scholars suppose that Aristotle similarly analysed comedy as a poetic genre, but unfortunately this work (if it ever existed) did not survive to our times. Comedies were performed on the same stage and during the same competitions as tragedies. Moreover, like tragedy, comedy addressed current political and moral topics. It even presented a similar vision of the human being – a creature who sins with pride and is subject to higher powers. The frivolous humour of Attic comedy was mainly based on confronting the ambitious aspirations and exaggerated pride of a known character with the uncontrolled sphere of corporeality (erotic passion or physiological needs). In a different way and by other means (mockery), comedy allowed viewers to experience (probably through cleansing laughter) a similar truth about the human situation as in tragedy: that our great aspirations can disintegrate against a higher power (Nussbaum, 2003, p. 224).

Aristotle's analysis of the moral purpose of dramas gained the recognition of subsequent philosophers. Marcus Aurelius writes in *Meditations* that tragedies were staged to remind people what might happen to man due to his nature (11.6). By becoming aware of the tragedy of the human fate, we can be better prepared for its sentences in our own lives; tragedy teaches us to accept the inevitable. In turn, comedy teaches humility, showing that the hubris of even the most proud and powerful people can be ridiculed. The literary advantage of comedy is *parresia* – honesty of statements, the virtue of cynics, appreciated in stoicism.

Plato's dialogues and other literary genres in ancient philosophy

Let us move on to discussing philosophical literature in antiquity and the ways in which it pursued ethical goals. Although the thought of Heraclitus and Democritus already addressed ethical issues, it still had the traditional form of poetic *gnomai*. The first original literary genre in which philosophy voiced its opinion on moral matters was *Sokratikoi logoi*. Although Plato was not the creator of this genre, he was the one who made the Socratic dialogue become the *mimesis* of the philosophical way of life – radically breaking with traditional values, presented as the most perfect and realising the true nature of man. In Plato's dialogues, the philosophical model of life was contrasted with both the poetic and sophistic ideals of *arete* and the tragic vision of human fate. However, the means that Plato used to persuade readers to follow that model were taken largely from poetry, rhetoric and drama.

What Diogenes Laertius (3.48) writes about Plato's dialogues proves that in the third century A.D., they were still a genre that was difficult to be unambiguously classified, and Aristotle did not analyse them at all in this respect. The very term "*sokratikoi"* was associated with the concept of imitation; all Socratic dialogues mimicked Socrates' character in his typical (which does not mean historically accurate) disputes (Clay, 1994, p. 23). The intention of their authors was not to faithfully present this historical figure, but to use him for their own literary purposes. Xenophon, the author of memories about Socrates and Socratic dialogues, used a similar style to write a work on the education of Cyrus, in which he presented this ruler of the Persians as a promoter of the democratic system.

Of all Socrates' students, Plato used the dramatic and philosophical potential of this character best. Plato's Socrates – a fictional, literary character – is a protagonist of texts that borrow many elements from the dramatic model, but he presents an anti-tragic vision of a good life (Nussbaum, 2003, p. 228). If we wanted to use Aristotle's typology here, then Plato's Socrates could be described as the hero of the "ethical" tragedy (*Poetics* 1455 b34), whose action is conditioned by the character of the hero, known by his choices and their verbal justification, and the subject of the play is his life, its successes or misfortunes (1450a). Plato's

Socrates is a philosopher forced to live in a badly organised *polis*, criticising its system and prophetically predicting his own death: a character whose deeds and words acquire a deeper meaning in the light of Socrates' tragic end, well known to the reader.[7] Readers of Plato's dialogues could watch Socrates' disputes as viewers in the theatre could observe Oedipus' deeds – with the awareness of what their consequences would be. Socrates' death made him the protagonist of a tragedy. Plato used a literary device nowadays referred to as "tragic irony" (Clay, 1994, p. 44), consisting in creating a context that the characters are not aware of, but which the reader is. Thanks to tragic irony, viewers look at the fate of the characters from a divine (*scil.* philosophical) point of view, assessing their deeds and words through the prism of their inevitable fate. Although they know this fate, they cannot change it and that is why they perceive the story in a human way – feeling pity and fear.

Socrates from Plato's dialogues, however, is not a tragic figure in the same sense as Oedipus or Antigone. Plato wanted to show that a man (philosopher) can achieve virtue that protects him from any misfortune (Nussbaum, 2003, p. 224), and, secondly, that it is possible to have a society that does not lead to moral dilemmas, organised like the cosmos, governed by coherent laws. Philosophy is the only remedy for the human drama which allows order to be brought into the moral life of people. Plato propagated this lofty ideal with philosophical texts, which at the same time are literary masterpieces and which (in accordance with his literary programme – *Republic* 604e; *Symposium* 223d) found a perfect balance between sublimity and humour. Plato showed in his dialogues an extraordinary talent in serious and ironic imitation of poetic devices: laudatory speeches, using rhymes and rhythms, eristic tricks, sophisms; he also created his own – irony and the elenctic method. The greatest value of his works, though, was their protagonist – paradoxical, atopical, defying traditional canons of beauty, not afraid of ridicule and not avoiding vulgarities, and at the same time irresistibly captivating with new beauty – not obvious, hidden, internal, true. Plato was able to show the beauty of moral attitude, the harmony of logos and ergon, so effectively that his Socrates, a literary protagonist, became the greatest encouragement to philosophy. Later ethical literature referring to moral standards has its source in the works of Plato.

Beauty can be a model and encouragement – it was that thesis that ethical literature in antiquity was founded on. It assumed a certain concept of the human nature. The philosophical model of life owed its shape to a thorough reflection on the poetic, medical and sophistic traditions. It was within these fields that the idea emerged that man could be physically and spiritually shaped, and therefore that the concept of *phusis* does not apply to man descriptively, but normatively, as a certain desired state to be achieved. Educational poetry made an effort to bring man to this state through its praise in literature (Pindar, Bacchylides). In turn, Greek medicine understood human nature as the "proper" state (health), which should be nurtured by adopting an appropriate lifestyle, and this requires a knowledge of this nature (medical art). Sophists, making use of this achievement of medicine, proposed the concept of mental shaping, according to which there is a proper harmonisation (*euharmostia*) and rhythm (*eurythmia*) of the soul, just like there are perfect proportions of the human body, and there is, like gymnastics, the art of bringing one to this state – and this is sophistic (Plato, *Protagoras* 326b). In sophistics, however, this art never concerned the sphere of morality, limiting education to the skills needed in political life.

The Greek vision of man as a being that is subjected to education – and capable of continuing this work on their own – had been developing since the times of Homer and discovered ever deeper layers of possible perfection in human nature. Educational poetry, sophists, the Socratic movement constituted the subsequent stages of this cognitive movement, but it reached its culmination only in the Platonic concept of the philosophical way of life. The most important

[7] Dialogues were written after the death of Socrates, the oldest probably 10 years after the trial.

notion characterising the philosophical concept of human nature in antiquity is *dυnamis*, potency. *Dυnamis* of human nature extends from beast to god (Plato, *Timaeus* 90a; Aristotle, *Politics* 1253a). Each person chooses their place on this scale, chooses themselves from many possible versions of the "I". Plotinus described it as carving one's own statue (*Enneads* I. 6. 9, 7). A real artist wants to bring the most beautiful shape out of stone; a man "carving" his statue should also look for the best version of himself. The Greek concept of *dυnamis* had exactly this sense: of a potency which contains in itself purpose and perfection (Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1019a); if human nature has the character of *dυnamis*, then it has perfection as its end, that is, the true nature of man. Each of us can be a beast, but also a philosopher; it is our choice – the choice of the way of life.

As soon as this thesis was formulated, philosophy joined the struggle for human souls. Most philosophical texts had had a paideutic function since the times of the Socratics; the object of the authors' efforts was the soul of the reader, and literary devices were to serve the purpose of achieving ethical effects. Of course, this does not apply to all philosophical literature in antiquity, but the choice of genre and style was always subordinated to the function of a given work. This approach resulted in the formal wealth of philosophical literature in antiquity: dialogues, protreptics, biographies, anecdotes, diatribes, apophthegms, memories, letters, narrative poems, summaries, doxographies, consolations, isagoges, dictionaries, treatises, commentaries. The form of the work allowed the reader to draw conclusions about the author's intentions. For example, biographies of the philosophers of the past were not intended to convey the historical truth, but to show the ideal of *bios philosophikos*; they were fictitious like *Sokratikoi logoi* before them.[8] In the Hellenistic era, even some letters were fictitious, as they often had a therapeutic function and the addressee could be an imaginary character. The Stoics and the Epicureans valued poetry as a way of practising philosophy; they wrote narrative poems, tragedies and comedies (Nussbaum, 2003, p. 235 n.). During the Hellenistic era, many new genres of philosophical expression were created; literary canons and argumentative topoi became established. However, an analysis of particular genres would require a separate article.[9]

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[8] I am aware that this last thesis is controversial, but I am following Ch. Kahn (1996) here.
[9] In articles published in Polish, I undertook an analysis of ancient philosophical biographies and *cosolationes* (Paczkowski, 2003; 2013).

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Ethics & Bioethics (in Central Europe), 2020, 10 (3–4), 116–132 DOI:10.2478/ebce-2020-0017

Virtual reality and imagination - a possible ethical framework based on the thought of Gregory of Nazianzus

Václav Ježek[1]

Abstract

The present article discusses the thoughts of Gregory of Nazianzus in relation to virtual reality especially man-made virtual reality in all its forms. We argue that the benefits of virtual reality, such as freedom, imagination, creativity can be paradoxically curtailed by virtual reality itself, since it is highly subjective and as its medium shows, can be an *a priori* matrix and prison for the human being. Gregory of Nazianzus, building his theology on a firm basis on substance and contemplation, offers a way out, where one acknowledges everything around us as beneficial and beautiful and therefore free, but this must be based on a firm grounding of truthfulness and guidance offered by an all-encompassing form of Divine love and creativity.

Keywords: Gregory of Nazianzus, virtual reality, imagination, internet, ethics

Introduction

The expansion of Virtual reality in all walks of life presents clear challenges which incorporate ethical issues. Technology is being developed so rapidly that possible ethical frameworks relating to it are lagging. Furthermore, given the state of ethics in terms of virtual reality one clearly observes a certain quandary how to identify the basic negative or positive elements present in virtual reality. While the debate is extensive, the pillars of a possible ethics of virtual reality are neither stable nor developed.

Virtual reality (and its other forms such as the internet, etc.) is based on imagery, design, and cognitive perceptions of reality (or their absence). Some scholars such as Brey called the process of integrating morality and ethics into design as "Anticipatory technology ethics" (Brey, 2011, p. 13).

One of the striking issues in virtual reality is its possible effect on desensitisation. Virtual reality has a link to sensitivity and to the development of our overall human psychological framework. This is further linked with the element of "control" which is obviously exercised by the creator of virtual reality. Virtual reality offers a "closed" world. Recently, many articles discuss the possibilities of virtual reality in cognitive therapy (Reppetto & Riva, 2011). However, virtual reality can limit the freedom, objectivity and psychosomatic development of the human being, especially sense perception and other related categories.

In our present discussion, we try to develop a framework for an ethics of virtual reality based on the thoughts of Gregory of Nazianzus. What can Gregory offer? In his works, Gregory meditates on the negative and positive features of images around us, whether we call them reality or virtual reality. He believes that our happiness is limited by the fact that we limit our world to our own subjective imagery and design, similarly to the person who creates his or her own virtual reality. We cannot simply trust anything around us unless we realise its origin and meaning. Our perception is or can be distorted creating a problem for our psychosomatic development. Whether one is a theist or not, Gregory's exposé of the image and its relationship to reality can offer much needed insight into the positives and negatives of virtual reality.

The present contribution is an assessment of some aspects of the thoughts of Gregory of Nazianzus in relation to the phenomenon of virtual reality. We discuss forms of virtual reality in relation to the internet, social media, and other forms, where virtual reality provides a platform. Of course, it is important to clarify what one understands as virtual reality. As has

[1] University of Prešov (Slovakia); vaclavjezek111@gmail.com

been observed by many scholars, even physical reality in terms of its apparent indeterminacy can provide a form of virtual reality. As shown by Whitworth for example, physics and its theories often provide models of reality including physical laws, which on their own seem to be so incomprehensible for the human mind that they seem to be a form of virtual reality (Whitworth, 2007, p. 319). This obviously requires one to clarify what we understand as virtual reality. The point here is to establish what kind of laws if any govern reality or virtual reality. Without laws we may argue any reality is devoid of substance. Some commentators have expressed their ideas about the necessity of identifying markers of reality. Without reality one may end up in unreality, which is not possible. For a discussion on this idea of an ontology of reality (Gilyazova, 2019).

Given these observations, Gregory of Nazianzus can help us here. For the patristic tradition or for Gregory there is no possibility of losing one's identity in any form of reality. Why? Because all reality is based on God and the Divine, which grounds all existence. This kind of luxury of thought is not available to the non-theist philosopher, who has, to come up with such a definition of reality or virtual reality as to make sense of the "senseless movements" of images, which seem to entrap us in a world of purposelessness and therefore unhappiness. This is the danger of virtual reality itself, that it propels one into a void of moving images, where laws are structured in such a way as not to offer any standing ground for a taxonomy of reality and therefore truth or life. Here images are, of course, not pictures but all physicality and mental imagery. By defining image, substance, the Divine and other issues, Gregory provides us with a solid framework for understanding reality and, by extension, virtual reality. Virtual reality of course, is not a new concept and has been present in history in one way or another for 3000 years.

The central thesis of our article is a new avenue of exploration, which we have developed along the lines of Gregory of Nazianzus. This exploration has been developed as an answer to some issues of virtual reality. We ask ourselves whether virtual reality and its various platforms (internet, social media etc.), is not a challenge to reality itself. Whether virtual reality is a delusion or illusion which moves us further away from reality and therefore from happiness and truth. If reality is itself a "painful" concept is it perhaps not the case that virtual reality is even more dangerous?

We further ask ourselves whether in fact the often stressed and presented benefits of virtual reality such as the development of imagination, development of communication etc., are not illusionary. Whether in fact virtual reality is a hindrance to personal relationships. Gregory of Nazianzus, an author from the fourth century AD can provide some answers.

The thoughts of Nazianzus are corroborated by contemporary thinkers in many ways. Poincaré for example, similarly to Christian thinking emphasised that science at the same time moves to complexity and variety but also to simplicity and oneness (Poincaré, 1917, pp. 202–203). Similarly, Poincaré believed that mathematical thought cannot be independent of the mind. In theological terms, a construction of an entity or form could mean its artificial projection and a construction of a substance, which however will always be purely subjective. Some forms of intuitive philosophy attempted to address these issues such as the thoughts of Nikolay Lossky and by other authors.

How do we discern substances or objects?

The physicality of reality necessarily must indicate that our perception is based on "real and objective" perception and observation as far as the mental cognitive faculties of the human being are capable. Whether we are capable or not of perceiving the physicality of reality, bodies and causal relationships are a given fact in the world around us. There is a substance (agreeing here with the primeval definitions of Aristotle) that can have a form and to this extent is an

"object of reflection". The emphasis on matter and form is an important aspect of Aristotle in this context.

The Fathers of the Church such as Gregory in comparison to other schools of thought in his period would never deny the physicality or matter or bodily form of things and beings. The basis of the controversies surrounding Christ would often touch on the bodily reality of Christ. The strong affirmation that one cannot be saved unless Christ did in reality assume our bodily nature with all its characteristics is a given fact in Fathers such as Gregory. This is often underappreciated in modern reflections because the conclusions of this view are often left unexpanded. The emphasis on corporality undoubtedly set these "realist" Fathers apart from the extreme spiritual (gnostic) schools surrounding them.

What needs to be emphasised from the outset is the fact that, given this line of reasoning, Gregory would never deny the "objectiveness" of reality. Gregory does not need to escape to forms of matter- less spiritualism to prove the truthfulness of his anthropology. For him there is "reality" a "substantial" existence. Existence and substance are linked here, since without an expression into "existence" one would not know that there was or is a "substance". In this regard, in terms of Divinity, there is a perfect correspondence between existence and substance, since how God exists, or acts is a perfect reflection or correspondence with his substance.

Gregory generally stresses the fact that God is not a composite being. This is very important. If God is "simple" this does not mean that Gregory is subscribing to some non-personal forms of God, but he is pointing to the very important fact that there is no object in creation that can fully circumscribe God. Therefore, any form of analogy is doomed to failure. It can only serve a pedagogical purpose. Even a comparison is inadequate. Thus, in his *Fifth Theological Oration* he observes: "I have very carefully considered this matter in in my own mind, and have looked at it in every point of view, in order to find some illustration of this most important subject, but I have been unable to discover anything on earth with which to compare the nature of the Godhead" (Or. 31(5), 31, 1–4).[2] Gregory is perfectly aware that any object or, in fact, image is in danger of "delusion" or "illusion". Obviously the "simple" nature of God is paradoxically a reflection of his superior complexity which is incomprehensible for anything outside God.

The substance according to the Patristic understanding of virtue being Divine and full of love is not a substance which is without activity. An especially important passage in Gregory stresses the unique nature of God who even before creation was full of activity contemplating his own self, by reference to beauty. Gregory observes: "Let us determine- solidify- what is the movement of Gods mind (πήγνυμι / πήχθης), (For god is not useless or uninitiated to me) before he fashioned the visible world. Who for ages emptied/exercised his most highest rule, moving goodness which produced radiance through his mind, (observing in his mind θηεύμενος/Θεάομαι), Threefold Divine harmonious light in equal excellence, As one Divinity, and imprinting the cosmos through the word being heard (interestingly, στήσιος could mean Zeus -a play on words). It is one great thought of the cosmos creating mind. Later being the God of all beings" (Carm., I, I, 4, Περὶ κόσμου 60-69; PG 37, 420–421).[3]

These verses describing God are of paramount importance just as the other statements in the other parts of this poem. The verses describe the unceasing activity and beauty of God, who was reigning for ages and this reign is a form of activity here. Importantly, it also mentions

[2] For Gregory's orations, I have offered the text from *Nicene and Post-Nicene Father* (Gregory of Nazianzen, 1894). However, I have altered the translation in some areas according to the original text (Grégoire de Nazianze, 1978; Norris, 1991). For the other citations of Gregory, not from the Orations, I have used my own translation (Gregory of Nazianzus, 2011).

[3] "Πήχθης, φραζώμεσθα τί κίννυτο Θεία νόησις, / (Οὐδὲ γάρ ἐστιν ἄπρηκτος ἐμοὶ Θεὸς, οὐδ' ἀτέλεστος), / Πρὶν τόδε πᾶν στῆναί τε καὶ εἴδεσι κοσμηθῆναι. / Αἰῶσιν κενεοῖσιν ὑπέρτατος ἐμβασιλεύων, / Κίννυτο κάλλεος οἷο φίλην θηεύμενος αἴγλην, / Τρισσοφαοῦς Θεότητος ὁμὸν σέλας ἰσοφέριστον, / Ὡς μούνῃ Θεότητι, καὶ κόσμοιο τύπους οὓς στήσατο λεύσσων / Οἷσιν ἐνὶ μεγάλοισι νοήμασι κοσμογόνος νοῦς / Ἐσσομένου μετέπειτα, Θεῷ δέ τε καὶ παρεόντος".

God's mind or thinking process, which is presumably linked with his creativity or contemplation of beauty.

We can state that an important conclusion which generally stems from Gregory's thoughts and not noticed by modern commentators is that the Divine "substance cannot move", since movement essentially means a change or transformation, which means that a substance cannot remain attached or synchronised to its expression/image and in an abstract sense then cannot express itself as full truth, since it is by virtue of movement "moving" and "untrue" to its own essence. Of course, here we mean by "movement" a more complex category not physical movement only. Generally, the negative connotations about movement is that it entails a change from one's position which belongs to substance at least in the abstract sense. Thus, a moving substance means a substance which through movement somehow loses its former trace and position and therefore "part of its substance". This is very important to emphasise because otherwise the theology of the image so prominent in patristic thought is left incomprehensible.

However, through contemplation, emphasised by Gregory, this issue is partly overcome since contemplation is static in a sense even though being dynamic at the same time. Contemplation paradoxically entails a dynamic/stationary position.

In Oration 28, Gregory discusses the character of God and his substance. "For what effect is produced upon his Being or Substance by His having no beginning, and being capable of change or limitation? Nay, the whole question of his Being is still left for the further consideration and exposition of him who truly has the mind of God and is advanced in contemplation".[4] Here the important thing to mention is that in the English translation of Brown and Swallow the term *Hypostasis* is missing. The term Hypostasis is of paramount importance here since it relates to the central concept of how a substance expresses itself; that is, through personhood.

In his theological oration 5, Gregory observes: "But it is not possible for *me* to make use of even this; because it is very evident what gives the ray its motion; but there is nothing prior to God which could set Him in motion; for He is Himself the Cause of all things, and He has no prior Cause. And secondly because in this case also there is a suggestion of such things as composition, diffusion, and an unsettled and unstable nature…none of which we can suppose in the Godhead. *In a word, there is nothing which presents a standing point to my mind in these illustrations from which to consider the Object which I am trying to represent to myself, unless one may indulgently accept one point of the image while rejecting the rest*" (Or. 31 (5), 33, 1-10). This last statement is a clear manifestation of the theologian's limits or more precisely the limits of the image to "fully express" itself. What does this mean for the theology of the image? This line of thinking leads Gregory to reflect on imagery generally and its relationship to what the image depicts or to its archetype. Here image is not only a mental or verbal picture, it is all physical and mental reality and for our purposes even virtual reality. The more one desires to touch such an image, the more it escapes. The question is then, for Gregory do images have any relation to truth?

In the first theological oration, Gregory observes: "Not to everyone, my friends does it belong to philosophize about God; not to every one (Οὐ παντός, ᾧ οὗτοι, τὸ περὶ Θεοῦ φιλοσοφεῖν, οὐ παντός) the Subject is not so cheap and low; and I will add, not before every audience, nor at all times, nor on all points; but on certain occasions, and before certain persons, and within certain limits. Not to all men, because it is permitted only to those who have been examined, and passed masters in contemplation, and who have been previously purified in soul and body, or at the very least are being purified. (Οὐ πάντων μέν, ὅτι τῶν ἐζητασμένων, και διαβεβηκόταν ἐν Θεωρίᾳ, καὶ πρὸ τούτον καὶ ψυχὴν καὶ σῶμα κεκαθαρμένον, ἢ καθαιρομένων, τὸ μετριώτατον)… It is when we are free from all external defilement or disturbance, and when

[4] Τί γὰρ ὄντι αὐτῷ κατὰ τὴν φύσιν καὶ τὴν ὑπόστασιν ὑπάρχει τὸ μὴ ἀρχὴν ἔχειν, μηδὲ ἐξίστασθαι, μηδὲ περατοῦσθαι; Ἀλλ᾽ ὅλον τὸ εἶναι περιλαμβάνειν λείπεται προσφιλοσοφεῖν τε καὶ πρεοσεξετάζειν τῷ «νοῦν θεοῦ» (1 Cor. 2, 16), ἀληθῶς ἔχοντι καὶ τελεωτέρῳ τὴν θεωρίαν (Or. 28 (2), 9, 6-13).

that which rules within us is not confused (ἡγεμονικὸν ἡμῶν συγχέηται) with vexatious or erring images (μοχθηροῖς), (τύποις); like persons mixing up (ἀναμιγνύντων) good writing with bad, or filth with the sweet odours of ointments. For it is necessary to be truly at leisure to know God; (Δεῖ γὰρ τῷ ὄντι σχολάσαι, καὶ γνῶναι Θεόν) and when we can get a convenient season, to discern the straight road of the things divine" (Or. 27 (1) 3, 1-15).

Gregory continues to argue that the subject of theology is so lofty that it cannot be subdued by discussions at the table, dinner or theatre. People who are low, often enter futile arguments (ἐρεσχελία), into self gratyfing discussions and nice contradictions (ἀντιθέσεων). The discussion here obviously understands the possibility of "meditation" about things divine commensurate to the degree of purification one undergoes. Discussing things divine without preparation means that these are mere images "without meaning" and therefore liable to be subject to profanity. Here, a particularly important thought is present. It is as if the very content of the theology in question gains substance to the degree of the reality it expresses, which itself is conditioned by purification. There needs to be an external and internal connection between theology and its substance. This can be achieved when this theology gains life through purification, since it is actualised. It becomes a living theology, and therefore a substantial theology. However, the un-purified person is unprepared to unlock the substance of theology, and therefore he or she seemingly can speak about theology but this is merely an image of theology even though the subject and theme can be the same. Thus paradoxically, both the purified and un-purified person can speak about, let's say, Christ's natures, but each will understand and express this theology in a different manner even though the subject is the same and the content is the same. This is the danger Gregory points to here, that in his own day, people could speak about the same subject and then wonder why everybody reached different understandings. Gregory is annoyed here, since the Sophists are doing exactly this. This deliberation leads one to state that one's discussions about theology are always limited to the degree of the preparedness of the audience, etc. Sophistic theology is theology of images without substance.

Here one can be reminded of the interesting iconoclast discussions which later revisited the issues of images in this context. Interestingly the later Patriarch, Nicephorus, used important terms associated with our theme. Thus, he spoke of essential qualities (οὐσιώδεις ποιότητες) and indicative properties (παραστατικὰ ἰδιώματα) and further, in relation to Aristotelian relatives, he defined the image as related to the pattern, calling it a relative notion (τῶν πρός τι) as the effect of a cause. "[...] the icon possesses a relation to the archetype as the effect of a cause. Therefore, it is necessary that the icon both be one of the relatives and be called such" (Goncharko & Goncharko, 2017, pp. 298, 302).

Are images and virtual reality deceptions in their own right?

In patristic thought generally, especially the tradition of fathers associated with the tradition of the Philokalia and hesychasm, "images" seem to have a bad reputation. Often images are associated with that which cause temptations and problems. Especially "images in the heart". Gregory of Nazianzus with his emphasis on beauty and contemplation, however, seems to present a useful corrective to this line of thinking, because in any event "imagery" is linked to beauty. How can we reconcile this positive and negative opinion about imagery? Already Plato established the fundamental problem of the image, imprint and the original.[5]

In order to understand the idea of the image, we would also have to address the complex theology of the creation of man in the "image and likeness of God" (Gen. 1, 26–27; 5, 1; 9, 6; Jas. 3, 9 etc.). We do not have the possibility of entering a discussion on the theology "of the

[5] See the Theaetetus of Plato. Modern philosophy often recapitulates the discussion already found in earlier authors. Thus, the patristic tradition already firmly established the discussion of the dynamics between image, imprint, mimesis and the original, typos (Ricœur, 2004).

Image and likeness" as developed on the basis of the Greek Septuagint. The idea of the image and substance, imprint and prototype, archetype played an important role in the formation of patristic thought.

Suffice it to say that in authors such as Gregory, we cannot discern a tension or still better a negative stance towards the image in contrast to its prototype. Gregory writes in the context of the Divinity of the Father and Son in his Fourth theological oration: "And the Image as of one substance with Him, and because He is of the Father, and not the Father of Him. For this is of the Nature of an Image, to be the reproduction of its Archetype, and of that whose name it bears; only that there is more here. For in ordinary language an image is a motionless representation of that which has motion; but in this case it is the living reproduction of the Living One, and is more exactly like than was Seth to Adam, or any son to his father".[6]

There are two levels of meaning here. If we understand creation/the human being as a kind of image of its prototype, this image cannot be understood as a negative image. However, the problem that the fathers point to is, that, due to sin and other factors, the image no longer corresponds to its prototype or archetype. This is not a permanent condition but is linked to the degree of our sin and rebellion as human beings. Thus, understandably, such a deformed image (including images in our heads and heart) cannot be good for our spiritual well-being. However, there is also another problematic dimension. Any unqualified intimate relationship between the image and its prototype encounters a problem, since, in Christian theology, the Divine substance, can never be fully explored. At first glance, therefore, the image can never be equal to its substance or to the archetype. This would presume a position of inferiority for the image. In terms of Gregory of Nazianzus and his school of thought, this is not really a problem. The image regardless of its distance from its prototype is never really inferior, since it offers each individual and observer a window to beauty through contemplation equal to the degree of perception available to each person. Any image leads to another image as a wonderful dynamic movement towards beauty which is an endless process just as God's substance is non-circumscribable in its nature. Therefore, no image is inferior since it is related to the Divine substance in a dynamic movement of the contemplation of beauty. Gregory observes: "So that no strangers would have the advantage over us, I say this in coloured language, even though the beauty for us is in Contemplation. For you it is necessary to play with wisdom. For us it's a lion's pleasure. To fourthly find the disease from which suffering stems".[7]

In Oration 30 Gregory mentions the ancient Judaic restrictions on naming God. He cannot be expressed by "divisible" words.[8] Further, he writes: "But we sketch Him by His Attributes, and so obtain a certain faint and feeble and partial idea concerning Him, and our best Theologian is he who has not indeed discovered the whole, for our present chain does not allow of our seeing the whole, but conceived of Him to a great extent than another, and gathered in himself more of the Likeness or adumbration of the Truth, or whatever we may call it".[9] The term

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[6] («Εἰκὼν» (Col. 1.15) δέ, ὡς ὁμοούσιον, καὶ ὅτι τοῦτο ἐκεῖθεν, ἀλλ᾽ οὐκ ἐκ τούτου Πατήρ. Αὕτη γὰρ εἰκόνος φύσις, μίμημα εἶναι τοῦ ἀρχετύπου, καὶ οὗ λέγεται, πλὴν ὅτι καὶ πλεῖον ἐνταῦθα. Ἐκεῖ μὲν γὰρ ἀκίνητος κινουμένου· ἐνταῦθα δὲ ζῶντος, καὶ ζῶσα, καὶ πλέον ἔχουσα τὸ ἀπαράλλακτον ἢ τοῦ Ἀδαμ ὁ Σήθ (Gen. 4, 2), καὶ τοῦ γεννῶντος παντὸς τὸ γεννώμενον.") (Or. 30 (4), 20, 21–28).

[7] "Πλέον δίδωμι τοὺς ξένους ἡμῶν ἔχειν / Τούτοις λέγω δὴ τοῖς κεχρωσμένοις λόγοις / Εἰ καὶ τὸ κάλλος ἡμῖν ἐν θεωρίᾳ. / Ὑμῖν μὲν οὖν δὴ τοῖς σοφοῖς ἐπαίξαμεν. / Ἔστω τις ἡμῖν καὶ χάρις λεόντιος. / Τέταρτον εὗρον τῇ νόσῳ πονούμενος" (Εἰς τὰ ἔμμετρα Carm., II, I, 39, 49–54, PG 37 1333).

[8] The Greek expression of the original is even more poignant. Οἱ γὰρ χαρακτῆρσιν ἰδίοις τὸ Θεῖον τιμήσαντες καὶ οὐδὲ γράμμασιν ἀνασχόμενοι τοῖς αὐτοῖς ἄλλο τι γράφεσθαι τῶν μετὰ Θεὸν καὶ Θεὸν, ὡς δέον ἀκοινώνητον εἶναι καὶ μέχρι τούτου τὸ Θεῖον τοῖς ἡμετέροις, πότε ἄν δέξαιντο λυομένη φωνῆ δηλοῦσθαι τὴν ἄλυτον φύσιν καὶ ἰδιάζουσαν; Οὔτε γὰρ ἀέρα τις ἔπνευσεν ὅλον πώποτε, οὔτε οὐσίαν θεοῦ παντελῶς ἢ νοῦς κεχώρηκεν, ἢ φωνὴ περιέλαβεν (Or. 30 (4) 17, 4–9).

[9] (Ἀλλ᾽ ἐκ τῶν περὶ αὐτὸν σκιαγραφοῦντες τὰ κατ᾽ αὐτόν, ἀμυδράν τινα καὶ ἀσθενῆ καὶ ἄλλην ἀπ᾽ ἄλλου φαντασίαν συλλέγομεν. Καὶ οὗτος ἄριστος ἡμῖν Θεολόγος, οὐχ ὃς εὗρε τὸ πὰν, οὐδὲ γὰρ δέχεται τὸ πᾶν ὁ δεσμός, ἀλλ᾽ ὃς

σκιαγραφοῦντες, which could be translated as outlining or sketching is especially important here. It is also related to rhetorical discussions of God and his divinity.

Perhaps it is unsurprising that the later Byzantine writer Michael Psellos found so much in common with Gregory of Nazianzus, whom he admires. Just as Gregory before him stressed beauty and contemplation as a key to unlock the dynamics of our life, so Michael Psellos rediscovers this concept in the later Byzantine world. To what extent does Psellos remain in the standard framework of Patristic thought in this context remains subject to debate (Barber & Papaioannou et. al., 2017; Papaioannou, 2011).[10]

Gregory continues to observe in his second theological oration: "Therefore, this darkness of the body has been placed between us and God, like the cloud of old between the Egyptians and the Hebrews (Exod. 14, 20); and this is perhaps what is meant by He made darkness His secret place, namely our dullness through which few can see even little".[11] Further "so it is quite impracticable for those who are in the body to be conversant with objects of pure thought apart altogether from bodily objects. For something in our own environment is ever creeping in, even when the mind has most fully detached itself from the visible, and collected itself, and is attempting to apply itself to those invisible things which are akin to itself".[12]

If Gregory had the occasion to live in our age, he would probably ask himself if reality itself is a problem for us in seeing the truth and God, is it not the case that virtual reality would be an even greater problem? If virtual reality is further removed from reality, how much more is it removed from the truth? If it is difficult to discern aspects of reality in the world surrounding us, is it almost impossible to see it in "virtual reality". The only thing that Gregory would probably agree on here is that, obviously, reality is a kind of "pointer" to higher things. This is of course the same with virtual reality, since even in virtual reality, we are driven to other objects behind it. We may speculate whether virtual reality does not push us towards greater oblivion, if oblivion is understood as the absence of reality/substance.

On one plane the imagery in virtual reality can push the relationship between what is real and what is interpretation or illusion to further extremes, especially given the obvious limits of virtual reality itself. The fundamental issue at hand is that if reality itself or its objective existence can be a source of our own illusion and delusion is it not true that "virtual reality" is even further in danger of distortion of the truth? Here the issue is not only linked with the Divine, but with reality as such. One may argue that this distortion of the truth in the image is only linked to the Christian presupposition of morality and sin. But this is clearly not the case, since any basic non-theist philosophy has to admit that there is a problem in our perception of reality, truth etc., regardless of moral notions of sin and other concepts.

Gregory emphasises the fact that one needs guidance through the field of knowledge and contemplation. The contemporary stress in humanist schools is that reality is objective enough and one does not need to have any guidance whatsoever apart from general abstract ethical principles which, however, cannot in their own right have no grounding since they are relative to the desires and needs of contemporary society. Gregory speaks of the Spirit as a guide. We may ask whether the observer living in virtual reality needs such a guide or if such a possibility of a guide indeed exists. The world without rules, which is the internet, does not have a guide.

ἐὰν ἄλλου φαντασθῇ πλέον, καὶ πλεῖον ἐν ἑαυτῷ συναγάγῃ τὸ τῆς ἀληθείας ἴνδαλμα, ἢ ἀποσκίασμα, ἢ ὅ τι καὶ ὀνομάσομεν.) (Or. 30 (4), 17, 11–16).

[10] However, the relationship between Psellos and Gregory of Nazianzus has not been sufficiently explored in modern scholarship in terms of the philosophy and theology of beauty.

[11] Διὰ τοῦτο μέσος ἡμῶν τε καὶ Θεοῦ ὁ σωματικὸς οὗτος ἵσταται «γνόφος» (Exod. 10, 22), ὥσπερ ἡ νεφέλη τὸ πάλαι τῶν Αἰγυπτίων καὶ Ἑβραίων (Exod. 14, 20). Καὶ τοῦτό ἐστιν ἴσως, ὃ «ἔθετο σκότος ἀποκρυφὴν αὐτοῦ (Ps. 17, 12), τὴν ἡμετέραν παχύτητα, δι᾽ ἣν ὀλίγοι καὶ μικρὸν διακύπτουσιν...

[12] (Οὕτως ἀμήχανον τοῖς ἐν σώματι δίχα τῶν σωματικῶν πάντη γενέσθαι μετὰ τῶν νοουμένων. Ἀεὶ γάρ τι παρεμπεσεῖται τῶν ἡμετέρων, κἂν ὅτι μάλιστα χωρίσας ἑαυτὸν τῶν ὁρωμένων ὁ νοῦς, καὶ καθ᾽ ἑαυτὸν γενόμενος, προσβάλλειν ἐπιχειρῇ τοῖς συγγενέσι καὶ ἀοράτοις. Γνώσῃ δὲ οὕτως) (Or. 28 (2), 12).

There is a liberation offered by Gregory from the reality, or virtual reality, of moving images seemingly without order and sense. Without a guide (just as is the case with the internet), there is a risk that we will be lost. However, this guide cannot be static itself otherwise it will be just another image. For Gregory it is the Holy Spirit. Here in the thoughts of Gregory and others the Spirit is something more than a Divine being. It is the spirit of unpredictability. To be more precise, only a "spirit" can manoeuvre in a complex virtual world or any world at all, since nothing is defined in advance. The association of the freedom of spirit with the internet is a theme not commented on by any contemporary author. The Divine Spirit in Christian life is a spirit of freedom and unpredictability, which however has its beginning and end in Christ understood here as the ultimate grounding of reality and truth. This notion could be useful for understanding the dynamics of virtual reality, if it assumes that the spirit of freedom which is inherent for example in the internet is indeed a spirit leading somewhere or from somewhere (without any moral or ethical judgements involved).

For Gregory, the Christian Holy Spirit is something present everywhere, it is "indwelling" in the human beings (Συμπολιτεύω), (See oration 41). Therefore, it is communion building in its nature. The Holy Spirit seems to reveal itself gradually on a certain level. This seems to be the import of Oration 41, 11, where the Spirit gradually manifests himself. Importantly, Gregory uses three terms ἀμυδρός, ἔκτυπος, τέλειος, to demonstrate the gradual manifestation of the Spirit until a perfection of manifestation. Importantly, he speaks of expression through energy which then also culminates in a substantial manifestation (ἐνεργεία / οὐσιωδῶς). The idea of a kind of self-revelatory and revelatory role of the Spirit appears elsewhere, like for example in Oration 6, 1, where the Spirit is associated with the process of purification (καθαίρω), through the workings of philosophy (τῇ δι᾽ ἔργων φιλοσοφίᾳ), and then an opening of the intellect, which receives in the Spirit (Ps. 119, 131), which leads to a good word (λόγον ἀγαθόν), which enables the perfect wisdom of God to be spoken (σοφίαν τελείαν), among those spiritually able to receive it (ἐν τοῖς τελείοις) (Or. 6, 1).

In our own spiritual makeup, we have, apart from the spirit or Holy Spirit, instruments of discernment, which are the physical and mental abilities to discern between images, concepts and so on. Therefore, encountering the image and its perception is not a static direct encounter, unmediated by a filter. We have unique organs which help us discern truth and reality which derive their objectiveness only by reference to a Divine Creator. Otherwise they would be relative. Gregory associates the nous with taxonomic qualities.[13] The Nous is the inner vision, which is not circumscribed. The work of the nous is thinking, about the impressions (imagining?). The faculty of "reason" is an inquiry on the impressions or images of the nous, which you make manifest by the organs of speech (Ὅροι παχυμερεῖς Carm., I, II, 34, 27–30; PG 37, 947–948).[14]

The important point here is the impression of the senses on the nous, which come from the outside and presumably leave an imprint. It is obvious, and we may conclude, that the nous then classifies these thoughts according to certain criteria. I do not want to use the word "reason" here because of its ambiguous meaning.[15]

The *nous* can be linked with reason. Reason in the patristic tradition is a complex reality. The patristic understanding of the nous and reason is linked with a complex and organic

[13] Νοῦς δ᾽ ἔστιν ὄψις ἔνδον, οὐ περίγραφος. / Νοῦ δ᾽ἔργον, ἡ νόησις, ἐκτύπωμά τε. / Λόγος δ᾽ ἔρευνα τῶν νοὸς τυπωμάτων, / ὃν ἐκλαλήσεις ὀργάνοις φωνητικοῖς.

