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SIGNIFYING THE MYSTICAL AS STRUGGLE: YANNARAS' ORTHODOX REFIGURING OF PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE

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Abstract

In accordance with the early Wittgenstein, for Christos Yannaras, the mystical might "show" itself in experience, but which, in propositional terms, remains transcendent and ultimately non-sense. Yet, the struggle at once to "signify" and to "relate to" the ultimately a inexpressible persists as integral to human being. Indeed, it defines the specificity of his involvement in the order of Life. With Heidegger's help, Yannaras' philosophy of language, factoring in the reality of Otherness and apophatic thinking, seeks to explore the dimensions of rationality in relational terms. The net effect of his creative thinking on language and rationality is, above all, suggestive in demonstrating the potential of patristic intuitions that underlie Yannaras' philosophy in view of providing an alternative direction for contemporary thought.
Keywords: Wittgenstein, Heidegger, apophaticism, Otherness, Orthodoxy.

In his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Ludwig Wittgenstein set out the conditions of what can be said in the hope of seeing the world aright. For him, the task of philosophy is to adjudicate in the use of language the boundaries between knowledge and nonsense. He clearly advances the issue hanging in the balance in the Preface to the *Tractatus*: his work, he says, aims at drawing a limit not so much between thoughts as such, but in regard to how thought is expressed:

> /.../ for in order to able to draw a limit to thought, we should have to find both sides of the limit thinkable (i.e., we should have to be able to think what cannot be thought). It will therefore only be in language that the limit can be drawn, and what lies on the other side of the limit will simply be nonsense. (Wittgenstein 1971, 3).

As the demonstrations proceed in the work, proposition after proposition, a close reading finds some surprising turns in the argument. For one thing, the

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nonsensical, namely, that which cannot conform to the linguistic conditions of the thinkable, constitutes the most interesting and pervasive part of the human experience. For another, the logical space, postulated as the *conditio sine qua non* for saying something sensible, *i.e.*, meaningful, we find to be ultimately nonsense, unthinkable. Like the ethical, the aesthetic, and the mystical, the logical space itself remains beyond meaning and the capacity of language to signify it. And, again, like the ethical, the aesthetic, and the mystical, the logical space can only be shown to the degree that it is actually being deployed in act. Yet, it cannot be properly "said." But, yet again, all meaning depends on it.

Not an analytical philosopher who would pursue these questions on the terms that Wittgenstein cast them in that early work, Christos Yannaras does nevertheless reflect on the nature of language with manifest reference to notions derived from the *Tractatus.* Besides the persistent reference to "logical spaces," he manifestly makes serious use, notably, in *Postmodern Metaphysics* and *Relational Ontology*, of famous Wittgensteinian *dicta* like: "The limits of my language are the limits of my world (5.6)"; "The sense of the world lies outside the world (6.41)"; and "There is indeed the inexpressible. This *shows* itself; it is the mystical (6.522)." But he ultimately sets these themes within the context of Heidegger's recovery of the ontological question, the key concept of which – at least as Yannaras explores it – is the "existential fact." In regard particularly to the mystical, he proposes,

> There also exists the so-called mystical approach to the interpretation of the logos (*i.e.*, cause and purpose) of the existence of existent things. /…/ The mystical approach relies on the obviousness (the self-evidence, self-manifestation) of the logos meaning as it emerges from the experience of participation in the existential fact. /…/ Mystical experience does not entirely renounce its linguistic expression, but it attempts to express itself indirectly through allegories, poetic images, and metaphors. (Yannaras 2011, 6-7).

In varying the perspective of the relation between the mystical and language within the parameters of existential fact, Yannaras refigures suggestively Wittgenstein's initial thesis concerning the expressible character of the mystical. Though only indirectly as far as the mystical is concerned, the two sides of the limits that Wittgenstein sought to keep apart are brought by Yannaras into communication. In the vocabulary of Heidegger that Yannaras frequently employs, we might describe the situation as exploring the possibility of introducing the more original and potentially transformative *Logos* into the ontic confines of linguistic analysis. Thereby, we can anticipate that the mystical approach will associate with the eventfulness of the logos capacity to cause and instil purpose, indeed to provide a sense for the world. Moreover, to those who participate in its mode of existence, it is to be celebrated in language that speaks of a relational experience surpassing mere intellectual conceptualisation.

In regard to the kind of language able to bring this experience and this relation to the fore of human rationality, the theology of the Church provides in its liturgical practices ontological paths to the inexpressible that it knows, nevertheless, as love, or better, as having an erotic love for her. In sum, the language of the mystical will be the language of desire, i.e., the divine *Logos*, God, translated into Lacanian psychoanalysis as the "Other" and space within which the rationality of desiring human subjects is formed. Yannaras will weave into Wittgensteinian linguistic questions the Heideggerian interest in existential fact; in turn, Yannaras will see this as intrinsically relational, namely, the condition for rationality driven by desire. But in doing so, Yannaras is – we believe – effectively situating a thematic that largely dominates Western philosophy within the distinctively Orthodox conviction that we engage the uncreated and divine essence only through the created, itself permeated with uncreated energies. As witnessed by the Church and delivered in Tradition, the experience is participatory and the human reality that emerges is a confederated one, rooted in divine theophanies and gathered together in the theandric Christ.

Notwithstanding the decidedly, and potentially polemical mystical tone of the proposal, Yannaras' Orthodox refiguring of philosophy of language does constitute a challenge to the Western thinking about the thematic, which – as Wittgenstein defined it – constitutes a primary form of human life and thereby influences all else. It is precisely its challenge and possible shortcomings that we should like to explore in the following – and perhaps envisage as a path of inquiry worth furthering. In reconstructing Yannaras' thoughts on the mystical and the struggle to signify it, we believe that we are addressing the core thesis of his theological philosophy and hope to give a fair account of its import for theistic metaphysics in our time. It will require to begin with establishing apophaticism as the new common ground in contemporary philosophy in order to prepare for a reworking of the notion of the logical space and, finally, to see the signifying of the mystical as related to the birthing and re-birthing of the human subject.

Apophatic Thinking and Linguistic Potential:
Unorthodox Limitations and Orthodox Possibilities

The idea of a consequential breakdown of philosophical foundationalism, exemplified successively by medieval realism and modern rationalism has many adherents. But to read its history in relation to a reappearance of apophaticism, as Yannaras does, is not usual and, of itself, sets the problem against the more distant background of the patristic insistence about the unknowability of God, namely the issue of divine essence and energies. For him, the apophatic refers generically to an "epistemic gap" between experience and the attempt to know it, *i.e.*, the inability to

translate adequately into conceptual terms what one actually knows through participatory belonging to what is effectively experienced (Yannaras 2011, 56). In *Postmodern Metaphysics*, Yannaras creates distinct categories that very much reveal how he conceives a fundamental metaphysical option that forms around the theme of apophaticism, Succinctely put, apophaticism comes to us in one of two ways: either it is "unorthodox" or it is "orthodox."

He calls the first "intellectualist-methodological," moreover a category that would fit Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* especially well. The world is "intellectualist-methodologically" contemplated; it is one implicitly governed by chance and is, on its own, inherently senseless. Whatever sense is advanced about it is largely self-constructed, *i.e.*, through the creation of epistemological models of interpretation. Each model deploys its own regulated process in articulating the structure of the real but none is definitive. That is, though all cogently supported by the axioms governing the methods, they remain, nevertheless, incompatible between themselves.

For the most part, the proponents of intellectualist-methodology are happy to allow for the relativity of their theory-bound proposals. Voicing the basic stance of the intellectualist-methodologist, Yannaras formulates it this way: "Without sacrificing methodological consistency, I do not make an absolute of it, nor in consequence do I tie it to a single methodological constant." (Yannaras 2004, 85). We find ourselves in the realm of heuristic models and metaphors; they deal with the onticity of the physical world that remains underdetermined by the attempts of human reason to express it. Therein consists its apophatic character, one that has become self-conscious in the example of post-Newtonian physics in which indeterminacy and un-definability mark the sphere of the signified. The work of signifying must resort to paradoxical and less precise expressions like "wave-particle," the function of which resembles, revealingly for Yannaras, theological terms such as *theanthropos* and *mêtroparthenos*. But the decisive point is that the quest for univocal scientific language yields to paradox and poetic images; they thus accentuate at the same time the greater freedom of the observer in relating to the evidence in a more personal way. Even contemporary science, he argues, does not close its mind to the poetic expressiveness of the world that it intends to explain. A step further, namely from the ontic to the ontological, would make the world appear, in its otherness, not only as a field to explore but also relational, even invitatory.

> The significance of personal experience may be discerned, because it does not refer to specific referents, but to the dynamics of the relation with the referents, with the inexpressible personal otherness of the referents.

> The new language of post-Newtonian science seems to bring us nearer to the significance of the experience of the modally infinite, nearer to the language of art and love. (Yannaras 2004, 154).

A possible path for postmodern metaphysics to follow, the orthodox insistence on the relational and the participatory comes into view. This will carry with it the characterisation of "significative-experiential," that Yannaras proposes in a relational ontology focused on the dynamics of the existential fact. Here, the ontic plane, occupied by the descriptive natural sciences, is transcended, situating us now in a domain more akin to that cultivated by "lovers and artists," *i.e.*, that of a freedom consisting in experiential probing, or soundings, a struggle to signifying that which cannot be rendered entirely objective, but is, nonetheless, known. Implicitly honouring the orthodox essence/energies distinction, the significative-experiential approach to language values human desiring for transformative self-transcendence. Operating above the ontic, the logical space in which the signifying will take place implies an un-circumscribable otherness, constituting the true measure of personal freedom.

Within the framework of *Postmodern Metaphysics*, the fate of apophaticism is seen then as emerging in modern and postmodern thought but also radically disengaged from the orthodox wisdom from which it actually derives. In a much earlier work, inspired by a Heideggerian "destruction" of modernity's obsessive fixation on efficiency and control and the desire for a renewed opening to ontological experiencing of the pre-conceptual, we are given a fuller account of what is at issue. Like Heidegger, Yannaras would underscore the virtual erasing of an original experience of being such as found in the pre-Socratics and the concomitant rise of onto-theology underlying the development of the Western mind. However, far more decisive and far more tragic for Western society is the deliberate marginalisation of the philosophical potential contained in the Christian revolution as experienced powerfully by the Apostolic Church, but liturgically "repeated" (in the Kierkegaardian sense) and thought through by the Church Fathers of all times. Indeed, the relational ontology, as Yannaras conceives it, finds a visible manifestation in the Christian *ecclesia*, a privileged expression of an ontology constituted by relations and by personhood. Apophaticism is seen rightly when situated into that sphere of reality opened to view by the experience of the Church, modelled as she is by the Triadic God; it is seen wrongly, or insufficiently, when not. However, in Yannaras' work, the theme harkens back to an earlier book, *On the Absence and Unknowability of God: Heidegger and the Areopagite*, published originally in 1976, but might be still read profitably alongside the more recent publications by the authors of Radical Orthodoxy and those by David Bentley Hart.

The meaning that Heidegger attributes to "the death of God" theme as a consequence of the long process of Western metaphysics and the forgetting of the ontological question perhaps underestimates, in our view, the earnestness (and perverseness) of Nietzsche's counter-gospel for a new humanity. But it is the Heideggerian reading that Yannaras takes to reinforce his own critique of Western Christianity and, indeed, Western civilisation itself. In this regard, he

sees Nietzsche as a prophet of the inadequacy of how the Christian God is conceived in a theology, which, in accentuating rational conceptualisation, has left us without a God who effectively saves us from death and corruption. "The historical development of both natural theology and apophaticism in the West culminates in the proclamation of the 'death of God'." (Yannaras 2005, 45-46). In other words, its apophaticism is unorthodox. No wonder God is absent, argues Yannaras, and no wonder nihilism has become the real cultural situation of the West. "Responsibility for the death of God of the Western-European metaphysical tradition lies nowhere else than with Western Christendom itself." (2005, 43). Nietzsche's apophatic statement translates then in the destruction of a metaphysical idol, but not the God revealed in Christ.

Once again, the underlying rule is that apophaticism refuses to accept that linguistic semantics can ever satisfy whatever it endeavours to know in cognitive acts of representing a given reality, for between the signifiers and the experiential knowledge lies an unbridgeable gulf. It "refuses to exhaust the content of knowledge in its formulation," *i.e.*, it refuses to exhaust the reality of the things signified in the logic of the signifiers (Yannaras 2004, 84). Nevertheless, the intrinsically frustrated struggle to bring signifiers into a complete correspondence with what is signified actually obscures but not eliminates an ultimately more promising connection between the two poles: semantic suggestiveness in regard to the reality that it expresses is better understood as the dynamic indeterminacy of relationships that underlies the workings of human reason before that which it endeavours to know. In sum, the primary mode of connecting knower and known is not conceptual but relational, *i.e.*, existential, participative, and personal. What we call truth is only achieved through the struggle to attain relations concomitantly with a greater degree of rationality (Yannaras 2011, 9).

The underscoring of the fundamental status of the relational and the participative as expressed in the notion of significative-experential enables Yannaras thus to recognise in the more ancient, and yet richer, version of apophaticism in Dionysius the Areopagite than the one that Heidegger advanced. (Yannaras 2005). The unknowability of God does not for the Areopagite finally translate into His absence, for God's erotic love for mankind seeks to engage his human creation and deify it; Heidegger's ontology, albeit admirable in its appreciation of the onto-theological trap into which the West has fallen, remains uncommitted and non-participatory in relation to an unknowable and, for all practical purposes, an absent God. As it is practiced in the West and as can be noted in both Heidegger and Wittgenstein, the use of apophaticism concerns itself with restraining the scope of rational knowledge, based merely on conceptual capacity. It remains forgetful of knowledge as involving fundamentally the experienced immediacy of relatedness with that to which the rational knower is engaged.

The contribution that Yannaras makes in this regard is to underscore that the existential fact of the human subject lies in his acute sense of self-conscious otherness. The experience of this fact invites him to transcend ontic relationships and to enter into the ontological opening constituted by the dynamics of personhood. Under the sign of ontological difference, Yannaras rethinks the kind of analogical thinking applicable to a viable metaphysics as sustained by the factor of otherness. *i.e.*, by analogical relationality, the apophatic quality that escapes ontic description, immersed as it is in the constitution of correlated otherness of the Triadic God. "It is an apophaticism of *divine being*, insisting upon essential otherness that underlies any analogical correlation of the uncreated God with created beings." (Yannaras 2005, 28). The experienced immediacy of relatedness with the other constitutes the only authentic foundation at once for a full theory of knowledge and philosophy of language, both ultimately open-ended and implying a sense-producing struggle.

The Qualitative Leap of Relational Rationality and the Postulate of the Un-Circumscribable Logical Space

As we have mentioned, Yannaras follows Wittgenstein in thinking that the sense of the world lay outside the world. However, in his own rendering of it, Yannaras would conceive the onticity of the natural world as ontologically located within the dynamics of relationality and eros, *i.e.*, that which lays outside the world. On the basis of what we have seen up until now, we can summarise the position thusly:

    a. *ontically, the laws of nature, including those that govern the physical-biological dimension of human nature, cannot be said to have qualities unto themselves;*

    b. *whatever meaning they have depends on the bearer of the logos of nature, the human subject;*

    c. *the distinctive ontological capacity of human being entails the laborious articulation of the relationality that constitute the world as such and his own being.*

In the world, but not of it, the human existent is beckoned to decide the sense of his life but, in so doing, he decides that of the world as well. He may decide to look principally to his biogenetic relation to the created world and be limited by its onticity and its mortality. These would constitute the parameters within which he cultivates his own sense of self. Or, alternatively, he may decide to delve with more consequence into the space of the Other, motivated by desire to realise his relational existence and achieve a mode of likeness to the uncreated. Human persons are, thereby, bearers of hypostatic energy that signify nature with their own *logos*, bound analogically that of God's.

In regard to this, very reminiscent of Kierkegaard (but probably via Heidegger), Yannaras underscores the leap involved in the yearning for freedom from the impersonal natural order. The vocation to participate more fully in the interpersonal demonstrates his will-for-freedom and brings to light the complicity of language and desire.

> /There is/ a leap from urge to desire, from desire to language, from language to the many-faceted nature (the "infinity of parts") of epistemic potentiality, from a predetermined capacity to perform certain skills to a creative otherness; a leap, finally, from the undifferentiated individual of a natural uniform species to the subject of self-conscious, active (not merely morphic otherness) – that is to say, a leap to the subject of freedom from what is predetermined by nature. (Yannaras 2011, 33).

Within the orthodox schematics of divine essence/ uncreated energies/ created energies that can be found here, we can formulate in general terms what Yannaras has in mind. For him, the created energies operative in the human mode of existence possess the potential for the realisation of freedom that transcends the natural preconditions rooted in the biological. Uncreated grace will constitute the invitatory instances that will seal the entrance into communion of reciprocating free wills.

Beginning again with the created energies, we see that the causal relations at work within the biological can be duly accounted for by scientific description as necessarily present in the higher expressions of human communication. Yet it is precisely the nature of seeking engagement with the other that produces, within the organism, a constant self-organisation reflecting an increasing consciousness that cannot be reduced to scientific explanation. Crucial for the emergence of human communication is the conversion of acoustic images into the symbolic of socially sharable linguistic signifiers tacitly desiring to signify and relate to the Other. "By the word *relation* we identify the fact that only in humankind does appetitive referentiality encounter in the place of its reference (the space of the Other) a mark of the power to respond to the desire." (Yannaras 2011, 48). The qualitative leap is thus spawned in the trajectory of intentionality provoked by the otherness implied in human desiring. It represents the possibility of making the created energies into receptors of those that are uncreated. In this case, the energies of the Other, like the divine *Logos*, act responsively and are received in the linguistic acts and the subsequent intellection.

Rationality, the power to realise relation, is grounded in the primordial desire for its Logos, the fundamental reference for its self-transcending ascent beyond the non-rational desires. These can only exhaust themselves in the onticity of their biological, dimension, inflected by chance and, in and of itself, senseless. For the world to have meaning, it requires the postulation of a logical space that is unbounded and yet intentional in its own right. Such a logical space

constitutes furthermore the condition for making philosophical and scientific investigations of the world possible.

> Thanks to intentionality, the whole of the logical space of the world becomes a meaningful question, a question extended into all possible situations of things. For this reason the logical space of intentionality is indefinable.

> Uncircumscribed, the logical space of intentionality establishes and perpetually maintains philosophy and science. As zero logical space, chance destroys philosophy and makes science nonsensical. (Yannaras 2004, 70).

Albeit indefinable and un-circumscribed, the indispensable logical space marked by intentionality already implies a relational ontology transcending the natural order, whilst establishing a sphere of freedom that explores the potential for personal existence.

Herein lies the substance of the struggle to signify and to become more fully rational: exploring the resources of its intrinsic freedom that does not confine itself to the finite and merely natural, it can activate dimensions exceeding the natural plane and make viable the postulating of "the modally infinite."

> The experience of the modally infinite /…/ is confirmed fundamentally not in the relationship of humanity with the world, but in its freedom from this relationship. That is, in the ability of humanity to create its own world not subject to the necessities of nature, to form relationships referring not to facts of nature but to its own existential otherness – to create art, culture, history. (Yannaras 2004, 146).

The more personal the relationship, the more supra-natural and properly personal the network of causality within which subjectivities engage with one another, the more the experience of the modally infinite becomes identified with logical space that determines the signifier, *anthropos*, with that created being generated in the space of the Other *i.e.*, "God." The uncreated causal principle of the created inspires love and erotic yearning precisely because the signifier "God" bears this very meaning, for, in conformity with the experience of the Church, God *is* love and erotic yearning. She further sees Him as the One whose freedom from necessity is such that He may choose to exist in the mode of human nature without ceasing to be God. In the face of such a revelation, the Church would eventually employ hypostatic signifiers – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – to express the inexpressible. She seeks to relate the ultimate causal principle in God (the Father)'s unlimited freedom to beget life-giving Logos, whose Spirit proceeds from the Father and is sent to manifest divine being in that which is not-God. The Church thus draws upon language of created rational beings but dramatically inflected by Christ's witnessing to the uncreated Father/God to Whom He is related as Son.

The Church adhered consistently to the apophatic character of the linguistic formulations of its experience, refusing to exhaust the truth in its formulations or to identify the knowledge of things signified merely with the understanding of the signifiers. (Yannaras 2011, 78-79).

The signifiers employed to express this set of relations are assumed by the Church's own participation in the reality of the Triadic God. In the context of this relational ontology, the words drawn from ordinary life are given a capacity to signify the meta-physical and to be approached only analogically and relatively, but actually approached experientially through participation. That is, the experience of the relation is real. In lieu of propositions structured around formal inferences, poetic imagery and languages of art constitute more apt means of symbolic expression in this regard.

We have already acknowledged with Yannaras the epistemic gap between our understanding of the signifiers and what may be experienced and known metaphysically. The signifiers are densely determined by the criteria and principles of specific epistemological and cultural paradigms. Metaphysical language is thus necessarily relative to those paradigms and the propensity to justify them. However, the metaphysical experience in relation to the Other as such is nevertheless highly personal and its communicability will call upon a relational language that wishes to express the sureness of the erotic relation, its confirmation that it is true and a foundational belief for the meaning of the rest.

Criteria concerning the experience will evoke the desire to give oneself to the Other, overcoming the impulse for individual self-preservation and domination. Rather a self-offering is aspired to with the clear sense that freedom is achieved and personal integrity is assured in the experience. Mystical knowledge of God is thus a matter of engaging with God's kenotic nature and prolonging it in acts. The epistemological confirmation resides then precisely in its reciprocity, assuring that the otherness of the Other may be approached as such and making communion based on mutual self-giving possible. A culture informed by this experience will have a language (like that of the liturgical language of the Church) capable to incite in its poetry and its art the erotic impulse to relate to the divine energies that effectively create a new circumstance for those who participate in it. The anagogic aspirations inhering in human rationality sustains in faith and hope the experience of the modally infinite and the private absolute, suggesting a yearning to seek a relational mode of existence that might overcome death and participate in the uncreated.

