Sofia Philosophical Review

Academic Community in Civil Society
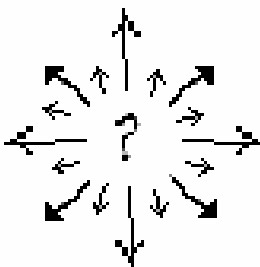
Sofia Philosophical Review Sofia Philosophical Review is a peer reviewed journal and is indexed by The Philosopher's Index.

Sofia Philosophical Review accepts papers in the fields of Social, Political, and Moral Philosophy,Continental Philosophy in general and Philosophy of Medicine. Please send a hard copy of the manuscripts accompanied by an electronic version of the same to:

Editor, Sofia Philosophical Review
Faculty of Philosophy
Sofia University
15 Tsar Osvoboditel Blvd.
Sofia 1504
BULGARIA

All prospective contributions should follow the
Chicago Manual of Style.

Review materials should be sent to the Book Review
Editor at the above address.

Dr. Plamen Angelov, www.SPhR_bg.org web administrator
Ms. Diana Zankova, the the SphR web page within the SU web administrator
© Aglika Gungova, artist

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY IN A CURRENT PERSPECTIVE

Cassirer and Heidegger at Davos

Thora Ilin Bayer (Xavier University, New Orleans)

Abstract

The occasion for these remarks is the recently published comprehensive study of the encounter between Cassirer and Heidegger at Davos, Switzerland in 1929 and its implications for an understanding of continental philosophy: Peter E. Gordon, *Continental Divide: Heidegger, Cassirer, Davos.* It is the latest of a number of works that have appeared during the last decade in the U.S. advancing significant interpretations of the thought of Cassirer. The existence of these recent works seems to indicate that the renaissance of interest in Cassirer that began in the 1990s in Europe has been and is continuing to be taken up by English-speaking scholars, by both philosophers and intellectual historians.

How and why has this new attention to Cassirer, in general, come about? And what does it signify for present-day philosophy? To my knowledge no attention has yet been given to reflecting on this development and my intention here is more to be suggestive rather than definitive. I wish to focus my remarks on the views advanced in Professor Gordon's rich and complex study, but to preface them by a brief sketch of the development of the recent English-language Cassirer studies of which I regard his work as a part. Gordon's study has just as much a place in Heidegger studies as in Cassirer studies. I will direct my attention to the latter as less is generally known of them than of Heidegger studies. The Heidegger literature is enormous and there are whole schools of Heidegger interpretation. I must leave it to Heidegger experts to take up the Heidegger side of the Davos debate.

Cassirer Studies

Cassirer left his position at the University of Hamburg in May 1933 following the rise of Hitler to the chancellorship of Germany, going first for two years to All Souls College at Oxford and then to the University of Göteborg, Sweden. In the summer of 1941, having accepted a position at Yale University, he moved to the U.S. After three years of teaching on temporary appointment at Yale he accepted a position at Columbia University. He died suddenly of a heart attack on the Columbia campus on April 13, 1945, the day after the death of President Roosevelt. Because of the *Ungunst* or disfavor of the times, a phrase Cassirer once used, his career was interrupted just at the point an interpretive literature of his work might have naturally developed through those who would have done advanced study under his direction.

The third volume of the *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* was published in 1929, completing at that point the full statement of his systematic philosophy. Had the times been different (and he could have remained at Hamburg during the 1930s), there would have been many who would have heard his ideas and experienced his manner of philosophy firsthand. Instead Cassirer was a visitor ever teaching his ideas to new audiences. When he arrived in the U.S. only one of his works had been translated into English as *Substance and Function* that had originally appeared in German in 1910 and appeared in the English version in 1923, along with a translation of Cassirer's essay of 1921 on *Einstein's Theory of Relativity*. Since Cassirer read the translations of these two works in manuscript and wrote the translators that they correctly conveyed his views, the volume had the status of an authorized translation.

To the extent that Cassirer was known at all on his arrival in the U.S., he was known as a philosopher of science. The exceptions were scholars such as Charles Hendel, the Chairman of the Department of Philosophy at Yale and who had arranged for his invitation and appointment and who wrote the general introduction to the translation of the three volumes of the *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* when they appeared in the 1950s. Cassirer wrote *An Essay on Man* directly in English, which appeared in 1944 and stands as one of the most widely read books of philosophy in the twentieth century. *The Myth of the State*, left in manuscript at Cassirer's death, appeared in 1946. Both of these books have been translated into most Euro-

pean and Asian languages and remained continuously in print by Yale University Press for well over half a century. Despite such general readership of some of his works, there did not develop a Cassirer following in professional philosophy. One does not hear of Cassirerians as one hears of Heideggerians, Husserlians, Deweyians, or Derridians, etc.

The one comprehensive work of interpretation that stood as a source for the study of Cassirer's thought in the years after his death and that still stands as valuable today is the collection of twenty-three essays in the Library of Living Philosophers volume on *The Philosophy of Ernst Cassirer* that appeared in 1949. Because Cassirer died during the preparation of this volume, it does not contain an intellectual autobiography nor is there an author's reply to his critics as is customary in this series. Cassirer's philosophy proved difficult to criticize and the essays in the volume raise few critical points; they remain mostly expository although quite valuable as interpretations. A prominent query raised in a number of these essays concerns the influence of Hegel on Cassirer as a source for his conception of the philosophy of culture taking it beyond a version of neo-Kantianism and the sense in which the symbolic forms comprise or do not comprise a system.

Between the mid-twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first century, a critical literature accumulated on various aspects of Cassirer's thought in various languages but there was no development of an integrated examination of his philosophy of symbolic forms. The critical literature that does appear in these years in large part is due to the work of particular scholars who became interested in Cassirer's philosophy as such or whose own work connects to that of Cassirer. This literature can be found through Eggers and Mayer's annotated bibliography.

If we single out one event that affects Cassirer studies during the years, it was the "discovery" by Donald Phillip Verene of the Cassirer papers now archived in the Yale Beineke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, which led to the publication of some of them from the last decade of Cassirer's life in *Symbol, Myth, and Culture: Essays and Lectures of Ernst Cassirer 1935-1945*. This volume that appeared in 1979 reintroduced Cassirer to the philosophical public by bringing to light manuscripts of essays and lectures that Cassirer wrote mostly in English to present his ideas to American academic audiences. Cassirer was in effect reintroduced in his own

words. This led to the American edition of the previously unpublished fourth volume of the *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms: The Metaphysics of Symbolic Forms* in 1996. It was preceded a year earlier by the German edition, but the American edition was begun by Verene and John Michael Krois several years earlier (see the editor's introduction to the American edition for details). The appearance of an unknown work by a major figure of twentieth-century philosophy is a rare event.

Cassirer's purpose in the 1928 text of this fourth volume was to place his philosophy of symbolic forms in relation to other contemporary philosophical positions. Principally, Cassirer wished to confront *Lebensphilosophie*, which he interpreted quite broadly to include figures as diverse as Heidegger and Bergson as well as figures such as Kleist and Klages. Cassirer connected *Lebensphilosophie* to the philosophical anthropology of Scheler but claimed that in Scheler's philosophy, *Leben* and *Geist* tended to become absolutes, with Geist acting as a counter to Leben instead of in Cassirer's view Geist being a transformation of the movement of Leben. In my commentary on the 1928 text, in *Cassirer's Metaphysics of Symbolic Forms*, I wished to emphasize Cassirer's concern to keep his philosophy in touch with other positions, which stemmed from his commitment that philosophy is a common enterprise, an activity within and necessary to human culture, not a transcendence of it. This approach is reflected in the two volumes of essays that have appeared in the last decade that are edited by Hamlin and Krois, *Symbolic Forms and Cultural Studies*, and by Barash, *The Symbolic Construction of Reality*. In both these volumes Cassirer's philosophy is shown to be relevant to contemporary problems.

Lofts' work, *Ernst Cassirer: A "Repetition" of Modernity*, puts Cassirer's philosophy of symbolic forms in the context of contemporary continental philosophy with a particular connection to structuralism. But it is not Lofts' purpose to view Cassirer as a precursor to the modernity of continental philosophy. Lofts' thesis is that Cassirer advances a new kind of thinking that we are now only discovering. The opposite view is put forth in Skidelsky's *Ernst Cassirer: The Last Philosopher of Culture*. Skidelsky reports that he began his study of Cassirer with the intention of bringing out Cassirer's importance but as he worked through the problems, he concluded that

Cassirer is the last figure of his kind. The movement of philosophical ideas has gone the direction of Heidegger, existentialism, and beyond, leaving Cassirer's approach to culture as a process of progressive self-liberation behind much in the way the Weimar Republic was left behind at the dawn of newer politics. This broad characterization is an oversimplification of Skidelsky's complex book, but it is in essence the point of his subtitle.

Friedman's *A Parting of the Ways: Carnap, Cassirer, and Heidegger* focuses on the epistemological positions of the three figures and sees them as setting the agenda for subsequent views in logical-analytic and continental philosophy. They became the source-figures for twentieth-century philosophy. A key event for both Friedman and Skidelsky is the interchange between Cassirer and Heidegger at Davos. Carnap was not an official participant at Davos but he was present and had contact there with both Cassirer and Heidegger. Friedman's book is groundbreaking in that it raises the question of how what we now call continental philosophy comes about from its major source in Kantian thought. Freidman's thesis of a parting of the ways leads directly to the more comprehensive study of Gordon's *Continental Divide*, which raises the issue that the history of continental philosophy cannot be understood apart from the actual and symbolic convergence of the forces and ideas captured in the events of the Davos *Hochschule* of 1929.

My purpose to this point is to suggest that in the last decade there has been a turning point in Cassirer studies from individually generated interpretations of Cassirer's philosophy to a view that Cassirer's philosophy must be understood in order properly to understand the nature of continental philosophy. I remind the reader, as stated earlier, my focus here and in the remarks that follow is on Cassirer studies, not on Heidegger studies. So much has been written on Heidegger and his philosophy is so much before us as a topic that I wish to presuppose its presence. The role of Cassirer, however, is more problematic and requires reclamation.

Continental Divide

The title of Gordon's book, *Continental Divide: Heidegger, Cassirer, Davos*, plays on the general meaning of "continental divide" as a divide separating streams that flow to opposite sides of a continent. As a proper name it refers specifically to the watershed of the North American continent

that generally coincides with the range of the Rocky Mountains, the central point of which is the state of Colorado. But the great divide runs from Canada to South America where it joins the Andes Mountains. The mountain imagery reflects that fact that Davos is in the Swiss Alps, known as the ski and health resort setting of Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain*. After their meeting at Davos, it became clear that the stream of philosophical thought that had flowed from Kant forward across the continent of Europe had divided into two streams flowing in opposite directions - one toward the idealist phenomenology of *Erkenntnis* and philosophy of culture of Cassirer and the other toward the existential phenomenology of *Dasein* and fundamental ontology of Heidegger. European continental philosophy was not the same after the Davos *Hochschule* of late March and early April of 1929.

This was the second of what became in total four annual academic gatherings in the resort town of Davos to bring together students and the interested public from various countries to promote interchange and intellectual understanding and to present what would be conceived today as mini-courses. Cassirer and Heidegger were among about 30 professors involved in presenting lectures. Cassirer was more famous at that time than Heidegger and was his senior. Heidegger, however, was very well known and was rapidly amassing a following of young disciples that, for example, included Emmanuel Levinas, who was later to become a major figure in his own right. The *Abendblatt der Frankfurter Zeitung* reported that there were over 200 students in attendance, mostly German, French, and Swiss.

The centerpiece of the *Hochschule* was the presence of Cassirer and Heidegger and especially the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft* session in which they confronted each other. Cassirer and Heidegger in accord with the format of the event each gave a three-lecture course. Cassirer's lectures addressed three topics in philosophical anthropology - space, language, and death. These were formulated with a view toward confronting Heidegger's existential analysis. Heidegger's lectures followed the three main sections of his Kant book that was to appear not long after the Davos meeting. These were formulated with a view to opposing the neo-Kantian approach to Kant that regarded Kant's first *Critique* as essentially an epistemology of scientific cognition standing against metaphysics and ontology. The *Davoser Revue.*

Zeitschrift für Literatur, Wissenschaft, Kunst und Sport (April 15, 1929) carried a summary of Cassirer's and Heidegger's lecture courses and is the main source for their content. In addition to his lecture course, Cassirer gave a special lecture on Scheler that is translated in the Library of Living Philosophers volume as a substitute for the author's reply.

The record of their joint session is the *Protokoll* of O. F. Bollnow and J. Ritter. It was agreed in advance that this transcription would be made of the session jointly by Bollnow, a follower of Heidegger, and Ritter, a student of Cassirer. As Gordon points out in his book, there is little reason to doubt that this record is inaccurate, although Heidegger does say in a letter to Rickert that the transcript was reproduced without there being sufficient time to proof it. (Rickert had objected to Heidegger mentioning him among several representatives of neo-Kantianism in the session.) But neither Cassirer nor Heidegger disavowed the overall validity of the transcript. In chapter 4 of his book, Gordon includes a new translation of the transcript interspersed with a passage-by-passage commentary.

The session is often characterized as a debate or a disputation and in a sense this is correct because it is a series of statements and responses between Cassirer and Heidegger. But as Gordon emphasizes, there was at that time in their relationship no particular animosity. There were strong differences of position but no acrimony, although to many of the audience the exchange captured the philosophical divisions of the age. The exchange became especially symbolic because of later political events when Cassirer, having served a term as Rector of the University of Hamburg, left Germany in the spring of 1933 never to return and Heidegger, under the National Socialist government in the same year, assumed the Rectorship of the University of Freiburg.

The Davos meeting between Cassirer and Heidegger has frequently been called a debate on Kant and Kantianism. This characterization is correct to an extent. The session began with Heidegger questioning Cassirer concerning his attachment to the neo-Kantian movement and Cassirer responding that neo-Kantianism must be understood in functional terms, that is, not as a single doctrine but as a development. Cassirer throughout his career never disavowed his roots in neo-Kantianism and in the work of his teacher Hermann Cohen, but Cassirer's theory of symbolic forms took his philosophy beyond the Marburgian emphasis on the epistemology of sci-

ence. This advance is captured in Cassirer's well-known assertion that in the philosophy of symbolic forms the critique of reason becomes the critique of culture. Throughout the Davos session, Cassirer and Heidegger base their disagreements on their respective interpretations of Kant but the issue is not the technical one of how to understand Kant's works. The issue all along and that explicitly emerges at the end is what is the true nature of the human condition and what is human freedom.

Heidegger's conception of Dasein is fundamentally opposed to Cassirer's view of human freedom that affirms the power of man to make the world of Geist through symbolic forms. Heidegger stated: "I believe what I describe by Dasein does not allow translation into a concept of Cassirer's" (Gordon, pp.194-95). Heidegger rejects consciousness in Cassirer's idealist sense of that in terms of which the human world is made. Because we are thrown (*geworfen*) into the midst of beings and we simply find ourselves there, we have no necessary access to freedom. Freedom cannot be a project of Geist in Cassirer's sense. The experience of freedom is something rare and contingent (*zufällig*) in human experience that depends upon a breakthrough (*Einbruch*). Heidegger says: "[It is] so contingent that the highest form of existence of Dasein is only allowed to lead back to the very few and rare glimpses of Dasein's duration between living and death, [and so contingent] that man exists only in very few glimpses of the pinnacle of his own possibility, but otherwise moves in the midst of his beings" (Gordon, p.195).

Prior to this striking declaration of Heidegger, Cassirer responded to a question of Heidegger regarding his conception of freedom. Heidegger asked: "To what extent does philosophy have as its task to be allowed to become free from anxiety? Or does it not have as its task to surrender man, even radically, to anxiety?" (Gordon, p.182). Cassirer replied: "Philosophy had to allow [sic] to become sufficiently free, to the extent that man can become free. While it does that, I believe, it frees man - to be sure in a certain radical sense – from anxiety as a mere disposition" (Gordon, p.187). Cassirer asserts that he believes Heidegger can agree with this view, but he was mistaken as is clear from Heidegger's above remark on Dasein. Cassirer concludes his answer to Heidegger's question: "I would like the sense, the goal, in the fact of freeing, to be taken in the sense: "Cast off from yourself the anxiety of earthly things!