[14] Further, the poem continues: "Αἴσθησίς ἐστιν εἰσδοχή τις ἔκτοθεν. / Μνήμη κάθεξις τῶν νοὸς τυπωμάτων. / Λήθη δέ μνήμης ἐκβολή. Λύθης δέ γε / Μνήμη τις αὖθις, ἣν ἀνάμνησιν λέγω Βούλησιν οἶδα, νοῦ ῥοπὴν καὶ συνδρομὴν / Τῶν ὅσσ᾽ ἐφ᾽ἡμῖν· τἄλλα δ᾽ οὐ θελητέα (vv. 31–37).

[15] In another poem we read: Ἀλλὰ νόον καθαροίσοι νοήμασιν αἰὲν ἀέξων, / Ἥδη καὶ Τριάδος ἅπτεται οὐρανίης. (The poem is interesting in its other verses as well), (IZ, Περὶ τῶν τοῦ βίου διαφορῶν, καὶ κατὰ ψευδιερέων (Carm., II, I, 17, 35–36; PG 37, 1264). However, the mind cleans the thoughts always increasingly, as the Trinity touching heavens.

understanding of the human person. The radical separation of rationality and reason from the overall human person, so adamant in modern philosophy and thought, was unknown to the patristic tradition. This is important even for our purposes since, if one is to understand our relationship to reality and virtual reality, a more holistic understanding is useful.

Neuroscientists such as Damasio, have increasingly called for a more holistic and inclusive understanding of emotion and reason. For a "comprehensive understanding of the human mind requires an organismic perspective" (Damasio, 1994). He addresses the issue of how reason interacts with emotions and thoughts. Importantly, he argues one cannot immediately and clearly ague that reason operates independently from other process including emotion, images and so on. The patristic tradition sees an interconnectedness of all these organs and aspects. This interconnectedness then enables us to interact with reality and virtual reality.

An interaction which sees a congeniality between the human being and the universe since the human being is a microcosmos. The obvious issue is, if virtual reality is a "reality" at all, it must be linked internally in a dynamic of interrelatedness with the human being and his or her internal and spiritual organs. Ironically, this would please the most dominant individualistic philosophy, where the "I" is in the centre.

This microcosmos aspect of the human being is also linked with the fact that we are, according to the Judaeo Christian tradition, intimately linked with God by virtue of being his creation. The believing Christian of course has recourse to perfect images, being himself or herself made in the image and likeness of God. The human being made in the image and likeness of God, can "recall" true images by reference to his divine origin. This recollection guarantees the truthfulness of reason since it operates with true images. This enables us through images to "remember God" (μεμνῆσθαι Θεοῦ), "meditate day and night" (μελετᾶν ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτὸς), (τὸ μεμνῆσθαι διηνεκῶς) (Or. 27 (1) 4).

If this is so we can argue using the term *mimesis*, that without this connection to Divine substance, (artistic) mimesis -just as Plato and Aristotle argued- cannot accurately express reality. The simplicity of God can be related to the "unseen" God. in fact, many fathers of the church especially Gregory of Nazianzus tend to speak of the simplicity of God. For example, a modern theologian writes: "A single quest and a single search must be substituted for all these questions. To seek God, to avoid the inner turmoil of overly subtle investigations and disputes…, to flee from the other noise of controversies and to eliminate futile problems, such is the foremost note of simplicity…, "holy simplicity" is the humility, which safeguards the integrity of the mind, which ensures the search for God alone. All these including intellectual pursuits should remain subordinate to the search for God" (Leclerq, 1960, p. 254).

The emphasis on the simplicity of God, also presents certain challenges for the notion of love. Plantinga generally addressed problems related to God's simplicity some years ago. Thus, he writes: "According to Augustine, God created everything distinct from him; did he then create these things? Presumably not; they have no beginning. Are they dependent on him? But how could a thing whose non-existence is impossible—the number 7, lets say, or the property of being a horse---depend upon anything for its existence? Does God (so to speak) just find them constituted the way they are? Must he simply put up with their being thus constituted? Are these things, their existence and their character, outside his control?" (Plantinga, 1980, pp. 4–5).

The matrix nature of virtual reality

The central question related to virtual reality is whether it has any relation to substance. We do not have the space here to justify or refute the traditional emphasis on substance in the patristic tradition. However, we can agree that reality by virtue of being reality has to have some connection with what one may term "substance" understood as a real basis for the materiality

of all existence. Whether this substance is associated with matter or something else is another issue.

The most negative aspect of, for example, the internet is undoubtedly its "matrix" fabric. The internet offers seeming endless freedom of information and action but all its aspects, including information, are programmed and are preconceived. Regardless of our perception, one cannot escape the matrix of pre-conceived planning and programming. This is the greatest danger of the internet or other forms of virtual reality. Of course, anyone can state that even the world around us offers a kind of preprogramed or predetermined reality. What is the difference between virtual structures and real structures in terms of volition? The difference is that the human being is the subjective force of human created virtual reality, whereas the human being has no control over nature and the world as such (at least not in an absolute sense). Thus, there is a reality beyond human control and therefore *is* reality. Whereas human made virtual reality is an artificial reality which at least now is controlled by the human being.

If one looks at social media such as Facebook, one can never enter a discussion from the "outside", since one must operate within the framework of social media and its elements. Entering a discussion on social media means accepting the rules and logic of argument herein. Here we do not mean simply rules for discussion but the limits for such a discussion set by the character of the media itself. This "binary" discussion does not necessarily produce anything new or a synthesis. Because all synthesis is limited to the conditions it stemmed from. It does not have a truthful and therefore independent existence.

Gregory held syllogistic and dialectical arguments in disdain, since he believed that argumentation cannot always produce truth, since one argument is countered by another without a tangible result. This kind of reflection leads us to suggest that even internet social media does not offer "a way out" of its own forms of discourse, which could succumb to being mere images and elements of discourse without a "liberating form". Even if there is a product, it is a product of the matrix of the internet and its reality.

In his second theological oration, Gregory comments on the possibilities of knowledge of God or things states: "inasmuch as it is easier to take in some single point than to go on disowning point after point in endless detail, in order, both by the elimination of negatives and the assertion of positives to arrive at a comprehension of this subject".[16] Gregory, generally in his theology, avoids a theology which would subscribe to an exchange of arguments or positions, since he believes that the truth lies somewhere above or outside general discourse of this sort.[17]

The question is whether one's limits in the way one argues does not limit in advance the form of conclusion and truth one reaches. In terms of virtual reality this seems to be even more pronounced.

Imagination and virtual reality

Virtual reality can be linked with imagination if imagination here means an expression of unhindered and free movement of the mind and body. One of the positive aspects of virtual reality is its ability to offer a seeming limitless platform for imagination. A person designing a computer game or other forms of media can be free to design objects and spaces which would otherwise be impossible in the "real world". The proponents of virtual reality often point to this positive aspect of virtual reality. Gregory, as we have implied, stresses the beauty of creation and God which is linked with imagination. This beauty is linked with the absolute imagination

[16] ὅσῳ καὶ ῥᾷον ἕν τι περιλαβεῖν, ἢ τὰ πάντα καθ᾽ ἕκαστον ἀπειπεῖν - ἵνα ἔκ τε τῆς ἀναιρέσεως ὧν οὐκ ἐστι καὶ τῆς οὗ ἐστὶ θέσεως, περιληφθῇ τὸ νοούμενον (Oration 28 (2), 9, 20–24).

[17] Interestingly enough, in the medieval period Gregory was associated with logic and as being a commentator on the quadrivium (Heiberg, 1929).

of God unparalleled in the universe and carried necessarily in the spirit of freedom since freedom and imagination go together.

The central question one may ask is; is this proposition true? Is virtual reality, in fact, an area offering limitless freedom and a platform for imagination? If we link imagination and freedom to the thoughts of Gregory of Nazianzus, interesting insights can be gained for an overall assessment of imagination and virtual reality. There are two main issues to be considered. Firstly, imagination does not automatically have a good reputation in ascetical writings, as it is linked with sin. But this does not mean that imagination is altogether rejected. On the contrary, Gregory of Nazianzus clearly sees in imagination one of the most important aspects of the creative force and love of God. Imagination must, however, be qualified. Imagination is a vehicle of contemplation and in this sense it is positive; a contemplation of the objective forces of creation. One is here reminded of the Stoic conception of *phantasia*.[18]

However, our own imagination, as a subjective and limited expression, can be dangerous since, paradoxically, the more imaginative we are, the less imaginative we actually are because our subjective imagination in the end limits this imagination, because it is based on our own limited and circumscribed vision. However, if Gregory sees a contemplative moment it does not mean that the human being is simply a passive observer through the medium of imagination. Imagination is a vehicle to see beauty, without imagination there is no possibility of seeing beauty. Although, in order to do that, one needs to ascend to these impressions in a spiritual assent.

Of course, generally, we can state that the images as imprints on the mind have a bad reputation in some patristic authors. For example, perhaps Evagrius understands the images and impressions as inherently problematic (Clark, 1992, p. 75) since they enter the mind and, once there, involve themselves in a battle. The passions play a role here in the negative absorption of these images. On a first reading, such theories obviously can lead to an idea of a completely passionate mind which is difficult to reconcile with the loving heart scheme and other contemplative modes of thinking. As we have indicated, Gregory of Nazianzus offers a corrective vision to this extreme position. The problem is not with the images but with how "one absorbs" them so to speak.

In terms of the internet, for example, one can only wonder how negative would Evagrius be if he had known that the internet sends out only images of all sorts. If reality is suspicious itself then even virtual reality with even a lesser correspondence to substance is even more dangerous. For Gregory, the main reflection point for understanding images, exegesis and all related concepts is by reference to the Trinity itself, where it is, above all, obvious that certain conceptions cannot be maintained about the Divinity. Of course, other philosophical schools were not limited by this theological postulate central to Christianity. However, the Triune God, with his substance beyond understanding, was a powerful exegetical condition for any reflection. Thus Gregory concludes his fifth Theological Oration by stating exactly that "Finally, then, it seems best to me to let the images and the shadows go, as being deceitful and very far short of the truth; and clinging myself to the more reverent conception, and resting upon few words, using the guidance of the Holy Ghost, keeping to the end as my genuine comrade and companion the enlightenment which I have received from Him, and passing through this world to persuade all others also to the best of my power to worship Father, Son and Holy Ghost, the One Godhead and Power. To Him belongs all glory and honour and might for ever and ever. Amen" (Or. 31 (5), 33).

[18] For an interpretation of Stoic *phantasiai* in terms of an "awareness" of the world (de Harven, 2018).

Contemplation

For Gregory, the central instrument for viewing and understanding the cosmos and its beauty in an objective way is through contemplation. Here, contemplation is a form which guarantees that our perception of the cosmos and creation is not based on a defective subjective platform but on a purely objective platform. This is guaranteed by the contemplative assent which only absorbs, so to speak, the images and beauty it receives without classifying it in an *a priori* move. This does not mean that the contemplative is some kind of passive sponge absorbing all around him, but it simply means that one is open to any impulse by virtue of not relying on an *a priori* taxonomic platform. This is very important to emphasise. Usually all the images that we receive enter our senses and we classify them according to our predetermined biological makeup and on the basis of previous psychological experiences, which of course then limits our freedom of seeing things "as they are". As we have discussed, the patristic tradition believes that we see things through a glass darkly precisely due to our sin or other factors, which prevents us *a priori* to see things in an objective light and therefore true light.

This contemplation is a never-ending process since God in his being can never be circumscribed by any form or creature of creation. In other words, we move from beauty to beauty, from glory to glory. Thus, in a way one can never be "bored" of a problem which was popular with medieval theologians. Gregory observes in his second theological oration: "Thus Solomon, who was the wisest of all men (1 Kgs. 3, 12), whether before him or in his own time, to whom God gave breadth of heart, and a flood of contemplation, more abundant than the sand, even he, the more he entered into the depth, the more dizzy he became, and declared the furthest point of wisdom to be the discovery of how very far off she was from him" (Oration 28 (2), 21).

In the same second theological oration, he writes: "Combining all things in one, solely with a view to the consent of the Creator of all things; Hymners of the Majesty of the Godhead, eternally contemplating the Eternal Glory, not that God may thereby gain an increase of glory, for nothing can be added to that which is full – to Him, who supplies good to all outside Himself but that there may never be a cessation of blessings to these first natures after God" (31).

Contemplation also, however, leads to a sense of unity and truth and a revelation of truth when one understands the true nature of reality and objects and beings around him. He observes in the above already cited poem: "So that no strangers would have the advantage over us, I say this in coloured language, even though the beauty for us is in Contemplation. For you it is necessary to play with wisdom. For us it's a lion's pleasure. To fourthly find the disease from which suffering stems".[19]

Here of course, contemplation is something different from prayer. Prayer is a dialogue or monologue, but contemplation is a state of being or awareness, which offers a unique perspective on things because it is liberated from one's own disposition and limits any preconceived notions. In psychiatry, the patient often must confront his or her previous experiences in order to find healing. This is similar in a way to a contemplative mode.

In terms of virtual reality, one may ask whether the images offered are indeed possibilities for contemplation in the objective sense of the word. The issue is that human made virtual reality as a creation of the human being is a subjective construct based on the imagery produced by an individual or individuals, which themselves, in our scheme, are subject to the imprisonment of their own limited and subjective worldviews in the same system as we have described above. The contemplative cannot be sure whether he or she is contemplating anything in virtual reality since this virtual reality is only an image or a prototype of some sort. Thus, in

[19] "Πλέον δίδωμι τοὺς ξένους ἡμῶν ἔχειν / Τούτοις λέγω δὴ τοῖς κεχρωσμένοις λόγοις / Εἰ καὶ τὸ κάλλος ἡμῖν ἐν θεωρίᾳ. / Ὑμῖν μὲν οὖν δὴ τοῖς σοφοῖς ἐπαίξαμεν. / Ἔστω τις ἡμῖν καὶ χάρις λεόντιος. / Τέταρτον εὗρον τῇ νόσῳ πονούμενος" (Εἰς τὰ ἔμμετρα, Carm., II, I, 39, 49–54, PG 37 1333).

the worst-case scenario, the contemplative is simply lost in an ocean of illusion preventing any form of contemplation.

Interestingly, such a problem was related to poetry in Greek philosophy. Poetry can result in deception and a reliance on subjective emotion. This subjective emotion can prevent the poet from offering anything truly objective apart from his own or her emotional disposition. Plato had a reserved position towards poets. According to Plato, poets can deceive the public because "they are like a portrait painter who cannot catch the likeness" (Plato Rep. 2, 377–383; McGuckin, 2006, p. 198) McGuckin argues that Origen and Gregory reconciled the situation by arguing that the poet must be, at the same time, a philosopher. This would alleviate the negative aspects of poetry (McGuckin, 2006, p. 198).

This leads us to consider rhetorical art. As the art of persuasion (according to its ancient understanding) it is obviously limited in its scope of portraying the truth. If rhetorical art aims to persuade about any form of proposition this, in essence, means that it is not concerned with truth but only with persuasion. Obviously, we can refer to the internet here and point to the negative flows of information aiming to persuade and convince without any moral grounds.

However, rhetorical art in Gregory has a clear aim and goal, which is important. It is the art of expressing the truth. For Gregory, there is a clear correspondence between what is stated and its content. There is no divorce between content and its expression. The true rhetor is not a Sophist, and his goal is not to persuade but to attain truth and, therefore, happiness. Of course, even Plato discerned between forms of truth. This is seen in the different ways he treats rhetoric in the Phaedrus and the Gorgias (Freese, 1952, p. xx).

According to Gregory, rhetorical art offers us a verbal expression of truth since there is an internal link between verbality and substance. Rhetorical art offers us a way of describing the utter beauty of creation. In a sense, Gregory stands in line with the later byzantine humanists such as Psellos and others.

Importantly, the internet and virtual reality as such can be a platform for endless and useless "babble", which Gregory detests. Looking at his first theological oration (27), one can read his disdain against those who "babble". Here, one might recall a story in Psellos himself when he experiences a vision after which he babbles. Psellos does not look at babbling in such a negative way in this particular story.

In the first theological oration (A Preliminary Discourse Against the Eunomians), Gregory writes: that there are those who use the "word" to display their pride (Πρὸς τοὺς ἐν λόγῳ κομψοὺς ὁ Λόγος). He states that this negative way of argumentation is also linked to the *way one thinks* (διάνοιαν). Some are rash (προσκνώμενοι) to say something. To say something empty (κενοφωνίαις), or to offer pseudo-science (ψευδωνύμου[20] γνώσεως- I Tim. 6, 20). He continues to state that people engaging in empty discussions should concentrate on linking their speeches with practice. If they are linked with practice, they will perhaps become less sophisticated and less paradoxical and no longer useless acrobatics (κυβισταὶ[21]). They will no longer speak senselessly about a sensible subject" (Or. 27 (1), 1, 1–16).

Communion and virtual reality

The internet, just like virtual reality generally, has serious implications for the development of communal aspects. As we have argued, virtual reality can provide a certain deception of imagery and persons. Similarly, as for ancient philosophers, poetry and rhetoric in their negative

[20] ψευδώνυμος, ον, Aeschyl. +; Plut., Mor. 479E; Aelian, N.A. 9, 18; Philo, Mos. 2. 171 of pagan gods; Epigr. Gr. 42, 4. – carrying in a false way a name, or the gnosis of heterodox Christians., (1 Ti 6: 20. M-M).

[21] In sources we learn about further forms of the term 'Chrétiennes', which are not offered by the dictionary of Lidell-Scott, especially as they appear in Homers Elias, 16, 750, Odysseus 18, 605, Odysée 4, 18. Platón Banquet 190a.

aspects, could mean that one adopts a different persona or image, deceiving a community of people and individuals.

As we have implied for people such as Gregory, communion and communion with God is a necessary criterion for enabling us to realise whether we are objective or not. Communion and community is one of the realities that helps the individual to realise whether he or she is subjective or truthful or not. This is obviously the main principle behind ecumenical councils and councils of the church, where the truth should appear. If one takes social groups on the internet into account, one can ask whether this kind of form really offers a communal experience or community. Social media offers a variety of forms of communication, which are positive in many aspects. Especially for those who are handicapped and have various forms of disabilities, this form of communication is often the only form available.

However, having said that, one must ask, the central question whether the internet does not offer a hidden form of personhood. A person in social groups on the internet can and often does present a different persona than he or she really is, either intentionally or not. The person presenting himself or herself on the internet assumes an alter ego. Even if there was a sincere desire on the part of the person to present herself or himself on social media in the most objective and truthful form, there are limits of communication and expression which limit this but this is not what interests us here.

In normal reality, for example a village or city, one lives in a community where one is responsible for his or her surroundings, since he is being directly and indirectly observed. The person can project to his or her surroundings some form of character or image which, however, is "corrected" in some way or another through the lenses of the community. The entire church and its history are about this concept of communal supervision; a supervision all the more stressed in the Old Testament. The Greco/Roman concepts of the politeia are exactly built on this fact as well. In virtual reality one can be controlled, in a good sense, by the social community he or she is a member of but this control is again only partial and inadequate by virtue of being unable to go outside of its limits.

As has been discussed by some philosophers, virtual reality offers sources for reflection which, as we have seen, are related to the patristic tradition and Gregory of Nazianzus, but also to other disciplines of philosophy. Virtual reality offers a glimpse or a metaphor of personhood and consciousness (Metzinger, 2018). For the theologian, however, the task is not only to assess the metaphors of virtual reality but to assess its negative influence generally.

Conclusion

In our, contribution we attempted to draw on some ideas related to Gregory of Nazianzus to perhaps contribute to a development of a general ethic of the manmade virtual world, which is so necessary in our period. We must live "in reality" for us, as human beings, "to be real". However, what is real and not is becoming increasingly blurred. This is the consequence of the existence of virtual reality. The question is: can one be happy in virtual reality or any other forms of reality if our own experience has shown that we are not happy even in the real world around us?

Our central argument, based on Gregory of Nazianzus is, that all reality is beautiful and worth admiration. However, the difference between artificial forms of creation, virtual reality and any form of reality lies in their grounding or, let us say, substance. It has often been argued that virtual reality and other forms of reality are a way of offering endless forms of creativity and imagination. With creativity and imagination freedom is linked. Obviously, freedom, creativity and imagination are all positive concepts. However, it is a given fact, and paradox that has often been commented on that, in actuality, forms of virtual reality, internet and other similar related realities, in effect do not offer freedom or liberation or creativity because they

are themselves limited. Thus, there is a paradox, that the more freedom virtual reality offers, the less freedom it offers in the real sense.

The reason for the negative aspects of manmade virtual reality lies in the fact that the human being is a subjective force behind its creation. Virtual reality as the consequence of the human being's activity can become a prison based on the subjective modality of its creator. The negative aspects of the virtual world are being seen daily. Thus, the irony is, that while virtual reality is becoming part of our daily lives on a staggering scale, reality around us is slowly disappearing in the form of the destruction of nature and animals. Social media offers endless platforms for criminals hiding their persona and identity. Social media does not offer a true community or communal perspective because its community is limited by the medium itself or by the endless illusions and delusions behind which we can hide and adopt an artificial life with artificial love.

Further, there are no clear guidelines or guide through virtual reality: risking it to be a world full of empty images stimulating other images and this endless imagery without substance is without life offering only endless, encounters with images. Once one is bored with one image, he or she gets another. The destruction of senses and emotion and feeling is only a necessary consequence of this encounter with virtual reality.

As we have seen Gregory, is weary and suspicious about any artificiality because artificiality is linked to untruthfulness (in his Christian world, of course, it is called sin). He believes in the ineffable Divinity which is our principle and grounding for viewing the reality of things. All reality has to have grounding and the Divine is inexpressible, and therefore an eternal and truthful reference point for our own orientation in reality. In order to identify the images around us, which is reality itself (here images are not pictures but all physical and spiritual manifestations) one needs to know their source and lead to it in order look behind them and find their substance which authenticates them as something true and offering interaction for us. Virtual reality offers only a derivative substance, which itself is subjective. Of course, even if we argue that all reality is a virtual reality itself, this does not counter the argument, because reality around us, in the general sense, is not our subjective creation.

The human being can, according to Gregory, discover happiness and truth by reference to his being the microcosmos linking him directly to the cosmic in its entirety and its movement. This cosmic dimension based on creation from God, offers an endless opportunity to enjoy beauty and imagery. However, the difference between images linked to substance-God and images without this substance is clear. The latter produce anguish and subordination, since they lead us into an endless search for meaning and truthfulness, which, however, is not occurring since these images have no basis and are therefore not real. The human being is a microcosmos where he is inherently linked with a macrocosmic reality. This means there is no divorce between virtual and other forms of reality if one acknowledges the dynamic movement of endless beauty achieved through contemplation.

Through contemplation, Gregory safeguards this freedom of creation, because contemplation implies for, Gregory of Nazianzus, a way out of a priori subjective discernment and taxonomy. In this context, virtual reality is a form which by its very nature has to build consciousness and personhood for it to be viable for the human being. Whether one adopts a Christian perspective or not, the fact is that virtual reality cannot limit the freedom and consciousness of the human being; for it to be viable, it must build personhood and, by extension, communal life. Overall, Gregory's theology offers many insights into a future ethics of virtual reality. Gregory sees beauty and freedom everywhere in all forms of reality so to speak. However, his methodology is here to safeguard the possibility of reality to fulfil its function in building freedom and imagination.

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Ethics & Bioethics (in Central Europe), 2020, 10 (3–4), 133–145 DOI:10.2478/ebce-2020-0014

Ethics of responsibility in Ján Palárik's civic liberalism

Marcel Martinkovič[1]

Abstract
The development of the individual attributes of ethics of responsibility in conjunction with the principles of civic liberalism in Slovak political thought is associated with the thinking of Ján Palárik. His political ideas published in the second half of the 19th century come out of an effort to characterize and achieve reform of the Habsburg monarchy on the basis of constitutionalism and federalism. These attributes, in Palárik's opinion, were to bring more effective solutions to the issue of educating people in their mother tongue and the creation of civic culture. A part of Palárik's approach to the formation of civic skills is also the advocating of free expression, the idea of pluralism and gradualism within the idea of the *unity of the different*. His realistic approach to politics was framed by knowing and respecting the objective limits when implementing the aims of national civic freedom. Palárik linked the development of the state and the process of acculturation of the people with application of the principles of practical reasonableness and ethics of responsibility. He found its essence in understanding the interconnectedness of political goals and ideals, which were to be reflected in close association with the real limitations of the capabilities of individuals and social circumstances.

Keywords: Ján Palárik, ethics of responsibility, civic culture, principle of pluralism, practical reasonableness

Introduction

The aim of the present study is to describe the ideological contribution of Ján Palárik's political thinking in Slovak philosophical-political discourse. The study builds on research into the development of Slovak political, cultural and ethical thinking (Gašparík, 1952; Városssová, 1963; Vavrovič, 1974; Katuninec, 2007; Maxwell, 2009, Pichler, 2011; Teich, Kováč & Brown, 2011; Gluchman, 2012). In the study, the focus is on selected aspects of Palárik's thinking, which he connected with the implementation of individual and collective rights in transforming society (Haydanka, 2014). These two dimensions of modern rights were interpreted as competing with one another in the discourse of the second half of the 19th century. Political reasoning on the need for cultural modernization and power decentralization included debates on the method of developing education and civic attitudes of people in the new constitutional order. This began to dynamically form after the revolutionary years of 1848/1849.[2] In this discussion fundamental space is also devoted to questions of legal arrangements and the defining of civic and collective national rights (Rusnák, 2013). Among the significant intellectual initiatives in Slovak political thinking of the second half of the 19th century, which reflected, aside from German classical philosophy, Russian thinking and ideas from Anglo-Saxon empiricism, we can also include the activities of the Catholic priest, writer and journalist Ján Palárik.[3]

In the second half of the 19th century he was established among active Slovak intellectuals who were engaged in discussions on the transformation of the society of that time and debates over the solution to questions of constitutional order of the Austrian monarchy. Since at that time the influence of the estates establishment was subsiding, it was natural that only a minority of citizens of the monarchy possessed political rights. Representatives of the Slovak

[1] Slovak Academy of Sciences, Bratislava (Slovakia); martinkovic.marcel@gmail.com

[2] Principle changes in the functioning of state institutions began being implemented only after the end of neo-absolutism (the end of the work of A. Bach in the government). Of importance were imperial constitutional reforms that began being issued by the so-called October Diploma of 20th October, 1860. These were expanded by the February patent from 26th February, 1861 (Kirschbaum, 2005, pp. 125–144).

[3] In December 2020 we will commemorate 150 years since the death of Ján Palárik, whose thinking had a principle influence on the formation of the so-called New School.

intelligentsia, including Ján Palárik, made up only a small proportion of this group. Despite this quantitative limitation, an intense journalistic debate was a part of the Slovak nation-building process. This was related to the goals and method of political and cultural emancipation of the Slovaks as well as the values that were to be the results of it (Bilasová, 2012, pp. 88–112). With respect to the public engagement of Ján Palárik and his followers, space was created in Slovak political thinking for the development and legitimization of the principles of ideological plurality and public involvement. A part of the public debate among Slovak elites was also the role of reinterpreting the aims of the national movement. Up to that time, a loosely organized group of followers of Ľudovít Štúr and Jozef Miloslav Hurban dominated the movement. This group, in terms of its programme and philosophy, continued in the development of the political and cultural principles that had come from the works of Štúr. Their ideological legacy was inspired by the philosophy of J. G. Herder and G. W. F. Hegel, which Štúr first transformed into the *romantic-realistic conception* of thinking (Pichler, 2001, pp. 111–116).

Its substance in this phase was an effort to maximize the national rights guarateed by law and to use them without regard to the real abilities of the Slovak inhabitants. However, Štúr changed this approach in the last phase of his life on the basis of appropriation of the ideas of the Russian Messianism and Slavophilism,[4] and writer Jonáš Záborský (Krištof, 2013) as well as Ján Palárik stood openly resolved against these aims.[5] The continuers of Štúr's political legacy at the beginning of the 1860s were integrated into the so-called Martin Wing (the so-called Old School).[6] Its activities were organized around the periodical *Pešťbudínske vedomostí* [*Pest-Buda news*] and denoted national conservatism and Romantic idealism with an emphasis on carrying out aims without regard to the circumstances. Such an interconnection of ethical ideal and politics, theory and practice was characterized within ethics of conviction (Weber, 2004, pp. 83–84). Its essential feature is an effort to realize the idea as an ethically justified aim, regardless of circumstances and possible negative consequences. The legitimacy of this action is based on the emotion and personal persuasion of the moral value to realize this idea through political action. In this case the historical task to guarantee, institutionally, the national development and existence of the Slovak people. The intellectual approach of representatives of the Old School regarding the expansion of political and cultural rights was framed in particular by abstract conceptions of the philosophy of history and the preferred programme unity of the Slovak intelligentsia. That was inspired mainly by the philosophy of history and

[4] The philosophical-political discourse that took place in Russia in the first half of the 19th century also had an impact on Slovak thinking through the work of Ľudovít Štúr. In this period in Tsarist Russia a debate between so-called "westerners", who sought inspiration in the modernization of Russia in the institutional and cultural environment of Europe (P. J. Chaadayev, Nikolai I. Nadezhdin, T. N. Granovskij etc.), and "Slavophiles" (A. Khomyakov, K. Aksakov, P. V. Kirejevskij, I. etc.) was already taking place. These held positions defending Russian culture, political and religious exclusivity. Among the basic theses of Russian Slavophiles were thoughts idealizing Russian cultural, religious and political specifics. Their thinking reflecting Russia and its cultural traditions founded on the principle of "enlightened tsarism", "velikoderžaija" [big government] and Orthodox spirituality also had an influence on Slovak intellectuals. They became a model in the realizing of national institutionalization of Slovaks, especially in connection with Štúr's work *Das Slawenthum und die Welt der Zukunft* [*Slavism and the World of the Future*] (Štúr, 1993; Lopatková, 2019; Haraksim, 2011; Plašienková, Rusnák & Florio, 2019; Jahelka, 2018).

[5] Palárik entered into the public sphere through the journal *Cyril a Metod*, which began being published in Banská Štiavnica from 14th March, 1850. In it he devoted himself primarily to the issue of reform of the church environment in the context of the enlightened approach of the priest Bernard Bolzano. His thinking and approach to the need for the transformation of ecclesiastical law, even then, already had a visible overlap into politics.

[6] This was that part of the younger Štúr generation which interpreted and defended in a traditionalist way the text of the Martin Memorandum, which originated at a meeting on 6th and 7th June, 1861 in Turčianský Svätý Martin. The demand made in it for the creation of an administrative unit of Upper Hungary, the Slovak environs, which was populated predominately by Slovak-speaking people, became a point of conflict among Slovak intellectuals. The position regarding this demand ultimately led to differentiation of the Slovak political elite into the mentioned groups, the so-called Old School and the New School (Hollý, 2011).

the thinking of Hegel in the way that it reflected national existence as the highest degree of the realization of The Ghost in history.

The progressive understanding of historical development concerning Ľudovít Štúr also became naturally evident in the press proof of the individual Slavic nations. His historical optimism unfolded from the potential of the spiritual increase of the Slavic nations in connection with the idea of the civilization mission of Slavic patriotism. Its source in the Slovak thinking are also the reflections of Johann Gottfried Herder and by him emphasized demonstrations of traditional folk culture and Slavic virtues, which are integrated in the value of humanity. We encounter them initially via Ján Kollár and, also, later in Štúr's thinking. The influence of Herder is shown on the places where the mentioned thinkers extract Slavic virtues, where they make reference to, for example, courage, persistence, humanity. By Štúr is their development subsequently connected with the ethical conviction that it is correct to push the national rights of the Slovak people since their development is in accordance with an inevitable historical evolution. An alternative political approach of intellectuals around Ján Palárik, Ján Nepomuk Bobula and their sympathizers subsequently formed around the editorial staff of *Slovenské noviny* [*Slovak News*] (1868–1875) and the so-called New School.

Their political programme approached resolution of the issue of national equality from the perspective of a Hungarian patriot, civic liberalism and advocacy of the ideas of political pluralism, freedom of expression and cooperation. In the context of the debate with representatives of the so-called Old School, Palárik emphasizes: "Please, don't immediately preach that every removed opinion is a national betrayal, as if you were national popes and every one of your words dogma. We believe in dogma only in religion, but in politics we want to have freedom of thought and belief" (Palárik, 1956, p. 118). Their central principle was the gradual promotion of political and cultural rights with an emphasis on considering the possibility of real implementation of their goals and minimizing any negative consequences. This strategy of negotiation was framed especially by ethics of responsibility. Its substance was to implement the same aim as by Štúr, an independent development of the Slovak people as a nation in the monarchy. The emphasis was on the responsible choice of the strategy, which also reflected possible negative consequences of the implementation of the given political aim as well as the then state of the cultural and political development of the Slovak people.

This approach did not have the form of abstract reflections about the philosophy of history, but it was aimed at the practical realization of the changes in social practice. Also, for this reason, Palárik, in his journalism, did not directly argue against the works of Hegel. The realization of the national and civil rights, in the thinking of the New School, unfolded, mainly from the practically focused philosophy, an effort to broaden the political maturity and civil competency of the people. Thus, in the given situation the ideas of Romantic idealism where the political action is motivated by feeling, emotionality and abstractly legitimized good intentions and empirical pragmatism, which takes into consideration practical rationality and the importance of political responsibility for the decisions to realize the chosen, ethically justified aims. The central thesis of the New School programme, which drew its ideas from the works of Ján Palárik, became Štúr's reinterpreted idea of the *unity of the different*. Štúr had articulated this in the linguistic context of a defence of the rights to one's own written language (Štúr, 1953, p. 244) and expanded its original content characterised by Ján Kollár (Kollár, 1837).

The intellectual approaches of both mentioned groups of Slovak intellectuals differed especially in the emphasis on the gradualness of steps for implementing national institutionalization and the formation of civic awareness. Representatives of the Martin Wing attempted to obtain institutional recognition on the basis of power intervention from the political centre. Their effort to realize the national rights of Slovak people proceeded from the idea that a good ethically legitimate aim should be politically asserted in every situation without

taking into consideration the possible consequences of their political action. The concentration on the realization of the chosen aim without taking into consideration appropriate means that limit it, is considered to be one of the essential aspects of Štúr's thinking, where the ethics of conviction is manifested. The nation-building project of *Slovenské noviny* [*Slovak News*][7] emphasized the importance of the idea of the *unity of the different*, the application of which also expanded into the sphere of the political framework of Hungary. In this way they accepted in their thinking Herder's idea of the *unity of the different* and they broadened its application from the level of culture and language into the civic sphere.[8]

They were aware that the springboard introduction of rights would not have the expected positive effect, if people do not acquire political skills though progressive political education.[9] They considered the disseminating of civic culture through the acculturation function of associations, newspapers and schools as an essential prerequisite for the success of forming civic culture in a framework of creating ethical responsibility. They thought that education of the people, especially in their mother tongue, together with amendment of laws relating to education and the municipal sphere were the primary tools for expanding the political skills of individuals. The journalistic activities of Ján Palárik and later the *New Slovak School* represented by J. N. Bobula (Franková, 2018, pp. 58–69) emphasized especially the principle of gradual and systematic expansion of association activities and the civic ethos within Hungary. Palárik defined these in his programme text *Nová škola* [*The New School*] (Palárik, 1956, pp. 109–118). The essence of their activities was also the effort to cooperate with moderate Hungarian intellectuals and parties. They saw in a strategy carried out in this way a real possibility of elevating the social and economic status of the common people in parallel. They perceived this as an important attribute for improving political skills, awareness of the importance of ethical standards, and responsibility for public matters within them. In this approach to the social reality we can find some aspects of ethics of responsibility that distinguishes and strictly judges the consequences of the political decisions concerning the realization of the chosen aim.

According to Palárik, the moral knowledge of the people and the will to use it in public policy is expressed only if the people know valid law and resolutely carry it out. In the article *Otázka národnosti a nasledovne i literatúry pri novom politickom preporodení Uhorska* [*The question of nationality and subsequently of literature during the new political rebirth of Hungary*] he writes in this context. "Those moral reasons must also be strengthened by legal physical ones, i.e. we must work with resolute will, words and deeds so that we make national rights applicable in life on the path of legality. Otherwise, this will only be negative for us, i.e. the fact that no one denies it in theory; it will be positive, real, valid only when we introduce it in practice, i.e. into life" (Palárik, 1956, p. 41). Without an expansion of the civic ethos, according to Palárik, recognized rights remain only formal and maximizing them may be politically counterproductive. The reason for such a conclusion was the nature of the political discourse of the time, which was radicalized under the influence of Hungarian nationalism.

[7] Aside from Bobula and Palárik, we can also place Ján Mallý among those representatives who were active as journalists in Slovak newspapers in various stages of their activities as well as Ladislav Jeszenszký, Móric Philadelphi, Koloman Banšell, Jozef Straković, Daniel Bachát, Jakub Graichmann and others.

[8] In this way, Palárik did not follow ideologically Herder's thesis about the civilization mission of the Slavs in the context of reflections about the completion of history through the realization of the principle of humanity. In this aspect was his approach completely different from the reflections of Ľ. Štúr. Palárik in his articles did not develop the narrative of idealization of the folk forms of culture inspired by Herder. He considered the public commitment with the aim of broadenening and with the action to secure their cultural and political rights, to be a sign of cultural maturity.

[9] Their activities concentrated on increasing the possibilities of education and participation of common people led, among other things, to the founding of the publishing house *Minerva* and the *Národno-demokratického slovenského spolku* [*National-democratic Slovak Association*] in Pest (Kačírek, 2016).

Attributes of ethics of responsibility in the thinking of Ján Palárik

The deliberations and articles of Ján Palárik focus on the realization of national and civic liberty with an emphasis on ethics of responsibility. Contrary to this, we can also see in Slovak cultural and philosophical discourse a model of ethics of principle. This is based on maximizing the legal guarantee of rights without regard to the political awareness of individuals. The distinction of the outlined ethical concepts for the development of the cultural identity of Slovak intellectuals is philosophical-political in essence. This is evident in the choice of and emphasis on divergent political means while preserving commonly reflected political goals. We can also note the difference in the method of their use and in the legitimization of the selected strategy. Ján Palárik in following the common goal (national institutionalization of the Slovaks) started from the ideas of the emphasized principles of constitutional liberalism, the guaranteeing of language rights when using the mother tongue in the school system and evolutionary development of civic skills. Such a concept of shaping democratic attitudes was inspired by the Anglo-Saxon philosophical tradition of reflecting the relationship of theory and practice.

In it the philosophical concept and theory were not unilaterally superior to practice but were connected with it on the basis of analysing the consequences of its application. An important aspect in Ján Palárik's thinking was thus the moment of removing the unrealistic, romantic aspects of Slovak political thinking and goals, which were a part of the appropriation of abstract philosophical constructs within philosophical history. The result of Palárik's journalism was thus a legitimizing of the idea of practical reasonableness, which emphasizes the importance of a gradual, practically orientated education in which the negative consequences of political perfectionism and the incorrect perception of ideals are absent. The ideas of practical reasonableness in line with ethics of responsibility consider a priori philosophically determined cultural and political goals as problematic. The reason for this statement is that no social limits exist in such a deductive and rationalistic approach to carrying out natural rights. The pragmatism of Ján Palárik stands in opposition to this rationalistic approach to reality. In it we find the basis of modern liberal thinking, which emphasizes the practical importance of philosophy, i.e. realism and the shift away from abstract rationalism. Representatives of philosophical rationalism were able to form a modern projection of the ideal of social equality and freedom.

However, in an effort to maximize them and rapidly implement them (with respect to the historical exceptionality of the political situation in the revolutionary years of 1848/1849 and Ľ. Štúr) they abstracted from objective determinants of the life of the common people of that time. Palárik articulated a different approach to resolving cultural and civic equality in opposition to this idealistic concept of politics. He put emphasis on ethics of responsibility in the scope of a gradual introduction of rights and freedoms into public life.[10] This involved a concept that respected the principle of so-called empirical democracy. The result of such a connection of ethics and politics is public activity, which is aware of its practical restrictions and limits. A final decision in line with ethics of responsibility is thus always reflected by the cultural, educational, economic and religious specifics of a society and the individual regions within a state (Marchuk, 2016). The positive consequences of legal regulations, according to Palárik, also depend to a significant measure on the practically focused reasonableness of elites and their responsibilities.[11]

[10] In this point Palárik started from the period assumptions relating to the development of rights and freedoms, such as Ľudovít Štúr in his pre-revolutionary, romantic-realistic thinking.