The issue for Yannaras seems to hang on following through on the rationality that is at once relational and ontological, *i.e.*, in the reception and cultivation of those energies originating from the uncreated and transforming the mode of existence into that related to un-circumscribed divine freedom. "The death of the created human entity, an entity capable of the reciprocity of relation, could rationally be taken as a positive step toward some kind of assimilation (*mutatis mutandis*) to the mode of the freedom of the uncreated"

(Yannaras 2011, 104). The ecclesial experience gives witness to death as strictly defined as a rejection of a relation with God and fear of death being an irrational impulse to self-preservation. The language of the New Testament writings defines the Church's transforming experience but cannot substitute it. They proclaim in a language understood by all that salvation from death and decay has come in the Person of Jesus the Christ, the language itself cannot be made to replace the experience, always already in excess of linguistic limits. However, the struggle to signify the mystical assumes the relational into the erotic that underscores the distinctiveness of Christian aesthetics of beauty and God as radically invitatory.

> /... / for the experience of physical beauty to function referentially, to refer to the personal immediacy of God the Creator, to be 'read' as an erotic summons from God the Lover and Bridesgroom of humankind, the decisive factor cannot be some rational proof of the significance of beauty, nor the perceptive persuasion of emotional excitement. (Yannaras 2011, 72).

The experience of such beauty associated with the kenotic God is a transcending one, actively engaging in unbounded desire, revealing a personal otherness that is unique and responsive to human desiring by offering it a new life. The measure of the divine beauty that awakens life is yet another criterion of a non-illusory experience of God. The triadic God of the Christian experience becomes the implicit measure of existential authenticity. Explicated from an ontological perspective, the measure discerns the rapport between the uncreated and the created: the qualitative dimension of freedom from the limitations of time, space, and movement standing against the predeterminations and limitations that defines atomic onticity and constitutes, in comparison, a sense of "fall," that is not meant to have the last word.

In Conclusion

Yannaras' Orthodox refiguring of the philosophy of language as originally formatted by Wittgenstein and, in a different key, by Heidegger operates on the basis of a retrieval of three distinct, albeit complicit, conceptual spheres that are central to patristic thinking and that converge on the idea of signifying the mystical. Briefly summarised, *apophaticism* points to the priority of participation in the uncreated energies of an unknowable God; the divine, uncreated energies are experienced, but the divine essence from which they come is beyond every conceivable concept. Nevertheless, the humility derived from apophatic disciplining of thought and the priority given to relatedness creates for human reason a logical space for its signifiers now understood as un-circumscribable divine logos, expressed and rendered meaningful in the language and worship of the Church that celebrates God's love for humankind

and the invitation for an appropriately loving response in return. Within the purview of apophaticism, the divine logos, and the experience of the Church the range of verifiable meaning furthers considerably what both Wittgenstein and Heidegger envisaged as possible for language.

Yet, if the specificity of the Christian experience is to be highlighted in regard to language, it remains to be asked whether Wittgenstein and Heidegger lead in the right, *i.e.*, Orthodox, direction. This would be particularly the case with Heidegger, but Wittgenstein would not be exempt from following the more pagan approach to philosophy by prioritizing the experience of the world and yet depriving the world of its own redemption in the divine economy of grace. To put the matter differently and following Michel Henry in his expression, with the Christian Revolution the philosophical question does not become one about the forgetfulness of being, *i.e.*, the ontological difference, but the forgetfulness of our divine affiliation – sons in the Son? And does not this render the real ontological interrogation less about the revelation of being, less about ecstatic ontological leap into a communion of persons, leaving the ontic order behind, and more about receiving a gift from a self-donating God who is Absolute Life? If we must speak of the ecstatic, would it not be better conceived within the economy of divine self-donation? And would not the patristic mind be more in tune with the recognition of Life as more urgent ontologically speaking and privileged than that of worldly experience? – or better, to see the latter in the perspective of the former, the fullness of the implications of the Incarnate Word and its hypostatic glorifying of matter?[2]

Yannaras' deployment of apophaticism, his reworking of logical space, and his courageous affirmation of the singular ontological status of the Church are certainly helpful in putting important postulates of modern and postmodern philosophy in a new and yet ancient perspective and provide these with renewed possibilities. This is already a considerable achievement. But, particularly given his uncompromising critique of Western options in philosophy and the life of the Church, is he radical enough on this score? Has he bought too much into the Wittgensteinian and Heideggerian format of philosophy of language and not enough into the Word that precedes human words about the world and, in fact, creates it whilst it speaks? If this comes into view in liturgy, and most notably in the Eucharist, ought we not to allow that these things too give rise to thought,

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2   Curiously, several essays dedicated to the man-as-priest-of -creation theme and Byzantine liturgical art, published in *Freedom of Morality*, do accentuate the sense of cosmic liturgy and the redemptive transfiguration of matter. But the theme is practically lost in the more recent *Postmodern Metaphysics* and *Relational Ontotology* that we have been following in this essay. Nevertheless, the following passage from an additional note to his "Ethos of Liturgical Art" is noteworthy for underscoring the art of introducing created matter into divine life: "/Such forms of art embody/ man's struggle for the truth of matter and the world, a struggle and an ascetic effort to bring about the *communal* event of personal freedom and distinctiveness." (Yannaras 1984, 264).

and even philosophical thought, about the nature of relationality and the power of language, originating in the un-circumscribed, to realize truth and beauty and to delight?

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JOHN POLKINGHORNE ON DIVINE ACTION

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Abstract

This essay investigates John Polkinghorne's concept of divine action. I argue that one of Polkinghorne's key innovations was to introduce the paradigm of 'information-input causation' into the theory of divine action. However, despite this achievement, I show that Polkinghorne's approach is trapped in an insuperable dilemma: it either can be reduced to classical non-informational causal accounts of divine action or turns God into a cause among others.

Keywords: John Polkinghorne, divine action, information-input causation, chaos, complex dynamical systems, God as a cause among others.

1. Introduction

In this essay, I analyze Polkinghorne's view on divine action. This theme has a long history in the theological and philosophical thinking and has puzzled both past and present writers. The topic of divine action occupied the minds of most Christian thinkers, who, starting with the Early Christian period[2] up until Thomas Aquinas[3] and Gregory Palamas[4] provided various solutions to this problem. Contemporary approaches of this issue, like that by Polkinghorne, which strongly take into account modern advances of science when dealing with divine action, encountered wider audience with the development of Divine Action Project, sponsored by the Vatican Observatory and the Centre for Theology and the Natural Sciences in Berkeley.[5] The basic hypothesis this project started from was that causal gaps in nature seem to be necessary in order to accommodate the concept of divine action to restrictions imposed by modern

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[2] See for details, J. Rebecca Lymann (1993). *Christology and Cosmology: Models of Divine Activity in Origen, Eusebius, and Athanasius.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

[3] See for details, M. Dodds (2012). *Unlocking Divine Action: Contemporary Science and Thomas Aquinas.* The Catholic University of America Press.

[4] See for details, T. Tollefsen (2012). *Activity and Participation in Late Antique and Early Christian Thought.* Oxford University Press.

[5] See for details, the following entry: http://www.ctns.org/research.html#project (last accessed at 12.04.2014).

science. A second hypothesis was that divine action should be proved non-interventionist for otherwise it would be contradictory to conceiving of God as perfectly designing the world and its laws from the beginning and afterwards wishing to suspend them. This demand for non-interventionist, objective, divine action was shared by Polkinghorne together with many others, though his approach could be singularized as an endeavor to look for causal gaps within complex dynamical systems and information theory instead of searching for traditional energy based or matter-type models for divine causality.[6] The innovative way in which Polkinghorne reframed the approach to the issue of divine action has been widely acknowledged by nowadays scholarship and the aim of this paper is to give a conceptual analysis of this theory.[7] Despite its achievements, I hold that this theory could be faced with a serious dilemma: it either can be reduced to classical non-informational causal accounts of divine action or turns God into a cause among others. Yet, as it will come up from the subsequent arguments, Polkinghorne designed his theory to specially avoid these conclusions. My strategy is to start from some of Polkinghorne's general reflections on God (section 2). Following, I will question the natural processes in which God may act according to Polkinghorne (chapter 3). In chapter four I discuss the mechanism of this action and draw on some of its misinterpretations. Finally, Polkinghorne's theory of divine action is faced with the dilemma mentioned above (section 5).

2. Personal God

On a classical reading, the world could be considered as a result of God's will. Thus, God could be seen as acting upon it whenever he wants and without being constrained by anything. According to this picture, God could change or break the laws of nature because they all depend on his absolute will. Once he is endowed with an absolute power, nothing could resist his will, even when he

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[6] Despite taking into account the advances brought in by quantum mechanics and other recent theories in science, it seems that authors like A. Peacocke, I. Barbour, J. Russell and others linked to the Divine Action Project did not emphasized the need to abandon the classical view of matter-energy type of causation as Polkinghorne did. For a short but interesting comparison between Polkinghorne's contribution to the theory of divine action and A. Peacocke and I. Barbour, see Christopher C. Knight (2012). 'John Polkinghorne', in J.B. Stump & A.G. Padgget, *The Blackwell Companion to Science and Christianity.* Wiley-Blackwell. pp. 627-630.

[7] For a biographical sketch and recent survey of the work by John Polkinghorne and its relevance for the dialogue between science and religion, see Christopher C. Knight 2012, 622-632. Knight starts his essay by portraying Polkinghorne as being "one of the most significant figures in the dialogue between science and theology in the last two decades of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first…"

may want things which seem irrational to us.[8] For Polkinghorne, this (classical) conception of God "is not one that commends itself to Christian theology".[9] God as a supernatural agent appears to him as an old fashioned view. Most importantly, he thinks it inadequately represents God as a ruler of the universe, who acts intermittently or even capriciously. This probably fits better than anything else with the traditional position designating the universe by using the clock metaphor, that is, the universe behaves like a mechanism which needs restarted at a certain period of time.[10] Nevertheless, the idea of the universe as a mechanism which sometimes needs an 'impulse' from God is repugnant to Polkinghorne. His reason for this is that this view actually limits God's activity only to the preservation of the world: "The outdated mechanical universe of pre-twentieth century physical science would not have been the fitting creation of the Christian God, though it could certainly be said to exhibit his economy and acquiescence" (Polkinghorne 1989, 9). As we will further see, Polkinghorne emphasizes that the world is actually much more complex than the clock metaphor suggests and this allows him to explore a different approach to divine action. It seems his theory was also motivated by his commitment to a theistic picture about God, that is a view which supports the hypothesis that God must enter in a relationship with humans and his creation. Being a God who bestows his love to human persons, he must be able to act and react continuously and not only for adjusting the clock of the world. The Christian God is conceived in this context as one we cooperate with by asking and praying. Of course, a detailed explanation of this interaction is difficult to provide though Polkinghorne considers there is room for both our freedom and for God's will to meet in a personal interaction (1989, 70). Polkinghorne thinks God's special interaction with the world must be accepted by all who contemplate on divine action, otherwise our prayers and our hopes would be in vain.[11] For a Christian believer, this is not an absurdity since for such a person God is a living being, open to the beings he has created: "He is not just the abstract God of natural theology but he is also the living God… He is the one who is worshipped by the elders in the Book of Revelation…" (1989, 10). In this context, Polkinghorne also emphasizes how unsuitable the concept of demiurge is in general, because it actually suggests only the idea of God as the cause of the universe. Albeit this picture gives God a superior power and intelligence, it appears to Polkinghorne as an awkward attempt to portray God as a cause among others, that is, the work

8   For a description of the issue of the omnipotence of God in this context, see A. Funkenstein (1986). *Theology and the Scientific Imagination from the Middle Ages to the Seventeenth Century*. Princeton University Press. ch. 3: Divine Omnipotence and the Laws of Nature.

9   J. Polkinghorne *Science and Providence*, SPCK, 1989, p. 6. From now on I will refer to this book by the abbreviation: Polkinghorne (1989) and I will follow below similar abbreviations for all the references to Polkinghorne's works.

10   See, for details, E. Dolnick (2011). *The Clockwork Universe: Isaac Newton, the Royal Society, and the Birth of the Modern World*. Harper Collins.

11   See ch. 9.

of God would be comparable with any work performed by a cause in the world which continuously sustains its effect (Polkinghorne 1988, 55). For example, think of the force of gravity that permanently maintains the planets in a particular position in the universe. For Polkinghorne and for most Christians, God must perform special works different in their character than those performed by common causes for this is the way in which he makes himself known to humans. Thus, for the Anglican theologian God could not be confused with other causes, he is the God of Jews and Christians, which uniquely shares in both a transcendent and an immanent status. God is behind anything conceivable by men, being somehow totally incomprehensible, though he revels himself and enters a kind of dialogue with every person (Polkinghorne 1989, 17). Undoubtedly, prayer is here taken as one of the most straightforward means through which this meeting can be reached. According to Polkinghorne, between human's wishes and God's will there has to be a point of intersection and prayer seems to be the perfect place for this crossing because due to prayer we can align to God's will (1989, 70). Polkinghorne emphasizes that in the act of praying we somehow engage in accomplishing God's will but also open ourselves for finding a possible answer to our wishes because he is the God of love (Polkinghorne 1988, 54) and the God "who suffers when his people suffer…" (Polkinghorne 1989, 19). Undoubtedly, this is a complex process but what Polkinghorne suggests is that it is impossible to think about this in terms other than co-operation. In the act of praying both men and God act and 'react' and so "both contribute" to this meeting (Polkinghorne 1989, 70-71). As a result, for Polkinghorne, the Christian God interacts with humans and he is not acting only for sustaining the universe. He is a theistic God, open to listening to our wishes and acting in response to them. We need now investigating what are the processes in nature identified by Polkinghorne which may suggest the possibility of such a special divine providence, according to which God interferes with his creation and not only acts through a general divine providence for just preserving it in existence. As for Polkinghorne and all other contributors to the theory of divine action, the proviso should always be the following: special divine action should not run God into inconsistency or irrationality. In other words, it has to be in line with the general divine providence through which God made the world and through which he continuously maintains it for it can be easily inferred from the Christian representation of God that he must be consistent with all his actions.

3. Complex Dynamical Systems

Polkinghorne states that the perfect 'place' where we could find traces of God's action in nature is the complex dynamical process. He introduces the idea by taking the analogy between us and our bodies, respectively God and the material world. In this approach, humans are seen as "mind/matter amphibians",

where the mental component can be considered as emerging at an "indefinitely flexible degree of organization of the matter" (Polkinghorne 1989, 26). Within this complementary couple, the mind can be taken as somehow interacting or acting upon the body. Polkinghorne thinks the material processes of the body show a high flexibility and this could fit for the conditions defining such an interaction (1989, 26). In analogy with this, Polkinghorne suggests we might contemplate the idea that the flexibility within the matter of the universe might allow for the divine action upon it. However, he also emphasizes the limits of the analogy: God does not act as the mind does because He is not an "amphibian" but is always free from matter (1989, 27).

The British theologian also explores the possibility of finding the cause of the flexibility of matter in the well-known quantum phenomena. These matters are purported to be good candidates in fulfilling the task of openness marked by the flexibility of matter.[12] At least, at first sight, this is what their random character might suggest to us.[13] One may think it is in their purported uncaused behavior where we could find the soil fitting to God's action. Yet, Polkinghorne casts serious doubts on the validity of this proposal. He first recalls us that quantum uncertainties, if interpreted ontologically, are valid only for individual quantum events. But at the level described by Newtonian mechanics or at common sense level, they bear low relevance since there everything is described classically.[14] Moreover, the British physicist emphasizes that quantum processes imply an indeterminist description only when measurements occur. The corollary of this for the interpretation of divine action through quantum gaps is that this approach would licenses to limiting God's action only to cases of measurements, a conclusion that would not be acceptable at a theological level (Polkinghorne 1989, 24). It turns out that, for Polkinghorne, the best place where we can find the flexibility in nature that might allow for God's action should be rather occupied by the domain of complex dynamical systems.[15] And it seems to me the most important part of Polkinghorne's originality to the

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[12] One of the first advocates of the idea of using quantum gaps as the medium for God's action, a point against which Polkinghorne provided several arguments across time, is Robert Russell; see, for details, Robert Russell *et all*. (eds.) (1988). *Physics, Philosophy and Theology*, Vatican Observatory, 1988 and T. Peters & N. Hallanger (eds.) (2000). *God's Action in Nature's World. Essays in Honour of Robert John Russell*, Ashgate.

[13] On randomness as a characteristic of quantum mechanics, see Hilgevoord, Jan and Uffink, Jos, "The Uncertainty Principle", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/ entries/qt-uncertainty/ (accessed at 12.03.2014).

[14] See for details, Polkinghorne 1989.

[15] One of the first systematic accounts of the issue of chaos, complex dynamical systems and divine action has been given in R.J. Russell, N. Murphy and A.R. Peacocke (eds.), *Chaos and Complexity. Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action*, Vatican Observatory Publications, Vatican City State and the Centre for Theology and the Natural Sciences, Berkeley, California.

interpretation of divine action lies exactly in this proposal. The essential feature of complex dynamical systems that Polkinghorne uses in this context is their unpredictability. These systems have the special property of having a behavior very sensitive to the circumstances. One can think there actually is an infinite variety of circumstances and this makes the prior prediction of their evolution simply impossible. To follow one of Polkinghorne's simple examples: take many billiard ball-like objects and then (continuously) collide them successively. The many-particle system only appears as being indeterminist but actually the trajectories of every ball depend upon the details of every local collision. These small uncertainties add up in the end in "exponentially diverging consequences" (Polkinghorne 1989, 28).

This kind of processes, for which Polkinghorne produces many examples impose a certain limit in the power of prediction. Thus, they seem to grant us with that kind of openness and flexibility which cannot be found in the classical clockwork metaphor of the universe. And furthermore, what proves to be highly relevant here is that they are neither separated systems nor self-contained. Moreover, they show a remarkable capacity of generating new order even if given their chaotic behavior we might be tempted to deprive them of any structural characteristic. They rather share in an oxymoronic order-disorder having "the character of a kind of structured randomness" (Polkinghorne 1994, 25). Polkinghorne emphasizes the possibility to extend the chaotic behavior within macroscopic systems we are acquainted with. He furthermore notes how improbable is to find many systems lacking this behavior and thus announces the death of the clockwork universe (Polkinghorne 1989, 33). Most of all, the above mentioned statement according to which the chaotic behavior can be restrained within certain (structural) limits does not prevent our author to make a further important step in his argumentation. He therefore maintains that there is an ontological correlative for the unpredictable character of complex dynamical systems. This different facet of the epistemological limits mentioned above is expressed through the conjecture of a 'true becoming' reality, which in itself becomes a principle according to which – as Polkinghorne likes to say – 'epistemology models ontology'. To put it simply, it signifies that physical processes are open but not predetermined; in order words, the present is not uniquely implied in the past. Remarkably, the disordered character of the dynamical complex processes leaves to Polkinghorne the space for speculating about an intrinsic openness of these systems. He thus invites us to conceive of the possibility God may interact with the cosmos due the intrinsic complexity of the structure of nature, which nonetheless assures its openness and true becoming (Polkinghorne 1989, 29-30). Polkinghorne thinks that only in such a complex open world, submitted to a continuous transformation, the idea of God who interacts with the universe can be rationally accepted and it is his merit of bringing to light this important hypothesis. One should further ask for an

explanation of the nature of this interaction and for the arguments Polkinghorne provides in its support.

4. Information-Input Causation

Polkinghorne is careful in ascertaining the limits of the analogy between mind-matter interaction and God-universe interaction. As I have previously mentioned, for Polkinghorne God's status is not that of an "amphibian" and, hence, He cannot act as being present in matter as our mind 'is'. Polkinghorne rather thinks that God *in*-forms, *i. e.* gives form to matter than energetically acting upon it: "If God acts in the world through influencing the evolution of complex systems, he does not need to do so by the creative input of energy." (Polkinghorne 1989, 32). The British physicist considers that accepting the traditional idea of material or energetic influence will raise at least three problems for conceptualizing God: first, God is not embodied in the universe in order to fulfill such a task; second, any energetic influence is constrained by conservation of energy and thermodynamic relations and this would implicitly impose many restrictions on God's action, and third, this kind of interaction would hardly help us in discerning God from "an agent among other agents" (1989, 32-33). Polkinghorne's notable proposal is therefore to think of God as operating non-mechanically/energetically. More exactly, God is taken by him to act through inserting information in the initial conditions of a system, an event which further determines dynamical systems to take one path from mere other possible ones:[16]

> Read from the bottom-upwards, physics provides us with no more than an envelope of possibility, within which future development is constrained to lie. Within that envelope, the path actually taken depends upon the realization of a specific set of options selected from among proliferating possibilities. These different possibilities are not discriminated from each other by energetic considerations… but by something much more like an information-input (this path rather than that one). (Polkinghorne 1994, 25-6).

