ANNALS

OF THE

UNIVERSITY OF BUCHAREST

Philosophy Series

2 0 1 5

Number I

SUMAR • SOMMAIRE • CONTENTS

CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHY

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

VARIA

REVIEWS

FORCE FICTIONALISM – MORALS FROM SPEECH ACT THEORY

GHEORGHE ȘTEFANOV[1]

Abstract

After mapping the various types of fictionalism, I zoom in to a version of force fictionalism, which I call Standalone Force Fictionalism and trying to show that it overcomes most of the objections traditionaly formulated against fictionalism, yet succumbs to a new objection, which can be derived from speech act theory. The general moral of my paper is that deciding whether something is fictional or not and deciding whether to keep track of the ontological commitments of a discourse or not are two different practices.

***Keywords*:** ontological commitment, fictionalism, content fictionalism, force fictionalism, hermeneutic fictionalism, revisionary fictionalism, speech act theory.

In what follows I will try to zoom in to a particular type of force fictionalism, which I will call *Standalone Force Fictionalism*. This version of fictionalism seems interesting due to the fact that it escapes all the objections directed at various kinds of content fictionalism. I will try to argue, in addition, that the phenomenological objection which could still apply to Standalone Force Fictionalism is not very strong against such a view, if the view in case is seen as a conceptual proposal, on the background of an anti-psychologist theory of intentions like the one provided by Elizabeth Anscombe[2]. My aim, however, is not to support Standalone Force Fictionalism but to show that it is untenable, using

[1] University of Bucharest, Faculty of Philosophy.

[2] See Anscombe (1963).

some morals from the speech act theory. A few more general considerations about fictionalism will be made at the end of this paper.

Fictional objects and characters do not exist. There are also things the existence of which is disputable or already rejected: abstract objects, moral facts, possible worlds, theoretical entities and others. Yet we appear to be speaking about such things. I take it that the fictionalist believes that although what we say should not be dismissed, we are not really speaking about abstract objects, moral facts, possible worlds and so on.

A question can be immediately raised: "What are we in fact doing in these cases?" To this the fictionalist would reply that we pretend to be speaking about nonexistents[3]. In accordance with this general view, a particular form of fictionalism would claim that some discourse (let us call it D) about one or another kind of nonexistents is to be regarded as fictional. In what follows, however, I am not going to talk about any particular type of fictionalism.

Two forms of fictionalism are usually distinguished[4]: hermeneutic fictionalism (HF), which says that D is fictional and revolutionary fictionalism (RF), saying that D should be used as fictional.

However, one might view fictionalism as a conceptual proposal, namely the proposal that D should be conceived as fictional. One way to distinguish HF from RF, then, would be to say that both are proposals that D should be conceived as fictional, with the notable difference that RF is a proposal focusing mainly on future utterances from D, while HF extends the proposal to past utterances from D as well. In what follows I will consider fictionalism as such a conceptual proposal, without talking about the extent to which the proposal should be applied.

To take an example, let us consider the following episode. I am in my office, looking for my cup of coffee. On finding it I exclaim: "Here you are!" Being inclined to reflect on my actions, I wonder what was I just doing. To this, the fictionalist conceptual proposal would be to describe my exclamation as belonging to a fiction producing practice. The fiction, in this case, would be that of an audience. In short, the

---

[3] I borrow the term from Rescher (2003), although I do not endorse Rescher's view.

[4] See Stanley (2001).

fictionalist might tell me that I was pretending to talk to the cup, in a similar way, perhaps, to the one in which we pretend to talk to small babies or to our pets. The fact that I did not have access by introspection to the intention to get involved into any kind of fiction will be discarded as irrelevant if I accept the fictionalist proposal.

I think both the hermeneutic fictionalist and the revolutionary fictionalist could adhere to such a proposal, but while the hermeneutic fictionalist would insist that all the past cases of similar practices have to be described according to the fiction-of-audience interpretation, the revolutionary fictionalist would be content with my acceptance of such a description for similar future situations.

Nevertheless, my understanding of the HF / RF distinction could be mistaken. If this is the case, then one could perhaps say that fictionalism as a conceptual proposal fails into the same category with RF. In any case, it is this kind of fictionalism that I am interested in right now, no matter the tag.

One simple question can be raised at this point. How can we pretend to speak about nonexistents? After all, we do utter words and sentences. In this sense, we really speak and not only pretend to be speaking. So what do we pretend to do?

According to content fictionalism, when talking about nonexistents we pretend to refer to such entities (and perhaps we also pretend that what we are saying is true). The next question to be answered by a content fictionalist would then be: "What are we actually saying?"

Different versions of content fictionalism provide different answers to this second question[5]:

a) Metafictionalism claims that we are actually talking about fictions (so all our utterances are or should be prefixed by "according to fiction X,...", were fiction X is characterized in terms of D's domain). Leaving aside the distinction between *engaging in* a fictional discourse and *reporting on* a fictional discourse, fictions are as ontologically problematic as some of our initial nonexistents (possible worlds, say), so this view might not be very helpful.

---

[5] See S. Yablo (2001).

b) Object-fictionalism claims that we pretend to refer to non-existents in order to talk about existing objects (let us mark the discourse about existing objects by D*), offering different ways in which utterances in D can be related to utterances in D*. It is, however, difficult to say what distinguishes this sort of fictionalism from older attempts to paraphrase ontologically problematic talk into ontologically acceptable talk, apart from the suggestion that the first should be taken as fictional.

c) Figuralism answers the same question by claiming that we basically speak in metaphors in order to talk about existing objects and makes the fictional character of D an essential trait of the functioning of our metaphors.

Several interesting objections have been raised against content fictionalism in the existing literature. Perhaps, instead of trying to device systematic (and composable) meaning relations between D and D* within a representationalist semantic framework, the content fictionalist would have better chances if she was working in a different semantic framework, like the one provided by inferentialism. However, I do not want to insist on such matters now, since the topic of my talk is not content fictionalism, but force fictionalism.

Now, force fictionalism provides a different answer to the first question considered here (i.e., "What do we pretend to do, since we do not pretend to speak?"). Instead of saying that we pretend to refer to nonexistents or to say something true about them, force fictionalism answers that we pretend to assert something about nonexistents. Things are somehow similar in this case. When asked about what do we actually do when we pretend to assert something, force fictionalists could also take different positions.

It should be noted that not all answers to the question "What do we do when we engage into fiction?" are based on speech act theory. Kendall Walton explicitly rejects the idea that a proper answer to this can be offered by speech act theory[6]. According to him, engaging into fiction amounts to using some objects as props in some games of make-believe. Walton believes this is the mark of any pretended action and not only of the sort of pretense one might enter into when communicating

[6] See Walton (1990).

with other persons. So according to this view it should be irrelevant for a fictional discourse D that when uttering some sentences belonging to D we pretend to assert them.

To this one could answer that if none of a person's actions is pretended, it is hard to see what would be a criterion for calling what one was doing a pretense. A painter does not pretend to assert anything and does not pretend to paint, but could produce a work of fiction only by pretending to depict some objects, facts or events (by pretending to make the portrait of a person, for instance). If she did not pretend to be doing something at any point in the production of her work, why should one call it a fictional work? The simple use of props in some make-believe situations does not seem sufficient. Mockups, wireframes and some prototypes may all be considered props used in make-believe, but a webdesigner and a client who have a discussion based on a mockup website do not seem to be engaged in any fiction[7].

I believe, then, that something cannot be fictional unless it is the product of some pretended action. Whether or not the use of props or the involvement in a game of make-believe are necessary is a matter of debate, of course[8], but the necessity of at least a pretended action for the production of a fictional work seems unproblematic to me. One could, for sure, try to find counterexamples to this claim. Such a counterexample would be, perhaps, the case of a person who would pretend that a natural phenomenon is occurring ("It is hot in here") by performing non-pretended actions (turning on the ceiling fan etc.). Nevertheless, the same situation could be also described as one in which the person was pretending to be affected by or to interfere with the effects of that natural phenomenon ("she was pretending to cool the room" or "she was pretending to cool herself"). The main point that could be noted here, in short, is that everything described in terms of "pretending that..." could be also described in terms of "pretending to...".

Now, if the work in case is a fictional discourse, at least some of the speech acts performed must be pretended. So now we return to our

---

[7] As a side note, Walton seems to shift pretension from the point of producing a fiction to the point of engaging into fiction.

[8] In order to pretend to dig a hole in the ground I could use an actual shovel or nothing at all, for instance.

question: "What is it to pretend to assert something?". Three answers inspired by the speech act theory will be mentioned here.

According to the first, for which I believe John Searle can be credited[9], to pretend to assert something is to pretend to perform the illocutionary act of assertion without performing any particular illocutionary act. According to the second, belonging to Gregory Currie[10], to pretend to assert something is to perform a different kind of speech act, a "sui-generis speech act", identified by the utterer's intention that the audience engage in a make-believe attitude towards the uttered content. The third answer, which is due to Aloysius Martinich, is that to pretend to assert something is to assert that same thing, only in a conversational context in which one does not have to observe a Supermaxim of Quality (derived from Grice's theory of conversation[11]): "Do not participate in a speech act unless you can satisfy all the conditions for its nondefective performance"[12].

Let us start with the second proposal. This seems to be the view that non-deceptive pretension is what we can abstract from different cases of pretended assertions, pretended promises, pretended requests, pretended declarations of war, pretended congratulations etc. and also (perhaps) from pretended non-communicative actions. We are doing different things in each case, but all the things we are doing might have something in common, namely our intention that some audience or someone witnessing our actions makes-believe that we are doing what we appear to be doing.

This can be, of course, criticized[13], but the point is that this reply leaves the problem of content open. So you cannot be a force fictionalist if you analyze fictional acts in this way without also being a content fictionalist.

---

9 See Searle (1975).

10 See Currie (1985) and Currie (1986).

11 H.P. Grice, "Logic and Conversation", in H.P. Grice (1989).

12 See Martinich (2001).

13 Compare, for instance, pretending to promise with taking back a promise. The second could be considered a meta-illocutionary act, since it acts on other illocutionary acts, while the first has nothing specific to do with the acts we perform by uttering sentences.

The same observation seems to be true for the third proposal. Leaving that aside, the suggestion that at least some of the conditions for performing an illocutionary act are suspended when one engages into a fictional discourse can be accepted even if we adopt a different view about what it is to engage into a fictional discourse.

The first proposal claims that we pretend to perform some illocutionary act, although we perform none. The point of whether what we were saying was true cannot apply here (for instance, there is no point to ask who won a pretended game of chess[14]). The content of a pretended illocutionary act is not asserted at all[15]. There is no point in asking what do the referring terms which figure within that content actually refer to. They do not refer. Here the relation between the content which we pretend to assert and some ontologically acceptable description of the world is more like the relation between a fictional story and its moral (what we can learn from it).

There is one previsible reply: "Right, but what about the case when the content *is* actually asserted?" One could, of course, block this question by saying that if the content which we pretend to assert was actually asserted it would be meaningless[16].

In order to see this better, let us consider the following two fictions:

(i) We pretend to play a game of chess by reenacting a game we have learned by heart (Urmson's example); the wooden pieces have the same rules for their use as in a regular play.

(ii) We pretend to play a game of chess by using rocks which we move on a checkerboard as if they were chess pieces. From some point onward we are unable to say what rock stands for what piece in the game of chess, but we continue to pretend, until we end the game with one of us saying "Checkmate!".

---

[14] Here I have in mind the example given in J.O. Urmson (1976).

[15] See Balaguer (2009) for the suggestion of such a view, which Balaguer calls *hermeneutic non-assertivism* (although he does not support it).

[16] See Eklund (2011): "one can imagine a fictionalist about some discourse who denies that the relevant sentences even can be meaningfully used outside the pretense; who holds that the sentences only have pretense-uses."

Now, it is clear that while the game of chess played at (i) could be played as a real, non-fictional game of chess, the game played at (ii) could not be actually played, since it would not be a game at all.

So, according to this type of force fictionalism, which I will call "standalone force fictionalism" (or SFF, for short) in producing S as a sentence of D we pretend to assert the content p, but we do not really assert it. If we were to actually assert p, we would be saying something meaningless. Therefore, we do not need content fictionalism. All the objections against content fictionalism, according to this view, do not apply to force fictionalism.

There still are some objections against fictionalism which could be directed against SFF, the most notable of which seems to be the phenomenological objection developed by Jason Stanley[17]. According to him:

> "If the hermeneutic fictionalist is correct, then x can bear the propositional attitude of pretense toward a proposition, without it being in principle accessible to x that x bears the propositional attitude of pretense towards that proposition. But this introduces a novel and quite drastic form of failure of first-person authority over one's own mental states".

Now, what if one is convinced by Wittgenstein's and Elizabeth Anscombe's arguments[18] that intentions, roughly speaking, should not be conceived as psychological states, but as depending on the way in which we describe (that is, conceptualize) our actions? A variation of that view might also apply here. In short, the fictionalist could say that what matters is not to empirically establish whether a mathematician, say, has this or that intention when uttering "4 is even", but whether it should be acceptable for the mathematician to describe her utterance as a non-deceptive pretension.

I must confess that my view of fictionalism as a conceptual proposal might be influenced by such a refusal to consider intentions as psychological attitudes. On this view, pretense is not a propositional attitude one could know she has by introspection. The previous example

---

[17] See Stanley (2001).

[18] See Wittgenstein (1953) and Anscombe (1963).

with my cup of coffee did perhaps already display such a perspective[19]. However, a few other things could be added now.

We can, for sure, distinguish between deceptive pretense and non-deceptive pretense. I suppose that we would agree that one can be involved in a self-deceptive pretense without knowing it[20]. Now, the fictionalist does not have to claim that in uttering sentences from an alleged fictional discourse D the speaker is self-deceiving herself. It would be enough to note that there are at least some cases in which first-person authority does not help one distinguish between deceptive and non-deceptive pretense.

Suppose I was saying that Santa lives at the North Pole in a discussion with a kid. No amount of introspection would help me establish whether I was involved in a deceptive or a non-deceptive pretense. What would matter, in such a case, would be to know whether the kid still believes that Santa does exist or not[21].

Moreover, the fictionalist could distinguish between the case in which one expresses an intention and the case in which one attributes an intention to oneself[22]. According to this distinction, what the fictionalist claims is only that the speaker should attribute to herself the intention that she (or her audience) engages into fiction by a certain way in which she describes her performance, and not that the speaker expresses any such intentions.

It is for such reasons that I believe the phenomenological objection is not a very strong one against SFF, if we consider SFF as a conceptual proposal, at least. However, I think one could still argue SFF is untenable, so this is what I am trying to do in what follows. For this I

---

19 Also, if you believe that my fictionalism as a conceptual proposal is a form of (RF), you will perhaps directly say that it escapes Stanley's phenomenological objection, which is only directed at (HF).

20 At least Jason Stanley would accept this.

21 Similarly, with respect to the fiction-of-audience case, introspection cannot help me establish whether I am still pretending to talk to my baby or I am not involved into a fiction anymore, since the baby started to understand me.

22 See Ştefanov (2011), where the distinction was used to analyze the case of an unconscious opinion as a case in which a person attributes an opinion to herself for the past without having expressed it in the past.

want to use an obvious principle, which I will call "the Principle of Pretending" and some morals from the speech act theory.

A first formulation of the Principle of Pretending goes like this:

(PP1) In order to pretend to be doing A one must not be doing A[23].

Applied to the case of assertion, (PP1) says that in order to pretend to assert that p, you must not be asserting that p. (PP1) states a necessary condition for pretending to do something, although the condition is not sufficient by itself. One cannot pretend to assert that Santa lives at the North Pole by denying that Santa lives at the North Pole. Performing a different illocutionary act with the content that p makes it clear that you are not asserting that p, but by doing this you cannot pretend to assert that p. So perhaps (PP1) could be expanded into:

(PP2) Given the purpose X of an action A, in order to pretend to be doing A one must not achieve X, but appear to pursue X[24].

---

[23] See Card (1985), for instance. You cannot say that Ender was pretending to be fighting the aliens' fleet or that he was pretending to destroy their planet. This is what he believed, of course. He believed that he was pretending to do those things, but he was actually doing them, so he could not be pretending to do them. A version of (PP1) could also apply to cases described by the "pretending that..." phrase (as opposed to "pretending to..."): One cannot pretend that X is the case unless X is not the case. An actor playing herself in a movie is either playing a caricature of herself, or not doing something which we would call pretending anymore (I owe the suggestion of such cases to Daniel Hutto).

[24] Matti Eklund has informed me of a possible objection directed to the first part of PP2 (Given the purpose X of an action A, in order to pretend to be doing A one must not achieve X). The main idea, if I understood him correctly, was that goal X could be achieved by performing a different action than A and one could still be pretending to perform A. For instance, suppose two different switches close to each other could turn on the light in a room. I pretend to turn on the light, so I move my hand near the first switch but touch the second one and actually turn on the light. So I did not perform the action which I was pretending to perform (turning on the light by using the first switch), but the purpose of the action I was pretending to perform was nevertheless achieved. I find this case quite interesting, since it brings out the difference between PP1 and PP2. The case can be brought down to two different sub-cases:
(a) I accidentally touch the second switch.
(b) I touch the second switch on purpose.

This analysis could be further detailed, but we need not do that here. We can already note that in order to pretend to assert something a person must not achieve the illocutionary point of assertion, but appear to pursue the illocutionary point of assertion.

It could be said, then, that in order to pretend to assert something one must: (a) on one hand break some of the rules for the successful and nondefective performance of the assertive illocutionary act, but also (b) respect (or appear to respect) just enough rules of the same illocutionary act such that her utterance is similar to an assertion.

Now, according to the speech act theory, the general structure of the rules for the successful and nondefective performance of an illocutionary act is as follows:

> "Assuming that all the conditions necessary and sufficient for hearer understanding are satisfied when the utterance is made, an illocutionary act of the form F(P) is successfully and nondefectively performed in a context of utterance iff:
> (1) The speaker succeeds in achieving in that context the illocutionary point of F on the proposition P with the required characteristic mode of achievement and degree of strength of illocutionary point of F.
> (2) He expresses the proposition P, and that proposition satisfies the propositional content conditions imposed by F.

Sub-case (b) seems to be excluded if my aim was to pretend to turn on the light. However, case (a) still points to a situation in which one seems to be able to pretend to do A although the goal of A is achieved. I think, however, that the impersonal formulation used here (contrast "the goal of A is achieved" with "one achieves the goal of A") holds the key to my answer.

I still have to think about this, but I suspect that the difference between the way I see such situations and the way Matti sees them boils down to the difference between using "pretense" to mark a kind of action and to use it to mark the manner in which an action is performed.

If we were talking about illocutionary acts, for instance, the difference between an actor uttering p on a scene (pretending to assert that p) and in her daily life (asserting that p) would be, according to the view I attribute to Matti, not a difference between two illocutionary points (or residing in different propositional content, sincerity or preparatory conditions), but rather a difference between two modes of achievement (in the same way in which a request and a command differ not in their illocutionary point or other conditions, but in their mode of achievement).

> (3) The preparatory conditions of the illocution and the propositional presuppositions obtain in the world of the utterance, and the speaker presupposes that they obtain.
> (4) The speaker expresses and possesses the psychological state determined by F with the characteristic degree of strength of the sincerity conditions of F."[25]

How do we apply this structure to assertions, then? Here is a suggestion:

> "By definition, the primitive assertive illocutionary force has the assertive illocutionary point; it has no special mode of achievement of illocutionary point, and no propositional content conditions; its preparatory conditions are simply that the speaker has reasons for accepting or evidence supporting the truth of the propositional content and its only psychological state is belief; it has medium degrees of strength of illocutionary point and of sincerity conditions."[26]

What is the illocutionary point of assertion? In short, it is to say how things are. So what we are interested in, right now, is to understand how one could fail to assert something but appear to attempt to say how things are. I take it that in order to fail to assert that p, one has to break some of the necessary conditions for asserting that p. It is disputable, for instance, that the sincerity condition is a necessary condition for the successful performance of an illocutionary act. In the case of promising, for instance, it could be said that a person promising to do A without intending to do A has succeeded to promise, but made a defective promise. In a similar way, it could be said that a person who asserted that p without believing that p could assert that p, but in a defective way. So a weaker version of the sincerity condition might be a better candidate for a necessary condition in the case of assertion:

> (SINC) The speaker intends that her utterance of S will make her responsible for believing that p[27].

Stronger necessary conditions for asserting that p have been proposed[28], but while they are disputable, I think we can say that (SINC)

---

[25] See Searle and Vanderveken (1985, 21-22).
[26] See Searle (1985, 59-60).
[27] This is inspired by Searle (1965).
[28] See, for instance, Williamson (1996).

is a suitable candidate. It seems impossible to claim that one could assert that p by uttering S without at least intending that her utterance of S makes her responsible for believing that p. We could also notice at this point that one who engages in a non-deceptive fictional discourse does not intend that her utterances make her responsible for believing something.

Also, since the preparatory conditions are necessary conditions in the case of any illocutionary act[29], we could add the following to (SINC):

(RE) The speaker has reasons for accepting or evidence supporting the truth of p.

Now, it is also clear that (RE) is a necessary condition. We regularly distinguish between assertions and guesses or unfounded claims. The person engaging in a literary fictional discourse also appears to disregard (RE), although we could talk about reasons for accepting that p within a fictional discourse (also, this seems to be easier if we distinguish between believing that p and accepting that p, as some fictionalists do). The SFF approach we have been considering here, however, would reject such an idea. There can be no reasons for accepting p when p cannot be properly asserted. So it would appear that to request that the speaker fails to assert that p (in order to pretend to assert that p) produces at least the conclusions that the speaker breaks both (SINC) and (RE).

The second part of our requirement is more difficult. In fact, I want to show that if one accepts SFF, she cannot fulfill it. To remind you, the requirement is that the speaker should appear to say how things are.

Suppose that I believe that Vlad Dracul was also a fictional character and I say "Vlad Dracul lived in Romania" in the same way in which I would say "Dracula lived in Romania". I did not succeed to pretend to assert that Vlad Dracul lived in Romania because it is true that Vlad Dracul lived in Romania. The illocutionary point of my "pretended assertion" was in fact achieved, so my utterance cannot be fictional anymore.

---

[29] See Searle and Vanderveken (1985, 17): "Such conditions which are necessary for the successful and nondefective performance of an illocutionary act we call preparatory conditions. In the performance of a speech act the speaker presupposes the satisfaction of all the preparatory conditions."

Nevertheless, in order to make sure that the illocutionary point of assertion is not achieved, one should be at least able to recognize that the illocutionary point of my utterance was supposed to be that of an assertion and not that of another illocutionary act. Intonation and context are not always enough to distinguish the illocutionary point of assertives from the illocutionary point of commissives, directives, declaratives or expressives. One could, of course, make the illocutionary point explicit by uttering the illocutionary preface "I assert that...". However, for several kinds of alleged fictional discourses, we do not need such an illocutionary preface in order to say that they contain assertions. So this is why to appear to say how things are leads to uttering a sentence with some locutionary content which could have been true, although it is not.

If my argument is correct, then the content in case can, in principle, be asserted, although the assertion would be false. But then we must speak of the content of our sentences belonging to a fictional discourse, so now we must add some version of content fictionalism to our force fictionalism. So it seems to follow from this that SFF is untenable[30].

In fact, if we provisionally accept the previous analysis of "pretending to assert that p", and give up SFF we could replace the observations that the speaker breaks (SINC) and (RE) with something a bit more informative, along the following lines:

Z pretends to assert that p in uttering S iff:

> (SINC*) Z intends that her utterance of S will make her responsible for making-believe that p (i. e. Z would accept a description of what Z was doing according to which Z should accept responsibility for making-believe that p).
> (RE*) Z's acceptance of p as part of discourse D does not make D incoherent (if the whole discourse consists only in p, p must not be contradictory).

[30] Iulian Toader pointed out to me that one might use the Frege-Geach problem to produce a simpler argument against SFF. In short, the Frege-Geach problem seems to force the standalone force fictionalist to start speaking of the content she pretends to assert, since D (which she considers fictional) can also contain modus ponens inferences. The standalone force fictionalist could still reply, however, that they are not proper inferences, but only resemble inferences (in the same way in which a move in the pretended game of chess might seem to have been made because it was a necessary condition for shouting 'Chessmate!', for instance).

(NT) p is not true (although it could in principle be true)[31].

It can be clearly noted, now, that this Revised Force Fictionalism still needs some type of content fictionalism to talk about the way in which p (from D) stands for p* (from D*), which is, in fact true.

What can we make of the chess analogy used earlier to introduce SFF, then? The case (ii) of "fictional chess" still contained enough elements to be recognized as simulated chess. By contrast, it seems that if no content is asserted, an utterance does not contain enough elements to be recognized as a simulation of an assertion.

Another example might help us here. Consider counting as a practice. A child would learn to count particular things. At first, the child will count only one set of things. If she learned to count the stairs of a particular staircase, she would only count a few of those stairs and nothing else. As the next step, the child will learn to count different sets of particular things. Finally, the child will learn to count without looking

---

[31] One could object to (NT) and indirectly to PP1 and the first half of PP2 in the following manner (suggested by Matti Eklund). Suppose my neighbor is an alien and in order to deceive my friend I blatantly pretend to assert "My neighbor is an alien". It seems that I succeed to pretend to assert that my neighbor is an alien even if it is true that my neighbor is an alien. I think this case could be better described by saying that I do not actually pretend to assert that my neighbor is an alien, but pretend to pretend to assert it. Since pretending to perform A is itself an action, there is no reason why one could not pretend to perform such an action.
In the same way, one could say that if C is an actor who plays her own role in a movie, then C pretends to pretend to be C, but does not pretend to be C.
This is a way in which such cases could be conceived without giving up PP1. However, if this move is not strong enough to escape counterexamples of this sort (someone could perhaps devise a case in which one was pretending to pretend to do A while pretending to do A), then a distinction between the kind of action performed and the manner in which an action is performed might be useful.
'Pretense' could, then, either mark the kind of action one is performing or the manner in which one was performing an action. For instance, I could either pretend to undress myself (while keeping my clothes on), or undress myself in a pretended manner (as if I was doing a striptease or with exaggerated gestures, or with the gestures of a particular person I would imitate, or even with the gestures of a caricature version of myself).
It would be clear, then, that I am interested only in cases of the first and not of the second kind.

at any particular set of things (I call this "counting as if one was in an arithmetic class").

At this point one might wonder how can the child speak as if she was referring to numbers when there are no such things. The fictionalist would perhaps propose that we conceptualize this last activity ("counting as if one was in an arithmetic class") by saying that the child engages into some sort of fiction. The problem for the standalone force fictionalist is that she says that the child engages into such a fiction in the same in which one could engage into the case (ii) of fictional chess mentioned before. The ability to play chess is not necessary for that case. We think, however, that a child could not properly count as if she was in an arithmetic class without being able to count particular sets of objects, since we would not call learning numerals by heart and reciting them in a certain order "counting". The ability gained in the practice which the fiction simulates must be used when engaging into a simulation of that practice. So the fictionalist should at least concede that the child is pretending to count some undetermined particulars, but this means that she is not a standalone force fictionalist anymore.

A few more general remarks might be in place at this point. Speech act theory did introduce a notion of illocutionary commitment which could help us to better understand the fictionalist proposal[32]. If I order you to close the door, for instance, I am also committed to allowing you to close the door (an illocutionary act with the same content and illocutionary point, but a different degree of strength). One way in which one could cancel such a commitment would be to pretend to give somebody the order to do A while forbidding the same person to do A. In a similar way, if by asserting that 4 is even I am committed to the assertion that 4 does exist, by pretending to assert that 4 is even I could cancel the respective commitment. Fictionalism, in this respect, could be seen as an attempt to conceptualize our talk such that we disengage from its ontological commitments.

To return to our previous example, the purpose of the fictionalist proposal was to accept counting as if in an arithmetic class as a practice without the ontological commitment of that practice. But the cut

[32] See, for instance, Searle and Vanderveken (1985, 24).

between counting and some ontological commitment towards numbers could be due to a more pervasive practice than that of engaging into fiction.

One possible development of this idea is to deny that the child is engaging into any sort of fiction while distinguishing between "talking" and "thinking-out-loud", like Sellars does[33]. Illocutionary commitment comes only with talking, with being involved in communication, one might say, while thinking-out-loud is not even the pretense of communication. If we agree with Sellars, by thinking-out-loud one does not talk and does not even pretend to talk. The child who has learned to count as if she was in an arithmetic class has also learned to think-out-loud, according to this view, and it is only now that she is going to learn to think to herself.

I do not support this view, but presented it here only as an example of an alternative way in which we could cut the link between our commitment towards the content of what we say and the ontological commitment coming from the presuppositions of what we say. Perhaps better alternatives could be devised to save our common sense intuition that deciding whether something is fictional or not and deciding whether to keep track of the ontological commitments of a discourse or not are two different practices, but that is besides the scope of this paper.