[11] In reflections on the relation of political theory and practice the followers of Ján Palárik were aware that philosophical rationalism is not a synonym of practical reasonableness. This namely assumes taking empirical limits into account (Sartori, 1987, pp. 51–55).

For this reason, a programme effort for systematic expansion of the possibilities for educating people became a part of Palárik's public engagement. The progress of national self-awareness of the Slovak-speaking population and the forming of a civic ethos were joined with this process.[12] This important aspect of forming a collective identity in the process of modernization can especially be created through the public activities of individuals. This, however, was limited by several objective socioeconomic, legal and cultural factors. For this reason Palárik emphasized the importance of parallel development of association, cultural and economic activities from below. The reason was the fact that if the state does not observe valid laws in the sphere of education, then educators must provide educational activities, especially on the organizational side.

In connection with resolution of the issue of national inequality of rights, Palárik emphasized in particular the benefit of introducing and developing the principle of the division of power. He sees in constitutionalism the possibility of carrying out the process of decentralization of state institutions in the direction of local self-government. This projected development, in his opinion, will create better opportunities for exercising civil rights in Hungary, which may be positively expressed in the growth of patriotism. He thus perceived the introducing of horizontal divisions of power and at the same time vertical decentralization as an important attribute for ensuring social integrity. The political thinking of Palárik in this situation specifically connected Romantic ideas based on national sentiment, the demands for national equality with Enlightenment ideas emphasizing the practical importance of reason and the right to education with the concept of ethics of responsibility. At the same time he also developed in it the idea of social liberalism, which emphasized the importance of state institutions in this process. Palárik's aim of the evolutionary acculturation of the people in this context also emphasized the support of this process from the Slovak-speaking middle class, lower nobility and landowners.

He also took this approach in situations that some laws coming from the logic of constructionalism were included in the political order of the monarchy only formally and with time limitations.[13] In the context of raising the level of political awareness of the common people, he also reflected the importance of expanding the space for public discussion on the basis of freedom of expression. "The constitution permits freedom of speech, the freedom to spread one's convictions, the freedom to petition, the freedom of association, and if we Slovaks don't use them wisely on the path to legality, then we will lose them" (Palárik, 1956, p. 30).[14] He perceived print media in this phase of formation of political literacy on the level of the masses as an essential means of spreading the principles of political pluralism and the formation of civic culture. This was to acquire a more organized and autonomous form with time. The educational-political influence of the press also had, in Palárik's opinion, importance in the context of accelerating the cultural integration of Slovaks, as, at the same time, it substituted for the insufficient functioning of the state education system in the conditions of Hungary. Such a form of socialization should have contributed not only to the expansion of vertical (national) integration but also to the successful engagement of the wider population in the formation of political structures. Promotion of the principles of Enlightenment liberalism, constitutionalism, ideological pluralism (*unity of the different*), tolerance and legitimization of rights of the

[12] For this reason, the development of elementary and secondary school education was among the priorities of the New School. This fact is also documented in the organization of a petition for establishing five purely Slovak and six mixed state grammar schools in 1869.

[13] This category of laws includes the acceptance of the so-called nationalist Act No. 44/1868 and Act No. 38/1868 on Teaching in Primary Schools. These acts did not satisfy all the expectations of Palárik and followers of the New School, but they created, by law, space for the development of the Slovak nation-building process.

[14] Compare with Palárik's article *Čo máme očakávať od konštitúcie uhorskej pre našu národnosť a čo nám teraz predovšetkým treba?* [*What Should We Expect from the Constitution of Hungary for Our Nation and What Do We Mainly Need?*] (Palárik, 2010, pp. 44–49).

individual in the thinking of Ján Palárik was bound to the reception of the ideas of Charles de Montesquieu.

> In aristocratic, monarchist, absolutist and despotic states the people may be simple, unenlightened and uneducated, because what is asked of them there is only a strict obedience and willing fulfilment of higher commands, for which mental blindness and ignorance are certainly better hosted than enlightenment and education – in fact, they would actually be harmful and dangerous for the state. 'Strict obedience', says Montesquieu, 'presupposes ignorance and blindness from the side of those who obey' (Palárik, 1956, p. 64).[15]

In the article *Práva ľudu a zákony roku 1848* [*The rights of the people and the laws of 1848*] he mentions the connection - in context, the interconnection – of the values of freedom and civic responsibility with education: "Because whoever has the right to a goal must also have the right to the means. But without sufficient enlightenment, education and political maturity already, the people cannot enjoy, nor respect, nor further develop, improve, nor hinder the political freedom granted to them in by the laws of 1848" (Palárik, 1956, p. 64). However, Palárik connected the spreading of the Enlightenment as a basic attribute of political liberalism in the 19th century with an emphasis on the mentioned social dimension. The central figure in the context of social liberalism in the Anglo-Saxon environment is John Stuart Mill. In his conception of developmental democracy, he connected the development of the individual rights and freedoms in particular with the development of so-called positive rights. The state should ensure their implementation through mass access to the education system and by guaranteeing freedom of speech, the press and organizations.

Even though Palárik does not explicitly refer to J. S. Mill's thinking, it is evident from the context of his published opinions that he was familiar with his views, as well as with the process of liberalization of rights in England. The reason for this conclusion is the fact that, like Mill, Palárik emphasized the need for the gradual expansion of civic rights depending on the level of education attained. Without the involvement of state institutions in the process of educating the people, the process of liberalization would be difficult to implement. The connection of state activities with the tasks of expanding the education of the people and their participation in politics was, in Palárik, framed by the already mentioned concept of ethics of responsibility. In its essence, we consider a programme of democratic politics founded on an understanding of the importance of shaping the ethical and civic responsibilities of the individual. In this context, political literacy is perceived not only as a means of becoming aware of one's own rights and freedoms, but also a tool for shaping an individual's morals and character.

Political consequences of ethics of responsibility in the thinking of Ján Palárik

In Ján Palárik we find clearly articulated sympathies for a gradual, evolutionary nation-building strategy. His disagreement with the achieving of political and cultural rights and freedoms in a revolutionary way is also understandable in view of the revolutionary experience of 1848/1849.[16] He sees in the development of the Hungarian constitutional system the best way

[15] Palárik accordingly, like Montesquieu, emphasized the coherence between the principles and level of education and values which the given political regime is carrying out. In his most well-known work, *The Spirit of Laws*, Montesquieu mentions that laws differ depending on the types of government. He considers an establishment where the people participate in the exercise of political power and where the nominal holders of power acquire civic virtues as a democratic regime. In democratic regimes, this is associated with respect for the law, equality, government in the public interest and a sense of civic solidarity and patriotism (Montesquieu, 2001, pp. 37–67).

[16] We find a similar departure from the positive reflection of the revolution, for example, in the Czech thinking of Karel Havlíček. He notes, among other things, in connection with the preference of the positives of gradual education of the people over revolutionary change. "Revolutions, rebellions, can also free a nation from oppressors – but only for a time, because if the whole nation is not educated, there will soon be wise men who will otherwise

to secure the cultural demands of individual nations. In the context of resolving the dispute over governmental organization between the representatives of centralization or federalization of the Habsburg monarchy, Palárik comes out in favour of the federalist idea. In this context, he again led the debate with representatives of the younger members of Štúr's generation. In the article *Na dorozumenie* [*For Understanding*] he writes:

> They see the salvation of the Slovak nation in the centralization of Austria. They fought in the 'Vienna Diary' and in brochures as early as 1850 for the centralization of Austria against the federalists, namely against Havlíček; they supported the centralist system of government at least indirectly by fighting for a 'patent'; and now they hope for 'Slovakia environs' from the centralist German government!! – I cannot, not from a Slovak nor from a higher Slavic position, cosy up to such principles. My conviction – I repeat it once again – is: to revive, defend and, by all possible means permitted by the constitution, bring to life the rights of our Slovak nationality, but at the same time to firmly hold with the Hungarian side against the centralist German side while retaining rights, and later, in solidarity with all Hungarian and Austrian Slavs, exacting the others that we still lack (Palárik, 1956, p. 82).[17]

In his view, the federal arrangement of the monarchy should have created more effective solutions to the issue of inequality of nations. Palárik assumed that the principle of subsidiarity could be applied more effectively in such a gradual process of the transformation of society. Palárik's federalism was thus based on the notion of the equality of culturally defined nations.

> Thus, justice, and again only justice towards other nationalities living in Hungary, is the only way by which the great work of the new political rebirth of our Hungarian country can be happily accomplished... Now, after a decade of experience of sincere reconciliation and dispassionate, healthy judgement, let us give way. But mutual recognition and justice is this exception. Do not think, you stronger [ones], that you do not need the weaker [ones], or that he cannot harm you, but promise him justice. Fear not the strong, you weak, if you see righteousness and the law prevail in him. May God grant that the peace and prosperity of our Hungarian homeland be modelled on this solid foundation of justice (Palárik, 1956, pp. 39–40).

In this context, the logical consequence of Palárik's political ideas is emphasizing the need for broad political cooperation with regard to the existence of common goals and values. This attitude of his was reflected in the efforts of the New School to develop collaboration in the context of the liberalization of the election, an education and nationality law, as well as with moderate members of the Hungarian political representation.[18] This central aspect of Palárik's thinking was supplemented with a similar demand regarding the development of political and cultural-literary cooperation of the Slavic nations in the monarchy. Palárik assumed that federalization of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy would lead to the creation of better conditions

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be able to impose the old despotism and oppression of the nation on their necks" (Havlíček, 1986, p. 231). (Havlíček, 1986, p. 231). This ideological analogy between Palárik and Karel Havlíček also demonstrates the close perception of political discourse between Czech and Slovak scholars (Havlíček, 2007, pp. 249–254).

[17] Similarly, in the article *Nová škola* [*The New School*] in an Austro-sceptic approach he recalls that it is impossible to expect "salvation from unreliable supporters and assistants in Vienna, but from the power of the nation itself, according to 'help yourself and God will help you' preferring to look for friends, supporters and loyal allies here at home" (Palárik, 1956, p. 114).

[18] From this perspective, it's necessary to mention the efforts of Ján N. Bobula in the late 1860s. In this period, he tried to establish cooperation with representatives of the Hungarian far left (for example, with Virgil Szilágyi) organized around the magazine *Magyar Ujság.* At the same time, they also developed cooperation with Adolf Szentiványi and Pavol Madocsányi as members of the Hungarian Diet.

for cultural self-government in individual parts of the state.[19] He also connected the benefit of federalization with the possibility of applying the idea of Slavic reciprocity as a suitable broker of the emancipatory efforts of Slavic nations in the monarchy. We can also mention the article *O vzájomnosti slovanskej* [*On Slavic Reciprocity*] among those that articulate the close connection of the above-mentioned ideas (Palárik, 1956, pp. 173–192). In it he distances himself from the perception of the idea of Slavic reciprocity, the aim of which should be the political and cultural unification of the Slavs.

He regards free cooperation and practical cultural and political assistance in promoting the principles of national equality within existing states to be its essence. In this aspect, Palárik did not follow Hegel's philosophical reflections where he reflects the national state as the highest level of the social organisation that has a priori legitimacy. Palárik reflected the meaning of a state in close connection to the realization of the basic functions of the development of society where he also included also the development of the national and civic rights. For this reason he did not identify with Hegel's idea that the highlight of the historical development of society is an institutional covering of the nation by the state. Palárik did not ideologically establish Štúr's interpretation of Hegel's philosophy of history from which he unfolded his idea of an approaching highlight of a civilization dispute between The West and The East. In this dispute should have been the unity of Slavic patriotism under the cultural and political hegemony of the Russian nation as an exclusive bearer of the essentiality of Slavic patriotism. Palárik pointed out the risks of spreading the idea of Slavic reciprocity in the form of political pan-Slavism. He publicly distanced himself from such an unrealistic notion on the content of Slavic cooperation, the result of which was to be the cultural and political unification of Slavic nations.

In this context, his pragmatic and critical view of the role of Russia, or Russian political elites, at that time on the issue of resolving national equality in the Habsburg monarchy is understandable. Palárik respected the contribution of Russian culture and literature in relation to Slovak culture. However, in the field of the political struggle for civil and collective rights, he did not seek real support (in contrast to the Messianistic vision of Štúr and the later idealism of Hurban-Vajanský) among representatives of Russian political elites (Martinkovič, 2011). He considered the attachment of some Slavic scholars to Russia as a state actor that will intervene in resolving the issue of the inequality of nations in the Habsburg monarchy as a counterproductive mystification and a consequence of applying ethics of conviction. In the above-mentioned article *O vzájomnosti slovanskej* [*On Slavic reciprocity*] Palárik states in this context:

> [D]ue to the misunderstanding of Slavic reciprocity by some Slavs, a misconception about political pan-Slavism has spread throughout all of Europe in this sense: as if the efforts of Slavs were really directed towards Russian centralization. How much such misleading perceptions of Slavic reciprocity have harmed the Slavs can in no way be described. (...) And this misunderstanding, which has damaged us so much, was caused by some overzealous apostles of Slavic reciprocity through the use of fiery, often impetuous, or insufficiently certain expressions of sympathy for the Russians, as they understood those sympathies in the political sense" (...) We embrace the Russian nation with all-Slavic love and wish it well in its national development and noble efforts for civil and political freedom, and in the spirit of genuine Slavic reciprocity we want to support it (Palárik, 1956, pp. 191–192).[20]

[19] Palárik's principle text advocating federalization of the monarchy in connection with emphasis on the free cooperation of Slavs is a set of articles in *Slovenské noviny* [*Slovak News*] titled *Účel Austrie pod centralizmom a dualizmom* [*The purpose of Austria under centralism and dualism*] (Palárik, 1956, pp. 84–108).

[20] Thus, even in this context, the last stage of Štúr's political thinking, who uncritically appeals to the political, religious and cultural significance of Russia in the implementation of the national institutionalization of the Slavic nations, seems to be a complete denial of its previous nation-building.

According to Palárik, such a form of Slavic cooperation, which sees its essence in mutual culturally enrichment, leads to the securing of national rights. This is founded on political cooperation while respecting state borders, national specifics and the value of civic rights and freedoms. Palárik was aware of the differences and cultural and religious specifics between the individual Slavic nations and the state of development of individual states. For this reason, he reflects on Slavic reciprocity not as an abstract idea but as a platform for voluntary cooperation in ensuring freedom and national equality. Palárik openly distances himself from the content of pan-Slavic reciprocity, whose ideal is to create a unified empire of Slavs under Tsarist Russia.[21] In addition, he rejects the delimitation of Ján Kollár's Slavic reciprocity to only the sphere of culture and literature (Palárik, 1956, pp. 183–184). Palárik connects the foundation of Slavic reciprocity in relation to the idea of the *unity of the different* with the development of mutual organizational and financial cooperation without separatist, disintegrating consequences for existing states. Here again, a concept of ethics of responsibility that respects the framework of constitutional principles, practical reasonableness and pluralism is evident in Palárik.

Conclusion

The development of the individual attributes of ethics of responsibility in connection with the principles of civic liberalism in Slovak political thought of the second half of the 19th century is tied to the thinking of Ján Palárik. His political considerations arise from an effort to characterize and achieve functional reform of the state organization of the monarchy on the basis of constitutionalism and federalization. In Palárik's view, these attributes should bring more effective solutions to the issue of educating the people in their mother tongue. He considered the exercise of this right as a starting point for the creation of a civic political culture. A component of Palárik's articles is the defence of freedom of speech, the idea of pluralism, a gradual strategy for realizing national and civil freedom, i.e. the asserting of political rights from below. In this context, he implemented Štúr's idea of the *unity of the different* into the Hungarian political framework. He also applied an expanded idea of the *unity of the different* to Slavic reciprocity.

He found its essence and meaning in free and voluntary cooperation in the fulfilment of national and civil rights of the Slavic nations in the Habsburg monarchy. His realistic approach in the perception of the role of Russia in the national emancipation process of the Slovaks was framed by knowledge of the political limits of the Tsarist establishment. In Palárik's political-philosophical thinking we find an appropriation of the Enlightenment philosophical tradition and its reflection of the relationship between the individual and society, in which emphasis was placed on the value of the individual and the principle of equality in the exercise of freedom. The intensity of an individual's participation in the political framework and his social status in this concept are related especially to the level of education achieved. This is a prerequisite for the acquisition of civic skills. At the same time, we also find elements of German idealistic philosophy in the political thinking of Palárik, which stressed the importance of the whole, which in his thinking we can find in the emphasis on the interconnectedness of the development of individual (civic) and collective (national) rights within the borders of monarchy.

He linked the development of the state with the application of the principles of practical reasonableness and ethics of responsibility. He found its essence in the understanding the

[21] "Slavic reciprocity leaves foreign nations and governments at peace; it does not disturb the right of others, (...) it only wants the right of Slavic nations to also be protected by other, namely ruling governments, and the national development and prosperity of Slavs to be ensured in the states in which they live" (Palárik, 1956, p. 184). This stance regarding the content of the idea of Pan-Slavism, which was to lead to the integration of Slavic nations into one state under Russian domination, was subsequently rejected by other representatives of the New School. Their attitude emerged from reflections on the views of part of the Russian elite. This fact is evidenced, for example, by an article by Koloman Banšell *My a panslavizmus* [*We and Pan-Slavism*] (Banšell, 1873).

interconnectedness of political aims and ideals, which were to be reflected in close association with the real limitations of the abilities of individuals and social circumstances. Thus, the struggle for the implementation of the principles of national and civic equality is, in Ján Palárik's view, closely connected with the level of acculturation of the individual and with the development of his legal, civic and ethical awareness of responsibility for himself and his surroundings. In addition, on the basis of Palárik's writings, the importance of civic culture in the nation-building process began to be reflected in the environment of Slovak-speaking elites, the basic content of which includes awareness of the value of the freedom of speech and the press, the principle of pluralism and civic solidarity with other members of society. For this reason, Palárik emphasizes the importance of forming public institutions which are helpful in the creation of an environment in which an individual develops responsibility for his own freedom.

This individualizing emphasis (Gellner, 1998, pp. 14–39) creates in parallel the potential for the development of democratic processes and simultaneously cultural specifics as the basis for the development of Hungarian patriotism based on the principles of ethics of responsibility and equality. Even though Palárik's programme of development of a civic ethos did not find wider political support at that time, it was a major contribution in the public discourse of Slovak scholars. His ideas of a necessary connection between the development of national individuality and civil freedom on the basis of the principle of ethics of responsibility led to the disruption of the intellectual monopoly of the historical-romantic concept of Ľudovít Štúr and his successors. Palárik's thinking thus contributed to the establishment of a new progressive current in Slovak political-philosophical thinking.

Acknowledgement
This article was supported by the project "Procesy recepcie a apropriácie ideí v dejinách filozofického a politického myslenia na Slovensku" [Processes of reception and appropriation of ideas in the history of philosophical and political thought in Slovakia: conceptualization of key issues], VEGA project no. 2/0116/19.

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Ethics & Bioethics (in Central Europe), 2020, 10 (3–4), 146–154 DOI:10.2478/ebce-2020-0020

Ethical aspects of the non-romantic thinking of Jonáš Záborský and Štefan Launer

Pavol Krištof[1]

Abstract

The paper focuses on the thinking of Jonáš Záborský (1812–1876) and Štěpán Launer (1821–1851), which were marginalized in Slovak national-forming thinking. Emphasis is placed on the comparison between non-romantic nationalism and Štúr's ethnic enthusiasm. Attention is paid to the value of their thinking, which can be analyzed in the context of reflections in the role of cultural identity in Štúr's conception of culture and its place in relation to European cultural and civilizational affiliation. At the same time, the critique of romantic thinking draws attention to the issue of the responsibility of nation-forming elites for the concept of civic development, which holistically approaches social change. Launer's and, partly Záborský's thinking draws attention to the dangers associated with the romantic search for ethnocultural specifics, which may result in the questioning the importance of civil liberties and Western cultural and civilizational affiliation.

Keywords: responsibility, nation, nationalism, culture, institutionalization, romanticism, enthusiasm

Introduction

While the national principle did not play a more relevant role in pre-industrial societies, political tendencies aimed at increasing cultural homogeneity and the associated pressures on cultural assimilation did not have a significant impact (Gellner, 1983, p. 63). This principle became significant only in social modernization, linked to a specific type of standardized culture capable of solving modern organizational structures' tasks. As a result, disputes over the concepts of official and language of instruction come to the fore, which were critical factors in the standardization of political and administrative structures in multiethnic societies, such as Hungary in 19th century.[2] Nationalism was an accompanying phenomenon of these structural changes in society. From this point of view, the national revivalists' role can also be interpreted in the context of social change, which have redefined collective identities and the associated loyalty to political institutions (Rusnák, 2019, pp. 190–192).

Ethnic enthusiasm, which was characterized by an emotional quality of thought and defense of the nation in the spirit of moral values, played an essential role in clashes between rival conceptions of nationalism. The distinguishing criterion between these concepts was the political-territorial or ethnocultural aspect (Pichler, 1998, pp. 111–112), while the participants in the modernization dispute, as bearers of ideas, interpreted this tension as a clash between patriotism and cultural equality. Through emotional perception, a low level of national awareness was interpreted as indifference to the process of ethnocultural emancipation. It can be said that this question had a moral character for national elites, because they understood the growth of national consciousness in the sense of the need to change the value orientation and the moral uplifting of society.

Záborský's non-romantic thinking

Although in the pre-revolutionary period, the similarities between Štúr and Záborský's philosophical conceptions can be stated, even at this time, their approaches to understanding the role of the people and elites in the national-forming process differed. Záborský's liberal, civic-national program was formulated as cultural and enlightening, and so it has a

[1] Trnava University (Slovakia); pavol.kristof@truni.sk

[2] The text describes Hungary as part of the multi-ethnic Habsburg monarchy. It is therefore not a Hungarian nation state that was established after the World War I.

predominantly national-emancipatory character. A specific feature of his thinking, which distinguishes it from the prevailing current of romantic nationalism, was his non-romantic, critical approach to the nation-forming process. He was also critical of Štúr's ethical romanticism of revolutionary action,[3] which puts exaggerated hopes in the "great deeds" and heroic actions through which radical social change occurs (Pichler, 1998, p. 108). According to Záborský, the nation-building effort cannot be led by the ambition to pursue romantic ideals, regardless of specific social and historical circumstances. Decision-making should be based on knowledge of social reality and national needs. In his practical morality, Záborský emphasized the critical approach based on common sense (*obecný rozum*), which he contrasted with romantic thinking and Hegel's philosophy when he wrote: "I am for life, reality and common sense" (Záborský, 1989, p. 328).

Záborský, like Ján Kollár, understood the nation as a natural community of speech, culture and customs (Záborský, 1988, p. 184). Based on the idea of Slavic reciprocity, he defined national identity in the broader context of a tribally differentiated Slavic nation (Maxwell, 2009, s. 96). However, unlike Ján Kollár, he did not necessarily consider the process of spreading national consciousness to be apolitical and did not completely rule out the possibility of forming a national identity through political institutions. Like Kollár, Záborský also warned against an orientation that would lead to the establishment of nationalism of small nations and an emphasis on own national individuality, which would lead to the establishment of provincial culture.

We can say that Jonáš Záborský complemented the ethnic enthusiasm influenced by Kollár with a civic ethos, thus connecting love for the nation with the need for civic unity and social understanding. Therefore, just as he refused to reduce social change to a top-down process, he did not limit public life to impersonal and formal relationships. Based on this knowledge, it can be stated that he understood patriotism in the sense of an acceptable form of coexistence of mature and equal citizens. A well-organized society cannot function if there is no unity among its citizens. Záborský did not assume that it was possible to run social changes and shape civil society without informal, friendly relations between confident and educated citizens. At the same time, he reformulated the understanding of patriotism, as defined by Kollár, out of love, or loyalty to the country, to cohesion among citizens. However, such relationships are only possible if the citizens are truly equal, including in the field of culture and speech. Without equality, the preconditions for civil liberties cannot be developed or kept. At the same time, Záborský considered civic unity crucial for the country's democratization and political development (Záborský, 1853, p. 188).

Based on the above, he confronted the people's romantic idealization with the everyday reality of social and economic passivity, illiteracy, and cultural backwardness.[4] He thought about their origins in demoralization and cultural decline caused by the absence of rights. Here he identified the causes of slavish servility, weakness, loss of interest in higher goals, and alcoholism, which the lower classes of the population were subjected to (Záborský, 1851, p. 165). Based on this fact, he stated the loss of value orientation. It could be said that the moral improvement of the people should be a prerequisite for national emancipation (Kalajtzidis, 2019, p. 91).

According to Záborský, the process of expanding civil rights cannot be carried out regardless of pre-political, i.e., cultural, educational and economic preconditions. As Záborský also states; the practical application of civil liberties in public life cannot be expected without cultural uplifting and the acquisition of civic virtues (Pichler, 1998, p. 107). Therefore, he considers the

[3] Gluchman draws attention to a certain "non-revolutionary" aspect of his thinking when he states in this connection that Záborský rejects disobedience to the nobility. According to him, the citizen should voluntarily accept the lordship and submit to it (Gluchman, 2012, p. 24).

[4] According to Pichler, Záborský distinguished between the people as a nation and the people as a specific social class (Pichler, 1998, p. 101).

change of individual moral attitudes to be an integral part of transforming the traditional into a prosperous civil society. According to Záborský, society's democratization should be accompanied by a change in the serf mentality into the civic culture. At the same time, this change requires a change in value orientation, a change in serf passivity into civic engagement. In this context, he saw the importance of the role of elites, in particular the lower nobility and clergy (Kalajtzidis, 2019, p. 90). In this case, too, he emphasized the role of socio-educational and folk education work focused on acculturation.[5] He also emphasizes the importance of gradual and purposeful action aimed at changing established patterns of behaviour.

He considered the persistent serf mentality to be one of the manifestations of this freedom's inability in public and economic life. At the same time, he states the predominant orientation towards pursuing personal benefits and interests. Therefore, he wrote about the need to change the value orientation. Its goal can be to acquire practical virtues and confident attitudes. Záborský considered general demoralization to be a remnant of the absence of rights among the lower strata of the population (Záborský, 1989, p. 141). The unfree mentality, together with the loss of national consciousness, which Záborský understood as a concrete manifestation of value orientation, influences the most severe social issues. Therefore, without the development of civic virtues, democratic principles in everyday life cannot be expected. Thus, the success of democratization affects the active participation of educated and confident individuals in public life. Thus, the goal of changes should be not only the formation of national identity, but also moral values and the acquisition of confident civic attitudes.

Likewise, by changing the orientation, as Záborský mentioned, the connecting ability of individuals to take the initiative and responsibility for public life also changes. Therefore, the process of nation formation requires a particular formation of autonomous cultural and public institutions. Thus, Záborský emphasizes the importance of social transformation in the area of political or legislative reforms and social relations that change individual attitudes. He was looking for differences between modern and traditional society in value orientation – national and civic ethos. Záborský points to the tension between a specific political organization's nature and civic emancipation and individual development. It also had consequences in terms of the organization and stability of social institutions. Without adequate civic engagement, the stability of a democratic order is unsustainable. Thus, civic organizations cannot perform without the essential activity of all strata of society (Záborský, 1853, p. 290).

Záborský's concept of enthusiasm

Záborský's enthusiasm can be considered problematic and atypical because it was seemingly at odds with his non-romantic nationalism. As mentioned above, his love for the nation was not blind to social ills. Therefore, he does not show a simple dichotomy of the nation and external threats (Záborský, 1956, s. 278). He formulated his understanding of national feeling mainly in the speech entitled *Ohavnost odrodilosti mezi námi Slováky* [*The abomination of denationalization among us Slovaks*], published together with the collection *Žehry* [*Complaints*] (Záborský, 1851). In it, he defined enthusiasm not only in terms of the binding demand for love for the nation, but, like Ján Kollár, defended it as a moral demand to spread and promote this feeling. Simultaneously, based on Kollár's conception, Záborský considered the effort mentioned above to elevate the nation to be a moral obligation. He identified a keen interest in national interests with an orientation towards the common good beyond the focus on private and individual interests (Záborský, 1851, pp. 180–181). Like Kollár, he also considered indifference to the nation as a manifestation of greed, limitation, corporeality, but also a loss of

[5] I use the terms political, socio-educational and folk educational work in the sense used by Elena Városssová in her work *Slovenské obrodenecké myslenie v kontexte prakticizmu Ľudovíta Štúra* [*Slovak revivalist thinking in the context of Ľudovít Štúr's practicism*] (Városssová, 1963, p. 45).

interest in higher goals (Záborský, 1853, p. 179). Záborský, thus, attributed the role of self-sacrificing and altruistic elites to ethnic enthusiasts (Záborský, 1989, p. 327). Orientation to the nation was to elevate its members beyond concern for their own needs and direct them to higher goals. He saw the spread of national consciousness and assimilation as an extreme manifestation of the relationship of individuals towards their nation (Záborský, 1989, p. 179). At the same time, he emphasized the moral dimension of the loss or change of national identity (Záborský, 1989, p. 298). Although he considered its purposeful change to be a moral failure, at the same time, it was a systematic way of gaining social benefits in Hungary at the time. He observed its causes in general moral decay and was not interested in culture and any higher goals.

However, Záborský's understanding of nationality as a moral category led him, like Kollár, to reject the possibility of choosing between a national and a civic principle. Even Záborský did not put a well-organized municipality and individual choice on one level.[6] It was the work and influence of *the renegades*, as he called those who, for particular personal reasons, changed their identity, that he considered more dangerous for the Slovak nation than the influence of external power factors (Záborský, 1851, p. 124).

Launer's non-romantic concept

Štěpan Launer (1821–1851) was an author with a unique position in the Slovak national revival context due to his non-romantic concept. We could say that his solution to the dilemma of Slavdom or Europeanism is, in many ways, similar to today's geopolitical debates in Slovakia. Although he was a student of Ľudovít Štúr, he sharply rejected his romantic revival program. However, it must be said that the savagery of his politically engaged pamphlets surpassed the contributions of other authors arguing about the Czech-Slovak literary schism (Pišút, 1949, p. 29). He earned the title of traitor to the nation for criticising Štúr's romantic nationalism and supporting the Hungarian revolution.

It can be said that the above-mentioned evaluation conclusions of the Štúrian movement were based on Kollár's view of the importance of ethnic enthusiasm. Ján Kollár, who, together with Záborský and Launer, was an opponent of the Štúrian national-forming program, considered the absence of national consciousness, or indifference to national life, to be a moral failure. At the same time, he attributed ethnic enthusiasm to the role of one of the main virtues that was supposed to complement the faith (Kollár, 1892, p. 4). Therefore, while he associated enthusiasm with an orientation towards universal values, he considered patriotism as a political principle to be artificial, focused primarily on partial goals. In Kollár's conception, the value of the nation, with its universal focus, outweighed particular political interests. At the same time, Kollár considered patriotism as a principle to be unstable and accidental, because it was to be as variable as political loyalty, which changes along with the change of citizenship.

Although Launer's philosophical conception showed certain ideological parallels with another "national sinner", Jonáš Záborský, their thinking differed not only in the starting points, especially in the evaluation of Hegel's philosophy, but also in the relationship between civic and national principles. However, Launer, like Záborský, emphasized the importance of political modernization and the expansion of political rights and freedoms, considering the issue of democratization to be inseparable from the expansion of education and traditional culture (Haydanka, 2014). For Launer, it was an enthusiasm that inspired his contemporaries to a nation he considered uneducated and culturally underdeveloped.[7] Like Záborský, he did not see a path

[6] Gellner writes of a great confrontation between rationalist individualism and romantic communitarianism. He combines individualism with the protection and enforcement of civil society rules. At the same time, it combines it with ethics that gives a good social order, which maximizes citizen satisfaction to one level (Gellner, 1998, p. 85).

[7] Marcel Martinkovič states that Ján Palárik, unlike Launer, emphasized the connection between the civic and national emancipation of the Slovak-speaking population (Martinkovič, 2013, p. 43).

in the national emancipation of the illiterate (Kalajtzidis, 2019, p. 90). Launer did not see value implications in cultural identity and we could say that, unlike Kollár, he considered loyalty to the constitution a virtue. At the same time, he denied that belonging to a linguistically and culturally defined social group would constitute a moral obligation for the individual that should affect loyalty to the state or affect compliance with the law. Similarly, he disagreed with the opinion that cultural identity should impact on the possibility of shaping civic individualism, or another, albeit more abstract, form of social cohesion.

For this reason, he was a sharp critic of Štúr's concept focused on national emancipation. Thus, in the eyes of the followers of Štúr, Launer betrayed the nation because he did not look for its peculiarity in folk culture but appreciated the importance of European education and the Hungarian constitution. It could be said that Launer realized that it was the issue of the formation of national identity, together with enthusiasm, that complicated the formation of civil society by introducing a contradiction between the *polis* and the *ethnos* (Pichler, 2006, p. 584). He did not attribute the value of nationality until it was enriched by science and culture. Although he understood national identity as natural, he also stated the need for its spirituality, cultivation and development (Launer, 1847a, p. 209). Therefore, it can be said that he considered education and civic competence to be more relevant values than the peculiarity of the *raw nature* of undeveloped and uncultivated ethnicity (Launer, 1847b, p. 7).

The issue of enthusiasm – politics and culture

It could be said that Launer also differed from his contemporaries in that he did not find politicum in the value of national culture when (Pišút, 1949, p. 29), unlike Záborský, he preferred patriotism to the ethnic principle. The same is true of liberal ideas and violent cultural assimilation, to which his contemporaries attributed critical relevance, he remained indifferent (Pichler, 2004, p. 704). Based on Kollár's narrative, in which love for the nation was to have moral validity, Launer, according to his contemporaries, including Záborský, sacrificed liberalism to the demand for cultural equality of non-Hungarian ethnic groups. Simultaneously, unlike Záborský, he considered civil liberties and the Hungarian constitution to be of higher value than cultural pluralism or linguistic equality. At the same time, he warned of the risks of a romantic search for national specifics, which he considered politically and historically irresponsible. At the same time, he anticipated the fact that Štúr's thinking in this way would lead to the questioning of the modern criteria of progress, liberalism and Western cultural-civilizational principles. Although, like Kollár, he stated that Slovaks have their origins in humanity and Slavdom, he preferred European cultural-civilizational affiliation to ethnocultural identity, which he considered more important than awareness of a common origin uniting Slavs (Launer, 1847a, p. v).

For these reasons, Launer's concept was characterized by an orientation towards social development, culminating in a constitutional and liberal arrangement. Based on Hegel's philosophy, he considers nations to be instruments through which the world spirit works (Launer, 1847a, p. v). However, in contrast to the romantic concept, Launer rejected the idea of a particular historical mission of the Slavs, which would go beyond the framework of the value orientation of Western culture, philosophy and constitutionalism. The historical task of Slavdom is to be "supplement the history of the Indo-European peoples" (Launer, 1847a, p. 110). The task of every great nation is to transform the general humanistic content into a specific national form. At the same time, like Záborský, progress in the field of politics is, according to him, conditioned by development in all areas of social life. Therefore, the stimulus for social development cannot draw inspiration from folk culture, but its institutionalization and development of science (Pichler, 2004, p. 704). We could say that Launer differed from his

contemporaries precisely in that he considered education more important for the development of value orientation than enthusiasm for folk culture. That is why Launer warns against the romantic search for a primordial national specificity. He does not consider such adventures as responsible.

For this reason, Launer questioned Štúr's moral motivation, because, in his opinion, his conception should lead to a departure from the standards of European education and culture to a trajectory that leads to a dead end, which can result in a loss of value orientation. It should be appreciated that, in this way, he foresaw the development of Štúr's thinking, which characterizes the work of *Slovanstvo a svet budúcnosti* [*Slavism and the world of the future*] (Štúr, 1993). We could state that Launer was opposed to what Gellner describes as Herderian protectionism of folk cultures (Gellner, 1997, p. 35). According to Launer, it is education and traditional culture that give individuals a real identity. He firmly rejects the preference for inanimate and uncultivated folkiness over the development of civil liberties,[8] Western culture and education, but he considers them harmful. (Launer, 1847b, p. 6). It can be said that Launer does not demand nationality but Western cultural-civilizational affiliation. At the same time, he differs from Záborský in this particular question, whose attitudes are critical of the Romantic movement, but a critical but still national enthusiasm characterizes his thinking.

Launer viewed the process of social development and democratization similarly. Liberalism and constitutionalism represent reform in his view, i.e., restoration of the state and its laws. Although he espoused the ideas of liberalism, it is not known to be based on Mill, Locke, Montesquieu, but rather the influence of Hegel and Luther's thinking is noticeable (Gbúrová, 2019, pp. 50, 70). Freedom and the expansion of civil rights depend on the quality of practical political life: acquiring modern civic competencies in practice. This is to be reflected in the development of constitutional life. Therefore, individual countries' laws should be the most obvious manifestation of the quality of education and individual nations' spirit. At the same time, he did not consider the existence of constitutional life only as a concrete manifestation of legality, but he also understood it as an expression of spiritual and moral effort. The nation's spirit is manifested in the knowledge of man's value, which is transformed into laws. Thus, the constitutions of individual countries articulate the spirit and determine a specific way of understanding the individual and his position in society. Launer understood constitutionalism more broadly, as it reflected the level of civic and interpersonal relations, civil law, and the development of religious life. The same can be said of the value of man in the case of non-free states. Absolutism is, thus, a manifestation of a low level of civic, moral and religious development. It is the development of education that impacts on the implementation of the liberal order and more humane laws. Therefore, for Launer, those nations living in absolutist states were spiritually underdeveloped or incapable of exercising political rights and freedoms. Thus, they accepted the authoritarian "education" of other nations or absolutist or despotic rulers.

The historical concept of Slavdom

It is also worth noting Launer's view of the importance of Europe for the Slavs, which again concerns the responsibility of romantic elites for the formation of the nation and its value orientation. The historical task of the Slavs is not to discover a new authentic Slavic culture but to accept modern European cultural and civilizational impulses. He understood history as a process leading to civic emancipation from despotic forms to liberal states represented by Western European nations (Városssová, 1988, p. 699). At present, Launer has recognized four

[8] Launer did not even emphasize the importance of national emancipation in the issue of expanding education, as it was in the case of Ján Palárik. Marcel Martinkovič writes more about Palárik's thinking and different strategies in Slovak political thought (Martinkovič, 2008, p. 893).

prototypes Italian, French, English and German, which represent the whole of Europe. He peculiarly assigns Slavic nations to the above prototypes to transform these principles into the Slavic environment. Based on cultural-civilizational development, he considers Central European Slavs to be more developed than Eastern ones. However, their task is to mechanically imitate European cultural and scientific patterns and reformulate them and transform them into a Slavic form. At the same time, he considered Russia to be an independently developing cultural entity, the potential modernization of which he combines with the acceptance of Western culture and education (Launer, 1847a, p. 118).

Launer's view that he identifies Slovaks as part of the Czechoslovak tribe with the German philosophical-theoretical spirit can be considered a certain idealization or tendency. The role and historical mission of the Slovaks is to strengthen the German spirit (Launer, 1847a, p. 164). At the same time, Launer criticized Štúr's romantic interpretation of history, which he considered as morally irresponsible as the search for national specifics that would not respect European values. At the same time, Launer criticized Štúr's romantic interpretation of history. According to Launer, Slovak identity does not need to be invented. Slovaks already have their peculiarity, but different from the one formulated by Štúr. It, in particular, belongs to Slavism and Europe – as a Western cultural-civilizational paradigm. Launer thus emphasized the role of civilizational competence, which is manifested in the sharing of Western culture. He defined Slovak identity through cultural, political and religious affiliation with the West when he stated that where European orientation was accepted, it is impossible to speak of historical passivity. According to Launer, Slovaks proved their cultural competence as part of the Czechoslovak tribe and politically as Hungary's inhabitants, whose constitutionalism proves their civic competence. According to Launer, belonging to Protestantism also refutes Štúr's idea of the "thousand-year beauty sleep".