[*Werft die Angst der Irdischen von euch!*]” That is the position of idealism to which I have always confessed” (Gordon, ibid.).

Heidegger is correct that Cassirer has no place in his philosophy for his analysis of Dasein. In his 1928 review of Cassirer’s analysis of mythical thought of the second volume of the *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* that appeared in the *Deutsche Literaturzeitung*, Heidegger concluded: “But with all that the fundamental philosophical problem of myth is not yet attained: in what way does myth belong to Dasein as such; in what respect, after all, is it an essential phenomenon within a universal interpretation of being (*Sein*) and its modifications?” (Verene, 34). Heidegger holds that the answer to his question must await the full statement of Cassirer’s symbolic forms. The full statement or *Systematik* is Cassirer’s phenomenology of *Erkenntnis* of the third volume of the *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*. Heidegger was to write a review of this third volume but never completed it. Cassirer delivered a lecture following the 1929 Davos meeting at Freiburg and while there asked Heidegger about his progress on the review. Cassirer wrote his wife Toni that he found Heidegger quite friendly but “He admitted to me that he had exerted himself for a long time with a review of my third volume, but for the present he did not yet know how he ought to come to grips with the thing” (Verene, p.36). The review never appeared and it seems doubtful that Heidegger would have found Cassirer’s theory of *Ausdrucksfunktion* and *Ausdrucksphänomen* of the third volume an adequate treatment of Dasein. After Davos the continental divide between Cassirer and Heidegger ever increased.

Although Cassirer never published a critique of Heidegger, he began one in the draft of his fourth volume of the *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* (see pt.3, sec.2). And, in the final chapter of *The Myth of the State*, Cassirer sharply accuses Heidegger of a philosophy of fatalism. Cassirer first comments on the meaning of freedom: “Men act as free agents not because they posses a *liberum arbitrium indifferentiae*. It is not the absence of a motive but the character of the motives that marks free action. In the ethical sense a man is a free agent if these motives depend upon his own judgment and own conviction of what moral duty is” (p.287). Cassirer says on Heidegger’s view there is no possibility of an “external” truth toward which philosophical thought can proceed. No thinker can give us more truth than that of the conditions of his own historical existence and to change these conditions is

impossible. Cassirer says that to express this view Heidegger had to coin a new term not as such in the German language – *Geworfenheit*. For Heidegger, "To be thrown into the stream of time is a fundamental and inalterable feature of our human situation. We cannot emerge from this stream and we cannot change its course. We have to accept the historical conditions of our existence. We can try to understand and to interpret them; but we cannot change them" (p.293).

On Cassirer's view in *The Myth of the State*, what Heidegger identifies as *Geworfenheit* or "thrownness" is the name for a philosophical problem, not a solution to a problem. It may accurately designate to an extent the problematic character of the human condition, but to designate it is not to exhaust its possibilities. For Cassirer there is a dialectic between the conditions of life and the possibilities of spirit that depend upon the human capacity for self-determination. For Heidegger, any involvement in such self-driven activity is simply avoidance of the anxiety of being, a failure to face the real question of what it means to exist. To face this anxiety properly will afford us authenticity, but in so doing we do not transcend or alter the finitude of our existence.

Gordon's thesis of the continental divide between Cassirer and Heidegger is based on a contrast between two normative images of human beings. He says: "For Cassirer, the human being is endowed with a special capacity for spontaneous self-expression: to be human is to create in complete freedom whole worlds of meaning, and these self-created worlds become in turn the objective spheres we experience as beautiful, moral, and true" (p.6). In contrast, Gordon claims: "For Heidegger, human beings are understood to be defined first and foremost by our finitude, which is to say we discover ourselves in the midst of conditions we had no share in creating and cannot hope to control. To be human in Heidegger's view is to be gifted with a special sort of *receptivity*, or openness to the world. This phenomenon of disclosedness lies at the very core of human existence, deeper than our rationality and before any and all practical action" (p.7). Gordon concludes that he will describe the contrast between these two views "as a contrast between *thrownness* and *spontaneity*" (p.7).

Gordon's aim is to elicit the crucial point of difference between Cas-

sirer and Heidegger and it is this difference that guides their exchange at Davos as well as their philosophical perspectives in general. "Throwness" (*Geworfenheit*) is without question a term unique to Heidegger. But does "spontaneity" (*Spontaneität*) have a similar status in Cassirer's philosophy? The one term associated with Cassirer's philosophy is "symbolic form"; a second term is perhaps "symbolic pregnance" but Cassirer adopts this from the "law of pregnance" of Gestalt psychology. Symbolic form, however, might be regarded as the product of the human condition, not the condition itself, which is perhaps what leads Gordon to seek a further term. Gordon finds Cassirer referring to the theme of spontaneity in his early study, *Freiheit und Form* (1916) where he connects it to Kant's "'fundamental concept of autonomy' and self-legislation of spirit' (*Selbstgesetzlichkeit des Geistes*" (p.17). Although Gordon finds spontaneity a valuable term to use throughout his interpretation of Cassirer's thought and although Cassirer uses the term, Cassirer offers no special discussion of it as a term of his philosophy.

I find Cassirer using "Spontaneität" only a few times in the *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*. The phrase "die freie Spontaneität des Geistigen" appears in the introduction to volume 1; "der 'Spontaneität' des Geistes" appears near the end of chapter 2 of the third part of volume 2; "einen Akt der 'Spontaneität' des Verstandes" and "'Aktus der Spontaneität'"" appear in the introduction to volume 3 with Spontaneität being connected to *Selbstbewusstsein* in a sentence in the second chapter of the first part of this volume. Where Cassirer is using the term its meaning fits with Gordon's theme, but there simply does not seem to be a term in Cassirer's corpus that has the pride of place that Geworfenheit does in Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*.

If I were to select a term in Cassirer's works as a counter to throwness, what quite quickly comes to mind is his use of "self-liberation" on the last page of *An Essay on Man*, the work that summarizes his views at the end of his career, where he states: "Human culture taken as a whole may be described as the process of man's progressive self-liberation" (p.228). Self-liberation seems to carry more weight than spontaneity. When something occurs spontaneously, it just happens for better or worse. Self-liberation has both the epistemological sense of the symbol as freeing consciousness from its emersion in the immediate flow of sensation and the normative sense of consciousness achieving and developing its own "inner form", a term from

Humbolt much used by Cassirer. Self-liberation, although put forth at the end of Cassirer's corpus, echoes back to its very roots. As *receptivity* helps to explain the thrownness of the human condition, *spontaneity* helps to explain the propensity to self-liberation of consciousness.

My other dissatisfaction with what I wish to emphasize is an altogether illuminating work is Gordon's lack of attention to the role of Hegel as a crucial source for Cassirer's conception of culture and the phenomenology of Erkenntnis. Gordon acknowledges that at the beginning of the third volume of the *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* Cassirer declares his conception of phenomenology as based on Hegel rather than the modern (Husserlian) sense of phenomenology, but nothing is made of this in Gordon's account. Gordon persistently grounds Cassirer's thought in Kant as he does Heidegger's but he does not consider that Cassirer required a further sense of the project of philosophical idealism to formulate his philosophy of culture. It is to Gordon's great credit that he does not confine Cassirer's position to the historical movement of neo-Kantianism but very skillfully exposits Cassirer's broader attachment to Kant.

Yet Cassirer's whole phenomenology of Erkenntnis reflects the developmental sense of consciousness in Hegel's "science of the experience of consciousness" of the *Phänomenologie des Geistes* even though Cassirer does not adhere to Hegel's principle of *Aufhebung* nor his telos of *absolutes Wissen*. Although the critique of reason becomes the critique of culture, the symbolic forms of culture that do not mirror the three *Critiques* do resonate with Hegelian forms of Geist. As mentioned above, the role of Hegel in Cassirer's thinking was recognized as early as the Library of Living Philosopher's volume in which a number of its contributors raised the question of the Hegelian nature of Cassirer's philosophy of culture. Charles Hendel in his general introduction to the English translation of the *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* discusses the connection of Cassirer's phenomenology of culture to Hegel's phenomenology of spirit. In his sketch for the introduction for the fourth volume of the *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* Cassirer begins with the sentence citing Hegel's famous "Das Wahre ist das Ganze": "We start with the concept of the whole: the whole is the true (Hegel)" (p.193).

Finally, I suggest that the concept of human freedom advanced by

Cassirer that is so much in contention in the Davos encounter cannot be fully grasped if it is thought of only in Kantian terms. The Hegelian concept of freedom is that of self-liberation or self-determination. Freedom is not simply the opposite of necessity, nor is it simply an ideal placed against what can be determined. Freedom in these senses is the abstraction of opposites characteristic of Hegel's "bad infinity". If freedom consists simply in an "ought" opposed to an "is" or actual state of affairs, it remains a beyond or other that can never be employed to determine human action. It is substantial and not functional.

Freedom (like Hegel's "true infinity") is functional, that is, self-constructive and progressive - the self building upon its own acts much as Cassirer regards the process of symbolic formation of experience to be a self-active process. Heidegger's conception of Dasein and the thrownness of the human being denies the validity of such a process, but it is just the validity of this process that Cassirer affirms. I wish to emphasize again that my reservations about Gordon's reliance on the term spontaneity and on his slighting of the importance of Hegel for Cassirer's thought and its interpretations are not intended to diminish the importance and value of his study. Anyone interested in the genesis of the forces that act today within continental philosophy will find his philosophical and historical analysis of the divide that took place at Davos a necessary book to read.

In conclusion, little more than a decade ago few scholars, except for specialists in Cassirer and Heidegger, had any understanding or even awareness of the Davos *Hochschule* events or their potential importance for the conception of continental philosophy. The term "continental philosophy" arose as a designation within professional philosophy as a way to account for European movements such as existential philosophy and phenomenology that stood apart from Anglo-American analytic philosophy and pragmatism. Continental philosophy was a label that could be used by English-language philosophers in the 1960s and beyond to designate European ways of thinking that could not be assimilated by linguistic analysis, logical empiricism, or philosophy of science. The label has taken on content to the extent that today continental philosophy has a history and can be approached in historical terms. The history of continental philosophy in this sense has yet to be fully written, but when it is, the work of Gordon and others on the Davos

encounter will have paved the way for how to account for the roles of Cassirer and Heidegger in this history.

References

Barash, Jeffery Andrew, ed., *The Symbolic Construction of Reality: The Legacy of Ernst Cassirer* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

Bayer, Thora Ilin. *Cassirer's Metaphysics of Symbolic Forms: A Philosophical Commentary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).

Cassirer, Ernst. *An Essay on Man: An Introduction to a Philosophy of Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1944).

Cassirer, Ernst. *The Myth of the State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1946).

Cassirer, Ernst. *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, vol. 4, *The Metaphysics of Symbolic Forms; Including the Text of Cassirer's Manuscript on Basis Phenomena*, ed. John Michael Krois and Donald Phillip Verene, trans. John Michael Krois. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).

Eggers, W. and S. Mayer. *Ernst Cassirer: An Annotated Bibliography* (New York: Garland, 1988).

Friedman, Michael. *A Parting of the Ways: Carnap, Cassirer, and Heidegger*. (Chicago and LaSalle, Ill.: Open Court, 2000).

Gordon, Peter E. *Continental Divide: Heidegger, Cassirer, Davos* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).

Hamlin, Cyrus and John Michael Krois, eds. *Symbolic Forms and Cultural Studies: Ernst Cassirer's Theory of Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

Lofts, S. G. *Ernst Cassirer: A "Repetition" of Modernity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000).

Schilpp, Paul Arthur, ed. *The Philosophy of Ernst Cassirer*. The Library of Living Philosophers (LaSalle, Ill.: Open Court, 1973; orig. pub. 1949).

Skidelsky, Edward. *Ernst Cassirer: The Last Philosopher of Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

Verene, Donald Phillip, ed. *Symbol, Myth, and Culture: Essays and Lectures of Ernst Cassirer 1935-1945* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979).

"I am not a philosopher."
Beckett and Philosophy:
A Methodological and Thematic Introduciton

Matthew Feldman (University of Northampton)

Abstract

The 1969 Nobel Laureate, Samuel Beckett, famously and repeatedly denied being a philosopher, and denied even understanding European philosophy. However, this has not stopped an army of literary (and other) critics reading philosophical themes into his poetry, drama and prose; or searching for philosophical influences in his artistic development – particularly in the critical decade of the 1930s. Ahead of a collection of groundbreaking essays devoted to Beckett and Philosophy in the *Sofia Philosophical Review*, the present overview broaches several issues surrounding this hotly debated area in "Beckett Studies." By way of introducing a few recurring themes and considerations to be expansively analyzed in this journal's forthcoming Special Issue in 2011, this article considers Beckett's discussion of Giambattista Vico in his first published text, the 1929 "Dante...Bruno.Vico..Joyce," as a template for much of his subsequent philosophical engagements in the interwar period and beyond.

§1

Some eight years after his artistic breakthrough with the Parisian staging of *En Attendant Godot*, and some eight years before receiving the 1969 Nobel Prize for his unremitting explorations of "the degradation of humanity," Samuel Beckett, unusually, consented to be interviewed. A now-famous exchange with *Nouvelles Littéraires* journalist Gabriel d'Aubarède cast doubt upon Beckett's engagement with philosophy:

> Have contemporary philosophers had any influence on your thought?
> I never read philosophers.
> Why not?

> I never understand anything they write.
>
> All the same, people have wondered if the existentialists' problem of being may afford a key to your works.
>
> There's no key or problem. I wouldn't have had any reason to write my novels if I could have expressed their subject in philosophic terms.[1]

Yet the "novel" published by Editions de Minuit only the month before, *Comment c'est* – tripartite in structure, unpunctuated in presentation, and notoriously difficult to digest – seemed to belie Beckett's claims of philosophical ignorance.[2] Some pages after name-checking the famous Presocratic thinker, Heraclitus the Obscure, and some pages before the same treatment is meted out to the obscure Malebranche (an Occasionalist follower of Cartesianism), the following passage occurs:

> mad or worse transformed à la Haeckel born in Potsdam where Klopstock too among others lived a space and laboured through buried in Altona the shadow he casts[3]

Amongst the madness and mud and misery and tin-can openers, the phrase is but one of many in *How It Is* betraying what must, *surely*, be considered "philosophic terms"; if not a suspiciously detailed philosophical knowledge.

---

[1]   The announcement of Beckett's 1969 Nobel Prize for Literature can be found online at www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1969/press.html (all websites last accessed on 11/8/10); Beckett's interview with Gabriel d'Aubarède of 16 Feb. 1961 is available in Lawrence Graver and Raymond Federman, eds., *Samuel Beckett: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge and Kegan: 1997), 217.

[2]   As Ruby Cohn's *A Beckett Canon* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press: 2004) makes clear, a likely source for the setting of *How It Is* can be found in the fifth circle of Dante's *Inferno*. Also noted by Cohn the tripartite structure employed in *How It Is*, consider Beckett's statement to his friend, the BBC Radio producer Donald McWhinnie: "The work is in three parts, the first a solitary journey in the dark and mud terminating with discovery of a similar creature known as Pim, the second life with Pim both motionless in the dark and mud terminating with departure of Pim, the third solitude motionless in the dark and mud. It is in the third part that occur the so-called voice 'quaqua,' its interiorisation and murmuring forth when the panting stops," 255-6.

[3]   Samuel Beckett, *How It Is* (London: Faber and Faber, 2009), 34.