REFERENCES

Anscombe, G.E.M. (1963). *Intention*, second edition. Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press.

Balaguer, Mark (2009). "Fictionalism, Theft, and the Story of Mathematics". In *Philosophia Mathematica*, (III) 17, pp. 157-159.

Card, Orson Scott (1985). *Ender's Game*. New York: Tor Books.

Currie, Gregory (1985). "What is Fiction?". In *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 43, pp. 385-92.

_____. (1986). "Works of Fiction and Illocutionary Acts". In *Philosophy and Literature* 10 (2), pp. 304-308.

Eklund, Matti (2001). "Fictionalism". In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2011 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL =http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2011/entries/fictionalism/

[33] See Sellars (1969).

Grice, H.P. (1989). "Logic and Conversation", in Grice, H.P. (1989). *Studies in the Way of Words*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, pp. 22-40.

Martinich, Aloysius P. (2001). "A Theory of Fiction". In *Philosophy and Literature* 25 (1), pp. 96-112.

Rescher, N. (2003). "Nonexistents Then and Now". In *Review of Metaphysics* 57 (2), pp. 359-381.

Searle, John R. (1965). "What Is a Speech Act?", in Black, Max (ed.), *Philosophy in America*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

_____. (1975). "The Logical Status of Fictional Discourse". In *New Literary History* 6 (2), pp. 319-332.

Searle, John R. and Vanderveken, Daniel (1985). *Foundations of Illocutionary Logic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sellars, W. (1969). "Language as Thought and as Communication". In *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 29 (4), pp. 506-527.

Stanley, J. (2001). "Hermeneutic Fictionalism", in French, P. and H. Wettstein, (eds.), 2001, *Midwest Studies in Philosophy Volume XXV: Figurative Language*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 36-71.

Ştefanov, G. (2011). "What Is It for Someone to Have Unconscious Opinions". In *Analele Universităţii din Bucureşti. Seria Filosofie* 60(2), pp. 81-86.

Urmson, J.O. (1976). "Fiction". In *American Philosophical Quaterly* 13 (2), pp. 155-156.

Walton, Kendall (1990). *Mimesis as Make-Believe: On the Foundations of the Representational Arts*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Williamson, Timothy (1996). "Knowing and Asserting". In *Philosophical Review* 105, pp. 489-523.

Wittgenstein, L. (1953). *Philosophische Untersuchungen.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Yablo, S. (2001). "Go Figure: A Path Through Fictionalism", in French, P. and H. Wettstein, (eds.), 2001, *Midwest Studies in Philosophy Volume XXV: Figurative Language*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 72-102.

NIETZSCHE AND FOUCAULT ON SELF-CREATION: TWO DIFFERENT PROJECTS

DANIEL NICA[1]

Abstract

This paper aims to highlight some major differences between the ethics of "self-becoming", as it was sketched by Friedrich Nietzsche, and the so-called "aesthetics of existence", which was developed in Michel Foucault's late work. Although the propinquity between the two authors is a commonplace in Foucauldian exegesis, my claim is that the two projects of self-creation are dissimilar in four relevant aspects. To support my thesis I will use Foucault's four-part ethical framework through which I will analyze each of the two projects.

Keywords: Foucault, Nietzsche, self-creation, will to power, aesthetics of existence, ethical substance, mode of subjectification, ethical work, ethical *telos*, power relations.

Everyone who is familiar with the academic commentaries on Michel Foucault's work can see the huge number of scholars who draw a lineage between the French thinker and Friedrich Nietzsche. The propinquity between the two authors is a commonplace in Foucauldian exegesis, and this happens for obvious reasons. First and foremost, there is a Nietzschean legacy, which Foucault directly reclaimed it or, at least, did not wish to reject. Such an influence is largely visible in Foucault's genealogical insights, in his perspectivist account of truth, in his reflections on power, and – arguably, most of all – in his conviction that philosophy is not a disengaged body of knowledge, but rather a committed and sometimes even a painful activity. Following Nietzsche,

[1] Romanian Academy, Iași Branch.

Foucault believed that philosophy is a matter of personal experience, which entails the unity between theory and practice. This conviction was made clear especially in Foucault's last interviews and writings, a period which coincided with his reflections on the aesthetics of existence and the problem of subjectivity. These "problematizations" are precisely one of the main reasons that make almost every scholar to connect Foucault with Nietzsche.

However, in this article I want to propose another picture of the late Foucault, by emphasizing some major differences between Foucault and Nietzsche with respect to the problem of self-creation. Although I am familiar with the similarities between the two philosophers, my claim is that Nietzsche and Foucault engaged in two different projects of self-creation. One major and obvious distinction lies in the radically opposed aims of self-creation. Whereas for Nietzsche, the purpose was the enhancement of life and creativity of strong individuals to the inevitable detriment of those weak and vulnerable, for Foucault, the purpose was, conversely, to give the fragile and vulnerable subject a weapon of resistance against domination. But, besides this conspicuous opposite purposes, my claim is that Nietzsche and Foucault are holding distinct outlooks on self-creation in terms of the "ethical substance", the "mode of subjectification", and the "ethical work" involved in their ethics.

With this, I come to my methodological framework, which I will borrow from Foucault himself, who investigated ethics through a fourfold model of the relation of the self to itself. I will use the same methodological tool myself and I will place both of Foucault's and Nietzsche's ideas within this ethical framework, in order to highlight what I consider to be the major differences between them.

Methodological Preliminaries

In the beginning of the second volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault turns away from the traditional approaches of ethics, focused on the moral assessment of actions. After distinguishing between ethics and moral codes, he analyzes four aspects of ethics, which – for Foucault – is an encompassing term that designates the relationship one has with oneself.

The first aspect discussed by the French philosopher is *the determination of the ethical substance* (Foucault 1985, 26-27). This aspect corresponds to a formal or an "ontological" element, which refers to a specific part of the subject that requires ethical care. In the history of ethics, we can find different ethical substances that engaged moral "problematization". For instance, the ancient Greeks thought the ethical substance was "the use of pleasures" (*aphrodisia*), and their task was to notice their risks and look for a state of temperance. The Christians believed the ethical substance was the "desires of the flesh", and that entailed the possibility of committing sins in ones heart (see Mt. 5:28). For a philosopher like Kant, the ethical substance was typified by the intentions that drive human actions.

The next aspect of the relation of the self to itself is *the mode of subjectification* (1985, 27), and this is the material or the "deontological" element of ethics. The question at stake here is: how does a subject relate to a set of prescriptions and to that part of itself, which is determined as the ethical substance? Or, to put it simply, why does a person has to follow a set of rules? The mode of subjectification refers to the manner in which an individual accepts to comply with a rule, and he is justified to think that his acts are morally valuable. Returning to the history of ethics, we could see that, for the Greeks, the mode of subjectification was the choice of a free man to lead a noble life, pursuant to the principles of self-mastership. This is the reason why, in Ancient Greece, the ethics was far stricter than the moral code. Whereas the moral code had fewer prescriptions, the ethical life of a Greek had much more self-regulations. For a Christian, the mode of subjectification involves the observance of God's commandments or submission to the love of God. In Kantian ethics, the mode of subjectification refers to the "respect for the law" (*Achtung für* das *Gesetz*).

The third aspect of ethics is *the ethical work* (1985, 27) and this is the "ascetic" element of the relation to oneself. (The ethical work is not "ascetic" in the Christian meaning, but in its ancient, Greek one. The point is not that it necessarily leads to monastic asceticism, but that it is an *askēsis*, i.e. a work, an effort, a practice.) The ethical work is also referred to as the "forms of elaborations of the self". The issues stake here are: what is the set of means by which the subject can become

morally valuable? How does one train oneself in order to fulfill his ethical purposes? These interrogations target the practices of the self by virtue of which a person can attain a certain "spiritual" state (i.e. an ethical *telos*). These self-techniques

> permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality. (Foucault 1988a, 18)

With other occasions, Foucault reflected upon most of the self-techniques present in Greek and Roman culture: the examination of conscience, the dialogue, the meditation, the *hypomnemata* and so on. Later on, several of these ancient techniques were assumed by Christian culture, and were modified to suit Christianity's spiritual aims. (For instance, the examination of conscience was practiced in the Christian culture as self-decipherment, a tool for identifying the "evil" that is harboring in oneself.)

The last aspect of ethics, identified by Foucualt, is the *teleology of the moral subject* or, simply, the *telos* (1985, 27-28). Foucault claimed that an action is not commendable in itself, but only as integrated into a larger structure, which is the entire ethical conduct or the life of a subject. This is the reason why each ethics has an end or a *telos*. Every action tends to settle a particular way of life. As in the case of the other three elements, the teleology of the moral subject underwent significant historical changes. The ancient Greeks thought the stake of the ethical work was to attain complete mastership over the self. For the Roman aristocrats, the end of moral life was to reach a state of independence from the everyday needs and pleasures. For Christians, the *telos* of ethics was salvation, namely the eternal life in the Kingdom of Heavens. We may easily see that, of all these ends, the Christian one is the most promising. And Foucault suggestion – even if not expressed as such – was that in the name of the most generous ideal, Western conduct became stricter and stricter, leading to the "juridification of morality". This process did not stop in the twilight of the Middle Ages, but continued during modern period. (Nica 2015b)

In what follows next, I will deal separately with the two projects, by putting each of the two self-creation projects within this framework sketched above. First, I will analyze the Nietzschean account of self-fashioning and, then, I will analyze the Foucauldian account of the aesthetics of existence, insisting upon the differences between him and the German philosopher.

The Four-Element Framework Applied to Nietzsche's Ethics of Self-Creation

Probably the best way to start with Nietzsche's ethics of self-creation is to show the manner in which the German thinker deconstructed "the soul-hypothesis". One of the main attacks against this hypothesis is by rejecting the traditional idea of a "free will". For Nietzsche, such an idea is "the best self-contradiction that has been conceived so far… a sort of rape and perversion of logic" (BGE 21). The presupposition of free will is that the human being is a God-like creature, which can be his own cause. But no real thing is its own cause, that is why for Nietzsche,

> *freedom of the will* in the superlative metaphysical sense… the desire to bear the entire and ultimate responsibility for one's actions oneself, and to absolve God, the world, ancestors, chance, and society involves nothing less than to be precisely this *causa sui* and…to pull oneself up into existence by the hair, out of the swamps of nothingness. (BGE 21)

Nietzsche repudiates the idea that humans are absolutely free or that the self has a substantial existence, and draws attention upon the natural, social and historical contingencies that shape a person's identity. To put it simply, what Nietzsche repudiates is the existence of a Kantian "agency", which makes the individual totally accountable for all his actions. One of the underlying assumptions of the agency-idea is that the human subject has a unity, an essence and an ontological substrate that makes a man what he is. But Nietzsche insists that "there is no such substrate; there is no « being » behind the doing, acting, becoming. « The doer » is merely made up and added into the action – the act is

everything:" (GM I 13). What Nietzsche does here is to invert the classical picture of action theory: it is not the subject that is making an action, but rather the action is that making a subject. This attack upon the old theory of action is a significant part of a larger assault against the traditional metaphysics of identity. The German philosopher suggests that what is usually called "reality" does not have an immovable identity or a true essence, so we shouldn't speak of entities as unities. All entities are, for Nietzsche, "unities only as dynamic systems" (Shacter 1992, 270). Each and every thing in the world is nothing but an aggregation of accidents, and each thing is further caught up in a system of relations, differences and contingencies. The world is nothing but a network of relations and accidents, which makes a thing to be "the sum of its effects" (WP 557). And, if we follow Alexander Nehamas' suggestion (1985, 25), this is precisely the broad meaning of the *will to power*. In this sense, the will to power is an impersonal force that permeates the entire universe, an activity of perpetual reconfiguration of opposed energies and forces (WP §1067). This image of the world as nothing but an interplay of energies rejects the Kantian concept of thing-in-itself, and this is what makes a thing to be the sum of its effects:

> The properties of a thing are effects on other *things*: if one removes other *things*, then a thing has no properties, i.e. there is *no thing* without other things, i.e. *no thing-in-itself*. (WP §557)

And, if a thing is the sum of its effects, then the human individual is the sum of his acts, since a person's effects are precisely his acts. I hope this clarifies the statement I made earlier that, for Nietzsche, the action is that which makes an individual, and not the other way around. An individual's identity represents the totality of his acts, namely the way by which he takes himself as a project to be carried in a lifetime. But even though all entities have a contingent and unstable existence, human being does not bear the same looseness in self-transformation. When we speak of human identity, we should be careful in noticing the difficulty of an individual's becoming. In the case of human existence, there are two manners by which a person may attain a form; or, to put it otherwise, there are two identity patterns. These two identity patterns

refer to the famous Nietzschean notions of "slave" and "master". The former is that of blind compliance to the code of social rules and values. Through blind compliance, the human becomes a "slave", namely a subject trapped in the snare of ready-made values. Since, for Nietzsche, society is a "dark workshop" programmed to "fabricate ideals" (GM I, 14), the observance of impersonal rules is a sign of weakness, not of real responsibility. And since the human being is the sum of her acts, then the "slave" is the sum of her resignations and submissions. At the opposite side, stands the master. His way of shaping an identity is self-creation, which is an attribute of the "free spirits" (*freie Geister*). A free spirit, a creative individual does not passively embrace an identity, but he builds one of his own. He is the "master", the one who creates values and, by that, he creates himself. His desire is the spiritualization of existence, by setting a new taste and giving himself a new and personal rule of self-government. Nietzsche's famous formula for the people who want to create themselves is: "Become who you are!", so we can characterize his ethics as an ethics of self-becoming:

> We, however, want to *become who we are* – human beings who are new, unique, incomparable, who give themselves laws, who create themselves! (GS §335)

This phrase captures, in short, the entire stakes and development of Nietzsche's project of self-creation. In what follows, I will present how Nietzsche's project fits within the four-part framework. But in order to do this, I must first clarify Nietzsche's famous exigency of becoming what/who we are.

If one has to become what he is, then it would seem that the outcome of this process is the "real Self", an unconcealed nucleus of one's true identity. It would mean that the self must be somehow disclosed or revealed. In such conditions, it would not be the case of self-creation, but only of self-discovery (which is more a Platonic or a Christian theme). Nietzsche is, as we know, extremely ambiguous. Nevertheless, we can partially unravel this enigmatic phrase, by pointing to Heidegger (1979, 7), who claimed that "for Nietzsche, Being is becoming". Given this hint, the utterance "become who you are"

should be assumed as an urge to intensify the becoming. If we replace "being" with "becoming" in Nietzsche's phrase, then "Man must become who he is" should be understood as "man must become becoming". Therefore, Nietzsche's phrase is not a celebration of "being", but an engagement towards "becoming". But considering that reality is already "becoming", namely the confrontation of energies and impulses, Nietzsche's advice must be understood, in the first place, as the following recommendation: one has to assume the multiplicity of impulses and forces that constitutes one's biology. In this interpretation, Nietzsche's exigency urges the individual to recognize the plurality of inner voices and tendencies that constitutes him at one point in his life. In contradistinction to the Platonic and Christian tradition that unify the subject around powerful concepts like "reason" or "soul", Nietzsche rejects the so-called human nature or the essence of man. The subject is multiplicity (WP §641) and one of the fundamental stakes of historical thinking is to point out that human being has "not an immortal soul but many mortal souls to shelter in himself" (HAH §218). Human being is not a homogeneous entity, but a plurality of instincts. "The subject as multiplicity" is the name for the real individual, the one who is made out of numerous clusters of conflicting energies, drives and forces.

Returning now to the four-level framework, the instincts represent, in Nietzsche's ethics, the ethical substance. The part which requires specific ethical care is precisely this plurality of opposing energies. And, for Nietzsche, is clear that a man is nothing as long as he *is* an uncultivated multiplicity, or as long as he *acts* according to all these conflicting instincts (WP §108). My claim is that Nietzsche's self-becoming is a two-steps process. The first one corresponds to the subject's awareness that he does not have a single nature and that his identity is scattered in a multitude of contradictory drives. The second step corresponds to the individual's strive for unification of these drives into a coherent attitude. Nietzsche's master is the one who has the capacity to structure all the conflicting impulses. This task is to be done in two different ways: either as an enhancement of a single instinct, which determine the ethical attitude itself, or as a rearrangement of energies, which form a new and harmonious cluster of instincts.

The picture I wish to propose for this natural state of instincts is that of a "puzzle without solution" (Nica 2015a). Let us imagine a puzzle, whose final picture is not available and, furthermore, there are no hints that the puzzle could be solved. A puzzle like this is not presumed to have been designed by someone. In such conditions, nobody knows how the final picture could possibly look like, and all the pieces appear to be nothing but a heap of irreconcilable fragments. I think this situation is the perfect illustration for the state of instincts in Nietzsche's philosophy. The absent designer is the dead God, and the pieces of the puzzle are the human instincts, floating in perpetual conflict. But all the contradictory instincts are brought under a state of harmony and perfection through the activity of a free spirit. We can say that, at the end of the process, the self in Nietzsche's philosophy must to appear as "an ordered clotting of contrasts".

To resume the analysis of the first element of the framework, the material aspect of Nietzsche's ethics of self-becoming is the constellation of drives, which are – commonly – struggling in a state of entropy. Using Foucault's terminology, we might say that the ethical "problematization" in Nietzsche's philosophy is the totality of instincts. One's impulses, drives and energies are object of ethical concern and they are transformed in the master's ethical work.

The second element of the ethical framework is the mode of subjectification, which for Nietzsche is the self's engagement to give itself a law. The answer to the question "why should a person be commmited to the ethics of self-becoming?" is: because he has given himself a law that is his own. The thing at stake here is the character of "ownness" that a law has:

> Can you give yourself your own evil and your own good and hang your own will over yourself as a law? Can you be your own judge and avenger of your law? Terrible it is to be alone with the judge and avenger of one's own law. Thus is a star thrown out into the void and into the icy breath of solitude. (Z I, 17)

The "icy breath of solitude" which Nietzsche mentions is the crucial mark of self-becoming that delineates his ethics from Kant's ethical project. We will not find in Nietzsche a transcendental and

universal subject, which gives itself a law as it would give it to the entire humankind. Whereas Kant purports that the righteous person is the one who had repressed all his instincts (G 4, 394-401), Nietzsche believes that the instincts are the primary tools of self-realization. Furthermore, the law that the free spirit has given to himself is not a universal law, but a particular law of inclinations. That is why the task of reason, in Nietzsche's philosophy, is not to suppress the instincts. If reason has a function at all, this would be to distinguish between the life-enhancement inclinations and the life-diminution ones. The joy of life is one the fundamental features of Nietzsche's ethics of self-becoming. However, this affirmation of life should not be comprehended as a mere indulgence in pleasure. For the German thinker, self-fulfillment is not about the complacency of a self-indulgent person. The depraved man, who devotes his life to all possible pleasures, is nothing but a slave, since his attitude is shaped by an undifferentiated obedience to bodily needs. The free spirit, the Overman is the master of his own sensations, and this distinguishes him from the members of the "herd". An important aspect that must be noticed, when speaking of Nietzsche's mode of subjectification, is the ultra-individualistic and elitist character of his ethics. Another way to answer the question "Why should I cultivate a certain ethical attitude" would, arguably, be: "I should fashion myself because I want to be different than the ordinary people". I will return later to this aspect.

The third aspect of ethics is the ethical work upon the self. The question is how a subject could transform itself into an ethical subject or, more simple, *how* does one fulfill his ethical goal. I have stated above that, in Nietzsche's philosophy, the harmonization of instincts is not feasible as an uncritical seeking of pleasures. The ethical transformation requires a specific discipline that entails us to talk about a sort of secular asceticism. When Nietzsche refers to self-creation, he suggests that it is unachievable without self-discipline. To this respect, he brings forth the exemplary figure of Goethe, who "disciplined himself to wholeness, he created himself" (TI 9, 49). The cultivation of self-discipline can be best described as a project of character stylization:

> One thing is needful. – To give style to one's character – a great and rare art! It is practiced by those who survey all the strengths and weaknesses of their nature and then fit them into an artistic plan until every one of them appears as art and reason and even weaknesses delight the eye. (GS §290)

The activity of stylizing one's character is the ascetic process, which separates the masters from the slaves. The free spirit exercises his freedom as an act of self-fashioning, operating upon himself a number of abstentions and constraints. In these constraints, he does not feel any encumbrance; on the contrary, he "enjoy[s] the finest gaiety in such constraint" (GS §290). On the other hand, the small members of the "herd" are incapable of self-discipline. They either comply with an impersonal code of conduct or they submit to each and every pleasure. We are talking here about two ways of submission, being that to common morality or to desires. The latter is the person incapable to commit to a certain discipline. As Nietzsche says, "the weak characters without power over themselves *hate* the constraint of style" (GS §290).

The fourth element of the framework is the teleology of the moral subject or, simply, the *telos*. In Nietzsche's project of self-becoming, the aim of ethical work is to become "new, unique and incomparable" (GS §335). The one who has become himself is the individual who imposes new values to the world. In the narrow sense, the will to power is nothing but the ability to create innovative meanings, to establish new interpretations. The world does not consists of facts, but only of interpretations (WP §481), and the hallmark of the higher individual is his capacity to proliferate novel interpretations, which surpass and challenge common understanding. His aim is both self-overcoming and the overcoming of others. Nietzsche's ethics is an elitist project of the individual who has risen above the "herd". The ethical subject that reached its *telos* is Zarathustra, who stays beyond common standards, and says: "This is now my way: where is yours?" (Z III, 11). This is a provocative question, which not only that it challenges everyone to self-overcoming, but especially it stresses the difference between the master and the slave. The inevitable outcome of Nietzsche's ethics is a person who highlights his own excellence, and transforms everyone else into remote human beings.

The Four-Element Framework Applied to Foucault's Aesthetics of Existence

In this section I will introduce Foucault's idea of the aesthetics of existence and I will frame it within his ethical fourfold.

The premises of Foucault's aesthetics of existence are the same with Nietzsche's account of self-creation. Foucault rejects the traditional idea of a substantial self, endowed with a transcendental or a transcendent dimension. As C.G. Prado states "basic to [Foucault's] work is the idea that subjectivity is a complex product rather than a preexisting condition" (Prado 2000, 10). The subject is not something given, and it is not a necessary condition either. But, if the subject is not given, then it is produced. The intellectual project Foucault carried through entire life was to show how the subject was constituted in history. Therefore, we should note that Foucault's interest on subjectivity is not only a late research focus, but it was his major and constant preoccupation. His crucial concern was to develop an account of subjectivity by answering some questions regarding the emergence of the subject in history. A brief answer, that covers all the stages of Foucault's work, would be that the subject emerges at the intersection of truth, power and self-techniques. These three elements correspond to the three periods of Foucault's philosophical activity:

> My objective has been to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects. My work has dealt with three modes of objectification which transform human beings into subjects. The first is the modes of inquiry which try to give themselves the status of the sciences. In the second part of my work, I have studied the objectivising of the subject in what I shall call 'dividing practices...' Finally, I have sought to study it is my current work the way a human being turns him – or himself – into a subject. For example, I have chosen the domain of sexuality... Thus it is not power, but the subject; that is the general theme of my research. (Foucault 1982, 777)

The aesthetics of existence corresponds to his third stage of his work, when Foucault turned up to Greek Antiquity and found that, in that epoch, ethics was not a matter of assessing actions in terms of right and wrong, but a matter of self-fashioning. This insight gave Foucault

the chance to enlarge his previous analysis regarding the emergence of the self. Whereas in his early stages, the French thinker depicted a fragile self, entrapped in a pervasive system of power relations, in his later period, Foucault articulated the possibility of a self-constituting subject. The self is not only fabricated in the interplay of power relations, but it has resources of resistance (Foucault 1979, 95) and, for that matter, it has resources of self-creation. In order to create themselves, the individuals don't need to go back to Antiquity, but they have to invent new forms of subjectivity according to contemporary and future challenges (Foucault 1988b, 15). This does not mean that the individual is an absolute free agent, but rather that, within the game of power relations, there are always interstices that allow the subject to constitute itself. As C. Koopman states, Foucault's ethical project is "located at the hinge between a history of the formation of the subject and the possibility of future self-transformation of that subject" (Koopman 2013, 526). In this process of self-transformation, the individual has to displace the standard subjectivity and to stylize his life, until it becomes a work of art. Human life could be art creation too, as long as an individual brings his life under certain criteria of harmony and perfection:

> What strikes me is the fact that in our society, art has become something which is related only to objects and not to individuals, or to life. That art is something which is specialized or which is done by experts who are artists. But couldn't everyone's life become a work of art? Why should the lamp or the house be an art object, but not our life? (Foucault 1984b, 350)

This aestheticization of life is another aspect in which Foucault's ethics resembles the Niezschean project of self-becoming. But the similarities between Nietzsche and Foucault stop here. In framing Foucauldian aesthetics of existence within the fourfold model of ethics, I will shed a light upon the major differences that appear between the two thinkers.

The first aspect of ethics is the determination of the ethical substance, which begs the question: "What part of the ethical subject requires ethical care?" There are at least two possible answers to this question. The first one, given by M. Huijer (1999, 71), is that feelings are the ethical substance in Foucault's aesthetics of existence. The second answer, given by T.O. Leary (2002, 107), is: the modes of subjectivities. I

will explain next why I think Huijer's solution is wrong. He supports his answer, by referring to one of Foucault's sayings from an interview with Dreyfuss and Rabinow. During the interview, Foucault said that, in our times, the part of ourselves which needs ethical care is our feelings. But what Foucault was referring to was not his own idea of a promising ethical substance. What Foucault did was only to acknowledge that, in Western society, the feelings are the main ethical field of inquiry. In the interview, he is rather ironic about this aspect. Here is the entire phrase from the interview:

> For instance, you can say, in general, that in our society the main field of morality, the part of ourselves which is most relevant for morality, is our feelings. You can have a girl in the street or anywhere, if you have very good feelings toward your wife. (Foucault 1984, 352)

After this sentence, Foucault describes that Kant and the medieval Christians believed that the ethical substance were intentions and desires respectively. In my opinion, it is clear that Foucault is only giving some historical examples from which he is clearly detached.

Therefore, I think it is more plausible to say that the ethical substance in Foucault's aesthetics of existence is the one identified by O'Leary, namely the modes of subjectivity. The modes of subjectivity (not to be conflated with modes of subjectification) are ways in which an individual establish a relation with himself and with the others. They cover a wide range of forms, from sexual identity to more complex identifying beliefs. The forms of subjectivity entail ways of life that determine our modes of being, thinking, and acting, and as long as these modes become problematized, "they become the material, the substance, for an ethical intervention and transformation" (O'Leary 2002, 108).

> The self, understood as the more or less homogenous coming together of our modes of subjectivity, has become the material, the substance of our ethical reflection and practice. It is the 'ethical substance' of the model Foucault proposes. (O'Leary 2002, 120)

It should be clear by now the fundamental difference between Nietzsche and Foucault regarding the material aspect of ethics. Whereas

Nietzsche believed the instincts were the ethical substance, Foucault problematizes the modes of subjectivity. We could express this significant difference by putting it in non-Foucauldian, yet more intuitive terms: on one hand, Nietzsche identifies the ethical substance as a "natural" feature; on the other, Foucault identifies the ethical substance as a "cultural" one.

The second element of the Foucault's ethical framework is the mode of subjectification. This element refers to a formal or ontological aspect of ethics, and it calls for the reasons why somebody should be committed to a certain ethical attitude. O'Leary's claim is that the aesthetics of existence is commendable, because otherwise a subject would be shapeless:

> In the ethics that Foucault is formulating, the mode of subjection, that is the answer to the question 'why should I live my life in one particular way, as opposed to any other?', is: because myself and my life have no shape, no purpose, no justification, outside of the form which I give to them. It is, therefore, imperative (non-categorically imperative) that I think about that form, develop the techniques that will help me to transform it, and that I reflect upon the ends, the teloi, to which I will direct it. (O'Leary 2002, 138)

Apparently, such an answer brings Foucault in the proximity of Nietzsche. The German philosopher would say as well that a shapeless life does not worth to be lived. The free spirit creates himself not only because he gives his own law, becoming his *own* master, but also because he wants to give a unique form to his life. It is no surprise that both O'Leary (2002, 136-137) and Huijer (1999, 75-76) are making extensive parallels between Foucault and Nietzsche. However, I think there is a little bit more to say about this matter. In the aesthetics of existence, Foucault does not simply longs for a form, but he wants to discover those modes of subjectivity, which could withstand biopolitical normalization. The aesthetics of existence is a practice of self-(trans)formation and, thereby, an act of political resistance against domination. An individual has to form and transform himself if he wants to resist those power relations that lead to domination. A shapeless subject is a subject which will receive an external and, possibly dangerous, identity. The uncultivated and unchanged individual is

extremely vulnerable to biopolitical mechanisms of discipline. The difference between Nietzsche and Foucault is that the French thinker's preoccupation is to articulate a hotbed of resistance for the otherwise fragile and vulnerable subjects.