Most important, Polkinghorne states that this kind of interaction precludes us from confusing God with a common agent from whom we would expect a kind of mechanical action. Still, it allows us to coherently conceive God as causally influencing the evolution of complex dynamical systems. Unfortunately, Polkinghorne makes no comments on the concept of information he uses here. However, it seems plausible to understand the concept as being similar with the one used by D. Bohm, an author Polkinghorne largely quotes with other occasions (Polkinghorne 2001, 101). Bohm postulated that the quantum

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[16] The information-input is also seen by N. Saunders, *Divine Actions & Modern Science*, 2002, ch. 7 as lying at the foundation of Polkinghorne's original contribution to the topic.

potential – a kind of force that in his opinion defines a non-classical "implicit order" and connection between the quantum entities – does not steer the particles through a mechanical influence. It rather imparts some information to them such that it determines their trajectories. For Polkinghorne too, the input of information seems to determine one trajectory among many possible paths and thus it merely *in*-forms the evolution of a system. Now, what Polkinghorne seems to say is that one should apply this picture to God's action. The natural conclusion of this would be that God's information-input steers one physical system until it gets one of the multiple available paths such that in the end its evolution takes a specific form.[17]

A problem raised here by some of Polkinghorne's critics regards the relationship between the chaotic-unpredictable character of complex dynamical systems and their deterministic evolution.[18] Essentially, chaos theory is a deterministic theory and the question now turns out to be where one can actually find room in it for the openness required by a theory of divine action? Thus, Polkinghorne would conflate the epistemic unpredictability with the indeterministic evolution of systems. And this would probably be determined by his conjecture (mentioned above) that there is a correspondence of unpredictability in ontology: "Such a view is congenial to the critical realist for whom epistemology and ontology are always closely linked" (Polkinghorne 1988, 43). But as N. Saunders rightly remarked, Polkinghorne is careful in not dropping the deterministic element from the picture (Saunders 2002, 190). Polkinghorne's move is rather to forbid any ontological inference from the deterministic character of mathematical equations. The British physicist is therefore reluctant to identifying the mathematical models with reality itself and he freely postulates reality is richer than we can grasp through mathematical models.[19] Saunders points out this is a metaphysical principle which lies at the base of Polkinghorne's argumentation for this particular point and because of failing in taking this into account, Polkinghorne's critics misunderstood the originality and force of his view.[20] The metaphysical claim Polkinghorne makes is that the world is essentially indeterministic, but at a lower level it allows a coherent deterministic description in terms of mathematical equations. It seems Polkinghorne firstly talks in terms of *emergent* open/chaotic behavior of the physical systems: initially isolated systems reach a certain level of complexity where they will purport an indeterministic description. But it seems that

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[17]   See also Saunders 2002, 193.
[18]   I follow here Saunders' (2002) approach. Unfortunately, I did not have at my disposal for this research the recent collection of essays edited by F. Watts (2012). *God and the Scientist. Exploring the Work of John Polkinghorne*. Ashgate. 2012.
[19]   Recall Polkinghorne's above mentioned principle: 'epistemology models ontology'.
[20]   Saunders 2002, 186-96 and especially 190-3. Saunders also considers Polkinghorne's view rests on a specific relation epistemology-ontology.

afterwards, Polkinghrone turns "the standard notion of ontological emergence on its head" (Saunders 2002, 191) and suggests the nature of reality is inherently indeterministic and mathematics only catches a "downward emergent determinism", as Saunders sharply pointed out:

> Essentially what Polkinghorne's scheme amounts to is the claim that mathematical chaos theory does not fully represent reality. Implicit in his understanding is an assertion about the reality of real world indeterministic chaotic phenomena that operate in nature over and above their mathematical representations… This metaphysical assertion that nature is inherently flexible cannot be caught by any simplistic critique on the basis that mathematically chaos theory is fundamentally deterministic. The choice between these two metaphysical interpretations of nature is one which Polkinghorne elsewhere likens to the decision between adhering to Heisenberg or Bohm's interpretation of quantum mechanics… (Saunders 2002, 191).

Therefore, it seems one is asked to choose between two options: an intrinsically deterministic world that allows the emergence of chaotic phenomena when a level of certain complexity is reached; and, on the contrary, a world inherently indeterministic that purports to a deterministic description of phenomena at one emergent downward level. The question to be reflected upon seems to be a twofold one: the meaning of the notion world/reality needs to be addressed in relation with the concept of (upward and downward) emergent phenomena. Also, one should inquire the nature of the link mathematics can have with reality. As Saunders has noted already, the decision upon all such difficult solutions is a metaphysical one, in the sense that there are no empirical or rational decisive constrains for adopting one or other of the options.

In conclusion, no matter whether one sees it as an incomplete proposal or not, Polkinghorne's view certainly represents a new and attractive contribution for the understanding of the concept of divine action. However, I will now show that this theory has to be confronted with an important quandary.

5. The Dilemma

As stated above, Polkinghorne pays much effort to assure us of the uniqueness of God's action in order to distinguish him from other agents. This feature is meant to be guaranteed by Polkinghorne's innovative idea of divine information-input causation. The interpretation proposed was that Polkinghorne uses information in a sense close to David Bohm's use of quantum potential. However, nowadays followers of Bohm's interpretation provided important

arguments for the dispense with the quantum potential.[21] More exactly, their theses proved the equivalence between the results obtained by invoking the existence of a "rather strange and arbitrary"[22] quantum potential and those following from imposing a specific quantum equilibrium condition on the probability distribution of (space representation of) particles (which is similar in its character with the classical thermodynamic equilibrium condition).[23] Thus, one can conclude that information as encapsulated in the quantum potential could be reduced to the distribution of probability of energy states of quantum particles. Hence, the first horn of the dilemma for Polkinghorne is that the job of information-input causation could be done with traditional tools and therefore divine causation will not be differentiated from other types of causation. The other horn of the dilemma starts with acknowledging that a different reading of information-input causation could be proposed than that focusing on Bohm's theory of the quantum potential. For example, there are voices which state that information must be the first category of ontology – everything that exists is information! In this approach, matter and energy should be treated as kinds of (quantum) information and any physical interaction should be seen as a process of information change.[24] But in such worldview, God's informational-input would no longer profess the unparalleled status assigned to it by Polkinghorne. God will then act as any other physical system because any interaction within the physical world is based on the change of information. Hence, in contrast to Polkinghorne's declared intention, God would be seen here as an agent among other agents. Therefore, Polkinghorne's novel proposal to interpret divine action in terms of information-input causation must confront the two horns of a quandary: information-input causation is either reducible to classical accounts using matter or energy based interactions or fails to avoid making God a cause among others. Support for the first comes from recent interpretations of the quantum potential and for the second from new proposals for interpreting information as the basic ingredient of ontology. In conclusion, despite its innovations and merits, Polkinghorne's theory of divine action must come up with further arguments for explaining divine action in terms of information and overcoming the horns of the dilemma.

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[21]   S. Goldstein, "Bohmian Mechanics", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2013 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2013/entries/qm-bohm/>.

[22]   Bohm's characterization of quantum potential in D. Bohm (1980). *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*. New York: Routledge. p. 80, *apud* Goldstein, art. cit., chapter 'the quantum potential'.

[23]   See, for more details, Goldstein, art.cit., chapter 'quantum randomness'.

[24]   See, for details, J. Bub (2006). 'Quantum Information and Quantum Computing' in J. Earman & J. Butterfield (eds.) (2006). *Philosophy of Physics* (Handbook of Philosophy of Science). North-Holland. pp. 555-660.

6. Conclusions

This study presented some key aspects of John Polkinghorne's theory of divine action. The aim was to provide an analysis of Polkinghorne's major contribution to the field as encapsulated in his interpretation of divine action in terms of information-input causation. Although this interpretation was recognized as an important development of conceptualizing divine action, I argued it cannot avoid a serious plight: it is either reducible to classical accounts of divine action which use matter or energy based interactions instead of information or fails to avoid making God a cause among others. The argument started with an overview of Polkinghorne's concept of God and his support for a theistic interpretation of divine action, one which presupposes a personal contact and relationship with God. Then, I presented Polkinghorne's key idea that complex dynamical systems could be the means through which this action could be performed. I emphasized that Polkinghorne makes an important analogy between information-input causation and the action performed by the quantum potential in David Bohm's interpretation of quantum mechanics. I finally faced Polkinghorne's theory with the two horns of a quandary: on the one hand, in general, the results obtained with the quantum potential could be gained with some tools which directly approximate classical thermal equilibrium theory and hence information-input causation is proved reducible in this context to matter-energy type of causation. On the other hand, if one prefers a more robust interpretation of information as providing the basic 'block' of ontology, then all physical interactions within the created world become characterized by information-input causal relations. Unavoidably, this would make God's information input-causation one among others and hence God one cause among others, a conclusion against which Polkinghorne explicitly designed his theory of divine action. Thus, despite its achievements, Polkinghorne's theory of divine action must provide us with further arguments for explaining divine action in terms of information and overcoming the horns of the dilemma. However, the approach by John Polkinghorne remains one of the most important attempts to interpret the issue of divine action with the tools of contemporary physics and will certainly contribute to open new paths and questions to the modern theories of divine action.

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NATURE AND LEGAL NORM
FROM AN ENVIRONMENTALIST STANDPOINT

CONSTANTIN STOENESCU[1]

Abstract

I have tried to argue in this paper that the general philosophical perspective over the environmental problems could generate different approaches of environmental legislation. For a traditionalist European philosopher the environmental ethics is not a new ethics, but is reducible to the technical problems of any applied ethics, for example, the way in which some legal norms cover some cases and the justice manages the prejudices against environment. From the standpoint of a "deep ecology" a debate on the metaphysics of environmentalism and the way in which environmental ethics gains a new statute is necessary.

Keywords: environmental ethics, environmental legislation, "deep ecology", global approach, local action.

Foreword: Moral Rights and Legal Rights

The main philosophical supposition of this article is that we need to draw the distinction between moral rights and legal rights in order to avoid some confusions and ambiguities regarding the two domains. Therefore, once I drew the distinction the aim of this paper became clearer, being that to look to legal rights as such and their role in an environmentalist theory and not to offer an appraisal of these concepts from an ethical standpoint.

The two concepts are different and to mention some of these differences could be a favorite starting point. I'll use Tom Regan's suggestions regarding the differences between the two domains of rights.[2] First of all, the legal rights have to be related with the sources of law at national level. From this point of view the legal rights are different in space and time, from one country to another and from one age to another. In modern society they have a contextual lawfulness or availability according to the general legal framework and the fundamental law, namely, the Constitution.

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[2]   See Tom Regan (1984). *The Case for Animal Rights*. London, New York: Routledge.

Secondly, the moral rights are universal, which means that the individuals with some common relevant characteristics have the same moral rights. Some characteristics as the race, the sex, the religion, the place of birth, the nationality, the residence country, and so on, aren't relevant for the moral rights. On the contrary, to use them in order to make a difference is a moral mistake. The environmentalist theories try to answer to the question regarding those characteristics which are relevant for the moral rights. If the answer is that all living organisms have in common a property which is relevant not only biologically, but also morally, then we need to redraw the borders of morality. In the case of legal rights it is at least possible – and the history is full of such kind of real cases – to use this characteristics as basic differences.

Thirdly, the moral rights are equal, namely, if two individuals have the same right then they have this right equally, whatever are the differences between them, as would be the irrelevant characteristics mentioned above. In the case of legal norms it is possible to build a world with an inequitable distribution of goods or a community with a preferential distribution of rewards. But the philosophers talked about different ways to conceive equality and the meaning which was agreed is that of equal opportunities. So, any legal obstacle to equal opportunities will be morally rejected.

Fourthly, the source of moral rights is not the individual activity, such as a tyrant or a group of selected people, let's say, a legislative assembly. To create legal rights which are in a good agreement with moral right or to protect them doesn't mean to create moral rights. But any society has to be governed on a legal basis and, as a consequence, if the environment is related with society or with individual interests, it becomes a subject of legal rights.

My aim here is to find a web of relations between moral rights and legal rights from an environmentalist point of view. Although moral rights and legal rights are different, the ethics of environment and the legislation regarding the environment interact each other in some ways.

Environmental Ethics and Environmental Legislation: Reciprocal Independence or Mutual Interdependence?

Generally speaking, a legal norm incorporates a set of values and attitudes, at least implicitly, into the structure of different normative utterances or statements, or explicitly, into the core of a speech which could be a companion for the normative web itself. Internalized by the moral subject, these norms, values and moral feelings become an individual ethos and the personal attitudes are expressed through a behavior which has intentionality and could be morally or legally right or wrong oriented. A moral outlook could be accompanied by an

ethical code and it can prove its rightness through the effects produced in every person, between the persons, and at the level of society as a whole.

In the last decades, as the ecological conscience was powered by the resurrection of public sensibility to nature, a new type of public speech was established. The human activities caused many ecological disasters and some economical activities are a stable source of threat for nature. Some people protested against this polluting world order and some reflected to this state of art. Some philosophers, as dialogical persons, with their eyes wide opened and with their souls impressed by the silent scream of nature, tried to advocate the nature *ex officio*. They put their ideas and their humanistic ideals into a new non-anthropocentric context and their minds starting to work to a new project. The good news was a new domain of philosophical reflection, the philosophy of environment and, in a narrow sense, the ethic of environment. The question if this new theoretical area made a difference into the domain of norms was legitimate. If the ethics of environment is a source for a new type of norms then we have a reason to discuss again about morality and law, about nature and convention, about identity and otherness, and to understand them otherwise

If ethics of environment is possible as a new domain of reflection then how should we conceive this ethics? In deontological terms used by Kant? Or return to the old idea about human virtues? And what about the contractualistic view? Aren't our interests and our pleasures good criteria for a utilitarian theory? And, another question, are we ready to talk about intrinsic value of ecosystems as wholes?

All these questions and many more receive solutions inside of the ethics of environment. But I am focused here only on the limited area of moral and legal rights. Has the environmental legislation any role to solve the environmental problems, to avoid the crisis or to prevent the damages against nature? Of course, the natural disasters, a devastating hurricane or a strong earthquake, can't be prevented by law, but the effects of human activities on environment depends on the legal framework. Then, the question is if we really need an environmental legislation superimposed to the traditional legislation and if the ethics of environment should be a source of law.

Since the environmental debate gained public force there were raised several theoretical positions regarding the relation between ethics of environment and the environmental legislation. These theoretical insights were expressed both simultaneously and sequentially. Some are mutually exclusive, others may coexist. I think broadly that a short description should take into account the main trends to understand the ethics of environment.

The first dominant standpoint was expressed after the Second World War and has kept its supremacy till the beginning of seventies. The ethics of environment were at its theoretical beginnings at that time and the dominant point of view was that we don't need an ethic in order to solve the problems

regarding environment. These are solved currently with the help of technology and all we need to do is to use the traditional legislation, to support adequate policies and to ask the scientists and other experts, first of all, the engineers and the managers, to offer the best solutions. The nature can't be a moral subject, it has no conscience and no interests and, therefore, it is without sense to talk about the ethics of environment. The domain of morality is coextensive with society.

Inside this first standpoint we could distinguish between two attitudes regarding the legal norms. The legislative reactions followed initially only after an ecological accident such that these technical events became the reason used by legislator for his decision to regulate certain activities. As a rule, these legal norms had a technical character, namely, they were technical norms for the technological process and the aim was to minimize the ecological risks through better technologies. Some old technologies or dangerous substances were forbidden and some technologies were upgraded with a new technical level, that of neutralizing those substances which are dangerous for human health. As a result, norms were adopted regarding manufacturing, manipulating, transporting and storage for dangerous substances and wastes. A good example is the accident happened in Seveso, Italy, which was the origin of an European Directive regarding the ecological accidents. But nothing was changed essentially. Because the technology was guilty, the owners of it have the obligation to replace it with a better technology, a friendly one. Some technologies are necessary for our welfare and we have no choice than to accept the inevitability of some damages against environment. Eventually, if we don't have yet a new technology better than the dangerous one, we'll pay a compensation for these damages. The "polluter pays" principle is the last expression of this attitude.

The second attitude internalized within the first standpoint is related with active measures, from learning and forming ecological conscience to punishing the polluter, even with a preventing goal. The case Brockovich – a person fighting for the people who were affected by the effects of industrial activities – is a paradigm for this turning point, when the justice takes a decision favorable to the people and the corporatist entity is punished. The conclusions were that the problems regarding the health of environment and the welfare of individuals or, let's say so, the welfare of a biotic community or an ecosystem, don't request only technological solutions, but also a real change at the level of society. In the year 1993, the young Erin Brockovich, although laced law competencies, instrumented a legal process against *Pacific Gas and Electric Company*, a company which contaminated the water in the Californian town Hinkley with hexavalent chrome. The law case was finished in the year 1996 with financial penalties for the company, the biggest in the history of USA for

such a case.[3] Even if this new attitude marks a new phase on the long way of wakening the ecological conscience, it wasn't the final change which we need in order to get to a new ethic because to solve the problem of environment through law doesn't mean anyway that the ethics of environment was fixed.

The second standpoint consists in the setting of an ethics of environment. The traditional ethics doesn't offer solutions to the problem regarding the relations between humans and environment because these problems aren't soluble in the framework of law built on traditional ethic. From the traditional standpoint the environment hasn't a moral standing and the problems of environment were ignored. Initially, some relations between humans were rethought in their dependence on the environment. Then the nature became the third part in the social contract and the humans accepted a new kind of responsibilities, those regarding the nature. The new vision about the relation between humankind and nature was that the nature isn't only a resource which must be exploited, but that we have the duty to preserve the integrity, the stability and the beauty of nature. We are morally responsible for all these and it is in our interest on a long term to protect the nature and to eliminate or to reduce the risks.

This second standpoint became dominant in the last two decades. The triple relation between society, economy and environment was conceived as a new basis for the dialogue regarding our choices and the development of society. The concept of sustainable development was proposed as a hard core for a new theory of development. This new idea was associated immediately with the problems regarding the relations between the human generations and their welfare and with the complex problem of intergenerational justice. The precautionary principle was stated starting from the idea of a prejudice against nature, comparable with the old idea of prejudice against humans. The principle of subsidiarity, as a way to good governance, was defined in relation with the closer relation between a human community and its natural environment. Even the principle "the polluter pays" acquired an ethical dimension, understood as a punishment for an immoral behavior and not only as a bargain between the polluter and the community according which the polluter has the right to pollute because he or she paid.

But neither the first nor the second standpoint questioned sufficiently and completely the so-called "ecological crisis" such that to reach the grounds of environmental ethics. If we are interested in using natural resources we can give an answer in terms of sustainable development, if we are interested in

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[3]   After winning this trial Erin Brockovich became an environmental activist. In the year 2001 she has published a book with the title *Take It from Me. Life's a Struggle But You Can Win.* A movie about her life, with Julia Roberts won the Oscar Prize for the best actress. The impact over the public conscience was very strong and the new generation of environmentalists was augmented.

equilibrium and irreversibility of ecosystems we'll find the answers in different scientific theories and so on, without any major changes in the conceptual framework.

The environmentalists share in common the idea that it is necessary to question explicitly the theoretical views about nature which were thought in the Western philosophical tradition and in other domains like science or religion. The environmentalists search for solutions within this tradition. But is this tradition able to solve the environmental problems as long as it was the last cause of them?[4]

"Shallow" and "Deep" in Environmental Ethics

Thus we get to the idea of an environmental ethics understood as a real change of our vision about the relation between human and nature, a change like that proposed by Arne Naess.[5] He has made a difference between a "shallow ecology" and a "deep ecology" and has tried to define it as a difference between ways of thinking, between modern scientific thought and the new way of thinking in environmental sciences. This distinction is similar with that more ethically charged which was defined by Routley[6] as a difference between human chauvinism or anthropocentrism and the attempt to assign to nature an intrinsic value which is independent from the utilitarian value recognized by the people.

"Shallow ecology" treats ecosystems and the environment as a science which belongs to the family of life and earth sciences, like oceanography or meteorology. Shallow environmentalists put knowledge in the service of nature, without an effort to forestall and to avoid the so/called "collateral damages". Like the meteorologists who make weather forecasts and alert us in order to avoid the damages if some extreme events are about to occur, the shallow environmentalists inform us, first of all, the politicians and the industrialists, about the long term effects of different natural phenomena caused by the human activities, as would be the acid rains, or about the consequences over ecosystems and our health of some new technologies, as would be the use of genetic modified organisms in agriculture. In Naess terms, "shallow ecology" fights against pollution and against the squander of natural resources. Its main goals are the health and the welfare of the people from developed countries.

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[4]   This type of question is already common for environmentalist as a starting point in their debates about the environmental ethics. See Hicham Stephane Affeisa (2007). "Preface", in Hicham Stephane Affeisa (ed.) (2007). *Ethique de l'environnement*. Paris: Vrin.

[5]   See Arne Naess (1973). "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement. A Summary", *Inquiry*, 16, (1973), pp. 95-100.

[6]   See Richard Routley, Val Routley (1999). "Against the Inevitability of Human Chauvinism", in K. Goodpaster, K. Sayre, (editors). *Ethics and Problems of the 21st Century*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press. pp. 35-59.

From the standpoint of "shallow ecology" an ethics of environment is not necessary because it has no other function that to overlap the traditional ethics and the problems regarding environment would be solved outside the ethics of environment. As a consequence, the environmental legislation will be completely elaborated inside the conceptual framework of traditional ethics. The traditional ethics is a source of law for all the law systems, environmental legislation included. To conceive the ethics of environment as something different is only a superfluous theoretical game without any fruitful results.

The advocates of "deep ecology" thought very differently. In their view ecology assumes a new relation with the world and a new outlook, and from these two new questions are implied, new theoretical challenges regarding the nature, the human being and the relation between human and environment. Therefore, "deep ecology" raises new interrogations of a metaphysical kind and it leads to a new approach based on new categorical concepts and on the uses of old traditional concepts in new contexts.

Arne Naess's "deep ecology" supposes a new scientific understanding of the world. From the standpoint of modern science the nature was reduced to an inert matter, the space was conceived as a homogenous surrounding, isotropic and boundless, defined by the reciprocal exteriority of its parts, *partes extra partes*, where all the movements are caused by pulling or pushing according with the mechanistic model proposed by Newton. The aim of ecology as a science of nature is to search for the interactions between organisms and between the biotic communities and their environment. The living beings are understood as interrelated parts of a whole, the biosphere. Last but not least, the concepts of autonomy, dependence and function and their relations are thought in the new framework. As a consequence, the domain of morality and that of legal norms have to be refreshed by the new ecological outlook.