Unlike Štúr and Záborský, in his historical interpretations, Launer does not romantically return to Great Moravia, but by rejecting negative historicism, he defended the active participation of Slovaks in Hungarian history.[9] At the same time, he assessed Slovaks' historical-creating competence in terms of participation in Hungarian history, the creator of which was not only one nation. At the same time, he stated the affinity of Hungarian and Czech political and cultural developments. Therefore, the history of the Bohemian and the Hungarian kingdom cannot be interpreted without regard to common political and cultural ties (Launer, 1847a, p. 133). Launer tried to demonstrate the affinity of the Slovaks for the Hussite and Brethren movement, which he, to some extent, idealized when he regarded it as the original Czechoslovak Protestant religion and national democratic movement aimed at liberation from authoritarianism and Catholic dogmatism. At the same time, he saw the Hussite movement as a pioneer of the reform movement and democratization. On this basis, he identified the Czechoslovak spirit with liberal and Protestant principles (Maxwell, 2009, p. 132). It was Protestantism that became, for him, the highest degree of the spirit of the time in Europe (Gbúrová, 2019, p. 50). According to Launer, Protestantism itself must be understood in the broader context of social and cultural change, when, like Hegel, he combined religious reform with the reform of the state, because as Protestantism, he understood not only the renewal of the church but also the reform of the state, legislation, art, science and philosophy (Hegel, 2001, p. 67).

Conclusion

Although the thinking of Jonáš Záborský and Štěpán Launer was marginalized in the Slovak discourse, in many ways, it paints a picture of the development of national identity and culture.

[9] The Kingdom of Hungary was a multi-ethnic state in the Carpathian Basin from 895/896 to 1918. The territory of today's Slovakia was gradually incorporated into the kingdom from the 10th to the 11th century. It was a part of it until 1918 when Czechoslovakia was founded.

At the same time, it completes the formation of a modern Slovak identity, which cannot be considered monolithic (Városssová, 1988, p. 697). While ethnic enthusiasm, as a passional way of thinking, played an essential role in the revolutionary national narrative in the context of the absence of cultural institutionalization, Jonáš Záborský and Štěpan Launer pointed out in their criticism that such views on the formation of national identity created a contradiction between polis and ethnos (Pichler, 2006, p. 584). This thinking did not allow for an individual choice between citizenship and national identity and left the responsibility for the decision to the representatives of national movements. Paradoxically, it was the national elites who were not united in defining cultural identity, which is why the responsibility of elites conceived in this way caused tension. Thus, ethnic enthusiasm did not imply the possibility of the formation of civic individualism but focused on the defence of collective rights. Although this type of thinking provided responsibility for the development and orientation to higher values to the representatives of nation-forming ideas, the emotional quality of thinking often led them to irreconcilable controversy and marginalization of opponents (Rusnák, 2013, p. 87).

The value of the non-romantic thinking of Záborský and Launer can also be seen in the context of current reflections on the role of cultural identity in the context of the Štúr-Hurban conception of national culture and its place in European culture. At the same time, the critique of romantic thinking draws attention to the issue of the responsibility of nation-forming elites for the concept of civic development, which does not approach social change holistically and for cultural development and the role of modern European cultural-civilizational impulses for modern European cultural identity. Simultaneously, it can be stated that Launer's and, in part, Záborský's thinking draws attention to the threat associated with the romantic search for ethnocultural peculiarity, which may result in the questioning of the importance of civil liberties and Western cultural-civilizational affiliation.

Acknowledgement
The paper is the result of the solution of the KEGA project no. 008TTU-4/2019.

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Ethics & Bioethics (in Central Europe), 2020, 10 (3–4), 155–172 DOI:10.2478/ebce-2020-0011

The abyss, or the insufficiency of ethical nihilism for Nietzsche's *Übermensch*

Jan Gresil Kahambing[1]

Abstract

In this paper, I critique the prevalent notion that only in the abyss can one emerge to be the *Übermensch,* or to use Hollingdale's term, the *Superman.* To support this, I will first expound on the notion of the abyss as ethical nihilism from the perspective of the death of God to Nietzsche's critique of morality. I argue that ethical nihilism as an abyss is insufficient in constituting Nietzsche's Superman. I will then set how the Superman emerges through counter-stages. The paradox is that such tragic an abyss that serves as *conditio sine qua non* for the Superman falls flat when looked at in the perspective of life. There underlies a fundamental difficulty in simply accepting the proposals of acknowledging the abyss or 'becoming what one is.' Later, Nietzsche's anti-romanticism and anti-Darwinism are explored to support such difficulty.

Keywords: Abyss, ethics, Übermensch, Nietzsche, nihilism, Romanticism, Darwinism

Introduction: Again, can there be a superman through an era of nothing?[2]

Superman and nihilism, again? In her most recent article, Maudemarie Clark clarifies in *Nietzsche: Old and New Questions* that despite the overkill of Nietzschean articulations today, topics have not yet been exhausted and interpretations have not yet drawn to a close. She says:

> Let me begin by stating that I do not believe that there are topics that have been overdone in Nietzsche scholarship or that we need new shiny questions. I consider it likely that contributions can still be made on just about any topic, including such well-trodden ones as the nature of Nietzsche's naturalism, his metaethics, his account of morality… (Clark, 2018a, p. 228).

The terms 'madman' and 'nihilist' often appear to describe Nietzsche, though there are counter-discussions. Danto's *Nietzsche as Philosopher* (1965) for one classically points to Nietzsche, quite strongly, as a nihilist. But Schacht, who writes 'Nietzsche and Nihilism' in *Critical essays on Nietzsche*, opposes it with equal strength (Schacht, 1980, pp. 58–82). Then there is the other question: is nihilism metaphysical or axiological? It appears that for a long time already, there have been lots of divisions, qualifications, and derivations of nihilism, especially when it comes to its discussion from Nietzsche. For instance, there is *passive* nihilism, which Nietzsche counters, and there is *active* nihilism, which he accepts (Ansell-Pearson, 2017, p. 74). There is also *alethetic* nihilism, which pertains to the impossibility of attaining knowledge, and there is *ethical* nihilism, which pertains to the impossibility of grounding a universal ethical foundation (Sorgner, 2017, p. 50). This ambiguity, born out of the variety in understanding nihilism, also conjures its essential characteristic: if one were to find an apt core of such impossibilities, the name for certain is the *abyss.*

[1] Leyte Normal University, Tacloban City (Philippines); vince_jb7@hotmail.com

[2] The successive works of Nietzsche in this article are quoted in the following format: "Nietzsche, date of book, (part), section no." rather than "Nietzsche, date of book, pages."

The abyss is also ambiguous but throughout Nietzsche's works, one can weave points of clarity out of its appearances. It appeared in Nietzsche's *Homeric Contest* as "terrifying savagery of hatred and the lust to annihilate" (Nietzsche, 1976a, 38); In *the Genealogy of morals*, as the "scientific conscience… the word 'science' is quite simply an obscenity in the traps of such trumpeters, an abuse, an indecency" (Nietzsche, 1998, III, 23); and in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* Prologue 4, "Man is a rope, fastened between animal and Overman – a rope over an abyss" (Nietzsche, 1969). The latter signifies the abyss as always behind man. In Z, III, 1, he addresses it: "to you who are intoxicated by riddles, who take pleasure in twilight, whose soul is lured with flutes to every treacherous abyss" (Nietzsche, 1969). It was in this same section of the book that the abyss was vividly explicated, hurled against the ascending movement of man, as "the spirit that drew it downward, drew it towards the abyss, the Spirit of Gravity, my devil and arch-enemy." Yet it is precisely this ambiguousness from which a bridge was made, for example: "Zarathustra bridges Nietzsche's early praise of Homeric societies and the mediating force of tragedy with his later discussions of the transmuted self and the ethic of resistance to societal norms and institutions" (Stewart, 2002, p. 2). The reason behind the abyss taken as scientific conscience can be traced from Nietzsche's understanding of nihilism not as 'proto-Schopenhauerian' in the sense of the degenerative despairing 'will' but of nihilism as Socratism (Brennan, 2018), which is scientific.

Seeing as it were that the broad corpus of Nietzsche's works has not yet been fully exhausted, in this paper, Nietzsche's concept of the abyss, again, will be discussed and how it constitutes the emergence of the Superman. More particularly, the discussion focuses more on ethical nihilism, following from an epistemic grounding in alethetic nihilism, reinstating the abyss of nihilism as an era of nothing which merely focuses on the perspectival nature of knowledge and reality.

As of this writing, fresh perspectives on perspectivism still rise above expectations of insipidness and simplicity. Nehamas (2017) reinterprets Nietzsche's perspectivism by rethinking the importance of truth and falsehood in the economy of human life against previous analysis such as Clark's (1990), which makes Nietzsche uncommitted to his idea of perspectivism. Clark (2018b) reads anew Nietzsche's perspectivism and argues a recent criticism by Nehamas (2017) on her previous reading (1990), concluding that it is a mistake to think that 'Nietzsche's perspectivism applies to all knowledge.' Aside from the two, Lanier Anderson (2018) argues in *The psychology of perspectivism: A question for Nietzsche studies now* that at present 'there are many pressing questions for Nietzsche', finding it pertinent that perspectivism has a vital link to moral psychology. In this paper, one has first to understand the abyss behind the idea of perspectivism, one in which knowledge, rather than values or ethics, loses its grounding and holds its impasse. The idea is that perspectivism presents itself as a groundlessness of objectivity where meaning is also excluded.[3] Hence, the other aspect of the abyss that connects to the inability to foreground truth, which in Greek is ἀλήθειαin or *aletheia*, is another kind of meaninglessness, or what can be called as alethetic nihilism.

It is important to note that this alethetic backdrop grounds the discussion of ethical nihilism when expounded to clarify the abyss. From the abyss of knowledge in Nietzsche's perspectivism as his critique of truth, the paper focuses on Nietzsche's pronouncement of the death of God as his critique of morality. From ethical nihilism, the paradox of the emerging Superman will be argued, focusing on the counter-acting stages from which it is set. Later, it will be discussed why such emergence is incomplete on its own: a paradox of the abyss justifies why Nietzsche also was not able to point to a historical figure as the embodiment of the superman.

[3] This, however, does not totally dismiss the idea of perspectivism as political consensus (Kahambing, 2017).

Ethical nihilism: From the madness of god's death to critique of morality

Nihilism can be traced as coinage from the mad youth rebels in Russia, which signals the decay of a future resulting from young people no longer finding worth in the world. The written fiction to reflect this account can further be traced in *The brothers Karamazov* (Dostoevsky, 1937) where Ivan Karamazov rightfully implies, rather than states in verbatim, that 'If God is dead, everything is permitted.' The same background of Dostoevsky presages the dark insinuations of the future, owing to the meaninglessness brought about not just by historical events e.g. World Wars, but also by the looming existential questions of time. Nietzsche brings such an event into attention as an attitude of insanity: "Not only the reason of millennia – their insanity too, breaks out in us" (Nietzsche, 1969, I, 22). What this means for Nietzsche is a specific brand of nihilism, an ethical one that follows from the void of divine death, which only a madman – and hence, no sane ethical man – can outrightly and conscientiously proclaim. As he rhetorically puts it in *The gay science*: "'Whither is God?' he cried: 'I will tell you. We have killed him—you and I. … Do we smell nothing as yet of the divine decomposition? Gods, too, decompose. God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him'" (Nietzsche, 1974, 125). In this frame, madness becomes the avenue through which things are expressed, and in fact, can only be expressed out of the absurdity stemming from the divine decomposition. Michel Foucault (1988) here becomes relevant in his work *Madness and civilization: Insanity in the age of reason* where he claims that paradoxically, only within the coordinates of insanity or madness can one determine the role of reason, or determine what society views as normal by means of the abnormal, what society views as accepted by means of those repressed in society. Hence, the madman in the *Gay science* proves to be a determinant factor in viewing and pronouncing what the present condition of society is, namely, that the presuppositions underlying the vast belief of God's existence is already put into shock.

'God is dead!' – a mad and traumatic conclusion that no believer can easily be appeased by. 'God is dead' situates the idea of a cultural setting where the belief in God no longer proves itself to be meaningful: a Christian identity without Christian deeds, a Christianity that culturally ritualizes Christ but practically denies Him – thus the phrase "we have killed him." That is to say, that the killers of God are not some random mercenaries hired to assassinate him off-guard but are the believers themselves whose inner contradictions of their belief already lose their inherent meaning. Bernard Reginster explains this conclusion quite radically: "What is dead, then, must not be God Himself, as it were, but rather something that can be born and die, namely, the idea of God or the belief in God" (Reginster, 2006, p. 40). Nietzsche elucidates its meaning: "God is dead [means that] the belief in the Christian god has become unworthy of belief" (Nietzsche, 1974, 346). The focal understanding here is that nihilism acts as a mirror that reflects and disturbs the very optimism and meaningfulness through which humans view life and their relationship with God. Nietzsche sees that what the Christians call 'faith' is not weak-willed, but more directly, in itself lacking in 'will': such faith is for him "always coveted most and needed most urgently where will is lacking" (Nietzsche, 1974, 347). Christianity practices and breeds a culture of values but lacks the will to substantiate them. That is to say, that the values of Christianity, embedded in its systematization in morality that mobilizes the cultural consciousness at that time, collapses.

From here, it is important to note that Nietzsche is very particular in attacking Judeo-Christian morality. Such an attack stems from Nietzsche's uneasiness with Judaism, which is the cultural and traditional background of Christian moral valuations, and more particularly Judaism's vengeful suffering – that they have suffered too much to have wanted revenge: "the view of Judaism as a 'religion of revenge and justice' led Nietzsche to label the Jews 'the worst people' but this is so because they are a 'suffering people'" (Duffy & Mittelman, 1988). Coupled with this is Judaism's

common association with Christianity's culture of withholding power to dominate the nobles, the powerful formula in the *Genealogy of Morals* which reverses the concepts of 'good' and 'bad': by branding the nobles bad 'birds of prey', the automatic effect would brand the reactive slaves good-old 'little lambs' (Nietzsche, 2007, I, 13). The twin forces of revenge and overturning of values gave rise to modern Judeo-Christian culture after the death of Christ, giving the specific point that Nietzsche is not entirely Anti-Christ, but is specifically, anti-'Christian culture' (Kaufmann, 1974, pp. 157–177).

For instance, the Church originally vouches for the better future for the autonomous individual and makes it a point to *become who he truly is* by breaking from his father and mother, to follow his own vocation, whether in the unification of marriage, single-blessedness, or religious life. This is supported by the understanding that it is a potent possibility mainly because it means that *internally*, the kingdom of God is in the hearts of men. However, it was also the culture of the church – herein understood as the people of God – that betrays this 'becoming who he truly is' when it seeks to uniform its members by self-denial (and consequently, vocation-denial) for the sake of an afterworld. Herein lies the contradicting paradox: the only possibility through which man can truly become who he is in following himself can only achieve its status as a possibility if and only if his vocation – the path in which the human trudges the course of his life in autonomy – works in the constellation of an *external* kingdom of God. There is, however, a corruption in this as seen in the historical (mal)practices of the church e.g. the selling of indulgences, pornocracy. The same arguments of the church assuming the position of political interveners (who are pharisaical in character) cultivated a culture that works against the meaning of its ideals and practice (Kaufmann, 1974, pp. 165, 176). Such a culture assumes the character of the abyss in a sense that it opens the meaninglessness of its center, making it possible for nihilism to enter. Asked what the abyss is, Brookner writes: "What abyss? The abyss that waits for all of us, when all our actions seem futile, when the ability to fill the day seems stalled, and the waiting takes on an edge of dread" (Brookner, 2012, p. 94) – it is hence, fundamentally, life's dramatic tragedy. Furthermore, this finds a parallel and a consequent explanation in Nietzsche's words:

> Nihilism stands at the door: whence comes this uncanniest of all guests? Point of departure: it is an error to consider "social distress" or "psychological degeneration" or worse, corruption, as the cause of nihilism. Ours is the most decent and compassionate age. Distress, whether of the soul, body, or intellect, cannot of itself give birth to *nihilism (i.e., the radical repudiation of value, meaning, and desirability*). Such distress always permits a variety of interpretations. Rather: it is in one particular interpretation, *the Christian moral-one, that nihilism is rooted* (Nietzsche, 1968, 1, Italics mine).

The essential character of this nihilism becomes ethical – an ethical nihilism – when the meaninglessness of the culture that breeds it is a 'moral-one'. It is precisely from this point that when Christianity centers its morality on the foundations of God, the foundation becomes ethically nihilistic since the belief in God and the concept of God are born out of 'conjecture' (Nietzsche, 1969, II, 2). The madman's pronouncement of the death of God makes it possible for nihilism to show its ethical form, pointing once again to the madness. Kauffman says that "to have lost God means madness; when mankind will discover that it has lost God, universal madness will break out" (Kaufmann, 1974, p. 97).

Furthermore, what this means is that ethical nihilism also implies along with it the critique of morality, when "we have destroyed our own faith in God. There remains only the void. We are falling. Our dignity is gone. *Our values are lost*" (Kauffman, 1974, p. 97, Italics mine). Nietzsche's

critique of morality then also becomes the defining point of ethical nihilism: "What does nihilism mean? *That the highest values devaluate themselves*" (Nietzsche, 1968, 2). By means of conjecture, the main impetus of this devaluation is that "we have measured the value of the world according to categories that refer to a purely fictitious world" (Nietzsche, 1968, 12b).

Nietzsche's philosophy regards the death of God as "the inevitable consequence of various well-known intellectual and cultural developments, rather than a revolutionary new idea in need of much support and elaboration" (Reginster, 2006, p. 9). With a culture associated to an abyss, nihilism and its advent is inevitable, much that the abyss that characterizes it functions as what Zarathustra calls 'the spirit of gravity' that drags man down to utter meaninglessness. Man for Zarathustra is a 'tightrope walker' where there is an abyss behind him. Man as *a rope over an abyss* (Nietzsche, 1969, prologue 4) places himself as a caricature of mediation, but also of temptation, while eventually acceding to the magnetizing act of monotonous life. For Nietzsche, such monotony is orchestrated in the culture of Europe – of European nihilism – which drags man down (Ansell-Pearson & Large, 2006, p. 309; Reginster, 2006, p. 95; Nietzsche, 1968, Preface). Apart from Christianity, which is a religion that has strong roots in Europe, Nietzsche also names another factor of nihilism dragging man down, namely, that "there are two great European narcotics: Christianity *and alcohol*" (Nietzsche, 1976c). Both for him engenders the spirit of gravity that hurls man into the abyss.

It is no wonder that Nietzsche addresses nihilism as the central problem of his philosophy. It becomes central not only because it is a description that touches the main dilemma at that time, but because it also greatly affects what Nietzsche gives importance to most: *Life*. Nihilism creates a great impact on life because it has the capacity to shape a whole collectivity of thinking as in culture, but a descending one (Deleuze, 1983, p. 35). Nietzsche, from Deleuze's point of view, emphasizes a typological analysis of viewing life as modes of being: "Every individual may be scrutinized to see whether he represents the *ascending* or the *descending* line of life" (Nietzsche, 1968, 1, Italics mine).

The death of God, therefore, must not be taken as the only source of nihilism but also the negation of life, and its descending perspective (Reginster, 2006, p. 45; Solomon & Higgins, 2000, p. 18; Nietzsche, 2005, Epilogue). Nihilism, generally, as the perspective that is descending, centralizes its premises on the abyss where existence becomes meaningless and life assumes a "surprisingly elusive" state (Reginster, 2006, p. 21). In ethical nihilism, the reason for life loses its track and its further cause can be traced. From the foregoing, the loss points to the culture of Christian morality. For Nietzsche, "any morality aims to secure the preservation of a community by requiring its individual members to comply with certain rules (sometimes called "customs")" (Reginster, 2006, p. 61). He says: "Wherever we encounter a morality, we also encounter valuations and an order of rank of human impulses and actions. These valuations and orders of rank are always expressions of the needs of a community and herd" (Nietzsche, 1974, 116; Nietzsche, 1996a, 96; Nietzsche, 1982, 9). Nietzsche observes, "Morality in Europe today is herd animal morality" (Nietzsche, 1997a, 202; Nietzsche, 1968, 275). These needs of the herd, these very valuations and orders of rank are put into a system by morality. The culture of decline that propagates in this system characterizes the abyss where everything is meaningless and goalless because everything is leveled down to a similar setting with no purpose or/of overcoming. There are two important reasons that substantiate Nietzsche's critique of morality: first, because morality engenders herd mentality and second, because morality rests on the unconditional setup of values (May, 1999, pp. 104–106).

First, morality hinges on "the idea that the good necessarily embodies certain values (notably altruism, equality, and pity) or traits of character (notably benevolence and sympathy)" (May,

1999, p. 105).[4] Nietzsche rejects these values set upon by such morality because they have the tendency to make everything equal, the same and thus monotonous. Zarathustra pictures it as "no shepherd and one herd! Everybody wants the same, everybody is the same: whoever feels different goes voluntarily into a madhouse" (Nietzsche, 1976d, 130). The political dimension of this abyss precisely functions when "the state cannot allow its members to transcend the herd" (Stewart, 2002, p. 95). The herd's virtue makes its members small because their culture, that is, their houses, makes them small men, upon equalizing and domesticating them. These small herdsmen virtues are, for Zarathustra, *equality, mediocrity, and cowardice* (Nietzsche, 1969, III, 5), which means that no one has the right to improve (Kahambing, 2018). They remain idle in the ups and downs of things, remaining passive and cowardly in the wonderful adventure of life; in short, one herd collectively living in the expectations of its members with the justification that all of them are the same because they loathe humanity as naturally slavish. This makes the culture of the herd share the same psychology to the culture of the slaves since the latter's disposition thinks that they are naturally born slaves – that they are weak, even to the point that they are weak against their nature. Specifically modeling this nihilism to an ethical issue, Nietzsche observes the ethics in his time: "our present ethics is pictured as heavily indebted to the morality of the powerless and the oppressed" (Kaufmann, 1974, p. 84).

Slave morality in Christianity produces the drive to escape this slavery by blaming the masters, those at the top of the food chain (Nietzsche, 1998, I, 13). This is what Nietzsche saw in the genealogy of morality: slave morality overcomes nature by overturning the power relations of the master or noble morality. By their antipathy towards life, the slaves feel and project that they are naturally born-victims. They rely on dramaturgy when they role-play their victimization, as Nietzsche says: "they want to feel like, and be accepted as, its (life's) servants and instruments" (Nietzsche, 1974, 5). In reaction, they wish so hard to have their own brand of justice – a mere equality among all. On a prima facie level, this serves as a prelude political critique against the tenets of equality in socialism, of a classless society. On a deeper level, Nietzsche here also criticizes egalitarianism as the politics of the masses (Cameron, 2002, p. 60). The herd too do not warrant themselves the power to rule themselves and recreate but to equalize everything, to make the powerful share with the powerless, by pity and benevolence. However, "the distinction between the powerful and the powerless, as here envisaged, is clearly a sociological one – not racial or biological – and it is suggested that being oppressed… of being powerless, may lead men to mistrust and hate everybody" (Cameron, 2002, p. 60). Both herd and slave moralities have already deeply embodied themselves in culture that their sociological way of life is hard-wired in it. Nietzsche thinks that equality, and in this case, all those values set to adjust power mediocrely, is "an essential feature of decline" (Nietzsche, 1997b, IX, 37). Nietzsche called them decadent values because they lack the will to power. He says,

> My assertion is that all the values which mankind at present summarizes its highest desideratum *decadence values*. I call an animal, a species depraved when it loses its instincts, when it chooses, when it *prefers* what is harmful to it. […] I consider life itself instinct for growth, for continuance, for accumulation of forces, for power: where will to power is lacking there is decline (Nietzsche, 1976c, 6).

[4] Cf.; Nietzsche, 1997b, IX 35-37; Nietzsche, 1997a, 33; Nietzsche, 1996b, I, 22-23; Nietzsche, 1974, 377; Nietzsche, 1976c, 7.

Secondly, morality becomes harmful to life because it lives "the idea that these values are unconditionally valid – that they, as it were, vindicate themselves" (May, 1999, p. 105).[5] Nietzsche writes,

> It is not error as error that horrifies me at this sight [Christian Morality] – not the lack, for thousands of years, of 'good will,' discipline, decency. Courage in matters of the spirit, revealed by its victory: it is lack of nature, it is the utterly gruesome fact that antinature itself received the highest honors as morality and was fixed over humanity as law and categorical imperative (Nietzsche, 1976b, XIV, 7).

By virtue of its casting off from the conditions on the ground, that is, the senses and the conditions set for contingency and continuities, morality vouched for an external standing, an objective standing. It is anti-nature because it seeks to find a standing above nature, something external to it, a kind of metaphysical independence. Values therefore assume an external origin "when they are metaphysically independent from the contingent contents of the human will, that is to say, when their nature is not conditioned by that will" (Reginster, 2006, p. 57). The will for Nietzsche is dependent from human drives; it is the central office for command – "the affect of command, the decisive sign of sovereignty and strength" (Nietzsche, 1974, 347). He continues his assertion in *the Antichrist* that "this will is lacking in all the supreme values of mankind – that values of decline, nihilistic values hold sway under the holiest names" (Nietzsche, 1976c, 12). Morality then, set in a form of categorical imperative as Kant's, projects itself as unconditional factors that cannot be questioned ("to protect morality against intrusive critical inquiry" – Nietzsche, 2005; 1982, Preface, 3), which for Nietzsche, is nothing but "a desire of the heart that has been filtered and made abstract" (Nietzsche, 1997a, 5). The culture of the slaves then extremely rips out "life by the root," a castration (Nietzsche, 1997b, V, 1). The world of the senses they seek to abhor (Nietzsche, 1996b, III, 7). Nietzsche therefore repudiates not only Christian morality, but also all dogmatic principles that seek to undermine this world.

Thus, nihilism as the devaluation of these values takes into effect the feeling of emptiness, of meaninglessness: "Do we not feel the breath of empty space? Has it not become colder? Is not night continually closing in on us?" (Nietzsche, 1974, 125). Nihilism defines the loss of every possible meaning. Ethical principles and values in themselves also lose their grounding.

Counter-staging emergence: Constituting an abysmal *Übermensch*

How will the abyss, the tragic character of life – as explicated in ethical nihilism – make it possible to constitute the superman? For this possibility to be staged, it has to undergo a paradox: the superman must emerge out of a tragedy that goes deeper than the abyss as the normal nihilistic predicament of things. The abyss must therefore be overcome not in a wholly annihilistic way, but in an overcoming that works within the coordinates of man, or more particularly, of the 'last man'. It is understood that the paradoxical emergence works not when the superman fights or counters an external last man whom he must never emulate – the tragedy being that there has to be a skirmish where one overpowers the other. On the contrary, the paradox is that the superman must delve further into himself and – here comes the radical point – *become the last man first*. In other words, the superman does not come out of nowhere; in such case, he would simply cease to become the meaning of the earth if he comes out from an extra-terrestrial dimension. The radicality of this

[5] Also confer. Nietzsche, 1997b, V, 6; Nietzsche, 1974, 335; Nietzsche, 1997a, 221, 272.

point however is not new, seeing as it were that the topic has been dealt with initially by Zimmerman (1968).

Nietzsche proposes a unified subjectivity, sovereign enough to emerge out of the rubble of a ruined or meaningless structure. In such manner, to form the new kind of man should restructure the stage to "the stage of the superman" in Robert Zimmerman's 'On Nietzsche'. For Zimmerman (1968), there are three stages: the stage of the master (noble, higher morality), the stage of the Christianized master (slave, herd morality), and the stage of the superman. The idea that he forwards is that "the last stage will not be a return to the first" (Zimmerman, 1968, p. 281). In other words, the stage of the superman is neither the stage of the master nor of the higher men that Zarathustra describes (Nietzsche, 1969). From the foregoing, the stage of the master is contaminated and becomes nihilistic through the slave morality of the abyss. The second stage also is shown in the way Christianity, as a European narcotic that Nietzsche sees along with alcohol, succeeds in replacing nature with a metaphysical standing that goes beyond it. Based on Zimmerman, all three stages, rather than going back or modifying one stage, must be undergone. The second stage easily can relate to the last man, the jester, which for Nietzsche is the opposite of the superman, who too easily gives in to the meaninglessness of the times (Kahambing, 2020). The superman, on the contrary, is a man of overcoming.

Nietzsche believes: "what doesn't kill me makes me stronger" (Nietzsche, 1997b, I, 8). Man must not wait for the moment to make himself strong. Instead, he has to will it: "One must need to be strong; else one will never become strong" (Nietzsche, 1997b, IX, 38). Man becomes great when he overcomes himself for the sake of the future. Overcoming then increases the power over one's self, the freedom of one's self to self-create. In this overcoming, one needs a will, a will to be stronger, and only thus can man manage and have the courage for self-overcoming – *the will to power.*

This will to power in Nietzsche's early thoughts can be interpreted both negatively and positively. On the one hand, "Fear is nothing but our attitude toward power – the negative aspect of our will to power […] the negative motive which would make us avoid something. On the other hand, the will to power "is the positive motive which would make us strive for something" (Kaufmann, 1974, p. 190). In his later works, however, one finds the complete exposition of the will to power in Zarathustra, wherein all drives reduce themselves only as manifestations of this basic drive. This drive is that "will itself, the will to power, the unexhausted, procreating life-will" (Nietzsche, 1969, II, 12). It is the principle that strives for a meaningful existence and for the overcoming of nihilism not only because it is the drive for life but because it is life itself: "for only where life is, there is also will: not will to life, but so I teach you – *will* to power!" (Nietzsche, 1969, II, 12). Here, Nietzsche improvises Schopenhauer's idea of *will to live* for will to power, since Nietzsche believes that the life of man makes much more sense when it overcomes itself, that is, if it makes one's self more powerful: "Life sacrifices itself – for the sake of power!" In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* the will to power whispers its secret to Nietzsche: "Behold, it said, "I am *that which must overcome itself again and again*" (Nietzsche, 1969, II, 12). This inexhaustible will permeates the motifs of overcoming as the "strongest, most life-affirming drive" (Nietzsche, 1996b, III, 18).

However, the will to power must not be misunderstood as something that only centers the movement for the sake of sheer movement itself. As an act of counter-staging, the will to power is a love that ever contradicts itself because it longs for something more: "whatever I create and however much I love it – soon I have to oppose it and my love: thus will my will have it" (Nietzsche, 1969, II, 12). The overcoming of the will to power seeks to know more, to strive more from what

one has already overcome. Thus, it is the most adventurous drive because it comes with the desire to know (Nietzsche, 1968, 702; 423).

The will to power in juxtaposing self-overcoming for the sake of self-excellence seems to denote a self-centered process. Quite the contrary, the will to power is not only a self-overcoming for one's self. It is not so selfish that it repudiates all intentions of political living. The will to power, though presented as self-overcoming, comes in as a motivation for others. The man who shows great will to power stands as a model among others and therefore affects as a striving for excellence in a form of awe and envy:

> The striving for excellence is the striving to overwhelm one's neighbor, even if only very indirectly or only in one's own feelings or even dreams. […] The striving for excellence brings with it for the neighbor – to name only a few steps of this long ladder: tortures, then blows, then terror, then anguished amazement, then wonder, then envy, then laughing… (Nietzsche, 1982, 113).

In other words, the will to power serves as an exemplar in the political sphere where developments are founded on man and the society that he lives in. As Stewart points out: "without the social, therefore, there can be no resistance, and thus no self-creation" (Stewart, 2002, p. 102). This development hinges the juxtaposition of the politics of transfiguration, whose goal is "the development of beings who do not simply live as human-all-too-human" (Strong, 1974, p. 13). Nietzsche, "instead of wanting man to 'return' to nature, thought that we must 'cultivate' and 'improve', 'transfigure' and remake our nature" (Kaufmann, 1974, p. 170). In remaking one's nature, one ought to reconcile its artistic impulse of Apollonian and Dionysian frenzy and unify them in the concept of the will to power as the only basic force (Nietzsche, 1968, 675) and emerge one's self as the 'Dionysian' – this time, "the union of Dionysius and Apollo: a creative striving that gives form to itself" (Kaufmann, 1974, p. 282). This is the later Dionysian, which is the synthesis of the two forces represented by (the early or first) Dionysius and Apollo in Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy.* The constant form-giving of one's self in the world of becoming essentially points that reality too is fluctuating and is will to power itself.

> This, my Dionysian world of the eternally self-creating, the eternally self-destroying […], without goal, unless the joy of circle is itself a goal; without will, unless a ring feels good will towards itself – do you want a name for this world? A solution for its riddles? This world is the will to power – and nothing else! (Nietzsche, 1968, 1067).

The superman is then the overcoming of man and emerges out of the will to power. He frees himself with the valuations and meanings, set upon to an external world, thus he becomes the 'meaning of the earth.' The vast sea, too, speaks of the depth of the abyss that must be overcome, but only a madman can traverse it, his will to power, his madness, his joy towards this life! With the faith of the Dionysian, he has in himself the formula of greatness, the apotheosis of joy – *the amor fati*: "My formula for the greatness of a human being is *amor fati*: that one wants nothing to be different – not forward, not backward, not in all eternity. Not merely bear what is necessary, still less conceal it … but *love* it" (Nietzsche, 2005, II, 10). The great human being is capable of transforming himself and creating himself over and over even in the midst of destruction, thereby transforming the abyss into an aesthetic phenomenon (Stack, 1993, p. 155). His Dionysian faith goes for the free art of life – the art of loving one's fate. This fate however is not the kind of fate that presupposes a fixed destiny. Rather, it is a different kind of fate, a fate that transforms one's self because it is a fate

uniquely given by life and all its avenues for overcoming. "The constant transformation," Dienstag says, "reminds us that our fate is not set. We have at least a role in determining it" (Dienstag, 2001, p. 936). Nietzsche's Dionysian faith, he continues, "looks toward the future, not with the expectation that better things are foreordained, but a hope founded only on taking joy in the constant process of transformation and destruction that mark out the human condition." Moreover, fate is "that which remains within his power to use each event, great or small, for man's improvement and fitness and, as it were, exhaust it" (Stack, 1992, p. 179). This fate, then, also corresponds with the will to power to reshape one's self as a work of art. Therefore, the will to power of the superman comes to the extreme in loving his fate that not only does he affirm life and its sufferings, his will to power also has the courage to deal with an abysmal death.

> I shall show you the consummating death, which shall be a spur and a promise to living. The man consummating his life dies his death triumphantly, surrounded by men filled with hope and making solemn vows. Thus one should learn to die (Nietzsche, 1969, I, 21).

What constitutes this superman then is an abysmal emergence inasmuch as the stage of the superman plunges first into the depths of the abyss. This kind of emergence does not flee but encounters both the stages of the master and the Christianized master in order to further counter, or to transcend, these two by becoming them and then by overcoming them. In this sense, the stage of the superman is a counter-staging emergence: the superman has the ability to rise again even if he has lost and plunged into the abyss of ethical nihilism of being the Christianized master. His will to power truly understands the convalescence of life: "free for death and free in death, one who solemnly says No when there is no longer time for Yes: thus he understands life and death" (Nietzsche, 1969, I, 21). He is able to transform his deaths into life once again. The dangerous life of the superman 'plunges into the heights' – that is his "abyss and danger" (Nietzsche, 1969, II, 21). For his abyss speaks: "I have turned my ultimate depth into the light!" (Nietzsche, 1969, III, 13.1–2). It is only in the deepest abyss of the self that one overcomes the most. Is this not then a paradoxical constitution? Those who experience the most terrible pains are those who truly lived life: "the highest must arise to its height from the deepest" (Nietzsche, 1969, III, 1). Nietzsche posits further this radical possibility: "the path to one's own heaven always leads through the voluptuousness of one's own hell" (Nietzsche, 1974, 338).

Short-lived tragedy, or why the abyss is not enough

In the previous section, it was explained how the superman can emerge through the radical possibility of the abyss – that its constitution rests on countering (which is transcending) the stages of the master and the Christianized master. This is done through an overcoming that is fueled by one's will to power. It should be further clarified that overcoming not only means accepting suffering but desiring it as well, as even desiring its desirability. Nietzsche says, "he who sees the abyss, but with eagle's eyes – he who grasps the abyss with an eagle's claws: he possesses courage" (Nietzsche, 1969, IV, 13:4). Pain and suffering is needed for the stage of the superman, since it deploys the overcoming that makes man truly human, but also that pushes him to be great and stand above life's monotony of events. The great achievements of history, the monumental remembrances that mark the traces of its glories, all stem out from intense training, pain, and suffering: 'no pain, no gain'![6]

[6] Confer Leiter, 2002, p. 132; Heidegger's *Nietzsche* vol. II, p. 131

The acceptance of suffering, however, to be great is only the least thing, a preliminary, because to be great, one must also not "perish of internal distress and uncertainty when one inflicts great suffering" (Nietzsche, 1974, 325). Thus, to be able to be great, one needs to be strong. And strength is only tested through weakness, through constant hard work, through overcoming one's self. Parmer even argues that self-cruelty, in Nietzsche's sense, is "one of the best expressions of agency" (Parmer, 2017, p. 402). Suffering and pain here can become avenues for the affirmation of life, inasmuch as they stimulate man in overcoming himself.

This might appear as a clear resolution to the problem of the superman. That in answer to the question of 'can there be a superman through an era of nothing?' the easy plain answer is 'yes' because there is overcoming and because there is the abyss – because the superman is an abysmal emergence. But there is a serious problem with this account that runs paradoxical to its core argument. That is to say, that there is a further abyss to the abyss, a tragic paradox that only the following words can capture: "*Mere acknowledgement of the abyss is insufficient*; one must gaze into it with full recognition of the existential implications" (Stewart, 2002, p. 130; Italics mine). The basic problem is that the abyss is not merely an intellectual exercise – a question-and-answer portion to some contest. Instead it goes far beyond mere mental gymnastics. That is why Nietzsche looks at Socratic scientism as abysmal too, because Socrates' claim to knowledge undermines the basic presuppositions of reality – or existential implications. In *The birth of tragedy,* Nietzsche (1927, 15) says that "Socrates is the prototype of the theoretical optimist who, with his faith that the nature of things can be fathomed, ascribes to knowledge and insight the power of a panacea." In this sense, life cannot be purely put into scientific observation, seeing that science falls under the characterization of the abyss (Brennan, 2018).

One can also find that in the discussions of nihilism above, a seminal thread can be traced to Bernard Reginster. The problem with Reginster's account of nihilism is that it is too philosophical, or intellectual. At such rate, nihilism would simply become an epistemological enterprise conceivable and arguable only in its abstract sense. However, it should be noted that the conceptualization of the abyss is not in a sense absolutely abstractive, and that the nihilism it presupposes does not solely rely on intellectual grandstanding. Instead, the abyss is a general characteristic that reveals its character only in the substantial content of nihilism.

What lies at the basic constitution of this abyss is the idea that "nihilism is still developing, and it is impossible to draw any definitive conclusions about it" (Vattimo, 1988, p. 19). In Nietzsche's words: nihilism is only "a transitional stage" (Nietzsche, 1968, 7). It is not a dead end. Creasy argues that nihilism as philosophical in Reginster's understanding is untenable as a 'purely cognitive phenomenon' (philosophical nihilism). Instead Creasy (2018) understands nihilism as a 'psychophysiological condition,' or affective nihilism, backed by Nietzsche's presentation of it as a 'feeling-phenomenon': a 'weariness with one's world.' Statkiewicz (2018) agrees with this point, though different in his approach by exploring Dostoevsky's 'feeling of thought' as well.

In order to see the further paradox of the abyss, it is important to look at the reality of things again, to probe further at the existential implications beset by its tenets. The question that forms this predicament is, namely: if the abyss is the formula for overcoming, and hence, the needed ingredient for the superman, why has there not yet been any superman in history, even a century after Nietzsche's death? Intellectually, scholars can of course point again to 'possibilities' but these again are mere potentialities and need to be radical to achieve the merit and realistic rejoinder they deserve. For instance, it can be proposed that contrary to nihilism, Nietzsche would have been reminded again, in echo to Pindar the poet, to *become what one is* or follow one's conscience. As he says: "*What does your conscience say?* – 'You should become who you are!" (Nietzsche, 1974, 270). In a similar passage he says, "We, however, want to *become who we are* – human beings

who are new, unique, incomparable, who give themselves laws, who create themselves!" (Nietzsche, 1974, 335). This is a possible take, but it has to further rejoin in the idea of life, not just intellectualizing – or by delving into philosophical nihilism – but also by affective nihilism. Both alethetic *and ethical* nihilism should then be put altogether at the service of life since the critique of morality is "essential to the restoration of an affective attachment to life" (Leiter, 2018). And this again has to encounter radicality or paradoxes.