The third element of ethics is the ethical work or the "forms of elaboration" of self. As stated before, this ascetic aspect refers to the actual practice or the set of exercises by virtue of which a subject can fulfill its ethical goals. Foucault analyzed the ethical work developed in Greek and Roman Antiquity. But what is the ethical work of Foucault's own ethical project? A very specific answer is given by James Bernauer (1990, 19), who argues that Foucault's ethical work is the method of genealogy. However, this is only a methodological instrument, and it is a little bit strange to reduce an entire ascetic activity to a scholarly tool. A proper ethical work should have more of an existential relevance. A comprehensive answer is suggested by Paul Rabinow, who claims that Foucault's ethical work consists in the critical activity in general. This is a more encompassing solution, and the readers of "What is Enlightenment?" will connect criticism with the "historical ontology of ourselves", which bears an existential significance:

> We must obviously give a more positive content to what may be a philosophical ethos consisting in a critique of what we are saying, thinking, and doing, through a historical ontology of ourselves. (Foucault 1984d, 45)

However, inspired by the above quote, I suggest we could go beyond the critical activity, and say that the ethical work is philosophy itself. Not philosophy as a theoretical reflection or as body of knowledge, but precisely the philosophical ethos, namely philosophy as a way of life. This is an experimental mode of doing philosophy, which not only changes one's opinions or the reader's view about the world, but it is an experiment carried out by the author, who thus invites the reader to experience on himself. If it is written by a true practitioner of philosophy, a book changes not only his theoretical insights, but it displaces his own subjectivity. Here are two quotes from Foucault's interviews, relevant for this matter:

> Reading a book or talking about a book was an exercise one surrendered to as it were for oneself in order to benefit from it, in order to transform oneself. (Foucault, 1985, 76-7, *apud* Huijer 1999, 78)

> The main interest in life and work is to become someone else that you were not in the beginning. If you knew when you began a book what you would say at the end, do you think that you would have the courage to write it? What is true for writing and for a love relationship is true also for life. (Foucault 1988a, 9)

The difference between Nietzsche and Foucault at this level is that whereas the former supports an affirmative and active philosophical life, the latter propose a reactive philosophical life. Nietzsche's ethics is informed by *amor fati*, whilst Foucault's aesthetics of existence is precisely a way of rejecting or eschewing certain situations, events or conditions. Although in real life Foucault was a vocal activist, his ethics represents a rather silent war against domination. He does not confront directly the establishment; instead he engages in a subversive and devious political project. And this is another important difference from Nietzsche. Unlike the philosophical life employed by Nietzsche, the Foucauldian aesthetics of existence is not only an ethics, but also a reactive way of doing politics.

The fourth element of the four-part framework is the *telos* of ethics, so we should finally ask ourselves what is the ethical aim of Foucault's aesthetics of existence. In a Nietzschean fashion, Bernauer (1990, 20) identifies the *telos* of Foucault's ethics as "a permanent provocation to the forces that war against our creativity". I tend to agree with Bernauer, when he says that the aim of Foucault's ethics is a fight against those forces that threaten "something" in us, but that "something" is not creativity in itself. Creativity is a mere effect of the ethical *telos* aimed at by the aesthetics of existence. To identify this goal, I return again to O'Leary, who argues that the purpose of ethics is freedom. It seems more plausible for me to say that freedom, rather than creativity is Foucault's ultimate goal, since freedom is the condition of creativity. The former is not only the condition of the latter, freedom is the very condition of possibility for self-creation or, as Foucault says, it is the "ontological condition of ethics" (Foucault 1987, 115). Here we may see another major difference between Nietzsche and Foucault. Although

Foucault rejects the humanist conception of a substantial self, in a manner similar to Nietzsche, Foucault maintains "a deep commitment to the idea of human freedom, thus distancing himself from Nietzsche" (Iftode 2013, 77). But how could ethics be both the condition and the end of ethics?

First of all, we should refrain ourselves to define Foucault's notion of freedom in terms of an ideal or absolute freedom, as conceived by the humanist thinking. For the French thinker, freedom is "not an ideal state for which we strive, it is a condition of our striving" (2002, 159). It is not a transcendental property of the soul, but a dynamic condition, which is related to a certain configuration of power relations. To put it simply, freedom exists only in my contingent and rather narrow possibility to stand against a norm, an authority or a state of domination. This is freedom as the ontological condition of ethics. But, at the same time, freedom is also the *telos* of the aesthetics of existence, in so far as much the process of self-transformation aims at maintaining this limited and contingent possibility to oppose domination. A suggestive expression of Foucault's idea of freedom is advanced by M. Huijer: "freeness as opposed to power" (Huijer 1999, 66). If a subject's interactions are caught up within all kinds of games of power, then the task of the aesthetics of existence is to find ways which would "allow these games of power to be played with a minimum of domination" (Foucault 1987, 129). Thus, the minimization of domination becomes the "the point of articulation of the ethical preoccupation and of the political struggle for the respect of rights, of the critical reflection against the abusive techniques of government" (Foucault 1987, 130). It appears that the aesthetics of existence is a profoundly democratic project. I am not speaking of democracy in none of its technical meanings (most of which are tributary to the liberal humanist project), but of democracy in a broad sense, as the system that provides the lowest degree of domination and the highest degree of freedom for the most vulnerable people. And this is another matter, which marks a significant difference between Foucault's and Nietzsche's ethics.

It should be clear by now that, albeit the two accounts of self-creation bear some visible similarities, they are still remaining two relevantly different projects.

Acknowledgement

This paper is supported by Sectorial Operational Program Human Resources Development (SOP HRD) financed from the European Social Fund and by the Romanian Government under the contract number POSDRU/159/1.5/S/133675.

REFERENCES

Bernauer, James (1990). *Michel Foucault's Force of Flight.* Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International.

Foucault, Michel (1979). *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1: An Introduction*. London: Allen Lane.

_____. (1982). "The Subject and Power". In *Critical Inquiry* 8 (4), pp. 777-795.

_____. (1984). "On the Genealogy of Ethics. An Overview of Work in Progress". In *The Foucault Reader. An Introduction to Michel Foucault*, ed. P. Rabinow. New York: Penguin Books, pp. 340-362.

_____. (1984b.). "What is Enlightenment?". In *The Foucault Reader*, pp. 32-50.

_____. (1987). "The Ethics of the Care of the Self as a Practice of Freedom: an Interview With Michel Foucault in January 1984", tr. J.D. Gauthier. In *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 2, pp. 112-131.

_____. (1988a). *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, ed. L. Martin, H. Gutman & P.H. Hutton. Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, pp. 16-49.

_____. (1988b.). "An Aesthetics of Existence". In *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings 1977-1984*, ed. L.D. Kritzman, New York and London: Routledge, 1988, pp. 47-56.

Heidegger, Martin (1979). *Nietzsche*, tr. D. Farrell Krel. New York: Harper & Row.

Huijer, Marli (1999). "The Aesthetics of Existence in the Work of Michel Foucault". In *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, Vol. 25. No. 2, 61-85.

Iftode, Cristian (2013). "Foucault's Idea of Philosophy as 'Care of the Self': Critical Assessment and Conflicting Metaphilosophical Views". In *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 71, 76-85.

Kant, Immanuel (1998). *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, tr. M.J. Gregor. Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press.

Koopman, Collin (2013). "The Formation and Self-Transformation of the Subject in Foucault's Ethics". In Falzon, C., O'Leary, T. & Sawicki, J. (eds.) *A Companion to Foucault*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 526-543.

Nehams, Alexander (1985). *Nietzsche, Life as Literature*. Cambridge, Massachussets, London: Harvard University Press.

Nica, Daniel (2015a). "« Opera de artă fără autor ». O perspectivă foucauldiană asupra ideii de autocreație în opera lui Nietzsche". In *Revista de Filosofie* 2/2015, pp. 209-221.

_____. (2015b). "The Aesthetics of Existence and the Political in Late Foucault". In *Re-thinking the Political in Contemporary Society. Globalization, Consumerism. Economic Efficiency*. Viorel Vizureanu (ed.) (2015). Bucharest: Pro Universitaria, pp. 39-62.

Nietzsche, Friedrich (1968). *The Will to Power*, tr. W. Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books.

_____. (1966). *Beyond Good and Evil*, tr. W. Kaufmann. New York: Random House.

_____. (1967). *On the Genealogy of Morals*, tr. W. Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale. In *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*. New York: Random House.

_____. (1974). *The Gay Science, with a Prelude of Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*, tr. W. Kaufmann. New York: Random House.

_____. (1986). *Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits*, tr. R.J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

_____. (2005). *Thus Spoke Zarathustra.* Tr. G. Parkes. Oxford: Oxford World's Classics.

O'Leary, Timothy (2002). *Foucault and the Art of Ethics*. London and New York: Continuum.

Prado, Carlos G. (2000). *Starting with Foucault. An Introduction to Genealogy*. Boulder & San Francisco: Westview Press.

Rabinow, Paul (1997). "Introduction". In *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault,* vol. I, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*. London: Allen Lane, pp. XI-XLIII.

Schact, Richard (1992). "On Self-Becoming: Nietzsche and Nehamas's Nietzsche". In *Nietzsche Studien* 21, pp. 266-280.

LAUGHING AT THE UN-LAUGHABLE: THE POLITICAL DIMENSION OF GENDER PARODY IN POPULAR CULTURE

VENERA DIMULESCU[1]

Abstract

Cross-dressing and drag are old artistic practices that were used by individuals to challenge the existing *status-quo* of a community. Through parody, dominant normative discourses of beauty, gender relations and social inequality were exposed and publicly deconstructed and questioned. In contemporary western societies, the technological evolution and the new instruments of mass communication have facilitated the fusion of artistic forms of expression and have given parody a new contextual framework. In this paper I will analyze the post-modern reinvention of parody in connection with the new theoretical standpoints of gender identity. My thesis is that contemporary gender parody acts, through their use of technological devices, not only preserved their political aim, but also became an effective artistic tool that shatters the cultural and political power of censorship in all its forms.

Keywords: gender identity, parody, biological determinism, abjection, sexual objectification, popular culture.

Introduction

The rise of identity politics, deconstruction theory and postmodern thought has marked a turning point in the artistic world. Contemporary art has become increasingly concerned with social and political factors of human life. Feminism and gender studies have been a permanent source of inspiration for the art scene, and the problematic aspects of gender

[1] University of Bucharest, Faculty of Philosophy.

inequalities enabled different forms of art to develop into active reactions to contemporary hegemonic discourses of power.

In visual arts, the most politically conscious form of expression is performance art, the primary reactionary tool of second wave feminists and activists, but also an artistic space of political awareness that still has a great impact on individuals, especially in western societies. On the other hand, as we have given up to the everlasting binary relationship between high and low art, popular culture has developed into an umbrella term for many forms of artistic expressions, from music to cinema.

In my research paper I am concerned with the intersection between contemporary representations of gender and the rich field of popular culture through the concept of gender parody. In postmodern theory, parody is understood as a critique of the cultural normative models of thought using the very tools of the hegemonic discourse. Its aim is to expose the limitations and oppressive nature of fixed cultural and political norms. Gender parody, in particular, tracing it way back to Antiquity, has been a source of laughter and mockery regarding socio-political taboos of sexuality, desire and gender (Jameson 1998). Usually associated with the old practice of cross-dressing or drag, gender parody is a key-element in contemporary gender studies, and a reaction to structuralist definitions of the masculine and the feminine as opposed and fixed identities (Butler 1990, 181).

In the context of the politically engaged contemporary art, gender parody serves not only as a recreational artistic expression, but also as a political manifest towards preconceived notions of the masculine and the feminine (Hutcheon 1986-1987).

In order to understand the actual manifest of gender parody, and what it stands for, we must first identify the limits and gaps of the hegemonic discourse of gender roles in the cultural field.

Mainstream Representations of the Body and Their Cultural Content

In contemporary popular culture, new representations of the female subject correlate femininity with established features of female physical appearance. These features do not define femininity as a

cultural construct or psychological structure, but as bodily property. We can easily trace popular media products such as movies, magazines or music videos where the sexed body is constructed as the referent of femininity, in its idealized form. However, the representation of the female body does not appear exclusively as an aesthetic unity of harmonious features, but as a fragmented one as well, through the process of isolating and ranking the body parts in order to construct them as disconnected beauty ideals. The contemporary ritual of transforming one's body parts into fetishes marks a serious issue in the process of objectification since one's individuality is reduced to certain physical features that may or may not conform to standardized perceptions of beauty.

These cultural representations are reinforced through a discourse of shame destined to shape and perpetuate beauty ideals in the audience and also punish it for non-conformity. Moral shaming as a punitive act of women is actually a critique of disobedience of the symbolic aesthetic law and it is often exercised publicly. The construction of shame in numerous TV shows and magazines is based on a critical evaluation of the female body accompanied with ironic comments aimed at discrediting one's authority and dignity. The most popular case is the public shaming of celebrities for the way they dress and gain weight as a sign of emotional instability in their private lives (Gill 2007).

The concept of femininity as concrete body is linked to the discourse about sex and sexuality in the media. Rosalind Gill identifies two forms of sexual representations of women in popular culture, one that defines women as desirable heterosexual objects, which actually implies the transformation of traditional norms of femininity into individual, self-conscious choices, and the other as the construction of women as fully responsible agents for their sexuality and emotional life, in an attempt to overcome the victim status assigned to them by second wave feminists.

The explicit discourse of female sexuality evokes a questionable stage in women's emancipatory struggle, as it unfolds a certain imperative in the process of preserving the traditional image which concerns female sexuality, with little efforts to include alternative experiences of their bodies.

Sexual objectification of women, an usual subject of quarrel among feminists, especially during the second wave, is still an important issue in nowadays rape culture which is often associated with the traditional paradigm of gender roles (Nussbaum 1995). The concept of objectification has been used to subvert women's representations in visual culture, naming advertising, cinematography and pornography, connoting, as Nussbaum would attest, "a way of speaking, thinking and acting that the speaker finds morally or socially objectionable, usually, though not always, in the sexual realm." (Nussbaum 1995, 249)

Judith Williamson attests the disappearance of the term objectification from public debates enabling, thus, a subtle form of censorship. She explains how sexism has been whipped off from the hegemonic discourse about gender relations, shutting down any possible form of criticism:

> This concept (unlike racism) has fallen into disuse in recent years, and is now rarely employed in public debate. So our view of the situation it describes becomes locked in the moment when the term flourished, and increasingly, our culture presents sexism as a kind of 60's or 70's phenomenon, to be enjoyed as kitsch, rather than as a contemporary problem to be addressed as unjust. (Williamson 2013)

Sexual objectification derives from the practice of sexism which is based on the masculine/feminine dichotomy which creates and sustains gender hierarchies. In accordance with the tradition of structuralist thought, this type of binary systems implies the construction of the former concept as the opposite of the latter. The interchangeable binary formulas of mind/body, masculine/feminine or nature/culture define the feminine subject as bodily matter in opposition to the abstracted, intellectualized representation of the masculine. Thus, sexual objectification of women is the cultural effect of the overly emphasized female body and of the construction of their bodies as objects of males' desires (Butler 1990). Sexual objectification is a widely spread tool in advertising, and a marker of consumerism that identifies or strengthens the economic potential of goods. The use of both male and female sexualized bodies and their subsequent assignment to commodities is, in

fact, a contemporary ritual of security check within the fluidity and inconsistent nature of the market.

Gender hierarchies are not exclusively sustained by sexual objectification of bodies. Their instrumentality provides the contexts in which traditional cultural practices are redistributed unequally. For example, the intensive care of a woman for her own body can function as the internalized act of objectification of the male gaze, which enacts the conventional assumption that the primary characteristic of womanliness is nature understood as maternal instinct and a voluptuous physical appearance that praises and emphasizes fertility. Rosalind Gill explains that external forms of power related to the same traditional hegemonic discourse about female identity are internalized by individuals and become *the practice of narcissistic self-surveillance* (Gill 2007). According to the author, the process of internalization is the result of the systematic exposure of women to the pattern of female sexuality as the object of masculine desire. In contemporary popular culture, however, the process of sexual objectification is resignified as sexual subjectification, which implies the autonomous act of the individual as self-represented sexual object. Thus, the female subject becomes the observer as well as the active judge of her own body (Gill 2007).

Up to this point we identified the way gender roles are enabled both as internalized reactions and external, punishable symbolic laws.

Yet one may ask, how can those gender representations pass as perpetually reinforced truths about one's identity and how does gender parody subverts them through the act of mocking?

Perhaps we can locate the problem of subversion in the gender debate that has been taken place throughout history.

The Nature-Culture Debate on Gender: A Destinal Encounter?

The hegemonic cultural discourse about gender implies, first of all, a commonly assumed perception of the human body, defined through a set of cultural conventions passively accepted and assimilated through education.

We are assigned at birth to a gender that corresponds to our intelligible sex the very moment we leave our mothers' bodies. If we see

our birth certificate as a metaphor, we can presume that it stands for our gender ID that marks our entire lifetime and experiences. We don't usually ask our parents why they used to buy us dresses instead of trousers, or dolls instead of toy cars when we were little. It is in the very constitution of one's sexed body that these rituals require to be practiced, one might think. Yet how is the body really constituted?

According to Butler, under the influence of Christian and Cartesian theoretical standpoints, the sexed body has been defined as a passive space of denotation, a "politically neutral surface on which culture acts" (Butler 1990, 11). The common assumption that nature or biology creates a set of innate determinants which are being transmitted to human beings at birth defines the body as a pre-discursive and irrefutable ground. Yet this ground is the subject of a historical relation between the concept of nature and culture.

The much debated dichotomy between nature and culture is, in fact, ascribed to a group of interchangeable pairs of concepts that were objects of knowledge for many thinkers throughout history: the mind vs. body, interior vs. exterior, and psychological vs. physical pairs. The binary model of structuralist thought that stands for the defining process of a term by the exclusion of the other has caused a deep, psychological split in the understanding of gender in particular. Not only masculinity and femininity are defined in contrast, but sex and gender too.

Briefly, the problem of perpetuated cultural traits and values is a question of position. The way we position theoretically essential notions for the individual, such as race, gender, class, etc., determines the way we understand their display in the real world. Butler argues that the preconceived split between what is considered to be essential biological and what is culturally constructed in one's body creates two separate meanings that sustain one another through gender hierarchies.

The most popular, traditional view of the concrete body defines the latter as the referent of the cruel, unrestrained and chaotic nature of the animal, whereas the human mind is the regulating force or the *border control* of supposedly evil instincts, as Butler would call it (Butler 1990). However, the cultural or rational limits of the human body do not

function as fluid borders, but also as fixed, deterministic lines which are not supposed to be crossed:

> "When the relevant *culture* that *constructs* gender is understood in terms of such a law or set of laws, then it seems that gender is as determined and fixed as it was under the biology-is-destiny formulation. In such case, not biology, but culture, becomes destiny." (Butler 1990, 12)

This can be easily traced in examples of public shaming of individuals who do not conform to stereotypes of hetero-normative or gender behaviors. The masculine woman or the homosexual man has always been the target of moral denigration, and her/his symbolic punishment through shame is the most popular practice of cultural reiteration and reinforcement of norms. Reiteration of gender practices through the obsessive public identification of the disobeyer functions as a reassuring act of the reality of the social.

Butler argues that the hegemonic discourse about gender is sustained and culturally transmitted through a permanent repetition of mutually accepted patterns of behavior, named the process of naturalization. Under these circumstances, naturalization does not only imply the process of centralizing a set of gender practices and gestures within the aura of the normal, but also their mechanical internalization into what we usually call *gender identity*:

> In this way, it showed that what we take to be an *internal* feature of ourselves is one that we anticipate and produce through certain bodily acts, at an extreme, a hallucinating effect of naturalized gestures. (Butler 1990, 15)

Based on repetition, the process of naturalization suggests that gender is a continuous and active series of acts and gestures constantly practiced by individuals. The way a woman or a man dresses or chooses to aesthetically shape her or his own body is, evidently, a re-produced behavior from a cultural background, but the very act of actualizing it reactivates its authority and legitimacy as adequate and socially acceptable reality. This is what Butler calls performativity of gender, a key element in gender parody and subversive sexual manifests.

No Rest for the Excluded: Peripheral Gender Performatives

Up to this point we can identify two types of bodily representations within the hegemonic cultural discourse and popular culture as well: one type of corporeality invested with symbolic power and the other presented as deviant content marked as dangerous for society and the law of the normal. The representations that fill the latter description correspond mainly to sexual minorities and paraphilia, but also to non-conformed patterns of straight female or male behavior.

The binary and exclusionary attitude of the majority towards the minorities is called by Kristeva the process of abjection. Regulatory cultural and political discourses such as sexism, racism and homophobia are, according to the author, products of a constructed reality by means of exclusion (Kristeva 1982). Thus, that which I recognize as valid truth is only recognizable in relation to my decision to eliminate other available perspectives.

In this way, the universal or essentialist truth about gender or any other subjects of matter is constructed in two stages: the internalization of the desirable stances of reality and the expulsion of the alternative as abject. In this regard, the act of internalization implies both recognizing the instance of truth within myself (in my very personal identity) and within others similar to me. In a structuralist paradigm, to act in such a way would mean to dismiss others who are not like me and construct them as the opposition. The repulsion and abjection derived from it is explained by Kristeva as a ritual of security towards one's comfort reality zone that maintains the unusual, the unknown, in a loathsome territory far away from the familiar (Kristeva 1982).

As a reaction to the oppressive binary nature of the normal/ abnormal system, sexual minorities developed a combination of terms that suggest a harmonious relation of the opposites. For example, what we may call a masculine woman, queer studies define as the *butch-femme*, a union between rough and soft aesthetics and behavior:

> They are coupled ones that do not impale themselves on the poles of sexual difference, or metaphysical values, but constantly seduce the sign system, through flirtation and inconstancy into the light fondle of artifice, replacing the Lacanian slash with the lesbian bar. (Case 1988, 296)

This call for new appropriation of language and resignification of words is a specific postmodern method of destabilizing binary thought and so it is for gender parody. If gender is not a destinal encounter between fixed biological data that require fixed cultural interpretations, but something that is constantly created through the fusion of physical and psychological processes, how can gender parody, through the act of cross-dressing or drag, manage to show us that?

First of all, cross-dressing and drag are in their very nature theatrical acts. The borrowed ensemble of gestures, clothes and behavior commonly assigned to one's opposed gender creates an alternative, imagined reality through the act of playing with symbols and significations accepted as factors of the real by the vast majority.

Parody is an act of imitation that reveals the very imitating nature of the "original". The mimicry of gender roles evokes how easy it is to create gender through its intelligible symbols and practices. Gender parody does not only perform the roles of the masculine and the feminine but also shows how we do it in real life:

> Any performer who puts on an outfit to project an image is drag. Everything you put on is to fit a preconceived notion of how you wanna be seen. It's all drag. (Berrick 2003)

The process of imitation in gender parody contests gender as a natural and innate identity emphasizing the easiness of copying gestures, practices and aesthetics associated with it. Imitating the hegemonic model, gender identity doesn't appear fixed and irreversible anymore, but fluid and open to interpretation:

> (...) gender parody reveals the original identity after which gender fashions itself is an imitation without an origin. To be more precise, it is a production which, in effect - that is, in its effect - postures as an imitation. (Butler 1990, 175-76)

It is important to stress the fact that gender parody does not offer an alternative discourse on truth. The act of unmasking a mask using the very features of the mask in question serves as a semiotic play with pre-existent gender signs in order to balance the normal and abnormal and diminish the authority of the normal. It is in fact a deconstruction of the

abject through the denunciation of cultural and political hierarchies based on repulsion towards minorities.

Furthermore, gender parody reclaims respect and social legitimacy for the non-conforming identities by challenging the power of the heteronormative discourse and its practices of exclusions and denials of alternative forms of sexualities, gender identities and desires.

Thus, in the context of its struggle against abusive forms of powers, gender parody becomes a political manifest.

Conclusions

As we have argued, gender parody is, first of all, a critique of the cultural limits of gender identities. Throughout contemporary popular culture, the insistence on conformity to fixed gender roles and practices not only threatens the individual's right to sexual freedom and speech, but also enables subtle forms of sexism, homophobia and gender inequalities, a concern that defines gender parody as a form of political awareness of oppressive symbolic laws.

Perhaps the best way to understand the usefulness of gender parody in contemporary western culture is to see it as an effort to widen the possibilities of personal identity in a constant awareness regarding existent or potential forms of censorship. Using the act of mocking, the instance of authority loses its idealized position not in favor of an oppositional, demonized image, but as an opened space that can be consciously filled with all the contradictions and irregularities of individual identity.

REFERENCES

Berrick, Genevieve (2003). "Drag King: Camp Acts, Queer Bodies, Desiring Audiences". Online source: http://www.academia.edu/245174/Drag_King_Camp_Acts_Queer_Bodies_Desiring_Audiences

Buttler, Judith (1999). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York and London: Routledge.

Case, Sue-Ellen (1988). "Towards a Butch-Femme Aesthetic". Online source: https://ws202.files.wordpress.com/2011/11/kic-document5.pdf

Gill, Rosalind (2007). "Postfeminist Media Cultures: Elements of a Sensibility". In *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 10(2), pp. 147-166.

Hutcheon, Linda (1987). "The Politics of Postmodernism: Parody and History". In *Cultural Critique* 5, pp. 179-207.

Jameson, Fredric (1998). *Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern 1983-1998.* London and New York: Verso.

Kristeva, Julia (1982). *Powers of Horror. An Essay on Abjection.* New York: Columbia Univ. Press.

Nussbaum, Martha (1995). "Objectification". In *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 24 (4), pp. 249-291.

Williamson, Judith (2003). "Sexism with an Alibi". In *The Guardian* magazine, May 31: http://www.theguardian.com/media/2003/may/31/advertising.comment

DO WEALTHY PERSONS FROM DEVELOPED COUNTRIES HAVE ANY RESPONSIBILITY TO THE POOR PERSONS FROM UNDERDEVELOPED COUNTRIES?

INGRID NICULESCU[1]

Abstract

The current studies on poverty revealed, over the years, countless issues regarding the inequality between people, the violation of their human rights, global justice or the advantages certain groups have over others. This is just one feature why the concern for the poor could be seen as a moral problem.

When we address to issues regarding extreme poverty and to the persons which are affected by it we are referring to values which might be named *social values*. In this case, we are dealing with a conflict between the duty to maximize the utility (maximizing the utility in our case means to find solution in order to enhance or to eliminate poverty so that the poor could have a good life) and the attempt to protect the rights and the liberties of the individuals. By enhancing the lives of the others it could be said that it automatically enhances the health at a global level, choosing a path with social achievements such as equality, ensuring that the rights and the liberties of the people are respected and that the overall utility is maximized. The extreme poverty raises a set of difficulties with many objectives, but they could be summed up in two main purposes: the purpose to protect the good of the public health and the purpose to protect the rights of the people (as members of the society). What does it mean to be poor in a developing country? Is this a problem on which we should focus? Many philosophers, economists, and medical researchers debate in their papers this matter and I will explain in the following passages why.

The goal of this article is to show a way in which we can discuss about the responsibility wealthy people from developed countries have to help the poor from the underdeveloped countries. The argument has at its core the idea that there is a global institutional order, through which the wealthy people from developed countries benefit

[1] University of Bucharest, Faculty of Philosophy.

from certain advantages that the inequality creates. Hence, examining extreme poverty from a global institutional order point of view, we could conclude that the rich people unfairly benefit from their position. But it does not necessary mean that the only solution is to fight against this order.

Keywords: extreme poverty, equality, human rights, liberty, utility.

I. What Do We Mean by Poverty?

What does it mean to be poor? Well, the first answer that comes into our minds is that we label someone as poor when he does not have a minimum of necessary goods and does not have a good life (or with these goods and resources they barely survive) like: water, food, medicine, shelter, no job opportunities, no access to education, to medical healthcare, vulnerable to epidemics and diseases which are treatable, lives in an area with a high criminal rate, so on and so forth.

If we look more careful at what people consider to be poor we realize that its meaning is changing. The change could be explained if we correlate their responses with the economic status of their country or with other sets of beliefs and mentalities. Hence, for the poor persons from Ethiopia, to be poor means that there are big chances of dying next day, in other words, we identify a high risk of death. While in Jamaica it means that you work as a slave, around 18 hours per day, in order to survive (cf. Snel). As an opposite extreme, in the United States of America you could be labeled as a poor person if you do not have a home and a good wage. Though the poor from America have higher chances to survive than the poor from Ethiopia, we tend to label them as poor either way. In this article I will refer only to the people which live in extreme poverty, those which could be situated at the base of poverty.