First of all, the environmental ethics needs a new definition of values and an extension of morality sphere. Moral values are understood in environmental ethics as intrinsic values and not as relational values. The values were traditionally understood as a relational property because they depend on the relation between the human being and the object which was appraised. This was the reason for an anthropocentric judgment in traditional ethics. Therefore, all the legal norms were the expression of human desires and interests, legitimately, we'll say, because only the humans have interests. The environmentalists challenged this view and they assigned interest not only to living organisms but also to species and ecosystems as wholes. Then we moved from an individualistic anthropocentric view to a holistic biocentric one. Entities with intrinsic value are not only the individuals, humans, animals or other organisms, but also whole systems such as ecosystems or biotic communities.

The acceptance of the notion of intrinsic value has theoretical consequences which lead to a new configuration of legal norms, inasmuch as

the intrinsic value yields another meaning for the sphere of morality. The moral relations are reconsidered and new questions arise and gain legitimacy. If we treasure life as a whole, then we'll treasure all individual forms of life with intrinsic value, such as microbes or rotting trees, or, as an alternative, we'll make an hierarchy of life forms based on different criteria such as the capacity to feel the pain and to react to it.[7] Another consequence would be that if the humans belong to the nature and the nature as a whole is a good thing, then all the natural phenomena will be good, pain and death included. But in this case the domains of morality and law must be revised radically. In have, this consequence equally means new meanings of moral good and good law, also a new demarcation between good and bad.[8]

Another problem, already anticipated above, is that regarding the intrinsic value, namely, if only individuals have a such kind of value or, besides them, the classes of individuals considered as wholes, like species, ecosystems, biotic communities, wildlife, biosphere, or the Earth. The problem regarding the dichotomy between an individualistic approach and a holistic one, which was a long debate in the social sciences, is resumed again in the environmental ethics. As extreme theoretical visions we'll have the radical individualism which grants intrinsic value only to some kind of individuals, and the Gaia hypothesis which gives intrinsic value to the Earth as a whole considered like a living organism. But if all the entities have value then they fall into the domain of morality and the related domain of legal norms must be redesigned and amplified.[9] Another problem is that regarding the modes in which we'll give value to different entities, to individuals or to wholes. Is a fly equally valuable with a human being? Which approach is right, an equalitarian one or a hierarchical one? If the humans have a special moral standing then the hierarchical standpoint becomes the right one and the possibility to build a hierarchy is opened.

Another topic with high philosophical amplitude stirs some controversies. If the human being has the duty or is constraint to respect the nature and the life as intrinsic values, then an ambiguity is assumed: the human being is both a part of the nature, of the biotic community, without any privilege, and in the same time the human being is different, separated from nature, because only the human being has moral obligations and he doesn't depend totally on nature.[10]

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[7] See P.W. Taylor (1986). *Respect for Nature*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. and also Robin Artfield (1983). *The Ethics of Environmental Concern*. New York: Columbia University Press.

[8] See Elliot Sober (1986). "Philosophical Problems for Environmentalism", in B.G. Norton (ed.). *The Preservation of Species*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. pp. 173-194.

[9] See Kenneth Goodpaster (1978). "On Being Morally Considerable". *Journal of Philosophy*, 75.

[10] Nigel Dower (1999). *World Ethics. The New Agenda*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. and also E.H. Matthews (1989)."The Metaphysics of Environmentalism", in Nigel Dower, (ed.). *Ethics and Environmental Responsibility*. Aldershot: Gower.

A summary is necessary at this stage of our debate. Traditionally, we, humans, pass a law for us and for all the other humans who are members of a community, and in this deliberative process we have in our minds the regulative and, I think, the constitutive idea that the man is the goal for the man. In the environmental ethics we establish the basis for an important change because the idea that we can give laws for all the other organisms and entities is theoretically legitimated. Traditionally, we are responsible for the others, in environmental ethics we are responsible for the other organisms and, generally speaking, for all the natural entities. But the nature is different from humans and the human culture is not a part of nature. How do we solve this entanglement? I think that a way out from this mess is to take into account carefully the relation between human being and nature. Human moral indebtedness towards nature doesn't suppose reciprocity. Using Elliot Sober's arguments, we can view the environmental ethics as an ethics based on duties, en ethics structured starting from obligations and not from rights. Actually, we decide what is right or good for all the other organisms and also we establish the size of the damages against environment. Therefore, we are able to assume responsibilities not only towards the other people and future generations, but also towards all the other organisms and natural entities. Finally, we decide the guilty.

Global Legislation and Local Action

Understood as a deep change of the moral and metaphysical status of entities, environmental ethics goes to a reconstruction of morality and extension of it. The concept of law is also reconsidered. If we take into account the relations between morality and the domain of legal norms, then it will be easy to see that the environmental ethics caused a reconsideration of all the issues, from the subjectivity of personal beliefs and behaviors to the global character of different some transnational political projects and institutions. My aim here is only to outline some ideas regarding the changes at the level of legislation. .

I think that we are entitled, on the basis of previous statements, to identify two complementary trends in reconstruction of legislative domain in the light of environmentalism. The two trends are orientated in the opposite directions: one is up down, the other, bottom up. In the first case, the process of legislative change is initialized by international institutions, such as the United Nations Organization or European Union, in the second case, the agents of change are the civil society organizations or some persons with a social prestige, well reflected by mass media and already located in public conscience. If in the first case human values and general public interests are invoked, and the change is institutionalized, in the second case more important are practice and the personal experiences and involvement, the change being subjectively projected.

The up down way of environmental legislation is fueled by the fact that the environmental problems have a global character. The pollution of

environment knows no borders and an ecological disaster can have remote effects. The environment is a huge planetary ecosystem inside which everything is connected with everything. Therefore, the environmental ethics would be understood as a global ethics, as a theory about values, relation and problems which cover entirely our planetary space, all the citizens and all the countries, all the living organisms and all the natural entities as rocks and landscapes, the land and the waters, the biosphere and the atmosphere. For all these reasons, our legal norms will have two components:

1. a set of universal values, namely values which are available for all the human beings and are recognized as such.
2. a set of global obligations and responsibilities which are shared by all the humans.[11]

This type of approach was already practiced by mankind, especially in the debate regarding the human rights. The domain of international affairs has also entailed the best experience for this kind of complex construction, especially regarding the negotiations which are necessary in order to achieve a goal starting from a debate about values and obligations.

The up down road of environmental legislation is mainly imported starting from initiatives of international institutions with a global function, such as United Nations Organization. This way is best illustrated by the debates and actions which took place in last two decades, after the Rio Conference, regarding the sustainable development and Agenda 21. The starting point was a common statement of world countries and a general consensus regarding the world needs and policies and at the other end was the different local implementation process of sustainable development principles. "Think globally and act locally" became the slogan of this changing movement. Many states and local communities have adopted national or local strategies for sustainable development and they are trying to apply the principles of sustainability in their governance. Some United Nations resolutions have strengthened the prestige and assured the legitimacy of sustainability, while the local initiative gained reliability and offered a new kind of citizenship.

Another legislative experience was covered in details by the European countries in their way to the European Union. This initial experience was repeated then under their national constraints by all the countries that joined the European Union. The *Acquis communautaire* contained a dossier regarding the environment, including the request to adapt national legislation with the European framework. Romania passed through all the stages in its pre-accession and it has adapted its environmental legislation and policies to the European framework and goals.[12]

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[11]   Nigel Dower (1999), *World Ethics. The New Agenda*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, p. 2.
[12]   This topic in developed in Dumitru Mihu, Constantin Stoenescu (2004). "Directiva Uniunii Europene privind obligaţia de mediu". *Sfera Politicii*, pp. 110-111, and also in

The other way, bottom up, is related especially with personal or nongovernmental initiatives. The civil society is the social melting pot where different social changes and reforms are prepared and this capacity of civil society make the difference between different countries. Where the civil society is strong and their activists well prepared, there the change is done easily and quickly. In the case of environment we have to speak about a critical mass of problems and the urgency of actions. The environmentalist movement was pushed forward by a large debate in mass media and also by some academic debates. The activists for animal rights were impulsed by Peter Singer's works which opened a debate between the philosophers regarding the possibility to assign a moral standing to animals. Jeremy Bentham's idea regarding the use of pain as a utilitarian criterion was recovered and from this there was only a step to an universal declaration of animal rights.

There were cases in which the two ways, up down and bottom up, were simultaneously taken and the meeting point was somewhere in the middle. A good example is the adoption of legislation regarding public consultation in decision making process. A progressive trend was the gradual acceptance of subsidiarity principle and the gradual displacement of responsibility from higher levels of authority to lower levels such that the decisions were made by those who would be directly affected. Moreover, the European countries have established by *Aarhus Convention*, unilaterally and unconditionally, on the basis of governmental liability and non-reciprocity principles, some obligations to the citizens in order to guarantee and to defend their rights to a healthy environment. *Aarhus Convention* mentions the right to have an open access to information, the right to participate in the decision making process and the right to get to court if the environment is prejudiced. From these rights were derived the obligations to inform the citizens, to assure the public consultation and the transparency of public affairs.[13]

Conclusion: the Need for Different Approaches

We have talked here about a family of environmental problems, that regarding the relation between the environmental ethic and legal norms, and we have understood that some of the problems look like the others and some are more or less different. I think that the most important lesson is that the theoretical pluralism is the clever way to escape from dilemmas and to support the practical action.

Constantin Stoenescu (2005). "Însemnări marginale la dosarul de mediu din *Aquis*-ul comunitar". *Sfera Politicii*. 119.

[13] For a detailed analysis see Dumitru Mihu, Constantin Stoenescu (2005). "Convenţia de la Aarhus şi politica formelor fără fond". *Sfera Politicii*. 115.

The conceptual framework has to be adapted to the levels of approach. The first level is that of legal norms and action where we need to know and to use the laws in order to give legitimacy or legal justification to our decision and actions. The second level is that of general principles. Here are the fundamental laws, the Constitutions of different countries, and the international treaties between countries. The third level is the theoretical one, where the conceptual framework is established or modified. The environmental ethics belongs to this level and, as a source of legal norms, it is a newcomer, but welcomed. I have tried to argue that environmental ethics extends the sphere of morality and, as a consequence, the domain of law is also enlarged. For this reason I think that environmental ethics not only adds something new in the philosophical debates but also changes old or traditional habits and visions.

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O, TEMPORA…: A METHODOLOGICAL MODEL TO APPROACH THE CRISIS

ANA BAZAC[1]

Abstract

My paper does not argue that the behaviour of the well-off and, more, of the visible ruling class would have been the cause of the breakdown of societies, but only to show that this behaviour was and is a sign of the social decay, more precisely, of the system crisis. Indeed, the crisis of social systems and institutions was and is the result of many causes, among which the fact that exceeding of the officially assumed legal and moral rules by the ruling elites has not only been the feature leading to the drastic reduction of political credibility of the rulers but also an example for the general social behaviour as in the model of avalanche.

I discuss the significances of Cicero's phrase *o, tempora* (*o, mores*) in the concrete historical framework it was coined and I demonstrate that the conditions which have generated the saying are those of system crisis, and thus the formula – which expresses important feelings that ought to stay in our attention – synthesises a moment in the human reactions in front of these conditions. At the same time, I stop on the methodological meaning and value of this type of analysis.

Keywords: o, tempora (*o, mores*), crisis, system crisis, ruling class, social psychology, philosophy of language, social sentiments, corruption, to keep appearances, to abandon the keeping of appearances, patterns of behaviour.

Introduction: Perplexity as First Feeling in Front of the Crisis

In front of the present destructive phenomena worldwide, people enter a state of *perplexity*. What does this mean? They even do not believe the facts they see and bear, these are so distant from the ordinary commonsensical patterns of morals and behaviour and, more, of the ordinary presumptions that those from the leading stratum, although not being saints, would not behave as the most impudent scoundrels ("they are lords, educated persons, they know they are very visible, for God' sake"), that the first reaction is a *void* of reactions. "It's unbelievable": it's so unbelievable that people need time to articulate their judgements, in short, their feelings.

What kind of phenomena are we speaking about? We do mention all sides of the human life, namely on different levels of their objective structuring

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and of our subjective ordering of things (the structural relations of the system, the use of the scientific discoveries, the political institutions and relations, the international warfare and insecurity, the social representations, the moral – especially the moral, don't we? –, the traditional institutions of human aggregating, family, religion, solidarity, pity, shame): they are so unwoven, their functioning is so un-regulated, their results are so socially discouraging and individually harming, their whole aspect is so decomposed and devastating, that people are at least confused.

Am I, or are they too negativistic? Since bad relations and fake morals have existed since time immemorial. And here one uses the well-known cliché of "nothing new under the sun"[2]. But if this cliché itself has to be deciphered in its historical framework, more interesting for us is to analyse the present view people think within.

And first, who are we speaking about, who are the perplexed ones in front of the present aspect of society? First again, they are, obviously, those who can make the difference between the previous and the present situation. Those who had an improved life before (as compared to their anterior status) and now experience its worsening: and have a *voice* which cannot be neglected, since it's the voice of the "mass support for governments in civilised, democratic countries".

This remark is certainly important: because it pays attention to the millions of people who had an under-low condition even during the post-war *État-providence* (providential social state) from the Western countries. We should not neglect that before the present economic crisis, and rather during the period of the Western welfare state, the number of those in extreme poverty has decreased, but the deep *impression of de-structuring, of loss of every security the social settlements could supply, of an ill society that does not protect at all and damages even the most traditional institutions*, belongs not so much to the under-middle class, but to those who have changed their life as pertaining to *middle class* and thus calling their new status as of *middle class* (in the meaning of Veblen: as level of consumption and middle quality of life, and not in the classical meaning of bourgeoisie).

It's not the place to detail the structural reasons of the present crisis, nor the wave of profound transformations of institutions even much before, in the 60s of the past century. 'The spring of students and youngsters' in 1968, their revolt against both the pharisaic discourse of those in power concerning concomitantly the defence of democracy and the aggression of the weak (see Vietnam) and the lack of horizon the society provided them, have shaken the appearance of the stable post-war 'Victorian' institutions as family, marriage, respectability. But, since things were only at the beginning, the transformations have concerned rather the institutions from the margins (and generally, this is the process, from the margin to the centre of the social establishment): a post-war

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[2]   See *Ecclesiastes*, 1:9. "What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is *nothing new under the sun*".

"sceptic generation"[3] became politically interested and involved and succeeded in shaking the institutions that framework the life (and later, step by step, they have continued).

Therefore (and in fact as during the whole 20th century – let's remember Scott Fitzgerald's post World War I malaise, as well as the European avant-garde's revolt), the idea of a "desperado age"[4] as a desperate time has accompanied at least a part of the psychology of youngsters. (This is the reason why Marcuse spoke about the force of the young – inherently mostly young – belonging rather to minorities (as the American black movement) and to intellectuals whose radical thinking only may destroy the dominant political conformism; and, concretely, about the "student opposition (as) a decisive factor of transformation: surely not… as an immediate revolutionary force, but as one of the strongest factors, one that can perhaps become a revolutionary force" (Marcuse 1967): all of these being the only ones that may oppose to the one-dimensioning society which gives a rational character of its irrationality by emerging "a pattern of *one-dimensional thought and behaviour* in which ideas, aspirations and objectives that, by their content, transcend the established universe of discourse and action are either repelled or reduced to terms of this universe") (Marcuse 1964, 12).

Summarising the aspects raised up until now, perplexity is not equivalent to the desperate feeling in front of the existence; or is it? And which is the scope of these attitudes?

In order to answer, we have to remember that, concretely, the appearance of capitalism as a settled and victorious system has generated a sentiment of *despair* in front of the contradistinction between its former promises and the reality of individualist fragmentation and cold pursuit of profit. At the bottom, the Western workers have opposed just in the name of their expectations meeting the utopian liberal promises: their presence in the British Chartist movement and their second upheaval in 1848th France were the sign of their despair. At the top, philosophers like Kierkegaard have transposed into the questioning of the single individual's psychology their deep *anxiety*[5] which, at the last analysis, reflects not only the complexity of the human psyche but also the social atmosphere, *antagonistic with the human expectations*. For Kierkegaard, it seemed that all happened "as if God has withdrawn into himself" (Kierkegaard 1995, 301). God was for Kierkegaard not so much as, let's say in the latter words of criticism of religion, an alter ego lain in the deep

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3   See Helmut Schelsky's 1957 book *Die skeptische Generation*. An interesting remark tied to the problem emphasised in the book is Bertram (2012).

4   According to Lidia Vianu's formula for the British literature from 1950 to 2004 (Vianu 2004). But if the author used it for expressing "the auctorial individualism, the denial of group psychology" by the British writers of the time, "the time of literary solitude and bravery" (11), I borrowed it in order to describe the tint of at least a part of the young generation psychology.

5   See the development of this concept from Kierkegaard to Sartre.

down of man and personalising his human possibility and aspiration[6], but rather a close friend to whom one confesses and who is called as a witness of the despair one feels in front of "the absurd" (let's use the latter word of Camus). In all these appearances, despair was the result of perplexity, it was its rapid transformation. People did no more lie in the first phase of their feelings in front of the existence, here – that of *perplexit*y, but in the second one, that of conclusion – which was that of *despair*.

If we do not analyse in a concrete manner, or at the level of concreteness of the existence, we obviously may venture to assert that perplexity and despair could have been the original feelings of man in front of the distance between the real possibilities he could try to fulfil and, on the other hand, his profound desire and presupposition that 'normal, just and good' are things to happen according to this presupposition of 'normalcy'/objective possibility, justice and good. In fact, it's a risky reasoning: because we keep dark that we put in parentheses our theoretical conclusions concerning a certain historical period, and we generalise them in a forbidden manner, beyond the conditions that generated them. Indeed, our theoretical conclusions are valid only when we circumscribe the historical period that allowed them: and this is necessary and a valid methodological requirement for both the analyses concerning theories about man and society and concepts describing natural facts. Because all of these reflect the *historical level of knowledge* the inquiring man has arrived at, and we have to mention it and be conscientious about this condition of knowledge.

Lastly, perplexity is both a preceding feeling to that of anxiety and despair, and a component of these ones. The problem is: what is the scope of these attitudes and what are they related to.

From the Void of Reactions to Definite Sentiments

Therefore,

1. I do not speak here about the perplexity and despair people feel in front of their individual situations caused by individual occasions.

2. I started my paper from the sentiments concerning society as they transform the bindings within the social construction. Kierkegaard has spoken in the name of an ordinary single individual and – for him and for all of us – that one represented/represents the essential problem of (the modern) society.

3. Perplexity and despair are not common trans-historical feelings – *i.e.* transcending the conditions of any society. They reflect some *specific social conditions*, born in certain societies. As alienation is not an abstract disjunction between subject and object (just contrary to Hegel's supposition), but a concrete estrangement of man from his products and environment when he does not

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[6]   It's about the aspiration towards perfection and, also, towards unity and coherence of society and the single individual.

control them, namely when group interests of domination impose the submission of the entire society, including through the domination of the exterior objects controlled by the dominant stratum over the entire society. In the same manner, perplexity and despair reflect and are the result of specific social relations which impose *drastic limitations of individual freedom* to control both the social settlements and the individual's own behaviour.

4. The modern society – to which these feelings pertain – is the historical space that emphasises the conditions determining them. And as this society is the complex *mirror* which explains the simpler types of society – even though the historical *description* begins with the simplest and raises up to the complex one, capitalism –, as our understanding of the attitudes people have in front of these societies should be derived from the analysis of the more complex and latest one; an ordered analysis, *i.e.* using concepts developing in complex and multifaceted relationships according to the logic of this society, namely to the structural relations of this society; even if the imagined concrete world supplied by the concepts developed starting from/developed on the ground of the complex society supposes abstractions decomposable to simpler determinations, these simpler determinations concern just this complex social existence; thus an analysis which must not be extrapolated in its concreteness – but not in its method – at different and simpler societies: except if we compare them and conclude on their fundamental difference.

It's difficult enough to understand that we better conceive of the past simpler societies starting from the more complex ones, since every description begins with the beginning. In fact, it's about the significances we put and discover in the concepts we use even in the description of former societies. Even when we draw a lesson from the analysis of the ancient times[7], we do so only with the help of the richness provided by a lot of research concerning the more complicated societies and the development towards them. Simply: the old type simpler societies teach us in a profound manner only when we reflect upon them with the toolbox of significances and theories we historically arrived at.