However, in Beckett Country – or in the "Beckettian" world if one prefers adjectives to nouns in describing this unique terrain – little is as it seems. Interpretations of his work founder precisely because "surely," as above, is shorthand for reading into Beckett whichever theme, theory, or critical approach one fancies. And they have all been tried: gender, politics, psychology, you name it: and sometimes with great merit.[4] But the unshakable point remains: given the challenging and slippery nature of the master's work, Beckett Studies contains no theoretical graveyards. A Rorschach Test is a fitting analogy.[5]

Yet at the same time, the interviewer had not misheard in February 1961, nor had the interviewee misspoken. For the sentiment was to be repeated that very summer, just as Beckett was commencing the arduous self-translation of *Comment c'est* into English as *How It Is*:

> One cannot speak anymore of being, one must speak only of the mess. When Heidegger and Sartre speak of a contrast between being and existence, they may be right, I don't know, but their language is too philosophical for me. I am not a philosopher. One can only speak of what is in front of him, and that now is simply the mess.[6]

---

[4]   In terms of the important (and contested) areas of gender, politics, and psychology, respectively, see influential texts in Beckett Studies by Mary Bryden, *Women in Samuel Beckett's Prose and Drama: Her Own Other* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1993); Terry Eagleton, "Political Beckett?", in *New Left Review* 40 (July-August 2006); and J.D. O'Hara, *Samuel Beckett's Hidden Drives: The Structural Uses of Depth Psychology* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1998).

[5]   In his seminal *Beckett/Beckett* (London: Souvenir, 1990), Vivian Mercier recounts a fascinating exchange between academic "experts" and audience members following a performance of *Waiting for Godot*:
       the most effective contribution was made by a member of the audience who asked the panel the rhetorical question, "Isn't *Waiting for Godot* a sort of living Rorschach [inkblot] test?" He was clapped and cheered by most of those present, who clearly felt as I still do that most interpretations of that play – indeed of Samuel Beckett's work as a whole – reveal more about the psyches of the people who offer them than about the work itself or the psyche of its author. (vii)

[6]   Beckett's interview with Tom Driver of Summer 1961 is also reprinted in *Samuel Beckett: The Critical Heritage*, 219.

And yet, avers the narrator in Part Three of *How It Is*: "nothing to be done in any case we have our being in justice I have never heard anything to the contrary."[7] So which is the real Samuel Beckett? The interviewee who repeatedly disclaimed any familiarity with philosophy – despite referring to both "philosophical terms" and famous philosophers in doing so – or the avant-garde artist who clearly, if nevertheless opaquely, incorporated Western philosophy into his writings?

§2

To some extent, that vexing question had already been addressed in the earliest critical responses to Beckett, such as the groundbreaking 1959 Special Issue of *Perspective*, containing titles like "Beckett's *Murphy*: A 'Cartesian' Novel." Other voices, also writing during Beckett's lifetime, similarly took those sporadic references to Western philosophers and ostensibly philosophical *mise en scène* as key clues to the unravelling of his work.[8] Yet the detailed, archival spadework was left for biographers in the first instance after Beckett's death; far and away most importantly in the expansive *Damned to Fame* of 1996. Only then were philosophical themes in Beckett's art properly *substantiated*, rather than *supposed*. This was largely due to an enormous corpus of manuscripts, letters and notes made available to Beckett's authorized biographer, James Knowlson, themselves joining the burgeoning Beckett Collection at the University of Reading for consultation by scholars exactly 30 years after its 1971 establishment in Reading, UK (now the home of the Beckett International Foundation).[9]

---

[7] *How It Is*, 108.

[8] Good examples are David Hesla, *The Shape of Chaos: An Interpretation of the Art of Samuel Beckett* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1971) and the chapter "Beckett and the Philosophers," in John Fletcher, *Samuel Beckett's Art* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1967), 121-137.

[9] For a catalogue of materials at Reading, see John Pilling, ed., *The Ideal Core of the Onion* (Beckett International Foundation, Reading: 1992). Materials unpublished during Beckett's lifetime include his first novel, *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*, and a play written just before *Waiting for Godot*, entitled *Eleuthéria*. For Beckett's reading notes on literature, psychology and philosophy, see the flawed but informative catalogue that comprises the first 200 pages of *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui* 16 (2006).

For a number of contemporary critics, the task now is to separate *sub-stantiated* from *supposed*. With respect to Beckett's readings in philosophy, this journal will shortly host a Special Issue that is unrivalled in scope and empirical depth in this regard: *Beckett/Philosophy*. For the first time, it is hoped this will comprehensively demonstrate Beckett's knowledge of philosophy; underscore this intensive self-education process of the 1930s, and reveal the intimacy with which Beckett was acquainted with some canonical philosophers. In addition to this archival section – with essays on Beckett's relationship to Immanuel Kant, Samuel Johnson, Arthur Schopenhauer, Wilhelm Windelband, Arnold Geulincx, Bishop Berkeley, Gottfried Leibniz, Fritz Mauthner and the Early Greeks – a further section of this forthcoming Special Issue is to be edited by this journal's Reviews Editor, Karim Mamdani. Here, an additional set of essays will explore key philosophical themes in Beckett's work, ranging from ignorance and abstraction to ethics and humanity. Collectively, it is hoped these texts will highlight both the philosophical nature of that art and, underpinning this, the specific philosophers read, noted and – in many cases – cited by Beckett.

However, before offering a "taster" of the philosophical trajectory commenced by Beckett prior to the crucial decade of self-education across the 1930s, a methodological note is in order. While my fellow contributors may not recognize, let alone endorse, the falsifiable methodology I have elsewhere set out as a template for broaching the nettlesome matter of Beckett and philosophy, this methodological issue seems to me pivotal, and bears restating here.[10] This is especially relevant to approaching Beckett's work for, as noted above, the very opacity of his art is such that all theories may be "verified" in writing that often has no subject, no place, no material referent.

At issue, ultimately, is the matter of evidence. In our postmodern world, it would seem that Sir Karl Popper's great injunctions about the value of deductive logic have been lost in the ether of intellectual relativism. Nowhere has this phenomenon been more enthusiastically endorsed and applied than in philosophical approaches to literature. Whether in literature, or

---

[10]   See my "Beckett and Popper, or, 'What stink of artifice': Some notes on Methodology, Falsifiability and Criticism in Beckett Studies" in *Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui* 16.

science, or politics, or psychoanalysis, as Popper has reminded us, evidence
is not ephemeral, but integral to the human advancement of knowledge:

> A Marxist could not look at a newspaper without finding
> verifying evidence of the class struggle on every page, from the
> leaders to the advertisements; and he also would find it, especially,
> in what the paper failed to say. And a psychoanalyst, whether
> Freudian or Adlerian, assuredly would tell you that he finds his
> theories daily, even hourly, verified by his clinical observations.
> But were these theories testable? Were these analyses really better
> tested than, say, the frequently 'verified' horoscopes of the astrolo-
> gers? What conceivable event would falsify them in the eyes of
> their adherents? Was not every conceivable event a 'verification'?
> It was precisely this fact – that they always fitted, that they were
> always 'verified' – which impressed their adherents. It began to
> dawn on me that this apparent strength was in fact a weakness, and
> that all these 'verificationists' were too cheap to count as argu-
> ments. The *method of looking for verifications* seemed to me un-
> sound – indeed, it seemed to me to be the typical method of a
> pseudo-science. I realized the need for distinguishing this method
> as clearly as possible from that other method – that is, the method
> of criticism, the *method of looking for falsifying instances*.[11]

A fine example of the former, "verificationist" approach is provided by
essays on Samuel Beckett and Michel Foucault, Jurgen Habermas and other of
their philosophical contemporaries in Richard Lane's edited book from 2002,
Beckett and Philosophy. One example must suffice here, from Steven
Barfield's chapter, as an example of a recent intellectual linking that simply
cannot be refuted: "In this chapter I argue that the texts of Beckett and Hei-
degger have an uncanny and unsettling relationship to one another, which
shows similar preoccupations but does not necessarily mean any influence of

---

[11] Karl Popper, *Realism and the Aims of Science*, ed. W.W. Bartley, III (Hutchinson,
London: 1985), pp. 162-3.

one to the other."[12] In my judgment, a simple litmus test may be carried out by adding the word do *not* to a methodological sentence like the one above, which looks uncannily like it would reveal just as much about Beckett and Heidegger by arguing the exact inverse; namely, "that their texts do not have an uncanny and relationship to one another." In fine, Heidegger betrays some "Beckettian" themes, while Beckett is construed in a "Heideggerian" light. But does this, ultimately, tell us anything beyond Barfield's interest in Heidegger, or the books on the former's bookshelf? Put another way, how does this, in any way, advance knowledge of Samuel Beckett?

What makes the latter approaches successful or otherwise is largely indebted to the rhetorical skill of the author, and to a much lesser extent, I believe, to the methodological guidelines for establishing *why* such a fusing of radical intellectuals should, or should not be, justified in terms of Popper's two great criteria for falsification: relevance and explanatory power. In effect, exhorts Popper, "falsificationists or fallibists [argue…] that what cannot (at present) in principle be overthrown by criticism is (at present) unworthy of being seriously considered." As Popper naturally counted himself amongst this group, one of his major achievements in the history of science was in offering a template for constructing theories – not a theory itself (at least "theory" as this is normally construed by all but radical skeptics like Gorgias of Leontini, and perhaps the more counterfactual of postmodern critics). In a word, Popper has reminded the discipline of literary studies that it is always preferable to theorize from a position of empirical accuracy rather than to do otherwise, or to simply ignore facts that do not conform to one's preferred reading:

> And while the verificationists laboured in vain to discover valid positive arguments in support of their beliefs, we for our part are satisfied that the rationality of a theory lies in the fact that we choose it because it is better than its predecessors; because it can be put to more severe tests; because it may even have passed

---

[12] Steve Barfield, "Beckett and Heidegger: A Critical Survey," in Richard Lane, ed., *Beckett and Philosophy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), 156.

them, if we are fortunate; and because it may, therefore, approach near to the truth.[13]

Having sketched these methodological points by way of negative example, to quote from Beckett's unpublished review, "Les Deux Besoins" ["The Two Needs"], reprinted in his collected criticism of 1984, *Disjecta*, "let's get on with falsifying." In that 1938 text, Beckett first advanced the view that was later to make him an icon, and his works a unique beacon of humility in our all-too-clever world: reason is inimical to the artistic process which derives, instead, from the need to create. Quite unlike his early mentor, James Joyce, it was the gaps in knowledge that were to motivate Beckett, not the reformulation of extant knowledge so masterfully compiled in *Finnegans Wake*.

For it seems to be with this realization – along with the critical shift to writing in French (both the unpublished "Les Deux Besoins" article and the "Petit Sot" series of poems date from 1938) – that Beckett returned full-circle to his position of ten years earlier: engaging with philosophy was superfluous to his artistic needs. However, the key difference between 1928 and 1938 was that Beckett had returned to this point from a position of knowledge instead of ignorance; or better still, through the embrace of what Nicholas Cusanus had centuries earlier called "learned ignorance." In short, the available evidence strongly suggests that the direct influence of philosophy upon Beckett was a short and intense affair. Of course, philosophical themes were to recur across Beckett's *oeuvre* again and again, right up to his death in 1989. But these were artistic reformulations of the work he had done in the pivotal decade leading to 1938. After that date, I want to suggest, Beckett's philosophical *development* ceased, and thereafter only philosophical *reinforcement* is in evidence – such as his re-reading of Schopenhauer in the late 1970s/early 1980s (again, as demonstrably, *falsifiably* evidenced in his "commonplace notebook" from the period, the so-called "Sottisier Notebook"[14]). Put simply, the philosophical evolution of Beckett's art

---

[13]   Karl Popper, "Truth, Rationality, and the Growth of Knowledge," in *Conjectures and Refutations* (London: Routledge, 2002), 336.

[14]   For insight into the "Sottisier Notebook," see Mark Nixon, "'Guess Where': From Reading to Writing in Beckett," in *Genetic Joyce Studies* 6 (Spring 2006), online at http://www.antwerpjamesjoycecenter.com/GJS6/GJS6Nixon.htm.

ended prior to WWII, halfway between the completion of *Murphy* in 1936 and the start of the wartime novel *Watt*.

§3

In addition to its value in taking the measure of Samuel Beckett's decade-long philosophical auto-didacticism turning to his earliest engagement with philosophy is instructive for at least four reasons. In his first published essay, written to support James Joyce's *Work in Progress* (later titled *Finnegans Wake*), the 1929 "Dante…Bruno.Vico...Joyce," Beckett revealed tendencies that were to resurface again and again in his study of philosophy across the 1930s. None of these are unusual, even if all might be considered at variance with the (inductive) idea of Beckett as a universal genius and devourer of Western learning on one hand, or a philosophical novice on the other.

The first point is that, despite taking a degree in Italian and French at Trinity College, Dublin, Beckett had no philosophical training upon taking up a two-year teaching post in Paris at the start of November 1928. As he recalled decades later for his first biography (which he neither "'helped" nor "hindered"), Beckett, in a letter of 24 October 1974, "stressed he did not study philosophy" prior to leaving Ireland: "Because he had not taken a philosophy course at Trinity College, which he felt was a serious defect in his education, he set out on what he thought was a systematic schedule of readings."[15] On closer inspection, however, these readings were to be anything but systematic.

The second, derivative point is that Beckett relied heavily upon friends to recommend philosophical books. In the case of his initial philosophical engagement upon arriving in France as an English *lecteur* at the École Normale Supérieure, Giambattista Vico seems to have acted as Beckett's introduction to philosophy. This was thanks to his relationship, or better, hero-worship, of James Joyce.[16] Joyce's own use of Vico as a "trellis"[17] for *Fin-*

---

[15]   Deirdre Bair, *Samuel Beckett: A Biography* (London, Picador: 1978), 96, 694.

[16]   With respect to James Joyce, Beckett remarked that his was "heroic work, heroic being," cited in James Knowlson, *Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett* (London: Bloomsbury, 1996), 105. Also prior to WWII, other friends of Beckett who gave philosophical advice included Jean Beaufret, Brian Coffey, and A.J. 'Con' Leventhal.

[17]   Cf. H.S. Harris, "What is Mr. Ear-Vico Supposed to be 'Earing'?", in Donald Phillip Verene, ed., *Vico and Joyce* (New York: SUNY Press, 1987), 72. Relevant chapters

negans Wake was to act as a catalyst for Beckett's engagement with *La Scienza Nuova*; and more specifically, Vico's "division of the development of human society into three ages: Theocratic, Heroic, Human (civilized), with a corresponding classification of language: Hieroglyphic (sacred), Metaphorical (poetic), Philosophical (capable of abstraction and generalization)" in order to explain "the ineluctable circular progression of society."[18] While it may be tempting to see in this tripartite structure the makings of the later tripartite, circular structure of a text like *How It Is*, Beckett – though he could not have known it then, unknown and unpublished as he was at twenty-two years old – himself warned against such inductive mapping in the essay's very first, justly famous, sentence: "The danger is in the neatness of identifications."[19]

Third, Beckett's knowledge of Vico – and other philosophers in this nascent pattern – derived less from Vico's writings than from Joyce's suggestions, and less from both of these than from extant secondary sources; in this case, from Benedetto Croce's 1911 *La Filosofia di Giambattista Vico*. Despite explicitly disagreeing with Croce's definition of Vico as a "mystic" who was rendered, in R.G. Collingwood's 1913 translation, "contemptuous of empiricism," Beckett nevertheless mined this source exhaustively; for example, for the definition of Providence, or again, for Vico's understanding myth as a

---

in this collection bearing on Beckett's first publication also include Peter Hughes, "From Allusion to Implosion. Vico. Michelet. Joyce, Beckett." and Donald Phillip Verene, "Vico as Reader of Joyce." Another angle is provided by Hayden V. White, "What is Living and What is Dead in Croce's Criticism of Vico," in *Giambattista Vico: An International Symposium*, edited by Giorgio Tagliacozzo and Hayden V. White (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1969).

[18] "Dante…Bruno.Vico..Joyce," in *Our Exagmination Round His Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress* (Paris: Shakespeare and Co., 1929), reprinted in Samuel Beckett, *Disjecta: Miscellaneous Writings and a Dramatic Fragment*, edited by Ruby Cohn (New York: Grove Press, 1984), 20. To date, the most extensive Anglophone discussions of Vico and Beckett available in print can be found in John Pilling, *Beckett Before Godot* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 13-25; and, to a lesser extent, Pilling, "Exagmination Round the Fictification of Vico and Joyce," in *James Joyce Quarterly*, 26/4 (Summer 1989).