II. *To Do* or *to Allow* a Harm?

In this section I will explain why it is important to make a distinction between *doing a harm* and *allowing a harm* when we talk about responsibility. When we deal for the first time with this distinction our

intuition is that harming someone is worst that allowing someone to harm. James Rachels disagrees with this claim and argues against it by using the following example:

1. Smith drowns his cousin.
2. Jones plans to drown his cousin but one day he spots him in the middle of a lake, drowning, and he does nothing to save him. (Rachels 1975, 78-86)

Though in the first case Smith performs an act and kills his cousin and in the second case Jones choose to do nothing, and the consequence is that his cousin dies, the intention of Jones to kill his cousin is the same. Therefore if the intention is the same then the wrong doing done by Smith and Jones is equivalent (Rachels 1975).

Rachels's argument has to deal with a problem, the thought experiment he uses to prove that his conclusion is valid does not take into account all the possible cases. One could say that Rachels adds a bad intention to both Jones and Smith, so that in this particular case we could agree that harming and allowing the harm are equal.

But Rachels is not arguing that in all possible situations *doing* is worst that *allowing*. What he wants is to highlight that there are cases when doing and allowing could be the same. This does not mean that there are no cases when doing is worse than allowing. For example, if we compare the case were I drown someone with my own hands with the case when I pass near a lake in which a little girl is drowning and I choose to do nothing, doing is worse than allowing.

In the last example, we cannot say that allowing is the same as doing because my absence would generate a different outcome, my victim would still be alive, while in the second case the girl would be in the same dangerous situation. Rachels is quite clear that in this particular example we cannot say that drowning someone is the same as allowing someone to drown, as long as I have no bad intentions in the girl case. It should be noticed that we talk about a difference of degree and not of kind, in other words, the fact that you choose to do nothing does not mean that you are guilt free, it just means that it's better than drowning someone with your bare hands.

III. The Responsibility towards Poor People from Underdeveloped Countries

Do the rich from developed countries have any responsibility towards the poor from underdeveloped countries? The discussion is not limited to what we discussed earlier about responsibility. In order to proceed we need to introduce two more concepts, *positive duties* and *negative duties*.

Negative duties are the duties which forbid one person to do any kind of harm to others. These duties are seen by Pogge as *omissions* (Pogge 2007, 20). A positive duty refers to situations when we can and we should help others. These kind of actions are considered *intentional actions*. Pogge claims that we have a negative duty to do no harm to others, especially when we are aware that we harm someone and we can stop.

III.1. Positive Duties

Peter Singer (1972) says that we have a positive duty towards the poor. He talks about the duty of wealthy people from developed countries towards the poor from the underdeveloped countries. In his opinion, it is important to reduce global poverty and he argues that we can do this only if all of us act well. He thinks that as good people we should not allow to be done any harm as long as we can do something against it (as long as we do not have to choose between something bad and something worse).

Can we apply any solution to this problem? Singer's proposal is that all the people with big wages should donate a certain amount of money in order to help the poor who live in underdeveloped countries. This way, those who could not afford to help the poor because that way their welfare will be affected do not have to donate, while those who earn enough and their welfare would not be affected if they donated a certain percentage from their income should donate[2].

[2] To be consulted Gauri and Sonderholm (2012).

This argument suggests that people should be allowed to flourish and to be let free in following their dreams and achieve their wishes. Should we force these people to prioritize donations over their dreams? Singer thinks that those who are able to flourish and afford to help others at the same time have an obligation to do so because it is unacceptable to let people die of starvation, lack of shelter or medicine as long as there are people who could live a good life and help the others as well. These people from developed countries have a moral duty to help the poor and the reason why they should do so is that "suffering from poverty is bad" (Huseby 2008, 2). He also claims that "if we can prevent something bad from happening, without sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance, we morally ought to do so." (Singer 1972, 231).

What about the distance? Does it matter if the poor are nearby or miles away from us? One might say that distance brings nothing new to the discussion, and that it is irrelevant from a rational point of view. But in reality people tend to make decisions differently, so proximity actually matters. For example, when we see a child in a lake, drowning, and the only way we can save him is to destroy a 500$ suit, we decide without too many problems to pay that price if that's what it takes to save a life. While in the case of a child which is dying of lack of food, and we can save him only if we pay an equivalent amount as in the case from above, of 500$ (Kamm 2007, 347), we are less tempted to say that we have a duty to pay that amount in order to save the child. Though these cases are relevant for practical ethics, Singer says that from a moral point of view distance is irrelevant. I would not develop my view on this subject here but it is important to mention that Singers' solution does not take into account how people actually make judgments but how they ought to make judgments.

III.2. Negative Duties

In a well-known article (Pogge 2007, 14), Pogge focuses on an argument based on negative duties. He argues that rich people from the more developed countries have a negative right to help the poor

because, in an institutional order which benefits just a few, the wealthy harm the poor. Pogge wants to make people aware of the fact that the poor are harmed by the behavior of the wealthy people from developed countries through an institutional order which gives the rich more opportunities and none to the poor.

Pogge states that rights have meaning only if: (i) the conditions to fulfill a duty are correlated with a right, and (ii) if the collected taxes could ensure the resources they need so that a good life could be lived (Pogge 2007, 14).

III.3. Are Negative Duties More Stringent Than the Positive Duties?

One objection to the Pogge's position is brought by Joshua Cohen (2010), with the following example: if someone is suffering terrible and another person could end the suffering (with a minimum cost), then the last person has an obligation to act, though by acting he violates a negative duty. If he choose not to act then he could be morally blamed for the suffering that the first person experienced.

Pogge answers to Cohen by claiming that we have some well-developed psychological mechanisms that help us to avoid moral shame, and therefore positive duties[3]. It might be assumed that negative duties are more important than positive duties because they offer motivational power to act as long as those who take part in something feel more responsible for the consequences than those who prevent.

It might be considered more important to prove that the global institutional order is unfair and it gives some advantages to some categories over others and from the moment that those who benefit from this order inflict harm on others violate a negative duty. Pogge added here that we are biologically built to prioritize negative duties and that it would be easier to do something in the case of global poverty if we knew that we are responsible by inflicting harm to the poor.

This argument is highly dependable on the idea that the institutional global order is unfair and by maintaining it we inflict harm

[3] To be consulted Daskal (2013).

on the poor. Pogge refers here to the wealthy people who see their interests and try to leave this system untouched. Assuming this important step, which is quite hard to prove, we can conclude that the rich inflict some harm on the poor because they protect these institutions, and when they get benefits from the system we cannot say that what they achieved is fair.

IV. Elites and the Institutional Global Order

One of the main assumptions[4] we identify in Pogges' project is that societies are guided by some institutional rules applied at a global level. Concerning this I will argue that these rules are created and consciously followed, knowing the consequences they have on people. In one of his papers[5], Thomas Pogge lists as examples of institutions and organizations: the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the United Nations (UN) system.

Thomas Pogge's argument is that these institutions offer advantages and are in the interest of the wealthy and developed countries while the underdeveloped are disadvantaged by it. This system should not be interpreted as a sort of a planned conspiracy by the wealthy countries against the underdeveloped or poor countries. What we should keep in mind is that an impartial system which does not take into consideration unequal positions tends to determine a constant advantage for those who are in a better position, in this case the rich countries. This abstract idea could be seen in negotiations where a bigger and a more important partner has more power over a smaller and less important one, though the rules are the same for both. This is a fact and at a global institutional level the consequences are that the rate of development is slowed by a system which assumes that all the countries are equal although in reality they are not.

---

[4] This assumption is based on Pogge's argument about the global institutional order, that can be read in his book *World Poverty and Human Rights*.

[5] To be consulted Pogge (2008).

This argument based on a global institutional order suggests that it is justified to say that the rich exploit the poor thanks to the system they promote and defend.

One objection to Pogge's argument is the fact that the global institutional order does not inflict harm on the poor. Mathias Risse (2009) claims this and he argues that we should look at the benefits this order gives to the poor and how many things have changed thanks to this order (as an example he looks at the evolution of wealth in the last 200 years). Medical progress and technological development are two other examples of how the world has advanced over the last years. Furthermore, he thinks that when we weight and judge the system we should also look at all the young people who live and who are not sick thanks to this development. Risse concentrates more on the benefits which are created by the global institutional order, hoping that in the future the problems the poor face will be solved if we allow the development to continue.

The issue here, from Pogge's perspective, is that we must look at the current status and we must notice that in this exact moment the poor are harmed by the global institutional order the order and wealthy countries which refuse to change and to help them. The assumption, that we are not responsible in a direct way because the politicians make the decisions and not us, does not make us less responsible for doing nothing[6].

In the next part, we must focus on the responsibility to improve the poor's situation. If we agree with Pogge then it's clear that the rich have a negative duty to stop harming the poor and we can turn now to a moral practical question: What should the rich do in order to change this?

In order to answer this question, it has been argued by Pogge that some compensations could protect the poor from the inflicted harm while the rich countries could work on changing[7] the system and the institutions. By not compensating the global poor and maintaining this global institutional order, it can be argued that we are harming the global poor and we are active participants in this crime against humanity[8].

---

6 For a discussion in detail about this, see Steinhoff (2012).

7 In this particular case, changing means to create institutions which could eliminate the bad promoted by the current system.

8 To be consulted Pogge (2005).

a) Duties in an Institutional Context

One objection to the Pogge line of argument, based on the main reason why the poor are in some conditions and referring to this distinction, is made by Steven Daskal. He explores other causes for their misery and suffering without denying that the current institutional order is a necessary cause but not a sufficient one taking into consideration the distinction between positive and negative duties as being conceptually confused for Pogge.

> To see why I believe his formulation on this duty to be ambiguous, consider the difference between killing and failing to rescue. This is a paradigm case of negative and positive duties, one that Pogge appeals to in articulating the distinction (…) the negative duty not to kill is more stringent than the positive duty to rescue. (Daskal 2013, 8)

But Daskal argues that if we transform the duty *not to kill* and the duty to *rescue* into an institutional context (*don't participate in institutions that kill* and *don't participate in institutions that fail to rescue*), we cannot further argue that the negative duties are more stringent than positive duties. His point is that if we think that negative duties identify specific things that we are (negatively) obligated not to do, whereas positive duties identify specific things that we are (positively) obligated to do, then it looks that the duties *not to kill*, *not to participate in institutions that kill* and *not to participate in institutions that fail to rescue* are all negative duties, whereas *the duty to rescue* is positive.

What Daskal is trying to imply is that an important distinction between positive and negative institutional duties has been neglected, and his analysis suggests that "the negative duties engaged by global poverty, through significant, do not demand as much as typical accounts of the positive duties to eliminate poverty" (Daskal 2013, 33).

As we have seen, it has been argued by some philosophers (like Pogge) that people are poor because of the *global institutional order*. But one objection to Pogge position can be related to the fact that he does not explain what does he mean by global institutional order and which are the institutions that are, in fact, part of this institutional order, despite the fact that we mentioned some of them in the begin of this section.

> Unfortunately, Pogge never clearly defined what the global institutional order actually includes and does not include, nor does he clearly explained what our imposition of this order upon the poor entails. Considering how important the global institutional order is to Pogge's argument, it is surprising that he spends so little time discussing which institutions are actually part of the global institutional order and in what sense affluent, powerful countries and their citizens are responsible for maintaining and imposing them upon the global poor. (Reitberger 2008, 382)

b) Poverty Related to Natural Disasters and to the Differences Between Persons

Going beyond the issue of positive and negative institutional duties, other writers – like Polly Vizard (2006) – have tried to explain poverty referring to causes like *natural disasters and differences between persons* (like disabilities or brute bad luck). In this case, the distinction between people who are poor because of the global institutional order Pogge talks about and people who are just unlucky or suffer from some disability is clear. Therefore, we could say, in an indirect way that to those poor people who are unlucky and suffer because of some disability we have a positive duty while in the case of the poor whom are poor because of the current institutional order, we have a negative duty to stop harming them.

c) **Poverty Due to *Some Bad and Incorrect Public Policies***

It has been argued by some writers, among them Julio Montero and Amartya Sen, that famine and extreme poverty are the results of some bad and incorrect public policies. Given the present problems, it is believed[9] that most of the officials from the poor countries violate the rights of their people and do not take into consideration the national interest of their countries. Again, it is quite easy to look at what happens in these poor countries, at the level of corruption and at the political

[9] To be consulted J. Montero (2010). "Do affluent countries violate the human rights of the global poor?". In *Global Justice: Theory Practice Rhetoric* (3) 2010, 22-41, University College London.

agendas of their leaders. Compared with the idea of an unfair institutional order these facts seem more real and closer to the problems the poor face.

> This argument suggests that the affluent countries are not violating the human rights of the global poor (…). Even when the global institutional order harms the economies of the poor countries and diminishes their capacity to deliver on the human rights of their citizens, poor countries could achieve this goal by adopting the necessary domestic policies, such as reducing their expenses on non-human rights-related activities, adopting redistributive policies, or, in hard times, asking for external loans. (Montero 2010, 38)

Therefore, the lack of resources are not the only factor which leads to poverty but also the national political context of their country and the political decisions of their leaders.

Pogge's objection to Sen and Montero's line of argument is that the global institutional order is not modeled just by the leaders from the rich countries but also by the corrupt leaders or elites of the poor countries.

d) Responsibility for Poverty Is Divided between Citizens and Elites or Politicians

In order to understand this problem, we must take into consideration an important distinction raised by Steinhoff, between *us* as people from a country and *us* as we are represented by the politicians we vote for, and who make decisions for us. Though this distinction is important and modifies the way in which we ascribe responsibility, he agrees with Pogge that there is a global institutional order which sustains poverty. The only point where he disagrees with Pogge is that it is not clear why exactly citizens, one by one, should be made responsible (38). This way he focused more on those who do actually inflict harm with their decisions, politicians and elites. They are the ones that make decisions and keep the current global institutional system, not the citizens. In other words, Steinhoff (2012, 119-38) claims that it is not the citizens from the developed countries those who harm the poor, but the

leaders and the elites from these wealthy countries are those who harm them and violate their rights, and they have a negative duty to stop.

It is assumed by Steinhoff that once you are in a certain group you adhere to its principles and beliefs, hence every member of the group is responsible for what the group is doing. The problem is that when a group makes a bad decision then all the members of the group are made responsible. Steinhoff signals to us that this is not the case with a country, for example: what happens with those who voted for the opposition? We cannot say that they adhere to the principle of the current leader, the one who won the elections. Therefore, there is no way to make them responsible for the decisions which that leader makes.

On the other hand, even if you vote for a leader, you cannot agree with all his future possible decisions or automatically adhere to all his beliefs and principles. When someone gives his vote to a leader what he is actually doing is to: "exert influence, however marginal, on who will *claim* to represent me and will in fact make decisions that will greatly affect me, whether I like those decisions or not. Moreover, I try to exert this influence in a situation where I know that in the end, whether I like it or not, someone *will* claim to represent me and make decisions in my name" (Steinhoff 2012, 135).

Pogge's conclusion is that the responsibility for creating and maintaining poverty belongs to the wealthiest and most powerful nations, because through them a global institutional order is imposed upon the world, which envisages their own benefits. Furthermore, "this order is not spontaneous, but something that 'we', the citizens of wealthy countries impose through our elected governments" (Pogge 2008, 199).

Despite any problems or disadvantages caused by the present global institutional order, we must be aware that the global institutional order facilitate cooperation between the wealthy and powerful countries. This way countries can change information and work together in order to solve global problems. But, "for the global poor, the global institutional order is more or less a by-product of such negotiations"[10].

Taking into consideration the present global institutional order, Pogge shows how this order should look like: wealthy people must

[10] To be consulted Reitberger (2008).

cooperate with poor people in imposing a global institutional order; this order must be designed in a way not to lead to human rights violations and these violations be reasonable, avoidable and predictable (Pogge 2005, 60).

Conclusions

I summed up the main perspectives in which the problem of the extreme poverty could be seen as a right violation of the poor by the wealthy. I have done this by reducing the meaning of extreme poverty to a simple definition which helps us to label a person as *poor*: those who have no shelter, are vulnerable to diseases, have no access to education, and do not have enough food to survive, or to not suffer from malnutrition. This way the mid categories, like the poor from United States of America, are excluded from this talk.

Wealthy categories from the more developed countries have the possibility to help the poor from the less developed countries. The question is if they have a moral duty or obligation to do so and if they are directly responsible for the condition of the poor. Pogge provides some arguments to show that we have a negative duty to help the poor because the global institutional order we leave untouched inflict harm on the poor. Though this idea has its practical and theoretical advantages it is not clear how you could make responsible a particular individual from a country for inflicting harm on the poor. By examining other opinions I tried to show that Pogge's idea raises some problems to which we should take a closer look.

I showed that we should observe the specific problems the poor are facing and to check how we could solve them and what are the alternatives, instead of focusing just on an abstract argument about the global institutional order. Maybe, by helping the poor to help themselves is better than just making them dependable on the resources they receive from the developed countries. Just how an old Chinese saying claims that: "By giving a man a fish you feed him for a day. Teach him how to fish and you feed him for a lifetime."

Acknowledgment

This work was supported by a grant of the Romanian National Authority for Scientific Research and Innovation, CNCS – UEFISCDI, project number PN-II-RU-TE-2014-4-1846.

REFERENCES

Cohen, Gerald (2010). "Philosophy, Social Science, Global Poverty". In *Jagger A (ed.), Thomas Pogge and Critics*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Daskal, Steven (2013). "Confining Pogge's Analysis of Global Poverty to Genuinely Negative Duties". In *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 16 (2), pp. 369-391.

Gauri, Varun and Sonderholm, Jorn (2012). "Global Poverty: Four Normative Positions". In *Journal of Global Ethics*, 8 (2-3), 2012.

Huseby, Robert (2008). "Duties and Responsibilities towards the Poor". In *Res Publica* 14, pp. 1-18.

Kamm, Frances. M. (2007). *Intricate Ethics, Rights, Responsibilities, and Permissible Harm*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Montero, Julio (2010). "Do Affluent Countries Violate the Human Rights of the Global Poor?". In *Global Justice: Theory, Practice and Rhetoric* 3, pp. 22-42.

Nagel, Thomas (2005). "The Problem of Global Justice". In *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 33 (2), pp. 113-147.

Pogge, Thomas (2005). "Real World Justice". In *The Journal of Ethics* 9 (1-2), pp. 29-53.

_____. (2005). "Severe Poverty as a Violation of Negative Duties". In *Ethics & International Affairs* 19, pp. 55-83.

_____. (ed.) (2007). *Freedom from Poverty as a Human Right*. The Philosopher's Library Series. UNESCO Publishing.

_____. (2008). *World Poverty and Human Rights: Cosmopolitan Responsibilities and Reforms*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Rachels, James (1975). "Active and Passive Euthanasia". In *New England Journal of Medicine*, 292, pp. 78-80.

Reitberger, Magnus (2008). "Poverty, Negative Duties, and the Global Institutional Order". In *Politics, Philosophy & Economics* 7 (4), pp. 379-402.

Risse, Mathias (2009). "Do We Owe the Global Poor Assistance or Rectification?". In Barry C. & Rosenthal J.H. (eds.), *Ethics and International Affairs: A Reader*. Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, pp. 317-328.

Singer, Peter (1972). "Famine, Affluence, and Morality". In *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1 (1), pp. 229-243.

Snel, Mathilde. "What Does It Mean to Be Poor?". In *Poverty Times* 1. Online source: http://www.grida.no/publications/et/ep1/page/2506.aspx;

Steinhoff, Uwe (2012). "Why 'We' Are Not Harming the Global Poor: A Critique of Pogge's Leap from State of Individual Responsibility". In *Public Reason* 4 (1-2), pp. 119-138.

Vizard, Polly (2006). "Pogge – *vs* – Sen on Global Poverty and Human Rights". In *Éthique et économique/Ethics and Economics* 3 (2). Online source: http://ethique-economique.org/

THEORETICAL AND HISTORICAL ASPECTS ON THE PROBLEM OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC MARGINALITY

ALEXANDRU VASILIU[1]

Abstract

This article is an attempt to discuss the problem of socio-economic marginality from a historical, sociological and economic perspective, by basing the premise of discussion on the concept that certain paradigm shifts in 18th century Western Europe unwittingly produced a change in the character of poverty, rather than eliminating it altogether, as it was intuitively suggested through the general idea of progress that took form during the Enlightenment. By discussing the changes entailed by modernity, urbanization and industrialization, I will present factors such as territoriality, spatial placement and differentiated access to knowledge and information that, by being accumulated intergenerationally, have the potential to produce an objective incapacity of marginal groups to exercise functional long-term socio-economic roles.

Keywords: marginality, poverty, progress, development, Industrial Revolution, modernity.

I. Proto-Theories on the Problem of Marginality and on the Idea of Progress

The condition of marginality was first underlined starting with the first period of industrialization in Western Europe. The new socio-economic context allowed the gradual development of norms for the analysis of systemic non-integration, on the basis of Enlightenment concepts regarding the emergent idea of intrinsic human rights. This idea signified an important turn, necessary for the emergence of modern

[1] University of Bucharest, Faculty of Philosophy.

political and economic theories. Thus, the 18th century was characterized by a fundamental transformation of the perception regarding poverty and, inferentially, the structural marginality of individuals and human groups. The idea of progress and of the potential of social, economic and political change manifested itself for the first time in the case of various thinkers and philosophers, such as Herder, Kant, Voltaire, or Turgot.

The paradigm shift that took root in the mid-18th century signified the establishment of the theoretical base for the transformation of the understanding of poverty. This became a contingency of the irrationality, inefficiency, and injustice inherent to the organisation of economic systems in that time, rather than an unavoidable phenomena characteristic of human life in societies.

A first analysis in this sense was undertaken by Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot in *A Philosophical Review of the Successive Advances of the Human Mind*, published in 1750, where the author explains the idea of progress as a constant of human activity in various domains, from art to science. It was in this context that poverty started to be seen as an avoidable, unusual, even abnormal condition, and this apprehension led to the development of two distinct theories of its determination: on one side, individual deficiencies, and on the other, objective factors like systemic injustice. Although different, these two views constitute an early attempt to portray poverty as an anomalous condition, rather than a purely natural and unavoidable one, as it was generally understood before.

After the events around the French Revolution and the temporary failure of its economic and political goals, the unified problem of inequality, poverty, and marginality was finally introduced in political discourse and in the theoretical environment, usually in a critical manner that proposed various solutions.

II. The Marxist and Weberian Turn in the Explanation of Injustice and Progress

The association between scientific feasibility and the construction of a better society gained a decisive momentum through the works of Karl Marx. In adding complex theoretical components to the socialist

and egalitarian developed before him, mainly the method of G.W.F. Hegel, the political economy of Adam Smith and the philosophical materialism of Ludwig Feuerbach, Marx established a new and highly influential domain of political philosophy, in which it is argued that a global society free of inequality, exploitation, poverty and aggression can be achieved through the rules inherent to the materialist conception of history.

The analysis of the determinant factors regarding poverty extended thus towards a view that the social structure itself, based on an unjust relation to the means of production, planted the seeds for injustice and discontent. The Marxist typology, connected to the condition of socio-economic inequalities is related to a contextual distinction, in the sense that the justifications for the legality of domination by a group of another are weaker in the conditions of the Industrial Revolution and in the imposition of an administrative bureaucratic order. The process of urbanization, of the gradual disappearance of the rural classes, of rationalized mass production, led to the formation of the proletariat, but, in the same time, signified the individualization and delineation of what Marx called for the first time in the *German Ideology* (1845), "lumpenproletariat" (Marx and Engels 1998, 218) a term that reappears explicitly in the *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon* (1852) (Marx 2009, 54-55), to describe the heterogeneous groups of socio-economic non-integrated people. Their multiplication was caused by deruralization through the amalgamation of agricultural fields in great farms necessitating less workforce, and in this case professionalized, and of the continuous specialization of the proletariat in the new factories characteristic of the urban space. This socio-economic marginality, through the inexistence of clearly defined occupations, of personal capital or property, was reinforced by a cultural dimension, underlined by the impossibility to adapt to the new structural norms of economic behaviour. It became the source of the first theoretical analysis regarding endemic poverty, and the contextual role fulfilled by this social category in the general phenomena of pressure maintenance on the salaries of the proletariat, and through the potential for counterrevolutionary disturbances.

Complementary to Marx's theories, the ideas of Max Weber are also useful in explaining certain processes that led to an economic leap for a segment of the population in Western Europe. In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* he explained that an unprecedented economic revolution place plane as a direct result of the objective necessity of solving spiritual anxieties that was produced by some aspects of the Protestant Reformation. Weber would call the rationalization of human activities, a form of "disenchantment" of the Western world, in the sense of the collapse of supernatural justifications of power, domination, inequality, and poverty emitted by the hegemonic groups, represented a normative factor in the removal of traditional and pre-modern concepts about the desirable social structure.

This unintentional economic result of a religious reformation led to the gradual delineation of productive economic activities as a necessary element of a normal social existence. As the new economic practices produced an unprecedented widening of prosperity, mobility, and freedom, the social results manifested themselves through the gradual imposition of the secularizing, rationalizing, and bureaucratizing function of modern industrial capitalism. These produced the most relevant modification of the structural Western paradigm, through the gradual replacement of traditional rural cultural and religious community systems, with the rational calculation of economic decision in almost all the spheres of life.

The process of rationalization of decisions, practices and methods of economic projection was accelerated with the second Industrial Revolution, from the second half of the 19th century, leading to new productive leaps, to automation, and to the dispersion of technologies facilitating quick exchanges. The administration of these new types of activities led to the development of the first theories regarding of the efficiency of projections and economic decisions, through the application of rational decisions in all the moments of productive activities. The main theory in this direction, Taylorism, became a source for the application of some early principles of action and rational decision, being extended towards other domains of society in the early 20th century. As a result of the processes of socio-economic rationalization, the access to structural benefits, like technical and theoretical knowledge became a conditioning

factor for the entrance of individuals inside the new system of production and distribution of goods. In this sense, the gradual manifestation of internal disparities within Western societies is related to the character and unequal distribution of progress.

Thus, the concept of marginality or social exclusion was developed in the specific context of rapid economic shifts that took place in Western Europe under the spectrum of the conditions of social reconfiguration produced by the Industrial Revolution.

In spite of the evolutions in understanding the context of marginality, the gradual monopolization of the political Left starting with the early 20th century by social-democratic parties that favoured only the proletariat in its drive for syndicalism, as well as by the Leninist totalitarian bloc, contributed to the limiting and eventual exclusion of the discourse regarding marginality. The concentration on the idea of class struggle, or on a self-declared avant-garde of the proletariat, did not contribute to an adequate understanding of the condition of poverty and marginality, signifying instead a polarization of the directions of thought towards the imposition of ideological systems, as dogmatic structures facilitating a discourse concentrated specifically on the ideas of class struggle and dialectical materialism. In this context, the understanding of marginality started to be monopolized by the concept enunciated by Marx regarding the heterogeneous anti-revolutionary class, the lumpenproletariat, which he brought into discussion after the *coup d'état* of Napoleon III.

Although the analysis started to become more ideological, it must be noted that the character of "classic" poverty, characteristic of the period dominated by the industrial revolutions, was generally residual and cyclic (Wacquant 1999, 1639-1647), being related to the cycles of production themselves. However, the process of economic restructuring and of the enlargement of the share represented by activities in the tertiary domain, changed the nature of marginality, increasing its temporal and spatial dimension. This new typology of marginality represents one of the results inherent in the structural permutations derived from the dissolution of the Fordist system of production, of the gradual replacement of the Keynesian economic theory, and of retreat of the welfare state by the decreasing of social services.

The approach on marginality and the general process of marginalization was established in the lines explaining its conditioning factors from several directions. In this sense, the congruence of some determinant factors started from the highlighting of the context and of the character of marginality in the specific conditions of the development of societies at a different place. Thus, the main point of the debate remains the conditioning of marginality by the rapid imposition of capitalist modes of production and distribution, or the objective incapacity of some societies or groups to adapt at the contact with a new economic reality and to overcome their structural gaps sufficiently fast. Although the implications of marginality derive from two conditionings with different reference points, the general considerations still start from the premise of a contradiction resulted from the superimposition or contact with a dynamic, competitive economic system, representing a total paradigm shift. This component of the analysis of marginality is placed in the larger area of discussion concerning the problem of socio-economic disparity between states and societies, and, not least, between groups situated in these societies.

III. The Role of Sociology in Analysing Socio-Economic Incongruities

Although the concept of persistent poverty and structural non-integration was revealed in the previous historical contexts, receiving political connotations through the Marxist theory by way of the definition inscribed to the lumpenproletariat, the specific term of marginality has its origin in five studies published by the American sociologist Robert Ezra Park. In the first of these studies, *Human Migration and the Marginal Man* (1928), Park developed the theory of the "hybrid", explaining that some individuals and groups are suspended between two societies, cultures, and economic systems. Their placement on an ambiguous socio-economic and cultural territory produces, according to Park, the conflict of the "divided self" (Park 1928, 356), through the fact that non-affiliation to a clearly defined social system

determines a certain psychological vulnerability, an inter-generationally cumulative inadaptability, and a resistance to normative integrative steps.