More clear: the simpler data, corresponding to simpler concepts/ simpler concepts corresponding to simpler data (as feelings and, more, concrete feelings as anger, despair, anxiety, fear) could hoax us determining us to think the analysis of any society from these concepts and data, and not from their complex environment, the social relations and their corresponding concepts. By doing so, we are tempted to separate the simpler data and concepts from their complex determinants and, at the same time, to consider them a-historically, as eternal and general, the social evolution only adding some new appearances and

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[7] See Tainter, 2003.

characteristics. But, as Marx has observed[8], the concepts as such – and always in their newest forms, with their newest contents – are the result of the most elaborated thinking in the newest, most complex societies. Consequently, the

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[8]   Marx 1857, 1. 1.: "This very simple category, then, makes a historic appearance in its full intensity only in the most developed conditions of society. By no means does it wade its way through all economic relations"… "Thus, although the simpler category may have existed historically before the more concrete, it can achieve its full (intensive and extensive) development precisely in a combined form of society, while the more concrete category was more fully developed in a less developed form of society"… "Labour seems a quite simple category. The conception of labour in this general form – as labour as such – is also immeasurably old. Nevertheless, when it is economically conceived in this simplicity, 'labour' is as modern a category as are the relations which create this simple abstraction"… The simplest abstraction, then, nevertheless achieves practical truth as an abstraction only as a category of the most modern society."… "This example of labour shows strikingly how even the most abstract categories, despite their validity – precisely because of their abstractness – for all epochs, are nevertheless, in the specific character of this abstraction, themselves likewise a product of historic relations, and possess their full validity only for and within these relations"… "Bourgeois society is the most developed and the most complex historic organization of production. The categories which express its relations, the comprehension of its structure, thereby also allows insights into the structure and the relations of production of all the vanished social formations out of whose ruins and elements it built itself up, whose partly still unconquered remnants are carried along within it, whose mere nuances have developed explicit significance within it etc. Human anatomy contains a key to the anatomy of the ape"… "But not at all in the manner of those economists who smudge over *all* historical differences and see bourgeois relations in all forms of society"... "The so-called historical presentation of development is founded, as a rule, on the fact that the latest form regards the previous ones as steps leading up to itself, and, since it is only rarely and only under quite specific conditions able to criticize itself – leaving aside, of course, the historical periods which appear to themselves as times of decadence – it always conceives them one-sidedly"… But "In so far as the bourgeois economy did not mythologically identify itself altogether with the past, its critique of the previous economies, notably of feudalism, with which it was still engaged in direct struggle, resembled the critique which Christianity leveled against paganism, or also that of Protestantism against Catholicism"… "It would therefore be unfeasible and wrong to let the economic categories follow one another in the same sequence as that in which they were historically decisive. Their sequence is determined, rather, by their relation to one another in modern bourgeois society, which is precisely the opposite of that which seems to be their natural order or which corresponds to historical development. The point is not the historic position of the economic relations in the succession of different forms of society. Even less is it their sequence 'in the idea' (Proudhon) (a muddy notion of historic movement). Rather, their order within modern bourgeois society"... "the purity (abstract specificity) in which the trading peoples – Phoenicians, Carthaginians – appear in the old world is determined precisely by the predominance of the agricultural peoples. Capital, as trading-capital or as money-capital, appears in this abstraction precisely where capital is not yet the predominant element of societies. Lombards, Jews take up the same position towards the agricultural societies of the Middle Ages"… "divergent positions which the same category can occupy in different social stages". I made a so abundant quote in order to highlight the methodological valence of Marx's theory.

specific content of a simple concept (and the concept, though abstract and resulting from the ability to think in an abstract manner, not only depends upon a concrete historical reality that constituted its ground, but has a concrete content in that it contains concrete historical aspects) has in its subtext a whole history of complex development. For example, concerning our topic: perplexity towards which reality? And why would some ones (but who?) be perplex, what does that perplexity mean and to which other feelings does it lead?

5. But it's not enough to insert our analysis and determine our concepts by capitalism in general. Since concepts are determined, they are determined not only by a general structure of a system, but also by its stages of development.

This aspect is important because the social reactions reflect not only the system, but they also reflect it in its concreteness of stages. For example, leaving aside the prolonged social paralysis of the ruled in front of the domination, they had their specific expression of their status and indignation in the radical theorising of Marx, an individual. But why was this theory, though on the one hand, grasped as the idea of revolution, idea that was intimately consistent with their deep feeling that "the real is not rational at all and we do no more accept it", seen on the other hand, as "it's only a theory, it is not realisable"? It was just because the past stages of capitalism contained features counter-balancing this idea. The majority of intellectuals – and they strongly influenced the workers – have thought during these stages that the evolution as such – irrespective here, if it was conceived of in the liberal or socialist manner – would be the remedy of the social problems. Thus: not revolution, but step by step changing. In short, as long as capitalism was in its stages when the ideological forms and manipulation from above still met its reserves/ when capitalism as such had reserves consisting in and in order to:

a) develop some regions and thus to increase the living standard of the working people in the Centre, although on the expense of the capitalist discovering of Periphery,

b) develop new regions snatched from Periphery, namely to integrate them in the capitalist world economy and consequently to extract profit balancing the objective tendency of fall of the profit rate as a result of the generalisation of technological discoveries,

c) increase the power of dominant strata worldwide, it could last with all the theoretical expressions of anger, disappointment, despair. Especially Nietzsche must be noted here: capitalist evolution does not lead to anything good, he said, not only defying the above-mentioned optimistic conceptions, but also warning about both the automatic objective development and the subjective assumption of this automatism.

6. Therefore, which is the stage of the modern society supporting both perplexity and the channelling of anger and despair? It is the present,

trans-national stage of world capitalism that, with all its benefits from the scientific and technological development it controls, from the trans-nationalisation as such and from its apparent higher power than ever, is at the same time a stage of *system crisis.*

Just a *time of crisis* opens a profound transformation of attitudes and feelings of people concerning their whole existence in society. The last century, already mentioned, illustrates this fact. The post World War I period was that of *stage crisis*: the crisis of the stage of first industrial revolution which has performed capitalism's productive forces during its epochs of free competition and monopoles (from the standpoint of the criterion of the evolution of capitalist productive relations)[9]. To this stage not perplexity, but either impotent *despair* leading to individualistic experiences of *carpe diem*, or *confidence* that ordinary people can change the social organisation in order to allow a human life to all have corresponded. The post World War II period has manifested through the *pragmatic cynicism* of cohorts of low origin fellows becoming and climbing up as middle class (Veblen) and only a small number of individuals were those who warned that at the core of this evolution there is a falsity that stops the real search for and the realisation of freedom and creative life. With all the passing these warnings over in silence and all the states of revolt manifested not only in the 1968 movement, till the last few (let' say three) decades people did not experience first of all perplexity but rather *plat anxiety*, *un-questioning resignation.*

But nowadays a general sentiment is raising up above the same general feelings of evasion from an alienating society, of resignation in front of the implacable appearance of the relations of power: it's *perplexity* that, first, coexists with the general and basic *boredom* which is only the manifestation of socially caused pain and which is still manipulated by the subduing entertainment [10]. But soon enough perplexity generates *indignation*, a *state of revolt*. These attitudes seem to be powerless and helpless, since the social establishment continues with the same aggressiveness of its instruments. But, as technology served and serves to render to people a state of anaesthesia, it also serves as a means of communication of perplexity and revolt.

Once Again, What Does Perplexity Mean?

Why would this feeling be so important in the construction of present human attitudes? It is because it is situated in front of a relatively new phenomenon linked to the present system crisis: that of the ruling elite's *abandonment of appearances* it observed before. Indeed, if the duplicity of the rulers is generic – at least, in their approach of the internal problems and respect

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[9] The development of automation – as the last moment of the first industrial revolution from the standpoint of means of production – took place only towards the end of this period, during the World War II and after.

[10] See Eisenstein.

of appearances divergent to their behaviour abroad; but at a more profound level, in the contradiction between the domination they impose and the slogans they wave about liberties –, inwards the frontiers they assumed, they always were tempted to show their respectability: obviously, within the inherent social establishment, for whom the domination-submission relations would be natural and eternal. Concretely, they tried to both save their appearances of respectability and alleviate in a certain manner the situation of the many, driving at a certain social consent through manipulation and the enlargement of the middle class.

But in the present capitalism's entering the system crisis and the more so as it confronts a deep and persistent economic crisis, there are less and less means to observe these requirements: world competition shrinks the resources of profit and the strata of bureaucracy access a lesser part of it as payment for their support of the power society. This is the reason of the *abandonment of appearances* by the bureaucratic leaders issuing from these strata: even in the Western civilisation marked by 'Max Weber's model of bureaucracy', there were in the last period and are now more and more scandals related to the corruption of the leading elite and, more – if this is possible at all –, related to the *impunity* the members of this elite enjoy. In front of this concrete impunity annulling the basic equality before the law, specific to the modern state/to its theoretical tenets – and despite all the discourses reclaiming ethical values, equal treatment of citizens etc. –, even people previously non-interested about politics become already involved within the public worry concerning public things.

This change takes place because the abandonment of the former way of keeping the appearances coexists with the worsening of the general welfare: and the impudent allocation of resources becomes unbearable. We have to remember that – and despite its manipulating use according to which it would be the main cause of the present economic economical crisis – both the greed of the bankers and the continuous state financing of the banks as absolute priority of the world decision-makers show that the asymmetrical allocation of resources is for the general social conscience worldwide, both unbelievable and revolting.

In front of the former general estrangement from politics, the first reaction of *perplexity*, followed by a continuous *preoccupation* for the general state of injustice – felt by the many in their economic living – and thus by *indignation*, a feeling that contains both the conscience of the antagonism between one's own moral sentiments and the political establishment of society[11] and the sentiment of fear in front of the power elite which apparently cannot be dislocated[12], are bricks constructing a *new social conscience*. These bricks help

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[11] This is emphasised, for example in Romania, by the majority that considers, now in already successive soundings, that the direction the country goes in is wrong, irrespective of what people understand through this last word.

[12] This aspect shows that the sentiment as such – and not only a single sentiment like indignation – is not sufficient to direct to an active efficient position: for example, people could protest, but rather as a finite ritual that comfort them, and at the same time vote 'for

people to publicly separate the good grain from weeds, thus to publicly – through rational debate and control – construct a new social conscience and a new practical attitude toward society. In this new conscience, the impunity of bureaucracy which itself decrees for itself begins to be related with the impunity of the leading economic stratum and, more, with the impunity of the informal and abstract structural relations of capitalism: till now most of the people has considered these relations as normal and natural, because the leading economic, political and cultural strata have successfully imposed this belief to the entire society.

But do not get enthusiastic too much: it's only a trend; nevertheless, although drowned in the systematic and aggressive manipulation from the top, it is symptomatic for the present-day general transformation.

Therefore, we speak about a *general state of spirit*, or rather a *generalising state of spirit*, a *spiritual atmosphere* imbued with feelings which tend to dislocate the former public conscience. The vectors of this radical/radicalising spiritual atmosphere are mostly the *young*, originated in both middle class and intellectual strata and in the lower ones: but all of them are close to the new *information and communication technology* and use it in order to freely and democratically debate the common trans-national problems concerning the means to confront and defeat the social order of domination as well as the ways to *construct alternatives*. The world of networks of socialisation allows – but it is not sufficient – to keep staying alive, thus not forget the *perplexity* one should have in spite of the entire environment of alienation, commoditisation, and reciprocal separation of individuals. It is the root of efficiency in people's control of the yet impersonal and inimical society.

To Approach the Crisis: an Old Model
with Psycho-Sociological Reverberations

I focused on /I discovered the concept of perplexity as a result of my reflection upon an old formula: *o, tempora, o, mores!* At first sight, the significance of this phrase would consist in the impotent incrimination of "the times" that cover in an indefinite manner the specific structural and political causes of a deviating moral. Here the incrimination takes place only in the framework of perplexity.

In fact, the exasperated statement – which became a well-known saying – belongs to Cicero who pronounced it when he heard about the praetor of Sicily, Gaius Verres, which has stolen gold vessels and art treasury and took possession of a big fortune in a corrupt manner (Cicero 70, B.C.). But Cicero has used the same formula when he has protested against the dirty complicity

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the lesser evil' that never dislocates the system; however, without this sentiment, people do not move at all: this is the reason of the huge manipulation from above, just to paralyse people's ability to care about, to judge and protest, to react.

which led to Catilina's conjuration against the Senate (Cicero 63, B.C.). Both orations were pronounced by Cicero as political acts, as active manifestations against the decay of behaviours in an epoch already of crisis of the Roman Empire: therefore, as indignation against the dangerous decline which already profiled.

But the saying was not occasioned by the facts and deeds of ordinary people. If it had been a reaction against such people, it would not have its valence as *methodological pattern* to conceive of the historical periods of crisis, and more, of system crisis. Both incriminated characters belonged to the ruling stratum and illustrated the inherent tendency of corruption of bureaucracy as intermediate stratum between the rulers possessing the means of production (namely, the economic or 'true' rulers) and the people. Both incriminated characters were members of high political bureaucracy (and from this standpoint their behaviour would not be strange at all to us). But – pay attention – they were also rich patricians, members of the true dominant stratum, the economic one. Thus why would they have descended to ignoble habits if they already had all the consideration of society, the social prestige that cannot be jolted?

I am not interested in the answer rounding about the 'eternal human nature' that would push man to never be satisfied with his actual status and thus to want more and more, far beyond his concrete real possibilities and his values, in short, far beyond his moral conscience[13]. I am only concerned about the *causes* that have during long periods *opposed* to this 'human nature'. Would these causes consist only in compulsion, in brakes pulled by those more powerful than the certain individual, be these ones either superhuman entities or men lain on a superior step of the social ladder? If this were the case, the distinction between man and beast would not be real, it would not constitute for us a motif of pride. In fact, and leaving aside the social relations which always suppose compulsion in a way or another, it is the *human conscience* that, in the last analysis, is the guide of the human behaviour: and it not only constructs but also considers the *moral values* as the only Archimedean points of the human action and a liveable society.

We should not be idealistic: the self-control, self-restraint of the powerful was and is depending not only – or even not firstly – on deeply internalised moral values, but rather on *preventive thinking* regarding the possible negative consequences of their imprudent behaviour. But for a long time during the evolution of societies, both this preventive thinking and the individual moral conscience were efficient in generating such behaviour of the rulers that it did not jolt the general social conscience of the ruled. Society meant domination and, thus, cruelty. And the legitimising moral values of this domination and

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[13] Let's remember that Socrates called the moral conscience a *daimonion*: "a sort of voice that comes to me, and when it comes it always holds me back from what I am thinking of doing, but never urges me forward". (Plato 1966, 31d).

cruelty (for example, the moral value of submission, of implacable destiny, of serene acceptance, of future reward, of social order and everyone's duty) made them 'natural': *in the framework/limits given by the fulfilment of the functioning of the rulers*. But when this functioning involved excessive cruelty – in fact, non-necessary to keep up the social order – and excessive privileges and appropriation (in fact, robbery – as the present massive and aggressive privatisation of social assets worldwide and financial support to banks on the expense of ordinary people) of the individual or common wealth, the ruled opposed, even in the form of upheavals, and if they did not succeed, the system as such was overthrown. But, obviously – this happened not quickly, not soon enough from the standpoint of raising human suffering. The period when the rulers surpassed/surpass the moral of their functioning as rulers is that of crisis: and not of a particular political or economic one, but a *system crisis*.

The excessive and, au fond, counter-productive behaviour of some rulers was and is not only the result of their own psychical weakness but also of the *dominant ideas* related to the *dominant world views* from a certain epoch – and I am especially interested about this cause –. Indeed, in some periods, at least some rulers (but not few at all) were and are tempted to transcend the limits of what is acceptable and what is forbidden: not only, or both for every human person from that society, and first and foremost for their condition of rulers. Their decisions were and are supported by the dominant ideological ideas which erase the traditional moral brakes of those blessed by their destiny.

These dominant ideas insist on the force of *power* as defeating any viewpoint of the despised 'common/ common thing', of ordinary moral and scruples. The arbitrariness became and is no more considered a feature of dictatorship – au fond, a kind of management and leadership the rulers do not agree *in their own societies* just because of its non-lasting and turbulence generating character –, thus a negative and undesirable form of political direction, but a banal consequence of the power – which is not as such if it is not discretionary, isn't it? They insist on the unflinching *superiority conferred by the power* and on the *limitless freedom* – this is the real freedom, isn't it? – that follows from this superiority. The entire insistence of these dominant ideas is based on an *individualistic* approach which considers the Other, the Others and society as both enemies and neutral and secondary range environment: a 'necessary evil'. The old proverb *quod licet Jovi, non licet bovi* was a cynical aphorism expressing just this standpoint: that of the rulers in authoritarian regimes and that of the ruling strata in times of system crisis.

Before these times, they certainly were corrupt tax collectors and ministers (this last word in its Latin meaning[14]), and also bad kings and nobles, but rather as exceptions: or, more correctly, their behaviours were severely

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[14] In order: servant, slave, priest, agent, office worker, assistant, intermediary.

sanctioned not only by the people but also by the ruling stratum. And this – not basically because of the struggle for power, but for both as a consequence of the precautionary attitude of this one and, or rather, because of the dominance of the ideological ideas of *limits* (of the rulers) *that should not be surpassed*. I speak here about a *socially relevant behaviour* or, precisely, about a *behaviour with social consequences*. Thus I am not interested here about a private moral of the rulers: although this one could be seen as an example and a measure indicating (especially when the number of faults is significant) the way of the general de-structuring of moral values. Not the private moral but the public one is that which is relevant for the social coherence and framing of the concrete destiny of the ordinary people: the 'neglecting' of these ones, their domination and treatment as terrorists was and is promoted by the most moral husbands and wives from the leading stratum. But when rulers are proved to unjustly beneficiate of public founds and prestige since they are guilt of plagiarism: this is not a question of private moral. Neither when rulers think that they have not to be imprisoned when they are indubitably and irrevocably guilty, is not a question of private moral. Nor when the other members of the ruling stratum cover them: it's not a question of private moral, but of class complicity and attack on the public morality without which there is no society. The *public moral* is that which is constituted from and refers to the functioning of ordinary moral values in the realm of social and public relations.

In a time of system crisis – generated by complex and convergent economic, political, social, cultural and psychological phenomena – the ruling stratum is so aware that it has no more unlimited time and, as I already mentioned, its former sources of profit, money and power are so shrinking, that it supports the radical values and public opinion-makers which legitimise their extreme individualistic and immoral behaviour. These values and their aggressive publicity emphasise, in their turn, this behaviour.

Obviously, the ruling stratum wants to cover its violation of public moral. But – and this is the scandal, not so much the violation as such, since for some decades people do no longer credit the rulers as to their observance of the public morality – neither when this violation is discovered, the leading class does not give full swing to the sanction of the guilty. Sometimes they are removed so as to no longer be in the public eyes, and are replaced by other personages who do not play in fact another game. There are, obviously, differences between countries: but if, for example in Germany high personages resigned when they were proven guilty of plagiarism – while in Romania they seem to be unmoveable –, everywhere the corrupt relationships, acting inwards and outwards, are vectors of power and influence.

Anyway, why is the example of Romania so important in the discussion of corruption? Because even these low level facts as those of high personages' plagiarism – covering in fact the general decay of the intellectual stratum and

the breakdown of the credibility of intellectual valuation – suggest the way of the ruling class in the system crisis. Perhaps this is not the only way: it would be possible that the secondary aspects such as plagiarism be severely sanctioned; in order to give room to the usual and much more important forms of power and struggle for an indefinite time for the power relations.

Cicero's judgement concerning the public immorality of Verres and Catilina could be seen in the light of this present interpretation: in the Roman world where the observing of "puritan" morals in the public space was essential for the pragmatic spring of the power of the republic and of the empire, the most clarifying expression of the horror in front of the distancing from this moral was: *o, tempora…* The immoral behaviour of Verres and Catilina could but ruin the epoch Cicero lived within and, at the same time, the epoch as such seemed to poison mentalities and behaviours: *o, tempora…*

Cicero's phrase also illustrates the precautionary spirit of preventing the aggravation of the crisis of credibility of the system as such, and of the leadership of the system: if one wants people to accept the system, then it must sacrifice something: the *ad libitum* morals. This one should remain within the limits required by the superior place on the social ladder.

But Cicero was not singular in reclaiming 'the times' that would be guilty: as we know, the decline of the Roman Empire was witnessed by many literary works and the perplexity and repudiation of the social spectacle were shared by the authors and their public as well: *o, tempora…* This sentiment became dominant in people's psychology and, as it is dominant in the present world media and public feelings, it is witnessing the system crisis.

Passing by, here the concept of system does not involve only the whole social system, but also its *subsystems*. This means that it's not only about the crisis of the system as a whole, but also about the crises of different subsystems: and of *all* the subsystems. Hegel has explained this problem when, for example, he wrote about Reformation as "resulted from the corruption of the Church" (Hegel 1900, 412).

But what does corruption mean? The Latin word, *corruptio, -ōnis*, means damage, alteration: from the verb *corrumpo, -umpĕre, -ūpi, -uptum*, to destroy, to ruin, to waste, to lose, to damage, to alter, to deceive, to infringe, to falsify, to bribe. A corrupt state of things is an alteration of its normal, usual situation. This is the most important element here. The general meaning of corruption – as theft, fraud, burglary, robbery, bribery, conflict of interests – derives from this idea of de-formation of the initial normal state of things. It's significant that the more general concept – corruption – (that is concretised and described as theft etc.) starts from this idea of alteration, and not from theft (*furtum, -i*), fraud (*fraudŭlentĭa, -ae*), burglar(y) (*burgaria, -ae*, *vispellio, -ōnis*), robbery (*raptum, -i*).

The basic motivation of this fact is that a theft etc. is an individual, accidental action. Certainly, the quantity of individual facts leads to a quality described as the general state of things concerning those facts. But if things are

altered, this already means that the concrete appearances of things we speak about are *no more accidental*, but belong to a new situation which is *the new normal state of things*. Hegel has helped us to understand that corruption is no more "an accidental phenomenon; it was not the mere *abuse* of power and dominion. A corrupt state of things is very frequently represented as an 'abuse'; it is taken for granted that the foundation is good – the system, the institution faultless – but that the passion, the subjective interest, in short the arbitrary volition of men has made use of that which in itself was good to further its own selfish ends, and what is required to be done is to remove these adventitious elements. On this showing the institute in question escapes obloquy, arid the evil that disfigures it appears something foreign to it. But when accidental abuse of a good thing really occurs, it is limited to particularity. A great and general corruption affecting a body of such large and comprehensive scope (as a Church), is quite another thing" (1900, 412).