Kuehne acknowledges that "a better understanding of his [Nietzsche's] ethics requires a fuller account of his paradoxical reasoning" (Kuehne, 2018, p. 78). This can be alluded to both alethetic and ethical nihilism, for they teach that in life 'we must live courageously by identifying the *paradoxes that beset* our *knowledge* and *moral belief* (Kuehne, 2018, p. 78; Italics mine). Herein abounds the significant link of Nietzschean immoral ethics to the discussion on radical possibilities and/or paradoxes: "ethics is *only possible* (yet may still fall short) in moments when metaphysics *collapses* and *paradox rears its head*" (Kuehne, 2018, p. 78; Italics mine). That is to say, that radical possibilities happen from two things: when dogmatic standings are abolished and when paradoxes are confronted. And so Franco is heading in the right track when he examines the idea of self-creation and acknowledges the paradox of its "odd juxtaposition of becoming and being: how can one *become* what one already *is*?" (Franco, 2018, p. 52). This is not simply an intellectual question – this requires an existential truth. More than the truth that is mentioned in alethetic nihilism is a different kind of truth. This kind of existential truth is the truth about the abyss and its primary attribute is abysmal, or as Nietzsche famously says, 'Truth is terrible' (Nietzsche, 1976b). What does he mean by this?

> When Nietzsche says, as he frequently does, that "the truth is terrible" he has in mind three kinds of terrible truths: (1) the terrible "existential" truths about the human situation (the inevitability of death and suffering); (2) the terrible "moral" truth that "life is essentially something amoral"; and (3) the terrible "epistemic" truth that most of what we think we know about the world around us is illusory (Leiter, 2018, p. 151).

The last two senses of terrible truth correspond directly to the two nihilisms. That truth is terrible as moral implies ethical nihilism. That truth is terrible as epistemic implies alethetic nihilism. But truth as existentially terrible creates a much deeper tragedy to it and imposes many contradictions. Forster argues that self-affirmation involves "the sort of life one has lived, namely a life engaged in the pursuit of growth (the exercise of the will to power), in part *through the confrontation with the problematic and questionable aspects of life*" (Forster, 2017, p. 375; Italics mine). How does one understand this? It is necessary to go back again to the question of the absence of the superman in history and the so-called 'abyss of the abyss,' which can be explained further through, first, Nietzsche's anti-romanticism, and second, through Nietzsche's anti-Darwinism.

First, there is no superman yet and hence the abyss is not enough because life is not altogether a romantic ideal and it is not so much as romanticizing suffering. Romanticizing suffering or tragedy means that one has to go over tragic experiences again to overcome them, that there is a vital linear connection to it that must be revisited again and again to affirm life. The counter-argument is that Nietzsche is in fact anti-romantic (Kaufmann, 1974, p. 124). But the paradox is that studies are arising to claim Nietzsche's opposition in his early and later works. There are different interpretations. On the one hand, del Caro in his *Nietzsche contra Nietzsche; Creativity and the anti-romantic* (1989) succeeds in drawing the linear development of Nietzsche's thought in his works – the implication being that he draws romantically from the previous works as inspiration, nostalgia, and so on. On the other hand, Picart in her "Nietzsche as Masked Romantic"

(1997) furthers the idea that it was in the later works of Nietzsche that a struggle in romanticism arises, particularly in his mature conception of will to power, which for Picart "resonates to a high degree with the romantic moral aesthetic" (Picart, 1997, p. 275). A more recent study by Norman in her "Nietzsche and Early Romanticism" (2002), however, makes it clear that Nietzsche is far from his association to romanticism. His thoughts taken as his own, do not amount to a historical incidence or self-contradiction.

How can one contextualize this Nietzschean anti-romanticism? Take for example the Filipino socially-constructed term 'hugot' – a sentimental drawback to some tragedy as reference (Arias & Sencil, 2017). For the last three to five years there has been an ample surge of open-mic performances portraying the common themes of loss, betrayal, and despair about love. This can be likened to poetic performances in theatres, which dramatizes the human condition. That is art and it is also tragic. Why, then, has there not been any attempt to really overcome such experiences? Instead the performers romanticize about these experiences too much as if they are losing their reality. This psyche is, thus, being propagated and normalizes the often ridiculous take of suffering into a spectacle. If tragedy in the abysmal sense is the only needed ingredient, then we should by now already see a superman in contemporary times. That is to say, that it is not simply the rhetoric of 'no pain, no gain' that is enough to expect a superman here: otherwise, all the gym buddies, bodybuilders, and narcissistic beauty enthusiasts are already supermen by default. The same can be said of resilience and post-disaster studies in some typhoon-stricken countries which merely take advantage of the funding in research to advance individual professional careers, plotting the clichéd urgency of the studies by romanticizing the catastrophic aftermaths of typhoons and earthquakes.

The more potent question here is: 'amidst all these tragedies, why have there not been any supermen just yet?' and the answer is the glaring romanticizing of tragedy in the same manner that a romantic thinks nostalgically of the past as if it was more glorious. The themes that connect to this idea make up the narratives of a past pure bliss as in the Genesis account where there is still divine justice or Milton's *Paradise Lost.* Nietzsche, however, does not romanticize tragedy, much less romanticize the abyss, so it is not surprising why throughout history there has not yet been a superman. The abyss in this sense is not enough. It is a short-lived tragedy because it resides only in the romanticisms of the subject, and hence overcoming can simply be done through imagination. It is paradoxical to imagine a resolution of the abyss but remain only within the fictional realm of imagination itself. According to Iris Murdoch, "tragedy … must break the ego, destroying the illusory whole of the unified self" (Murdoch, 2003, p. 104).

Second, there has been no superman yet even with the prodding of overcoming and the will to power because history does not evolve with a linearity or with a linear progression of evolution. This has some counter-affinities to that of Hegel but that eludes the scope of this paper. The more important thread points to Charles Darwin who shares in the evolutionary aspect of history almost in a linear fashion. In this account, there is a possibility of a superman in the future because if history evolves always for the better, then man improves daily and overcoming keeps on overcoming as a constant development. But this is not a precise existential implication and the paradox is that in life sometimes overcoming is overcoming of the same problem but without progress. Similarly, the idea of having gone *beyond* something is quite paradoxical in itself: we always say we have gone beyond something but really, we are just repeating old patterns.[7] This is Nietzsche as anti-Darwinian (Kaufmann, 1974, p. 150). In Rogers' early study of "Darwinism, scientism, and nihilism" (1960), he discusses the Russian interpretation of the theory of evolution

[7] See Lacan (1990, p. 71). Confer with Kahambing, 2019, p. 148.

that accordingly arises not out of competition but of cooperation. On the other hand, a more recent study of Richardson in his "Nietzsche contra Darwin" (2002) suggests of a biology of power that naturally selects the will towards power, which explains Nietzsche's conception of Life as Will to Power. Forber backs this in his "Nietzsche was no darwinian" (2007) and Johnson follows up in his *Nietzsche's anti-Darwinism* (2010). The common idea is that Nietzsche criticizes the main concept of progress, especially in the modern understanding of progress.[8] In the *Antichrist,* he asserts the falseness of the modern (Nietzsche, 1976c, I, 4) mindset and claims that history's progress has only worked within the logic of a multiplication of zeroes. It is affirmatively progress to multiply but it really does nothing if what is multiplied is nihilism – if what is multiplied is an ample amount of zeroes (Nietzsche, 1997b, I, 14). The anti-darwinian Nietzsche thinks that history does not necessarily connote progressive development and thinks that even the past may have already achieved something great, only that they were merely highermen and not supermen.

And what are the qualifications of the highermen? Hassan (2017) highlights that one feature of the great individuals Nietzsche considers is that "they, in some capacity, are (*selten*) – an exception (*Ausnahme*) to the majority" and in *Untimely Meditations* as the "rarest and most valuable exemplars" (Nietzsche, 1997c, III, 6) against the "herd [Heerde]" (Nietzsche, 1974, 116, Nietzsche, 1997a, 44), the "common" [gemein] (Nietzsche, 1997c, II: 9, Nietzsche, 1996b, I, 4), the "mediocre [mittelmässig]" (Nietzsche, 1996a, 467, Nietzsche, 1997a, 262), and the "rabble [Pöbel]" (Nietzsche, 1997c, II: 7, Nietzsche, 1997a, 190). These are accidents or exceptions. Nietzsche thinks that "the *goal of humanity* cannot lie in the end but only *in its highest specimens*" (Nietzsche, 1997c, II, 9). In this sense, man's task is: "he *should* let his existence be 'a thoughtless accident" (Nietzsche, 1997c, III, 1, Italics added).' However, even if Nietzsche already saw examples of those higher types, those are still merely accidents.

> The problem I thus pose is not what shall succeed mankind in the sequence of living beings (man as an end), but what type of man shall be *bred*, shall be *willed*, for being higher in value, worthier of life, more certain of a future. Even in the past this higher type has appeared often – but as a fortunate accident, as an exception, never as something *willed* (Nietzsche, 1976c, 3).

The superman then is not an accident that only appears on one momentous occasion, but a man formed by self-overcoming, formed by the world of yes-saying Dionysius, formed by the will to power, formed by the political life of creators – a man formed by his future. Zarathustra then teaches this man:

> I teach you the Superman. Man is something that should be overcome. *What have you done to overcome him?* … The Superman is the meaning of the earth … Behold, I teach you the Superman: he is this sea, in him your great contempt can go under … Behold, I teach you the Superman: he is this lightning, he is this madness! (Nietzsche, 1969, prologue, 3; Italics mine).

The real question is: 'what have you done to overcome him?' which seems like an end-of-life question similar to 'what have you done to your life?' or 'what choices have you made?' This is the abyss of the abyss. It is the constant thought that the search for existential truth is always going to be there and it has to be accompanied by choices. It is not merely an intellectual teaching or an

[8] Chaput on the ridiculous way the progress of science fills the emptiness of the modern man (Chaput, 2007, p. 167).

epistemological praxeology – it is a mad conclusion that again only a madman can pronounce and make the self-choice of venturing. The abyss is not enough because it is missing something that can activate its lightning and wake the slumber of its being a sea. In other words, it is lacking a jolt for a consistent pattern of choice. That is its foremost paradox: the abyss lies in the abyss because of the paradox of freedom. What is missing in this abyss is something that must jolt it into a different kind of overcoming, something that traumatizes it.

Conclusion

It was examined in this paper how Nietzsche's concept of the abyss constitutes the emergence of the Superman. Moreover, the discussion of ethical nihilism is expounded to clarify the abyss, and in this paper corresponded to Nietzsche's pronouncement of the death of God, his critique of morality. Then, the paradox of the emerging Superman was argued, focusing on the counter-acting stages from which it is set. Such emergence, moreover, is incomplete on its own or that a paradox of the abyss justifies why Nietzsche was also not able to point a historical figure to be the embodiment of the superman. The idea was that tragedy is merely short-lived – it is the general predicament of things and it has to be existentially placed, or it has to activate itself rather than ruminate on romanticisms or wait for history to produce a superman in the Darwinian sense. Finally, it was acknowledged that something is missing in the abyss before a superman may radically be possible, and points to something in likes of trauma.

Acknowledgment

The author would like to acknowledge the people who, in one way or another, assisted in the supervision, reading, inspiration, and revision of this article. Specifically, thanks is due to Ernestus Padilla (Santa Isabel College), Luis David SJ (Ateneo de Manila University), Joselito Galendo (Holy Name University), and Jonathan Eddy (University of Prešov). Gratitude also goes to the anonymous reviewers. Finally, the author thanks the Leyte Normal University for partially funding the work.

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Ethics & Bioethics (in Central Europe), 2020, 10 (3–4), 173–178 DOI:10.2478/ebce-2020-0015

Axiological justification of the objective norm by Heinrich Rickert

Aleksander Bobko[1]

Abstract
The aim of this paper is to show the main thesis concerning the theory of cognition of the eminent neo-Kantian Heinrich Rickert, as presented in his work "*Der Gegenstand der Erkenntnis*". On the one hand, Rickert finds out that thinking is fated to "clash with nothingness", thus creating a temptation to reject all rigours and to yield to complete discretion. On the other hand, he attributes axiological status to nothingness which subjects thinking to a particular kind of "ought". In his view, the cognizing subject is faced with an axiological choice: either discretion or truth and argues that it is worth opting for truth. His argumentation could be an interesting point of reference for contemporary culture gradually moving away from the type of thinking rooted in objectively existing principles.

Keywords: Heinrich Rickert, values, objectivity, norm

Introduction

It cannot be denied that contemporary culture has undermined the foundations of the traditionally understood objectivity of science, cognition and thinking itself. This is all the more interesting since some philosophical schools like pragmatism or postmodernism regard it as a positive change. For Richard Rorty, the inability to appeal to truth and the abandonment of claims to objective cognition is not a fault but, on the contrary, an advantage of human thought. This, he argues, makes it possible to remove restraints of, de facto apparent, rigour and create a non-committal community based on mutual sympathy and solidarity, permeated by freedom and methodological nonchalance. The expectations with regard to science and scientists have also changed: "The image of the great scientist would not be of somebody who got it right but of somebody who got it new. A scientist would rely on a sense of solidarity […] rather than on the picture of herself as battling through the veils of illusions, guided by the light of reason" (Rorty, 1991, p. 44).

Practical effects of moving away from rigourism can be seen in everyday experience: in the quality of discourse in the public space and in the lines of argumentation concerning significant ethical dilemmas. This is aptly described by Alasdair MacIntyre:

> The most striking feature of contemporary moral utterance is that so much of it is used to express disagreements; and the most striking feature of the debates in which these disagreements are expressed is their interminable character. I do not mean by this just that such debates go on and on and on- although they do – but also that they apparently can find no terminus. There seems to be no rational way of securing moral agreement in our culture (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 6).

The question arises, therefore, as to whether it still makes sense to strive for the justification of the objectivity of norms to which our thinking should be subjected?

[1] University of Rzeszow (Poland); bobkoale@ur.edu.pl; ORCID 0000 0003 0609 6982

Rickert's theory of judgement

To answer this question I will refer to the book "*Der Gegenstand der Erkenntnis*" written over 100 years ago by one of the leading neo-Kantians, Heinrich Rickert. In my opinion, his approach to cognition may still be interesting and instructive. On the one hand, he points out that reasoning is doomed to clash with emptiness (even with nothingness), generating some kind of blank space which creates a temptation to reject all rigours in favour of absolute discretion. On the other hand, he attributes a distinct status to nothingness in which man (a thinking subject) is faced with an axiological choice: either discretion or truth, with a whole raft of arguments underpinning the truth. At the beginning of his inquiry into the essence of cognition Rickert states:

> The concept of cognition embraces, apart from the subject or the I which cognizes, the object which is being cognized. The notion of the object does not involve anything else but what is vis-à-vis the subject as something independent of him and to which cognition should adapt [sich danach richten] in order to achieve its aim. The aim of cognition is for it to be true and objective. Our question is: what is the object, independent of the subject, as the measure of cognition or, how does cognition acquire its objectivity? (Rickert, 1928, p. 1).

These sentences are the gist of the further account of the concept of cognition and problems relating to it. Rickert justifies his way of addressing the issue as follows: "There must exist something that is independent of the experiencing subject in the way that cognition, to become true and objective, adapts to it. Otherwise, raising an epistemological question to which a true answer is expected does not make sense. This presupposes an absolute difference between true and false and also something that reinforces this difference. True or cognitive thinking is always something more than a subject's pure thinking. It is this <more> that constitutes objectivity" (Rickert, 1928, p. 8).

Therefore, before delving into the problems of cognition, we must either presuppose the existence of a true and objective form of cognition (i.e., true is distinguishable from false), or we agree to accept skepticism which, in fact, involves the equivalence of all statements. For Rickert it is obvious to opt for the first, as only then intellectual activities make sense. Thus, the aim of his scrutiny is to clarify how cognition is possible (assuming that such a possibility exists). This leads to the question of what is basically the difference between true and false?

The key to finding an answer to this question is judgment analysis as, in Rickert's view, the process of making judgements is central to human cognition. In his judgement theory, Rickert refers to Kant but the same time argues with him and goes beyond his concept.

According to Kant, "All judgments are accordingly functions of unity among our representations" (Kant, 1998, p. A69, B94). This unity, to put it briefly, is generated by understanding, whose functioning – contrary to sensible experience which is only able to feel passive sensations – is characterized by spontaneity. Spontaneity of intellectual reasoning has its own structure based on functions, understood as follows: "By a function, however, I understand the unity of the action of ordering different representations under a common one. Concepts are therefore grounded on the spontaneity of thinking" (Kant, 1998, pp. A68, B93). Thus, understanding introduces order, grasping several representations by one, more general representation constituting a notion. The final result of such a function of understanding is judgement, in which the synthesis of what is contained in representations takes place. This synthesis is of a very complicated nature and Kant devoted to it a good deal of his analyses in "*The critique of pure reason*".

According to Rickert, if we adopt Kant and his followers' approach, "making judgements seems to be closely related to representation (vorstellungsmäßiges Gebilde), and with this assumption

everything stays the same – the truth of judgement must be inherent in representations" (Rickert, 1928, p. 148). This makes it impossible to base cognition on a transcendent measure. Issuing judgements should be, in a new way, open to truth – "While making judgements, apart from the relations among representations' elements, another element comes into play which, however, cannot be understood as something connected with representation" (Rickert, 1928, p. 167). This new element that a cognitive act adds to the representations perceived involves "either affirming or denying" (Rickert, 1928, p. 184). What is meant by this?

While explaining the role of affirming, Rickert directs our attention to the most relevant, in his view, moment of a cognitive act. The need to take a decision, to pronounce the affirming "yes' or negating "no", puts the cognizing subject in front of an alternative, the sui generis "either – or". This situation forces the subject to engage, to adopt a definitive stance, excluding a purely contemplative character of the act. This description cannot be interpreted from a psychological point of view, implying that there is an emotional relationship between the cognizing subject and the object cognized. What is involved here is something more fundamental, which has no connection with emotions or psychic experiences, but which makes the subject adopt a stance towards values – "The very act of issuing judgment as affirming or denying, according to its sense, should be given equal standing with the attitude adopted towards a positive or negative value (Stellungsnahme zu einer Wert oder Unwert)" (Rickert, 1928, p. 185). Thus, it turns out that a cognitive act becomes an act of evaluation, therefore cognition must relate to the sphere of values.

The question which arises about the nature of the relationship between reality and values introduces us to the most original part of Rickert's philosophy – his theory of value. He writes: "We already know that the notion of being is not the only notion to which something can be subdued, alongside it, apart from non-something or nothing there is an all-embracing notion of something non-existent, the notion of values. We use this word […] to denote forms which do not exist but in spite of this they are something" (Rickert, 1928, p. 260). In this statement there appears an intuition implying that reality itself is not enough to know it thoroughly. What exists in reality does not necessarily express the richness of being. Thus, to encompass it fully one needs to refer to something non-existing or existing in a different way from that of reality and which, in this sense, is unreal. To define this unreal sphere Rickert proposes the term "value".

Is this not a case of "multiplying entities without necessity"? It would seem that values are found in "real" reality as well. Real objects exist, called goods, which are intrinsically connected with values such as works of art, goods meeting people's needs, also people themselves. They could all be called values. There are also acts of valuing where values are assigned to particular objects or persons thereby becoming "more real". These examples show that although there is a certain relationship between reality and values, they are not the same. Rickert claims that "goods (Güter) and acts of valuing (Wertungen) are not values, but a relation between values and reality. Values constitute a realm for themselves (Reich für sich)" (Rickert, 1928, p. 195), so putting them on the same footing as real entities would lead to overlooking their substance. How, then, can we determine their nature? Rickert answers: "The best way to express the nature of values is to say that they are valid (gelten)" (Rickert, 1928, p. 260). Values are valid, they are relevant and that is why they have [a] specific nature as compared with existing reality.

Establishing a distinction between reality and values – between being (Sein) which exists and that which doesn't exist, but which is valid (Gelten) is not an original idea of Rickert's. In his theory he exploits the notion of "the reality of what is valid" (Lotze, 1928, p. 514) introduced by Herman Lotze who characterizes the sphere of validity as follows:

> We shouldn't ask what validity is, assuming that what is meant by it can be drawn still from something else. […] Just as we cannot say how it happens that something is or something takes place, similarly not much can be explained with regard to the fact that truth is valid. We must see in validity the basic concept which relies entirely on itself and everybody knows how to understand it (Lotze, 1928, p. 512).

Both validity and being are primary notions which, similarly to axioms in mathematics, cannot be defined although we understand their meaning.

How is validity reflected in acts of judgements, what is the relation between values and the measure of cognition for which we search and on which true cognition and objectivity rely? Rickert writes: "in every act of judgement, in a blink of an eye (Augenblick), in which I affirm, I assume that I recognize in it something that is timelessly valid and entirely independent of my temporary, actual, psychological state" (Rickert, 1928, p. 198). Let us focus on the paradoxical nature of the above description. What has been affirmed while issuing judgement, that is the value underpinning the judgement's argument, as it is towards this value that the cognizing subject adopts a particular stance, is characterized by incredible fragility and transience. It lacks a firm foundation in reality, it is only present "in the blink of an eye". On the other hand, value has an astonishing potential exceeding the scope of reality. Its paramount importance manifests itself in the fact that it is universally and timelessly valid.

Thinking according values

What results from the fact that issuing a judgement means adopting an approach towards the valid value? Rickert writes: "The state of certainty or, more exactly, the value about which this state informs me and which I affirm, grants my act of judging a character of unconditional necessity" (Rickert, 1928, p. 199). Two moments can be distinguished in the relation between the act of judging and value. The first one is of subjective character: the presence of value induces in the cognizing subject a mental state which could be called a sense of evidence. However, unconditional necessity of judgement is not based on this evidence, it is founded on the validity of unreal values. The other moment of the above-mentioned relationship consists in a direct transfer of necessity from the unreal sphere of values to a real judgement. Rickert states: "This necessity, which consolidates each act of judgement and thereby each act of cognition should be defined as the necessity of judgement (Urteilsnotwendigkeit). This is the best conceptual description; power (Macht) on which we depend while affirming" (Rickert, 1928, p. 236). The validity of values, the unreal structure of meanings inherently connected with necessity (called Urteilsnotwendigkeit by Rickert), is the foundation of true cognition. A subject perceiving the elements belonging to the real world is dependent in the act of judging on the "power" resulting from the validity of unreal values. Paradoxically, the unreal shapes the real.

This mysterious impact of values and their validity (i.e. their timeless relevance) on the acts of cognition cannot be understood as a sui generis "mechanical" process. "The necessity of judgement" is not the reason which makes a judgement issued in reality true. It is not simple coercion inducing in the cognizing subject a state which determines him directly to acknowledge value. It is a kind of imperative which requires subduing – "What makes my act of judging justified is the responsibility guaranteed by the necessity of judgement (durch Urteilsnotwendigkeit verbürgte Sollen) which I should, in a confirmative way, acknowledge" (Rickert, 1928, p. 201). The relationship between real cognition and valid values – interdependence of the sphere of being and unreal values – are best expressed by the notion of *ought* (Sollen). The domain of values which

is valid regardless of the existing reality creates the sphere of *ought*, which is what should be acknowledged in the act of cognition by the cognizing subject.

Let us look at the asymmetry of the relation between these spheres. The unreal *ought* has a significant effect on the perception of reality. It requires acknowledging, some kind of respect which occurs in the act of cognition. What is real, however, does not have any effect on the sphere of *ought* – value is valid regardless of being acknowledged in the cognitive act or not; ought does not gain any additional strength resulting from its acknowledgement by the cognizing subject. That is why value which is to be acknowledged in the act of judging (and this is what the act of judging and thereby the act of cognition consist in) is, in view of this act, transcendent.

This brings us to the solution of the problem which Rickert considered to be fundamental for the theory of cognition. The transcendent measure of cognition for which we search is found in the unreal, valid value and, in ought, related to it. On the one hand, the valid value and its vibrant strength of ought become present in the act of judgement – they appear to the cognizing subject at least for "a blink of an eye"– but although they are made aware this way, they stay completely independent of the cognizing subject and do not become part of his immanent world. Values are valid regardless of the fact whether their validity has been acknowledged in the act of cognition or not – "It is enough for the judging subject to be aware of the ought because it can only be assumed as independent of acknowledged as being transcendentally valid, i.e., as remaining beyond judgement [urteilsjenseitig], but not beyond consciousness" (Rickert, 1928, p. 236). To put it briefly – "what is" has no influence on "what ought to be". Thereby, ought remains entirely transcendent as regards the cognizing subject.

Following Rickert's train of thought we can formulate the conclusion – the final determination of the measure of cognition: "If cognition is affirming, its measure is what is being affirmed whereas what the act of judging affirms and acknowledges, always remains in the sphere of ought, never in the sphere of real being" (Rickert, 1928, p. 214). Transcendentally valid value which works by means of ought, constitutes the relevant, independent of the subject, object of cognition. It is a measure whereby cognition is associated with truth and objectivity which is a condition of acquiring a reasonable knowledge of reality.

It must be emphasized that Rickert views the nature of values in a radically non-object way. Values are not objects which can be experienced, their essence lies in validity. On the other hand, the main motive of Rickert's theory of cognition is searching for the object of cognition – something that being a measure of cognition is in front of the cognizing subject. And this is the measure that he looks out for in the sphere of valid values. How, then, can this approach be reconciled with the non-object character of values? In what way truth, not being an object, is to stand vis-à-vis the subject?

For Rickert, overcoming this controversy is possible thanks to the fact that the relationship connecting the thinking subject with value possesses an axiological character. The use of the term "axiological relationship" is justified here owing to the way in which Rickert characterizes the essence of this relationship: "each value must relate to the subject in such a way that it becomes *ough*t for it" (Rickert, 1928, p. 337). Describing the way in which value "stands in front of" the subject, Rickert refers to the notion of ought on which, in his opinion, this relationship is based. The notion indicates the "non-ontological" nature of the relationship between thinking and truth – truth does not exert influence by presenting itself, but by generating ought. Thinking is "bound" by necessity which "not –is" but is valid. Truth as value carries unusual power – it subordinates thinking using a means which is beyond the sphere of being. Ought is such a means. It addresses the subject in a different way than something standing, vis-à-vis, to him, it doesn't tell the subject "you should". Rather, it expresses a kind of "one should" which, representing universal rationality,

demands respect. By the same token, value by means of ought is incorporated into the structure of thinking which, in turn, becomes "thinking according values".[2]

Conclusion

Thus, implicit at the source of thinking is some axiological decision, thinking is based, using Rickert's phrase, on an original act of adopting a stance towards values. It may prove to be a stance towards nothingness. Yet this nothingness, as Rickert insists, is relevant, it emanates the power of ought and commits thinking to rigour.

It is just this message that seems to be of particular importance for contemporary culture. Given the methodological and logical "nonchalance" thinking should impose rigour on itself even if nothingness should be its source. Heinrich Rickert says the foundation of this rigourism is of axiological character – it is noticeable via *ought*, which appeals to us and which obliges us to rigourous thinking. We do not have to yield to ought but if this is the case, thinking diffuses in the space of complete discretion and latitude. Depending on the mood of the moment, this space may turn out to be friendly or hostile.

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[2] The idea of "thinking according values" develops in very interesting way polish philosopher Józef Tischner (Tischner, 1982).

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Ethics & Bioethics (in Central Europe), 2020, 10 (3–4), 179–189 DOI:10.2478/ebce-2020-0016

Cultivated character: Voltaire and Karel Čapek on the good gardener

Daniel Brennan[1]

Abstract

The paper unpacks the nuanced ethical potential in the metaphor of gardening that is depicted in Karel Čapek's *The Gardener's Year,* and the relevance of Čapek's metaphor for understanding Voltaire's famously ambiguous ending to *Candide*. Against more pessimistic or passive accounts of what Candide could have meant, the paper agrees with scholars who consider Candide's maxim as meaning to engage in active, and communal practise of character development. By using Čapek's much fuller account of the gardener in the practice of cultivation to fill in the gaps in Voltaire's account, the paper shows that gardening is a rich metaphor of the virtuous person engaged in lifelong character cultivation.

Keywords: Karel Čapek, Voltaire, Gardening, virtue ethics, humanism

Karel Čapek's *The Gardener's Year* (Zahradníkův rok), published in 1929 is ostensibly a light-hearted book on the joys and frustrations of gardening.[2] Presented as a quasi-guide to gardening practice, the book explores the aspirations and behaviors, for a generalized gardener over the course of a year. Although treating a fairly mundane topic, *The Gardener's Year* fits in quite well with Čapek's *oeuvre*, as it offers an insightful interpretation of ordinary life, that is brimful of his liberal, humanist position. The book is replete with implied philosophy that belies its mundane topic. Gardening operates for Čapek as a metaphor for the human endeavor. In much of his journalism, Čapek offered vignettes of ordinary life, in which he propounds humanist values. He also critiques decadent human practices which could be renewed through humanist action.

Similarly, in many of his plays and novels, overly confident and modern individuals and societies are brought undone through their hubristic attempts to control nature. In *The Gardener's Year*, Čapek depicts the gardener as a person embedded in nature, and in culture, who never conquers, nor has total control over either sphere of activity, and also finds a harmonious way to live with others in a manner which brings much beauty to the world. Hence the gardener is a rich metaphor for Čapek's view of the virtuous person.

The book has received scant attention in English language scholarship. Indeed, the very metaphor of gardening is also under-represented in philosophical discourse of the human condition and societal renewal. In this paper, I will explore Čapek's use of gardening as a metaphor and make a case for its philosophical richness. Furthermore, I will show that Čapek's specific depiction of the gardener is one of the richest uses of the metaphor in western literature.

In the canon of western literature, apart from philosophy, there is a long history of gardening being employed as a metaphor for considering the human condition. It is interesting that in western philosophy there is very little on gardening and philosophy. In one of the very few philosophical treatments of philosophy and gardening, David Cooper remarks that if we are to look for a philosophy of gardens then we might need to reconsider what a philosopher is. Cooper looks to figures like Virgil, Herman Hesse, or, as I do here, Karel Čapek (Cooper, 2006, p. 3). For Cooper these authors were all philosophically trained and their philosophical positions informed their literary endeavors. Hence, there is good reason to hope for finding philosophical insight into gardening through a study of certain literature.

[1] Bond University, Gold Coast (Australia); dbrennan@bond.edu.au

[2] For the entirety of this paper, including all quotations, the 1931 translation of the text by M. & R. Weatherall has been used (Čapek, 1984).

Anders Cullhed, in a sweeping analysis of the use of the gardening metaphor in Western literature, describes its lineage from the garden of Eden in the Book of Genesis, through Jean de Meun's *The Romance of the Rose*, and through to Voltaire's famous parting advice in *Candide* (Cullhed, 2010, p. 6). He argues that the garden is mostly viewed as a site of blissful eroticism – an escape from the pains of the world. The garden, for Cullhed stands as a "utopian dream for suffering mankind" (Cullhed, 2010, p. 6). However, Cullhed points out that this dream is open to multiple interpretations. In Eden, man's expulsion from the garden means that we must toil in pain to survive. By the time Voltaire has Candide declare that "we must cultivate our garden", Cullhed suggests the toil, so clearly a negative in Genesis, is now a positive means of salvation, associated with useful activity and not merely pain (Cullhed, 2010, p. 7). To further confuse the meaning of the metaphor, interpreters of Voltaire are not in agreement about what the cultivation of our gardens actually entails. Candide does not elaborate in the novella, and neither does Voltaire in other works.

Voltaire and Candide, the cultivation of one's garden

Hence for some critics, Voltaire intended through his gardening metaphor to encourage people to escape from the horrors and evils of the world to a privately owned space of personal toil in which to find brief moments of repose. Philip Stewart for example, contends that the garden is a refuge (Stewart, 2009, p. 135). Similarly, Salman Rushdie, in a journalism piece for *The Guardian,* contends that "Voltaire's great fable ends with the suggestion that in appalling times we would be well advised to keep our minds off high ideas and our noses out of great affairs, and simply cultivate our gardens" (Rushdie, 2002). The garden is thus a symbol of an escape to the quiet life – the blissful eroticism of Cullhed's account - a bracketing off, or hiding from the world's ill for private pleasure.

Roy Wolper, building on those who suggested that Candide, and by extension Voltaire, is arguing for a retreat from worldly matters, suggests that Candide is a mere character who was never intended by the author to have learned anything (Crocker & Wolper, 1971, p. 150). For Wolper, Candide wants a small plot for himself to cultivate because it is nicer than anything else he has experienced (Crocker & Wolper, 1971, p. 148). For Wolper, Candide is unaware that the gardener could have his plot destroyed by radical evil as it marches around the world haphazardly (Crocker & Wolper, 1971, p. 148). Candide, the gardener, is hence not only an escapist who refuses to consider his duties to others; he is also naïve in that he has not learned the lessons of his experience (that bad things happen randomly and with little ability to defend against them).

Candide's maxim has also been read as an explanation of the absurd (Crocker & Wolper, 1971, p. 148). If the world that Candide has experienced, full of inexplicable evil, is as things really are, then it clearly has no rational basis. Gardening is thus a response to the absurd. Wolper moves slightly away from this position suggesting that the work of cultivation is a remedy to the ills of the world only for the gardener (Crocker & Wolper, 1971, p. 149). That is, it makes no difference to the world as such, but to their private worlds there is some temporary ease. I have difficulty with this interpretation as it seems to set the metaphor up in a false dilemma. Either a garden solves the world's problems totally, or it is a private affair. I would perhaps agree that as a total response to evil, the cultivation of one's garden could not be a complete panacea. I would add that not much can. However, this does not preclude the possibility of gardening being a part of the treatment. That is, it does not follow the world is necessarily absurd in the sense that Wolper means absurd (totally lacking in rationality) if gardening is the means of renewal. One might suggest that better education is a part of the response to a decadent world. One would be mistaken to then say that because those who become educated do not go on to fix all of the world's problems that education is therefore

unimportant. Rather, and this is much clearer in the next interpretation of Candide's maxim, the cultivation of a more educated community produces a community of (hopefully) critical thinkers who make more morally sound decisions – it is hence a case for meliorism, not revolution.

The final interpretation of Candide's maxim reflects this meliorism. For some critics gardening as Candide describes it, represents the idea that we are to strive for a better world here, in this world, as it is given to us – in full knowledge that not every attempt will be successful. Such is the view of Ari Hirvonen who offers a three-level interpretation of Voltaire's garden cultivation metaphor (2014). Firstly, the maxim of Candide is an imperative to progress (Hirvonen, 2014, p. 232). Perhaps pruning the oppressive qualities of society, and watering those with just blossoms. Secondly, for Hirvonen, Voltaire's garden is a space of resistance and revolt (Hirvonen, 2014, p. 233). Hirvonen writes that "the garden is a space of tolerance that challenges all kinds of miscarriages of justice." Finally, the cultivation of a garden is the making possible of a community (Hirvonen, 2014, pp. 233–234).

> To be in the garden is to be with others. However, this being-together, which is not grounded on any onto-theological god or transcendental being, is a limited existence. As Candide and his friends cultivate the garden, they are exposed to limits that are not at their disposal: flowering and death. Thus, Voltaire's garden is about our existing as finite beings in a world that is never our own (Hirvonen, 2014, pp. 233–234).

What this interpretation offers is an imagining of the garden and its fecundity, as a symbol for social renewal. More than that, it is a non-violent, non-militaristic account of resisting oppression. It is also a plea for a humble account of man's place in nature. The collective enterprise of gardening is also highlighted by David Williams in his book-length study of *Candide*. For Williams, the pursuit of happiness, in Candide's formulation, is only possible in terms of cooperative endeavors (Williams, 1997, p. 90).

These more optimistic interpretations of gardening in Candide, stress not only the cooperative element of the activity but also the finiteness of the task amongst the infinite stretch of nature (in terms of magnitude and time) – that is they consider the gardener as a metaphor for man's being in the world. The garden of Candide's maxim is not a remaking of Eden as an alternative to rationality, but "a world of action, solidarity and collective human endeavor and aspiration" (Williams, 1997, p. 91). Such action is not aimed at utopia, but rather recognizes the lack of guarantee for fortune. We should garden because it is the most ethical thing to do in the face of a world where bad things happen. We must cultivate our communities and attempt to satisfy our human needs because to do so is the best way to participate in a world in which good things happen but are not guaranteed. The striving of the gardener is thus an excellent metaphor for the virtuous human being. The person who tends to the world around them so that beauty has a chance to emerge. Furthermore, the gardener is a part of a community of gardeners, holistically improving the places in which they dwell.

Čapek's gardener; Filling in the row

Of course, this is a lot to make out of what is really a single sentence (albeit it with some literary context around it) uttered by a character who for many critics is not the mouthpiece of Voltaire. Hence, it is to the characteristics of gardening itself that better elucidation of the metaphorical potential of the activity can be found. If gardening is a solitary, lonely escapist pursuit then the reading of Candide as an escapist is correct. If gardening offers absolution only for those who engage in it then Candide is as Wolper suggests naïve to his experience and looking for brief reprieve from evil. However, if gardening is the kind of epistemically humble and cooperative activity defined in the final interpretation, then Candide is offering a maxim of hope and

possibility. It is necessary to look beyond Voltaire's book as he writes too little on the metaphor, thus inviting ambiguity and hence making it difficult to find the dominant interpretation.

It is in Čapek's book that such an elucidation takes place. Čapek has the space of an entire monograph, that describes a full year's activity within which to describe the characteristic activity of the gardener. The book also hints at extended time, as the gardening year leads into the continuing cycles of nature (the year described could be any year, and indeed the book's popularity some 90 years after initially being published is testament to the timelessness of the vignettes). Hence there should seemingly be little chance of confusing the metaphor. However, the way that the English translations of the book (and there have been multiple translations and many editions), are advertised and reviewed, reflects the same diverse ways that gardening as a metaphor in Candide has been interpreted. For example, in the explanatory blurb on the publisher Bloomsbury's website for Geoffrey Newsome's translation, the book is described in the marketing as something that "will be treasured equally by those who love gardening as relaxation, by those who loathe it as a chore, and by those who have no interest in it whatsoever." Gardening is clearly interpreted as an escapist pursuit, undertaken primarily for relaxation and that any disagreement about the characteristics of the activity would be about whether it is fun or not. There is good reason to reject this interpretation, as I will demonstrate through the remainder of this paper the philosophical, and literary richness of the text.

On the other hand, the publisher Random House, released a translation as a part of the Modern Library Gardening series. The series editor, Michael Pollan, himself a famed 'gardening' writer, is also a serious activist, producing much-lauded journalism on the problems of industrial farm practices, and the social and political importance of recovering small scale food production. For Pollan, the choice to include a translation of Čapek's book in the series is because of the attention on the gardener's themselves, rather than instructions on how to garden (Hill, 2009). The perspective of the book is insightful, as Čapek is more focused on the person of the gardener and their virtues. That is, the book is depicted as a description of the actions of the gardener, not a recounting of an escapist hobby. As I will develop below, the virtues are ethical rather than merely related to the activity of gardening itself. What is practised in gardening, for Čapek has importance for the world, and not merely a closed off and private part of it. As Cooper writes, what Pollan and Čapek can agree on is the richness of the idea that the gardener communes with nature (Cooper, 2006, p. 74). That is, what could be, in baser gardening journalism, a cliched and hence empty statement, in writers like Pollan is a robust account of how gardening brings humanity in closer relationship to the world they live they inhabit.

Even in scholarship, apart from the all to brief mentions of Čapek's work in Cooper's book, there seems to be a lack of nuanced reading of Čapek's text. In reviewing a translation of *The Gardener's Year* in the *Slavic and East European Journal*, Craig Cravens fits the book to Čapek's critique of modernity (2007). Cravens rushes to describe the themes of *R.U.R.* and *War With the Newts* to then argue that *The Gardener's Year* is a book about individuals hubristically trying to overcome and control nature.