In this context, it can be argued that societies going through a series of radical social, economic and cultural transformation are the depositaries of groups whose subjective incapacity or objective impossibility to adapt to transformations limits their operational capacity to develop and optimize capabilities of social interaction and economic productivity. In this regard, the development of the term in the United States in the 1920s is related to that context, because the period is associated to a vast economic development, under the spectrum of industrialization shaped by the Fordist model, that of mass production, of the exponential growth of income, and also of accelerated urbanization. The two factors that are over-imposed to the progress that transformed the United States into the most prosperous state of the world are represented by the massive immigration of people from underdeveloped regions, and by the stagnation of the southern and some of the Midwestern states, still dependant on an agrarian model. With some exceptions represented by persecuted intellectuals or scientists, most of the migrant groups came from poor rural areas, characterized by a traditionalist culture, and that did not yet go through the complete stages of modernization.

Similarly to groups that are coming from the outside of a specific social system that possess, correspondingly, different or even opposed sets of values, the concept of marginality was also applied to groups situated, on a spatial level, inside the societies that performed a process of change. This could be considered the relevant category in a discussion about marginality, the requirement being that an analysis of the conditions in which groups and individuals that are formally situated inside a specific society, are or become marginalised as a result of the gradual imposition of structural modifications that do not require their participation in the new economic and cultural activities.

The area of the conditioning of marginality represents a contentious point of analysis. As a result of the analysis of Park and Stonequist and, after 1950, through the contributions of Dickie-Clark, an individualization of five models of marginality can be traced: conflict, organizational, adaptive, hierarchical, and deculturation (Del Pilar and

Udasco 2004, 6). The analysis of the first two models was achieved starting with the 1950s through a correlative method, through the development of tests and formal instruments for the purpose of tracing connections between the condition of marginality and certain personal characteristics. In the case of the adaptive, hierarchical and deculturization models, the appropriate analytical methodology is the convergent one, based on conceptual and structural theoretical investigations. They start with the objective background of economic, social, and cultural factors, and the way they interact and influence or condition certain values, characteristics, and processes of decision making in a rational or irrational way, in the case of individual and marginal groups.

IV. Analytic Approaches on the Problem of Marginality

The overcoming of contingency related explanations of marginality created the conditions for a more technical understanding of the problem. The theorists of the inter-bellum years started to view marginality in the sense of the lack of access of certain groups to material goods and services like housing, education, medical care, and access to public utilities. This fact was explained either through assuming that some economic fluctuations where inevitable, like the Great Depression, either through the contact between economically underdeveloped groups and advanced societies. Both where, in some cases, marked by a Nietzschean or Neo-Darwinian influence, that insisted on intellectual deficiencies replicated on the level of biological reproduction. The academic and cultural space influenced by Marx rejected these methodologically different propositions that implied a series of contingencies at the level of the argumentation infrastructure, claiming that poverty and marginality represented the direct and objective result of specific economic decisions of the political elite. It also put an emphasis on the mode of functioning intrinsic in capitalism itself, whose capacity of exponentially valuing certain activities, reduced the necessity for the perpetuation of some redundant economic practices, like agriculture and manufactories (Marx 1991, 614-615).

This macro-historic process led to a delineation of marginality in the direction of the assignation of a systemic cleavage between the *new centre* and the *new periphery*, through the dispossession of some groups of the means, methods and appropriate contexts in which they can undertake economically sustainable activities. It is important to note that this is the context in which the distinction between the pre-modern and pre-capitalist poverty becomes operational. The first represented an apparently perennial form of poverty, caused by the chronic economic and technological underdevelopment of society, and seen by its contemporaries as an unavoidable characteristic of life, in the conditions of a majority of the population formed by poor peasants, ruled by a nobiliary-clerical minority that justified its position by the means of supernatural concepts. This state of affairs, virtually unchanged for a long span of time, was disrupted, and eventually conclusively changed through singular event, encompassing the Protestant Reformation, Enlightenment, the Capitalist, Industrial, Scientific, and Technological revolutions, which took place between the 17th and the 19th centuries in Western and Northern Europe.

From this point on, marginality became intrinsically connected to the process of industrialization, urbanization, and proliferation of technology and transport infrastructure, that left some social groups behind, and altered the allocation of resources, knowledge, and wealth. This is the context in which the "centre-periphery" paradigm becomes useful in the study of the relation between the centres of political and economic power, and its passive subjects, represented by marginal individuals, groups, or even states. Immanuel Wallerstein's theory regarding the character of relations between centre and periphery, which he expanded in his influential work, *The Modern World System*, was applied by various political philosophers, anthropologists, sociologists and historians in the area of explaining distinctions developed under the spectrum of the new economic relations initiated through capitalism, technology, and the circulation of information on an increasingly global level (Fasano Guarini 1995, S75). The theory presents similarities with Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony and subordination (Urbinati 1998, 370), which was a practical adjustment of the Western Marxist point of view to the new economic and political

realities of the 1930s. The use of the centre-periphery terminology can lead to a wider analysis of the concept of marginality, by associating it with the increasing separation between the economic chances of social groups.

The application of the centre-periphery concept on the problem of marginality within states and societies was introduced in the 1970s, when a series of articles established models through which distinctions and discontinuities in the access to information and in the economic and political participation of groups where observed and analyzed.[2] To distinguish between the different aspects of marginality, four models can be noted for their use in explaining a series of issues regarding accessibility, social and spatial positioning, and the level of systemic convergence. These models were presented by Robert E. Lane[3], Lester W. Milbrath[4], Johan Galtung[5], and Stein Rokkan.[6]

In Lane's view, the centrality of the location of an individual or a group is related to the aspect of communication, being sociometrically connected to their capabilities to access goods, services, and to actualize social and political rights. The access to information, to knowledge, to education, enables an optimum development of social capital, and also the capability to develop the potential to form and structure multidimensional relations in the area of social and economic activities.

For Milbrath, the central placement does not only represent a spatial dimension, but it is also a social positioning in the broad term, centrality representing the degree of proximity to the cores that generate socio-economic and cultural progress, and also to the centres of economic decision-making. The topic of degree proximity is related to empirical correlations developed between analytically different dimensions, through the fact that social status can in itself represent a standard of closeness or remoteness to a centre. An indicator of the degree of centrality of a group would signify, theoretically, a supplementary series of structural-informational components, apart from the statute itself. Given the context of a complex capitalist economy

---

2 The most important are Langholm (1971) and Naustdalslid (1977).

3 See Lane (1971, 195-196, *apud* Langholm 1971, 273).

4 See Milbrath (1965, 110-114, *apud* Langholm 1971, 273).

5 See Galtung (1964 and 1967, 164-165, *apud* Langholm 1971, 274).

6 See Rokkan (1967, *apud* Langholm 1971, 275).

that gradually became the norm in the second half of the 20th century in the developed world, it can be added that social statutes are not determinant constants of closeness to the centre, any more. They themselves suffer modifications as the old traditionalistic markers are replaced by objective modalities of measuring the normative capabilities of individuals and groups in their increasingly flexible relation with the economic and social centre.

Galtung's outlook can offer a supplementary series of analytic methodologies in the problem of marginality and the evolution of its study, through the fact that it offers a model for the structuring of society in three distinct categories: the "core" of decision-making, the "centre" of the society, that usually accepts and applies the decisions and also enjoys their benefits, and the "periphery" (Langholm 1971, 274). The latter is formed, as it was noted, of groups situated in an objective incapacity to exercise socio-economic functions, or refractory to progress by way of various subjective motives, or rejected from the centre following political justifications, or economical ones. In this sense, it would be implied that the economic system, in the form it is conceived, cannot integrate the entire population. The "centre" does not represent a clearly defined social position, being only the heterogeneous segment of a society that adheres to the general values, norms and to the direction ratified by the members of the core. The "centre" also possesses a series of capabilities and specializations that allow a functional exercising of activities that are necessary to sustain the socio-economic infrastructure, and having in the same time real access to goods, services and rights.

For Rokkan, territoriality, spatial placement, represents a valid characteristic of distinctions within a society. This aspect, superimposed to the index of development or underdevelopment, and to that of population density, allows a structurally adequate analysis that is focused on the implications of objective characteristics of the spaces in which marginal groups find themselves situated. The theory also takes into account a multidimensionality of development and of centrality that presupposes the unequal progress in a society as a consequence of the differential investment of capital, technology, infrastructure, urbanization and industrialization. The concept can be connected to the classic

approaches on the problem of marginality, at least in the area of macrosystemic economic dysfunctionalities.

In the context of Rokkan's theory, I would bring to attention the specific problem of "cultural distance", as a secondary dimension of socio-economic marginality, in the area of differences regarding values and cultural systems between members of the centre or those of the periphery. This problem can be applied to the theory of cultural hegemony, as a method of analysing socio-economic determinant factors that materialize in the context of a normative distance from consensual cultural norms inherent in the "official" culture.

V. Conclusion

The debate regarding the type of marginality circumscribed in this model can be separated in two categories, depending on the conditional role fulfilled by culture. The first category is that in which a culture, as an individual entity, has a direct influence on economic disparities between the constitutive groups of society. The second one would contain arguments according to which the effect of economic and political factors on cultural norms produces a cumulus of elements that contribute to the perpetuation of marginalization. The second direction of research grants the economy of a state a bigger autonomy in the process of power and knowledge distribution, emphasizing cultural differences, but being completely free of their influence. In this sense, the process of peripheralisation is synonymous with that of marginalization, the determinant factors being either cultural, wither economic.

In this context, a view on social relations, from individual to groups, is that the process of complex knowledge distribution, that takes place when the non-integrated categories establish "counter-worlds", alternative formulas of networking and value propagation, produce series of extremely different subjective social markers that substantiate the disparities between centre and periphery.

The debate is by no means resolved, as researchers from different domains produce various theories on this subject, many times mutually contradictory. Taking this into account and based on the arguments I

have presented, a short conclusion would be that the problem of marginality can be related to different issues regarding unequal distribution of material resources and of knowledge itself, being, in its modern and contemporary form, a secondary result of macro-economic, social and cultural changes that took a concrete form during the early stages of the Industrial Revolution. Thus, its meaning, context and character are different from classical typologies of poverty, which are inherent in the objectively limited functional and technological capabilities of a society.

Acknowledgement

This work was supported by the strategic grant POSDRU/159/1.5/S/140863, Project ID 140863, *Competitive Researchers in Europe in the Field of Humanities and Socio-Economic Sciences. A Multi-regional Research Network* (2014), co-financed by the European Social Fund within the Sectorial Operational Program Human Resources Development 2007-2013.

REFERENCES

Del Pilar, Jose A., Udasco, Jocelynda O. (2004). "Marginality Theory: The Lack of Construct Validity". In *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 26 (1), pp. 3-15.

Fasano Guarini, Elena (1995). "Center and Periphery". In *The Journal of Modern History* 67, *Supplement: The Origins of the State in Italy, 1300-1600*, pp. S74-S96.

Galtung, Johan (1964). "Foreign Policy Opinion as a Function of Social Position. In *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 1, No. 3-4, pp. 206-230.

Galtung, Johan (1967). "Social Position, Party Identification and Foreign Policy Orientation: A Norwegian Case Study". In J.N. Rosenau (ed.), *Domestic Sources of Foreign Policy*. New York: Free Press, pp. 161-193.

Lane, Robert E. (1961). *Political Life: Why People Get Involved in Politics*. Glencoe: Free Press.

Langholm, Silvert (1971). "On the Concepts of Center and Periphery". In *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 8, No. 3-4, pp. 273-278.

Marx, Karl (1991). *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume Three*. London, New York & Toronto: Penguin Books. Trans. David Fernbach.

Marx, Karl (2009). *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon*. Gloucester: Dodo Press. Trans. Daniel De Leon.

Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels (1998). *The German Ideology*. Amherst & New York: Prometheus Books.

Milbrath, Lester W. (1965), *Political Participation: How and Why Do People Get Involved in Politics*? Chicago: Rand McNally.

Naustdalslid, Jon (1977). "A Multi-Level Approach to the Study of Center-Periphery Systems and Socio-Economic Change". In *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 14, No. 3, pp. 203-222.

Park, Robert Ezra (1928). "Human Migration and the Marginal Man". In *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 33, No. 6, pp. 881-893.

Rokkan, Stein (1967). "Geography, Religion, and Social Class: Crosscutting Cleavages in Norwegian Politics". In S.M. Lipset and S. Rokkan (eds.), *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspectives*. New York: Free Press, pp. 367-444.

Rosenau, James N. (Ed.) (1967). *Domestic Sources of Foreign Policy*. New York: Free Press.

Urbinati, Nadia (1998). "From the Periphery of Modernity: Antonio Gramsci's Theory of Subordination and Hegemony". In *Political Theory*, Vol. 26, No. 3, pp. 370-391.

Wacquant, Loïc (1999). "Urban Marginality and the Coming Millennium". In *Urban Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 10, pp. 1639-1647.

Wallerstein, Immanuel (2011). *The Modern World-System, Vol. 1, Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Weber, Max (2005). *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. London & New York: Routledge. Trans. Talcott Parsons.

VARIA

THE TRANSCENDENTAL STRUCTURE OF THE ARCHAIC UNIVERSE. MIRCEA ELIADE'S *THE SACRED AND THE PROFANE*

VALENTIN CIOVEIE

Abstract

The argument of the present paper shows that Mircea Eliade's book *The Sacred and the Profane* is not conceived just as a simple introduction into the history of religions. This book dares to formulate an ontology and an anthropology which are more originary (in the phenomenological sense) and complete than those of Plato at the beginning of European philosophy and those of Heidegger's *Being and Time* at the other end of philosophy's history. Although not explicitly expressed, *The Sacred and the Profane* together with other similar works by Eliade aims to expose the profoundest – according to Eliade himself – ontology and anthropology ever thematised. In this article I try to systematize Eliade's ontological and anthropological discourse and to show its transcendental dimension.

Keywords: sacre, profane, ontology, anthropology, Eliade, Heidegger.

I. Introduction

The work that will be analyzed in what follows was written in 1956 and was published in 1957 under the title *Das Heilige und das Profane* (*The Sacred and the Profane*) in Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, Reinbeck bei Hamburg. It is explicitly conceived by the author as a general introduction to the phenomenological and historical study of religious acts and it "describes the modalities of the sacred and the situation of the human being in a world charged with religious values" (Eliade 1957, 18). More precisely, it is a presentation of the experiences,

beliefs and behaviour of *homo religiosus*, above all of those of the human being from traditional and oriental societies. Eliade includes here archaic societies among traditional societies, although the distinction between archaic and traditional repeatedly appears in the work.[1] The book will reveal "the logic and greatness of their conceptions upon the world", "that is of their religious behaviour, symbolism and systems", will highlight "the specific categories of a religious existence that is archaic and traditional" (18). In order to be clearer through contrast to people living today, but also for the general message of the book destined to them, Eliade will present the religious human being "as compared to the human being lacking in religious sentiment, of the human being living ... in a desacralised world" or, to put it differently: "Our primary concern is to present the specific dimensions of religious experience, to bring out the differences between it and profane experience of the world." (17) Although Eliade does not deal with the process of degeneration of the religious phenomenon[2], he contrasts the result of this degeneration brought about by secularization, which is the behaviour of the modern individual, *impoverished* and *lacking in coherence*, with the experience and behaviour of the *homo religiosus* as an archaic, traditional and oriental human being.

II. The Nature of the Sacred

The sacred as primary indefinable category is borrowed by Mircea Eliade from Roger Callois (who is only mentioned in the *Forward* to *Traité d'histoire des religions*), and both relate, of course, to Rudolf Otto's work, *Das Heilige* (1917). If Callois is no longer mentioned in *The Sacred and the Profane*, Otto's concept is briefly sketched in order to underline the differences from Eliade's approach. Otto analyses the *fundamental dispositions* generated inside an individual by numinous experience,

---

1 For example, in the *Forward* (to the French edition) etc.

2 Nor does he deal with the significant theme of the resacralisation of the profane, which represents a theme that is currently under discussion; however, he points out three possible directions of development for this process (*Forward* to the French edition).

translated through the terms *tremendum*, *majestas*, and *fascinans*. Eliade believes (taken the subtitle of Otto into account) that this is the analysis of the irrational side generated by the relationship with the sacred, while he will present the phenomenon in its entire complexity, beyond the dichotomy between the rational and the irrational. The terms most often used are *experience* (without making any distinction between the rational and the irrational side) and *behaviour.*

According to the authors mentioned above, the sacred cannot be defined, it represents the ultimate reality that is inexpressible *par excellence*: it can only be said that "it is *the opposite of the profane*" (10). What could be characterized positively are only its manifestations in the world and in time for the consciousness of human being, manifestations which belong to the most different categories. In this context, Eliade makes a statement which clearly reveals the fact that, for him, sacred reality is monolithic and indistinct (unitary), in total opposition to the heterogeneity of hierophanies and also that he supports a relativistic point of view in the history of religion:

> From the most elementary hierophany – e.g., manifestation of the sacred in some ordinary object, a stone or a tree – to the supreme hierophany (which, for a Christian, is the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ) there is no solution of continuity. (That means: they do not evolve one from another – V.C.). In each case we are confronted by the same mysterious act – the manifestation of something of a wholly different order, a reality that does not belong to our world, in objects that are an integral part of our natural "profane" world. (11)

The same reality, that of the sacred, through the same mysterious act, gives birth both to the hierophanies from the sacred stones, as well as to the most complex and non-dual hierophany in the history of religions, Jesus Christ. Even if you are not Christian (and thus scandalized by this levelling inside the realm of the Unseen), as a historian of religions you cannot help being surprised by this extreme simplification. And the conclusion that one must reach is that a simple and monolithic reality, even if it is being (*Being*) itself, as Eliade would state, cannot directly bring about the quasi-infinite variety of hierophanies, cratophanies, teophanies and revelations of the sacred,

without the mediation of some other sacral levels.[3] For this reason, a variety *inside* the sacred *per se* needs to be conceived, probably ordered in a hierarchy of stages that accounts for the variety perceived throughout history. And this is an aspect that Eliade does not achieve in any of his works, unless we accept a realist position with regard to the categories present in the *Treatise*, obtained through phenomenological reduction. In this case however, the use of the concept of the *sacred* as being beyond these categories would go in the direction of an absolute transcendent, apophatic reality and would overlap what the Abrahamic traditions consider to be God in His hidden nature or the ultimate reality in Hinduism etc. We cannot however find any statements in Eliade's work to support this point of view, with the exception perhaps of the impossibility of defining the sacred and of making the latter synonymous with being (which however is distinct and ontologically subordinated to God in the Christian tradition: the truly ultimate Reality goes beyond being, according to Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite, for example).

The sacred is equated by Eliade also with reality itself, with the saturation by being and with power. The opposition sacred – profane can be translated through the opposition real – unreal. As this is a reality filled with power, the sacred acts efficiently in the world and it is perennial.

As the reader can see from our considerations and from many other claims in the huge work of Eliade, it is very hard to find just one sense of the word. I propose instead to accept different meanings which are mutually complementary. These meanings can be divided into two main categories that I will call 'ontic claims' and 'epistemic claims'. I use the term *ontic* as being different from *ontological*, the last one implying a structure, the first one just a claim regarding the reality of the sacred outside the human consciousness.

In my opinion, we cannot treat the work of Eliade without taking into account a certain evolution through time. Regarding the concrete problem which is of interest here, the nature of the sacred, it would be inappropriate to think that the *Traité* (and the *Prolegomena*) shared

[3] Eliade uses numerous terms from the same semantic area to refer to the phenomenon of the manifestation of the sacred: hierophany, epiphany, ontophany, kratophany, teophany,the revelation or irruption of the sacred, the appearance of a sign.

exactly the same conception with *The Sacred and the Profane*. I find it significant that in the first book (appeared in 1949, but written between 1940 and 1948) just the name of R. Callois is mentioned, but not that of R. Otto, while in the second book we find the ideas of Otto presented, but Callois is not even mentioned. Here we have to remind the reader that Callois came from the sociological school of Durkheim and that supported Eliade explicitly against Durkheim's views an anti-reductionist stance and an anti-evolutionist view in the history of religious traditions. But there are many claims of Callois himself that Eliade accepted in their entire formulation, maybe with another justification.

The sources of the epistemic theses regarding the nature of the sacred represent, on one hand, the fact that the sacred manifests itself for the human consciousness, according to the structures of this consciousness. We have no direct, unmediated experience of the sacred as noumenal realm, as we already know from Kant. On the other hand, not just the individual structure of consciousness contributes to what we experience as the sacred, but also the human community as a sociological reality.

The first source of the ontic thesis regarding the nature of the sacred is Otto's idea, borrowed from Kant, that in order to have an experience of the world as something sacred, there must be a *noumenal* reality out there, the sacred is not *just* a modality of our consciousness. The second source is the idea of a real power out there, mentioned by Dumézil in his *Preface* to the *Traité*: *mana* as a mystical force without form but being capable of taking any form.

As Bryan Rennie in his book *Reconstructing Eliade: Making Sense of Religion* (1996) proposes, there is a conjunction in Eliade between what I call the *epistemic* and *ontic* theses. But Rennie accentuates so much the epistemic thesis that the reader has the impression of excluding the other. In an article not yet published, supporting the attribution theory regarding the sacred in Eliade against a *sui generis* discourse, he is explicitly making this step.

I want to mention five senses[4] in which the word 'sacred' is used in Eliade without supporting each of them with texts, because my aim in this paper is the transcendental doctrine of Eliade. However, for any transcendental doctrine there must be a real counterpart outside the consciousness.

1. The sacred as a reality absolute transcendent to the cosmos (and being), irreducible and apophatic: *the noumen*. About the sacred in this sense we can only say that is opposed to the profane. It does not mean an entity and it does not imply a specific ontology, but it is independent ontic of all other realities. It appears in different traditions as the Supreme Being who becomes *deus otiosus*.
2. Closely connected with the first sense is the second one: the sacred as a force (energy) without form, but capable of taking any form.
3. As being itself, manifested through the cosmically hierophanies, but irreducible to the mundane aspects of these. It is specific to cosmic religiosity which is opposed to what I called the apophatic sense of the sacred and its experience.
4. The sacred as archetypes (which have three different meanings according to I.P. Culianu).
5. The sacred as *adjective* referring to the modality of human experience, to the relation of consciousness with the real, but not to the real itself. It is the thesis of this paper that the human modality of experiencing the sacred in the first senses has a transcendental structure.

The manifestation of the sacred is a paradoxical process: something of a completely other nature manifests itself in an object or in a being in the world over here, in the profane world:

---

[4] Julien Ries distinguishes in the second chapter of his excellent book *Il sacro nella storia religiosa dell'umanita* (1995), when he analyses the conception of Otto, between what I consider the first sense from the transcendental sense and from the sacred as value. The three meanings appear again in his book in the chapter dedicated to Eliade.

> By manifesting the sacred, any object becomes *something else,* yet it continues to remain *itself*, for it continues to participate in its surrounding cosmic milieu. (12)

It is the first process of the duality sacred-profane (to which we shall return) and it consists exactly in this paradoxical *merging* of a reality *beyond* with natural realities *from here*. But the most important intrication is with the human consciousness.

III. Underlining the Importance of Eliade's Work

The first thesis of the anthropology of a religious individual is the following:

> The individual of the archaic societies tends to live as much as possible in the sacred or in close proximity to consecrated objects.
> The desire of the religious individual to live in the sacred is in fact the same as his desire to situate himself in objective reality, not to let him be paralysed by the endless relativity of purely subjective experiences, to live in a real and efficient world – and not in an illusion. (12)

We speak here of an ontic yearning.

In order to develop this anthropology and the ontology implicitly related to it, Eliade will analyze in antithesis the two manners of being in the world, from the point of view of space and living, of the experience of time, of the relation with nature and tools, of the perception of human life itself constituted from its concrete acts.

The ontology is absorbed in the transcendental anthropology exactly in the manner in which this is done in Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*: *world* is a moment of the transcendental structure of *Dasein* 'being-in-the-world' and no more than this. I think that this transcendental discourse is late and not to be found in *Traité*.

The method used is that of comparison between the most different 'primitive' cultures, removed from each other both in time and space, followed by traditional cultures (India plays a central role here), then the Judeo-Christian tradition and, at last, modernity. The purpose is to highlight the common transcendental traits of religious experience as

opposed to profane experience, ignoring the differences between historical and cultural contexts. We speak here of the approach that is typical to the philosophical tradition of categorial thinking, as it was shown above. Eliade is of course aware of the importance of historical, social, psychological etc. determinations of the experience of the sacred, as becomes obvious both from his explicit statements present in different works, as well as in the mode of analysis present in the three volumes of the *History*, as in numerous other works. There are however in his writings two processes of abstracting the general from the concrete: a) on the one hand, it means reducing historical, social, psychological etc. determinations, in order to arrive at what is *irreducible* in the experience of the sacred; b) on the other hand, it means searching for the *common* traits of the experience of the sacred in very different cultures.

Although 'reductionist' in this double (phenomenological) sense, his position is militantly anti-reductionist in a completely other sense. He argues explicitly against reducing religious experience to one of its historical, social etc. contexts, hence Mircea Eliade affirms the irreducibility of the experience of the sacred and of its reality (see *Foreword* to *Treatise upon the History of Religions* etc.)

As we speak here of a work that has the character of an introduction into the study of religious phenomena, I will present its contents using Eliade's own terms. There might be a category of readers who are somewhat troubled by the 'thesist' manner of presenting the paper. I tried through this analytical approach to highlight as best as I could the central statements and the *structure* of archaic ontology and anthropology, so that they can be distinguished from the many examples in the work and from other statements with an explanatory role, and in this manner the groundwork will be laid for eventual further research for this other type of *Existential Analytics* (that is, the comparison with Plato's ontology and with the work *Being and Time* by Heidegger, as will be shown later on).

What is essential to note in Eliade's thematisation is the shift that is produced by the understanding of the archaic mind in the conceptualization of the classical binome *logos – mythos*: for Eliade the whole realm of myth is related to *logos* too, that is to reason; however, we speak here of a logic of the symbols present in the pre-theoretical

mode in the *behaviour* of the traditional and archaic individual, and opposed to the logic of the concepts (Aristotelian etc.).

Eliade's purpose in this paper is purely philosophical; this is only visible at first glance for the reader who notices that the central terms of the first chapter are *space*, *world*, *inhabiting*, *being*, *two modes of being in the world*. These are Heideggerian terms, and the influence of Heidegger's 'Existential Analytics' on Eliade is also attested by Culianu.[5] The thesis of the present article is that Mircea Eliade tries through this work to present another, more original, *Existential Analytics*, starting from the experience and behaviour of the religious individual in opposition to the profane individual. We deal therefore with a transcendental phenomenological discourse. This is not the place to analyse the relationship between these two proposals for transcendental anthropology (Heidegger and Eliade). We do however have to emphasize the superficial impression that the religious individual could be identified with Heidegger's authentic *Dasein*, although an analogy between the two concepts is possible. From a certain perspective we can even speak of an opposition between *Dasein* and *homo religiosus*.[6] We would venture the thesis according to which Eliade's analysis from this work is *transcendental* in the strictest sense of the word, meaning that we deal here with structures of the individual that make possible a type of experience and a certain behaviour. We do not speak here only of structures of consciousness, as in the case of the transcendental tradition from Kant to Husserl. Eliade speaks of experience at the level of the whole human being and, referring to R. Otto, he includes the irrational level in his analysis.[7] Therefore, the sense

---

5 Eliade's critics pass very quickly over this influence. See an extended discussion in the Annex.

6 An argument certainly not lacking in significance can be taken up from Eliade's literary works (enough has been written about the unity of the academic and literary works for us not to insist upon the matter here). In *The Forbidden Forest* Ștefan Viziru opposes a saint's vision upon time with the heideggerian one defended by Biriș. Culianu (previous note) speaks about Eliade's interest for the *ontic*, as opposed to the heideggerian interest for the *ontologic*.

7 If there several transcendental discourses upon the level of conscious experience do exist, there are very few attempts to offer a transcendental analysis of the unconscious. We are personally only aware of Vasile Dem. Zamfirescu's (1998) excellent analysis. The transcendental analysis of the total human being is Mircea

of the term 'transcendental' is widened with respect to that of a Kantian origin (the second thesis of this part of our article). There is also a lack of distance between transcendental and empirical as in Kant and Heidegger: for Eliade the transcendental discourse is constantly illustrated with examples. *The Sacred and the Profane* is not an anthropology *per se*, in the sense from which Heidegger distances himself in *Being and Time* (that is, purely empirical research). Unlike Heidegger however, Eliade goes beyond the strict distance between transcendental discourse and empirical discourse, offering numerous examples from different cultures in order to illustrate his theses. Exercising a certain care, it would be possible to systematically reconstruct Eliade's book in the sense of isolating the transcendental dimension. It can be argued that the discourse of Eliade here and in other late papers is of the kind called "naturalized transcendental".