[19] "Dante," 19.

primitive "historical statement of fact."[20] In short, this is Croce's conceit more than it is Vico's – let alone that of Niccolò da Conti, cited *en passant* by Beckett and in Croce's primer, but omitted in Vico's original, which defines myth as "history of such a kind as could be constructed by primitive minds, and strictly considered by them as an account of actual fact."[21]

Regrettably, space permits only two final, yet definitive, examples of this persistent pattern of secondary source "notesnatching"[22] – albeit one that has not been previously raised in Beckett Studies. In the first place, Beckett happily, if mistakenly, follows Vico's introductory "Idea of the Work" (§34) and calls Book II, namely "Poetic Wisdom," "the master key to the entire work" (Vico, instead, actually identifies the "origins both of languages and of letters" in "poets who spoke in poetic characters" as the "master key" of *The New Science*); the debt, yet again, is to Croce, not Vico.[23] Similarly in "Dante…Bruno.Vico..Joyce" one finds the first reference to a well-known Beckettian tag (given in Italian in his essay): "the human mind does not understand anything of which it has had no previous impression." Yet Beckett's initial encounter with this phrase (he was later to transcribe it into his central commonplace book of the 1930s, the so-called "Whoroscope Notebook," when he encountered it again 1936 in Léon Brunschvicg's 1923 *Spinoza et ses contemporains*) does not come from the expansive Book II in Vico's *New Science*.[24] Had Beckett found the phrase in

---

[20] Ibid. R.G. Collingwood's translation of Benedetto Croce's *La Filosofia di Giambattista Vico* (Rome: Bari, 1911) was published as *The Philosophy of Giambattista Vico* (London: H. Latimer, 1913); here cited 78, 118-9, and 62-4.

[21] Ibid., 64.

[22] Beckett, letter of 25 Jan. 1931 to Thomas MacGreevy, in reference to the former's reading of St. Augustine, cited in John Pilling, *Beckett's* Dream *Notebook* (Reading: Beckett International Foundation, 1999), xiii. Along with details of many other Western philosophers consulted by Beckett, a similar passage on "phrase-hunting" in Augustine's *Confessions* can be found in *The Letters of Samuel Beckett, Volume I: 1929-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 62.

[23] Giambattista Vico, *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, translated by. Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 21-2. Compare Collingwood's translation of *La Filosofia di Giambattista Vico*, 62.

[24] For coverage of this important phrase from Beckett's 1930s commonplace book, see John Pilling's "Dates and Difficulties in Beckett's *Whoroscope* Notebook," in the *Journal of Beckett Studies* 13/2 (2005), 46. For Italian readers, the phrase given in

the latter, he doubtless would have cited the full sentence there: "What Aristotle said of the individual man is true of the race in general: *Nihil est in intellectu quin prius ferit in sensu*." But no. This referent is 1,000 years too early. Instead Beckett tells us that, far from being Aristotle's, the phrase is instead a "Scholastics' axiom."And this, in turn, derives from the idiosyncratic Croce, who also seems to have played fast and loose with Giambattista Vico here:

> Poets and philosophers may be called respectively the senses and the intellect of mankind: and in this sense we may retain as true the scholastic saying "there is nothing in the intellect which was not first in the senses." Without sense, we cannot have intellect: without poetry, we cannot have philosophy, nor indeed any civilisation.[25]

At this point it should be reiterated that, without such evidence as the above, it is impossible to advance falsifiable claims in Beckett Studies – or elsewhere, I would contend – nor indeed to substantiate empirically-supported interpretations in literary criticism (like that argued here: Croce's Vico was of greater influence to Beckett than Vico himself).

Fourth and finally, the above passage also highlights the way in which Beckett transformed what he read philosophically into his art. Thus, fully a generation later, this phrase, now truncated and defaced, is placed by the narrator of *Malone Dies* into the beak of the "whoreson" Jackson's "dumb" parrot, Polly, which he "used to try and teach [...] to say, Nihil in intellectu, etc. These first three words the bird managed well enough, but the celebrated restriction was too much for it, all you heard was a series of squawks." This led to Jackson's nagging, Polly's retreat to the corner of his imprisoning cage, which "was even overcrowded, personally I would have felt cramped." But as so often in Beckett's art, there is an opaque depth to this comical moment. For the cage is not only for Jackson's parrot; it is also a metaphor for Malone's

---

"Dante…Bruno.Vico..Joyce" is "*niente è nell'inelletto che prima non sia nel senso*," 24. For more on the Italian angle in Beckett's first published text, see Andrea Battestini, "Beckett e Vico," in *Bolletino del Centro di Studi Vichiani* 5 (1975), 78-86.

[25]   *The Philosophy of Giambattista Vico*, 49.

imprisonment in the "hallucinations" of the mind – the mind of whom, one might reasonably ask – without the material (dis)comforts of the senses:

> And in the skull is it a vacuum? I ask. And if I close my eyes, close them really, as others cannot, but as I can, for there are limits to my impotence, then sometimes my bed is caught up into the air and tossed like a straw by the swirling eddies, and I in it. Fortunately it is not so much an affair of eyelids, but as it were the soul that must be veiled, that soul denied in vain, vigilant, anxious, turning in its cage as in a lantern, in the night without haven or craft or matter or understanding.[26]

§4

And so, in conclusion, what does this reveal about Samuel Beckett? Clearly, it is not so easy to simply label him a philosopher. Nor is it the case that "philosophical language" went over his head – even as a young man. As with the entirety of Beckett's literary *oeuvre*, such distinctions smack of an artificial "neatness." For even in his earliest short story, "Assumption," also first published in the June 1929 issue of the "little magazine" *transition*, the first line announces: "He could have shouted and he could not."[27] While it may be that clear answers to Beckett's art are, in the final analysis, "unsayable," that is not to say the sources and allusions are. Of the latter, philosophy plays no small role, even in Beckett's earliest writings. The forthcoming Special Issue *Beckett/Philosophy* will illuminate many of these philosophical engagements, in the 1930s and beyond.

From this detailed perspective it may be, as John Calder has argued regarding "the attitudes, the thinking, and the intellectual background of Samuel Beckett the philosopher," that "Beckett was the last of the great stoics."[28] In quite another view, it may be, instead, that the tracks of literature and philosophy run in tandem through Beckett's art, as Lance St. John Butler influentially argued long ago. Or still again, as Bruno Clément would

---

[26] Samuel Beckett, *Malone Dies* (London: Faber and Faber, 2010), 44, 48-9.

[27] Samuel Beckett, "Assumption," in *The Complete Short Prose, 1929-1989* (New York: Grove Press, 1995), 3.

[28] John Calder, *The Philosophy of Samuel Beckett* (London: Calder, 2002), 1.

have it, the reformulation of Beckett's literature by philosophers – such as Badiou, Deleuze or Cixous most recently – interrogates ideas that can be profitably articulated in philosophical concepts and language.[29] Whichever way is taken, one can be sure that the "philosophical" in Beckett's work (whatever that may be) will remain a live issue for literary critics no less than for philosophers. It is hoped that placing such questions on and even sounder footing, through the pages of the *Sofia Philosophical Review*, shall give added impetus to those probing questions Beckett asks of us, and invites us to ask of ourselves.

Right from the start, as this overview has aimed to show, those questions – the bread and butter of great philosophy, no less than of great literature – have made, and will continue to make, Samuel Beckett our intellectual contemporary. His is a "timeless parenthesis." Even in the early, tenuous, and apprentice days of 1929, that Western philosophy contributed to Beckett's brilliant asides in our mythic narrative of human "progress" remains, to date, obscured. In bringing these into focus, one can only make the hopeful assumption that explorations of Beckett and philosophy, in the broadest sense, will help to keep us, his readers, "irretrievably engulfed" in his challenging art:

> After a timeless parenthesis he found himself alone in his room, spent with ecstasy, torn by the bitter loathing of that which he had condemned to the humanity of silence. Thus each night he died and was God, each night revived and was torn, torn and battered with increasing grievousness, so that he hungered to be irretrievably engulfed in the light of eternity, one with the birdless cloudless colourless skies, in infinite fulfilment.[30]

---

[29] See Lance St. John Butler, *Samuel Beckett and the Meaning of Being: A Study in Ontological Parable* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984), which argues that, despite "protestations to the contrary, Beckett is working the same ground as the philosophers," 2; see also Bruno Clément, "What the Philosophers do With Samuel Beckett," in S.E. Gontarski and Anthony Uhlmann, eds., *Beckett After Beckett* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2006).

[30] "Assumption," 6-7.

II. UNMASKING SOCIAL REALITY

Personal Identity: From Belonging Toward Responsibility

Maria Dimitrova (Sofia University)

Abstract

Traditionally, we identify ourselves by our belonging to the Whole—of the Cosmos, Nature, Society, State, Community, Family, etc. But following Levinas' philosophy, this paper discusses responsibility as another kind of personal identification.

Key words: identification, otherness, rights, community, ethics, politics

Personal identity as belonging to the totality

In Early Modernity people began to identify themselves by their belonging to society as a totality. They wanted to overcome provincial borders following the new sense of cosmopolitism, that is, of universality. There was a demand to grasp what was common among all people on the planet and to extend this humanness over the whole of humanity. The universal nature of man was identified with Reason. But to recognize those rules which can sustain the tests of universality and which in this way are reasonable is a task originally condemned to failure. In fact, universal citizenship means extra-territoriality and extra-temporality. The requirement for universality implies rejecting particular claims linked with time and place. For the particular claims are restricted in space and time but pretend to be everlasting and unbounded and such claims contradict both each other and the proclaimed common interest. But the postulate of human nature, which consists in the universality of reason, was compatible to the ambitions and actions of the modern State leading war against the local authorities who mediate between

State power and individuals.

Universality itself or civilization (where civilization is understood as striving for the ideal of universality) has protected itself by self-empowerment distancing and excluding those who have not been sufficiently universalized (civilized) or in exercising pressure and coercion over them. And when the standards of universalization have already been accepted and the empowered central authority has become aware of being unchallenged, it has started to maintain a different policy and to allow inclusion and recognition of earlier excluded and unrecognized ones in order to avoid criticism of intolerance. Usually, this new task has been performed through integration and/or pluralization techniques.

The principle of universal participation, which earlier had been maintained by overcoming a lot of barriers to underestimating various local and particular differences, now starts to look like the principle of totalitarianism or the totalitarian State. It has been blamed by many for all evils in public life since it uniforms, homogenizes, and excludes. It has been believed that this principle can be improved relying on variety and even that it can be substituted with the principle of pluralism. However, no matter what the new freedom, diversity, tolerance and respect to differences the pluralistic attitude brings, as a negation of unity, it is only a reaction "led by the nose" by the discourse favoring unity. Pluralization opposes totalization by implying it. The diversification and recognition of the differences happens at the background of universalization and usually establishes a second reflective level of the discourse, which cannot avoid acknowledgment of totality posed as a basis. Diversity itself, as a philosophical category and pluralism as principle, acquire sense thanks to the criticisms against the Whole. Pluralism itself is a negation of identity, of unified principle, of universality, but exactly as a negation, as a simple reaction, it is its hostage - negation is always dependent and derivative. Pluralism does not leave the borders within the Whole; it lives in the shadow of the notion of totality.

The epoch of Modern Times proclaims inclusion of everyone into citizenship and equality of all citizens in the State. This has been completed primarily via neutralizing differences. Many see the hidden basis of this view in the market tendency to ascribe quantitative expression to qualitative

characteristics by evaluating them. Qualitative differences are reduced to their money equivalent so that the natural movement of capital leads to neutralization, homogenization, unification, etc. But today a critique of uniformity has started, in spite of this still active tendency, due to the logic of capital, which is the same no matter where the capital is invested. The critique stresses that the common rules and laws before which all are equal (as it was suggested during Early Modernity), do not take into consideration individual and group peculiarities. It is clear that differences are of prime importance for market consumption and since the markets are already global today, newer and newer differences emerge. In the globalizing world, politics and culture of differences oppose culture and politics of uniformity and want to put it aside. Actually however, as Zygmunt Bauman emphasizes, globalization goes hand in hand with localization[1].

In the globalization process, the first evidence which comes to the fore is the opening of identities and liquidizing of the whole. Individuals and groups are understood not as a steady closet, whole and defined by the individual or/and group characteristics fixed forever, but rather as identification processes. They are thought of as constructed, as more or less changeable and temporary "identifications".

It is true that contemporary communities in a much higher degree than in the past, have as their principle pluralism. They are multiracial, multinational, multicultural, multiethnic, etc., so it is possible to claim (although with hyperbole) that communication within them does not differ significantly from the communication outside. But in this condition of pluralism, and we can add of fragmentarization and hybridization (in Late Modernity) as well as of homogenization and unification (in Early Modernity), the universality as an emblem of humanity in humans if not outdated, at least is not sufficient. It is perceived that the particular differences are of enormous importance and cannot be neglected. Most of our contemporary social problems concern exactly policies and culture of difference. A direct reference of the individual to the social entirety ignores the mediating role of communities and the irreducible difference of individuals.

---

[1] Zygmunt Bauman. *Globalization: The Human Consequences* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), p. 2.

In Modernity efforts were directed first of all to discovering what was valid for "everyone". In Postmodernity this main opposition "individual-society" is preserved but an attempt is made to restore as the rights of various particular communities and groups so the rights of the individual uniqueness which in the previous epochs had been underestimated or denied in the name of defending the totality.

The advantages and the disadvantages of social and political discourse of a pluralistic society are explicated and seen in the unabated debate between liberals and communitarians. Proceeding mainly from empirical observations both camps admit that the universal point of view does not pay attention to particularities and diversities and in this way is utopian and leads to illusions. Besides, it is unjust and namely here unfolds their critical pathos. People inevitably consider the emerging problems and participate in the course of events under the influence of their life experience and their perception in the social surrounding. They are formed in the process of socialization in different groups and communities. Their history is that unconscious, as Bourdieu calls it, which manifests itself publicly as different habitual practices. The differences are not only a result of the oppositions of interests and applications of different tactics of self-defense but are an effect from a different past, culture, status, forms of communication and functions in society. All these factors determine different understanding and evaluation of social relationships and order, different motivation of their social and political activities.

But if we have a preference for differences, this means to fall into the trap of fragmentation. Exactly that causes trouble for liberals and communitarians - what they want is to avoid it at any expense. In fragmentation and heterogeneity, again and probably even stronger than in the unification, we face the exclusion of individuals and groups defined as different in relation to the norm determined by certain powerful interests portraying themselves as "common" and even "universal". In the pluralized society people are not forced "to develop, civilize, and improve" according to a given standards in catching up with "more developed, civilized, and more advanced" groups and societies but are allowed "to be as they are". However, a significant part of groups - if not *de jure*, and least *de facto* - occupied the weaker position,

the marginalized one, that of the minority suffering of being ignored or/and deprived, often repressed, with no right of say as well as deprived of number of other rights. In a pluralized, fragmented and atomized social milieu, the stronger groups are privileged ones (as clearly is the case with the debate on minority rights, women and children rights, etc.). Both positions on citizenship - the liberal and communitarian - insist that it is necessary to taking into account the individual and group needs and desires because recognition of being moral obliges to organize group and individual interests according to the common good so that everybody to get a chance for participation. As Bourdieu critically points out, the monopoly of the universal continues to gain supporters and to legitimize itself by the values of neutrality and universal recognition.

However, the old issue about monopolizing the right to speak on behalf of the group and about the privileged position appears immediately here. Even when the stress is not laid on "common goal", "welfare of society", "belonging of everyone to the group success", but on the differences where everyone can contribute to some common work, shared task, carrying out the project due to their peculiarity or procedure rules of representation, civic community is constituted once again through the common for all of them. If we abandon that commonality, it is not clear how it is possible to conceptualize and apply a justice principle. Unavoidably a question arises whether, why, and how people should be treated differently, as well as the opposite question - whether, why, and how people have to be subsumed under a common denominator?