This kind of permanent state of corruption does not happen any time. Only when the system faces a deep tension resulting from antagonistic forces in search of resources, *i.e.* only when the dominant stratum needs a large bureaucracy which seeks for more and more benefits, thus only when the restrictive allocation of resources forces the exceeding of legal means to obtain them and the interdependence of the dominant stratum and (high) bureaucracy is so strong that both depend upon the same process of extortion[15] of profits and benefits by all means, one see with perplexity that there are no more cases of corruption, but *entangled knots, chains and nets*. And one can no more attack seriously one knot without seeing with the same perplexity that the problem is far more large and the knot is connected with other knots and chains and nets: so as either one continues to unwind the chain, assuming the revenge of the bearers of corruption, or one stops and surrenders, and the process of corruption seems to be equivalent with the whole society, as a huge monstrous castle[16] with a monstrous labyrinth of corridors where the individual is lost and deeply feels his insignificant size. The system crisis once more aggravates the modern alienation and the first reaction of perplexity is that which contains the conscience of the enormous asymmetry between the individual and the Moloch of corruption: *o, tempora…* and *vae victis*.

When both the corruption is so almighty and people seem to be paralysed in front of it, the bearers of corruption do no more care for keeping the appearances. Nowadays corruption is so huge – so as every one knows about it and feels it – not because mass media are more vigilant than before, but because the corrupts, *i.e.* the entire dominant stratum no longer care about the consideration of people, no longer care about the ordinary moral values which are nevertheless required by common people. This new attitude of the powerful leads to the increase – if it's possible at all – of the corruption phenomenon.

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[15] See the Latin verb: *extorquĕo, -quēre, -si, -tum*, to sprain, *to tear out*, *to snatch*, *to wring*, *to take out*, to torment, to anguish, to torture.
[16] Let's remember Kafka's novel.

And so on and so forth. This un-destructible continuity has, however, a single solution: that of the decisive indignation of the many.

Therefore, Cicero's phrase illuminates a model of approaching a historical period of system crisis, when the *social decay is manifesting through corruption as a general and 'normal' state*. There are, obviously, many example of corruption, so as they seem to be the new rule (while honesty and correctness – as something strange and out-of-date phenomenon). Because these examples of corruption are not punished, nor morally sanctioned at the official level (or not decisively sanctioned at the official level, since this would mean the substitution of the entire political class and the replacing of the entire economic and political system), they no longer seem discrete accidents that society may control and dissolve, but, on the contrary, the society seems to have become a corrupt space containing different corresponding individual appearances.

At the level of psyche, Cicero's model of reacting involves mainly the sentiment of *powerlessness* and *sadness* in front of the size of the social taint and adulterated phenomena. These ones generate "sad passions" (Bensayang 2006): people cannot assume/ wonder about the possibility to assume the solving of the social decay. But, at the same time, a spark of optimism lights in the middle of these passions: if these *tempora* are *real* and mean the entire social establishment, they could be transformed so as to become also *rational*. Just the huge task and the superposing of time with the whole social reality allow – and, in fact, require – the human intervention in order to construct a rational environment, an environment proper to man.

Instead of Conclusions

Many decades until the economic crisis begun in 2007, the economic, including trans-nationally realised, corruption was not considered as something fundamentally harming: it was tolerated in the common conscience as the inherent abuse of the powerful, and even – in the opinion of the most educated from a social standpoint – of power relations as such. The inertia of ideological clichés must not be forgotten. There were, obviously, many causes, but the majority of people were integrated in the functioning of the capitalist system and in its electoral game: even if they abstained from the polls and although their confidence in the political supplies was very low, they did not react according to this fact (Dogan 1999, 513-548). They thought – and especially in the last three or four decades in the West, as well as in the last twenty years in Romania – that they lived *Hard Times*[17], but they still hoped for a better life, like in the after-war period.

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[17] It's Charles Dickens' novel written in 1854.

The economic crisis – that officially was minimized and pictured as a short interval and after 2009 was periodically prolonged, so that at present one no longer ventures to decree its end in the next ten years– has weakened up the former common political conscience. People might still consider the political and academic corruption as being separated from the economic one and from the economic structural relations of society, but they are both exasperated and waiting for the breakdown which would bring something as a better social organisation: they think more and more that the system is wrong. But, obviously, they lack their power. And, what is more important, their social conscience is still marked by different backward ideas promoted in the huge ideological manipulation.

My paper is not focusing on this problem. What I am saying is that nowadays the old phrase of Cicero means more that the powerlessness that manifests through the abstract covering of things. *O, tempora…* signifies rather a little arrow conscientiously guided to the structural causes of a society in system crisis.

The idea of this saying represents the *sign* of a time of system crisis – a general corruption and alteration – and not its cause: indeed, people's resignation in front of this manifestation of the system crisis is a *cause* of the lasting of this crisis only through its combining with the other ones. From this standpoint, *o, tempora…* accentuates the message of the power as unassailable asymmetry, its victory. But, as we saw, the saying has not a single meaning.

A deep significance of this phrase which accuses the times – as in a periphrastic concise euphemism, if I may say so – is that of the concrete state of the human freedom: just because people have no liberty, and because their lack of liberty seems to be the result of the entire reality, *they take their servitude for freedom* and consequently accuse everything / "the times". If they would really have some liberties, they would accuse precisely the instances/ social relations opposing to the rest of freedom they need. But, since they do not have but formal and in a formal manner liberties manifesting in the public space, they express their feelings from the inwardness of their homes – where they feel free[18] – as a refutation of the entire exterior which comprises them: *tempora* are the receptacle of the entire non-understood and inimical milieu.

Finally, the function of a phrase pronounced two thousand years ago as a pattern of understanding of the historical epoch one lives in (and, more concretely, the epoch of system crisis – *i.e.*, not only the epoch of the Roman writer) is valid only because the phrase was interpreted from the viewpoint of significances and contents accumulated in the whole history and analysed and derived by researchers. Namely, if every theory and significant formula reflects

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[18] But let's remember Arendt, where she has demonstrated that one's private movement in the private realm in order to labour "for the tangible things needed for the life process itself" (Arendt 1958, 96) – in modern words, to earn one's living – is just subordinated to the natural anankē and is the least provider of freedom.

the concrete historical conditions they were created in, their correct extrapolation could take place only after the analysis of those historical conditions, the drawing of possible common features in different historical epochs and the exploration of the world of feelings those theories and formulae involve. Only from this standpoint, an old saying could be significant both in its common use, which fulfils as a result of spontaneous intuitions, and in its scientific interpretation, beyond the time when it was coined. The reproduction of a spiritual state of many individuals through a formula is thus a sign of the reproduction of the conditions it was thought.

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PHILOSOPHY AS A HUMANISTIC DISCIPLINE

FLORIN PRUNĂ

Abstract

In this paper I will present the outlook on philosophy as described by Bernard Williams in his essay, *Philosophy as a humanistic discipline*. My attempt consists of a first part of expositive approach which limits itself only to the enumeration of Williams' main arguments and to the outlay of the fundamental thesis he dawns from them. The second section proposes a correlation of his position with a specific metaphysical doctrine; for this aim and for a clearer explanation I found it useful to introduce references to other authors, like: R.G. Collingwood, C.L. Becker or H. Putnam. In the part reserved for my personal conclusions I will further investigate the premises of this specific outlook upon philosophy – as a discipline – and also try to suggest the immediate involvements that such a perspective could bring.

Keywords: philosophy, humanistic discipline, how should philosophy understand itself, Bernard Williams.

The main purpose of this paper would be that of delivering a brief exposition of Bernard Williams' understanding of philosophy, seen as a subject. My aim is not of disputing with Williams or to criticize his arguments. Such an attitude of debate – if wished to be successful – requires a certain philosophical disposition, one that implies a fair amount of tact alongside with a significant analytic ability. Thus the below list of key-points is not consequently presented in an ordered logical succession, preferring only to enumerate them in the form of a *thoughtcloud*[1]. Nevertheless an assurance can be given as to the fact that they are presuppositions withdrawn from Williams' essay. My opinion is that such a method is one that doesn't exclude firm logical reconstruction. Furthermore this approach is somehow closer to the method of research proposed for philosophy – *as a humanistic discipline* – by Williams in his book; at least as I was able to understand it.

While pursuing the answer to the question "*how should philosophy understand itself?*" Williams reaches some key points. In his view philosophy is a humanistic discipline; his answer is like such mainly because:

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[1]   A group of distinct and yet unordered, logical propositions;

- it is integrated in a system of knowledge – human knowledge;
- it is contained in what could be considered a wide system of humanistic disciplines;
- all disciplines on our planet are humanistic;
- aims to explain the world – but never alone in its effort; reeling on knowledge obtained by other disciplines;
- it doesn't necessarily have the particularities of science: experimental, "trial and error" approach nor mathematical precision;
- analytic philosophy is not as scientific as it may seem;
- its concepts tend to change their meaning rather than concur one another, where in science new concepts often take the place of old ones;
- the feature of accumulative knowledge is a feature also shared by history; its past achievements are an active part of its present.

If he is suggesting something about philosophy as a discipline then he has what is called an outlook on the subject. This can only mean that his approach is a metaphysical approach. It's quite obvious that metaphysics and only metaphysics can refer to the way a subject-matter *is* – its ontological traits, its presuppositions. His arguments conclude in favor of philosophy as being a humanistic discipline – thus actively integrated with other humanistic subjects of study – and quite a particular one due to its specific methods of research and due to its solid characteristics. Also when comparing philosophy with other subjects of study he holds a strong point towards the benefit that those specific sciences historically have gained from the philosophical enterprise (physics, psychology, history etc). On the reverse he admits that the further self-development of such sciences is in a very much way for philosophy's sake because it remains connected to the solid results that these sciences produce and it can use its specific – critical – instruments to judge the potential, the meaning, of the solutions that they present.

To favor the identity and distinctiveness of philosophy he compares it to historical procedures. The interest of historical research can as well include the study of philosophy – the history of philosophy, seen as the history of thought development – but this is not actually philosophy, says Williams. It is a known fact that modern history uses philosophical leverage to some extend to investigate its subject-matter. Substantial authors like C.R. Collingwood or C.L. Becker are sufficient in mentioning for the exemplification of this point.

> (…) our inveterate habit of thinking of the world of history as part of the external world, and of historical facts as actual events. In truth the actual past is gone; and the world of history is an intangible world, re-created imaginatively, and present in our minds. (Becker 1955, 327-340)

On the other hand, at least theoretically, it can be agreed that philosophical thought does not necessarily require a profound historical leverage. Nevertheless Williams insists that things can function in this fashion only to some limited extend because historical identification is paradoxically unavoidable in philosophy; especially in specific areas of concern like moral philosophy.

> Here history helps philosophical understanding, or is part of it. Philosophy has to learn the lesson that conceptual description (or, more specifically, analysis) is not self-sufficient; and that such projects as deriving our concepts *a priori* from universal conditions of human life, though they indeed have a place (a greater place in some areas of philosophy than others), are likely to leave unexplained many features that provoke philosophical enquiry. (Williams 2006, 192)

Moving on with his analogy to the case of other sciences, like the natural sciences, Williams suggests that they also have a great deal to profit from the philosophical effort but without a doubt their concerns come from a totally different angle. Some criticism is brought up in this point on behalf of the philosophers who demand that philosophy should be conducted in a scientific manner. Their methods even-though aim for rigor, clarity and, why not, truth, imply a discourse in which ultimately mathematics tends to outline the philosophical thought. Analytical philosophy is pointed out to be such an approach of doing philosophy and Williams suggests that its downsides prove that this *kind of science* doesn't really function.

Now we have a clearer comprehension on Williams' goal: that of separating the philosophical enterprise from the barrowed instrumental rigors that other sciences presuppose. He seems to suggest that when adopted, in philosophical inquiries, these instruments impose a sort of practical trait of vindication that the philosophical results can just never fully achieve; otherwise when reaching such characteristics it simply means that a new science was again established due to the philosophical inquires. To reach a short conclusion his main thesis can be also enunciated like this: *philosophy is not a science. It is a humanistic discipline.*

But what is a science anyway?

> The word 'science', in its original sense, which is still its proper sense not in the English language alone but in the international language of European civilization, means a body of systematic or orderly thinking about a determinate subject-matter. (Collingwood 1940, 4)

And if philosophy is not a science is it a discipline?

> It is not just a question of a discipline, as a field or area of enquiry. 'Discipline' is supposed to imply discipline. In philosophy, there had better be something that counts as getting it right, or doing it right, and I believe that this must still be associated with the aims of philosophy of offering arguments and expressing oneself clearly, aims that have

been particularly emphasized by analytic philosophy, though sometimes in a perverse and one-sided manner. (Williams 2006, 180)

Regardless of the dispute about its status, for now, the absolute presupposition that philosophy is in the aid of human knowledge must be regarded like an 'oath of faith'.

Is Philosophy a Science or a Discipline?

Williams is not the only one who argued about the character of a specific human enterprise. In the work of Collingwood (1940) we can recognize a well ironed attempt to save the prestigious word that was in the front of word 'history' – science – by demonstrating that metaphysics is a tool that the historian uses in his work. Specifically, he was convinced that this tool is a scientific one; one that concerns itself only with the study of presuppositions. Scientific because it implies:

> Scientific or 'orderly' thinking, as I pointed out at the beginning of Chapter IV, is orderly in the sense that it deals with things in their logical order, putting what is presupposed before what presupposes it (Collingwood 1940, 39)

If accepted, Collingwood's argument would lead to the identification of history with a field of study that uses scientific instruments. Therefore it could be called itself a science. In this paper we will not concern ourselves with the statute of history but one point appears to be quite clear: this field of enquiry has some of the presuppositions implied by Williams regarding philosophy. Mentioning an undisputed one is appropriate: that of being a humanistic discipline.[2]

What interests us more exactly, in Collingwood's work is the fact that metaphysical inquiries are argued upon to be sound only when they are done in a scientific way. Then again we have to admit that when talking about philosophy we are also talking about metaphysics.

To make Williams position coherent now we could accept that metaphysics is an actual science and therefore we should have to separate it from philosophy. But such a development is not likely to succeed on the sole purpose that philosophy is dependent on metaphysical inquiries. There would be practically nothing left of it if we would extract metaphysics. Such a perspective would be a bit absurd. Furthermore Williams wants to release philosophy from the category of science, proposing it as a fundamental humanistic discipline one that is in the aid of human knowledge in a looser, but wider, sense. It seems that

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[2]   The word 'humanistic' implies a specific set of characteristics; also it should admit an intricate human limit in what concerns the process of obtaining knowledge;

there's no way of making Williams' position be coherent without disputing even more with Collingwood. Yet again, if we look into the developments of the *philosophy of science* we can also acknowledge that there's no clear demarcation between science and metaphysics (Hannan 2009, 4).

Even so one can't help but wonder: what is the statute of philosophy? It may be true that other enterprises, like history, are in part responsible for its social prestige – at least in the eyes of the unfamiliar public, but it is also itself responsible for the prestige it has today in front of anyone who gets in touch with it even if just in a brief encountering during his day-to-day routines.

Williams suggests that philosophy is a discipline – in the sense that it has its own discipline (Williams 2006, 180). I suggest that he implies that a certain set of traits does exist concerning philosophy but its identification is not easily done or for that matter not even so important. His metaphysical position, even-though not very clearly expressed, doesn't impose with rigorous necessity a scientific outline for the philosophical effort *per se*. Philosophy is a field of study, one of many other humanistic fields of study, and it lays in its own power to prove its value – its intellectual authority (Williams 2006, 188).

Actually, it seems that Williams is not convinced of the self-acclaimed ultimate triumph of scientific enquiries in what concerns the obtainment of absolute human knowledge so therefore it would appear that he suggests to rid this concept from philosophy's character, hoping, by doing so, it will not share the same predicted faith. In fact *only* as a humanistic discipline, philosophy still brings aid to human knowledge, we can be sure about this, even though the idea of human knowledge admits benefits from other disciplines as well. It seems there's no specific reason not to conceive things in this fashion.

A Semantic Approach

Justifying Williams' outlook by correlating it with a theory debated in favor by Putnam – the causal theory of reference (Putnam 1973) – could bring some more light on this matter. If we consider this theory we accept that the meaning of the words that compose a certain language change because ultimately language is a social instrument. So why not include in the philosophical jargon as well? Putnam's famous *doppelganger* experiment – even though a purely mental one – sustained the logical necessity of social participation in what concerns the transformations of language (its development).

We can imagine, without taking another risky oath of faith that Williams is himself such a participator and, why not, one with a field of interest – a specialist in philosophy. When Putnam shows us how the meaning of the word 'water' changes he holds this transformation as a responsibility of the social component. In his example some scientists (chemists) discover that water is

actually H$_2$O, therefore the old name (water), used to indicate the clear and healthy liquid, becomes not so accurate like the new one, even though both of the words are in use at the same time they don't indicate quite the same liquid.[3] In this theory social participation takes place and knowledge is spread in a moderate homogeneous way through the use of a common language.

Returning to Williams we can admit that he is a sort of a scientist as well – in the sense of a well formed and *disciplined* voice – in the field of philosophy. His purpose is to determine us to see philosophy as a discipline and not as a science. Like how 'water' today is described more accurate by a chemical trait (H$_2$O) instead of a physical one (clear healthy liquid) likewise he suggests that the meaning of *philosophy* is more accurately detailed when we describe it like a discipline and not as a science.

We did not imply that Putnam's theory generated Williams' idea but we have tried to test its further searching for coherence. We know Williams' arguments and we can be sure that he could be called a worthy voice of philosophy in the same way as the scientist[4] who discovered the formula of water was a worthy voice of chemistry. Philosophy should have intellectual authority even when it's judging itself; therefore I suggest that Williams' outlook should be seriously taken into consideration.

As to conclude we can summarize that Williams sustains a pluralistic strife for knowledge, one that should merely limit itself to the development and to the improvement of a vast variety of research methods. Philosophy, seen as humanistic discipline, means that this enterprise is interconnected to other fields and more important it has the same typical humanistic limits of acquiring knowledge – which is actually a perfectly normal trait.

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[3]   H$_2$O refers strictly to a substance essentially pure, composed only of hydrogen and oxygen, while "water" could include some impurities as well (a lake is composed out of water).

[4]   Here I am referring to Henry Cavendish.

VASILE GOLDIŞ'S CONTRIBUTION
TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION
AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL PEDAGOGY[1]

MARŢIAN IOVAN[2]

Abstract

In this article, the author looks at Vasile Goldiş's contribution to the development of the philosophy of education and social pedagogy, in his position as a political leader, director of "Românul" (The Romanian) newspaper, journalist, president of "Astra", author and, last but not least, teacher. His pedagogical view on shaping the "soul" of the crowds, *i.e.* fostering self-awareness in human communities – nations in particular –, is an integral part of his general worldview on society, humanity and values, and can only be understood as a subsystem of the latter and a part of universal culture. The value of Goldiş's original contributions to the philosophy of education and the development of social and political pedagogy are demonstrated, above all, by his life and five-decade long activity in the service of national liberation and solidarity among social groups within the Romanian state, while also envisioning an ever-increasing unity among European nations, leading to the creation of a future world state.

Keywords: national education, school, faith, Vasile Goldiş, social group, "Astra".

Introduction

With a degree in Philosophy and Letters, having attended the Universities of Budapest and Vienna, Vasile Goldiş was a versatile thinker, multilingual scholar, connoisseur of universal history, philosophy, and the great currents of thought in culture, religion, literature, and fundamental sciences. Goldiş made original contributions in various fields of culture, the best known of which were ontology, philosophy of history, philosophy of culture, psychology, ethics, philosophy of law, sociology, crowd psychology, political ideology, and history.

As a teacher at the Normal School of Caransebeş (since 1886) and the Orthodox School in Braşov (since 1889), Goldiş embraced, with all responsibility and spiritual devotion, a career as a teacher, where he was

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interested in the development of pedagogical sciences, seeking to achieve superior performance in teaching. In this capacity, he published Romanian-language textbooks on History, Constitution, Latin, and Geography, he developed various projects, and published articles in journals devoted to the philosophy of education, methodology, or social pedagogy. Throughout his lifetime, he served as a Secretary of the "Society for the creation of a Romanian theater", located in Brasov, as a Member of Parliament in Budapest and, a few decades later, in Bucharest, as director of the "Românul" newspaper, as President of "Astra" Association and as a Minister. In these positions, Goldiş sought to increase literacy and civic education among the people, shape their national awareness, and reform Transylvanian institutions, continuing the work he conducted as a teacher, on a much broader, macro-social level. His ideas on education were completed and developed, resulting in a unitary outlook on guiding (teaching) the nation as a social "body". In this professional exercise as a scholar and illuminator of his people, Goldiş makes a substantial contribution to the development of social pedagogy. His views on pedagogy can be properly understood only as part of his philosophical worldview on society, history, culture and values. In the following pages, we endeavor to systematize his pedagogical ideas, which show a creed and ideal well integrated into a system of thought concerning education in general and teaching in particular.

Views on Education

An influential figure as a teacher, minister of culture and religion, social pedagogue and educator of the nation, Vasile Goldiş developed an overview on the essence and role of education in society. This included the directions of its development, the evaluation of educational factors in close connection with the role of the Church and the various other cultural institutions, with a civilizing impact for different social groups and the nation as a whole.

Goldiş conceived education through school, Church, the press and other cultural institutions, as a conscious, uninterrupted process on both a historical scale and at individual level, obeying generally valid principles for all ages or social groups (whether a nation, nationality, social class, age category, human community, functional institution, family or political party). The specifics of school or community-based educational work consist not of regulatory principles, but of methods, procedures and techniques employed, goals or ideals to be achieved in the actual cultural context where it is applied, leaving a mark on the effectiveness of educational activities.