The third important statement argues that Eliade's achievement competes with Plato's: the ontology present in Plato's philosophy is inspired by the archaic. Eliade himself considers his own achievement as an attempt to crystallize a *pre-Socratic ontology* (pre-theoretical), starting from the experiences and behaviour of the archaic individual. The result of Eliade's research is more originally archaic (because he does not elaborate an intellectual ontology) and, at any rate, more general (because he draws on cultures that Plato most certainly did not have access to). If it has been possible to say of European philosophy that it represents no more than a series of notes upon Plato's philosophy (Whitehead), we can imagine at this moment the importance of Eliade's achievement for the entire European and Western culture. Eliade himself was perfectly aware of this: he states on repeated occasions, in different works, that the encounter with archaic (but also oriental) ontology and religiousness has the purpose of bringing the Western person out of his *provincialism*.[8]

Eliade's aim in this paper. For an attempt at a total transcendental ontology and anthropology (conscious and unconscious), see Virgil Ciomoș (2008).

[8] The relationship between archaic ontology brought to light by Eliade (in *The Sacred and the Profane, The Myth of the Eternal Return* and in *Treatise upon the History of Religions*) and, on the one hand, Platonic philosophy and, on the other

The first indication supporting the thesis that Eliade's reflection is of a transcendental type is the general and categorial character of his reflections. I will provide two examples. The term 'Chaos' is a transcendental concept designating a structure of human consciousness that *makes possible* the (different) experiences of non-consecrated spaces. In distinct cultures these spaces will bear different names. 'Axis Mundi' plays the same role. The term itself may *not* appear in any religious tradition, where we encounter *pillar, stairway, mountain, tree, climbing plant* etc. The latter are symbols that have been particularized in one culture or another and related to particular experience of sacred habitation. 'Axis Mundi' is forged as a term by Eliade to designate the transcendental category corresponding to the structure of maximum depth that makes possible every religious experience and behaviour of living in an oriented space.

The general discourse couched in general terms is perhaps insufficient (not any general discourse is transcendental), as is the occurrence of certain linguistic expressions of *possibility*, a concept that is specific to transcendental discourse. The decisive argument for the transcendental reading of the work that I propose can only be found in one place in the book (but see also the indications in the *Annex I*). At page 119, Eliade states that what is contained in the symbolism of the 'Sky' is not from the realm of a "logical, rational operation." And then he adds:

> The *transcendental* (my emphasis – C.V.) category of height, of the superterrestrial, of the infinite, is revealed to the whole man, to his intelligence and his soul.

In other words, it is an *existential* marker. Q.e.d.

To this argument we can of course add the manner in which Eliade discerns a transcendental level of experience (which is universal) and which he expresses through the syntagm *fundamental experience*. This level is explicitly distinguished from concrete experience in a certain religious space.

I will add here Eliade's own statement from *The Nostalgia of Origins* according to which his endeavour (his general work as a historian of religions, beyond the work analyzed here) can be understood in the sense of a *new phenomenology of the spirit*. Hegel is the

---

hand, Heidegger's *Existential Analytic* from *Being and Time* is one worth being investigated in a separate paper.

author whom Eliade explicitly uses as a reference not only in the scholarly work (*The Myth of the Eternal Return*), but also in the literary work (*19 Roses*). Of course, it is not the phenomenology of Hegel itself that entirely inspired Eliade, but the state of phenomenology of his time.

We can ask ourselves what is the difference between the results that Eliade reaches and Plato's ontology itself. The answer lies implicitly in *The Myth of the Eternal Return.* Firstly, Eliade starts from the result of field research into the *behaviour* of the religious individual in different archaic cultures. The archaic person's vision upon the world is not contained, as in Plato's case, in a system of theoretical statements, but rather in concrete behaviour, representing ritual acts (hunting, war, marriage, sexuality and nutrition etc.) and, afterwards, symbolically, in myths. Eliade tries to obtain not only a more general result, or to build a system, but rather to highlight those (systematic, of course) beliefs that make possible the behaviour of the archaic and traditional individual. Secondly, unlike Plato, who duplicates the visible cosmos with the world of Ideas, Eliade shows that the world of objects and concrete gestures from below is also doubled above by a world of objects and *concrete* gestures (not of Ideas), but of a maximum degree of perfection. Thirdly, Plato is interested in a *dialectical justification* of his own ontology, while for the archaic person what is important is not the theoretical attitude, but rather the behaviour that is full of power (sacredness). Fourthly, it is a question of the degree of generality relative to the number of archaic cultures considered. Plato is inspired by his own archaic culture while Eliade gives the impression that he has investigated all the archaic cultures of the world.

IV. Transcendental Anthropology and Ontology

We cited the first thesis of this *new Analytics* above:

> ***Thesis 1:*** The individual of the archaic societies tends to live as much as possible in the sacred or in close proximity to consecrated objects.

We speak here of an ontic thirst, a longing for Being. (Also see thesis 8, concerning nostalgia).

Chapter I: Sacred Space and the Sacralisation of the World

For the religious person, 'space' (in an existential Heideggerian sense, not in a purely geometrical one) is not amorphous. There is, on the one hand, sacred space (real, true) and, on the other hand, unformed, profane space surrounding it.

> ***Thesis 2:*** The Experience of the Non-homogeneousness of Space is a Primordial religious Experience.

In an initial 'uninhabited' space (in a Heideggerian sense) the sacred manifests itself (initial hierophany or teophany, sometimes a sign is sufficient). This first point of manifestation will become the central axis of any future orientation. It implies a foundation of the 'world' (again in a Heideggerian sense).

> ***Thesis 3:*** The Religious Person wishes to live in the 'Centre of the World'.

It is from here that the significance of the symbolism of the Centre derives, and it shall play an essential role in Eliade's whole work and it represents an existential that does not appear at all in Heidegger's work.

> ***Thesis 4:*** Settling down in a territory was the equivalent of the foundation of a world.

It is from here that the necessity for the consecration and 'construction' of space arose. The consecration of a territory was effected through the repetition of cosmogony, because any creation follows this exemplary model.

> ***Thesis 5:*** The Religious person senses an opposition between inhabited and consecrated territory and the unknown and undetermined space surrounding it, between cosmos and chaos.

The Cosmos and the World represent territories where the sacred has already become manifest. The hierophany that consecrates a space represents a rupture at the level of the three cosmic tiers: Earth, Sky, lower regions. The vertical dimension uniting these three regions is the *Axis Mundi* itself.

Given these representations, habitation and space give rise to a system of relations characteristic to traditional societies (37):

a) a sacred place constitutes a break in the homogeneity of space.

b) this break is symbolised by an opening through which it is possible to pass from one cosmic region to another (from heaven to earth and vice versa; from earth to the underworld)

c) communication with heaven is expressed by one image or another, all referring to the *axis mundi*: pillar (cf. the universalis columna), ladder (cf. Jacob's ladder), mountain, tree, vine etc.[9]

d) around this cosmic axis lies the world (= our world), hence it is the Centre of the world.

The World is holy because it is placed as close as possible to the sky, that is, to gods. The Symbolism of the Centre explains other cosmological images and religious beliefs:

1. sacred cities and sanctuaries are located in the Centre of the World;

2. temples are replicas of the Cosmic Mountain and constitute the 'link' *par excellence* between the Sky and the Earth;

3. the foundations of the temples penetrate deep into the lower regions.

The attack upon the world of the religious individual is assimilated to the attack upon the cosmos carried out by the primordial dragon. The forces of Chaos are demonic. It is for this reason that the fortifications of inhabited space were initially magical.

---

[9] The film *Avatar* (2009) is an interesting illustration of an archaic society with magical powers, in which these symbols can be found. The film presents, somewhat naively, the destructive force of what is most sacred in this culture (*The Tree of Life*), a force that drives profane mentality (in the film, supertechnilogical american society), whole sole interest is the rush for resources and scientific curiosity, and these interests transform the other into an object of consumption or study. The film's message tells us in fact that, once in outer space, humans will repeat the same behaviour it exhibits on the limited space of Earth.

There are two modalities or types of behaviour for habitation: traditional and modern. The profane, modern experience of space perceives the latter as homogenous, relative, lacking in any orientation. For the profane person the house is a 'habitation machine', for the religious person it is an *imago mundi*.

A whole country (Palestine), a city (Jerusalem), a sanctuary (The Temple of Jerusalem) represents, in turn, an *imago mundi*.

> ***Thesis 6:*** The habitation symbolises the Universe that is reconstructed through the imitation of cosmogony.

As said above, the foundation of space and of the world is effected through the ritual celebration of cosmogony. As some cosmogonic myths tell the story of the birth of the world through the sacrifice of a primordial dragon (or of another creature), the founding of the world is carried out through sacrifices that imitate the primordial sacrifice.

Any construction and inauguration of a habitation equates a new beginning, a new life. Hence Eliade's theme, which traverses his entire work and life: *incipit vita nuova*.

> ***Thesis 7:*** All symbols and rituals related to temples, fortresses, and houses derive, in the end, from the primary experience of sacred space.

> ***Thesis 8:*** The profound nostalgia of the religious person for inhabiting a 'divine world' expresses the wish to live in a pure and holy cosmos, as in the beginning.

Chapter II: Sacred Time and Myths

The theses of this chapter are analyzed in more detail in *The Myth of the Eternal Return*.

> ***Thesis 1:*** Time is, for religious the religious person, neither homogenous, nor continuous.

We speak, on the one hand, of intervals of sacred Time (the periodic time of celebrations), and, on the other hand, of profane Time, in which acts with no religious significance are inscribed.

> ***Thesis 2:*** Sacred time is in itself irreversible, irrecoverable; that is, it is primordial mythical Time, which becomes present periodically, through rites.

Celebrations do not commemorate an elapsed time, but rather actualize primordial time (*illo tempore*).

These transcendental characteristics can be found in a camouflaged manner in the case of the profane person as well: for the unreligious human being, too, time is discontinuous (time of work and time of celebration, of love, etc.), but the origin of qualitative time, that is different from mundane time, is no longer transhuman. For the religious person, *illo tempore* can be equated with a type of eternity.

The novelty of the Judeo-Christian tradition is the identification of mythical time with a historical moment.

> ***Thesis 3:*** There is solidarity of significance between the world and cosmic time, between temple and time.

This relationship is visible in some archaic cultures through synonymous expressions: 'the world has passed' and 'a year has gone by'.

The circularity of time finds its equivalent in the periodical renewal of the world through rites. The New Year is a re-enactment of cosmogony (the most important epiphany) and a re-commencement of Time from the beginning. Originary holiness is sought, so purification rites are related to this moment. In order to be purified and reborn, the world (or the human being) must first regress into chaos, into a field lacking determined forms.

Life cannot be repaired, only recreated, through the symbolic repetition of cosmogony, which is an exemplary model for any creation.

> ***Thesis 4:*** Any human act has a transhuman model.

This thesis actually represents the central thesis of the last chapter and would belong there, systematically.

The manner in which the deeds of gods (transhuman models) from the *illo tempore* are told is represented by myth, and the most important one is, of course, the cosmogonic myth. Myth speaks of what is truly real (as opposed to human acts, lacking in significance). For archaic and traditional civilizations, myth represents the correspondent of ontology, and it must be mentioned that its function is of an efficient-pragmatic nature, and not of a theoretical nature. The basic function of myth is the revelation of exemplary models for all human activities.

> ***Thesis 5:*** It is only through the repetitive imitation of the deeds of the gods that human acts gain reality. You only really become a human being if you conform to the wisdom of myths, imitating the gods.

Hence the importance that myth has for the religious person: it transmits the paradigmatic acts for the human behaviour of gods (or of other supernatural beings). Myth, rite, the rite of initiation respectively, as well as the symbol are themes that are addressed cursorily in this introduction to the history of religions. As we shall see, they will be approached systematically by Eliade in other works.

The modern human being, ever interested in novelty and progress, in the individual manifestation of himself, lies at the opposite end of the religious person with regard to his concept of what counts as real and significant. The modern individual is a random product of history and builds himself creatively; while the religious individual is not simply given in profane history, he is 'forged' by the spiritual masters who reveal divine models to him. The imitation of divine models implies a serious responsibility.

In the history of religions, two phenomena arise as a result of this perspective upon time and reality. Firstly, the original sense of this pre-Socratic ontology is lost: cyclic repetition does remain, but it no longer produces an integration into being; from here results a metaphysical and religious pessimism (the doctrine of the huge Indian cosmic cycles).

Secondly, Judaism will introduce the concept of linear time, which has a beginning and an end. God will manifest Himself within this time

frame, within the framework of history. Epiphany does not occur in *illo tempore*; rather, intra-historical moments represent the teophanies of Jahve and, among these, the Embodiment of Jesus Christ (for Christians) is of central importance. For Hegel, history in its entirety is a teophany.

When the European concept of the world is desacralised, we will reach historicism (the mere enumeration of facts), as a result of the desacralisation of the Christian concept of time: history is nothing but a series of events with no transhuman significance.

Chapter III: The Sacredness of Nature and Cosmic Religion

Thesis 1: For the religious person the cosmos is not the mere presence of an object; rather, it is laden with religious value. Therefore, the Cosmos is a real, living and sacred organism.

This does not refer to the manifestation of the gods in the Cosmos, but to the fact that in the act of the divine creation of the Cosmos, sacredness entered the very structures of the World.

Whether we speak of the Sky, of cosmic rhythms, of Waters or of the Earth, of stones, animals, the Sun or the Moon, the religious person contemplates in them some modality of the sacred.

Sub-thesis 1.1: The mere fact of being other than the sublunary world (high, infinite, other) confers onto the Sky an attribute of divinity.

This is the habitation of the gods.

For many primitive peoples, the supreme gods have names that designate height, the sky etc., but this does not mean that we have identification there.

At this point of the book Eliade speaks briefly of a phenomenon that is essential for the whole history of religions: the modification of a Uranian religiousness, through the transformation of the celestial god into a *deus otiosus*, into a telluric religiousness (Eliade calls it *cosmic*), meaning that the experience of the sacred passes from a transcendent to

an immanent regime. Interest is shifted towards terrestrial fecundity and towards the individual's own religious, cultural and economic discoveries.

> *Sub-thesis 1.2:* The second manner in which the sacred is manifested is related to Earth, the Great Mother Goddesses and the Powerful Gods, to fecundity and to the mythology of the feminine.

It is only in cases of extreme catastrophes that the religious person turns again towards transcendent religiousness.

Even if removed from the cult, the Urarian god is kept alive through symbolism.

> *Sub-thesis 1.3:* The waters symbolize the universal totality of virtualities. The immersion in water signifies the return to the pre-formal, chaos, that is, to death. Immersion is the equivalent of a rebirth, regeneration.

As in the case of other themes (for example the theme of temporality), Eliade follows the novelty of the Judeo-Christian tradition when compared to archaic and traditional concepts. Immersion and emersion in water through the Christian baptism signify the death of the old person and the birth of the new one. The value of baptism also relates to the symbolic repetition of the Flood, and also to the idea of Christ vanquishing the demons. According to Eliade, the new values associated with baptismal symbolism do not contradict a universal aquatic symbolism.

> ***Thesis 2:*** The experience of a Nature that has been radically desacralised is a recent discovery.

Eliade does not speak in this chapter of other important cosmic hierophanies: those related to the Sun and the Moon, to stones, animals, etc. Each of them reveals a modality that is specific to the sacred. These were analyzed in the *Treatise upon the History of Religions*.

Chapter IV: Human Existence and Sanctified Life

After a short introduction announcing the ultimate purpose of the historian of religions, which is to know and explain the behaviour of *homo religiosus*, Eliade indicates the wide area of religious traditions that a historian of religions must master. He himself observes how diverse the experience and behaviour of *homo religiosus* is; and yet, in the manner of the tradition of categorial thinking, he speaks of this experience and behaviour as though it constituted a unitary block. The attention paid to the differences between different *homo religiosus*, which could be more important than the similarities, would certainly lead to the existence of a family or families of *homo religiosus*; between whose members there would only be family resemblances, in a Wittgensteinian sense. Even within the category of the archaic religious person, which is *paradigmatic religiousness for Eliade*[10], we can find countless families. If a researcher of Australian religions were to rewrite Eliade's book after carrying out research based on fragmentary methodology (that is, attention is paid to differences between the various archaic tribes and cultures in Australia), the result would be considerably different.

The first concept analyzed in this chapter dedicated to human existence is that of *world*, and this might seem strange if we had not already indicated Eliade's relationship with the Heideggerian *Analytic*: the *world* of the religious person is not a neutral universe, but a transcendental existential structure. The world is a cosmos and it is absorbed in the fact-of-the-person-being.

As a whole, there are only three main theses in this chapter, which, together with the first thesis of the first chapter, can be considered the central theses of the whole book. The remaining reflections comprise numerous examples of *sui generis* equivalences made between the human being and the cosmos (exemplifications for the second thesis of the chapter), several subchapters about *initiation* and a last subchapter about the sacred and the profane in the modern world.

---

[10] This statement is commonplace for Eliade specialists, yet I do indicate Eliade's statement in this sense in chapter IV: "To come to know the mental universe of **homo religiosus**, we must above all take into account the men of these primitive societies." (165).

Thesis 1: The world exists because it was created by the gods. It is therefore transparent for the sacred in its very structures.

Thesis 2: The individual perceives himself as a microcosmos, a creation in the framework of the great creation of the Cosmos.

Therefore: he can find originary 'holiness' in himself. There are therefore numerous *equations between the cosmological and the anthropological level*. These equations are lived at an existential level, these are not theoretical ideas.

Through the existential dimension that is permanently 'open' towards the cosmos and the gods, human life gains a transhuman dimension (which the modern individual has lost).

Preliminary statement to thesis 2: All the organs and physiological experiences of (archaic and traditional) religious man have a cosmic symbolism and a sacred significance.

Physiological acts were inaugurated by the gods in the *illo tempore*.

Food, sexuality, work and play all have a sacred significance and take the acts of the gods as models. Numerous analogies between the micro- and the macro-cosmos are exemplified by Eliade: the woman, assimilated to the soil and to Mother Earth, the sexual act assimilated to the hierogamy between Sky-Earth and to sowing, the eye assimilated to the Sun, breathing to the wind, bones to stones and hair to grass. In addition, the belly or the uterus is assimilated to a cave, the intestines to labyrinths, and the backbone to the *Axis Mundi*. The equation between house-body-cosmos is granted the largest space in Eliade's analysis. The skull, for example, is assimilated to the roof and, therefore, it is considered that, after death, the soul leaves the body through the centre of the head, but also through the chimney of the house. Bursting through the roof and flying through the air are symbols not only for the ultimate liberation, but also for any experience leading to spiritual freedom (mystic experiences of surpassing the common human condition).

Eliade continues with the opposition between this manner of being in the world and that of the (profane) modern person:

> Just as the modern man's habitation has lost its cosmological values, so too his body is without religious or spiritual significance. (178)

The symbolism of a superior opening signifies, more widely, the passage from one mode of being to another, which refers us to the idea of the human being's spiritual evolution (the human being is not perfect, but in evolution), to rites of passage (initiation).[11] In the context of arriving at the maximum level of existence (we would say the *insistential* level) pilgrims and anchorites "declare ..... their desire to go out of the world, the refusal of any worldly situatedness". This search is identified in much evolved religions with the search for the *Deus absconditus*. At this point of the work, there clearly arises the possibility of surpassing Heidegger's *Existential Analytics* in order to arrive at an *Insistential Analytics* (surpassing *in-der-Welt-sein* through an *epektatic* structure), a possibility that is not actualized by Eliade in any part of his work. There is a double explanation for this: on the one hand, the fascination for archaic religious experience which, although aware of the Supreme god, only remembers Him in extreme cases (*deus otiosus*). Its typical religious experience is telluric and cosmic, which fascinates the historian of religions to the detriment of apophatic experience. And there is a second reason why Eliade does not arrive at an *Insistential Analytics*.[12] This can also be observed from the spiritual types that Eliade chooses for detailed analysis (the shaman, the alchemist and the yogi): all these types are related in different degrees to a cosmic experience. Radical mystic types, linked to experiences that negate the cosmos, did not lead to a large-scale analysis in Mircea Eliade's work. He was of course aware of this other type of religious experience (in the first volume of the *History* he speaks of the new religious modality revealed in Judaism and which he calls the *Abrahamic faith*), but the accents that are evident retrospectively in the framework of his entire work are clear: nostalgia for a paradisial cosmic religiousness.

---

[11] The theme is treated *in extenso* în *Mythical births*, but also in *Myths, dreams and mysteries*.

[12] Or with *Apophatic Anthropology*: as a correspondent to *Deus Absconditus* there is a *homo absconditus*.

> ***Thesis 3:*** The individual man of the primitive societies, as he finds himself given at the "natural" level of existence, does not consider himself "finished". To become a human being in the proper sense he must die for this first (natural) life and be reborn for a higher life, which is at once religious and cultural. (187)

Access to spirituality is expressed, in archaic societies, through a symbolism of Death and of a new rebirth. The rites of initiation that comprise this symbolic death and rebirth were founded by the gods, by civilizing heroes or by mythical ancestors.

The theme of the last subchapter of the work is the modern individual. It starts however with the idea (not explicitly formulated here) that the discipline of the history of religions is an exercise that leads to the *whole person* through the assumption of all (or of as many as possible) existential religious situations which, although overcome by history, have contributed to what we are today. Is this not however the statement of a modern person (that is, of a profane person!)? Is it not Eliade himself who teaches us that only the profane individual allows himself to be made by history? In this case, Emil Cioran's reproach to the friend from his youth is justified. He asserted that whoever tries to catalogue all possible types of deities from all the traditions of the world cannot really be a religious person. The religious person (who practices a tradition) has a justified exclusive religious experience. However, we can see Eliade's statement differently, in continuity with the Judeo-Christian experience of time. Just as Jahve reveals Himself in history and as through the increasingly complex succession of His teophanies we reach a succession of revelations of the human being to himself, so too in a linear understanding of history the multitude of hierophanies of any type can generate a deepening and an extension of an understanding of the human being that is not limited to that of the Judeo-Christian tradition. A Christian – such as the author of these lines – can of course ask himself whether these supplementary revelations ensure a deeper salvation. Whether Christian or not, a historian of religions who carries out the history of religions as an exercise in the *anamnesis* of each period of *illo tempore* for all the religious traditions of the world will surely, as

Eliade himself suggests, transform the discipline of the history of religions into a spiritual technique.[13]

The theses from this last part of chapter IV are related to the modern individual:

> ***Thesis 4:*** The nonreligious person refuses transcendence, accepts the relativity of the meaning of life and even doubts the existence of this meaning.

Although, as Eliade writes, it is possible that he might have existed at the archaic levels of culture (without being mentioned as such), the nonreligious person only fully manifests himself in modern societies.

> ***Thesis 5:*** The nonreligious person recognizes himself only as a subject and agent of (immanent) history.

> ***Thesis 6:*** He forges himself by the explicit refusal of the sacred.

He cannot consider himself fully free until he has killed the last god, Eliade will say. This presupposes the assumption of a tragic existence, which Mircea Eliade does not consider devoid of greatness.

The profane person was constituted historically from the religious person, through opposition to the latter, but without managing to completely abolish him.

> ***Thesis 7:*** The profane person still maintains traces of religious behaviour, purged however of their religious significance. Or, put differently: in his deeper being, even the most avowedly nonreligious person still shares in a religiously oriented behaviour. (211)

He still has available to him a whole camouflaged mythology and numerous degraded ritualisms. Camouflaged religious behaviour is

---

[13] In this conext, there is an interesting mix between literature, the cultural field that, according to Eliade, best maintains the traditional function of myth, and the history of religions as soteriological technique. See the author's *Adieu* and *19 Roses*.

noticeable in pseudo-religious movements − "the sheer travesty of religion" (206) − in political mystiques (for example: Nazism, communism), in lay movements and even in those that explicitly declare themselves to be antireligious.

Eliade's main observation is that "the contents and the structures of the unconscious (of the modern person – C.V.) exhibit astonishing similarities to mythological images and figures." (209). Also: "the contents and the structures of the unconscious are the result of immemorial existential situations ..." (210).

It is appropriate to remark here that this thesis about the camouflage of sacred living in the modern unconscious represents the analogue of the Freudian thesis on repression: as for Freud sexual content is repressed in the unconscious and reach the surface in a masked symbolic form ('the return of the repressed'), so too for Eliade the experience of the sacred is repressed by the modern individual to the unconscious and returns under masked forms in art (the novel, film, painting) and in oniric or imaginary experiences. The central difference with regard to the religious person is that this content is not integrated in a coherent vision upon the world and does not lie at the basis of a certain type of behaviour.

V. Conclusions

At the end of this presentation of the work *The Sacred and the Profane*, in which I tried to highlight the transcendental philosophical structure of Eliade's reflections upon *homo religiosus* as opposed to the profane individual, we would like to return in brief to the essence of Eliade's contribution and to indicate the direction in which research could delve more deeply in future. Firstly, let us clarify what the idea of this transcendental discourse is: Eliade starts from the experiences and behaviour attested by documents gathered over time by archeologists, ethnologists, sociologists, missionaries etc. and asks: *what structures of consciousness and unconsciousness and what attitudes* ***make possible*** *the experiences and behaviour described in the documents?* The answer is contained in a concentrated manner in the 22 theses mentioned above

and presented in the four chapters of the work *The Sacred and the Profane.* They constitute the nucleus of pre-Socratic ontology, meaning that ontology preceding the appearance of philosophy in European culture and, generally speaking, the appearance of any type of systematic thinking upon the Real on Earth. This *sui generis Analytics* of the religious human being is not prior to the different systematic elaborations of religious experience (because we still encounter archaic mentalities today in the tribes that have survived in the different parts of the world); rather, it is *originary* in a phenomenological (Heideggerian) sense by reference to any type of systematic reflection. The *Weltanschauung* of the archaic person never constituted a theory; it was present at the level of the ritual behaviour of archaic peoples. Any systematic reflection (philosophical, theological or generally religious) has only served to distil this implicit archaic ontology. The significance of Eliade's endeavour is, therefore, that he *reveals the most originary source of any human experience.* The main problem is not whether he succeeded or the truth value of his project, but to understand firstly the ambition of Eliade's project in its true dimension. Eliade did not have a strange – or, according to some opinions – a sick fascination for the archaic individual; rather, he generally sought the human being's most originary transcendental layer. A suggestion from our text indicates the fact that it is still possible to go a step deeper, but this can only happen after Mircea Eliade's contribution in itself is assimilated. Statements about 'surpassing the age of Eliade' etc. seem somewhat rash.

How could this piece of research be completed? Firstly, it is necessary to clarify the relation between Eliade's archaic anthropology and ontology. If he is of Heideggerian descent, as we suggest, then the so-called anthropology (which is in fact a transcendental endeavour, rather than an empirical one) absorbs ontology: for Heidegger, *the world* is a transcendental structure of the individual. Secondly, this archaic anthropology and ontology can be distilled at greater length by taking into consideration Eliade's other works, in particular *The Myth of the Eternal Return* and *Treatise upon the History of Religions.* We have only presented the nucleus here. Thirdly, it will be necessary to investigate the relations indicated above with regard to Plato's ontology and with Heidegger's *Being and Time* (as well as with Heidegger's late

philosophy). And lastly, we must raise the problem of an *Analytics* (anthropology and ontology) which is truly originary, and which, in our opinion, can only be *apophatic* ('insistential').

VI. Annex

There is no investigation in the secondary literature regarding the influence of Heidegger on Eliade, but just some remarks in this respect. Culianu (1995, 125-26) suggests that Eliade did not fully understand Heidegger (providing an adequate quote in this sense), but attests his interest towards Heidegger regarding the issue of death. Ion Lotreanu (1980) in *Introducere în opera lui Mircea Eliade*, writes on the similarity between interest of Heidegger for the origins of European philosophy (Presocratics) and the interest of Eliade for the origins.

Sorin Alexandrescu, who has offered us one of the best commentary of the novels of Eliade, writtes in his essay "Towards a philosophical examination of the work of Mircea Eliade":

> If the phenomenological fundaments of the theory of Eliade can be historical established, it is to the contrary very difficult to demonstrate the influence of Heidegger on him. (Alexandrescu 1998)

Nevertheless, Alexandrescu reads Heidegger and Eliade comparatively and finds a lot of common points (and some differences) regarding the claims on being, respectively on the sacred.