A major deficiency both of the communitarians and liberals appears in their definition of social connection as unification or opposition based on individual and/or group interest (when individuals and groups themselves are in advance considered as monads, although not solipsistically encapsulated, but open to the conversations). The problem is that they believe their conversation is always mediated by the common. Social connection is considered first of all as belonging to a class on the base of common characteristics, that is, as a relationship with the others with whom one feels and/or identifies as similar or "the same as they are" unlike "the others" - the other group, the other race, the other culture, the other party, nation, etc., in relation with whom their essential difference is stressed. It is believed that ex-

actly due to this similarity and/or difference people recognize each other and group in solidarity or enter into conflict. The essentialist approach is kept when the individuals and groups are defined by their common features or their similarity (that is, by the principal which they carry) even if it is insisted that their group belonging is an issue of free choice (liberalism) or of interactive recognition (communitarism). It is possible to object that the essentialist-approach alternative is sought in defining individuals and groups within a network of relations and not as substances according to some principal (repetition, universality, law, similarity, etc.). It is stated that the social processes generate some ensembles and disperse some others, but in such a way a common nature of the individuals and groups acquired forever and indispensably is not created. However, the assumption that essence is not pre-determined and fixed but acquired and transitory like roles which we play or the task of self-creation which everyone assigns to himself alone, does not break with the substantionalistic approach. Within this process of unceasing self-constitution and self-affirmation, people are free to select the group which they belong to and accordingly the qualities which they possess, but such type of self-determination is not explicitly linked with the opposition between "mine" and "foreign", "own" and "other", my rights against yours. This is also the issue about identification through property (my own and that of the other) and, then, this is the issue about participation (part, party, partition, particularity) in dividing or in creating totality. In this way, although essence is not, as Heidegger puts it, facticity and throwness, but openness and strives to make your existence into what you really are, here besides the old conflict of universal-particular, that is, part-whole, another one is added, namely the issue of the Self and the Other (others). In such a way, a categorization emerges forward which in a sense is more fundamental than the distinction universal-particular or general-specific. Both theoretically and practically universal-particular distinction already implies the separation of mine and alien. Within the whole, even when it is taken in the process of becoming, alienation from what is mine and difficulties in the integration of the other (the acceptance and assimilation of the alterity or, at least, the tolerance in the sense of indifference to alterity) raise barriers in front of communication and interaction. In philosophical terms it seems that

such a category of otherness is the one that creates the problems.

The question is that both communitarians and liberals define alterity not as otherness or difference *per se*, but in relation to a principle (norm, majority, law, etc.) or through mutual measurement (which also implies an accepted common standard, common measurement unit even when role of such a tool is plaid by one of the elements in the relationship in order it to be imposed as a measure upon the other). Since the others are originally excluded from the class of the same, it is very difficult to find afterwards the route back to accession and inclusion in an extended area, no matter whether this is a community of representation, recognition or joint practices. This only shows that neither those liberally inclined, nor the defenders of the community have broken their connection with early modern thinking. Such a conclusion is valid as for ones who today intentionally support the continuation of the modernist project, so for those who most aggressively oppose it. The intention of engulfing the alien and its integration into a whole with which the Self is identified has been preserved by many even today. It appears in the discourse of Modernity and reaches its most thoughtful defense in Hegel's philosophy when the Other is assimilated by the identity of opposites (differences), as this has happened *de facto* in society. Those who oppose this assimilatory approach reach at most neutrality toward alterity, tolerance toward the alien, and, finally, indifference toward difference. Today, diversity is encouraged, on the one hand, but on the other, based on the preliminary contradiction of positions, an attempt is made again - through dialog, consensus, tolerance requirements, human rights protection, recognition, etc., to collectivize the differences through their unification into a common whole and through the fusion of horizons. Well, sometimes open minds are inclined to abandon fusion which, in their opinion, is not obligatory; let the differences remain differences and the others remain other; let's enjoy diversity and get delighted with multi-colorness, but only on one condition: the difference does not cause problems and complies with the universal legislation and the Constitution accepted "on the behalf of everyone"!

Personal identity by taking responsibility

It seems that the serious philosophical critique of universality and identification through belonging to the whole comes rather not from the critique of

totalitarianism as it is usually done in the field of politics, but from another direction - ethical grounds. As Bauman summarizes, the question is first of all that Modernity's moral impulses and restrictions have been neutralized and perceived as irrelevant and the opportunity to commit inhuman deeds has been provided to men and women without their feeling inhuman at all. By the overview of the bibliography on this issue, it can be observed that contesting the modern ideals in the perspective of antinomies of Postmodernity, attention of the most philosophers and theorists circle around ethical topics.

In this paper, a view on identity is implied, which is not based only on belonging of the individual to the whole but on the responsibility of the Self toward the Other. The Self is in a process of identification by the responsibilities one assumes. Moreover, one not only assumes the responsibility for his own comportment but for the comportment of others as well. This implies a new understanding of subjectivity and freedom as well as of protection of human rights - not on the basis of our group or individual selfishness, but primarily as responsibility for the rights of the Other. It is not a question about the responsibility that is sought after the deeds have been committed as it is done in reflection and in the verdicts (for instance in the Court), but rather as a sensibility and thinking over what my action would mean for others in my contact with them. One would be right to point out that exactly this is the Kantian approach to universalization because it requires the maxim of my behavior to take in consideration the others in advance in order to be posed as the universal law of action for everybody. The significant difference consists in the fact that while Kant starts with the Self, here it is suggested beginning with the Other. Obviously, in such a perspective it is impossible to get rid of rethinking communication and dialog, justice and law, morality and citizenship. It is important to grasp this change of perspective, which can be summarized with Levinas' words that "We" is not the plural of "I" because the Other is not a "second I". He exists by himself and is meaningful by himself and is not just bearer of the meaning that I ascribe to him. We can also add that the Other is not taken negatively as an adversary, competitor, limit, and barrier in front of my freedom but is viewed positively. The positive value of the Other is not calculated regarding the opportunities he opens to me, i.e., he is not assessed by the instrumental

thinking that reduces the Other to an object useful for me. The Other is not an object at all but a collocutor.

It is also necessary to rethink the notion of community as it is already assumed that:

1) Community is not produced by the multiplication of transcendental subjects whose being common consists in their constitution as self-consciousness by "I think, accompanying all my representation";

2) we do not respect the Other in the community for the sake of an abstract humanism, that is, according to the universal law (Kantian imperative) but according his empirical and historical presence in his entire particularity and, even more, in his entire singularity. In the Early Modern Philosophy and in German Idealistic Philosophy the alien particularity appears as limit of mine;

3) Community is not the universal substance/subject, that is a historically formed totality where self-consciousness is a differentiation which actually is not differentiation because any differentiation is posed by this absolute subject as distinction of Self from itself (Hegel).

Liberals and communitarians have been trying to oppose these forms of the understanding of human community and coexistence beginning with empirically present differences in order to find theoretical and moral and/or juridical ground for their reconciliation. Both liberals and communitarians want to see a partner in the Other, although he is my limit. We should not forget that while Hegel has interpreted in various ways reconciliation, it is a final accord still in Hegel's philosophical symphony. But even in their noblest and most generous motivation toward the Other aiming at ensuring the recognition of the otherness - the main goal of their efforts, the liberals and the communitarians at best allocate for the Other a place right next to me, "side by side with me" (which, of course, is not below or behind me). Unfortunately, the final justification of their efforts is egalitarianism. They believe that the differences have to be reduced to mutual recognition where equal opportunities for the individual and, accordingly, group autonomy are achieved. The idea that the Other is the superior in relation to me (or us) is not allowed because automatically, almost instinctively, he is identified with the postulating a relationship of domination and submission. Just the opposite, here Levinas' position is supported claiming that the Other is the one to

whom my existence is in service (even in the cases when I intentionally don't want this) and this type of relation is a caring for the Other and not slavery to the Other. In this way, self-existence which is "for the Other" receives a social dimension and social identification. I become Self thanks to the responsibility to the others. In this way sociality transcends state of nature, and meaning transcends meaninglessness. The Other here is Transcendence, but "*is not transcendent because he is free to the same degree as I am; just the opposite, his freedom is superiority.*"[2] The Other's freedom is not a restriction of my own freedom, as is thought in the interpretation of community as totality and in the theory of social contract. In the whole of the community or society, according to the common individualistic-atomistic image, the less restricted by the others one is and, accordingly, the more restrictions he can impose on others, the freer he is. Freedom defined as independence from the others - from their customs, beliefs, prejudices, communal biases, and, in general, from tradition - springs up in the dawn of Modern Times in order, later, to unfold into the autonomy theories where the subject determines by himself the law which is going to obey. But since the whole is always limited, everyone within its limits experiences the other as a restriction and a barrier. In such a way, an autonomous will is necessarily opposed to the other ones. The more independent an individual is, the more capable of accomplishing his goals he is, the wider is the scope of his activity, and more successful is his self-realization. But since the opposite party, the other individual, the competitors also strive for maximal realization within the space of their interaction, the expansion of the one confronts with the similar attitude of the Other. Freedom of the one is a necessary obstacle for the freedom of the Other and vice versa. Still, as a merit of contemporary neo-liberal and communitarian conceptions, it should be pointed out that they aim at stressing - at least theoretically - the relations of cooperation and not of competition.

It seems like the category "freedom", understood as autonomy, should be deprived of the privileged status it has acquired. The notion of heteronomy is thrown overboard since Kant on. In this essay, Kantian definition of self-determination is rethought for the sake of restoring rights of heteron-

---

2   Emmanuel Levinas. *Totalite et infini*. (The Hague: Kluwer Academic, 1971), p. 86.

omy. The autonomy of the self is understood in a different way - as a response to the heteronomous demand on the side of the Other. It would be more precise to say that exactly the protection of the freedom of the Other, of his right to be himself authorizes me to act in my capacity of an autonomous subject, yet to act questioning the power of domination, calling me to justice, appealing to responsibility; that is, "to respond to the other because of the Other". My comportment receives its meaning and direction not first of all in accordance with the law that the Self imposes on himself but in response to the presence of the Other. Otherwise, freedom would be a foolish spontaneity, caprice, arbitrariness and/or would wander under the guise of instrumentalizing others. Even Kant's categorical imperative cannot serve as a cure against these two malicious mutations. If Kant's imperative requires universalization of the maxim which I follow, and if it appears as expression of my pretension that it is the rationality of human nature in general, this means that it has to be extended over the others as a valid to the same degree as for them. However, such a pretension of declaring of universal moral legislation, imposed on the others on my behalf, is rather dangerous. It is necessary to introduce a preliminary consideration of the demands and conditions of others and choosing motives of my behavior according to them not just in their capacity as noumenal beings but in response to their otherness. It is a question about how this kind of consideration is possible and/or realistic. If we assume, as it is proposed here, that autonomy ought to be a response to heteronomy - of heteronomy identified with the appeal on the side of the Other, who questions spontaneity of my will, then the question arises whether to abandon any normativity and the very notions of freedom and justice in the way they are understood according to Kantian interpretation and, more generally, as it is in the modern discourse. Is not the principle defending the personal autonomy of all individuals the primary condition for any legislation and any justice? We are answering these questions negatively. However, not abandoning these categories and their current interpretation is not the intention of this paper, but their new understanding. Constitution of togetherness as an interpersonal relation precedes its restructuring into unity. Unity implies sameness or uniformity according to a certain principle of categorization, while togetherness is established thanks to differences, which exist still before assembling into unity. Furthermore, unity it-

self could impose a new tyranny, that of universality, homogeneity and de-personalization. However, facelessness could be overcome if the resources of unity could allow the Self to support the Other in his otherness and not to struggle with him. Thus, through cooperation and the responsibility for the Other, the Self could discover itself and to reflect over itself. But this return to itself would be then not a self-purpose but rather "a by-product". Then, the identification of the Self is neither an imposition over the individual from outside of belonging to a group, nor an arbitrary choice, but is taking responsibilities for the others.

Before participating in a hierarchy or the organization of the police, we participate in interpersonal relations that are primary in comparison to institu-tionalized links. The original necessity for a communication among the differ-ent individuals (for instance, between a child and an adult, employee and em-ployer, salesperson and client, doctor and patient, etc., and not only between those who have equal status of free citizens and right-holders) is a necessity determined exactly by their difference. Since the one needs the other they meet. The one is necessary for the other because he has what to give him tak-ing into account his specific condition of the one, who needs advice, service, protection, security and so on. Exactly the difference creates the original community between them. Due to repetition, regularity, and normalization of this kind of links (which always begin and are implemented on personal level but bear consequences not only for the direct participants); that is, thanks to institutionalization, the relationship is extended and modified reaching the status of universal rule, that is, the status of right in the totality of community. Namely the relation between the One and the Other attains the scope of an in-stitution; from this moment on, it can favor but also can betray its function and to begin impeding these kinds of contacts.

Responsibility as an asymmetrical and non-reciprocal relation between the Other and me

The pioneer in the notion of togetherness that gives priority to the in-terpersonal relationship is probably Martin Buber, whose main topic, as is well known, is the dialogue. We have a lot of reasons to call pre-Buber phi-losophy monological. While the new tendency he started stresses the dia-logical character of human history and culture, the main movement of

monological life is reflection when the Self has withdrawn into itself. As Buber mentions, although the difference of the other touches my soul, it is not in my soul, so that to allow differences is to exist only as experience of the other, only as "a part of myself". For philosophy based on the dialogical principle, I-You relationship is primary regarding I-It relationship and meeting the other is the event, which poses the beginning of their togetherness. Only later, this event moves reflection of the Self in such a way as I-You to be transformed into I-It relationship.

Within the tradition of the older idealistic philosophy where the subject-object relationship is the only background on the stage, the object (It) has unclear status: it is transcendent in relation to the cognizing Self, but on the other hand, due to the activity of consciousness, is transformed into immanence, into an entity of consciousness, into representation. This ambiguity has served as a ground for creation various theories about subject-object relationship; in any case, it is taken as a model for any monological philosophy. In these theories, any thinking and movement of the Self is encircled around himself, being reflection and self-reflection, and language is only an additional factor, which is viewed only in its capacity of a means of expressing and objectifying internal experiences. But Martin Buber, in his philosophy of dialogue, views language and communication in a different mode. The most important for the word is that it is an appeal to the Other as to "Thou". The I-Thou word creates the world of connection while the I-It word is the world of experience. Experience is the world of the Self; it is "in the Self", and not between the Self and the world because *"The world has no part in the experience. It permits itself to be experienced, but has no concern in the matter. For it does nothing to the experience, and the experience does nothing to it. As the experience the world belongs to the primary word I-It"*[3]. While the event of the I-You meeting, being according to Buber a reciprocal communication, is incommensurable with the action of cognition.

For Levinas, who continues this new understanding of language, experience, and sociality, Buber is exactly the philosopher who discovers this strange overturn of the intentionality of cognition in communication. The

---

[3]   Martin Buber. *I and Thou*. Translated by Ronald Gregor Smith (Edinburgh: T. &T. Clark), p. 5

basic I-You word is the pre-condition for appearance of any language; I-It relation is derivative and in its relativity is incommensurable with the first one. Translating Buber's terminology, we could say that in the dialogical trend of philosophizing subject-subject relationship both precedes and exceeds (chronologically and logically) subject-object relationship. However, such a translation is not entirely adequate. In order to understand what its deficiency consists in, it is necessary to keep in mind that dialogue is not a reciprocal relationship between equal subjects. This is Levinas' lesson that there is no equality between I and You. Most probably, this very expression I-You is inappropriate. The link between the Other and me begins exactly because of the original inequality and difference. For Levinas, all social links spring from the moral relationship between the Other and me, which is asymmetrical and non-reciprocal. This is true even when, like in tyranny and despotism as well as in all other forms of violence toward the Other, morality at first glance is rejected in this asymmetry and non-reciprocity. Moral responsibility in its most extreme and hyperbolized form is the substitution of the One for the Other. The most fundamental difference between the Other and me, the Difference from which all other differences spring, consists exactly in my extreme responsibility, which never ceases to take into account the otherness of the Other. The moral Self does not cease to ask (put into question) in what sense, how, and why the Other is other, and how to meet his otherness (which would mean questioning my own identification as a simple entity or affiliation). This moral relationship of responsibility, according to Levinas, weaves the very woof of the togetherness.