> Through a discussion of gardening, Čapek treats the human condition – mankind's arrogant attempts to tame, domesticate, and overcome nature. With Čapek, however, the ruminations are not nearly as overwrought as the previous sentence suggests. He characteristically arrays his philosophical insights in deceptively light and airy garb to create a collection of essays that appeals to all manner of readership save those who seek more melodramatic philosophy (Cravens, 2007, p. 176).

Cravens also adds to his suggestion that the book is light on ideas by contending that "Čapek's sententiae are few and far between". What Cravens is apparently looking for is explicit philosophical articulation. However, I contend it is already there, contained within the richness

of the metaphor of the gardener. I agree with Pollan, Čapek's little book is really about our human all too human endeavors, in fact, Čapek even writes that a garden is "like the human world and all human undertakings" (Čapek, 1984, p. 132). If we take Čapek at his word, then all of the activities of the gardener are about all humans. Every passage of the book is thus brimful of moral significance, rather than such moral sayings being "few and far between" as Cravens reads it (Cravens, 2007, p. 176). There is good reason to think this as Čapek scholarship usually contends that Čapek wrote with the same humanist motives across all of his writing. Haman and Trensky contend that Čapek is constantly preoccupied with the same weighing and judging o f the world through his humanist, pragmatic attitude to life (Haman & Trensky, 1967, p. 175).

Furthermore, as they read Čapek, even in his journalism, and smaller pieces, Čapek expresses a keen desire to effect a moral influence on the world (Haman & Trensky, 1967, p. 175). Hence, no matter the subject of his work, whether that be an epic account of humanity in a novel, or a small vignette for a newspaper, or indeed a small book about gardening, Čapek's writing is built around his personal morality. Haman and Trensky ultimately contend that the key to understing Čapek's writing is to see it as the construction of a literary world into which the epic human struggle for morality and meaning can play out. They also contend that Čapek "projected his historical utopia of the brotherhood for all" into the "*theatrum mundi*" created in his texts (Haman & Trensky, 1967, p. 183). That the book on gardening could be such a theatrical, and epic world where a vision of a moral world can be weighed and judged, in my view, immediately connects the work to *Candide*. Furthermore, I will argue that *The Gardener's Year* is a more robust description of Candide's maxim when that maxim is interpreted as an ethical activity of communal worldly renewal.

Cravens is partly correct that the book treats the arrogance of humanity's attempts to control nature. Such critique is a recurrent and vital theme in Čapek's oeuvre. In *War With the Newts*, Čapek depicts the destruction of the world and people through the operations of perverse rationality. Similarly, in *R.U.R.*, the development of thinking robots leads to the destruction of all humans. In Čapek's work, there is a very strong critique of the totalizing politics of fascism and scientism, which seek to see the world through one lens. However, Čapek is also a staunch humanist. The tendency of some parts of human culture to search for totalizing answers to politics and nature is tempered by the humanist potential to celebrate the diversity of the human experience, and also to be humble in our inability to control nature. That is to say that the satirical element of Čapek's writing is not merely a critique of delusions of titanism; but rather, as Haman and Trensky explain, Čapek's satire "is built upon a practical, personal morality" (Haman & Trensky, 1967, p. 175). Contained within the satirical critique, is also the presentation of the solution. Čapek's gardener is hence not only foiled by the inadequacy of technology but also able to work within those constraints to produce a beautiful garden.

Consider the humorous description of a garden hose in *The Gardener's Year*. For Cravens, it is a part of the critique of an overly zealous faith in technology to improve life. However, when viewed in its full context, the gardener's struggle with the hose is representative of humanist attempts at progress and a humble orientation to the seemingly Sisyphean task.

> It will soon be clear that until it has been tamed a hose is an extraordinarily evasive and dangerous beast, for it contorts itself, it jumps it wriggles, it makes puddles of water, and dives with delight into the mess it has made; then it goes for the man who is going to use it and coils itself around its legs… You must grasp it firmly and hold it tight; the best rears with pain and begins to spout water, not from the mouth, but from the hydrant and from somewhere in the middle of its body. Three men at least are needed to tame it at first, and they leave the place of battle splashed to the ears with mud and drenched with water; as to the garden itself, in parts it has changed into greasy pools, while in

> other places it is cracking with thirst. If you do this every day, in a fortnight weeds will spring up instead of grass (Čapek, 1984, p. 8).

Humorous, and seemingly light, the above passage is more than mere critique. There is no underlying message that one should not use a hose. Even the eventual growing of weeds is not a reason to not plant seeds, but an imperative to strive more as the next passage is on the endlessly necessary task of weeding (something like the activity of a happy Sisyphus). The snake-like hose is not the creature keeping us from Eden, nor is it poisonous, and a part of the slope towards decadence and oblivion. Instead of being a mere light-hearted anecdote, Čapek's hose is a flawed, but not entirely ineffective piece of human ingenuity which will not tame, nor control nature, but will eventually, perhaps, produce beauty. It is also an activity requiring a community of gardeners as many are required to hold it. As further support of the optimistic content of the hose motif consider the next time the hose appears. The second appearance of the hose is not comic, it is instead described as a part of a sacred encounter between gardener and land.

> But there is one moment when the gardener rises and straightens himself up to his full height; this is in the afternoon, when he administers the sacrament of water to his little garden. Then he stands, straight and almost noble, directing the jet of water from the mouth of the hydrant; the water rushes in a silver and kissing shower; out of the puffy soil wafts a perfumed breath of moisture, every little leaf is almost wildly green, and sparkles with an appetizing joy, so that a man may eat it (Čapek, 1984, p. 39).

The gardener is doing something sacred, not merely mundane. It is important that the gardener is "almost noble", and the leaf is almost "wildly green". These adjectives are explicitly limited by Čapek. Instead of the comedy of the cobra-like hose, this time Čapek is careful to repeat the lesson but in a different tone. The gardener is close to nobility; however, they are not imbibed with hubris. The garden is close to wild nature, but not it entirely either. The garden and the gardener are also, importantly, not lesser, nor profane; instead, they are just not perfect. In Čapek's description, the desire to garden and the use of tools to attempt it are not a part of man's hamartia, nor is it a sign of our divinity. Instead for Čapek, they are means of mixing the sacred with the mundane.

Rather than being anti-technology, or human advancement, Čapek presents the gardener as an exemplar of the virtuous person. A measured, epistemically humble, community-minded, and patient individual who finds the good life through their practice. By focusing on the character traits of the gardener Čapek adds another ethical dimension to the metaphor of the gardener. The gardener's qualities are more than accidental attainments or passionate outburst. They are practised, beneficent, psychological traits that present as an orientation of care towards the world and its inhabitants. Matthew Dinan, in writing about *R.U.R.*, argues that for Čapek, "loving attentiveness to the preservation of humanizing conditions is the counterintuitive basis of all real "progress"" (Dinan, 2017, p. 109). The same insight is easily applied to *The Gardener's Year*.

The virtues of Čapek's gardener

There is also a strong connection between the gardener's striving and good fortune that is well worth elaborating. The role of luck in the production of a beautiful garden is reminiscent of the role of luck and fortune in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (1976). For Aristotle, the virtues are a necessary but not sufficient component of the good life. What an agent requires, is also the luck that their efforts come to fruition. Aristotle's views on luck and the virtues are well explained by Sarah Broadie in her paper 'Aristotle on Luck, Happiness, and Solon's Dictum'

> A passage of virtuous activity directed at making a difference in the world can be frustrated by bad luck; hence it depends for success on the lucky absence of bad luck. But the virtuous activity itself (the "trying"), as distinct from the intended result, wholly depends on the agent and so is invulnerable to luck (Broadie, 2019, p. 31).

The above is insightful for understanding Čapek's gardener, and the metaphor of gardening, as it is important to consider how the gardener is depicted as they stand surrounded by thwarted efforts at coaxing flowers from the soil. It is clear that luck plays a major role, and it is also clear that the gardener does not have access to a superrational principal of gardening, like, for example, a categorical imperative, to guide their actions. Rather they are a person who tries, or strives, and develops habits. Clearly, this is not an activity in an absurd world, as one of the above-explained interpretations of Candide's maxim has it; instead, the virtues are a rational response to the lack of ability to predict the capriciousness of nature, weather, neighbors or whatever else could cause seeds to not sprout. The point is not the beautiful garden is guaranteed, it requires a confluence of elements which all depend to an extent on luck; but also, without the striving of the gardener, there is no garden either. Hence, like Aristotle's virtues, the practice of enthusiastic gardening is necessary for the good life, even though that happiness could be thwarted.

Consider the following passage humorously describing the gardener attempting to till the frozen soil of a Czechoslovakian January.

> And look, the thaw is here, and the gardener rushes into the garden to till the soil. After a while he brings home, stuck to his boots, all that has thawed on the surface; nevertheless he looks happy and declares that the earth is opening already. In the meantime nothing is left but "to do some work ready for the coming season" (Čapek, 1984, p. 20).

It is impossible to read gardening in Čapek's description, as being relaxing, or even something to be undertaken as a past-time. It is too involving for that, requiring year-round attention and constant struggle. The gardener, Čapek writes, "is not a man who smells a rose, but who is persecuted by the idea that "the soil would like some lime" (Čapek, 1984, p. 37). Yet for all of the continued effort they are rewarded, despite the possibility of failure, with a wondrous experience of nature that speaks of more than human consciousness can make sense of. Consider the above passage of the gardener administering the sacrament of water to their garden. The reward for toiling with the cobra-like hose is the witnessing of nature's advancement. For Čapek "a gardener's pleasure is deeper rooted, right in the womb of the soil" (Čapek, 1984, p. 37).

The gardener, if patient, is also rewarded with a knowledge of nature, not a totalizing, Baconian knowledge that allows control, but rather one that allows coexistence. Čapek's gardener understands the phrases, "the bitter cold" or "the merciless north wind", and waits, patiently attuned to weather forecasts on the radio for moments of reprieve from violent weather so that restorative work can be done (Čapek, 1984, p. 39). The knowledge that allows the capriciousness of nature to be endured is also found in the communal aspect of gardening. Čapek writes that the gardener goes out of their way to meet older gardeners who possess memories of worse weather patterns so that they can, in solidarity recognize their powerless against nature, but also the potential to regroup in more favorable conditions. Again, this is clearly not a description of an absurd and contingent evil, but rather a refocusing of the place of man in nature, and the establishment of a community, who through shared knowledge and toil encourage progress in their love of the human, all too human condition. Consider the following vignette:

> I will not betray to you how gardeners recognize one another, whether by smell, or some password, or secret sign; but it is a fact that they recognize one another at first sight, whether in gangways of the theatre, or in a dentists waiting room; in the first phrases which they utter they exchange views on the weather ("No, sr, I never remember such a spring"), then they pass to the question of humidity, to dahlias, artificial manures, to a Dutch lily ("damned thing; what's its name, well never mind, I will give you a bulb"), to strawberries, American catalogues, damage from last winter, to aphis, asters, and other such themes. It is only an illusion that they are two men in dress suits in the gangway of the theatre; in deeper and actual reality they are two gardeners with a spade and watering can (Čapek, 1984, pp. 45–46).

The gardeners are immersed in society and culture, and also in their gardens. Their gardening is not private but shared in social spaces. They are generous to each other and communicate what knowledge, and lack of experience they have, so that each may improve their garden. It is a powerful statement that despite their dress, and immersion in cultural institutions like the theatre, there is a more real identity as a gardener, and for Čapek that identity is inherently social.

Earlier in the book Čapek declares that a real gardener is someone who says that "you must come to see me… I will show you my garden" (Čapek, 1984, p. 12). The showing of the garden is not only for pride or showing off, but a sharing of ideas, and plants – it is, as in my preferred interpretation of *Candide*, a communal affair that is a valid response to a world that can be malicious. The gardener is also an exemplar to other gardeners. In a striking passage about neighbors, Čapek contends that one can tell when the Spring has come by the appearance of neighbors in their gardens. Once one has that sight or sense, one is then duty-bound to don gardening clothes and tools and head out as well, to be the virtuous example to other neighbors.

Along with this knowledge and community, there is the requirement of patience. Gardening is an activity of waiting. Of letting nature's courses run, and intervening as far as possible and appropriate, with a moderated hand. As Čapek writes, "[a]nd then one must wait and wait!... And then in the meantime, without the gardener having suspected, nor having done anything crocuses and snowdrops has pricked through the soil" (Čapek, 1984, p. 22). Of course, the gardener has "done" something. The gardener has been, all year long, tending the soil, weeding, preparing, and waiting. In the instant of the flower appearing it may look like no effort has gone into it, but as Čapek recounts, there is so much effort around the sprouting, that enabled the sprouting to be possible. So that the striving effort of the gardener compliment the contingency of nature a certain epistemic humility is necessary. Such an epistemic standpoint is in my reading, similar to the virtue of *mesure* described by Albert Camus.

Mesure, as a Camusian virtue is a kind of practised moderation. Matthew Sharpe describes *mesure* as:

> 'balance' or 'moderation.' This position recognizes the importance of, and tries to comprehensively balance *both* sides of the oppositions that Western thought has lurched uneasily between, excluding no evidently salient dimension of our shared condition: nature-history; reason-affect; justice-love; political duty-happiness; individual-collective; exile-kingdom; sacred-profane; contemplation-action; withdrawal-engagement; innocence-guilt; assent-negation or revolt; unity-difference (Sharpe, 2015, p. 26).

For Sharpe, mesure is a philosophical position of recognizing the limits of human comprehension of our activity. However, this is not to say that mesure knows of nothing; instead, it is a recognition that totalizing answers exclude that which they are in opposition. For Sharpe, *mesure* is a virtuous outlook because it is more than an emotional reaction to an unknowable world. It is a practised moderation of the passionate attempt to know or control

everything (Sharpe, 2015, p. 26). *Mesure* is hence like the gardener's humility in that the gardener's basic epistemic orientation is to acknowledge that nature cannot be controlled and that a garden is possible within that nature. What the gardener receives for that orientation is not more knowledge, but the experience of wonder. An insightful account of planting a seed in a pot demonstrates the combined activity of *mesure* and the experience of wonder.

> Very well then, now the great and feverish activity of every sower begins – that is waiting…
> The first day nothing comes up, and the watcher tosses in his bed at night, unable to await the morning.
> The second day, on the mysterious soil, a tuft of mould appears. He rejoices that this is the first sign of life.
> The third day something creeps up on a long white leg and grows like mad. He exalts almost aloud that it is here already, and he tends the first seedling like a mother nursing her child.
> The fourth day, when the shoot has stretched out to an impossible length, the watcher becomes anxious because it might be a weed…
> Well, then, sometimes on the eight day, or still later, without any warning, in a mysterious, unregulated moment, for nobody ever saw or caught it, the soil is silently forced apart and the first shoot appears…
> It is simply a wonder of Nature; and this athletic deed is performed by almost any shoot (Čapek, 1984, p. 26).

The section concludes with Čapek wondering, "What did I want to say? Oh, I know – nothing; only that life is more complicated than one can imagine" (Čapek, 1984, p. 26).

The effect of this wonder on the character of the gardener, is to direct the gardener's concern towards a better future. In this lies the crux of my argument that the gardeners of Čapek, (and Voltaire) are a valid response to a world where bad things can happen to good people. The gardener is not retreating to a private place of contemplation, where some other workers have done the hard work of producing the garden; they are the future-orientated workers cultivating progress. The sense that the gardener cares for the future goes further than saying the gardener awaits the blooms of the seeds they sow. For Čapek man is placed in the somewhat eternal cycles of nature, and it is to longer than the flowering of one plant that the gardener directs care. Each year brings new challenges, but the growing of a garden, and being a good gardener are life-time pursuits. It is in the repeated motif of soil improvement that the strongest sense that the care for the future well-being of the garden is an allegory for ethical concern for progress can be found. The plants themselves are, for Čapek, almost incidental to the nurturing of the soil in which such beautiful things can grow. The tending of the soil is hence the strongest metaphor for being orientated to the world with care because it does not seek to control what grows, only the potential that growth can occur. For Čapek, "the real gardener is not a man who cultivates flowers; he is a man who cultivates the soil" (Čapek, 1984, p. 34). Humorously, Čapek declares that the gardener, if allowed back into Eden, would ignore the flowers and fruits and immediately wax lyrical on the qualities of the humus (Čapek, 1984, p. 34). They are thus workers for progress, not contemplators in retreat.

That the activity of the gardener reaches beyond the immediate present suggests that gardening is a philosophy as a way of life. I would say that Čapek's view is somewhat reminiscent of a more classical form of conceiving philosophy, that is a fundamental attitude about what in life is valuable. A proponent of such classical philosophy, Pierre Hadot, writing on his own philosophical position contends that "there are universal and fundamental attitudes of the human being, when he searches for wisdom" (Hadot, 2020, p. 41). For Hadot, these attitudes are independent of the schools of thought which are said define them – for instance, for Hadot, there is a universal Epicureanism which as an attitude to life might differ from the

specific arguments put forward by Epicureans. This attitude is found in the way of practising living, rather than theorizing. Hadot quotes Kant to elaborate on his point:

> To an old man, who told him that he attended lessons on virtue, Plato responded: 'and when will you begin to live virtuously?' One cannot always theorize. One must finally aim at passing from thought to exercise. But today we take someone who lives what he teaches to be a dreamer (Hadot, 2020, p. 42).

Čapek's description of the gardener represents just such a fundamental attitude to living a virtuous life. Devoid of theory, *The Gardener's Year* is, however brimful of symbolic meaning on the practice of a virtuous life.

Clearly, there is far more to the depiction of gardening in Čapek's book than a mere account of a hobby. Furthermore, the description of gardening is as a character enhancing, and continuously engaging activity, rather than a peaceful, contemplative moment of reprieve from the problems of the world. For Čapek gardening is a response to the issues of the world through the germination of virtuous qualities in the people who practice it. Importantly Čapek's book is an excellent means of explaining the maxim that was hastily annunciated by the literary character of Candide a hundred and seventy-nine years previously. By exploring what the gardener does, and not just what people do in gardens, Čapek shows that if we take the activity seriously as a philosophical metaphor, it contains the image of a nuanced and moral response to evil, just as Candide declared. Čapek shows that Candide was neither selfish, nor naïve at the conclusion of the book; instead Candide's (and Čapek's) insight is that character development and cultivation, is a robust, and effective way of guarding against the evils of the world which can occur without reason.

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Ethics & Bioethics (in Central Europe), 2020, 10 (3–4), 190–202 DOI:10.2478/ebce-2020-0018

What is critical in the Anthropocene? A discussion of four conceptual problems from the environmental-political philosophy perspective

Daniel Buschmann[1]

Abstract
The Anthropocene confronts environmental philosophy with one of the most urgent questions of the 21st century: How to maintain the earth's condition in a way that allows current and future human generations to thrive? By asking such a question, ethical thought ceases to be solely a matter of individuality or morality. Instead, it raises a political issue: How can or should environmental philosophy relate to society in the Anthropocene? This article argues for a *critical* perspective that draws on contemporary historic materialist scholars and politicises societal power relations. It exemplifies this approach by discussing key-terms of the Anthropocene discourse, like planetary boundaries, tipping points, and space-ship earth. The article concludes that the idea that "we have to act fast now" would be dangerously too easy because it ignores the ambivalent character of human-nature relations.

Keywords: Anthropocene, environmental philosophy, ethics, social theory, critical thought

1. Introduction

Disastrous consequences of human actions in the Anthropocene (Steffen et al., 2015a/b) urge modern environmental philosophy to discuss pressing bioethical questions (Sťahel, 2019; Randall, 2016; Sherwin, 2008; Naess, 1973). How can current and future human generations thrive without exploiting natural resources?[2] How to justify ecological politics in the presence of social injustice? However, many traditional concepts in bioethics fall short of this challenge (Arras, 2016; Warren, 2015). This article suggests that insights of modern social theory are relevant to this debate and proposes developing a critical environmental-political-philosophical approach. In doing so, it highlights systematic problems in several key concepts of the Anthropocene debate.

Here, to understand the relevance of social theory for bioethical questions, we must accept the premise that the environmental question is a political one. Referring to Richard Sťahel, a key researcher in Central Eastern European debate, philosophical considerations about the environment are "the central theme or even the basic assumptions of all thinking about politics and society" (Sťahel, 2019, p. 349). Furthermore, he states that the sustainable "care for the *polis* […] is one of the main reasons for philosophy's existence" (Sťahel, 2017, p. 446). These statements highlight that philosophical issues concerning the natural environment *or* society – apparently separate topics at first glance – are actually deeply intertwined. Thus, we encounter a political question: How exactly can the *polis* be sustainable?

This is where the normative notion of *critical* environmental-political philosophy[3] is rooted. The latest that the term biopower, or biopolitics, appeared first was in Michel Foucault's works in 1978 (Foucault, 2006, p. 42) the discipline of bioethics ceased to be solely a matter of individuality or morality. By politicising "domination at every level and in every form" (Foucault, 2000, p. 281), social theory entered the discourse of how the *polis* shall interact with

[1] Environment Agency Austria, Vienna; daniel.buschmann@umweltbundesamt.at

[2] Clearly, human life cannot thrive without non-human life flourishing as well. This article, however, will put a focus on the societal dimensions of the Anthropocene; therefore, it is beyond its scope to deepen the aspects of non-human life.

[3] In the following I speak of *environmental-political* philosophy in order to acknowledge that both aspects need to be discussed with regard to their complex interconnectedness.

life. A critical environmental-political philosophy in this context is an attempt to relate the ethical, and often individualistic, considerations of 'how shall we act' with a tradition of *critical thought*, that is, societal theory developed by, *inter alia*, Foucault in respect of works by Hegel, Marx, the Frankfurt School and others (Foucault, 2010, p. 21). Thus, the adjective critical means to positively acknowledge a history of social struggles that politicise distributional inequality, the violent exercise of power, and exclusion of people from freedom, wealth or human rights. Critical philosophical considerations are transparent about their normative bias, insofar as they reject these forms of domination and strive for a less exclusive organization of society. The reason for making this transparent is that normative biases affects all research but often remain undisclosed in order to maintain the illusion of scientific objectivity (Reiss & Sprenger, 2014, 2.2).

Why, it might be asked, is a critical environmental-political philosophy needed and what added value does it provide? This is because most existing theories (e.g. metaphysical, critical: Arras, 2016; rationalism, critical: Warren, 2015) do not capture the complex relations between global problems and local conflicts (St'ahel, 2020, p. 3). Individual ethics, for example, is an insufficient tool to understand global societal issues (St'ahel, 2020, p. 5f.). This is firstly because environmental effects are beyond the scope of individual action, and secondly because any individual perspective conceals the structural power relations in society. Thus, the value of social theory is "to make harder those acts which are now too easy" (Foucault, 1988, p. 155), meaning to reject any fast solutions that disregard the societal roots beneath seemingly external environmental issues. However, making it harder to discuss the Anthropocene is not a philosophical Glass Bead Game, but an endeavour to prevent dangerous societal and environmental backlashes resulting from too easy solutions.

In the following, this article will illustrate the need for critical environmental-political philosophy in more detail by referring to the Anthropocene debate and a couple of its key concepts. Chapter 2 therefore discusses the idea of a homogeneous *anthropos*, the ambivalent role of science-policy interfaces, the shortcomings of the planetary boundaries concept, and finally the relevance of social justice. Chapter 3 briefly wraps up the cornerstones of the argumentation and draws conclusions.

2. What is critical in the Anthropocene?

The term Anthropocene originates from a discourse among geologists who divide the earth's history into separate ages, or eras, each named after a dominant stratigraphic element that can be found in sediments all around the world. The consensus is that during the Pleistocene (2.6 million years ago until 12 thousand years ago) the ice was the major, telluric force, shaping the face of the earth. It is followed by the Holocene (starting 12 thousand years ago), where warmth and, thus, melting ice was characteristic. However, since the 19th century, this consensus is increasingly often challenged by geologists who argue that, nowadays, humans are the major, telluric force that shapes the face of earth, calling this new era the Anthropocene. It is still contested when exactly this era began (Lewis & Maslin, 2015) – with the triumph of agriculture about 10 thousand years ago, with industrialization and climate change since the 1870s, or with the global spread of radioactive isotopes that stem from nuclear bomb tests in the 1960s? Either way, the debate experienced global attention in 2002 when Nobel-prize winner Paul Crutzen (re-)introduced the term Anthropocene in *Nature* (Crutzen, 2002), and later linking it with the notion of a *great acceleration* (Steffen et al., 2015b) of resource use and pollution across all sectors, scales, and regions since the 1960s.

One reason why the term Anthropocene became so popular is because it is a *boundary concept* at the edge between science and politics. The term conveys two clear messages: Firstly, that the accumulated consequences of human actions have led to a global change that undermines the stable preconditions of human life, once guaranteed during the Holocene.

Secondly, as a consequence of this development, nature is no longer purely external to humans but needs to become the object of responsible human regulation, i.e. a global environmental governance (Biermann, 2014). In the following, the article examines four reasons why a critical environmental-political philosophy needs to intervene in this discussion.

2.1 Disenchant the "anthropos"

As much as the term Anthropocene helped to highlight the urgency of environmental issues, and positively politicised how much we all depend on nature as our material basis of life, it also obscures two essential aspects. Humans are neither the cause nor the solution of environmental issues. What does this mean?

First of all, the general notion of *anthropos* as the cause of the Anthropocene conceals that it neither was nor is humankind *as such* who continues to enforce environmental degradation. Within this heterogeneous group of actors some play a more significant role than others. People in the global North historically had and still have a higher impact on environmental changes, while being less vulnerable to its effects (O'Brien et al., 2007). Even within the global North or South, people with political or economic power have a higher impact on environmental changes than the ones without (Wissen, 2012), and also gendered differences exist (Alston & Whittenbury, 2013). Even more importantly, the collectivization of all actors inside *anthropos* neglects the fact that they continue to pursue and protect different interests. Actors in the automobile industry for example, who want to secure their markets and business-models, seek alliances with government actors, who want to secure employment in order to be re-elected. By obscuring these significant differences between actors, the abstract *anthropos* obscures those who speak about whom and with which interests.

Secondly, who is addressed by the Anthropocene debate? Who can take the required actions? Is it the established institutions of global environmental governance? Is it national parliaments? Referring to *anthropos* in this context is highly ambivalent, as it ignores that exactly these actors failed to establish effective sustainable policies for already more than 40 years (Blühdorn, 2013; Brand & Wissen, 2013). While isolated environmental issues like the ozone-layer or acid rain could be solved with the help of cheap supplements in production or general economic modernization (WBGU, 2011, p. 101), the general tendencies of a "great acceleration" in resource use and pollution continued to grow exponentially (Steffen et al., 2015a; 2015b). Thus, using the term Anthropocene to urge the established actors for action is, in the best case, an appeal to continue structurally ineffective measures in environmental governance, and, in the worst case, like putting a fox in charge of the henhouse (Brand & Wissen, 2013). Transnational corporations with high environmental impact have since the 1990s found ways to protect their interests from too ambitious regulations, and institutions of global (environmental) governance have subordinated their goals to the "factual constrains" of economic growth and liberal market policies. A call for "more" or "faster" action towards these actors is likely to reproduce an array of shortcomings, unfavourable side-effects, and even failures that have characterized environmental governance since 1972 (The limits to growth), 1986 (Brundtland Report), 1992 (1st COP in Rio de Janeiro), 2005 (Kyoto-Protocol), and 2015 (Paris Agreement, Agenda 2030). None of these milestones of global environmental governance had even a slight impact on the *great acceleration* (Steffen et al., 2015b; Blühdorn, 2013; Brand & Wissen, 2013; Brand & Wissen, 2012), so why should an intensified pursuit of this path be successful?

Consequently, the *anthropos* as such can neither be used as a reference to the causation, nor as a reference to the solution of environmental issues. As Lövbrand et al. (2015) note, the *anthropos* in the Anthropocene is currently understood as post-natural, post-social, and post-political. This means (a) that nature is no longer perceived as purely external to society, but as one of their most crucial issues (= post-natural), (b) that humanity is perceived as a single, undistinguishable actor with uncontested common interests (=post-social), and (c) that politics

is no longer a matter of balancing interests and weighting alternatives, but of taking scientifically clearly defined steps that result in survival if followed or catastrophe if ignored (=post-political). Following this critique, it is not "humankind" but a complex web of relations between society and its perceived environment that should be investigated as the cause of or solution to the Anthropocene. Such an understanding of societal nature relations embraces dialectical thought (Görg, 2011), and opens space to think of approaches and solutions which do not reproduce the structural social and environmental injustices that today display key challenges in environmental governance (Brand & Wissen, 2013; Brand & Wissen, 2012).
Thus, a greater degree of nuance and complexity is necessary, and a critical environmental-political philosophy is in charge to reflect upon it. What is the role of (global) environmental governance in society? How do contested societal interests materialize in (environmental) public policy? In what ways are societies and their natural environments entangled? Who has the agency to act in the Anthropocene, on which legitimatory basis, in whose interest, and for which ends? Talking about "humanity" in general bears the risk of falling short of the complexity of the challenges posed by the Anthropocene, and therefore failing to provide the answers needed so urgently.

2.2 Debunk objective science and politics

In its role as a *boundary concept* at the edge of environmental science and politics, the term Anthropocene is often associated with the idea that "science speaks truth to power" (Ortiz, 2019).[4] In other words, concerned natural scientists reveal objective facts about the status of the external environment to political decision makers in order to give them a solid basis for their responsible decision-making. The following sections demonstrate why this popular image is at best wishful thinking. Neither do scientists possess "the truth" nor do the addressed decision-makers possess "the power" or have their interests exclusively in sustainability. Even under the premise that the abovementioned expression is meant as a metaphor, environmental-political philosophy needs to reflect critically on the ideal relationship between science and society this approach suggests.

Firstly, let alone the fact that there is nothing like "the science", the idea that science could be objective or deliver objective insights is fundamentally problematic (Mulder, 2020; Reiss & Sprenger, 2014). In being subjects, scientists *always* have normative assumptions about the world, i.e. ideological frameworks, selective research interests, and political views. This influences research agendas and to some degree also the outcomes of research. Already, in 1904, Max Weber notes: "There is no absolutely objective scientific analysis of […] 'social phenomena' independent of special and 'one-sided' viewpoints according to which expressly or tacitly, consciously or unconsciously they are selected, analyzed and organized for expository purposes" (Weber, 1949, p. 72). This said, Weber does not imply that scientific insights are purely subjective either (Weber, 1949, p. 84). Scientific insights can be significant and meaningful for a wide audience if communicated in a well-balanced way, through a value-neutral language, by applying a falsifiable methodology, or a logical line of argumentation. Still, scientific objectivity remains an unattainable, highly ambivalent ideal (Mulder, 2020; Grasswick, 2018). Ambivalent in so far as the idea of one objective, universal truth often reproduces colonial, sexual, etc., power relations and discursive exclusions (Anderson, 2020; Escobar, 2016). This fact needs to be critically considered when demanding that *the* science shall speak *the* truth to *the* power in the Anthropocene.

Consequently, rather than trying to *appear* objective and therefore implicitly claiming unjustified authority (Grosfoguel, 2007), critical environmental-political philosophy should act openly with its implicit biases, prepositions, and goals. Since *the* science is not able to speak

[4] See also: https://www.unitebehindthescience.online/

the truth, scientific knowledge does not deserve privilege in the political discourse. A dialogue between science and society can therefore only work on eye-level, in mutual appreciation, not based on "non-negotiable limits" (Steffen et al., 2011) posed by science. Scientific investigation, moreover, can, as diverse and heterogeneous as *the* science is, learn a lot from non-academic, non-western, non-hegemonial forms of knowledge through transdisciplinary research methods (Shilliam, 2011; Grosfoguel, 2007; O'Brien et al., 2007; Harvey, 1993). Rather than speaking truth *about* society or *towards* decision-makers, the role of critical scientific approaches is collaboration *together with* and *in appreciation of* other knowledge producers, while acting openly with its own normative biases and limitations.

Secondly, *the* politics is neither a single actor nor a neutral decision-making tool. While many (mostly natural) scientists dream of addressing "the power", meaning "the politics" or "the national decision-makers" with their expertise (e.g. WBGU, 2011, p. 188, NEAA, 2009, p. 5), it must be remembered that national states cannot automatically be considered as neural actors. A state, understood as a material condensation of power relations (Brand & Wissen, 2013; Kannankulam, 2008), is a contested territory where different interests struggle to become hegemonic (Brand & Wissen, 2015). Accordingly, a state is a complex conglomerate of actors with a heterogeneous set of interests that might align with environmental causes or not. Therefore, national states cannot simply be perceived as neutral problem-solving tools to put scientific knowledge into action, but as complex material and discursive structures that represent and protect complex constellations of interests. Why does this matter? Because the historic shortcomings of national states in dealing with environmental issues have structural explanations (Brand & Wissen, 2013) that cannot be ignored. Or, in the oversimplified words of Terry Eagleton (2006): "power knows the truth already, and is busy concealing it". As a result, critical environmental-political philosophy needs to be careful with ascribing agency in environmental issues to "the politics". Some investigations suggest that also international organizations can be understood as a material condensation of power relations (Brand & Wissen, 2012; Brand, 2009). This would mean that rather than overcoming the shortcomings of national states regarding environmental regulation, international organizations in their current shape could reproduce them. Critical environmental-political philosophy, therefore, needs to politicise *who* is urged to action and under *which* conditions, meaning in which political processes with whose participation or exclusion, actions are supposed to be realized. Otherwise, overly enthusiastic natural scientists might appeal to the political fox for more responsible henhouse management.

2.3 Abandon space-ship earth (and planetary boundaries)

The metaphor most frequently associated with the Anthropocene is "spaceship earth" (Crutzen et al., 2011; critical: Höhler, 2015). The narrative dates back into the 1960s and points towards the vulnerability of "our small blue planet" (WBCSD, 2010, p. 2) as well as to a technologically advanced drive for research and discovery. It therefore appeals to a global spirit of responsibility and world-citizenship. Strongly liked with this metaphor are the idea of *planetary boundaries* (Rockström et al., 2009; critical: Geden & Beck, 2014) and *tipping points* (Steffen et al., 2015a), which are therefore also discussed in this context.[5] While spaceship-earth-metaphors are often used to highlight the urgency of environmental politics, they involuntarily convey many problematic messages. In the following, they are discussed among the three analytical axes of (a) humans, (b) nature, and (c) the human conquest of nature.

(a) Humans

Similar to the way *anthropos* blurs who causes and who suffers from environmental issues (see

[5] The website anthropocene.info mentions both terms as key elements: http://www.anthropocene.info/

2.1), the spaceship-earth-metaphor merges all humans into a single political subject – with one seemingly homogeneous interest: to survive. This is problematic for several reasons among which four are important: Firstly, the spaceship-metaphor implicitly calls for a captain, for someone who is "in command" and decides about the rules everyone else has to follow. Stereotypically, one would imagine a white, old, heterosexual male with military experience to be the captain. In other words, the prerogative of a global environmental crisis implicitly calls for traditional authoritative leadership to ensure the greater common good. This call is highly ambivalent, not only because such kind of power bears a veritable potential for misuse or because it reproduces exclusive power relations, but mostly because it ranks democratic processes of careful negotiation between interests, and participatory, nuanced decision-making as useless in environmental matters. Moreover, differently to a captain, who qualifies for his position mostly through advanced commanding experience and power in a superior hierarchical context, no current institution of global governance has a comparable legitimation to rule over all of humanity. Consequently, established institutions are called to bring spaceship earth back on course – a questionable call, considering their (systematic) failure in the past 40 years of environmental politics (see 2.1, 2.2; Blühdorn, 2013; Brand & Wissen, 2013; Brand & Wissen, 2012). Calling upon *this* authority might therefore, against all good intentions, result in accelerating the environmental crisis or at least prolonging it.

Secondly, the spaceship-earth metaphor depoliticises environmental policy as a factual constraint. Decision-making based upon "non-negotiable limits" (Steffen et al., 2011) is a problematic approach to democracy, the very idea of which is to balance powers and interests and hence negotiates between different actors, interests, and positions. Where is *the political* in the context of humanity as a single subject with homogeneous interests? Thirdly, exactly these unequal powers and interests are concealed in the spaceship-metaphor. It levels significant differences between e.g. the global North and South, classes, ethnicities, and genders (Arrora-Jonsson, 2011; Dankelman, 2010; Hartcourt & Escobar, 2005) concerning their agency in causation of environmental crises, and their vulnerability to its effects (Alston & Whittenburg, 2013; Nightingale, 2011). In other words: "distinctions between hotel room cleaners and hedge fund managers become irrelevant" (Lohmann, 2014, p. 1).

Lastly, the spaceship-metaphor displays a cybernetic hubris. When biophysical parameters of the earth become the object of human actions, critical environmental-political philosophy needs to ask who (democratic parliaments?) governs over what (external nature?) to which ends (sustainable economic growth?) and in whose interest? Without these questions asked, the reference to spaceship earth could legitimate radical but highly questionable cybernetic approaches like carbon capture and storage (critical: Evar et al., 2012; Meadowcroft & Langhelle, 2009) or solar radiation management (critical: Wiertz, 2016; UBA, 2011), and problematic economic strategies like the *Green new deal* or *Green economy* (see EC, 2019; critical: Brand & Wissen, 2015). Questioning the ends and the beneficiaries of these approaches should take priority over fast but half-baked solutions that might in the end fight the fire with more oil.

(b) Nature

Spaceship-earth-metaphors, as well as references to planetary boundaries, draw a specific image of "nature", as opposed to the "humans". While acknowledging the interconnectedness of multiple dimensions of natural change (e.g. global warming, ocean acidification, and biodiversity loss, see Rockström et al., 2009) in a systemic perspective, the imagination of nature in these concepts also raises some important questions that need to be discussed. Here, four interconnected aspects are central: Firstly, nature is stereotyped as external to humans (the single political subject) and potentially dangerous for their survival. Thus, and similar to the *anthropos* (see 2.1), nature appears as uniform and without regional specifications or

differences. How, then, for example, does the loss of coral reefs in one region affect the resilience of ecosystems worldwide? In a false dichotomy (Görg, 2011), nature can either ensure human survival, like during the stable and comfortable Holocene, or risk human survival, like in the unstable and dangerous Anthropocene. In any case, nature appears as a "higher force", generally separated from the human world but manipulatable by human actions. If this premise of an external nature is accepted, then, secondly, the domination of nature for the sake of human survival appears to be not only logical but also legitimate. This justifies, for example, unlimited access to natural resources, and the cybernetic human control of natural systems through *Green Governance* mechanisms (critical: Brand & Wissen, 2013) or questionable technological methods of *Geoengineering* (critical: Wiertz, 2016; UBA, 2011).

Thirdly, justice in this context appears as a quantifiable matter, as equally distributed rights to use the atmosphere as a dumpsite for, *inter alia*, greenhouse gases. Qualitative aspects of (in-) justice disappear in such a perspective (see 2.4). For example, the difference between luxury emissions and emissions to fulfil basic needs, specific differences in climate vulnerabilities (Alston & Whittenbury, 2013) or different degrees of participation in climate political decision-making (Harvey, 1993). Lastly, quantifiable *planetary boundaries* falsely suggest scientific certainty (see 2.2, Geden & Beck, 2014) in identifying absolute natural thresholds, which, when crossed, endanger human survival in general. This perspective on nature, however, obfuscates that different groups of humans are affected to different degrees by climate change, and that the thresholds for inhumane consequences vary between class, ethnicity, and gender (Nightingale, 2011). What appears to be a "safe operation space" (Rockström et al., 2009; Steffen et al., 2015a) for people in the global North, is currently already associated with large-scale fires, droughts, hunger or flooding in the global South. Thus, the concept of *planetary boundaries* neglects that the mere definition of seemingly objective global and universal "tipping points" is in fact a normative act (Höhler, 2015). Depicting unacceptable future change in the global North as "beyond the safe operation space", while at the same time ignoring the present human suffering in the global South, is *per se* a political and not a scientific decision (Geden & Beck, 2014). Consequently, the planetary boundaries are socio-political, not external natural boundaries. This is not to say that the concept of planetary boundaries consequently ignores the existence of something like "societal boundaries" that could mark a safe "operation space for humanness", something like poverty, violence, hunger, or political persecution. A very first step in this direction can be seen in the discussion started by Otto et al. (2020).