To the negative supposition on the influence my whole present paper represents an answer, but I will bring here other arguments. Eliade himself offers an explicit parallel between his reflection and Heidegger's in the 'Conclusions' of the *Traité*:

> This resistance towards the sacred has its equivalent, from the perspective of existential metaphysics, in the flight from authenticity. (Eliade 1992, 420)

An article that even remarks the existential sense of the term 'world' and its centrality in *The Sacred and the Profane* mentions in passing in a footnote the phenomenological sources of this concept. The

article in question is William E. Paden's "The Concept of World Habitation", which in clarifying the concept takes a cue however not from Heidegger but from Nelson Goodman's *Ways of Worldmaking*. In the same book edited by Brian Rennie we find another paper which gives more space to the idea of transcendental in Eliade: Tim Murphy's "Eliade, subjectivity and hermeneutics". While Murphy has no problem in recognizing a transcendental subjectivity in the work of Eliade even as a main aim of his enterprise in the study of religions, the article proves a superficial judgement of Eliade from the point of view of postmodern ideology (a term like 'etnocentrist' is used like a *Schimpfwort*, as are sometimes used words like 'white man', 'metaphysical thinking' and others). It makes the mistake he alledgedly finds in Eliade: overlooks the specificity of the claims of Eliade himself, his individuality, by not studying carefully the work of Eliade.

Acknowledgments

I owe many thanks to Mrs. Roxana Oltean for her suggestions that improved my translation from Romanian into English of the above text.

REFERENCES

Alexandrescu, Sorin (1998). *Paradoxul Român*. București: Univers.
Ciomoș, Virgil (2008). *Être(s) de passage*. Bucharest: Zeta Books.
Culianu, Ioan P. (1995). *Mircea Eliade*. Bucureşti: Nemira.
Eliade, Mircea (1967). *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries*. Translated by Philip Mairet. New York: Harper & Row.
_____. (1971). *The Myth of the Eternal Return: Cosmos and History*. Princeton: Princeton UP.
_____. (1987). *The Sacred and the Profane. The Nature of Religion*, translated by Willard R. Trask. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World Inc.
_____. (1988). *Nineteen Roses*. Translated by Mac Linscott Ricketts. In *Youth without Youth*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press.
_____. (1992). *Tratat de istorie a religiilor (Treatise upon the History of Religions).* București: Humanitas.
_____. (2009). *Incognito à Buchewald/Adieu*. Paris: Gallimard.

Heidegger, Martin (2010). *Being and Time*, translated by Joan Stambaugh, revised by Dennis J. Schmidt. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Lotreanu, Ion (1980). *Introducere în opera lui Mircea Eliade*. București: Minerva.

Parden, William E. (2000). "The Concept of World Habitation". In Bryan Rennie (ed.) *Changing Religious Worlds*. State University of New York Press, chapter 15, pp. 249-259.

Ries, Julien (1995). *Il sacro nella storia religiosa dell'umanita.* Milano: Jaca Book.

Whitehead, Alfred North (1929). *Process and Reality: An Cosmology*. New York: Macmillan Company, 1929.

Zamfirescu, Vasile Dem (1998). *The Philosophy of the Unconscious.* București: Editura Trei.

LOVE, MADNESS, AND PLATO.
PHAEDRUS: THE WORTHY OTHER IN PLATO'S DIALOGUES

RALUCA ROȘU[1]

Abstract

The paper argues against Charles Griswold's opinion that in the *Phaedrus* the latter is not worthy of Socrates's time because he is mediocre. First, we refer to Socrates's affectionate attitude towards Phaedrus and his desire to turn the latter's soul towards philosophy. Second, we highlighted Socrates's incompleteness as the reason he engages in a meaningful conversation with Phaedrus. A third approach dealt with the philosopher's ascent and the idea that physical beauty does not define a young boy completely; when the philosopher acknowledges the relevance of his soul's beauty he actually acknowledges his worth. We concluded that Griswold misunderstood the crucial importance of the role of the other in Plato's dialogues, "other" who is in fact an engaged partner whose worth consists in taking part in a constant effort for reaching the truth.

Keywords: Plato's dialogues, *Phaedrus,* the other, partner of dialogue, worthiness, physical beauty, beauty of the soul, philosopher's ascent.

Introduction

My analysis will focus on two of Plato's dialogues, namely the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium.* I will start from some remarks made by Charles L. Griswold in his book *Self-knowledge in Plato's* Phaedrus. Griswold seems to be surprised that Plato chose Phaedrus as a character and named the dialogue after him. He refers to Phaedrus as being inferior to Socrates. He also finds their interaction as being mainly comical precisely because of this asymmetry in their relationship. My

[1] University of Bucharest, Faculty of Philosophy.

interest is not to engage in a detailed critique of Griswold's hypotheses. I will nevertheless present briefly some of the points Griswold makes in his study of the *Phaedrus*. This helps me introduce my own thesis regarding Phaedrus' significance for both the dialogue and Socrates.

For Griswold, the main difference between Socrates and Phaedrus would be that Socrates is already aware of his own ignorance, while Phaedrus cannot even realize the fact that he is ignorant. Griswold's suggestion is then that Phaedrus is intentionally chosen by Plato as the ideal character to illustrate the necessity of self-knowledge[2]. Phaedrus would be then *useful* to both Socrates and Plato. Moreover, Griswold seems to imply that Phaedrus appears in the dialogue due to his *unworthiness* as an interlocutor, referring to him as mediocre[3]. It is true that Griswold is ready to acknowledge that Phaedrus is turned to philosophy by Socrates by the end of the dialogue. However, he can only acknowledge Phaedrus's utility. He will not talk about Phaedrus as being intrinsically worthy. It is important to mention that this happens because Griswold fails to notice the true nature of the relationship between Socrates and Phaedrus. For him, despite Socrates's obvious interest in engaging in a conversation with Phaedrus (Griswold 1996, 26-32), they are not even friends[4]. I firmly consider that Socrates does not engage in a dialogue with someone who is unworthy. This happens not only because Socrates does not treat Phaedrus as being unworthy, which Griswold does not deny. My argument is that Socrates's attitude towards Phaedrus is also Plato's attitude. Phaedrus's worth, as it can be

---

[2] "It is precisely Phaedrus' passive and formalistic love of speeches that makes him congenial to Socrates." (Griswold 1996, 22). The use of the term *congenial* [my emphasis] is only one of the many examples of how Griswold inscribes the relationship between Socrates and Phaedrus in the language of mere utility. This is the position I wish to argue against. Another example is the use of the term *suitable:* "Phaedrus does serve as a *suitable* [my emphasis] interlocutor for a conversation in which the self-knowledge theme is developed." (25) Last but not least, Griswold uses the term *useful* to describe Phaedrus: "Phaedrus is *useful* [my emphasis] to Socrates as a conveyer to the city of a partial, politically useful defense of philosophy." (27)

[3] "Mediocre Phaedrus" (Griswold 1996, 18).

[4] "Best is the relationship of friendship (*philia*) between lovers of wisdom. (…) Phaedrus and Socrates do not attain friendship in that sense." (Griswold 1996, 31).

seen throughout the whole dialogue, is that he manages to eventually rise up to Socrates's challenge, his soul turning to philosophy. This is intimately related to Phaedrus's love for Socrates: there is already something inside the former that makes him worthy of Socrates's time and it is Plato's intention to express that. I shall note here that I understand worth in the sense of something or someone having value, personal importance or merit. Usefulness, on the other hand, refers to something or someone that is serving someone else's purpose, brings an advantage to them.

I intend to argue that there is worth to Phaedrus, not mere practicality, which will be by the end connected to the character of Alcibiades[5] and the *Symposium.* Phaedrus's love for Socrates is crucial for understanding the former's worth. Also, Socrates's love for both Phaedrus and Alcibiades will help justify my position. No less important will be exploring ideas such as incompleteness and lack in both the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*. To anticipate, an important distinction must be made. We have on the one hand Socrates's incompleteness (he knows that he does not know) and Phaedrus's initial incompleteness (he does not know that he does not know). My conclusion will be that Griswold's reading of the *Phaedrus* is problematic because it fails to recognize the crucial importance of the role of the other in Plato's dialogues. This is why he talks about usefulness in his account of the *Phaedrus*. My reading of the *Phaedrus* acknowledges precisely the value of the other for the philosophical enterprise, by affirming Phaedrus's worth.

Socrates' Attitude towards Phaedrus

The first manner in which one can understand Phaedrus's worth for Socrates is by looking at the latter's attitude towards Phaedrus. Take

[5] It is interesting to see that Griswold also connects Phaedrus and Alcibiades. He misinterprets the relationship between Socrates and Alcibiades as well and ends up stating the following: "The last section of the *Symposium* documents Socrates's inability to get Alcibiades to understand and control his Eros. For all his mediocrity, Phaedrus is in a way closer to philosophy than is Alcibiades." (Griswold, 1996, 22-23).

for example the first two lines of the dialogue[6]. Socrates's question proves to be the most meaningful question one can ask. This has to do with the idea of education as being a turning of the soul. Socrates's question could be rephrased in the following manner: can we say that Phaedrus's soul is turned into the right direction?[7] From the first lines we understand that the two first questions are at stake for the whole dialogue. This is only the first clue that Socrates will be trying to seduce Phaedrus.

Socrates and Phaedrus embody the relationship between the *erastes* (adult, active lover and citizen) and *eromenos* (a young boy, the beloved who is yet to become an active citizen). In Ancient Greece, an educational relationship like this was a learning opportunity for the young boy. It was considered that homoerotic relationships strengthened civic bonds[8]. This is why these relationships consisted in standardized practices of homoeroticism[9]. The proper practice would imply that the relationship was not reciprocal. The boy would not sexually desire the lover. He was supposed to enter the relation out of admiration for the lover and for improving himself. The boy was supposed to play coy, seriously evaluate if the *erastes* deserved his favors. A positive erotic relationship needed to be transformed into *philia* when the passion was gone and the boy became an adult.

The dialogue starts by Socrates convincing Phaedrus to read him one of the speeches of Lysias, the famous rhetorician. Although Phaedrus is more than eager to do so, he pretends he is not comfortable

---

6 "SOCRATES: Phaedrus, my friend! Where have you been? And where are you going?" (Plato, "Phaedrus", 227a).

7 As Richard Bernstein had pointed out.

8 One must also have in mind Phaedrus's speech in the *Symposium* where he talks about "an army of lovers and beloveds, a productive, happy polity composed entirely of *erastai* and *eromenoi*." (Wohl 1999, 356).

9 Victoria Wohl offers a detailed and complex analysis of this relationship and its relevance for Athenian democracy in "The Eros of Alcibiades". She talks about a "democratic Eros" that "defined the Athenian citizen as socially autonomous and sexually dominant." (51). I will come back to Wohl's text in a following section of this paper.

doing it. He is playing the coquette[10]. Phaedrus's age is never mentioned in the dialogue. He is nevertheless known to have been around thirty or forty years old. Despite that, there are many instances in which he acts as a boy. This resistance, an inherent part of any game of seduction, is an important proof of the erotic nature of the relationship between the two characters of the dialogue.

Lysias's speech deals with seduction through persuasion, aiming "at seducing a beautiful boy, but the speaker is not in love with him."[11] As we will find out later in the dialogue, for Plato, the soul is immortal because it is a self-moving mover[12]. We might say that Phaedrus's incompleteness consists precisely in his soul not showing self-movement. One can clearly observe that Phaedrus lacks autonomy at this point. He is more than ready to succumb to the "clever and elegant"[13] speech of Lysias, enchanted by its form and not concerning himself with matters of content or truth. There is an already obvious difference between Socrates and Phaedrus when it comes to discourse. In the *Symposium* Phaedrus is named the father of speeches and he is the one starting the conversation about Eros. One would be tempted to say that their supposed shared passion for speeches is not quite the same. Despite that, what is of interest here for my purposes is the explicit erotic language defining Socrates's and Phaedrus's conversation.

They refer to each other also as *friends*[14], but they flirt and tease each other various times. Socrates speaks of him and Phaedrus using the image of two dance partners[15]. His general attitude is affectionate and

---

[10] "Do you think that a mere dilettante like me could recite from memory in a manner worthy of him a speech that Lysias, the best of our writers, took such time and trouble to compose?" (Plato, "Phaedrus", 228a).

[11] Plato, "Phaedrus", 227c.

[12] "Every soul is immortal. That is because whatever is always in motion is immortal. (…) So it is only what moves itself that never desists from motion, since it does not leave off being itself." (Plato, "Phaedrus", 245c).

[13] Plato, "Phaedrus", 227c.

[14] Even Griswold notes how the words *phile* or *philotes* appear constantly in the dialogue (Griswold 1996, 26).

[15] "And running into a man [Socrates] who is sick with the passion for hearing speeches, seeing him, just seeing him – he was filled with delight : he had found a partner for his frenzied dance, and he urged him to lead the way." (Plato, "Phaedrus", 228b).

caring, although he is ironic in many instances. He knows very well who he is talking to and takes deep interest in Phaedrus[16]. He even openly says to the latter: "I love you dearly."[17] One can only be surprised how someone, as Griswold does, could still sustain that Socrates is not considering Phaedrus to be worthy of his time. I consider the hypothesis of Socrates being completely ironical and deceitful every time he is affectionate to Phaedrus hard to be argued for. One can clearly see the game of seduction Socrates and Phaedrus constantly play. Also, the roles are reversed at some points, when Phaedrus is chasing Socrates, and not the other way around. One could then say that Socrates is not actually himself in this dialogue. A discussion of Socrates's strange description of the countryside, where he and Phaedrus actually have their conversation exceeds my intentions. However, I want to stress the fact that Socrates is *out of place* only in his description of the scenery. His love for Phaedrus is rather a part of Socrates being his usual self[18].

For now, the most important aspect of the beginning of the *Phaedrus* is that Socrates knows very well that Phaedrus is extremely interested in hearing speeches. The former then proceeds to talk to the latter about his love for words, engaging in a meaningful and soul-turning dialogue. Socrates is trying here to take Phaedrus away from Lysias. Socrates's intention is to seduce Phaedrus into an understanding of what love truly is. We can even talk about a contest between Lysias and Socrates for the soul (*psyche*) of Phaedrus. Why then would Socrates fight for a soul that is unworthy and try to prevent it from being seduced by anything but philosophy?

The Final Step in Seducing Phaedrus into Philosophy

Socrates's affectionate attitude towards Phaedrus, his attempt at seducing him and turning his soul towards philosophy is an important

---

[16] "SOCRATES: Oh, Phaedrus, if I don't know my Phaedrus I must be forgetting who I am myself." (Plato, "Phaedrus", 228a.)

[17] Plato, "Phaedrus", 228d.

[18] "PHAEDRUS: And you, my remarkable friend, appear to be totally out of place." (Plato, "Phaedrus", 230d).

and necessary step in proving Phaedrus's worth. However, this is not sufficient. It is not enough to prove that Socrates is interested in Phaedrus. This is due to the fact that one can still maintain, as Griswold does, that Phaedrus is merely useful in Socrates's pursuit of knowledge. Even if we recognize an erotic relation between the two, we could be faced with yet another objection. The erotic relationship, followed by *philia* could still be just a gateway and first step towards reaching true beauty, which would be the philosopher's purpose. Phaedrus could still be merely useful to Socrates and disposable after accessing the form of Beauty itself. This is why it is necessary to further explore the way in which Socrates himself is incomplete. Also, it will prove helpful to look into the definition of Eros as not being a god in another dialogue, namely the *Symposium.* Before exploring all this, a last argument from the *Phaedrus* must be detailed.

There is a part in this dialogue (276a-277a) where we can already see why we must talk about Phaedrus as being worthy and not useful. Towards the end of the dialogue, Socrates emphasizes the importance of the right kind of speech[19]. Socrates considers that the proper kind of discourse and the proper kind of writing is the one that aims at the soul of the listener[20]. He is actually describing here what happens between him and Phaedrus. It can also be seen as a reference to the silence of Lysias's speech, which is read by Phaedrus in Lysias's absence[21]. It is another way for Socrates to tell Phaedrus that it is the right decision to choose philosophy over (bad) rhetoric. Socrates is the "sensible farmer"[22] he himself refers to. His use of the imagery of the seeds that are planted in the soul proves his belief in an inner worth of Phaedrus. Socrates talks about planting "the seeds he care[s] for" and the importance of when and where these seeds are planted. The mere decision of engaging in a

---

19 "The nature of the speech is in fact to direct the soul." (Plato, "Phaedrus", 271d).

20 "It is a discourse that is written down, with knowledge in the soul of the listener; it can defend itself, and it knows for whom it should speak and for whom it should remain silent." (Plato, "Phaedrus", 276a).

21 Lysias himself cannot answer Socrates's many questions and objections because he is present only through his written speech – which irremediably remains silent and undefended.

22 Plato, "Phaedrus", 276b.

seduction of Phaedrus through dialogue shows that Phaedrus's soul was worthy enough for Socrates to choose it among other souls[23]. Plato is making Socrates express the idea that there is always an informed choice of the philosopher when he starts a dialogue with someone. Again, this is exactly the case with Phaedrus. Socrates, willingly and carefully selects Phaedrus's soul to turn towards philosophy precisely because he recognizes it as being the right kind of soul to be turned to philosophy[24]. I find it highly unconvincing if someone would interpret this passage as referring to Phaedrus's utility for Socrates. I consider the passage an important proof for the worthiness of Phaedrus, whose already *fertile* soul allows Socrates to plant a "discourse (…) which is not barren, but produces a seed from which more discourse grows"[25]. Plato's message seems to lead to the crucial importance of reciprocity[26], even though the relationship between the two characters of the dialogue remains asymmetric. It is not as if Socrates is merely using Phaedrus for his philosophical ascent towards a world of pure contemplation. Their dialogue takes place outside the city walls, but in the end they return to the city. The city is the place were Socrates feels to be himself, in contrast to how he feels in the countryside, where he is out of place (*atopostatos*[27]). Their friendship survives their return to the city[28]. The whole dialogue

---

[23] "The dialectician chooses a proper soul and plants sows within it." (Plato, "Phaedrus", 276e).

[24] This point is also made by L. Robin, quoted in Hadot's book, *What is ancient philosophy?*: "The fruitful soul can fecundate and fructify only by its commerce with another soul, in which *the necessary qualities* [my emphasis] *had* been recognized. This commerce can be instituted only by living words and the daily interchange required by a life in common (…) for an indefinite future." (Hadot 2002, 56).

[25] Plato, "Phaedrus", 277a.

[26] After Socrates' great speech, the one delivered to purify himself from the untruthfulness of his first speech, Phaedrus's attitude has already changed. He says: "I join you in your prayer [for converting Phaedrus to philosophy]. (…) As to your speech, I admired it from the moment you began. (…) I'm afraid that Lysias's effort to match it is bound to fall flat.", Plato, "Phaedrus", 257c.

[27] As Cinzia Aruzzo pointed out, the Greek word is a superlative and can also mean absurdity.

[28] In the last lines of the dialogue Phaedrus asks his beloved friend Socrates to pray for him as well: "Make a prayer for me as well. Friends have everything in common." (Plato, "Phaedrus", 279c).

shows how Socrates cares and takes care of Phaedrus's soul. It is impossible to consider Socrates would love someone whose worth is uncertain. I consider this to be Plato's intention and message. Philosophy turns out to be an existential[29] practice that aims at gaining knowledge of the truth. In order for this to happen, one must transform oneself and Phaedrus rises to the challenge. Socrates already knows that. As this transformation occurs, the soul is changed and this leads to further transformation: knowing the truth restructures Phaedrus. The question then arises: how can someone's soul be restructured unless they already had the possibility of this reshaping within them? This is one of the reasons why we should be speaking of worth and not instrumentality in the case of Phaedrus.

Socrates' Incompleteness

As I have mentioned earlier, it is necessary to explore Socrates's specific incompleteness. In order to do that, both the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium* will prove to be relevant. We can already see in the *Phaedrus* how Socrates directly expresses his own lack. This has to do with him being aware that he cannot yet truly understand and know himself. It constitutes his main concern[30]. It is in this light that we should see Socrates's desire to talk to people in general and to talk to Phaedrus in particular. Moreover, this is the reason why Socrates usually does not travel outside Athens: he has much more to learn from conversing with people than from anything else[31]. It is true that the *Phaedrus* takes place outside the city walls, but Socrates seems to be charmed mostly by

[29] ''This existential option (…) implies a certain vision of the world, and the task of philosophical discourse will therefore be to reveal and rationally justify this existential option, as well as this representation of the world." (Hadot 2002, 3).

[30] "But I have no time for such things; and the reason, my friend, is this. I am still unable, as the Delphic inscription orders, to know myself; and it really seems to me ridiculous to look into other things before I have understood that." (Plato, "Phaedrus", 230a).

[31] "I am devoted to learning; landscapes and trees have nothing to teach – only the people in the city can do that." (Plato, "Phaedrus", 230d).

Phaedrus and by the possibility of a meaningful conversation with him. Again, one could say that Socrates is being ironic when he stresses the importance of learning from other people. They could then say that for him Phaedrus and everybody else is not even useful. I wish to reject this interpretation. Also, I find it hard to see how someone could still talk about Phaedrus as being useful from Socrates. This is due to the fact that the latter openly acknowledges the merit and worth of other people. Admitting to gain knowledge from others means already admitting their potential worth.

For both Socrates and Plato, the most valuable interaction with others is the erotic one. Socrates talks about *Eros* as being the most important form of divine madness (*mania*) in the *Phaedrus*[32]. He is, of course, talking about the lover/beloved relationship[33]. Socrates tells Phaedrus: "when someone who loves beautiful boys is touched by this madness, he is called a lover."[34] I consider that Socrates – and Plato for that matter – attributes value to the erotic interaction between an adult man and a young boy. Given that Phaedrus mostly plays the role of the beloved in the dialogue, we can say that his beauty reminds Socrates of true beauty[35]. Phaedrus is the beautiful boy both Socrates and Lysias talk about in their respective speeches. It is true that his soul is not yet beautiful as Socrates's soul might be, but Phaedrus's value could consist in making Socrates recollect the vision of the form of Beauty. He cannot be just a replaceable element in Socrates journey towards the forms. In order to truly confirm my point, however, I must go beyond the *Phaedrus.* Although Plato offers us the image of the soul regaining the lost wings through love, one could still see mere utility in the love for a young boy. Again, Socrates's love for Phaedrus and Phaedrus's love for Socrates are necessary, but not sufficient proof.

---

[32] "This is the best and noblest of all the forms that possession by god can take for anyone." (Plato, "Phaedrus", 249e).

[33] Described in an earlier section of this paper.

[34] Plato, "Phaedrus", 249e.

[35] "He sees the beauty we have down here and [the lover/philosopher] is reminded of true beauty; then he takes wing and flutters in his eagerness to rise up. (...) beauty was radiant to see at that time when the souls (...) saw that blessed and spectacular vision." (Plato, "Phaedrus", 249e-250b).

Two more mentions must be made before exploring the *Symposium.* First, true beauty can, in a certain sense, be grasped through our sight. It is the only form that appears in a sensorial way. This means that Eros is an access point to the contemplation of forms[36]. Beauty and Eros then constitute for Plato a bridge between humans and the forms. The interaction between the man and the particular beautiful boy is part of the philosophers' ascent. For Plato, though, even after the passion is consumed, there is also a strong emotional attachment to be preserved. Even here utility seems to be terribly out of place. Second, the boy also feels erotic desire towards his older lover, but does not know what he loves[37]. Seeing himself in the lover's eyes is like seeing himself in a mirror. The boy sees his own beauty, but not as a narcissistic enterprise. His physical beauty is acknowledged as a transition to the contemplation of the forms. This is a love that makes one aware of one's beauty. Why would Socrates make Phaedrus aware of something like his beauty if he considered him unworthy? More than that, how could Socrates talk about true beauty in the case of Phaedrus if he envisioned their relation as being instrumental?

Aristophanes's Speech

It is true that the androgynous myth offered by Aristophanes might appear as a strange way to talk about love in the *Symposium*. However, there is an important aspect of his speech that must be considered. The idea Plato expresses through him is precisely that human beings are characterized by a lack that is always seeking fulfillment[38]. Human beings desire and need each other[39]. Even from

---

[36] We cannot deny the physical, sexual element in erotic relationships precisely because of the specificity of beauty, as Cinzia Aruzzo pointed out.

[37] "Still, his desire is nearly the same as the lover's is (…) though he never speaks nor thinks of it as love, but as friendship." (Plato, "Phaedrus", 255e).

[38] As emphasized several times by Cinzia Aruzzo, also in the discussion about the *Phaedrus*.

Aristophanes's speech we can already see the crucial role of the other in Plato. It is not as if the other person is a mere means to and end or someone who can offer us only carnal pleasure. Physicality is definitely not denied by its importance, as desire for someone's body has its origin in the soul. Added to it, an erotic relationship would also engage the other parts of the soul[40]. It has to do also with a desire for unity, according to Aristophanes. Unfortunately, for the latter, love is considered to be a god. Socrates' speech will correct that.

Diotima's Speech: Love Is Not a God

Before even starting his speech, Socrates promises to offer a truthful account of love[41] through his speech. It is important to note that he then attributes the words he is about to utter to a woman, Diotima – the priestess of Mantinea. All of the people present at the banquet and who gave speeches described Eros as a god. Socrates then starts by saying that Diotima contradicted him on this issue when he himself expressed a similar view. He had already proved Agathon[42] that Love needs beauty and the good[43]. Diotima is the first to convince Socrates that Eros is defined by need and desire for beauty and good, without being beautiful or a god[44]. Eros is presented as an intermediary being. This follows the same logic as the one in which correct opinion[45]

[39] "Each one longed for its own other half, and so they would throw their arms about each other, weaving themselves together, wanting to grow together. (…) Love is born into every human being." (Plato, "Symposium", 191bd).

[40] "It's obvious that the soul of every lover longs for something else; his soul cannot say what it is, but (...) it has a sense of what it wants." (Plato, "Symposium", 192d).

[41] "You will hear the truth about love, and the words and phrasing will take care of themselves." (Plato, "Symposium", 199b).

[42] One must not forget that Agathon was Socrates's beautiful beloved and the poet celebrated at the feast described in the *Symposium.*

[43] "Then if Love needs beautiful things, and if all good things are beautiful, he will need good things too." (Plato, "Symposium", 201c).

[44] "What about Love? You agreed he needs good and beautiful things, and that's why he desires them – because he does he needs them." (Plato, "Symposium", 202d).

[45] "It's judging things correctly without being able to give a reason. (…) it is *in between* understanding and ignorance." (Plato, "Symposium", 202a).

(*ortodoxa)* is situated between wisdom (*sophia*) and ignorance. Eros proves to be a *daimon*, "a great spirit"[46] who is neither mortal nor immortal. His intermediary state makes him also a mediator between humans and the gods. This is one of the reasons why Pierre Hadot rightfully sees Socrates in Diotima's description of Eros[47]. Moreover, by defining Eros as a "lover of wisdom"[48], Diotima identifies him with the philosopher in general[49]. Love arises from need and lack of self-sufficiency and this is also the destiny of Socrates as a philosopher.

Also, Eros is the capacity of some human beings to transform their acknowledged condition of lack into access to reality, to the forms. When I say *some* human beings I have in mind Plato's idea of people who are "ignorant" and who do not recognize their own ignorance[50]. At first Phaedrus is one of them, but he is quickly urged by Socrates to move towards another type of incompleteness that belongs to the philosopher. The same happens to the supposedly untamable and controversial Alcibiades. Alcibiades's more complicated case will be analyzed in the following section.

Returning to Diotima's speech, one can find here a similar image to one found in the *Phaedrus.* Love is not only a desire for what is wise and beautiful, but also a desire for fecundity, Hadot observes. It is a desire "to immortalize oneself by producing" (Hadot 2002, 55). Diotima carefully makes the distinction between the fruitfulness of the body (giving birth to children) and the soul's fruitfulness (giving birth to ideas)[51]. In the *Phaedrus* we have this in the image of "impregnating minds"[52] and the metaphor of the seeds, already discussed. This is the

---

46 Plato, "Symposium", 202e.

47 "He is always poor, and he's far from being delicate and beautiful. (…) he is tough and shriveled and shoeless and homeless." (Plato, "Symposium", 203d).

48 Plato, "Symposium", 204b.

49 "Eros and Socrates personify (…) the figure of the philosopher." (Hadot 2002, 41).

50 "For what's especially difficult about being ignorant is that you are content with yourself, even though you're neither beautiful and good nor intelligent." (Plato, "Symposium", 204a).

51 "All of us are pregnant, (…) both in body and in soul, and, as soon as we come to a certain age, we naturally desire to give birth." (Plato, "Symposium", 206c).

52 "Such discourse makes the seed forever immortal and renders the man who has it as happy as any human being can be." (Plato, "Phaedrus", 277a).

reason why Socrates is also represented as a midwife, helping his interlocutors give birth to their own truth (Hadot 2002, 27). Now we can better understand why Socratic dialogue is crucial for philosophy. This means that philosophy does not presuppose a lonely, detached enterprise. It is envisioned by Plato as a "community of life and dialogue between masters and disciples." (56). If we agree with this interpretation of Plato's intentions when writing his dialogues, then it is again very difficult to maintain a position even remotely similar to that of Griswold's. It seems that seeing the relationship between Socrates and Phaedrus (and any other of his partners in dialogue) in terms of usefulness is a serious misunderstanding of what philosophy stands for. It is unconceivable to talk about utility in the interaction between master and disciple, although their relation is defined as asymmetrical. They are not using each other in the vulgar sense Griswold proposes. The dialogue itself is worth both their time[53]. This happens because of the acknowledged worth of both interlocutors. It is true though that this is more explicit in the *Symposium* than in the *Phaedrus*.