For Levinas, my identity is not due anymore only to my participation in the space of community, but to my identification (my being assigned) as extraordinary and indispensable bearer of the responsibility for the Other (and the others). The Self takes the responsibility - because it falls upon him - without expectations of reciprocity, mutuality, or reversal of the relationship (although of course, this can happen but is not primarily in an interpersonal connection; sometimes, it is relied on taking the risk and responsibilities should be compensated by the State, thanks to the traditions and customs, and so on). Togetherness does not imply equality neither multiplication and assembling of in-different to each other, although similar, elements

in a certain conglomerate based on their likeness, but implies not-in-difference of the one to the other exactly because they are not equal, tantamount, and reciprocal in the originality of social interaction.

In the dialogical trend of philosophizing, there are other branches besides the one which is linked with the names of Buber and Levinas, but, as a rule, they remain in the orbit of totality. I have in mind Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutics, where Hegel's logic is restored to a great degree and preference is given to creating a common horizon in dialogue or, let's say, the theory of communicative action of Jurgen Habermas relying on consensus. Although they highlight the openness of dialogue, the classification of these paradigms still follows the old manner, namely part-whole, i.e. particular-universal presupposing unity and totality as the highest achievement. Mine-alien relationship substitutes the relationship between the Other and me. The individuals, then, receive the status of elements or the stages in a process of conversation and only through the result receive their adequate meaning. Buber's view in this respect concerning *"that powerful modern point of view, according to which in the last resort only so-called objectives, more precisely collectives, are real, while significance is attached to persons only as the workers or the tools of the collectives"*[4] is fully applicable in this case.

Just the opposite, here it is argued that individuals have significance that is created within communication without relying on the teleology of unity. The beginning of communication is the Other (and not the Self, and not each one of us, not the universal being) and he has significance which is not derived from his belonging to the whole; he himself makes this social whole possible, understandable, important. The Other and the Self play entirely different roles in the drama of joint human existence.

Following Levinas' works, it is possible to show a new perspective in understanding personal identity that is not focused on the self-reflection of the thinking subject but on "responsibility of the one for the other". This is an asymmetrical relation of the one to the other and not just a common characteristic possessed "by nature" or a priori in the same degree by all individuals in the genus. In order to transform the asymmetrical and nonrecipro-

---

[4]   Martin Buber. *Between Man and Man.* Translated by Ronald Gregor Smith (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 83.

cal relationship into symmetrical and reciprocal, it is necessary for the Third to appear. Then, it is possible to speak about a public and common relationship between them. With the presence of the Third next to the Other the question of institutionalization and justice arises, which is central for any humanistic discourse and for any society. The Third here is a name "for everyone", for the third persons who are excluded from the immediacy of the connection establishing the close space only between two collocutors.

The Third implies mediation. As we know, this area has been discussed at least since Hegel's time. Hegel himself had reached the point to proclaim that any immediacy is actually mediated, that is, immediacy is always delusion when it is taken as a bare result and not in respect of the method which led to it. It is necessary to restore the rights of immediacy not qua *cognitive category* of sensibility as traditionally conceived but qua *moral category* about the original (moral) relationship to the Other. In general, the point is made here that morality as a responsibility for others is the "alpha and omega" of human existence, even when everything in the human world is directed against morality and people wonder why they need morality at all. But the question here is that morality is not on the level of needs which we can satisfy or leave unsatisfied; we are accustomed to hearing that morality is a high spiritual need. In this essay morality is viewed not as a certain moral codex, different in different communities and epochs, but as responsibility which is the root of any "togetherness". Society as a whole with all its structures, institutions and relations would die without morality. Justice, before becoming a category of social philosophy, is a moral category absolutely necessary in the vast space populated by others more or less remote. They are a multitude, sometimes entirely alien, unfamiliar, anonymous, and the responsibility in this context is carried out only by establishing and sustaining just institutions throughout the whole society. Justice stops to be justice if we cease asking anymore if justice is just enough, that is, how it is related to the moral saintliness.

Conclusion

While in Early Modernity priority was given to cognition, production, and creativity, in Late Modernity or Postmodernity much more attention is paid to communication and its forms. The question is not about one of these

moments to be excluded according to the scheme "either-or" (either communication, or activity) but to analyze their role in creation and recreation of social relations. Of course, thanks to their activity, people produce the conditions of their lives, their institutions, and themselves and in turn ensure the reproduction of the social whole. But we support the view that the communication, determining motives and meanings of human actions, is primary in respect to instrumentality and purposefulness of actions and interactions. Before being objectified and transcend himself by his actions one becomes aware of the existence of Transcendence, including the transcendence of the objective world, thanks to the meeting of "the otherness of the Other", wherein lies the source of any understanding.

Being aware as a finite creature, one always wants to relate to a reality exceeding his own limits. Going back to various epochs, we can see how the individual has identified with the totality exactly because it always overcomes the framework of his opportunities. He has perceived himself as an element in its structure and as subordinated to its universal laws, even if, as it is in Kant and in many other philosophies after his, the individual himself is proclaimed to be the law-giver although not to the pre-given, but to the humanly constituted and constructed totality. Any such totality has always been thought and is thought by its universal laws and principles - natural, moral, social, etc. - but thought by whom? By man identifying himself with Reason assuming the position of Objective observer who has taken the throne vacated by God. This is the early modern position. Still, Kant warned us in his *Critique of Pure Reason* about the transcendental illusion which we create unavoidably. This is the illusion according to which we can be encompassed thanks to our constitutive capabilities and principles of the totality of experience. Further on, it can be added, in the language of Marx' critique of German classical philosophy, that people have actually shared the unity of reality, i.e. its universal laws universalizing their own representations and concepts. Or speaking in Pierre Bourdieu's aphoristic language, the universal is always an object of universal reverence.

However, since the belief in the universal has become problematic, since (according to Buber) the individual feels "cosmically and socially homeless", since there is no hope that by objectifying himself the individual will transcend himself toward universality, the question of Transcendence

and transcending is extremely palpable. The whole history of the modern West is considered to be the destruction of piety before Transcendence by destroying Transcendence itself. The trouble is that the legitimacy of the universal norms, imperatives, laws, etc., (which actually have been extrapolation of human limits - of certain private interests, prejudices, believes, and convictions) is put into question. The particular (expanded to the universal, the totality) has been taken for this or that absolute. This paper claims that true transcendence is not primarily the totality with which one is correlated as a subject with object and into which it is finally absorbed, but rather the other person. Transcendence of the external world - that of nature, community, society, culture artifacts, etc. - appears and is understood thanks to the correlation of the Self with the transcendence of the Other.

In the attempts to articulate this connection, of the greatest importance is Emmanuel Levinas' thought. We have awarded him with this merit of discovering for philosophy the original identification of the subject, which is neither reduced nor derived from the affiliation to and participation of the individual in a certain social whole. Rather, communion of the individual to the community and society is due to this asymmetrical and non-reversible link of the Self with the Other where the clue for his identification lies.

In this essay an approach is offered, where in order to understand the whole, intersubjectivity is taken as the point of departure. It proceeds not to the totality as the final end but to the Other in his otherness. The totality is put in service to the Other - not to the man in general, not to one's own Ego, but to the Other. The Self and the Other are not on equal terms. The Self has always been, as Levinas puts it, one responsibility more than the Other. The responsibility for the Other is constitutive for the responsibility of my Self, while the responsibility of the Other to me is his own business.

The totality (State, society, community) receive and materialize their meaning if the Self, who embodies them as "an individualized society" (according to the famous phrase of Pierre Bourdieu), comports responsibly to the Other. This means that, only by the responsibility of the Self, the Other gets the opportunity to be a Self regarding the Third. Only with the appearance of the Third the public character of relations is possible, their institutionalization, and their transformation into "right for everybody". But we

must not forget that the institutions and the social mechanisms in general - as any technique - are under human supervision. The state machinery, as any other public organization, is necessarily personalized in order to function. The Self is exactly this personification: a subject carrying on his shoulders all authorizations, competence, and knowledge, etc., which the organization bestows on him. But in order for the Self to be a Self, he uses the resources at his disposal in order to respond to the others. The spare elements which in a given situation are under the Self's control have to be used, but not just caring after oneself, that is, for one's own needs, interests, biases, etc., but because of the Other. The human link between the other and me begins with the word and its beginning is the appeal on the side of the Other even if he is silent. But the Self responds to this appeal not just in word but in deed. The sense gives motive to actions and meaning to practices, which from this moment on are relevant for the Third and for each one. Only in this way, in general terms, they become relevant for the totality of the state, for society, and for the community in which we partake.

From Reality to Virtuality: The New Forms of Power and Governance in the Information Society

Godwin Darmanin (Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski)

Abstract

This paper philosophically examines the social, the political and the technological processes that are found within the 'Information Society' in relation to the new forms of governance, power, democratic tools, privacy and globalisation. I first start my essay by scrutinising the role of the nation state in the 'Information Society' in order to determine whether in the latter, governance has become more problematic. Subsequently, I define and depict both e-Democracy and e-Government with the aid of topical examples and also explain that although the two terms are related, they do not refer to the same thing. Following that I examine the processes of globalisation and illustrate how these are affecting both established information societies but also those nations which are still not considered to be fully fledged information societies. Afterwards, I also discuss how the 'Information Society' supports citizens' privacy when at the same time it permits the proliferation of new forms of technologies which can be easily used for mass surveillance. Finally, I also discuss whether or not in information societies, national governments still hold the ultimate power. All of these topics are comprehensively discussed in order to determine whether or not the nation state is still relevant in today's information age.

I. Introduction

As of the end of 2010, the United Nations has a total of 192 member states. Moreover, a number of regional alliances such as the EU, EFTA, AU, APEC, and ASEAN all together comprise many member states in political and/or economic unions. Within the individual nation states themselves, one also finds regional or local groupings such as the individual states which make up the USA and the Italian *regioni*. At the same time, one also finds a

number of multi national corporations (MNCs) and non-governmental or-
ganisations (NGOs) that operate both from within and also across the vari-
ous nation states.

It must also be noted that all of the 192 UN member states claim to be
sovereign, which means that they have the power to exercise supreme and
permanent authority over their territories. In spite of this, and because of the
fact that most of them are members of political and/or economic unions, in
practice they possess only varying degrees of political sovereignty. This ob-
servation is even more accentuated by the fact that their same sovereignty is
kept in check by NGOs while at the same time MNCs put a lot of pressure
onto the governments so that the latter can safeguard their economic interests.

The framework which has been depicted so far can only operate through
various processes of globalisation and which, in turn, are backed up by the
processing of information. As a matter of fact, MNCs can transfer their capital
efficiently thanks to present-day information technologies. At the same time
NGOs are in a position to organise and co-ordinate both their local and inter-
national activities efficiently thanks to the same information technologies. Po-
litical and economic unions are also totally dependent on the processing and
the dissemination of information and for instance the EU officially proclaims
that it (and as a result also its citizens) belong to the "information society".
Consequently, the information age and the information society have further
accentuated pressure on both the power and on the authority of those govern-
ments whose nation states are information societies. At the same time it is
perhaps also the case that a lack of information and of knowledge have left
certain governments (those whose nation states are still far from being infor-
mation societies) with unlimited power to exercise their authority.

These are all themes (the nation state, power, governance, and global-
isation) that I will be discussing throughout this paper. This is mainly going
to be done in order to ascertain whether or not the nation state is still rele-
vant in the information society and to try to determine who holds the power
in a liberal and democratic information society, which is at times bewildered
by the virtuality that is created by its technologies. Moreover, all of this is
going to be done without neglecting the issues of both privacy and surveil-
lance because whereas most citizens of the information society rightly be-
lieve that they are entitled to their privacy, at the same time their govern-

ments are still keen to pursue some policies of surveillance!

II. The role of the "nation state" in the information society

It can be confidently stated that it has never been easy for authorities that preside over nation states to exercise their power and to manage all of the activities which occur within their national boundaries. Likewise, it has never been easy for these same governments to control what goes in and what goes out of their national jurisdictions. However, it can also be observed that with the advent of the information age, all of the governmental tasks which were already not easy to handle, have even become more problematic. For instance, before the introduction of today's taken-for-granted information technologies, it was easier for governments to control the inflow and outflow of money. Similarly, it was also easier for governments to monitor and control the activities which used to take place among their people and the activities which used to take place between the latter and the people residing in other nations. In this regard Johnson and Post have eloquently observed how

> The rise of the global computer network is destroying the link between geographical location and: (1) the power of local governments to assert control over online behaviour; (2) the effects of online behaviour on individuals or things; (3) the legitimacy of the efforts of a local sovereign to enforce rules applicable to global phenomena; and (4) the ability of physical location to give notice of which sets of rules apply. The Net thus radically subverts the system of rule-making based on borders between physical spaces, at least with respect to the claim that Cyberspace should naturally be governed by territorially defined rules.[1]

Each of these four points delineates the areas of major concern for governments in information societies and consequently each of Johnson's and Post's remarks need to be discussed before progressing further.

---

[1]   David Johnson and David Post, "Law and Borders: The Rise of Law in Cyberspace", *Stanford Law Review*, Volume 48, Number 5, pp. 1367-1402 (May, 1996).

The power of local governments to assert control over online behaviour

Before the commercialisation of the Internet, people living anywhere in the world, even in those nations which towards the end of the 20th century were already considered information societies, did not have real opportunities to voice their opinion without being restrained through both explicit and implicit degrees of control. Hence, even though in the information societies of the pre-Internet period, people could write letters to the editors of daily or weekly newspapers, and they could participate in television and radio phone-ins, their opinions could never really be voiced unless this conformed with certain rules of behaviour as implicitly set by society, and with the agendas of the broadcaster or publisher (both public and private). All of this changed overnight once more and more people started to connect to the Internet. As a matter of fact, in cyberspace people started to utilise a myriad of tools such as forums, newsgroups, and personal websites to post personal opinions, images and also audio and video clips pertaining to every imaginable topic. Among all posted material, one can even to this day find content which ranges from the questionable to the outright illegal. Faced with such a situation, governments reacted mainly by setting up apposite sections within the police corps so that the latter can take action against the perpetrators of what is now being defined as cybercrime. However, this kind of control over online behaviour has never been easy to carry out, mainly because the cybercrime police are usually behind in relation to both technologies and know-how when compared to those responsible for the online criminal acts. Moreover, even when the police manage to apprehend those responsible, it is usually difficult for them to take legal actions against the perpetrators unless the law already caters for such occurrences. Another difficulty arises in relation to geographic locations, since even if local law caters for questionable online behaviour, in certain occasions no action can be taken against the perpetrators since the servers which host the questionable content are located outside the local government's jurisdiction. It must be noted that governments in the most advanced information societies are now doing their best to catch up with such situations; however, they are still rather limited whenever they try to assert control over online behaviour.

The effects of online behaviour on individuals or things

The Internet has certainly brought about both positive but also negative effects on individuals or things. The former are definitely numerous and these range from online education up to the possibility to interact with friends or relatives who live in remote geographical locations. However, the Internet has also created negative effects vis-à-vis human behaviour which once again governmental authorities are finding difficult to control. Two such effects are cyber-bullying and cyber-stalking. The UK government states that the former occurs "when one person or a group of people try to threaten, tease or embarrass someone else by using a mobile phone or the Internet".[2] As regards cyber-stalking, Jaishankar and Sankary state that it "is a new form of computer-related crime occurring in our society. Cyber stalking is when people are followed and pursued online. Their privacy is invaded, their every move watched. It is a form of harassment that can disrupt the life of the victim and leave them feeling very afraid and threatened."[3] Besides affecting individuals, online behaviour has also affected things such as the mass media, with the latter having to adapt as a consequence. For instance, all television and radio networks as well as newspapers have an online presence and this is not limited to having only a website. Nowadays, the mass media have also infiltrated into social networking websites such as FaceBook, and as a consequence the mass media have increasingly become multi-dimensional. These and similar effects of online behaviour on individuals or things have certainly rendered the role of the nation state in the information society less effective, even though it must be noted that in most information societies, governments are trying to deal with such effects as efficiently as existing technology and legislation currently permits them.