(c) The human conquest of nature as an act of survival

Besides concealing crucial normative assumptions (see above) the concept of "tipping points", as one of the key elements of the Anthropocene discourse, needs to be discussed also under another perspective. The depiction of future "disastrous consequences for humans" (Rockström, 2009, p. 472) as a result of overstepping tipping points, has two important implications when put under a critical environmental-political philosophy lens: Firstly, the disastrous status quo, i.e. global-scale exploitation of humans and nature (Demirovic et al., 2011) and current climate-fuelled catastrophes in the Global South, appears as acceptable, or, if seen as a "safe operation space" (Rockström et al., 2009) even worth protecting. Consequently, the underlying societal relations that *cause* tipping points to be reached, remain invisible and untouched (Höhler, 2015; Hulme, 2008). Instead, neo-Malthusian ideas of cybernetic societal regulation appear to be a choice without alternatives (Köhler, 2016, p. 249). A debate that develops in such a direction favours short-term technical solutions that do not touch the substance of the problems they are supposed to address. Moreover, if the mere survival of human civilization is at stake, options of self-limitation or even publicly enforced limitation of individual freedom becomes a matter of discussion. All of this because of a focus on the environmental symptoms, not at the societal

causes of "tipping points". This article therefore proposes a different focus: not on the survival of the human species, but on the survival of humaneness in society. This shift implies attention to fundamentally different questions: Which modes of development guarantee a good life for all (Görgen & Wendt, 2020; O'Neill, 2018; Novy, 2017)? To what extent are current modes of development unjust (Wissen & Brand, 2018)? And what positive trajectories of development can be envisaged (D'Alisa et al., 2014)?

Secondly, the implicit catastrophism[6] transported by the idea of "tipping points" favours dystopian narratives (Buschmann & Plank, 2020). Not only does this depoliticize the effects of global industrial pollution as an external natural force that comes as a divine punishment upon humanity (Hulme, 2008). In the subtext, radical measures are suggested that need considerable political authority to be enforced (Brand, 2016). The open discussion about the limits of democracy in the context of the Anthropocene (Hammond et al., 2020) can be a chance for progressive emancipatory reform of participation modes in public policy, but also a veritable threat to democratic virtues and liberties, and socio-environmental justice. Critical environmental-political philosophy in this context needs to discuss *who* is called by the appeal to act in the tipping points metaphor, *what* are the (implicitly) suggested actions, and *how* are they supposed to be enforced?

2.4 Reconsider: Which justice?

As a last critical intervention in the Anthropocene discourse, the idea of environmental justice needs to be reflected. Being a relatively young debate (Barritt et al., 2019), considerations of environmental justice face an important divide: qualitative versus quantitative concepts of justice (Brunnengräber & Dietz, 2016, p. 160). In short, quantitative concepts discuss the equal distribution of the atmosphere as a greenhouse gas disposal site, while qualitative concepts focus on participatory decision-making processes in climate governance, and on developing different modes of production and consumption. Thus, qualitative concepts of environmental justice strongly link to issues of social justice, distributional equity, and discussions of a good life for all (O'Neill, 2018; Novy, 2017). They, thus, politicise current modes of development (Görgen & Wendt, 2020) and often call for a democratization of societal nature relations (Wissen, 2016). Under this premise, it is crucial to include not only environmental, but also social, sexual, and racial aspects of justice, that often intersect in a web of mutually reinforcing relations (Walby et al., 2012). To sum up, rather than talking about environmental justice between nations or "humans", critical environmental-political philosophy needs to ask *who* can participate *how* in *which* processes (or not), and to *which* ends?

3. Conclusion and prospects

This article aimed at *making it harder* to discuss the Anthropocene by examining the societal roots beneath seemingly external environmental issues, intending thereby to prevent dangerous societal and environmental backlashes that might result from *too easy* solutions. In doing so, the article identified four main challenges.

Firstly to disenchant the *anthropos*, meaning to question whether "humanity" is the cause of or the solution to environmental issues in the Anthropocene. The article rejected both notions, criticising that *anthropos* is currently understood as post-natural, post-social, and post-political. Secondly, to debunk objective science and politics by questioning a science-policy interface that aims at "speaking truth to power". Here, scientists should acknowledge their normative biases and seek the exchange with non-scientific knowledge producers, while at the same time reflecting upon a 40-year history of failure in politics before uncritically urging it to action. Thirdly, metaphors of spaceship earth, tipping points or planetary boundaries should be

[6] This article focuses on the negative aspects of catastrophism. An in-depth discussion about possible positive aspects (Hrubec, 2019; Beck, 2015) is promising but beyond its scope.

abandoned because they reproduce intolerable implications of humanity as a single political subject, and of nature as an object of regulation that threatens human survival. Thereby they play on catastrophism and fear, potentially giving leeway to authoritarian political solutions. Lastly, all these questionable implications contribute to blurring questions of social justice instead of opening up the debate about how decision-making processes about common goods should be, what are desirable societal goals (apart from survival), and how the needs of everyone can be satisfied in a sustainable manner.

Considering these critical interventions into the current Anthropocene debate, do we still have hope? Certainly, it is not the task of philosophy to be society's hope factory. Nevertheless, by disenchanting dystopian narratives, like "human civilization might collapse", "we have to act fast now", or "there is no alternative", we reclaim space for a discussion about how just and sustainable collective modes of developments could actually look. We generate new leeway in thinking of desirable societal alternatives beyond authoritarian rule, technological control or cemented inequalities. By making human-nature relations the object of discussion (rather than human survival), we have a chance to reflect and eventually dismantle the structural reasons for more than 40 years of relative failure in global environmental governance. Most of all, by critically problematizing the Anthropocene we can realize that "another world is possible", making it more likely to bring it about instead of fearfully protecting the illusionary security and comfort of the world we grew accustomed to.

Acknowledgement
This article is part of the VEGA project1/0291/18 *Historic-philosophical analysis of environmental thinking, research on its influences on ethical, legal and political thinking and its social response*.

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Ethics & Bioethics (in Central Europe), 2020, 10 (3–4), 203–220 DOI:10.2478/ebce-2020-0019

Freedom in the Society of Control: Ethical challenges

Yevhen Laniuk[1]

Abstract

The Society of Control is a philosophical concept developed by Gilles Deleuze in the early 1990s to highlight the transition from Michel Foucault's Disciplinary Society to a new social constitution of power assisted by digital technologies. The Society of Control is organized around switches, which convert data, and, in this way, exercise power. These switches take data inputs (digitized information about individuals) and transform them into outputs (decisions) based on their pre-programmed instructions. I call these switches "automated decision-making algorithms" (ADMAs) and look at ethical issues that arise from their impact on human freedom. I distinguish between negative and positive aspects of freedom and examine the impact of the ADMAs on both. My main argument is that freedom becomes endangered in this new ecosystem of computerized control, which makes individuals powerless in new and unprecedented ways. Finally, I suggest a few ways to recover freedom, while preserving the economic benefits of the ADMAs.

Keywords: Freedom, Power, Society of Control, Automated Decision-Making Algorithms, Digital Technologies.

Introduction

We live in a time of rapidly accelerating computer technologies. Computers have become so deeply entrenched into our lives that we can no longer imagine our societies without them. Some of the greatest achievements of the human mind – from space exploration to decoding DNA – have become possible due to their assistance. However, like atomic energy, this potent technology can do harm if used improperly. Some of the greatest minds in the IT-industry, including Bill Gates and Elon Musk, have warned against the mentality of cyber-utopianism, which regards digital technologies as a universal solution to virtually every human problem and welcomes their unrestrained introduction into society (Sainato, 2015).

Pressing ethical issues arise from the attempts to apply their power to the social realm. Ethical concerns inevitably proceed from the efforts to "digitize" human life, turn it into a stream of data, and make automatic decisions about it using computers. I call the software programs, specifically designed for this purpose "automated decision-making algorithms" (ADMAs) – "automated," because they are inanimate objects, working without human intervention or oversight; "decision-making" – because their rationale is to yield binary decisions, such as "accept / decline," "allow / deny," "pardon / punish," etc.; "algorithms" – because they are mathematical models, designed to convert data inputs (digitized information about individuals) into outputs (decisions) in a finite number of steps, based on their pre-programmed instructions.[2]

These ADMAs have become widespread in a wide range of spheres. Banks use them to determine if someone is eligible for a credit or loan; courts – to figure out the risk of recidivism (in some cases, they can even guide the verdict) (O'Neil, 2018, ch. 1); employers – to find out if a prospective employee will be an efficient worker; consumer marketers – to discover the likelihood of purchasing a certain item, etc. As the ecosystem of ADMAs grows, a new type of society is formed around them. Gilles Deleuze theorized about this type of society in his seminal essay *Postscript on the Societies of Control* (1992), in which he argued that automated switches create a new modality of power, which he called the "Society of Control." The main rationale behind ADMAs is to save money and increase productivity, but they also raise several ethical

[1] Ivan Franko National University of Lviv (Ukraine); yevhen.lanyuk@lnu.edu.ua

[2] This approach is close to the concept of "autonomous artificial agents" (AAAs) developed by philosopher Samir Chopra and the attorney Laurence White (Chopra & White, 2011).

questions: Are these software programs fair? Under what conditions can they be wrong? Which decisions can and cannot be delegated to machines? And, finally, what is the price we must pay for the economic efficiency brought by these ADMAs? Aren't we sacrificing something very important, something that makes us humans, in our ever-growing dependency on the soulless technology, inaugurated by the profit-dominated mind of the capitalist and the cold, calculating mind of the scientist?

It is far beyond the scope of this article to answer these questions. But I would like to raise (and, hopefully, substantiate) one issue here: The ever-growing utilization of ADMAs and the type of society it creates – the Society of Control – tends to push (us) into a world without freedom. These software programs establish invisible bonds that tether individuals to their initial social positions and impede their self-realization. They also tend to create a situation when a person's life is deterministically governed by forces outside his control. Considering their tendency to disproportionately affect the lives of the weak and the poor, they create a dystopian world, in which, in the words of St. Luke, "to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what they have will be taken away" (Luke 19:26). Such a society is antithetical to the liberal vision, which emphasizes not just the equality of rights, but also the availability of opportunities to fulfill the inalienable human right of the "pursuit of happiness."

The issue of ethical impact of automated decision-making systems on society has been already raised by several authors. Most importantly, by Cathy O'Neil in her book *Weapons of math destruction: How big data increases inequality and threatens democracy* (O'Neil, 2016), in which she outlines the subversive impact of what she calls "weapons of math destruction" on human society. In Frank Pasquale's book *Black box society: the secret algorithms that control money and information* (Pasquale, 2016), the author analyzes how the corporate world uses secretive algorithms to control personal behavior and raises a number of political, social, economic, and ethical issues that result from this control. The Harvard University Professor Shoshana Zuboff, in her profound work *The age of surveillance capitalism: the fight for a human future at the new frontier of power* (Zuboff, 2020), substantiates the concept of "surveillance capitalism" – an economic system that pivots around the commodification of personal data with the purpose of profit-making – and analyzes, among other things, the ethical impact of autonomous decision-making systems. Finally, some general ethical issues related to technological development in the 21st century have been raised by Yuval Noah Harari (Harari, 2016), Nick Bostrom, Francis Fukuyama, Steven Pinker, and many other authors. This article is the first attempt to examine the impact of automated decision-making algorithms on freedom from an ethical perspective specifically in the framework of Gillles Deleuze's concept of the "Society of Control".

It is divided into three parts. In Part 1, I will outline the ethical value of freedom and its manifestation in human society. In Part 2, I will focus on the type of society, which results from a ubiquitous utilization of ADMAs. Following Gilles Deleuze, I will call this type of society "the Society of Control." Hopefully, this will help to establish a theoretical framework, in which, in Part 3, I will examine several ethical challenges to freedom that arise from an increasing application of ADMAs. Finally, in the Conclusion, I will suggest some possible cures.

The ethics of freedom

Before proceeding to an analysis, it is proper to begin by defining the core concept of this article – freedom. The authoritative Merriam-Webster dictionary of English defines it as: 1. The quality or state of being free: such as: a. the absence of necessity, coercion, or constraint in choice or action, b. liberation from slavery or restraint or from the power of another, c. the quality or state of being exempt or released usually from something onerous, d. unrestricted

use, e. ease, facility, f. the quality of being frank, open, or outspoken, g. improper familiarity, h. boldness of conception; 2. A political right (Merriam-Webster, *Freedom*). In the second sense, the word "liberty" is also widely used as a synonym. Two parts of freedom are usually distinguished, namely *negative freedom* ("freedom from"), which implies the absence of constraints for action, and *positive freedom* ("freedom to"), or the ability to command control over one's life and realize one's fundamental purposes. Isaiah Berlin conceptualized this distinction in his famous work *Four Essays on Liberty* (Berlin, 1969), in which he outlined the negative aspect of liberty as the ultimate answer to the question "What is the area within which the subject — a person or group of persons — is or should be left to do or be what he is able to do or be, without interference by other persons?", whereas positive attempts to answer "What, or who, is the source of control or interference that can determine someone to do, or be, this rather than that?" (Berlin, 1969, pp. 121–122). Although Berlin used the term "liberty" in his original essay, I suggest that his two-part typology applies to "freedom." First, this distinction is valid not only in relation to a political authority, but also in social relations more broadly, down to the individual level. Second, in Slavic languages, the differentiation between freedom in general and its political part is usually less pronounced. The title of Berlin's essay is translated as "Dva pojmy slobody" into Slovak, "Dwie koncepcje wolności" into Polish, and "Дві конпепції свободи" [Dvi kontseptsii svobody] into Ukrainian. The Slavic words "sloboda," "wolnośc," and "свобода" [svoboda] are as often used in reference to freedom in general as to the degree of it that one could have in relationships with a political authority.

Freedom and ethics are inextricably connected. On the one hand, freedom is a source of ethics. All ethical systems, including divine command theory, natural law theory, deontological ethics, utilitarianism, contractarianism, etc., assume that the subject of an action toward the Other is free. That action may be subordinate to divine or metaphysical rules, judged by intentions or consequences, but it will be ethically valid only insofar as the one who performs it is free. The Dutch philosopher Bernardo Kastrup argues that freedom is "foundational to our moral codes, criminal justice system, religions and even to the very meaning of life itself" (Kastrup, 2020). On the other hand, freedom is also a purpose of ethics. According to Anatoliy Karas, "ethics is a form and way of activity and an actualization of meeting with the Other," in which "the primacy of the ethical" should be understood "as a priority of the Other in the 'discourse of action' and the realization of individual freedom" (Karas, 2003, p. 408). Aristotle who first used the term "ethics" understood it as "practical wisdom" meant to explain how people should live together and act toward one another as free beings. However, ethics and its principles apply not only to individuals, but to all levels of intersubjective relations, including groups, communities, and society at large.

As both the source and destination of ethics, freedom may not be even interpreted as a value, but as a meta-value, which constitutes the ethical sphere itself, or, rather, the framework of its actualization in human society. At the same time, it is always caught in the "is-ought" dilemma. As Karas argues, "ethics that is not oriented toward the realization of freedom, but simply fixes the existing *status quo*, does not correspond to the human vocation to care for life and self-fulfillment" (Karas, 2003, p. 412). In this article, we will explore the challenges to freedom in the computerized society of the 21st century, or the *is*, therefore, we should first outline the *ought*: What is the ethical ideal of freedom and how does it manifest in human society? Since such an analysis can be performed from many theoretical standpoints, we will focus only on the one that fulfills the next three criteria: i. lays the groundwork for the ethical consideration of freedom as a formative ideal of human society; ii. outlines the types of society that are and are not based on this ideal; iii. regards their evolution from a historical perspective. The ethical and political theory by the 19th century Italian philosopher Antonio Rosmini meets all these criteria.

Similarly to Immanuel Kant, freedom and ethics for Rosmini are inseparably connected and are rooted in the human person. Rosmini defines the person as "a substantial individual in so far as it contains a supreme, incommunicable, intelligent and active principle" (Rosmini, 2010, p. 17). For him, in the perfection of this natural and self-evident principle lies "the moral dignity of persons, their freedom, and that infinite excellence which cedes to nothing and is subservient to nothing" (Rosmini, 2010, p. 19). Dignity, for Rosmini is a counterpart of freedom and is manifested in the person's devotion to truth or Being in its fullness.

Freedom and dignity characterize the domain of persons, as opposed to the domain of things. Rosmini distinguishes between the relationships among persons, which should be grounded on the principles of freedom and dignity, and the relationships of persons with things, which are subject to possession and instrumental use:

> The simplest, most general relationships of human beings with things and persons are ultimately those of means and end. Relative to human beings, things are means, persons are ends. From these two fundamental relationships descend all the moral laws which must govern human behavior towards things and persons. The first law, governing human conduct towards things, states: 'Human beings must use things as means to the end proper to human beings.' The second law, governing human conduct towards persons, states: 'Human beings must treat persons as end, that is, as having their own end' (Rosmini, 2010, p. 10).

He calls relationships based on the formative principles of freedom and dignity *social*. "Society presupposes freedom", Rosmini argues. "Persons, as members, are free" (Rosmini, 2010, p. 35). The very task of the social is to increase the scope of human freedom. However, the principle of freedom in relationships among people is oftentimes violated and persons are subjected to the same treatment as things. The philosopher calls these relationships *seignioral*, and the social order that supports them a *seigniory*. The seigniory often arises in a situation of conquest and subjugation, when the inhabitants of the conquered country lose freedom, are denied dignity and become mere means to their masters' ends.

In Rosmini's theory, the social and seignioral elements are regarded as ideal types, whereas actual societies combine them in various proportions. History, in his view, consists in the gradual limitation of the latter element and the growth of the former; however, this process is tortuous and has many twists and setbacks. The seignioral element can disappear in one context and then re-appear in another in a totally new form. Though Rosmini elaborated his theory in the 19th century, the seigniory arguably reached its peak a century later. "The formation of such an entity as the society of the Soviet Union," writes Karas, "was completely preceded by its abstract justification as a socio-political means of achieving the Communist goal" (Karas, 2003, p. 291). The question of whether a technologically advanced society of the 21st century can become a new seigniory is open and highly relevant.

The issue of freedom is inseparable from the issue of power. Power is usually seen as an antagonist of freedom, and vice versa. However, such a view is simplistic and only partially correct. The lack of power in society leads to anarchy, not freedom. Freedom is void unless it is protected by some power. Too much power, however, absorbs freedom and leads to tyranny. This dual relationship of power with freedom can be interpreted from the standpoint of Aristotle's distinction of "good" and "bad" types of power. Apart from the issue by whom it was exercised (for Aristotle, it could be one person, a group, or the majority of them), the philosopher argued that "good" power favors its subjects, while "bad" benefits only its carriers at the expense of its subjects.[3] From this standpoint, freedom simultaneously directs and limits

[3] The "good" types, according to Aristotle, were monarchy, aristocracy, and politeia, and the "bad" ones were tyranny, oligarchy, and democracy.

power, constituting the ethical framework of its realization in human society. According to Rosmini, it serves as a criterion of distinction between the seignioral power, which treats the Other as a tool, and social, for which he is an end.

Historically, the government has been seen both as the main protector of freedom and the biggest threat to it. If it did not oppress society, it would be often enough to declare that its members enjoyed negative freedom. Moreover, if it additionally distributed welfare, one could also argue that it provided positive freedom. Democratic institutions, such as political parties, regular elections, governmental checks and balances, etc., have all been established to protect freedom primarily from incursions of the state. However, freedom can be encroached not solely by the government but also by the private sector. The seignioral relationships, which reduce the person to a thing and treat him/her as a pure means to others' ends, can occur beyond the political domain. The early days of industrial capitalism with their extremely harsh working conditions, which allowed Karl Marx to theorize about the "objectification" and "alienation" of workers, may serve as an example. The claim that the threat to freedom could come not only from the government, but from society itself was famously made by John Stuart Mill in his philosophical essay *On Liberty*:

> When society is itself the tyrant ... its means of terrorizing are not restricted to the acts which it may do by the hands of its political functionaries. Society can and does execute its own mandate; and if it issues wrong mandates instead of right, it practices a social tyranny more formidable than many kinds of political oppression, since it leaves fewer means of escape, penetrating much more deeply into the details of life, and enslaving the soul itself (Mill, 1975, p. 6).

The idea that society itself can be a threat to freedom is important for this article, because most of the examples that will be discussed as ethical challenges to freedom involve private companies, not public bodies.

In the modern world, the issue of freedom seems to be at the heart of political and ethical discussions. Apparently, it seems that the Western world lives in the age of profound liberation. Today, the dominant political motive is about "empowerment," giving more rights and opportunities, especially to historically disadvantaged members of society. When I was writing this article, mass protests erupted in the United States and several other countries following the death of an African American man named George Floyd. These protests are not just a reaction to the single act of injustice, but rather a revolt against the social system, in which traditionally dominant social groups allegedly oppress everyone who is outside the white, male-dominated, heterosexual, capitalist culture. The goal of such movements as Black Lives Matter is arguably to overcome the legacy of seigniory, in which members of one race or sex were considered inferior to members of the other and treated more as a means than ends in themselves. But on the other hand, new forms of seigniory seem to emerge, one of which is the ecosystem of computerized regimentation, which the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze conceptualized as the "Society of Control". This environment raises thorny ethical issues, it can potentially curtail freedom and make individuals powerless in new and unprecedented ways.

Ancient aspirations – modern technologies

In his novel *The Pharaoh*, the Polish author Boleslaw Prus described a fictional civil war in Ancient Egypt between a young and charismatic pharaoh and a clique of priests, greedy for wealth and political power. The pharaoh had almost defeated the priests on the battlefield, but in the final battle, when his troops were assaulting their last besieged fortress, something mysterious happened. The chief priest appeared on the bulwark, raised his hands to the sky, and the sun began to turn dark. The pharaoh's troops were shocked by his power to command celestial bodies. Seized by a surreptitious fear, they plunged into a panicked stampede and

almost crushed their commander who vainly tried to hold them back. The soldiers and the pharaoh himself were unaware that the priests were keen on mathematics and astronomy. After centuries of observing the sun, they learned to predict its eclipses, and made the pharaoh assault their fortress on that exact day. Eventually, the priests won the war, despite having been almost defeated on the battlefield.

There are, at least, three things to learn from this episode. First, it illustrates the connection between knowledge and power. Solar eclipses, indeed, occur regularly. With the knowledge of their timing, the priests could predict the future, which gave them an advantage over their superior enemy. Second, it shows that knowledge is profitable only if it is hidden. If it were available also to the pharaoh, his troops, perhaps, would have been less amazed by the priests' trick. Third, it illustrates an unequal society, in which wealth and power are based on some exclusive knowledge available only to the insiders.

Modern societies are supposed to be founded on different principles. They favor democracy over the domination of the few, a strong middle class over the consolidation of money and power in a tiny elite, and a transparency of public institutions over the esoteric concentration of knowledge in closed groups. However, this fictional episode from the 19th-century novel seems to highlight precisely the opposite tendency in the development of our technologically advanced societies. Imagine governments, banks, and big tech companies instead of Egyptian priests, think about their predictive algorithms as of ancient sacred formulas – and you will get a picture of what is happening in the world right now, with the difference that modern tools have become much more pervasive and sophisticated, and they are being applied not to natural phenomena, but to the social realm.

People have always dreamt about predicting the future. In Ancient Greece, the priestess named Pythia delivered prophecies in a frenzied state induced by vapors rising from the chasm, and her talks were interpreted as signs of the future. However, for centuries, due to its complexity and unpredictability, the social reality has largely evaded attempts of being understood, with the same clarity and predictability as laws governing natural phenomena. Despite the efforts of such thinkers, as Henri de Saint-Simon and Auguste Comte, to create, in the 19th-century, so-called "social physics," these attempts largely did not move beyond purely theoretical speculations up until the most recent years. Two big obstacles were in their way: the lack of relevant statistical data and the absence of calculating power to process it. Today, both these obstacles increasingly yield to the power of computer technologies. The more they enter our lives, the more data, which before went unrecorded, becomes available for computer analysis. Couple that data with clever algorithms of discovering patterns in it – and you will get an oracle that will tell you the future more accurately than any Pythia of the past. This time based on science, not magic.

The word "algorithm" comes from Arabic and means "a procedure for solving a mathematical problem in a finite number of steps" (Merriam-Webster, *Algorithm*). While in the past it was a purely mathematical term, today its application has moved beyond science and technology. Decisions in such spheres, as business, finance, insurance, education, employment, healthcare, etc., increasingly become automated, especially at the grassroots level. While in the past decisions, such as: Whom to hire? What to advertise? How much to charge for insurance? were made by humans, now they are increasingly delegated to machines. The more we interact with them, the more relevant become the ethical questions: What type of society do they produce? Moreover, how does this novel social reality affect freedom? Let me deal with both questions, starting with the first.

Lewis Mumford, a prominent American historian of technologies, argued that the structure of society is consistent with the workings of its basic technology. He referred to the ancient hydraulic civilizations, as well as the 20th-century industrial superpowers, as "megamachines", or machines using humans as their components (Mumford, 1966, p. 312). According to

Mumford, their social structure, including a hierarchical chain of command, immense bureaucracy, and social conformity, was rooted in their major technologies – first, centralized irrigation systems and, later, integrated industrial production.

This approach allows to suggest that modern society may also be consistent with its basic technology – the computer. The computer is basically a data conversion machine. Its processor takes a stream of "ones" and "zeros" from RAM, converts it into another stream via its microarchitecture – an intricate set of "logic gates," made of transistors performing Boolean operations ("AND", "OR", "NOT"), – and writes it back into RAM. Then the cycle repeats. From this viewpoint, automatic decision-making algorithms may be described as social counterparts of computer "logic gates." They also take data inputs – digitized information about human activities – and transform them into outputs (decisions). On the abstract level, they work as switches, which convert data flows. Just as a computer's "logic gate," which labels data inputs as "true" or "false," ADMAs do the same with information about individuals, which they sort into different types of binary categories: "accept/decline", "pardon/punish", etc.

Gilles Deleuze conceptualized a society, organized around switches and data flows, as the "Society of Control". He argued that individuals in the Society of Control become "dividuals", or double entities, consisting of their physical bodies and their representations in the system of computerized control, or the "code". This system automatically gives or blocks access to certain locations, opportunities, venues, etc., based on the code (Deleuze calls this computer-mediated environment "a variable geometry") (Deleuze, 1992, p. 4). The switches, thus, manage society in the same way, as electrons are managed inside the array of computer microchips. He exemplifies this as follows: "Félix Guattari has imagined a city where we would be able to leave one's apartment, one's street, one's neighborhood, thanks to one's (dividual) electronic card that raises a given barrier; but the card could just as easily be rejected on a given day or between certain hours; what counts is not the barrier but the computer that tracks each person's position – licit or illicit – and effects a universal modulation" (Deleuze, 1992, p. 7).

According to Deleuze, the Society of Control should be regarded as a novel type of power, because the concept of "disciplinary power" elaborated by Michel Foucault and its crucial element – the panopticon, – in his opinion, can no longer explain its workings in the digital age.[4] In Foucault's theory, power was embodied in the panopticon, which can be generally described as a circular building with transparent cells along the perimeter and a central tower with an invisible watchman. This architectural design could be applied to all kinds of institutions, in which power was exercised over individuals, such as prisons, barracks, schools, factories, etc. The relations of power were born from its internalization because Foucault believed that internees of such institutions would perform their duties automatically even if nobody was watching them at any moment. He called the panoptic power "disciplinary," because its *raison d'être* was not to punish, as in the medieval "sovereign" type of power, but rather to train humans to become docile and useful beings.

Deleuze argues that since the late 20th century "we are in a generalized crisis in relation to all the environments of enclosure – prison, hospital, factory, school, family" (Deleuze, 1992, p. 3). In order to exercise power in the 21st century, there is a less need for prisons, labor camps, barbed wire, machine guns, and all those "heavy" institutions and tools, which were the symbols of power in the previous century. Today, power also works through switches and is exercised over data. The panoptic surveillance of bodies is supplemented by the surveillance of data, or "dataveillance," as Roger Clarke has suggested (Clarke, 1988), whereby a person's data is "imprisoned" in the database and used to control him from there. Those who oversee those switches, including governments, banks, and big tech companies, command authority over

[4] In Foucault's theory, the disciplinary power was itself historically discontinuous with the previous mode of "sovereign" power.

individuals in a similar fashion as a computer user makes electrons inside his PC to perform useful computations.

This ecosystem of computerized control has progressed rapidly over a few decades and left liberal democracy totally unprepared for these new challenges. According to Yuval Noah Harari, classical liberalism has developed "an impressive arsenal of arguments and institutions to defend individual freedoms against external attacks from oppressive governments and bigoted religions, but it is unprepared for a situation when individual freedom is subverted from within, and when the very concepts of 'individual' and 'freedom' no longer make sense" (Harari, 2018). The "subversion of freedom from within" can be interpreted as the replacement of an individual – a sovereign and autonomous decision-maker – with an aggregation of data in the system of computerized control, in which clever algorithms discover patterns and make decisions about that individual in advance, without his approval or even knowledge, thus, handling him as a sort of raw material. This tends to push into seignioral relationships, since the value of the Other is denied, and he is treated more as a means than an autonomous end. I find "subversion" to be the proper word to describe this process, because, as the Society of Control develops, the loss of freedom comes not as an obvious, one-time political catastrophe, a head-on collision with some inner or outer political enemy, but as a silent, invisible, and step-by-step impairment, which circumvents the capacity of traditional political institutions to protect it.

The forces that, in Harari's words, "subvert freedom from within" come not so much from the government, but rather from the society itself, therefore, the challenges they pose to freedom should be understood less as a political, and more as an ethical issue (despite it may be needing a political response). Of course, governments actively partake in the collection of data about their citizens and use that data to control them algorithmically, as Edward Snowden showed the world in 2013, but, according to Shoshana Zuboff, these tactics were pioneered by private companies, including Google, Facebook, and Amazon. According to Zuboff, these companies invented a historically unprecedented business strategy, which mines personal information and turns it into profit. She calls this strategy "surveillance capitalism" and argues that Google is its "pioneer, discoverer, elaborator, experimenter, lead practitioner, role model, and diffusion hub" (Zuboff, 2020, ch. 3). In many ways, the private sector is ahead of many governments in the collection of data about individuals and the invention of intricate ways of controlling them algorithmically. Perhaps, the biggest scandal around the application of digital algorithms for political purposes involved a private company – the British political consulting firm Cambridge Analytica.

All those rights that have been won in long historical struggles in the "physical" world are not automatically protected online. The digital realm, which, in the early days of the Internet, was seen as a space of anonymity and freedom, is now increasingly being claimed by rapacious corporations and power-greedy governments as a realm of one-sided and unchecked power. This is reminiscent of the colonial age when Western countries discovered huge territories overseas and began exploiting them because the rights their citizens enjoyed at home were not extended there, and private companies were often among the biggest exploiters. Now, the "territory" to be exploited is located not in the physical world, but in the parallel world online, while what is being exploited is not natural resources, but the personal information of Internet users.

In the preceding part of the article, I outlined the distinction between "good" and "bad" types of power. The former (social) power is based on the value of freedom and treats its subjects as autonomous ends, while the latter (seignioral) regards them as pure means. The power exercised by ADMAs, which have been designed primarily to spare costs and optimize useful output, is seignioral. Insurers, banks, and other bodies install them to cut losses and maximize profit. In this way, their role is like that of Michel Foucault's panopticon. Like the panopticon, ADMAs

divide their subjects into a double mode: normal/abnormal, compliant/non-compliant, efficient/inefficient, etc., and thus, exercise a "normalizing gaze." They also serve the panoptic function of "strengthening social forces – increasing production, developing the economy, spreading education, raising the level of public morality" (Foucault, 1995, p. 208). Foucault interpreted the panopticon as a "diagram of a mechanism of power reduced to its ideal form" (Foucault, 1995, p. 205). An ideal panopticon is 0% freedom and 100% power. Panoptic power is also completely asymmetrical – its internees have no capacity to challenge the power, which has been unilaterally imposed on them and made them mere means to their master's ends. The parallels with the panopticon allow us to argue that the ecosystem of ADMAs increases the "bad" type of power, or the one that benefits its carriers at the cost of its subjects, and, thus, damages freedom. How exactly does this happen? So far, we have considered the ethical value of freedom and the unprecedented social order that is based on data flows and automatic switches. Let us now examine several ways how it affects freedom and what ethical issues may arise herewith.

The Goliath of the microchip

Sarah Wysocki was a schoolteacher from Washington DC. In 2009, the city's municipal authority decided to reform its school system and dismiss low-performing teachers. For this purpose, it harnessed a software named IMPACT, which evaluated teachers' performance based on their students' progress in math and language tests in two consecutive years. A complex algorithm had to separate the teacher's output from a variety of other factors. Wysocki thought she did not have to worry because her students and their parents rated her highly as a teacher. However, she was eventually fired because IMPACT gave her an implausibly low score. Though she understood that the score was unfair, it was not easy to prove. Neither the school administrators, nor the education officials knew how the algorithm worked, but they all appealed to a fair and unbiased judgment of the machine. Wysocki hypothesized that, perhaps, her students' previous scores had been artificially bloated and that led to her poor evaluation as a teacher. Eventually, her case received media attention and she was hired by another school. Her case, however, leaves open the question: How many other people have been unfairly punished under the same circumstances?

The story of Sarah Wysocki summarizes many features of ADMAs. First, they are unilaterally imposed upon individuals, often without their consent, and used to measure their value as workers, borrowers, customers, etc. Second, the inner mechanisms of these systems are often shrouded in mystery. Few people, except for their creators,[5] can tell how the algorithms arrive at their conclusions. Third, they make a probabilistic assumption that a person *might* be an inefficient worker or untrustworthy borrower, but that person ends up being treated as if he/she *is* such a person. A bad credit history or prolonged unemployment will aggravate their situation even further and eventually catch them in a vicious feedback loop, whereby the score damages their life, and vice versa. This potentially can foster an unequal society, in which the poor will be destined to remain so forever. The mathematician Cathy O'Neil calls these algorithms 'weapons of math destruction' and discusses them as follows:

> Many of the 'weapons of math destruction' behave like that. They define their own reality and use it to justify their results. This type of model is self-perpetuating, highly destructive – and very common. [...] An algorithm processes a slew of statistics and comes up with a probability that a certain person might be a bad hire, a risky borrower, a terrorist, or a miserable teacher. That probability is distilled into a score, which can turn someone's life upside down. And yet when the person fights back, 'suggestive'

[5] In the case of self-trained AI, even the creators of those systems won't be able to tell how they arrive at their conclusions.

> countervailing evidence simply won't cut it. The case must be ironclad (O'Neil, 2018, intro).

The researcher Frank Pasquale argues that a new social phenomenon arises from the ubiquitous use of opaque algorithms, like IMPACT. He calls this phenomenon a "black box" society and emphasizes the double definition of the term "black box," which means both a recording device and something mysterious, impenetrable to scrutiny. Pasquale summarizes the features of "black box" society as follows. First, they set "a rule of scores and bets." A person's life is distilled into a score and is measured thereof, while giving little power to control or even know how the score is calculated. Second, these algorithms create "separate and unequal economies," since the scores tend to punish the poor and favor the rich.[6] Third, they produce "invisible powers." While there is a demand that democratic power should be maximally transparent, "black box society" is a significant setback from this demand. Fourth, the algorithms set up "wasteful arms races and unfair competitions." Pasquale illustrates this statement with Gary Shteyngart's dystopian novel *Super Sad True Love Story*, in which its characters did not care about what the scores meant or how they were calculated – they only wanted high ones (Pasquale, 2016, p. 190).

The first ethical challenge to freedom in the Society of Control that I would discuss in this article involves its negative dimension, namely privacy. The researcher Alan F. Westin argues that the connection between freedom and privacy is rooted in territoriality, or the inherent desire of most animals to keep and defend their territory. If we understand negative freedom as a state of protection from unwanted intrusion, privacy goes hand in hand with it. For humans, according to Westin, privacy includes not only their physical surroundings, but also the abstract spheres of mind and relationships. He defines privacy as "the claim of individuals, groups, or institutions to determine for themselves when, how, and to what extent information about them is communicated to others" (Westin, 1970, p. 7). While privacy is equivalent with freedom, surveillance, on the other hand, is synonymous with power. The inmates of the panopticon were stripped of any private corner to hide from the all-seeing, judgmental eye of the watchman.

ADMAs rely heavily on surveillance. In order to work, they need data. The more data they have, the more accurate are their calculations and predictions. The desire to improve accuracy, thus, runs against the social demand for privacy and, *ipso facto*, freedom. Michael Karanicolas provided, perhaps, the best illustration of the intrusion into privacy:

> Imagine a typical day you spend strolling through a shopping center in your hometown. Perhaps you will browse through titles at a bookstore or record shop, visit your bank or take in a movie. You may see friends or acquaintances and stop to catch up. Now imagine that, for the entire day, there was a group of people following you, diligently writing down every shop you visited and object you looked at and every person you spoke to. Imagine they collated that information to build as detailed a profile as possible about you: your demographic and income level, your hobbies and interests, your political beliefs and so on. Imagine they spent months or years collecting the information, and then offered it for sale to anyone who was interested (Karanicolas, 2014, p. 7).

In the Society of Control, human lives progressively become open books. Cameras record how they drive and where they go. Their browsing history and shopping habits reveal intimate details about their health and lifestyle. All that data is assembled into their digital profiles and treated as raw material for algorithmic calculations. "There are now hundreds of credit scores for sale," writes Frank Pasquale, "and thousands of 'consumer scores,' on subjects ranging from frailty

[6] O'Neil puts forward the same argument: "The privileged are processed more by people, the masses by machines" (O'Neil, 2016, intro).

to reliability to likelihood to commit fraud. ChexSystems and TeleCheck track bounced checks; Alliant Cooperative Data Solutions documents missed monthly payments for gym memberships; payday lenders report 'deadbeats' to Teletrack. Datalogix has lists of dieters. And there are far more sources of data for all these scores than there are scores themselves" (Pasquale, 2016, p. 33). He adds that any of these scores "could change our lives on the basis of a falsehood or a mistake that we don't even know about" (Pasquale, 2016, p. 33). The complexity of those systems is an effective shield against scrutiny and accountability.

As a state of protection from unwanted intrusion, negative freedom can be regarded as its "passive" part. Positive freedom, or the ability to maintain control over one's life and achieve one's goals, is rather the "active" part of freedom. I can claim to have positive liberty if it is *me* – not somebody else – who makes decisions about my life. Of course, my boss can fire me anytime or my country can put me in prison. If this happens because I broke some of the rules, to which I had voluntarily agreed, this is fair.[7] I am still in charge of my fate because I can decide anytime whether to follow those rules or not.

In the Society of Control, positive freedom can mean three things: i. to oversee what data is assembled about me, by whom, and under what circumstances; ii. to control or, at least, understand how this data can be used to make decisions about me; iii. to be able to challenge those decisions if there is a suspicion that they are unfair. The case of Sarah Wysocki demonstrates that all three assumptions have been violated. She could neither control the collection of data, nor did she know how the system came up with the score or could effectively challenge it. In 2011, the press discussed the case of an Arkansas resident named Catherine Taylor who had trouble finding employment for several years (O'Neil, 2016, ch. 8). After many failures to find a job, she discovered that another Catherine Taylor, who happened to be born on the same day, had a criminal record. Her prospective employers checked her name in the database and got the answer that she was a former convict. Taylor managed to clear out that record, but it had already been copied into many other consumer databases, and, perhaps, she is still being treated as a criminal. Her case shows how one's life can be tethered to one's digital profile and illustrates the argument: "We do not produce our databased selves, the databased selves produce us" (Chesterman, 2018).

While Taylor's case demonstrates how a single mistake in the system of computerized control can turn one's life upside down, the case of a youth named Kyle Behm shows how one can be harmed due to a lack of knowledge of how the system works. Behm was a college student who suffered from bipolar disorder. After rehabilitation, he was looking for a low-income job but was constantly "red-lighted" by his prospective employers. Kyle found that the reason behind his misfortunes was a single computer test that the employers in his hometown were using. This test was developed by Kronos, a workforce management company from Boston, Massachusetts, and measured a prospective employee's performance based on the five-factor personality model (O'Neil, 2016, ch. 6). Since it is illegal to use health records or IQ scores in employment in the United States, the companies have found a proxy for them in a seemingly harmless personality test. A common feature of such tests is that their takers never know what answers may disqualify them. For example, McDonald's asks its prospective workers to choose which of the following answers describe them better: "It is difficult to be cheerful when there are many problems to take care of" or "Sometimes, I need a push to get started on my work" (O'Neil, 2016, ch. 6). It can be only guessed which answer is worse. In fact, there are no "right" answers whatsoever, because the computer collates the test-takers' answers with their future performance at work and discovers patterns, which "red-flag" an applicant if he unluckily falls into one of them. The decision is not even made by a person.