The idea of the soul being impregnated with the truth is correlated by Diotima with beauty. This can be seen in her description of lovers as "giving birth in beauty, whether in body or soul."[54] Beauty is a component of reproduction because of the divine nature of the latter. However, there is more value in the product of what we might call an intellectual reproduction. Again, the lover/beloved educational relationship[55] is described here. It is through the other that we are reminded of beauty, of something that we have "been carrying inside (…) for ages"[56]. This is how true friendship is reached. I consider this to be an accurate description of what happens between Phaedrus and Socrates in the *Phaedrus*.

---

[53] "Caring for ourselves and questioning ourselves occur only when our individuality is transcended and we rise to the level of universality, which is represented by what the two interlocutors have in common." (Hadot 2002, 32).

[54] Plato, "Symposium", 206b.

[55] "Such people therefore, have much more to share than do the parents of human children and have a firmer bond of friendship." (Plato, "Symposium", 209cd). The children that are given birth to in the homoerotic relationship are ideas, which are both truly beautiful and immortal, according to Plato.

[56] Plato, "Symposium", 209c.

Initiation into the Ritual of Love

The true challenge of Eros consists, according to Diotima, into mastering a certain path that must be followed, "through loving boys correctly."[57] This passage (210b-212c) is complex and problematic precisely for the question of value or worth I have been raising. Diotima describes the philosopher's ascent from particular, bodily beauty to Beauty itself[58]. Before talking about the actual steps of this ascent, I must notice the verb *to use*[59] in the translation of Plato's text. Someone like Griswold would take this as a definitive proof of the beloved being instrumental and disposable after true Beauty is finally reached. I understand why someone would be tempted to interpret it like this, but I intend to explain this statement in relation with the entire passage about the destination of the philosopher's journey. Also, in the *Symposium* the ascent seems to be presented as not being interrupted by any interior conflict. One might want to contrast this with what happens in the *Phaedrus* in the dramatic myth of the charioteer and the idea of the tri-partition of the soul.[60]

I will now come back to the steps towards "the sight of (…) knowledge"[61] Diotima speaks of. Eros leads correctly from a particular beautiful body to every body that is beautiful, then to the realization that not physical beauty, but the beauty of the soul is truly relevant. The last step is to reach the Beauty of true knowledge or the true knowledge of Beauty.[62] This is also a place of true virtue. One crucial point must be made explicit here. The particular boy with whom the ascent starts is not identical merely to his beautiful body. If it were the case, then we could indeed consider that he is eventually discarded and merely used. What the next step in the ascent presupposes is precisely the realization of a more

---

57 Plato, "Symposium", 211c

58 "By itself, with itself; it is only one in form, and all the other beautiful things share in that" (Plato, "Symposium", 211b).

59 "One goes always upwards for the sake of this Beauty, starting out from beautiful things and *using* [my emphasis] them like rising stairs." (Plato, "Symposium", 211c).

60 This important difference between the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium* had been mentioned by Cinzia Aruzzo. Added to this, Alcibiades's entrance in the *Symposium*, might be seen as a sign of interior conflict. He could be a representative of the infamous black horse's passion in the *Phaedrus*.

61 Plato, "Symposium", 210e.

62 "In the end he comes to know what it is to be beautiful, (…) beholding this Beauty." (Plato, "Symposium", 211d).

important part of any particular boy, namely his soul. His physical beauty, although helpful, becomes irrelevant. The boy is still not irrelevant here. More than this, Phaedrus is not irrelevant to Socrates at any point. The value of the boy is truly recognized when the philosopher understands that he should go beyond his passion for a beautiful body.[63] The beauty of the body reminds him of the beauty of the soul. The moment when the boy is truly valued is when his soul begins to be cared for and taken care of.[64] So, when we are talking about the soul (*psyche*), instrumentality seems inappropriate. In order to understand why Phaedrus is valuable and needed even after contemplating the forms, I shall return to the idea of dialectics present in the *Phaedrus* and in Plato in general.

Socrates' Incompleteness Reconsidered

We must correlate the image of the ladder used in the *Symposium* with the importance of a certain type of dialogue in Plato's work. This is present explicitly in the *Phaedrus*. The dialogue between Socrates and Phaedrus, the constant interaction between the lover and the beloved can be envisioned as a perpetual traversing of all the steps required by true Love. Socrates's incompleteness can be better understood in this light. He acknowledges both his and Phaedrus's troubles within the soul, although they may be different at first. He is indeed leading Phaedrus through his transformation, but this itself is part of his own effort towards reaching knowledge. Hadot points to the difficulty of holding onto wisdom once it has been reached as part of the philosopher's destiny. This is why philosophy has to do with the constant desire for wisdom *par excellence*. Hadot stresses the fact that Socrates indeed tests his partners in conversation, but also himself.[65] It is true that Phaedrus in this instance is a step towards a destination that should be final: the realm of the forms.

---

[63] "He will think that the beauty of bodies is a thing of no importance." (Plato, "Symposium", 210c).

[64] "Our lover must be content to love and care for him and to seek to give birth to such ideas as will make young men better." (Plato, "Symposium", 210c).

[65] "Such wisdom is never acquired once and for all. It is not only others that Socrates never stops testing, but also himself. (…) Self-transformation is never definitive, but demands perpetual reconquest." (Hadot 2002, 36).

However, this destination must be perpetually won, or at least this seems to be Plato's message. This is why Socrates's need for Phaedrus should be defined in terms of worth. Moreover, this is why philosophy involves a life choice and not an isolated, singular event.[66] One must be reminded here again that in the *Phaedrus*, Socrates and Phaedrus eventually return to the city, where Socrates willfully decided to spend all of his life. The philosopher is indeed an intermediate between this world and the world of the forms, but his life must be spent in the company of other people whose value he inevitably recognizes. It seems now that we have escaped the possibility in which a particular beloved is disposable and lacks true worth. To conclude this section, we must admit, along with Hadot, that Socrates was always the first to emphasize the necessity of "living contact between human beings" (Hadot 2002, 60) and that Plato agreed with him on this topic. I would add that the basis of this view lays in a firm belief in the worth and possibility of transformation (*askesis*) of other people's souls.

Alcibiades's Untamed Eros[67]

I will now focus shortly[68] on Alcibiades in the *Symposium*. I do this not only because Griswold talks about it. The other reason is that I consider it to reinforce the idea of Phaedrus's value, which has been my main concern here. As I have mentioned before, Alcibiades is considered to be even less worthy of Socrates's time than Phaedrus. Socrates has completely failed in turning the controversial Alcibiades to philosophy,

---

66 This is what Hadot means when he says that "the philosopher will never attain wisdom, but he can make progress in its direction. According to the *Symposium*, then, philosophy is not wisdom, but a way of life and discourse determined by the *idea* of wisdom." (Hadot 2002, 46).

67 I will only mention the distinction Wohl makes between the *democratic Eros*, socially accepted in Ancient Greece (it defines the relationship between Phaedrus and Socrates) and the *tyrannical Eros*, unconsciously both desired and rejected by the Greeks. The latter belongs to Alcibiades, who actually "queers (…) the very distinction between good and bad *eros*." (Wohl 1999, 365-366).

68 My very short account of Alcibiades should not be seen as an incapacity to understand his importance for the whole dialogue or that I deny that much more could be said about him.

according to Griswold. Victoria Wohl offers a complex discussion of Alcibiades as a real person. I only want to point to her account of the *Symposium*. For her, Plato's dialogue is a place where the strange Eros of Alcibiades can be accepted. More than that, this Eros is crucial for both Socrates and Plato.[69] One already sees here the stubborn passion of the black horse in the *Phaedrus*, making love and knowledge possible. Alcibiades's portrayal of Socrates in the *Symposium* shows how deeply Socrates had moved his soul.[70] Wohl offers a key to understanding both Alcibiades's and Phaedrus's worth. Alcibiades's worth consists in him being "a manifestation of Absolute Beauty", says Wohl. The same could be said about Phaedrus as well. I consider Socrates to be able to find true beauty in both of them. His task is more difficult with Alcibiades, but he succeeds eventually.[71] If even Alcibiades's worth is thus affirmed, how can Phaedrus's still not be? Griswold's perspective remains extremely questionable.

Conclusions

My analysis started from some comments made by Charles Griswold in connection to the relationship between Phaedrus and Socrates in the *Phaedrus*. He implies that Phaedrus is not worthy of Socrates's time because he is mediocre. Their interaction would then be merely useful to Socrates in his pursuit of knowledge.

The first step in arguing against this position was to point to Socrates's attitude towards Phaedrus. The former is affectionate and cares about his partner in conversation. Socrates sees beauty in Phaedrus and wants to turn the latter's soul towards philosophy. This is a first sign of an inner worth of Phaedrus. However, I realized it not to be enough, although the two of them have an erotic relationship. Phaedrus

---

[69] Wohl sees "Alcibiades's *eros* as a central element of Socratic philosophy." His "sexuality (…) is foundational." (Wohl 1999, 376-378).

[70] Alcibiades is "merely an admirer of the supreme love that is embodied in the most valuable love-object, Socrates and his philosophy." (Wohl 1999, 378).

[71] "Thus Socrates, by the magical and demonic effect of his life and his speech, forces Alcibiades to question himself and admit that his life is not worth living if he behaves as he does." (Hadot 2002, 47).

proves to be incomplete in the sense of lacking even the awareness of his own ignorance. This is where Socrates steps in. The metaphor of the dialectician planting seeds in a proper soul, as presented by Plato in the *Phaedrus*, strengthened my argumentation. A proper soul has worth and not mere utility.

A second step involved discussing Socrates's incompleteness, which proved to be the philosopher's incompleteness. It is recognition of lack. Socrates needs and desires a knowledge he is aware he does not yet possess. This was seen operating both in the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*. This is the reason why I proceeded in analyzing Aristophanes's and Diotima's speeches from the *Symposium*. According to Diotima, Love is not a god. Eros is presented as an intermediate between humanity and the gods. Diotima's description of Eros coincides with Socrates's figure and with the figure of the philosopher in general. It also made clearer the reason why Socrates engages in a meaningful conversation with Phaedrus after all. This also hinted to the actual worth of Phaedrus that defines Socrates's position towards him.

A third step dealt with the philosopher's ascent present in Diotima's speech. Although this passage remains problematic, I tried to offer an interpretation that served my main purpose. The main idea was to stress on the fact that the physical beauty of a young boy does not define him completely. When the philosopher (Socrates) acknowledges the relevance of the beauty of the soul of his partner in dialogue, he actually acknowledges his worth. I sustained that this is the case with Phaedrus as well.

A last step was to connect Phaedrus's character with Alcibiades's character in the *Symposium*. Victoria Wohl's account of the relationship between Socrates and Alcibiades proved to be extremely helpful. Socrates sees true beauty in Alcibiades, which then confirms even Alcibiades's worth. I applied this to Phaedrus as well. By the end of my enterprise I came to realize the reason why Griswold's interpretation was so disturbing for me. Griswold had misunderstood the crucial importance of the role of the other in Plato's dialogues. This is why he talks about usefulness in his account of the *Phaedrus*. My argumentation can be read then not only as an attempt to prove Phaedrus's worth and crucial importance for Socrates. More than this, it can be taken as an

account of the crucial role of the other for the philosophical enterprise. It is also a way of offering a tentative solution for the problems raised by the ascent of the philosopher towards true knowledge in Diotima's speech. My conclusion is then that the other is not merely left behind and treated as a means to an end. He is an engaged partner whose worth consists in taking part in a constant effort for understanding and reaching the truth.

REFERENCES

Bett, Richard (2001). "Immortality and the Nature of the Soul in the Phaedrus". In *Essays on Plato's Psychology.* Edited by Ellen Wagner. Lexington Books.

Camus, Albert (2002). "Mitul lui Sisif". In A.Camus, *Faţa şi reversul. Nunta. Mitul lui Sisif. Omul revoltat. Vara.* Translated by Irina Mavrodin. Rao Editions.

Griswold, Charles L. Jr. (1996). *Self-Knowledge in Plato's* Phaedrus. Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press.

Hadot, Pierre (2002). *What is Ancient Philosophy?*. Translated by Michael Chase. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Jankélévitch, Vladimir (2001) *Pur şi impur*. Translated by Elena Brânduşa Steiciuc. Nemira Editions.

Plato (1997). "Phaedrus". In *Plato. Complete Works.* Edited, with Introduction and Notes, by John M. Cooper. Associate Editor D.S. Hutchinson, pp. 506-556. Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company.

_____. (1997). "Symposium". In *Plato. Complete Works.* Edited, with Introduction and Notes, by John M. Cooper. Associate Editor D.S. Hutchinson, pp. 457-505. Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company.

_____. (1999). *Ethics, Politics, Religion, and the Soul*. Edited by Gail Fine. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Rohde, Erwin (1985). *Psyche*. Translated by Mircea Popescu. Bucharest: Meridiane Editions.

Wohl, Victoria (1999). "The Eros of Alcibiades", *Classical Antiquity* 18 (2), pp. 349-385.

V. Frissen, L. Sybille, M. de Lange, J. de Mul, J. Raessens, J, (eds. (2015). *Playful Identities: The Ludification of Digital Media Cultures*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

HOMO LUDENS 2.0: PLAY, MEDIA AND IDENTITY

ALEXANDRU DOBRE-AGAPIE[1]

A very important topic of discussion nowadays is represented by the digital identity and how this theme it is perceived by society and individuals alike. How we create, use, store and verify the identity in the digital playground context is a complex question, one that is often debated and argued from many angles. From philosophical point of view, but mostly from an ethical perspective, this subject is regarded as an ever-growing field of research bearing an important significance from an aesthetic, ontological, legal and social point of view.

Playful Identities: The Ludification of Digital Media Cultures, a research that is funded by the Dutch Organization for Scientific Research (NWO) and edited by Valerie Frissen, Jos de Mul (both from the Faculty of Philosophy, Erasmus University Rotterdam, the Netherlands), Joost Raessens (holds the chair of Media Theory and is the scientific director of GAP: the Center for the Study of Digital Games and Play ,Faculty of Humanities, Utrecht University), Sybille Lammes (associate professor at the Centre for Interdisciplinary Methodologies at the University of

[1] University of Bucharest, Faculty of Philosophy.

Warwick) and Michiel de Lange (part-time Lecturer New Media Studies at Utrecht University) must be recognized as a consistent effort to familiarize researchers as well as the large audience with the concepts of *play, media* and *identity*.

In order to confirm the prominent concepts reminded above, the volume is split into three different parts: *Play, Media* and *Identity*, each part consisting of various articles written by professors, researchers in various domains like sociology, information and communication technology, philosophy, psychology, computer games, multimedia communication, new media and digital culture and so on. A good description of the book's main focus related to digital identity is given by Jos de Mul in the final chapter: "most of the contributions in this volume were situated in the rhetoric of self and identity, and as a result the authors have predominantly (though not exclusively) discussed kinds of play and players that are most relevant for these types of rhetoric" (de Mul 2005, 338). Due to its aim to capture the most important aspects related to *play*, *media* and *identity* and because all of the chapters of *Playful Identities: The Ludification of Digital Media Cultures* have analyzed, interpreted, criticized the first section of this book *Homo Ludens 2.0: Play, media, and identity*, I have chosen it for my review.

Going through the well-known references of Johan Huizinga's ground-breaking book *Homo Ludens: A study of the play-element in culture*, Paul Ricoeur's *Theory of narrative identity* and the critical elaboration of Roger Caillois *Les jeux et les homes* and analyzing the contradictions, differences and similarities between the ideas and concepts described, this first section brings an important benefit to the actual status-quo in this new field of research, *digital identity*. The article's main purpose is to demonstrate how the "actual playful technologies, which have been embraced worldwide with great enthusiasm in the past decades, have profoundly affected out identities" (de Mul 2005, 337). This first chapter tries to put things into perspective, by highlighting its contribution to a bigger social and cultural trend - ludification.

Ludification should be treated, in this paper, as a major social and cultural phenomenon, a subset or as direct consequence of what was, in the 1990s, called "the postmodern turn" (Seidman 1994). Postmodernism

is useful in this context in order to understand the specific context of the cultural change that the word "*ludification*" translates.

The first part of *Homo Ludens 2.0: Play, media, and identity* is dedicated to the theory of *play* developed by Johan Huizinga in his famous book *Homo Ludens: A study of the play-element in culture*, and to his central claim "that culture and civilization arises in and as play and never leaves it" (Huizinga 1995, 173). The first section of Huizinga's book contains a definition of the phenomenon of play, which includes the most important components of it that form the main topic of debate throughout this article:

a) Play is free, it is in fact freedom;
b) Play is not "*ordinary*" or "real" life (13);
c) Play is distinct from "*ordinary*" life with respect to both locality and duration;
d) Play creates order, it is order. Play demands absolute and supreme order;
e) Play is connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained from it.

Authors argue that in order to apply Huizinga's theory of play to the current world of digital technologies, *Homo Ludens* needs an enhancement because in their opinion play and technology are both almost complete opposites for Huizinga. With respect to this fact, they introduce the concept of *Homo Ludens 2.0* as an upgrade to the initial work done by Huizinga, arguing that play and technology are very tightly connected to each other, and that both derive from the same ludic dimension. Another main aspect that is analysed here is the important connection between the ludic dimension and the medium specific qualities of media and digital technologies, for example multimediality, virtuality, interactivity and connectivity. Due to this approach and to the fact that they represent intrinsic characteristics of media and all that digital technology represents, because they all share the common purpose of being the representation and interaction of digital media in different social, economic, legal and philosophical implications, I agree with the argument.

The second part of the article describes and analyzes from the author's own perspective, in parallel with Huizinga's work, Roger

Caillois *Les jeux et les homes* (1958) which represents a critical elaboration of Huizinga's work. According to Caillois, beside Huizinga's "sacred performance" described as "mimicry" or role playing in Caillois terminology and the "festal contest" or *competition* (*agon*), there are also other important categories like *chance* (*alea*) referring for example to aleatory games and *vertigo* (*ilinx*) in the sense of altering perception, for example rolling roller coasters, children spinning and so forth. Caillois introduces two play attitudes: *paidia* and *ludus*, the former referring to unstructured and spontaneous activities (playfulness) and the latter to the structured and rule-governed activities with explicit rules of play (games). Caillois's definition of play has six elements in comparison with Huizinga's definition:.

(1) *free* — (in such way that is non-obligatory);
(2) *separate*;
(3) *uncertain* — (in the sense that the results are not known beforehand);
(4) *unproductive* — (that is, an event or interaction that does not create wealth or goods);
(5) *rule bound*;
(6) *fictive*.

As we can see, Caillois' special contribution is his attempt to include material considerations in the definition of play. He does this by claiming that play is distinctive because it leads to no increase in economic productivity, but instead it simply expends and redistributes resources.

Continuing the debate related to the controversial and contradicting aspects of Huizinga's book, authors mention the four most important ambiguities:

1. *Reality versus appearance*. Analyzing the intrinsic relation between them, and the fact that when a subject plays, he is experiencing in a dramatic measure the media content, but at the same time the subject is also aware of is as-if-ness.

2. *Freedom versus force*. Each time, the subject is perceived as the one who plays and who is played, by mean of relationship between the real self/virtual self-fulfilling both features simultaneously and being able to respect or modify the rules of the game according to his own wish.

3. *Determination versus change*. The correlation between games is regarded as determined from the beginning. The consciousness of risk,

for instance, presupposes that the player cannot confidently anticipate to the result of an action; this unpredictability largely determines the intensity of many games, particularly those involving chance and competition. To experience this sort of tension is to become invested in an outcome that has not yet been settled. It is always possible to ask in this context: How will the game come out?

4. *Individual versus collective*. Or as authors described it "the player is absorbed in his own private play-world, often before an audience."[2] Nowadays, more and more often people are play games that are viewed as collective, there is a definitive tendency towards the collectiveness approach that I nevertheless fully understand and agree with. On the other hand with respect to the fact that a subject playing a solitary game is considered by some "as being played before an imagined audience" (Lawn 2006, 109), I consider that more discussion is in order. To understand the imagined audience, it is helpful first to consider the influence that the actual audience typically has on everyday face-to-face communication. According to theories of self-presentation and impression management, in order to help control the impressions that others form, individuals interact and adapt their behavior based on who is in the actual audience.[3] The imagined audience is the mental conceptualization of the people with whom we are communicating, our audience. With respect to determining behaviour, researchers have concluded that the mere imagined audience can be just as influential as the actual audience (Baldwin and Holmes 1987). For example, Alan J. Fridlund (1991) found that participants smiled more, regardless of their happiness, when they were either watching a movie with a friend or when they believed a friend was watching the same video in another room than when they were alone or when they thought their friend was partaking in a different activity. He concluded that "solitary faces occur for the same reasons as public ones, if only because when we are alone we create social interactions in our imaginations" (Fridlund 1991, 238).

---

[2] To be consulted Valerie Frissen, Sybille Lammes, Michiel de Lange, Jos de Mul & Joost Raessens, eds. (2015). *Homo ludens 2.0: Play, media, and identity*, in *Playful Identities: The Ludification of Digital Media Cultures*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, p.17.

[3] To be consulted Goffman (1959); Schlenker (1980).

Last but not least, an important shifting point, analyzed in this chapter is Paul Ricoeur's theory of narrative identity. Ricoeur's analysis of personal narrative identity yields four conclusions that are basic to his theory and these are the following:

1. Because my personal identity is a narrative identity, I can make sense of myself only in and through my involvement with others.

2. In my dealings with others, I do not simply enact a role or function that has been assigned to me. I can change myself through my own efforts and can reasonably encourage others to change as well.

3. Nonetheless, because I am an embodied existence and hence have inherited both biological and psychological constraints, I cannot change everything about myself. And because others are similarly constrained, I cannot sensibly call for comprehensive changes in them.

4. Though I can be evaluated in a number of ways, e.g., physical dexterity, verbal fluency, technical skill, the ethical evaluation in the light of my responsiveness to others, over time, is, on the whole, the most important evaluation.

Homo Ludens 2.0: Play, media, and identity proposes to "supplement Ricoeur's theory of narrative identity with a theory of *ludic identity construction* that explains how both play and games are currently appropriate metaphors for human identity, as well as the very means by which people reflexively construct their identity" (Frissen 2005, 11). I find this idea quite compelling because the digital gaming experience requires a processing of personal identity between the need to be different and the meaning of our daily lives, through "voluntary" action anchored „in a well-defined space and time" (Huizinga). Thus, digital culture justifies the game as a context of empathically aesthetic rethinking, proposing a new meaning to the sense of aesthetic pleasure, which we can analyze from a psychoanalytic, social and physical perspective. Psychoanalytic, virtual identities express at a subconscious level the tendency towards perfection, towards complete freedom, autonomy, even an imaginary projection of an overall change which convey, in fact, a mark of a latent temperament, dominant, either masculine or feminine: this redefining power echoes even in a social medium where "self-persistence" of reality can be fulfilled or forgotten. Game manifested individually or in team as a "loss of self" through the

cultural materialization of a new, imaginary fictional discourse yet handled from reality itself reflects the aspiration for a better self, therefore towards a virtual identity, over which the user or the player has full control, both socially and physically. From this point of view, the game requires a digital speech of self representation depending on the type of aesthetic pleasure which it inspires.

Finally, we must admit that this social trend of ludification is powered by media, digital technology, play and by "us" represented by our identity. It reflects a new impact of these concepts in social structures and environments – the inclusion of playfulness in culture, society and everyday life. Moreover, it also applies a new direction of development that is renewing culture, society and business, and the most important aspect, that we should take into consideration when analyzing it, is the background that generated it, the actual impact that it has over our lives and on the future outcome of it.

REFERENCES

Baldwin, M.W. & Holmes, J.G. (1987). "Salient Private Audiences and Awareness of the Self". In *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 52 (6), pp. 1087-1098.

Fridlund, A. (1991). "The Sociality of Solitary Smiles: Effects of an Implicit Audience". In *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 60 (2), pp. 229-240.

Frissen, V. & Sybille, L. & de Lange, M. & de Mul, J. & Raessens, J. (2015). "Homo ludens 2.0: Play, Media, and Identity". In *Playful Identities: The Ludification of Digital Media Cultures*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, pp. 9-55.

Goffman, E. (1959) *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. University of Edinburgh, open source accessed at the 2nd April 2015: http://monoskop.org/images/1/19/Goffman_Erving_The_Presentation_of_Self_in_Everyday_Life.pdf,.

Huizinga, H. (1995). *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture*. London: Routledge.

Lawn, C. (2006). *A Guide for the Perplexed*. London: Continuum.

Schlenker, B.R. (1980). *Impression Management: The Self-Concept, Social Identity, and Interpersonal Relations*. Monterey, Calif.: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company.

Seidman, S. (1994). *The Postmodern Turn: New Perspectives on Social Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

THE ANNALS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF BUCHAREST
PHILOSOPHY SERIES

The authors of the articles and book reviews are requested to observe the following publication guidelines:

- ✓ The articles should be edited in English.
- ✓ The articles should be submitted electronically (by e-mail or CD) in a WORD format (formats .doc or .rtf).
- ✓ The articles should contain the author's full name and affiliation, along with the author's e-mail address. The authors are requested to supply an auto-bio-bibliography (approximately 10 lines), in a footnote.
- ✓ The articles should contain an abstract (10-15 lines), followed by 5-7 Keywords (Times New Roman, 9, single spaced).
- ✓ All the articles and book reviews must be edited using diacritical marks; if there are special Fonts, these should also be sent.
- ✓ The page format: paper A4 (no Letter, Executive, A5 etc.).
- ✓ The page margins: top – 5,75 cm; bottom – 5 cm; left and right – 4,25 cm; header – 4,75 cm; footer – 1,25 cm.
- ✓ The articles submitted for publication must be typed single spaced, in Times New Roman, 11.
- ✓ ***The title*** of the article should be centered, bold, all capitals (Times New Roman, 11).
- ✓ ***The author's name*** (bold capitals) should be centered, under the title (Times New Roman, 9).
- ✓ ***The abstract*** (with the translated title, if the article is written in other language than English; Times New Roman 9, single spaced) precedes the text of the article; the Keywords (Times New Roman,

9, bold) follow the abstract and they are preceded by the word ***Keywords*** (in italics, bold).

- ✓ ***The notes*** should be indicated by superscript numbers in the text and typed at the bottom of the page (single spaced, Times New Roman 9).
- ✓ ***The references*** or ***the quotations sources*** should be indicated in the text, following the format: (Author year:(space)page) − (Pop 2001: 32); (Pop/Ionescu 2001: 32).
- ✓ ***The abbreviations*** or ***abbreviated titles*** (RRL, tome L, nos 3-4, p. 216) can be used in the papers; they will be included completely in the listed references at the end of the article, as it follows:

RRL – *Revue Roumaine de Linguistique*, tome L, nos 3-4, 2005.

- ✓ ***The references*** should observe the following styles:

1. ***Books*** *Basic Format:* Author, A.A. (, B.B. Author, C.C. Author), Year of publication, *Title of Work,* Location, Publisher.

   Kleiber, Georges, 2001, *L'anaphore associative*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France.

2. ***Edited Books*** *Basic Format:* Author, A.A. (, B.B. Author, C.C. Author) (ed./eds.), Year of publication, *Title of Work,* Location, Publisher (only the name of the first editor inverted).

   Zafiu, R., C. Stan, Al. Nicolae (eds.), 2007, *Studii lingvistice. Omagiu profesoarei Gabriela Pană Dindelegan, la aniversare*, Bucureşti, Editura Universității din Bucureşti.

3. ***Articles or Chapters in Edited Book*** *Basic Format:*

   Rand Hoare, Michael, 2009, "Scientific and Technical Dictionnaries", in A.P. Cowie (ed.), *The Oxford History of English Lexicography*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 47-94.

4. ***Articles in Journals*** *Basic Format:* Author, A.A. (, B.B. Author), Year of publication, "Title of the article", in *Title of Periodical*, volume number (issue number), pages.

   Fischer, I., 1968, « Remarques sur le traitement de la diphtongue *au* en latin vulgaire », in *Revue Roumaine de Linguistique*, XIII, nr. 5, pp. 417-420.

All the bibliographical references should appear in the final bibliography.

All the papers will be peer-reviewed by a committee of specialists in different philological fields: linguistics, literature, cultural studies, translation studies.

The first version of the articles should be submitted to the e-mail address: annals.philosophy@ub-filosofie.ro

Tiparul s-a executat sub c-da nr. 984/2016 la
Tipografia Editurii Universității din Bucureşti