The legitimacy of the efforts of a local sovereign to enforce rules applicable to global phenomena

To illustrate the third point of Johnson and Post we must first understand what global phenomena are. Put simply, global phenomena are occur-

---

2   www.direct.gov.uk/en/YoungPeople/HealthAndRelationships/Bullying/DG_070501
3   K. Jaishankar and Uma Sankary, "Cyber Stalking: A Global Menace in the Information Super Highway" in *ERCES Online Quarterly Review*, Volume 2, Number 3 (July - September, 2005).

rences which currently have or which will eventually have the potential to affect the entire planet and consequently all of humanity. Climate change, the problem of refugees and the destruction of the rainforest are all examples of global phenomena. Within the context of the information society, the application of information and communication technologies is a relevant global phenomenon which deserves our immediate attention. In this regard if we take once again the example of the Internet, which is certainly a global phenomenon, we can ask whether those local governments that are enforcing censorship on Internet content are justified in doing so. For instance "Reporters without Borders" lists twelve countries in its latest "Enemies of the Internet" list and states that "Some of these countries are determined to use any means necessary to prevent their citizens from having access to the Internet". The same organisation furthermore illustrates the situation in each of these countries and for instance in relation to Egypt states that "Since early 2007, the government has been reinforcing Web surveillance in the name of the fight against terrorism, under the iron fist of a special department of Egypt's Ministry of Interior".[4] In this instance the main argument put forward by "Reporters without Borders" is that Egypt wants to restrict access to information and to deny freedom of speech under the false pretence that it is trying to safeguard its national interests from terrorist attacks, and this is indeed a clear case of a local government which is enforcing rules applicable to global phenomena. Nevertheless, questions remain as to whether this is a legitimate course of action in view of the fact that Egypt is after all a sovereign nation state and that consequently its government has overall authority over its population.

The ability of physical location to give notice of which sets of rules apply

The fourth and last point that Johnson and Post put forward is the ability of physical location to give notice of which sets of rules apply. To illustrate this point we can refer to the case of Second Life, a popular virtual word which can be accessed on the Internet. The user's manual states that "You have the ability to do almost anything here, but there are basic rules

---

[4]   Reporters Without Borders, "World Day Against Cyber Censorship", New Media Desk (March 12th, 2010).

set by Linden Lab. Those rules are described in the Community Standards. Real life laws still apply in a virtual world. Linden Lab is based in California, USA, so their local laws apply to it, and your local laws apply to you".[5] In this particular case, Second Life is a virtual world which is located on physical servers which are physically located in California. Hence, in this case which sets of rules should apply to those users who do not physically reside in California? Matters could indeed become further complicated if we take into consideration the physical location of the same users. So, in this case, which sets of rules should apply? Those where the users are physically located or those where the virtual world is located? These and similar dilemmas are indeed extremely intricate and any government will surely not find it easy to determine which sets of rules to apply in such circumstances.

In relation to what has been discussed so far, Johnson and Post also assert that

> …efforts to control the flow of electronic information across physical borders - to map local regulation and physical boundaries onto Cyberspace - are likely to prove futile, at least in countries that hope to participate in global commerce. Individual electrons can easily, and without any realistic prospect of detection, 'enter' any sovereign's territory. The volume of electronic communications crossing territorial boundaries is just too great in relation to the resources available to government authorities.[6]

Hence, way back in 1996, Johnson and Post had already predicted that any attempt by governments to control the flow of electronic information was going to be ineffective, and although time has mostly proved them right, the latest report by "Reporters without Borders" just proves that some governments are still persisting with their efforts to apply stringent controls. Nevertheless, one can also observe that ten out of twelve countries that have been included in the latest "Enemies of the Internet" list (Burma, North Korea, Cuba, Egypt, Iran, Uzbekistan, Syria, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, and Viet-

---

[5]   Source: Second Life User's Manual: http://wiki.secondlife.com/wiki/User's_Manual
[6]   Johnson and Post, op. cit.

nam)[7] are not eager at all to take part in global commerce. On the other hand the other two countries in the list (Saudi Arabia and China) seem to favour partial participation vis-à-vis global commerce. Moreover, as one can evidently notice, no governments from the advanced economies have been included in the list since none of these can hope to hinder global commerce, even in those cases where there is the genuine need to protect the local industry.

When one takes into consideration what I have been so far illustrating, the picture does certainly not look encouraging given the role of the state in the information society. Indeed, it looks like the state is becoming increasingly helpless at least when it comes to administering the flow of products, information, and services. It is also becoming increasingly apparent that the citizens of the information society can in many instances circumvent the authority of local powers and this can be done through both legal but also through questionable ways. However, in relation to this, Christopher May observes that

> By ignoring the continuing capacity of the state, much discussion of the information age fails fully to appreciate the importance of the relationship between state and citizen. Furthermore, having been told repeatedly that the state is in decline, or outmoded, many users may fail to perceive the impact governmental actions could have on them. When the state's role in the information age is ignored or downplayed, governments are left a freer hand to indulge in the sorts of action which should be held more democratically accountable than they are.[8]

Indeed May's observation poses a present and real danger in the information society because the "informed" citizen is increasingly feeling falsely liberated from the shackles of local authorities. As a matter of fact, while in the pre-digital times, all citizens were highly dependent on the information and on the services that only their governments could provide them with, the information society has by now advanced to such a stage

---

[7]   Reporters Without Borders, op. cit.

[8]   Christopher May, *The Information Society: A Sceptical View*, Polity Press, 2002.

where citizens have certainly the ways and means to find much of the needed information by themselves, even if the latter can in certain instances prove to be either misinformation or disinformation. As a consequence, governments might start to experience a sense of detachment from their independent citizens with the result that they might become less accountable for any of their actions. But to counter-balance this phenomenon the same, the information society is providing its citizens with two relevant mechanisms: E-Democracy and E-government and these two will be the next two topics to be discussed.

III. E-democracy and increasing the transparency of the political process

One of the main pillars of any democracy is the possibility for all citizens to keep their governments in check, but for this to be really possible a number of effective mechanisms need to be in place. In the information society one such mechanism is electronic democracy. According to Trechsel et al,

> E-democracy consists of all electronic means of communication that enable/empower citizens in their efforts to hold rulers/politicians accountable for their actions in the public realm. Depending on the aspect of democracy being promoted, e-Democracy can employ different techniques: (1) for increasing the transparency of the political process; (2) for enhancing the direct involvement and participation of citizens; and, (3) improving the quality of opinion formation by opening new spaces of information and deliberation.[9]

Each of these three points is now going to be illustrated.

Present-day political processes can indeed be bewildering for the vast majority of citizens. While most of the processes themselves are intrinsically convoluted, this issue has in this day and age become further complicated by most citizens' apathy towards politics and by their inclination to

---

[9]   Alexander Trechsel et al., "Evaluation of the Use of New Technologies in order to Facilitate Democracy in Europe: E-Democratising the Parliaments and Parties of Europe" University of Geneva & Florence (October 8, 2003).

prefer pleasure-seeking activities. Nevertheless, a number of governments have taken the initiative to expose parts of the process to the general public. A case in point is www.Parliament.uk, a website owned by the British government and which contains information on the parliament's role, elections and voting, the making of laws, and parliamentary sovereignty. On the same website one can also find both live and recorded transmissions of parliamentary sessions and these can be watched through the appropriately called Parliament TV. A similar service is available in New Zealand since July 2007 and it is not being excluded that similar services exist in other countries. Indeed, this is an instance where one can observe the information society delivering its best.

Enhancing the direct involvement and participation of citizens

Apart from an acute apathy towards politics in general, many citizens in information societies have apathy towards elections in particular. A direct consequence of this phenomenon is low voter turnout during elections. For instance, the average EU turnout for the European parliamentary elections has dropped from 61.99% in 1979 to 43% in 2009.[10] In this regard, in September 2000 the European Union embarked on a trial project that was aptly called Cyber Vote. At the end of the project a two-page information sheet summarised the project as follows:

> As new information and communications technologies are transforming the meaning of democracy in Europe and globally, the Cyber Vote project sought to develop a secure cyber voting system enabling European citizens to vote through their mobile phones and PCs connected to the Internet. This contributed to increase the overall participation of European citizens to all kind of elections, and more specifically the participation of the young, the physically handicapped people (including elderly), immigrants, and socially excluded people.[11]

---

[10]   www.europarl.europa.eu/parliament/archive/elections2009/en/turnout_en.html

[11]   www.ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/egovernment/docs/project_syn psis/syn_cybervote.pdf

Nevertheless, despite these claims, electronic voting has been plagued with documented problems since its inception and in general it has always been viewed with a certain degree of suspicion. For instance, in an article published in *The Guardian*, Wendy Grossman stated that "Democracy is made difficult by the fact that electronic voting systems are inherently flawed - and susceptible to fraud".[12] Hence, although electronic voting is certainly a step in the right direction, a lot needs to be done until it gains widespread acceptance from the majority of citizens in information societies.

Improving the quality of opinion-formation by opening new spaces of information and deliberation

The last point mentioned by Trechsel et al can be implemented through various mechanisms. One of these is mentioned by the Council of Europe which observes that

> One of the universal complaints one hears about contemporary democracies is that they are remote. Their operations are so complex and take place through the intercession of so many layers of decision making and policy implementation that the ordinary citizen feels incapable of reaching those responsible - even when he is sufficiently motivated to do so. Moreover, the sheer volume of information that governments put out has increased to such a degree that no one can be expected to keep up unless they make an extraordinary effort.[13]

In this regard the same Council of Europe proposes the introduction of Democracy Kiosks so that these can offer among other services face-to-face advice from local functionaries about laws and regulations. Unfortunately, I suspect that for the foreseeable future we will not be seeing such democracy kiosks across all cities, towns and villages of the European Union, but if one day that eventually happens it will indeed mark a big step towards the for-

---

[12]   Wendy Grossman, "Why machines are bad at counting votes", *The Guardian* (April 30, 2009).

[13]   www.coe.int/t/dgap/democracy/activities/key-texts/02_green_paper/Wish_list_en.asp

mation of a truly European information society.

I have so far illustrated the concept of e-democracy through the three points of Trechsel et al and more specifically through relevant examples for each of these points, but the doubt still remains as to whether or not e-Democracy can really work if put into practice. In relation to this Pratchett et al refer to Beetham[14] and observe that

> …e-democracy adopts the Democratic Audit's criteria for democracy as having two fundamental principles that devices should be seeking to advance: political equality and popular control. Political equality refers to the principle that all citizens should have equal opportunities to influence decision makers in their locality. As well as offering mechanisms that theoretically support equality (e.g. universal franchise, one person one vote, etc); therefore, democracies should also include positive attempts to redress systematic imbalances in political engagement, develop inclusiveness and promote an equal sense of political efficacy among citizens. Popular control is the other side of the same coin and refers to the idea that citizens as a whole are able to control and direct what governments do on their behalf. Consequently, it includes such principles as transparency in government processes, accountability of governments and public servants, and responsiveness in policies and practices.[15]

Hence, if we take political equality and popular control and use them to gauge the effectiveness of e-democracy we can observe that, for instance, electronic voting can fulfil the requirements of the former. This is the case because electronic voting has indeed the potential of increasing the participation of socially excluded groups and of those who because of some physical handicap cannot reach the traditional voting booths. Similarly, democracy kiosks have the potential to develop inclusiveness among the citizens

---

[14]   David Beetham, "Theorising Democracy and Local Government" in D. King and S. Desmond (Eds), *Rethinking Local Democracy*, (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997).

[15]   Lawrence Pratchett, "Barriers to e-Democracy: Local government experiences and responses" in Local e-Democracy National Project (May 27, 2005).

because these will allow the same citizens to interact with their elected representatives. Hence through such mechanisms, citizens will possibly be in a position to be part of the political system on a continuous basis and not only once in every four or five years (that is when they are called to elect their representatives). If on the other hand we try to assess popular control, one can notice the potential that both parliamentary websites and television have in this regard. This is the case, because these tools can indeed increase both transparency and accountability in relation to governmental processes. Nevertheless, Pratchett et al do also warn that

> The implications for e-democracy of these two simple concepts are significant. No democracy, at the level of either the nation state or local government, can claim to have met them fully. Citizens do not have equal power in their locality and governments are often accused of ignoring citizens' wishes. For democracy to work, therefore, it needs to have a number of mechanisms, all of which seek to achieve, in different ways, components of political equality and popular control. Furthermore, these mechanisms need to be continuously reviewed and updated to ensure that they remain relevant to the values that they are seeking to support.[16]

This advice is indeed very factual because it is certainly not sufficient to just proclaim the benefits of e-democracy and then not have the proper mechanisms which can practically support the declared benefits. For instance, as already mentioned regarding electronic voting, a lot needs to be done to make this secure enough for it to attract the citizens' confidence. On the other hand, it is not enough to have parliamentary websites if these are not updated on a continuous basis with new laws and proposed regulations. Moreover, if what governments want is real participation they should give the opportunity to citizens (through present-day information technologies) to submit their opinions on proposed laws which are still under discussion, rather than just posting the laws once they have been legislated. After all, the information society should be promulgating two-way communication rather than one-way imposition.

---

[16]   Ibid.

IV. E-government

The second e-mechanism which requires our attention is that of e-government, a term which should not be confused with e-democracy although the two are related. Almarabeh and Abu Ali observe that

> …there are multiple definitions of e-government among researchers and specialists, but most of them agreed to define electronic government as government use of information communication technologies to offer for citizens and businesses the opportunity to interact and conduct business with government by using different electronic media such as telephone, touch pad, fax, smart cards, self-service kiosks, e-mail, Internet, and EDI. It is about how government organizes itself: its administration, rules, regulations and frameworks set out to carry out service delivery and to coordinate, communicate and integrate processes within it.[17]

Hence, e-government is indeed more of a service (or a collection of services) rather than a mechanism per se. As a matter of fact, e-government is much more tangible than it has been so far the case with e-Democracy and this is the case because through e-government, citizens of the information society can among other things request documents and submit applications electronically rather than having to do it personally by visiting some governmental department or ministry. Hence, where this service is already available, citizens can for instance renew their national identity cards and/or passports online and thus avoid travelling and having to endure long queues. Indeed, this is just one example among many which one would typically find in an e-government framework. Other factual examples are the submission of online applications for trading licenses and applications for vacancies within government departments and ministries.

The so far mentioned examples do indeed demonstrate that a number of services which are offered within the information society are both positive and valuable, and that undeniably they can be of great help for the

---

[17]   Tamara Almarabeh and Amer Abu Ali, "A General Framework for E-government: Definition, Maturity Challenges, Opportunities, and Success" *in European Journal of Scientific Research*, Volume 39, Number 1 (2010), pp. 29-42.

knowledgeable citizen. However, as Steven Clift rightly warns,

> A significant barrier to e-government efforts that enhance online participation are bureaucratic fears of quantity over quality. The scarcity of time faced by citizens is a challenge for civil servants as well. Without structured ways to gather, evaluate, and respond to public input online, there will be diminishing value received or perceived with each additional public comment. Achieving greater consultation with value-added citizen input is the area of the most considerable e-government and democracy activity in the executive or administrative branch of government.[18]

Hence, Clift is here urging us not to fall into the trap of transforming one kind of bureaucracy (offline) into a new form of bureaucracy (online). It is indeed imperative that e-government streamlines traditional processes and not just give them an ineffectual facelift. As a matter of fact, if effective streamlining is not carried out, citizens will just be queuing in the informational superhighway rather than in the corridors of a governmental department!

Steven Clift also declares that "One indicator of e-government and democracy success will be the increased understanding online users gain about government. To effectively participate in your government you need access to the ground rules, including information on the proper way to make freedom of information requests that go beyond what governments share online at their discretion. Without these seemingly mundane information components in place, efforts to encourage deeper public participation will lack the necessary foundation."[19] This is indeed a very eloquent observation and as a matter of fact that is why I have previously introduced Clift's passages with the term "knowledgeable citizen", because unless the citizen is conversant with both the conventional governmental processes and with information technologies, he will not be able to make effective use of e-government services. This is for instance confirmed by Choudrie and Dwivedi who in relation to e-government services offered in the UK (which

---

[18]   Steven Clift, "E-government and Democracy: Representation and Citizen Engagement in the Information Age" in Publicus.Net (February, 2004).
[19]   Ibid.

is undeniably one of the most advanced information societies that exist nowadays) observed that the majority of the adopters were between the age ranges of 25 and 54 years. Moreover they state that one interesting result was that the adoption rate declined considerably after 54 years and no respondents were reported at the 64-years plus category. Indeed, they believe that this is the case "because this age group consists of mostly non-computer users who do not possess the skills and knowledge necessary in order to use the computer and Internet".[20] Hence, from this we can essentially observe how Choudrie and Dwivedi agree with Clift regarding the fact that unless citizens posses the necessary "foundation" they will not be able to benefit from the "goods" that the information society has to offer.