[7] The consent and moral obligation of a citizen to obey his country's laws are presumed in the theory of social contract (Carmichael, 1989, pp. 949–950).

The defenders of such tests argue that if their rules were revealed, the takers would "game" the system by choosing only the appropriate answers but this also creates a Kafkaesque situation when someone is judged by the rules that are hidden from him. "A bad credit score may cost a borrower hundreds of thousands of dollars, but he will never understand exactly how it was calculated," writes Frank Pasquale. "A predictive analytics firm may score someone as a 'high cost' or 'unreliable' worker, yet never tell her about the decision" (Pasquale, 2016, p. 5). The practice of judging someone by hidden rules seems to be unprecedented in history. Historically, people have been judged by norms, which were fair or unfair, permissive or oppressive, just or discriminatory, but they had one thing in common: in all cases, they were revealed to their subjects. One could decide whether to follow or break those rules and, thus, maintain some degree of control over one's life even under the most oppressive political regimes. In the Society of Control, on the contrary, the rules progressively become hidden. Its members are reminded of the Biblical workers in the Vineyard (Matthew 20:16): the punishment can come anytime, but they do not know when and from where to expect it. Imagine a Kafkaesque scenario: In the dystopian future, society is fully ruled algorithmically. One day a police officer may knock on your door and say that a computer program has decided that you are a bad citizen and should be prosecuted, however neither he, nor anyone else will tell you why. In such a society, human life will depend on some inscrutable external force, which will also effectively invalidate resistance. Indeed, how can one revolt against something that he does not even understand? Now, we see only the early forebodings of such a future. But what can ultimately prevent this grim fantasy from coming true? If somebody had told Europeans in the early 1910s what was to befall them in the next 30 years, they, probably, would have called him a madman.

Another ethical challenge to freedom comes from ADMAs' blindness to social contexts. For example, an MIT study found that it was possible to predict a person's sexual orientation by analyzing their friends on Facebook (Heussner, 2009). With this clue, users can be targeted with LGBT content. One user who did not openly disclose his sexual orientation found a rainbow-emblazoned ad for "Coming out Coach" on his Facebook page (Pasquale, 2016, p. 26). It can be imagined what would happen if this user lived in one of those countries where homosexuality is punishable or heavily stigmatized. In a widely discussed case, the US supermarket chain Target invented an algorithm that predicted pregnancy by analyzing the shopping behavior of its female customers. With this algorithm, they began sending ads with baby products to women who they believed were pregnant. It turned out that they unwittingly disclosed one girl's pregnancy to her family without her consent (Kashmir, 2012). It is obvious that reckless dealing with such intimate details of life can often be disastrous. These cases demonstrate how socially blind ADMAs make it harder for individuals to control their privacy and, eventually, their lives.

Western societies have fought a long way to reduce social stigmas around, for example, gay people or the disabled. New stigmas, however, seem to appear in the Society of Control. If an algorithm identifies someone as lazy or unreliable, this person may face a snowball effect throughout his entire life. Even if such identification is occasionally true, it will still block his attempts to improve his life and turn over a new leaf – something we inherently associate with freedom. In the past, if someone were fired for carelessness, he could apply elsewhere. Now, his name will probably end up in a database and tarnish his life forever. "Since the beginning of time," writes the researcher Victor Mayer-Schönberger, "for us humans, forgetting has been the norm and remembering the exception. Because of digital technology and global networks, however, this balance has shifted. Today, with the help of widespread technology, forgetting has become the exception, and remembering the default" (Mayer-Schönberger, 2009, p. 2). Freedom in the digital age is incomplete without what seems to be a new human right – the right to be forgotten.

The examples of Catherine Taylor, Kyle Behm, and the anonymous pregnant girl can all be interpreted in the context of *reductionism,* which is a philosophical concept for scaling down a complex phenomenon to its basic parts and endowing it with the same value as those parts. An example of reductionism can be found among the ideas of several philosophers-materialists of the Enlightenment who argued that physical matter, governed by the laws of mechanical motion, was the only true form of existence, and regarded human beings as just another form of it. Julien Offray de La Mettrie's *L'Homme Machine* [Machine man] (1747) is a classic example of this approach. A society made of such "machine men" would not have moral status and would be just raw material for social experimentation. The infamous phrase by Josef Stalin: "Forest chopped – chips fly," in which he compared human beings to lumber, can serve as an iconic example of reductionism.

In the Society of Control, human beings face a different kind of reductionism. They are reduced not to physical matter, as in the Communist or Nazi totalitarian regimes, but to another sort of raw material – data. A computer does not care if its data inputs are about schoolteachers, disabled persons, low-income workers, marginalized social groups, stock market assets, earthquakes, atmospheric winds, or oxygen on Mars – it will process them equally. The companies attempt to "datafy" human lives and approach them as a mathematical problem to be solved; but what on the surface may seem like solving a technical problem, ignores the fact that there are human lives and destinies chained to the pieces of data inside the computer processor. As Shoshana Zuboff has put it, "Each rendered bit is liberated from its life in the social, no longer inconveniently encumbered by moral reasoning, politics, social norms, rights, values, relationships, feelings, contexts, and situations. All things animate and inanimate share the same existential status in this blended confection, each reborn as an objective and measurable, indexable, browsable, searchable 'it'" (Zuboff, 2020, ch. 7). Although Zuboff did not use the terms from Rosmini's ethical vocabulary, it is apparent that this process reinforces the seignioral relationships. As she writes, "users were no longer ends in themselves but rather became the means to others' ends" (Zuboff, 2020, ch. 3).

Vertical social mobility, or the ability to climb the social ladder and uplift one's status in the eyes of peers, is another integral part of freedom. For this reason, ancient hierarchical societies, whose members were fixed to their social roles throughout their lives, are widely regarded as unfree from the modern standpoint. The "pursuit of happiness" is never complete without the aspiration for a higher status. However, ADMAs tend to undermine this natural human right by creating pernicious feedback loops, which tether a person to his initial social position and work against his struggle to improve it. For example, when an algorithm evaluates someone as "unreliable," this person, probably, will not be hired and the longer they stay without a job, the lower their employment score and, therefore, chances to get one in the future. Cathy O'Neil argues that these vicious feedback loops are especially subversive for those at the bottom of society. "The poor are expected to remain poor forever and are treated accordingly—denied opportunities, jailed more often, and gouged for services and loans. It's inexorable, often hidden and beyond appeal, and unfair," she writes (O'Neil, 2016, ch. 8). In her book *Weapons of Math Destruction*, she discusses several examples of how algorithms tend to create such loops.

For example, in Reading, Pennsylvania, the local police department employed an algorithm named PredPol, which processes historical crime records and predicts in which areas of the city crimes are more likely to occur around certain hours. These areas then become primary targets for police patrols. According to O'Neil, this algorithm has a major flaw: more police means more recorded crimes, especially petty ones, which, in turn, justify further policing. Eventually, some areas become overpoliced. In the US, according to O'Neil, those areas tend to overlap with segregated minority neighborhoods, making them targets of disproportionate police scrutiny (O'Neil, 2016, ch. 5). This not only reinforces racial divisions, but also increases the chances of police brutality, such as happened to George Floyd on May 25th, 2020.

Another example of toxic feedback loops from O'Neil's book involves predatory advertising strategies aimed primarily at people in desperate need. Rapacious companies use algorithms to navigate through the personal information of Internet users and pinpoint the most vulnerable ones. People often unwittingly disclose their weak points when they browse or fill in online questionnaires. These people are targeted with dubious ads, which promise a miraculous cure for their problems, such as payday loans or crooked medication, but eventually drive them even further into need. O'Neil quotes one for-profit college named the Vattertott University, which advertises its services to the following social categories: "Welfare Moms with kids. Pregnant Ladies. Recent Divorce. Low Self-Esteem. Low Income Jobs. Experienced a Recent Death. Physically/Mentally Abused. Recent Incarceration. Drug Rehabilitation. Dead-End Jobs—No Future" (O'Neil, 2016, ch. 4). Preying on the vulnerable has been out there for millennia, but in the age of Big Data and sophisticated algorithms, it can be carried out with unprecedented speed and precision.

What ADMAs do with social status, they also do with information. Possessing true information is an epistemological part of freedom. Nobody is free unless he acts based on true and objective knowledge. The connection between freedom and truth was famously established in the Bible: "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). However, search engines and social media websites use algorithms, which "predict" what kind of content their users will most likely consume based on the history of their searches. This means that if someone has illusions, he will get stuck in the bubble of these illusions. Here again, one's past is automatically projected into the future and decisions are being made *about* him, not *by* him. Tom Steinberg, a British author, provides a vivid illustration of this phenomenon:

> I am actively searching through Facebook for people celebrating the Brexit leave victory, but the filter bubble is SO strong, and extends SO far into things like Facebook's custom search that I can't find anyone who is happy despite the fact that over half the country is clearly jubilant today and despite the fact that I'm actively looking to hear what they are saying. This echo-chamber problem is now SO severe and SO chronic that I can only beg any friends I have who actually work for Facebook and other major social media and technology to urgently tell their leaders that to not act on this problem now is tantamount to actively supporting and funding the tearing apart of the fabric of our societies… We're getting countries where one half just doesn't know anything at all about the other (Viner, 2016).

Plato famously described prisoners in a cave who could see nothing but the shadows of things. By chaining individuals to their habitual ways of looking at things, ADMAs breathe new life into this ancient metaphor.

From their onset, IT promised liberation. At least, it was the vision of Californian Ideology and its early adepts who combined entrepreneurial zeal with the counter-cultural stance of the 1960s and loathed any form of oppression. Ronald Reagan famously said that "the Goliath of totalitarianism will be brought down by the David of the microchip." Now, however, there seem to be Goliaths with the microchip. The Society of Control has the potential to become a new page in the long catalog of oppressive regimes. Paraphrasing Marx, the underdogs of the future will have nothing to lose but their scores and database records.

Conclusion

Michel Foucault was one of the most insightful thinkers who studied the historical evolution of power. In his significant philosophical heritage, he mostly examined the transition from "sovereign" power, which involved obedience to the central authority figure with the right "to take life or let live," to what he called "disciplinary" power, embodied in the panopticon. The

panopticon was a multi-purpose space of enclosure, surveillance, and coercion for all types of applications – from overseeing prisoners to managing the workforce. According to Foucault, this technical invention helped to establish a vast network, or "microarchitecture," of power, coextensive with the entire social body. Individuals in such a society moved from one space of enclosure to another, for example from school to factory, and lived under life-long surveillance, which trained them to become useful, docile, and compliant beings.

Disciplinary power reached its height in 20th century totalitarian regimes. When Foucault analyzed its workings, a new mode of power was already lurking on the horizon underpinned by emerging computer technologies. His premature death in 1984 prevented him from formulating a schema of it as comprehensive as the panopticon. This task was completed by Gilles Deleuze who developed the concept of the Society of Control in 1992. Power in this society is focused on the management of data in computerized networks and databases. This management is executed by automated switches, or algorithms, which modify the flows of data in electronic circuits, based on their instructions and protocols. Such a society resembles a computer, in which individuals correspond to electrons moving through a vast network of constantly changing switches. In this article, I have called these switches "automated decision-making algorithms" (ADMAs) and scrutinized mostly their impact on freedom.

As I stated in the first part of the article, such movements as Black Lives Matter allegedly indicate liberation and the defeat of seigniory. However, in the background of this asserted liberation there is the outgrowth of the Society of Control with its new mode of power, embodied in networks and switches. So, what is our age about – liberation or subjection? Or, maybe, both at once, like the Enlightenment, which created both the magnificent slogan "Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité" and the panopticon? Foucault himself emphasized this dialectical dichotomy when he contrasted "an explicit, coded and formally egalitarian judicial framework" with all those "tiny, everyday, physical mechanisms," which were "essentially non-egalitarian and asymmetrical" and "constituted the other, dark side of these processes" (Foucault, 1995, p. 222). It frequently seems that freedom is subject to the law of communicating vessels: if more of it is added in one place, the equal amount is reduced in another. However, reflecting on the intellectual heritage of the Enlightenment, it can be concluded that sometimes the mechanisms of power can break loose and engulf the whole society. This happened in 20th century totalitarian regimes, which applied the principles of the panopticon (no rights, universal surveillance, ubiquitous discipline, etc.) to the entire social body.

This leads me to the final question: What can prevent the Society of Control from following the same path? Today, China is experimenting with a comprehensive system of digital governance, named the Social Credit System, in which a person's life is distilled into a score used to mediate his status. But there are also reasons to worry in the West. In 2020, worldwide quarantine has shifted many human activities into the digital realm, potentially giving a big boost both to the volume of data circulating online and the means of its algorithmic processing. Simultaneously, some human rights, including the right to privacy, can be curtailed under the justification of fighting the virus. Some political thinkers already predict the end of democracy and welcome the advent of this "brave new world." However, if freedom has value, it must be saved. Since the return to the analog age is neither desirable, nor possible, let me suggest a few principles, which potentially may allow combining the benefits of technology with the fruits of freedom.

It is necessary to emphasize, though, that the proposed suggestions do not constitute a simple remedy or "silver bullet" that could solve the ethical threats posed by ADMAs. I believe that the solutions might exist in a complex interplay between technological, economic, social, and political aspects of the future of information society, which it is too early to anticipate. By way of analogy, it took decades for mankind to find remedies against the brutalization of nature and human labor in early industrial capitalist economy. In many ways (e. g., ecological

damage), we are still facing its dire consequences. In one thing, however, we can be sure: Awareness of the problem is the first step to recovery. Therefore, I fully agree with the respected reviewer of this article that its main goal is to outline the problem. I suggest these measures (although I am aware that they are simplified and superficial) mostly as an invitation for further discussion.

1) *Privacy*. Individuals should control themselves which bodies (except government institutions authorized by court) have access to their data and how they use it. The companies should obtain data about their clients only under their informed consent, which includes a. describing the proposed intervention; b. discussing alternatives; c. explaining risks and consequences. They also should not be allowed to transfer that data without their approval. Special attention should be drawn to the protection of minors and other vulnerable groups.
2) *Oversight*. Individuals should oversee what data is stored about them and to whom it is communicated, especially if it is related to sensitive issues, such as health, financial status, private life, religious and political views. Oversight by individuals should be complemented by government oversight. There is a need for a digital rights code, like codes regulating labor.
3) *Ethical obligations*. Any algorithm that decides about a human being should be approved by a special commission consisting of IT-specialists, lawyers, ethicists, and social scientists. If it affects millions of people, the authorization procedure should be as complex, strict, and multistage, as in the case of the country's laws.
4) *Transparency*. No judgment by opaque, "black box" algorithms is ethically acceptable. There should be a list of spheres, in which decisions can be made only by humans (for example, in criminal law) and a much wider list where automated systems can only assist humans. Only where the public benefit clearly outweighs risks, there can be fully autonomous systems. However, even there, a person should always be able to know how the system came up with the result and challenge it before a human being.
5) *The right to be forgotten.* The capacity of digital networks to store information virtually forever brings into the spotlight the discussion about a new human right – the right to be forgotten, or silence past events in one's life if they are no longer relevant. If it is a database record about some minor violation, the perpetrator should be able to redeem it, for example, by charity or community work (no excuse can be made for felons or repetitive violators). If these are publications about some blameworthy facts of his life, he should be able request their removal after a while (exceptions can be made for people who occupy important offices, felons, or if such facts are somehow important for society). A nuanced discussion is needed about how the right to be forgotten can be balanced against freedom of information.

The initial stage of the information age in some ways resembles the onset of the Industrial Revolution when humans mastered a new powerful technology, but still lacked a proper moral and legal attitude to it. When we look back at those times, we shudder at the pictures of child labor, pollution, and unbearable working conditions in the early factories. Perhaps future generations will have the same attitude to our times.

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Ethics & Bioethics (in Central Europe), 2020, 10 (3–4), 221–229 DOI:10.2478/ebce-2020-0013

Euthanasia as an issue in ethics of social consequences?

Ján Kalajtzidis[1]

Abstract
The main aim of the presented paper is to look for an answer as to whether and how euthanasia reflected is in ethics of social consequences. Ethics of social consequences is a contemporary Slovak ethical theory with an original approach to delimitating moral agency. The paper puts this definition to the test while considering the main focus of the paper – responding to the question of whether euthanasia and end of life can be understood as a moral uncertainty. The intention is to find out whether the definition is clear and adequate to withstand the basic arguments against euthanasia. Since ethics of social consequences is a consequentialist ethical theory, another partial goal is to analyse the fitness of such a position to be used in bioethical inquires.

Keywords: euthanasia, moral agent, moral subject, ethics of social consequences

Introduction

Before we start our journey and look for the answers, which are of interest in the paper, first of all, it is necessary to find a definition of euthanasia which will fit our aims. There are many definitions of euthanasia from different areas of knowledge. We are not interested in a strictly legal or medical definition but much more in a philosophical-ethical definition which is based on the present understanding of the concept. That does not mean that those definitions cannot overlap. On the contrary, they are very much connected as (e.g.) a philosophical-ethical definition cannot ignore technological advances in the field of medicine. Subsequently, the legal definition should not ignore philosophical debate.

The definition

One of the first systematical attempts to find a such definition is a paper written by Tom Beauchamp & Arnold Davidson.[2] Their goal was to find a definition that could be nonprescriptive and would not be subject to refute by counterexample. As an illustration of such insufficient definitions, one which was favoured[3] in the seventies is used: euthanasia is understood as "the painless inducement of a quick death". The weakness of this definition is very much clear, as it does not include (among other things) the elements of suffering or disease. Inducing a quick death on somebody who is not suffering would most probably be "just" murder. Another aspect which might be useful (maybe even necessary) is the element of a motive, which is closely connected to an aspect of beneficence. To overcome all of those and many other insufficiencies, Beauchamp and Davidson submitted a definition which is based on five conditions.

> The death of a human being A is an instance of euthanasia if and only if:
> (1) A's death is intended by at least one other human being (B), where B is either the cause of death or a causally relevant feature of the event resulting in death (whether by action or by omission);
> (2) there is either sufficient current evidence for B to believe that A is acutely suffering or irreversibly comatose, or there is sufficient current evidence related to A's present condition such that one or more known causal laws supports B's belief that A will be in a condition of acute suffering or irreversible comatose;

[1] University of Prešov (Slovakia); jan.kalajtzidis@unipo.sk
[2] The paper is almost a half century old (1979).
[3] The definition was even included in the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

(3) (a) B's primary reason for intending A's death is cessation of A's (actual or predicted future) suffering or irreversible comatose, where B does not intend A's death for a different primary reason, though there may be other relevant reasons, and (b) there is sufficient current evidence for either A or B that causal means to A's death will not produce any more suffering than would be produced for A if B were nor to intervene;
(4) the causal means to the event of A's death are chosen by A or B to be as painless as possible unless either A or B has an overriding reason for a more painful causal means, where the reason for choosing the latter causal means does not conflict with the evidence in 3b;
(5) A is a non-foetal organism (Beauchamp & Davidson, 1979, p. 304).

With respect to the first condition of their definition, a narrower type of euthanasia exists – physician-assisted suicide as one form of euthanasia (which has a wider meaning). According to Peter Singer, within the usual definition, there are three different types of euthanasia,[4] from which each raises a distinctive ethical issue – voluntary,[5] involuntary[6] and non-voluntary[7] euthanasia. Even the case for voluntary and non-voluntary euthanasia has some common ground (benefit for the one killed/ not a harm) the two differ (Singer, 2011). In the terms of ethics of social consequences, voluntary euthanasia involves the killing of the moral subject/ human being (or the former moral subject who consented), while the non-voluntary form does not. Non-voluntary euthanasia involves the killing of a moral object who never was a moral subject, or, one which was a moral subject before, but as one, they did not give a clear answer on the question of euthanasia.

Ethics of social consequences – introduction

Ethics of social consequences can be characterised as a consequentialist ethical theory with the inclination to act according to utilitarianism and by adopting a case-oriented approach. The case-oriented approach is acknowledged as a better way of dealing with specific moral issues of everyday life. Other aspects of ethics of social consequences are moderate subjectivity, hedonism, and partial eudemonism. Even though this might signalize a certain similarity with utilitarianism, ethics of social consequences refuses to be associated with it. The core values of ethics of social consequences are humanity, human dignity, and moral right. Secondary, or auxiliary values closely interconnected with the primary ones are responsibility and justice.

The values which are closely connected with the issue of this paper are humanity[8] and human dignity. They are understood in connection with the protection, support, and development of human life that usually bring positive social consequences. The theory assumes that protection and support of the development of life (including human life) bring positive social consequences.[9] That is why people naturally tend to protect and support life in any form. The

[4] Singer defines the euthanasia as "the killing of those who are incurably ill and in great pain or distress, in order to spare them further suffering or distress" (Singer, 2011, p. 157).
[5] Euthanasia which is carried out at the voluntary request of the person killed, who must be, when making the request, mentally competent and adequately informed (Singer, 2011, p. 157).
[6] Euthanasia is defined by Singer as involuntary when the person killed is capable of consenting to their own death but does not do so. There are at least two reasons, either they does not do so because they are not asked or because they are asked and choose to go on living (Singer, 2011, p. 158).
[7] Singer refers to euthanasia as non-voluntary if a human being is not capable of understanding the choice between life and death and therefore is unable to give consent (without having previously requested or rejected euthanasia in these circumstances) (Singer, 2011, p. 158).
[8] Humanity is, in ethics of social consequences, expressed as respect for the human being per se (Gluchman, 2018, p. xv).
[9] Positive social consequences can be characterized as consequences which help to satisfy the necessity of moral agents, social community or society as such. They are an essential condition (and at the same time part) of the good (Gluchman, 1994, p. 16; Gluchman, 1999, p. 18).

reason is not only the awareness of our duty to act to produce positive social consequences but predominantly our compassion with suffering people and our need to help to protect and support life.

Gluchman states that every adult moral agent gains the value of human dignity as a human based on the fact of his/her existence. Nevertheless, the demand on the respect of his/her dignity and humanity in relation to him/herself must be permanently confirmed by his/her actions, more specifically by the character of his/her actions that should be in accordance with valid and acceptable moral norms (even legal norms to some point – e. g. the right to live) or, at least, should not be in contrast with them (Gluchman, 1997, p. 156). According to ethics of social consequences, every human being (even mentally disabled individuals) has the primary equivalent value of human dignity. When promoting the value of humanity, ethics of social consequences differentiates on the grounds of the qualitative criteria of human life. Realization of the value of humanity in ethics of social consequences can then bring us to a situation in which terminating the life of a constantly suffering being is a demonstration of humanity.

Dignity[10] in ethics of social consequences is understood as a value that we assign to entities following a body of qualities or values they have and that are worthy of esteem and respect (Gluchman, 2008, pp. 92–93). All living entities have a certain basic degree of dignity with regard to their being. This is called the ontological grounds of the value in ethics of social consequences. However, the value is neither absolute nor constant. As already stated, it greatly depends on the stage of development of an entity and its activity. To be more terminologically clear, it is necessary at this point to distinguish between "to exist" and "to be" (to be alive). The being of the entity, so when an entity "is", means that he/she "lives" and because the entity "is" – lives, he/she has a basic degree of dignity. However, if the entity not only lives but additionally, he/she lives actively (is in interaction with its surroundings on a required level), then it can be stated that he/she exists. Death is considered as something bad (usually not desired) for several reasons. One of the most vigorous ones is the fact that death deprives us of the good things we would have enjoyed had we lived on (others might include fear of the unknown, or of pain during the process of dying, etc.). Of course, the former is true only under the assumption that we have the ability to enjoy the good. We have this ability only if we really exist as active beings, not only "are" living entities.

In ethics of social consequences, the actions and activities of existing beings are regarded as a criterion for the differentiation of the dignity which is ascribed to the entity. The dignity which is ascribed is different, on the one hand, from species to species (it depends on their developmental stage in the evolutionary chain), and as well between individuals from the same species (it depends on the consequences of their actions) (Gluchman, 2009, p. 83).

Ethics of social consequences works with categories that might make the issue we are dealing with in this paper much clearer. It distinguishes between the moral agent (subject) and the moral object. The term moral agent refers to beings, which are usually named as "real" human beings, as somebody who shows "true" human qualities. In Singer's words, this type of labelling does not refer to membership of the species (Homo sapiens), which is a biological fact, but it implies that beings "characteristically possess certain qualities, and this person possesses them to a high degree" (Singer, 2011, p. 73).

Gluchman states that a moral agent is an agent of morality fulfilling required criteria: "he/she is able to recognize and understand the existing moral status of society and is competent of conscious and voluntary activity,[11] for which he/she needs to take moral responsibility"

[10] For a better understanding of the issue of dignity in the ethics of social consequences within the concept of dying look at the paper of Katarína Komenská (2018). Komenská states that dying with dignity might be an eligible answer to ethical dilemmas for those who cannot fulfil their goals and considers their life to be irreversibly bad and full of suffering.

[11] In other words, an agent must be a rational and self-conscious being.

(Gluchman, 1997, p. 22; Gluchman, 2018, p. xv).[12] If we break down this definition, the following is required from the agent: self-awareness, self-control, a sense of the future, a sense of the past, a capacity to relate to others, concern for others, communication and curiosity.[13] Those are the conditions that an agent must fulfill in order to be able to take moral responsibility and therefore become a moral agent.

What is interesting in this definition is the fact that there is no condition to be a part of a specific biological species. This helps it to overcome the speciesism argument which is present in those types of definitions. At the same time, the definition stays open to future discoveries of different life forms (extraterrestrial life or artificial intelligence). In addition to moral subject (agent), ethics of social consequences distinguishes moral object which is defined much more widely. All human beings, also animals to some extent, and even the entire universe can potentially be the object of our moral interest and actions, therefore – a moral object (Gluchman, 2018, p. xv). Every moral agent (subject) is a moral object in this definition – and as such deserves the protection and respect of others. However, only a few moral objects are sufficient to fulfill the requirements of becoming a moral agent (subject).

Ethics of social consequences comes from the standpoint that the death of a human being is an irreversible loss of what it is, essentially, to be a human (the intellectual-cognitive position). Ethics of social consequences assumes that the set of functions controlled by the brain are more essential "than a mere pump and set of tubes through which blood flows" (Veatch & Ross, 2016, p. 6). Ethics of social consequences comes from the position that this definition of what is essential to human existence is based not only on philosophical beliefs. It is based on contemporary medical knowledge and in part on basic religious beliefs as well.

There is a clear difference between a moral agent (subject) and a moral object. This distinction can be identified by the presence of consciousness, rationality, and self-determination of the agent and their absence in the moral object. Those attributes are important because they are a prerequisite for the ability which distinguishes (qualitatively) a moral agent from any other being. The distinction is based on the ability of moral responsibility. Moral responsibility in ethics of social consequences is understood as the ability of an agent to take account for his/her actions or omissions. This competence is interconnected with the possibility to praise or blame him/her (reward or punish him/her). However, this understanding is not sufficient enough; additionally, the agent must be able not only to bear something (to take account) but also able to act. On the one hand, the responsibility is understood as the ability to bear, on the other, as the ability to act. It is important to acknowledge this aspect of responsibility: as a facility to assign duties to an agent. The agent must be able to act on behalf of something. If the agent is not capable of acting on behalf of something, it is impossible to refer to him/her as responsible and therefore as an agent; there is no purpose in assigning duties to somebody who is unable to be accountable for them. In this sense, responsibility is understood as an integral and central attribute of moral agency (Kalajtzidis, 2018a).

There are three conditions that must be fulfilled when we want to ascribe moral responsibility to the moral agent and hold him/her responsible. The agent must be confronted with a situation which is morally relevant. He/she must face a morally significant choice involving the possibility of doing something good or bad (right or wrong). The second condition is that he/she is able to judge the situation. The moral agent must be able to acquire relevant information to make a judgment. They must be in a position to see what is (was) at stake. The third condition is to be able to take charge of the way he/she shapes his/her judgment; he/she must be able to choose on the basis of judgment. The choice must be within the domain of the agent's will

[12] The definition of moral agent used in ethics of social consequences is based on intellectual-cognitive assumptions.

[13] The list comes from Joseph Fletcher article *Indicators of Humanhood: A Tentative Profile of Man* (1972) and is even used in the bioethics today (e.g. Singer, 2011).

(control) (Kalajtzidis, 2018a). If a person is unable to fulfill those criteria, they cannot relate to the notion of moral responsibility and as such could not be labelled as a moral agent. In this sense, the person cannot be held accountable and is not eligible for moral evaluation. Without this ability, there is no point in reflecting on other aspects of responsibility such as the notion of duty[14] and notion of guarantee.[15] [16]

Wrongness of taking a life?

Peter Singer lists four possible reasons for maintaining that it is especially serious to take a person's life. In the context of the paper, they can be understood as reasons for maintaining that it is especially serious to take a moral agent's life. Singer includes hedonistic utilitarian concern with the effect of the killing on others; preference utilitarian concern with the frustration of the victim's desires and plans for the future; the right to life and respect for autonomy (Singer, 2011, p. 84).

In a very simplified and brief way, I will try to introduce those reasons in the context of our understanding of life. Utilitarianism judges actions by their tendency to maximize pleasure or happiness and minimize pain or unhappiness. The wrongness of killing a moral agent in utilitarianism lies in the fear that people like myself with a future and desires are sometimes killed. That makes me worry all the time and can make my life less enjoyable. Even though this argument is very odd from a common-sense morality standpoint, this indirect argument is the soundest one from the utilitarian point of view. If we accept euthanasia as a common practice, moral agents might live an anxious life in the fear that their life might be terminated and, in this sense, less filled with pleasure and happiness. It must be understood that this argumentation is only solid with moral agents as they were defined above because only they are able to have a sense of the future. It does not affect moral object as they do not have a sense of the future and therefore cannot have the same worries (which lessen their happiness and pleasure) as moral agents.

Preference utilitarian reason against killing a moral agent is similar to the previous one in focusing on the future. Preference utilitarianism judges actions not by their tendency to maximize pleasure (happiness) or minimize pain (unhappiness), but by the extent to which they agree with the preferences of beings affected by actions or its consequences. According to the argumentation of preference utilitarianism, an action contrary to the preference of any being is, unless this preference is outweighed by contrary preferences, wrong (Singer, 1993, p. 94). Killing a moral agent who prefers to continue living is considered wrong, other things being equal. A moral object might have preferences as well, such as a preference not to suffer, but it is only a moral agent whose death will violate not just one but a wide range of preferences which are connected with future existence (plans, goals, etc…).

The classical version of utilitarianism, as well as the preference version of the theory, do present arguments against the taking of life. As can be seen, both versions of argumentation do support the distinction of life forms and their arguments can hold when applied to moral agents, but not so much to moral objects. The third line of reasoning against taking a life comes from the proponents of the argument based on rights. The idea is a very simple one and it accentuates that we do have a right to life (as a distinct life form). Not every living being does have a right

[14] Connected in ethics of social consequences with the ability to make deliberate decisions and act on them. To act in compliance with fundamental moral values, such as human dignity and humanity.

[15] Connected in ethics of social consequences with the ability to bear consequences. To allow (for) the possibility to impute reward or punishment on a moral agent.

[16] It must be stated that the issues of moral responsibility and moral agency are inseparable. Without moral agency, there would be no moral responsibility. Without moral responsibility there would be no moral agency (notion of a moral agent) as we know it. For better understanding of the notion of moral responsibility in ethics of social consequences, see Responsibility and justice: secondary values in ethics of social consequences (Kalajtzidis, 2018a).

to life, or at least it is not strong in the same way as the one of humans. Otherwise, we would be forbidden to eat any kind of meat which comes from living animals, and maybe even plants' right to life should be considered. That is why philosophers look for the way to specify those who do have a right to life[17] which is considered sometimes even absolute. One of the most used arguments in this notion is, again, connected with the future, more precisely with the ability to plan and anticipate one's future.[18] Michael Tooley argues that we do have a right to life, which is based on our capacity to desire – what we desire most is a continuing existence (Tooley, 1988, pp. 83–114). Once again, the capacity to desire is limited to those living forms which we referred to in the previous text as a moral agent.

The fourth reason is respect for autonomy. Establishment of autonomy as a basic moral principle is connected with Immanuel Kant, but today strongly present in bioethical literature thanks to principlism. In the understanding of Beauchamp and Childress, autonomy as a principle primarily expresses the possibility of free acting in accordance with our own aims (Beauchamp & Childress, 2009, pp. 99–100). Taking the life of a person who does not choose to die is considered to be the most serious violation of the person's autonomy. The question which arises is, if the moral object, as it was defined in the text, is suitable for attribution of autonomy. If we take into account that free acting in accordance with our own aims is required then the autonomy stays reserved for the moral subjects only.

Ethics of social consequences and euthanasia

As Wendy Drozenova notices in her article on euthanasia, it is well known that disagreement in the moral evaluation of behaviour is often due to a disagreement in knowledge of facts (not moral principles) (Drozenová, 2013, p. 63). That is why we are now going to look closer at the issue of euthanasia in the understanding of ethics of social consequences.

If we accept the definition of euthanasia which comes from Beauchamp and Davidson, it is important to concentrate on a few fundamental issues when we look for clarification. 1) It is possible to talk about euthanasia only when the human being/ person/ moral agent is at stake.[19] 2) Death is intended by at least one other moral agent. 3) The aim of the act is to relieve the one who is either suffering or irreversible comatose (benefit for the one killed). 4) the method used must be on behalf of the agent.

In the literature, we distinguish three basic types of euthanasia – voluntary, involuntary and non-voluntary. The voluntary form is, in connection to the mentioned issues, the least problematic. When the moral agent is mentally competent and adequately informed, I believe there are no moral restrictions that could forbid him/her from making a decision about euthanasia. The voluntary request of a moral agent (if in compliance with any medical conditions which are set) should not be violated. The same applies to a former moral subject who consented before he/she became a moral object.

The involuntary form of euthanasia appears to be much more peculiar. Involuntary euthanasia is defined as one in which a person possesses the capacity to agree or disagree but has not provided consent. This happens either because they are not asked, or because they are asked and choose to go on living. I believe that this type of "euthanasia" does not exist or exists only in a very bizarre theoretical situation. This type of "euthanasia" does not support the above-mentioned conditions (e. g. neither number 3 nor 4) from the definition used. It can be claimed

[17] What properties must a thing possess in order to have a right to life? This is a most tricky question in the connection to the right to life argumentation.

[18] Death, dying, euthanasia and many other similar issues should be understood in their complexity. The life of the moral agent has many different aspects such as psychological, sociocultural, spiritual and other. The spiritual aspect can be understood through moral and aesthetic emotions which are considered to be higher emotions. In synergy, they help us to generate notions of our past and future to create goals and ideas in our life (Makky, 2019).

[19] The being whose life is at stake can possibly be a moral object, but there is a requirement that they had been a moral agent in the past.

that this type of life-ending should be labelled as something other than euthanasia (in some cases probably even murder).

Non-voluntary euthanasia is the one that is the most problematic. The paper accepts the definition of non-voluntary euthanasia as that which occurs when the person concerned has been unable to express an opinion, usually because they lacks the capacity to do so (Biggs, 2001, p. 12). Another important condition is that the person to whom it relates previously has not requested or rejected euthanasia in these circumstances. If they requested euthanasia (as a moral agent in the past) then it can be labelled as voluntary euthanasia (from the point of view of our previous argumentation). Therefore, non-voluntary euthanasia should involve the killing of a moral object who never was a moral subject, or one which was a moral subject before, but as one, they never requested or rejected euthanasia in these circumstances. However, this type of description does not correspond with the first requirement of the definition of euthanasia, which demands that when we talk about euthanasia, we should have in mind a moral agent or former moral agent.

If we were to try to overcome the problematic first requirement, the consequences could be very odd. The circumstances would allow us to see the death of an animal (which is considered a moral object) or any living being as a case of euthanasia. Abortion as well as the killing of an animal for dinner would be considered euthanasia. We can soften the requirement and consider replacing it with a different request such as: The being whose life is at stake could possibly be a moral object, but there is a precondition (to overcome the former insufficiency) that they had been a moral agent in the past. Although, in this case, a new issue arises. What should we do with severely damaged humans who were born as a moral object without any potential to become a moral subject? Is it even possible to talk about euthanasia in their case? If yes, what kind of euthanasia? It would probably be wrong to dismiss severely damaged humans and other moral objects from the discussion on euthanasia. In this case, it might be useful to look at the issue from a different point of view. Not from the perspective of the object of euthanasia (and even admit that euthanasia also exists in the connection with animals and unborn beings) but from the perspective of the aim of killing (benefit for the being killed). In that case, we should change the first condition to: Is it possible to talk about euthanasia when the life of a moral object or a moral subject is at stake. The requirement (footnote number 16) that the moral object must have been a moral subject should, then, be revoked.[20]

So-called voluntary euthanasia will stay reserved for a mentally competent and adequately informed moral subject or a former moral subject who, when he/she was able to do so, requested euthanasia in these circumstances. Involuntary euthanasia will stay ungrounded and non-voluntary euthanasia will be used when moral objects are the case. A moral object who was never a moral subject or one which was a moral subject before, but as one, they never requested or rejected euthanasia in these circumstances.

Conclusion

From the point of view of ethics of social consequences, it is not only voluntary euthanasia which seems to be without any significant issues. Even non-voluntary euthanasia in the context of the paper and the theory is not that as uncertain as many people might think. As was mentioned, non-voluntary euthanasia could be performed in two different cases. Moral objects who were never a moral subject and moral objects who were moral subject but did not give a clear answer to the question of euthanasia.

In my previous paper (Kalajtzidis, 2018b), I distinguished between the death of a person and the death of an organism and agreed that it is our mind that makes us who we are. We persist

[20] What is important is to adhere to condition number 3 from the definition: The aim of the act is to relieve the one who is either suffering or irreversibly comatose (benefit for the one killed). If the condition is fulfilled, then my previous notes about abortion and animal killing are irrelevant.

as long as our mind remains intact. When a being has lost its ability to be a moral agent, it dies as a person. However, the human being still exists and is labelled a moral object. The person (moral agent) is dead, but the body survives (moral object). The question which stands in front of us will be whether these living bodies (moral objects) that are no longer moral agents (persons) should be treated differently from normal living people (moral subjects) in the case of euthanasia. Ethics of social consequences would answer positively.[21]

As was already shown in the previous part – *wrongness of taking a life?* – the four reasons which were mentioned do not really apply to our case of moral objects. As they do not have a sense of the future, they can be neither affected by hedonistic nor preference utilitarianism arguments. We argued that the capacity to desire as a prerequisite to the right to life is once again limited to those living forms which were labelled as moral agents. In the same way, the argument on respect for autonomy was dismissed on the grounds of the unfeasibility of moral objects to act freely in accordance with their own aims. Moreover, as was already mentioned, death is considered bad mostly because it deprives us of the good things we would enjoy had we lived on. As the definition of moral object states, it is clearly impossible for moral objects to enjoy life as they only "are" as living entities and do not really exist as active beings.

I believe the same applies to both cases of non-voluntary euthanasia. As in the light of the presented understanding, it does not matter if a moral object who was a moral subject did or did not request euthanasia, as their wish does not matter anymore.[22] What could matter is a clear rejection (during a state of moral agency) as it might be important for other moral agents to keep the promise/ wish. Not in the matter of pure wish/ promise keeping, but in the matter of arguments mentioned in the part *wrongness of taking a life?* as performing unwanted euthanasia might lower the potential quantity of happiness because we would worry that it might happen to us. What should be done in those cases I do not dare to say (for now).

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[21] There are two basic arguments for this position. The first is the already mentioned value structure of the theory which is connected to the protection and support of life. The second is the consequential attitude of ethics of social consequences. For precise argumentation, I suggest my previous paper (Kalajtzidis, 2018b).

[22] As their, or other moral objects, cannot be influenced by that.

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