The man as an individual is defined by Goldiş as a social being (in accordance with Aristotle), as an individual who lives and develops by and for society, which, by assimilating culture, distances itself from ignorance and

advances in the sphere of civilization, stepping away from barbarism. Any human being and any social body are subject to the inexorable law of life: they are born, they live and they die. Any human individual, any group of people "who have a feeling of belonging are a single being, a biological individuality, a man who thinks and feels, hates and loves, who serves others if he cannot do otherwise, who pretends, lies, fights and sometimes dies fighting, but in all this he is driven by the inexorable law of life, which wants to assert, spread and perfect itself through the struggle for existence" (Goldiş 1976, 223).

The development of an individual or social body is regulated by ideals and values, resulting in a degree of civilization. The more complete the individual being (a man, a nation, a people or any other social organization) is, the higher the level of civilization. The human struggles to conquer truth (through scientific research, discoveries, innovations, streamlining knowledge) in order to make life easier through benefits resulting from civilization, to master nature more rationally and to a greater extent, requires overcoming possibly infinite obstacles that oppose human possibility to achieve progress of civilization. Therefore, the education of an individual or nation demands effort, sacrifice, and struggle with oneself. The same principle applies in terms of human emancipation from the dominion of man. This pertains to the political and civic formation of man and social organizations. Above these, Goldiş placed the moral and spiritual order of society, *i.e.* religious education, which is always focused on cultivating solidarity, love of man by man, which glues any society and gradually strengthens cohesion and character. In this way, by the action of cultural factors, particularly school and Church, over biological individuality, intellectual and spiritual individuality will gradually develop. Intellectual individuality grows through knowledge, intelligence, extension of experience; spiritual individuality increases through the formation of feelings, beliefs, skills, habits stored, often subconsciously, in accordance with political, moral and spiritual values.

The man is distinguished from other creatures, Goldiş said, not only in that he is a social being with a social, spiritual personality, but especially in that he can "grow intensively and without limit" (1976, 231), *i.e.* reach perfection by overcoming smaller or larger obstacles. Other creatures have a purely biological individuality and can only grow extensively and limitedly. Individuals, states, nations, cultural institutions will be born, live and die, guided by the same eternal law: "the life force of any nation is directly related to the extent to which individuals are willing to subordinate their individual interests to the interests of the entire nation, and only that nation may have eternal life, whose sons are ready at any moment to sacrifice their passing lives so that their nation may live forever." (1976, 232).

As a social being, man lives his life on Earth, being subject to the physical laws of his environment, and "as a society, to economic laws, but the

real life of man is contained within his feelings, his thoughts, his preferences, the ideals he worships, the beliefs that reconcile him with the absolute, affording moments of satisfaction to the needs his soul." (Goldiş 1930, 4). Therefore, the development of man involves not so much the accumulation of knowledge and various products of intellect and reason, but, especially, his moral and religious feelings, his faith-based character. Faith has been and will always be the backbone of civilization. At the same time, "the power of faith has been shown at all times to have an inexhaustible spiritual fruitfulness, and a moral order without a religious order has proven illusory" (Goldiş 1929, 3).

In accordance with his general views on man, society and values, and his philosophy on human history and culture, Goldiş generally conceived education as a conscious process of development, corresponding to a belief and an ideal of man from the cradle to the grave. Education is a continuous, lifelong process, extending to the whole history of a people. It is not only children, young people, social groups, peoples or nations that need improvement, guidance, education on the scale of civilization, but any social body. At micro-social level, education is made by the mother, family, teacher, and priest. In this context, Goldiş conceives education as "preparing the individual for community service." (Goldiş 1929, 173). At macro-social level, education is carried out by historical figures, the true "apostles of the nation", the great teachers, shapers of the national soul, serving as true models, as were George Şincai, Mihail Kogălniceanu, Octavian Goga, Andrei Bârseanu, Vasile Lucaciu, Spiru Haret, Ion Maiorescu, Mihai Eminescu, George Coşbuc, I.L. Caragiale, Aurel Vlaicu, Simion Bărnuţiu, Gheorghe Lazăr, Avram Iancu, Vissarion Roman, Gheorghe Bariţiu and many others. Goldiş portrayed such figures in various writings and speeches, using phrases to highlight their merits as follows: guiders and enlighteners of the people, forerunners, "sowers of national ideals", "teachers of peoples", great "educators of the Romanian people", "moral compasses of future generations", "leaders of the national soul", those who have awakened "national awareness, who built our soul, faith and ideals", "conductors of crowds", "apostles of the blessed ascension of souls" etc. Such personalities, political, cultural and spiritual leaders, men of genius, make education for the masses, guide and direct the various cultural institutions, as was "Astra" and many other cultural societies, media outlets, schools, universities, houses of culture, libraries, museums etc. Through their efforts, cultural and educational factors succeed in unifying the energies of isolated individuals and groups, forming close-knit human communities with faith in their ideals, elevating peoples on glorious ladder of perfection, developing the capacity and the will of peoples to overcome barriers, and harmonizing life with universal values. Social-scale education leads to the development of social bodies, the gradual increase of human solidarity in relation to undertaken ideals, the progress of civilization towards ever greater justice, freedom and love of people. With these

ideas, Goldiş proves himself an enlightened social pedagogue, as both a practitioner and a theorist. In both positions, he referenced the existing literature in sociology, crowd psychology, social psychology, general pedagogy (including works published by E. Durkheim, C. Bouglé, D. Gusti, G. Wells, G. Le Bon, V. Barbat, J.F. Herbart, J.-J. Rousseau, James L. Hughes, Georg Simmel, Gabriel Tarde, J. Maxwell, Bertrand de Jouvenel etc.).

Goldiş conceived training as a component of education, as transmission and acquisition of knowledge, as a communication process that broadens the individual's knowledge and experience and increases his intellectual capacities. But the main purpose of education is not to give children, and learners in general, a massive amount of knowledge, "a lot of learning" as "the good school it not that which gives a lot of knowledge, but rather that which builds characters, spreads morals and plants ideals. The value of an individual is not given by his knowledge, however extensive, but by his character, the morals that guide him and the ideals that inspire him ... Characters provide the safety conditions for any human society. History is witness that nations perish from the weakening of their character, not by that of their intelligence." (Goldiş 1925, 3). In other words, the ideal of education is to mold a man endowed with moral and spiritual virtues, whose synthesis lies in the character. Character requires initiative capacity, sound judgment, strong will, determination, and perseverance – qualities that gradually form in the personality of the learner through the agency of faith, rather than thought or reason. Our faith is our ultimate reason to be and the only guarantee of character, morals and ideals in the real world of human societies – Goldiş maintained.

Thus conceived, the ideal education should guide all efforts of learners and teachers towards continuing improvement and self-improvement of human and social bodies. Ideals stand above all else; the struggles of human beings and humanity have always focused on attaining ideals – which led to improvement of people, *i.e.* the progress of civilization. "Civilization", Goldiş said, "is the summary of ideals that have heated human souls throughout history" (1925, 3), and peoples who left barbarism did so when they found their ideal. From ideals, peoples evolve to civilization through education, as they strengthen their characters, their unity of will and their ability to perform historical actions.

At the core of the teacher's efforts, Goldiş believed, "lies the noble ideal of Christ: the love of people, which is the source of spiritual unity and of the character of every man and every social body. This ideal is the ultimate source of Western culture today; it is the first to proclaim distinction, equality, freedom, and fraternity to the world, mercy for the weak and condemnation of the shameless and hypocritical." (1925, 3). The school that truly wishes to be a guide to a nation cannot be deprived of ideals, and the most sacred ideal is the law of Christ: it must remain the ideal of school, as it is eternal, while all others are transient.

In his various writings, Goldiş addresses education from other perspectives, as well: as institutional and spontaneous (non-institutionalized) education, as systematic education in and outside of school, as lifelong education, as multi-lateral education leading to the development and perfection of man (moral, civic, aesthetic, work-based, religious, political education etc.), as education depending on the factors that deliver it (patriotic and national education delivered by "Astra", political and civic education made by the Romanian National Party, education conducted by theaters, museums, houses of culture etc.), as education achieved through subjects (History, Latin, Geography, Constitution etc). Regardless of its form, in order for it to be efficient and yield the desired results, education must adhere to principles and methodological rules according to field specificity.

The principles of education are natural laws, on the observance of which depends the degree of achievement of ideals and goals. Among these, Goldiş approached the principle of vivid intuition as the source of scientific knowledge, the principle of accessibility, the principle of active participation of learners in their training, the principle of systematic and logical organization of knowledge, the principle of assimilation and applicability of knowledge etc. He also insisted, with convincing arguments, on complying with some principles in the process of reorganizing the national education system in Romania, reconstructed after World War I, and in building a national system of education and culture in the interwar period, such as: equal access to education for all children; free public education; general elementary education; a more democratic education; respect for human rights; the principle of non-discrimination based on nationality, sex, race, religion etc.; focusing education on the training of teachers; freedom and autonomy of education and culture etc.

Vasile Goldiş's myriad of concerns (in education, training, development of national awareness, solidarity of social bodies able to make progress in culture, civilization, strengthening the unitary national state of the Romanians and making life easier for all people etc.), his original arguments, his causal and functional explanations emphasize his responsibility, skill, and ability as an organizer of vast cultural, political, and social events, as a publicist, as a social pedagogue, and as a teacher of the Romanian nation. These dimensions of his personality come to complete those as a high school teacher and author of textbooks for Romanian schools in the multinational imperial education structure.

In respect of the level of development of education in his time, Goldiş was very much interested in its future. His vision is optimistically pedagogical, relying on the fact that although man is a limited being, he aspires to perfectibility and has a natural desire for perfection. So are nations, states, or other social organizations. Their path to perfection, civilization and progress is education, especially moral education – focused on cultivating ancestral faith, customs, morals, Romanian attitudes and solidarity between generations. The

future of industrial civilization, the ease of work from decade to decade, the increase in people's ability to master nature reasonably require further enhancement of science education and a larger amount of knowledge to be learned. But the purpose of future education should not reside in increasing the stock of basic knowledge that should be stored in the memory and learned by children, as they are ephemeral and "however much it may progress, science shall forever remain insufficient for the satisfaction of the soul." (Goldiş 1931, 7). It is more important to shape characters based on ancestral faith. The future will be dominated by the school of the masses. Therefore, general and compulsory education will have to be the center of concern for decision-makers who bear responsibility for the peoples' future.

Mankind will evolve to new levels of organization of human solidarity, within which a new, universal moral and spiritual order will gradually assert itself until, after a long period of time, it will lead to universal solidarity, a global institutional organization, from which war will be permanently excluded. This future organization of humanity will result mainly from the action of spiritual forces, as was the case with Reform and liberal society in Europe. Education will be a determining factor in this respect, its fruits will be the awareness of human solidarity, the human able to understand his freedom in the process of living with others, to articulate his individual interest with respect to that of the community, to exercise his will in accordance with the requirements of physical, economic, social and moral laws. "In the state of mankind", Goldiş believed, "education will be made institutionally." (Goldiş 1930, 6). As man and his soul are eternally perfectible, education shall also be eternal and perfectible within the future universal organization of mankind.

Perfection of National Awareness and Community Spirit – A Central Concern of Vasile Goldiş

Undoubtedly, Vasile Goldiş was a great national and social pedagogue, a teacher of European nations, who leveraged, in his political and cultural activities, his vast knowledge in the field of history, philosophy of culture, religion and law. By World War I, the goal of his life was to contribute to the perfection of self-awareness of the Romanian nation by shaping, among Romanians in Transylvania, Banat and other parts of Europe, the belief that they belong to the same historical core which is the Romanian people, that they have the same origin, language, customs and mindsets, regardless of the administration they are under. His actions of various kinds, especially in the area of politics, organization, and educational communication, were aimed at Romanians' national awareness. This included the expansion and enhancement of self-awareness of the Romanian people and every member thereof. Such a

major historical work is complex and lengthy; it is a cultural process in its general meaning, and an educational one, in a narrower sense and as part of the former.

As a philosopher of history, Goldiş argues that historical eras are dominated by an idea, or a "spirit", as the Middle Ages were possessed by the idea of religion, and the modern age, due to the French Revolution, proclaimed human rights and religious tolerance as triumphant ideas in the mind of European peoples. After Napoleon's war, the national idea emerged as a driving force of the peoples, in the light of which nation states arose, built on the ruins of the great Napoleonic Empire. "The new spirit, the spirit of the national idea, quickly conquered all mankind. The whole nineteenth century especially bears the national mark, which gave birth to nation states." (Goldiş 1912, 1). The inevitable course of history, the call of the "spirit of history" is also true for the other empires and nationalities composing them. Therefore, Romanians within the empire had to be educated in light of national ideals, aspirations and interests in order to assert their solidarity and to strengthen the unity of their national awareness. Obviously, this process is secular; it had begun around 1600. A series of 'teachers of the people' ensued, artists who dedicated their lives to the enlightenment of the Romanian people. In 1816, Gheorghe Lazăr had sowed "seeds" that sprung barely a century later and which matured national awareness, awakening in the souls of Romanians the "will of national unity and freedom" (Goldiş 1976, 261) and, behold, today "Romanians, all together, give life to the right we have to rule the land of our fathers, and from the waves of a history of human unrest, our great Romanian country rises to the surface of life" (1976, 261), *i.e.* Greater Romania, the dream and precious treasure of our ancestors, our own and our heirs'.

As a result of history, the 1918 act of Alba Iulia was prepared through a complex, rightful and comprehensive cultural and educational work, carried out mainly by intellectuals, especially teachers, priests and writers. Such an ideal and corresponding activity were upheld by the "Association for Romanian Literature and Culture" or numerous other cultural societies, associations and organizations. "Astra" served national ideals, committed to "forever settle down Romanian solidarity and unity" (1976, 261), managing to light the flame of national awareness in the souls of Romanians, to hasten steps to freedom, justice and culture, to achieve that "every people be cultured, administered and judged in its own language, by individuals who not only know the habits, character and spirit of the people, but who share it, too." (Goldiş 1976, 156).

The education of national spirit involves leveraging, developing and broadcasting national and universal culture, literary and artistic creation, the press, libraries, universities, cultural centers, and all cultural establishments. Goldiş noted that "with the development of means of communication, the awareness of spiritual unity has become increasingly strong." (1976, 151). The education of national awareness is organically correlated to longing for unity

and cultural development, to strengthening political and administrative unity in a legal framework that is institutionally specific to the nation state.

But it is not national awareness, devoid of feelings, beliefs, customs, traditions and mindsets, that is the main factor which unites and strengthens a nation, but character. A predominant role is played by feelings of patriotism, national pride and dignity, the spirit of sacrifice for the nation's destiny. They must be well-secured by a common ideal and creed. The final goal of patriotic education is to shape souls. In this respect, Goldiş appreciated the role of music, visual arts, architecture, literature, theater, folk performances, ceremonies and rituals, without diminishing the role of information or knowledge transmission through modern means of communication. The action of various factors of education – be it political, civic, or patriotic – is driven by school and Church – two synthesizing factors that have generated, over time, the formation of human associations and organizations. Only if twinned with faith and the spread of culture will education of social groups and citizens actually lead to civilization (1929, 969). The two forces – Church and education, are the creators of souls of men, nations and institutions; they will gradually be able to defeat the beast in man, to create a world in harmony with the great values of humanity, such as freedom, justice, solidarity, the greater good, peace within and among States, and prosperity.

Thus, believing that history has produced sufficient evidence to demonstrate that healthy bodies are created and fortified, in particular, by the awareness of national belonging, Goldiş undertook, as the main purpose of his life, what he himself wrote in 1920: "we fought the hardest of fights against our oppressors for centuries. I knew that the national awareness of our subjugated people was a matter of being or not being. The propagation, the strengthening of this national awareness is the sole purpose of our fight." (1920, 2). In the service of this supreme goal, Goldiş revealed, through thought and deed, his brilliant qualities as a national and social educator, acting persistently to strengthen national spirit, which would master all of the Romanians' feelings and skills.

In the period after the Great Union of 1 December 1918, Goldiş developed his theoretical and practical work on another level, aimed at strengthening the Romanian national state and laying new foundations for the economy, social relations, education and culture. To this end, in April 18, 1920, Goldiş said that the shaping of the Romanian soul should continue until union will be strengthened not only institutionally, but also spiritually, and the Romanian National Party, whose leader he was, should work harder until attaining the complete spiritual unity of the Romanian people and the formation of a homogeneous mindset – as a basis for preventing political divisions, deviations from the agenda of the Union, betrayals and anarchic manifestations. The new state should be based on Christian morality, on a healthy and rational economy, on the appreciation and fair organization of labor, on a flourishing

culture – all being supported by the creation of appropriate institutional networks. The political agenda initiated by Goldiş, of a Christian – democratic essence, held, as national priorities, the cultivation of Christian morality, rational labor and economy, culture and human rights, the progress of the Romanian people on the scale of human civilization. "Above all, however", Goldiş wrote, "as an absolutely indispensable condition for progress, will have to be the perfect honesty, the impartiality and sacred altruism of all those who receive the burdensome entitlement and the very noble duty of conducting public affairs." (1993, 43). As a minister, party leader, president of "Astra", cultural activist and writer, Vasile Goldiş continued his work as a national pedagogue, "father of the country" – as defined by Octavian Goga, in the new socio-political, institutional and international context, to diminish discord and anarchy and promote the affective, spiritual, cultural, economic and political unity of all Romanians.

Christian moral education, the promotion of moral values, the education of Romanians in the spirit of human and civil rights is the pivot of resettlement of economic and social order, designed to strengthen the character and identity of the Romanian people, its vitality and will. Despite the tensions and difficulties that occurred after World War I, Goldiş trusted that the Romanian people, "having returned to the health of political thought, will know how to distinguish the tares from the wheat and will return to the political views that are likely to ensure its happiness." (Goldiş 1920, 2). He strongly believes that "soon, my kind will heal from the disease that had it in its grips for a while and will assume its natural role in the history of world civilization, as an element of order and an absolutely entitled factor of human culture." (1920, 2). But achieving this state requires literacy efforts, directed at all walks of life, from ploughmen, industrial workers, government officials, to the training of educators, needed in all types of schools, and priests.

The assumption of moral education, verified by history, the cultivation of altruism, the Christian love of man by man, the rule of justice, honesty, solidarity and other moral values consist of the fact that "people are not guided by *raison* (reason – *our note*), they are guided by feelings, opinions, beliefs... Because of this, we must turn the national idea into faith." (Goldiş 1920, 2). Moral sentiments, including those of national solidarity, must be part of every Romanian soul. Enlightening factors, such as "Astra", including educational ones in a narrower sense, are called to cultivate moral values in the souls of Romanians in this direction.

Throughout his life, Goldiş hated discord and sought to spread love among people, regardless of nationality, race, religion, gender or social class. From this position, he criticized, with historical and legal arguments, fanatical nationalism, chauvinism and irredentism. The formation of a nation's character, the propaganda and education conducted by different factors must exclude these

manifestations which violate human dignity, human and civic rights alike, being opposed to the principles of civilization and to the direction of historical evolution of humanity. The development of national and cultural awareness among non-Hungarian peoples in prewar Hungary, as well non-Romanian ones in Greater Romania, should follow universal principles resulting from history, their natural rights and democratic values. Otherwise, the governing power of the state becomes enslaving for certain parts of society, it becomes an immoral and corrupt governance. In such a situation, a discriminated, exploited nationality, deprived of its natural rights, is entitled to exercise the right to self-determination, to rebel until liberated. Goldiş argues in favor of these ideas by invoking a quote from the work of the Hungarian revolutionary, Lajos Kossuth, "Without nationality, life is useless. When we lose our national language, we shall lose our souls. Losing nationality is dying as a people. As such, nationality and language are dearer than freedom; for freedom can be regained, but nationality is lost forever." (1920, 124). Likewise, Goldiş concludes, for us Romanians, our nationality is our dearest possession in the world and "whoever wants to take our nationality, wishes to rob us of our souls. One cannot have his soul torn from him and then left to live on." (1920, 124).

Through his entire work as an educator, writer and political practitioner, Goldiş pleaded for observance of universal principles enshrined in the civilized world of Western democracies, including equal national entitlement of all peoples and nationalities within multiethnic empires. Such principles, he maintained, are, above all, moral, educational, spiritual and political, and must also be enshrined in legal terms. Therefore, the entire activity of political and civic education, the perfection of the national spirit of the Romanian people and its every citizen must respect universally enshrined principles and be conducted in harmony with the stated values of universal history, accepted by civilized peoples.

In conclusion, we can summarize Goldiş's outlook on education, in his position as a social reformer and guider of the Romanian nation, as an integral part of his philosophy, his general worldview on society, man and values, as a constituent of dissemination of culture to the people, which perfects its soul, its national awareness, its character based on ancestral faith. The dissemination of culture to the masses, through different factors, especially through education institutions, Church and various publications, leads any people, any social body to strengthen its unity of conscience, soul and belief, to increase its power to walk on the path of civilization, discipline and prosperity. In this historical process, promoting moral values and strengthening faith in the hearts of peoples, nations, and men as individuals, is the key to universal solidarity. Moral values are required in conjunction with justice. Great figures in history, politics, art, science and culture are those who plant ideals, who enlighten and guide the people, working as teachers of mankind, as social reformers.

Goldiş's philosophical views on education have not only oriented his conduct as a teacher and textbook author, but also as a politician, a cultural and social campaigner for perfection of the unity of national and cultural awareness of the Romanian people, whose life, culture and spirituality are free to develop in equal entitlement to other peoples. Through his work on education, instruction, enlightenment of the masses, nations and peoples, Goldiş made a substantial contribution to the development of European social pedagogy, philosophy of education – being himself a brilliant and tireless guider, national educator, that is, not only an illustrious teacher during his youth, but also a social pedagogue, a great thinker on the roles of education in his mature years.

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SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE UNIVERSE OF ETHNOLOGY AND ITS RELATED SCIENCES

SEBASTIAN ŞTEFĂNUCĂ

Abstract

Many times I noticed that there does not exist a unitary usage of the terms 'ethnography', 'ethnology' and 'anthropology' among the Romanian socio-cultural scientists. The same situation is to be found when taking a brief look at the history of the three scientific disciplines. A specialist facing such situation could choose only one of the two variants: to be guided by the use of the terms in relation with the different periods and geographical space or to take up the hard task of finding the definitional core of each discipline. I have adopted the second variant. I consider that the ideas contained by the *Structural Anthropology* of Claude Lévi-Strauss represent a moment of maturity in the epistemological evolution of the mentioned disciplines.

Keywords: ethnography, ethnology, social and cultural anthropology, conceptual clarity, styles of knowledge.

Accepting that in the Romanian scientific area the term "ethnology" seems to have a special resonance for many of the contemporary social and cultural scientists, considerations on the object and the aim of ethnology may not be – and might have never been – made without substantial references to other related disciplines: ethnography, folklore and, in the recent years, to cultural and social anthropology. In fact, the idea of this study emerged from great personal doubts regarding the suitable use and the exact delineation of the factual, conceptual, methodological and teleological universe specific to ethnology. I have recently noticed that the entire history of these disciplines is full of such doubts. Hence, numerous reactions have arisen. For example, Paul H. Stahl, starting from the idea that "Current notions, apparently the most simple, which compound the vocabulary of social sciences are actually notions whose content varies from one country to another, sometimes from one school to another, moreover, from one individual to another",[1] a situation that characterizes also the *name* of social sciences, so that "(…) the variety, the diversity in definitions are usual for ethnology, ethnography, as well as for cultural anthropology" (Stahl 1989, 146), makes his choice for an interest

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[1] And, I add, quite for the same individual. See further the case of Lévi-Strauss (note 10).

related to the *problems* and not to the names of the disciplines with which these problems are tackled. On the contrary, Gheorghiţă Geană, for whom „the division of scientific disciplines can only be but beneficial to the need professionalism" (Geană 2001, 169), makes his choice for conceptual clarity. The identity of cultural anthropology was to be for him a source of intense epistemological unrest at the beginning of his career at the Center of Anthropological Researches "Francis Rainer" from Bucharest, which lasted at least four years, and which leaded him to the writing of his doctoral thesis entitled *The epistemological status of cultural anthropology*,[2] in 1977 (Geană 2006, 206). In this thesis we are also dealing with an analysis meant to circumscribe cultural anthropology both from physical anthropology – practiced mainly inside the mentioned institute – and from sociology, ethnology, ethnography and folklore. His notional attitudes, once established, were to remain for him essentially unaltered by now. However, he considers that the boundaries between disciplines are in any case not firmly traced, making his choice also for finding "deep specialties" (therefore agreeing here with Paul H. Stahl), which could enable us "to understand scientific disciplines as genuine *styles of knowledge*"[3] (2006, 211).

As far as I am concerned, I must confess that I am – at least at the moment – in a position of an accurate conceptual separation, including also the fields of our disciplines, not fortuitous maybe, if we were to trust Romulus Vuia. Thus, during the opening lesson of his course "Introduction to Ethnography and Folklore", held at the University of Cluj (9th November 1926),[4] noticing that there are many and diverse definitions and directions of ethnology, ethnography and folklore – following national schools, authors and certain periods of time –, our remarkable precursor was committed to explain the causes which produced the situation. An *objective* cause is due to the relative "youth" (at that time) of the afore mentioned disciplines, with definitions which were still reflecting the tumultuous periods of the beginning; another cause, a *subjective* one, is due to the training of specialists – converted to the study of human-cultural manifestations after years of apprenticeship in philology, geography, history, natural sciences etc. –, a formation which subsequently influenced ontological, methodological and definitional approaches (Vuia 1975, 26). From this point of view, my own training in engineering and philosophy brings me closer to the epistemological reflections related to fine conceptual and disciplinary delimitations – that's why I chose Gheorghiţă Geană's standpoint, endorsed by the same philosophical training, rather than Stahl's, upheld by a training which

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[2]   Published in 2005 at the Criterion Publishing, with the title *Cultural Anthropology. An Epistemological Profile.*
[3]   Italics in the original.
[4]   Subsequently published in the IVth volume of *The Works of the Institute of Geography of the University* (Pop 1975, VI).

took place within the framework of the Gustian famous school, in the period of patenting monographic method with the participation of numerous specialists of different backgrounds: social sciences, medicine, botany, geography, history etc. (Stahl, 1989, 149).

Romulus Vuia's inaugural lesson is an excellent guide for reviewing the definitions of ethnology and of associated disciplines from his time. The impression of heterogeneity that appeared during the course never leaves us, since a scientist like Paul Stahl resumes this impression convincingly in a few sentences from 1989. I shall select randomly some attempts of "separating of waters", relating all the time to the definitional-disciplinal positions, the part of which I declared to be attached. Because I shall undertake later a presentation of these positions, I am only saying now that I refer to the "moment" Claude Lévi-Strauss from the middle of 1950's.

Thus, we find out that both ethnology (1839) and ethnography (some time earlier) begin as sciences having a close dialogue with the study and classification of races, so that, regarding ethnology, for a long time there was a complete confusion between anthropology[5] and ethnology, up to the point of becoming synonyms (Vuia 1975, 5). With regard to this state of "original soup", many authors were to react, proposing their own disciplinary delimitations and were frequently far away from agreement. The scheme of Paul Topinard (1885) separates anthropology from ethnology, the last one with two directions: *general* ethnography, interested in the common elements of all populations (corresponding to the cultural anthropology in the classification which I agree with) and *special* ethnography (corresponding to the ethnography in our classification, if we are talking about *description* only). "Ethnology" is substituted by "general ethnography" and entirely left aside for a while in France, and to a great extent also in other countries. By comparison, I find in present day Romania a reverted tendency, of leaving aside the term "ethnography" for the term "ethnology"[6]. Coming back to Romulus Vuia and to the reviewing definitional lesson, I shall further select the classification suggested by Michael Haberlandt (1925), which separates the ethnology from ethnography and folklore. Ethnology (or general ethnography) examines comparatively different peoples, searching general laws related to their life as communities, to the evolution of human culture etc. (based on a point of view which soon I shall present, I place this type of ethnology on the side of cultural and social anthropology). Descriptive ethnography has two goals, the knowledge of peoples by their inner and outer peculiarities, as well as their classification following some criteria as physical features, language and

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[5]   It is talked about what today it is called "physical anthropology".
[6]   On the contrary, in the actual American cultural anthropology just the term "ethnography" has the first place.

civilization (carrying our thought toward all the levels of research displayed by Lévi-Strauss, ethnography-ethnology-cultural anthropology, as well as to the discipline we nowadays call human geography); the peoples referenced hereto are the primitive people, already a specific object of study of ethnology.

The civilized peoples of Europe were to be studied by the *folklore* (*Volkskunde,* the German pair of English "folklore") (1925, 11). The arising of folklore in the middle of the XIXth century, preoccupied with collecting "manners, customs, observances, superstitions, ballads, proverbs" (Thoms 1965, 5), which were believed would disappear soon from the popular use, complicates the issues. The folklore, from the initial focus on beliefs, manners and oral literature, extends beyond the borders of England and Europe towards primitive peoples in order to search "survivals", what would correspond to ethnology, by the German ethnologists (Vuia 1975, 14-15). In the German world, the ethnography and the folklore have the same object (customs, beliefs, oral literature, settlements, houses, clothes, technology, occupations, popular art), the only difference being that the folklore (*Volkskunde*) studies the testimonies of popular civilizations from European countries, while the ethnography (*Völkerkunde*) is interested in the primitive peoples.

The work of Vuia is extremely rich in definitional references. It would be redundant to select other authors and situations to account for the lack of conceptual unity in defining ethnology and its close relation with ethnography, folklore and cultural and social anthropology[7]. However, I shall also focus on the situation within the Romanian space,[8] just to ascertain the same variety of definitional contents. Thus, the comparison and the "clearing up" of materials from all over the world related to customs, beliefs and popular literature would form the object of a "special science" of the folklore for Lazăr Şăineanu (1885), considered to be either a branch of ethno-psychology or of ethnology. L. Şăineanu also uses for the first time the term "ethnology", abandoned later on in Romanian scientific literature (1885, 22-23). Then, in the 1910, Ovid Densusianu, unlike the German school, excludes the clothes, popular art etc. from folklore, stating that they belong to the ethnography, which was considered to be an *auxiliary science of folklore*, as well as the dialectology (1910, 22-23). But

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[7]   "Generally, we could ascertain that in the England and in the North America (…) it is used in both senses both the notion of anthropology and ethnology (of « physical anthropology » and of « cultural anthropology », how it had appeared at Edward Tylor in 1881; our note, S. Ş.)" (Vuia 1975, 7).

[8]   Given this heterogeneity, I prefer to talk about "space", in detriment of a different notion particularly used in the folklore, "national school". However, "national school" represents also a term which we can successfully keep as far as we succeed to select some general tendencies. For example, R. Vuia's stressing on the polarity *Volkskunde / Völkerkunde* in the Germany, or prevalent orientation for us rather to "gatherings of materials and special researches, than to problems of theoretical and general order" (1975, 22) (a fact which, so far as I have a good understanding, continues today too).

George Vâlsan, in 1927, while characterizing ethnography as being first of all a descriptive science of a people and taking into account many aspects – physical appearances, language, material and spiritual culture etc. –, identifies folklore as being a *branch of ethnography*, preoccupied with aspects from the domain of spiritual culture, as popular poems, tales, riddles, beliefs etc. Moreover, ethnography has one more aim: "classifies, compares, and from all these, draws out general observations, rules, and sometimes laws"[9] (a goal of social and cultural anthropology for the classification I have adhered).

If the training of the authors constitutes a plausible argument for their activity and for the offered definitions, we shall observe that not only philology, geography, history or social sciences dispute the object of ethnology, but also, as psychology, especially in its appearance of ethno-psychology, or sociology. In this case, Romulus Vuia's analyses are inadequate, although these preoccupations, particularly in the German world, had had some development through the work of Wilhelm Wundt and his ten volumes of *Völkerpsychologie*. However, Vuia is approaching this domain every time he points out authors for whom the object of folklore is constituted by „psychical" products of the people, or when he characterizes the German *Volkskunde* as a certain science of the nation interested in discovering of that which forms the "soul of the people" (*Volksseele*) (1975, 22).

Now, I shall select, using other sources, some moments from the construction of ethnology and of the connected sciences, significant for the "penetration" of psychology and sociology. For example, at the end of the XIXth century, Adolf Bastian was launching the hypotheses of "psychical unity of mankind", by which at the beginning of all human cultures would remain a series of "elementary ideas", with specific appearances varying with historical and cultural conditions. The task of ethnology, synonym with ethno-psychology, would be to extract these elementary ideas (*Elementargedanken*) from the bulk of cultural variations (*Völkergedanken*) (Hasterock 1999, 105). Later, Franz Boas considers that the final aim of ethnology is the relationship of reciprocal influence between society and the individual (Lévi-Strauss 1999, 117). In our country, Ion Chelcea argues in favour of a paradigm sustained also by G. Vâlsan, O. Densusianu or Constantin Rădulescu-Motru.[10] He considers that the ethnographer must explore too "the circumstances in which (an object; my note, S. Ş) was created, by whom (…), and even the social stratum its author belongs to and

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[9]   Vâlsan, *apud* Vuia (1975, 25).

[10]   A tendency which, beginning with Franz Boas and especially with British social anthropology, had a great international echo. For example, Sigfried Nadel, Professor of anthropology at Australian National University, was writing in 1951: "If the ethnologist, linguist or historian of culture traces the same institution through different societies or ages regardless of their implications as to relationships and group organization, he chooses to view (…) a two-dimensional whole under one aspect only" (Nadel 1963, 90).

what were his distinctive features – ethnical, by speaking first of all" (Chelcea 2002, 22). He deplores some ethnographical paradigms deprived of the social aspect, and concludes that "every work which neglects the creative spring and do not respond more or less to the ethnic (to which it is related) could not be called ethnography" (2002, 25).

We have painted, therefore, a painting in which our characters melt in explosions of colours and forms, with contents hardly seen here and there, of expressionist-vanguard orientation. Two reactions arise in front of the viewer – as I mentioned in the introduction of my study –, paralleled by a third, the last one falling into the polarity of the first two, thus satisfying a basic common-sense law of logic. The first of them is a kind of "suspending the reason", as Sextus Empiricus and the skeptics already recommended in the IIth century. This attitude would equate to the orientation by the *use* of our terms in the time and space we are happening to exist, because "the use creates utilizations that are not always concordant with meaning of the terms and their theoretically established end" (Vuia 1975, 32). The focus on the problem, about which Paul Stahl talks, given the lack of "true" definitions in the social sciences, is a mark over the time of this attitude and a real confession of post-modernism in the social sciences. The second reaction – which I have announced I have experienced it too – is an attachment, not without arguments, to a clear position of conceptual separation once displayed in the history of our disciplines. And the third, a long and tiresome definitional historical journey in order to place ourselves at the end of the journey either of "suspending the reason" or of a good delimitations of definitional borders.

From my point of view, I consider that Claude Lévi-Strauss's statements from "The Place of Anthropology in the Social Sciences and the Problems Raised in Teaching it", a paper from 1954, also included in *Structural Anthropology* (1958), represents a maturity moment in the ontological becoming – and not only ontological – of our disciplines, because they are gathering under their conceptual umbrella those feeble notional cores which we glimpse whenever we refer to any of these disciplines.[11] However, the definitional separation is not rigid, since ethnography, ethnology and cultural anthropology are not three isolated disciplines, but *three levels or moments of the same research* (Lévi-Strauss, 1963: 356). Therefore,

> In all countries, it seems, ethnography is interpreted in the same way: It corresponds to the first stages in research – *observation and description, fieldwork*. The typical ethnographical study consists with a monograph dealing with a social group small enough for the author

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[11] But neither Lévi-Strauss was entirely consistent in his writings. In *Structural anthropology* too, this time in an article written in 1949 ("Introduction: History and Anthropology"), the ethnography covers also the domain of the ethnology, the last one equating that of social and cultural anthropology (1963, 2).

to be able to collect most of his material by personal observation. Ethnography also includes the methods and techniques connected with field work, with the classification, description, and analysis of particular cultural phenomena – weather weapons, beliefs, tools or institutions (1963, 354-355; my italics, S. Ş.).

After this statement and adding that the study of material objects could continue into the museum, Lévi-Strauss characterizes ethnology:

> In relation to the ethnography, ethnology represents *a first step toward synthesis.* Without excluding direct observation, it leads toward conclusions sufficiently comprehensive to preclude, or almost to preclude, their being based solely on first hand-information. The synthesis may be of three kinds: geographical, if information about neighboring groups is to be collated; historical, if the purpose is to reconstruct the past of one or several peoples; systematic, if one type of technique, custom or institution is selected for special attention (1963, 355; my italics, S.Ş.).

In order to exemplify these statements, we shall refer to the monograph of *Ţara Bârsei*.[12] The survey made by Maura and Nicolae Dunăre of the most important sewing techniques used for the traditional costume from Ţara Bârsei, both for Romanians, for *saşi* (Germanic population) and *ceangăi* (Hungarian population), with references to surrounding and to other far off ethnographical and geographical regions, represents, from the point of view of Lévi-Straussian definitions/classification, specific ethnographical preoccupations. But, when Nicolae Dunăre notices and compares the spreading of the *sewing warped on "creţuri"* (wrinkles) and concludes that "it has represented an essential feature of one of the our main types of popular costume, a constitutive part of ethnographical character both of Romanians from intra-Carpathian regions and of Transylvanian Romanians settled many centuries ago at the South-East of Carpathians" (1978, 369), we make the passage to the ethnological level of research.

Finally, we have reached at the socio-cultural anthropology:

> On the other hand, wherever we meet with the terms *social anthropology* or *cultural anthropology* they are linked **to a second and final stage of the synthesis**, based upon ethnographical and ethnological conclusions. In the Anglo-Saxon countries, anthropology aims at a global knowledge of man – embracing the subject in its full historical and geographical extension, seeking **knowledge applicable to the whole of human evolution** from, let us say, *Hominidae* to the races of today, and leading to conclusions which may be either positive or negative but which are valid for all human societies, from the large modern city to the smallest Melanesian tribe" (Lévi-Strauss 1963, 355-356; my bolds, S.Ş.).

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[12] Published in three volumes beginning with 1972, under the coordination of Nicolae Dunăre. Apart of these, I could say that the team work for creating a regional monograph can happily supplement the activity of a single researcher, inevitably limited to a small group. I would recommend this monograph to any ethnography study beginner, because this monograph attacks a lot of the characteristic domains of the discipline (see also the scheme of the domains exposed by R. Vuia 1975, 37-38).

We could use here as an illustration the essays of Ernest Bernea about the representations of space, time and causality at the Romanian people. Thus, Ernest Bernea finds himself in the field of ethnology when he underlines the importance of analyzing of these categories in order to "understand other phenomena which express the Romanian social reality". Moreover, this analysis could help us to "try to define the man who lives and orchestrates them, namely the Romanian ethos". But when he affirms that "they can make obvious things which surpass the ethnicity and go to problems related to human reality itself" (2005, 147), we are invited to place ourselves on the orbit of cultural and social anthropology.

In Romania this point of view is assumed by – among others – Gheorghiţă Geană,[13] an author previously referred to, with the only difference that he stresses more powerfully the interaction of the three disciplines,[14] especially between ethnology and cultural anthropology. Thus, ethnology, from a *comparative* impetus, may refer to other peoples and their culture too and this is what makes it similar to anthropology. At the same time, the anthropology, from the anthropo-spherical general level, is frequently looking for a *regional anchorage*, inductively or deductively, which determines Gheorghiţă Geană to conclude that "*the anthropology is comparative ethnology and the ethnology is regional anthropology*"[15] (Geană 2005, 17; italics in the original text). Since he has finished his doctoral thesis (1977) until now, the author keeps unchanged its position regarding ontological and methodological universe of the three disciplines,[16] adding sometimes that the justification of ethnology as cultural

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[13] I am more familiar with his writings and activity, this is why I use him as an example. Others too agree with the delineations proposed by Lévi-Strauss. For instance, Ştefan Chişu, Delia Ilie and Maria Preduţ, in quite the foreword of *General ethnology. Themes and concepts*, are writing: "The ethnology is often equated with ethnography when it is talked about it. From our point of view, we have started from the opinion of Lévi-Strauss regarding the family of the disciplines inside which this discipline is integrated and its intercourse with other sciences" (2000, 3).

[14] At Claude Lévi-Strauss too we are finding the difference between *general anthropology* and *regional anthropology*, the last one representing a specialization – in the third year of a presumable faculty of anthropology – in the prehistory, archaeology, geography, advanced study of one or more languages of the part of the world chosen by investigator (Lévi-Strauss 1963, 370). But for the professor Geană, Simion Mehedinţi's writings are the main source of inspiration. For example, in *Terra* (64), S. Mehedinţi is estimating briefly, in a footnote, the distinction which A. Hettner had made between *general geography* and *regional geography*.

[15] For example, by way of Franz Boas, who re-orientates the anthropology from its evolutionist and diffusionist coordinates to the historical study of each culture, the anthropology keeps its universal claims only as far away objective, becoming ethnology in its close horizon (Geană 2001, 170).

[16] However, he keeps open the possibility that "in the near future, ethnology to reconsider its epistemological coordinates in the front of the challenges of anthropology", seeking "especially what is particularly ethnical in a culture (material and spiritual values, beliefs, traditions – in a single word, all that is related with local patrimony)" (2006, 11).

anthropology could also take place when the ethnology uses fundamental concepts from the anthropological vocabulary, as "culture", "personality", "social structure" (2001, 170).

Personally, I have tried to study the relation between anthropology and ethnology from the perspective of *participative observation with long-time immersion in the studied culture,* a method which beside the comparative approach gives methodological identity to the cultural and social anthropology. The *panel* research – which the ethnologist sometimes use – characterized by periodical coming again in the same field, months or years on end, could not entirely equate the mentioned type of observation. Step by step, the anthropologist becomes an expert in what sometimes was called "indigenous knowledge" (Warren 1991). So, one important difference between ethnologist and anthropologist is that the last one is much nearer to the "native point of view".

I cannot conclude without some words about folklore, which seems to be eluded to by Lévi-Strauss, at least in the study referred to. If I betray my embraced attitude and I shall try a disciplinal circumscription looking at the activity of folklorists from my country, I am concluding that for the moment there is an attachment to the "limited meaning" of "folklore", of English origin (so the study and collection of customs, beliefs, superstitions, popular literature), to which may add the music and choreography. Not without meaning, graduates of philology and music choose this domain while the folkloric learning is organized in the frame of literature faculties, and the folkloric learning is organized in the frame of literature faculties. Taking into considerations these facts, until a more detailed look at the international context, Nicole Belmont's affirmation (1999, 253) that "the term has disappeared from the scientific vocabulary" seems somehow strange to me.

At the end of this study, I consider that an actual and a perennial interrogation of the ethnology is that regarding its own universe. In the end it is an old interrogation of man about himself, inevitably unfolded on the fringe of philosophical reflection, the answers of which we could hardly imagine that will be ever caught in the net of some mathematical formulas, a moment when the barriers between humanities and natural sciences would be definitively wiped. Auguste Comte was once launching the idea of a social physics. But many human scientists say that we are now as well far away from the fulfillment of the idea as then, and that the "Theory, which is also both possible and necessary, grows out of particular circumstances and, however abstract, is validated by its power to order them in their full particularity, not by stripping that particularity away" (Geertz 2000, 138). Could not be this state of facts a positive advantage?![17]

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[17] The present study served as a base for the communication with the same title held at National Conference of Romanian Ethnological Sciences Association, the Vth Edition, Piteşti, 5-6 November 2009.

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