V. The Information Age and globalisation

In our information age, all nation states are affected in some way or another by the processes of globalisation and many of these processes are initiated or take place in countries which are already information societies. Consequently, it is of utmost importance that globalisation is also discussed in relation to the main theme of this paper.

As a matter of fact, a recurring discussion within the theme of globalisation is the role of the nation state since as it has been argued in the beginning of this paper; nation states have to operate within a political and economical climate where their power is seen to be contested by the international flow of information and by MNCs. In relation to this, Christopher May writes that

> Much of the debate and comment about the information age as it relates to states dovetails with claims made about globalization and its effects. But contemporary commentators have been remarkably myopic. In many cases only the state can offer the support that MNCs may find attractive (infrastructure provision, tax holidays and the protection of their property rights).[21]

---

[20] Choudrie and Dwivedi, "A Survey of Citizens' Awareness and Adoption of e-government Initiatives, The Government Gateway: A United Kingdom Perspective", paper submitted at the e-Government Workshop. Sept. 13, 2005.

[21] C. May, op cit.

Here, May is referring to those commentators who believe that globalisation has rendered obsolete the idea of nation states. Indeed, May sees nation states as pivotal in the information age and although he is here referring to the nation state's role in relation to the MNCs I also contend that their role is also crucial in the free flow of information across national borders. My observation is supported by the fact that nation states are the ones who both initiate and oversee the construction of local grids which are necessary for the required flow of information. Moreover, the allocation of the required frequencies on which the transport of both local and international information takes place is also carried out by national governments. Hence, this also amply demonstrates how the role of each individual nation state is still important in the construction of a future information society which is aspiring to become truly globalised.

While notwithstanding the fact that the role of the nation state is still an important one, it is also true that in the information age, the processes of globalisation have influenced and shaped the roles of individual nation states and if we observe this within the context of the New International Division of Labour (NIDL) we will be able to see that it is not only those nations which have already become information societies that have been affected. In relation to this, Ietto-Gillies states that

> …the interests and activities of TNCs led to new developments in the production process by which the product would be divided into several components according to the skills required. The components requiring low skills would be located in developing countries (often in export processing zones) and those requiring high skills would be located in developed countries ... A similar pattern is now developing for many services - or services components of goods - because of the new technologies. We could be talking of an electronic-age "new international division of labour" (e-NIDL) in which the ICTs allow increased scope for the conditions which led to the NIDL. In the e-NIDL the scope for division of the manufactured products into appropriate components is still applicable. However, to this we must now add the scope for division of services into components some of which can be transmitted

electronically for further processing in other locations.[22]

The above observation by Ietto-Gillies is indeed a credible one because it is the case that MNCs are now making full use of information and communication technologies to allocate the various work which pertains to the processing of information in different countries. All of this can be easily observed across various information-based industries. If for instance we take the computer software industry which nowadays generates billions of revenues worldwide, we can observe how the multinational software companies are splitting their operations across the countries in which they own local offices. For instance a company with its headquarters in the USA might keep its research and development together with its marketing and sales divisions in the most affluent information societies, while it outsources the development of software to Ukraine which has a lot of talented and lowly paid software programmers. This is something which its occurrence can be confirmed by Andrea Curti of the *Kyiv Post* who wrote the following: "Where does a Western businessman go when he needs state-of-the-art software tailored to his business? Instead of drawing expertise from their expensive domestic labour market, many Western firms are now looking east, taking advantage of the highly skilled and inexpensive labour force here in Ukraine and other parts of Central and Eastern Europe, including Russia".[23] After-sales support is then usually provided by countries such as India and accordingly telephone calls of customers who need help with using the software programs are redirected through digital exchanges located in the affluent information societies to the myriad of call centres that have been setup by the multinational corporations in the western-friendly developing nations.

All of the above is certainly of benefit, primarily for MNCs and to a lesser extent also for governments of developing nations, because the former are seen by the latter as generating the much needed work places. Neverthe-

---

[22] Grazia Ietto-Gillies, "Internationalization and the demarcation between services and manufacturers: a theoretical and empirical analysis" in M. Miozzo (Ed), *Internationalization, Technology and Services* (Camberley and Northampton: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, 2003).

[23] Western Firms turn to Ukraine for Programmers. www.auriga.com/en/pressroom/articles/detail.php?ID=782

less, this whole scenario is also creating a lot of uncertainty among most workers in both established information societies and in those which are aspiring to become so. This is confirmed by Pintér who in reference to Castells states that

> Information and communication technology provides the infrastructural background which is financially supported by the new heavily globalised network economy. A predictable consequence of this transformation process is the growth of social insecurity, a weakened capacity for prediction and plan-making, as well as the appearance of new social inequalities that create a fourth world of outcasts. Networking is the new logic, the new organizing principle of society. The rule is simple: those belonging to the network exist, while the network outcasts are non-existent. Since humanity is basically a self-centred entity, with its identity defined by one particular location and culture this process generates immense tension. Individual workers and the human labour force, in general, cannot pursue the constant wandering of capital and hence, job opportunities, on a global level.[24]

Hence, as Pintér rightly observes, the processes of globalisation are creating social insecurity because workers in the affluent information societies are under constant threat of having their jobs outsourced to workers in developing countries, and on their side workers in the developing nations know that if they demand wages and work conditions which are similar to those of their western counterparts they might see their jobs transferred somewhere else. Moreover, it is also the case that such global arrangements have created a number of disparities in both the developed and the developing nations. This is the case because those who are not considered to be connected knowledge workers cannot be in a position to integrate in the electronic-age equivalent of the New International Division of Labour.

Moreover the level of generated insecurity is not only related to labour, but as Pintér observes,

---

[24]   Róbert Pintér, "Towards getting to know information society", *Information society - From Theory to Political Practice* (Budapest: BPR Publishers 2008).

The growth of tension is also reflected in social movements. Some of these (religious fundamentalists, for instance, among other reactive movements) withdraw into traditions and religious values regarding stability, and lack of change as something precious. Others, (anti-globalisation proactive groups) turn against the network society, ironically enough, exploiting the latter's own means of globalised technology and culture. Global criminal economy presents another difficulty that societies have to face, and to make things even worse, in certain countries such crime is entangled with the legal political power. This circumstance in the end is something that poses a threat to the entire globalised world. The workings of the globalised information society eventually have its impact on everyone. However, not every individual participates in the construction of the new mode of living, in the same way as not all of us become part of the network.[25]

Hence, from Pintér's passage we can observe how ironically the processes of globalisation can sometimes have the opposite effect, like for instance that of creating antagonising localised realities. This happens in response to the effects of the same globalising processes which are sometimes seen as being too invasive vis-à-vis local culture and tradition. Another problem also arises through the new forms of criminality because many criminal organisations have embraced globalised information and communication technologies to create criminal networks which extend beyond traditional boundaries. These and other globalised realities are certainly already creating far-reaching effects on the whole of humanity.

VI. Privacy versus surveillance in the information society

One of the indistinguishable features that one cannot fail to observe in the Orwellian world of the novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is mass surveillance. As a matter of fact, in 1949, Orwell had imagined a future world were humanity could be easily observed through the use of ubiquitous technology. Since Orwell published his book, more than sixty years have passed and

---

[25]   Ibid.

people living in the information society can be observed through cameras that are found in shopping malls, in the streets, at airports and sometimes even at home through interactive television and web cameras. Also, whereas in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* people were aware of mass surveillance, in many instances the citizens of the information society are not aware that they are being observed. At the same time, the promoters of the information society do also advocate an Athenian world where personal privacy is considered to be of utmost importance. So, in the information society which of these two opposing features is the one which really prevails?

In the information society surveillance can be exercised through various mechanisms. For instance Pintér observes that "The life of the citizen as a consumer can be tracked, without doubt, through an increasing level of precision by a sophisticated range of information technologies".[26] The information technologies which track consumer behaviour are numerous. For example through Pay-Per-View programs on television, service providers are able to build up profiles of what type of programs each subscriber is watching the most. This profile can then be used to target each subscriber with individualised marketing. For instance if a profile of a particular subscriber shows that he is mostly watching the football games of a particular team, then that subscriber can be targeted via sales campaigns which aim to sell merchandise related to that particular football team. Similar mechanisms can also be used on the World Wide Web via tracking "cookies" which are small text-files that are stored on a user's computer while browsing websites.

On July 5, 1993, *The New Yorker* published a cartoon depicting two dogs in front of a computer with a caption stating "On the Internet, nobody knows you're a dog". This referred to the then common but erroneous assumption that on the Internet one could hide or not disclose his real identity. But in reality, there are various ways and means in relation to how identities can indeed be revealed. This is confirmed by Hosein who remarked that "The disclosure of user identities is increasing. A number of cases have emerged worldwide where courts have ordered the disclosure of the identities of internet-posters, e-mailers, and mere users. Copyright rules that require the release of subscriber information of suspected file sharers only

---

[26]   Ibid.

makes matters worse for the protection of personal privacy".[27] Indeed, Internet service providers store usage logs for every subscriber and through a technical analysis of these logs any competent authority can know which websites were visited at any point in time and by whom. Most Internet users are not aware of this, and moreover only the minority possess the required technical knowledge to circumvent such surveillance. Hosein also observes:

> Using the argument that the retention of traffic data was critical for the war on terror, a number of countries adopted retention policies. In December 2001 data retention was introduced and passed under the United Kingdom's anti-terrorism law, followed by France and many others in the EU, with other countries following quickly including South Africa, and Argentina. All these countries now require ISPs (and telephone companies) to keep the traffic data generated by their customers for lengthy periods of time in case the data may be of value for an investigation of any crime.[28]

Hence, in all of these information societies, any kind of electronic communication that takes place between citizens is being recorded and stored for a number of years with the proviso that only legally established authorities can access it. However, what these authorities usually fail to mention is the fact that both ISPs and telephone companies are manned by technically knowledgeable human beings who can at any time "look into" the stored communication that concerns other human beings. Moreover, the stored communication can also be accessed by highly knowledgeable unauthorised users if these manage to remotely retrieve the same communication by hacking into the ISPs' or telephone companies' digital networks.

As Hosein rightly claims, "These new policies permit the mass surveillance of individuals, and enable the sharing of this personal information across borders…" and adds that "The general public appear relatively un-

---

[27] Gus Hosein, *Politics of the Information Society: The Bordering and Restraining of Global Data Flows*, (Paris: UNESCO, 2004).

[28] Ibid.

aware of these regimes for mass surveillance".[29] Indeed, the only times that the general public is made aware of such surveillance policies is when the contract which binds a subscriber to an ISP or a telephone company is initially signed and when the media publishes an article or broadcasts a piece of news which are related to such directives. However, as regards the former the "information" which should in theory make the subscribers aware of the surveillance is printed using small characters and written using legal terms. As a consequence only a few subscribers bother to read it. On the other hand, even though some media try to inform their readers or viewers of such directives, this only happens in rare occasions and usually it is only the minority that bothers to reflect on the possible consequences!

From what has been so far depicted the situation does indeed not look very rosy and most evidence seems to show that the information society, at least in relation to citizens' privacy is quite similar to an Orwellian type of society. However, Pintér contends that

> Whereas the state attains increasingly efficient means of surveillance, citizens can gain easy access to information that they can employ against any transparent and controllable state mechanism. There is a gradual expansion of the individual's freedom that runs parallel with the rising transparency of the state. This implies that both sides by fulfilling opposing interests can utilize the new processes. It is not only the state that gains further resources but citizens too.[30]

Hence, according to Pintér the whole issue which puts privacy against surveillance is what in game-theory would be described as a win-win situation, and that consequently all parties can benefit from it. While I do agree that his argument has a degree of merit, it is also a fact that not everyone is in a position or has the right knowledge to gain easy access to information. Consequently, it can indeed prove difficult (if not impossible) for these citizens to gain easy access to information that they can utilise against any apparent state mechanism! Hence, for such citizens it is usually the state and

---

commercial corporations who have the upper-hand in relation to mass surveillance over citizens' privacy.

Indeed, it seems that also Pintér is aware of potential issues that may exist in relation to privacy and surveillance but in this regard he states that "Even if mass surveillance arises as a significant problem, our evaluation of present democracies indicates there are inbuilt guarantees in democracy for the management of such centuries old difficulties with the misuse of power. These past guarantees may need revision in order to accommodate the altered circumstances thus preserving their efficiency and recognition".[31] It seems to me that in this regard Pintér is over confident as regards the possibility of guarantees which ought to prevent the misuse of surveillance because until governments and private corporations are in a position to be in control of the medium, it will be very difficult for the majority of the citizens to find effective ways on how to even detect any misuse of power. Indeed, most information-age citizens find usually themselves in situations where they either accept all imposed conditions or else they are totally barred from gaining access to information!

VII. Where does power lie in the information society?

All of the social entities that I have discussed throughout this paper are very relevant within the context of the information society but nevertheless it is still not clear who out of these discussed social players holds the power. The only author who has specifically elaborated on this is Manuel Castells and although in his treatise he constantly refers to the Network Society, it must be noted that the latter term is equivalent to the notion of the information society.

Castells observes that those who have an interest in acquiring power seek to create social networks which can include various players. More specifically he states that "Social actors may establish their power position by constituting a network that accumulates valuable resources and then by exercising their gate keeping strategies to bar access to those who do not add value to the network or jeopardize the interests that are dominant in the network's

---

[31]   Ibid.

programs".[32] Central to these social networks are their programs, which are the set of objectives that each network aims to reach. For instance one of the programs of a particular network could be that of becoming the major media empire in a particular region. In this regard it is essential for those who are part of the network to make sure that the objectives are both reached and maintained, and any group who cannot contribute towards reaching the network's objectives will be barred from joining the same network.

Castells also observes that "power is exercised not by exclusion from the networks, but by the imposition of the rules of inclusion… Network power is the power of the standards of the network over its components, although this network power ultimately favours the interests of a specific set of social actors at the source of network formation and of the establishment of the standards."[33] and as a specific example he mentions the so-called Washington Consensus as the operating principle of the global market economy which he identifies as a power network[34] The latter refers to a set of objectives which between 1980 and 2008 pushed forward the idea of a globalised free-market economy. This network power included various social actors such as influential politicians, free-market economists, popular journalists and global organisations such as the World Bank and the IMF. Hence in this case, anyone who wanted to be part of this power network had to adhere to the objective of pushing ahead with a free-market economy and all those social actors who were opposed to such objective were automatically excluded.

Castells is also very specific in relation to the amount of power that each social actor within a power network has. For instance he observers that

> As for the capitalist class, it does have some power, but not power over everyone or something: it is highly dependent on both the autonomous dynamics of global markets and on the decisions of governments in terms of regulations and policies. Finally, governments themselves are connected in complex networks of imperfect global governance, conditioned by the pressures of business and interests groups, obliged to negotiate with the media

---

[32]   Manuel Castells, *Communication Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).
[33]   Ibid.
[34]   Ibid.

which translate government actions for their citizenries, and periodically assailed by social movements and expressions of resistance that do not recede easily to the back rooms at the end of history. [35]

Hence, according to Castells none of these social actors (the capitalist class, governments, regional groupings, NGOs, the media and social movements) hold ultimate power over the others. Rather, power is shared between all of them and is kept in balance by the reciprocal relationships that each of them have within the network. Consequently, any local government who is at the helm of a networked information society, cannot hold absolute power but the latter has to be shared with the other partners within the network.

VIII. Conclusion

Throughout this paper I have illustrated the main developments that have been taking place over the past couple of decades in the most economically advanced nation states. It is my hope that at the end of my interpretation the attentive readers will be in a better position to appreciate the fact that the new forms of governance which are present in our "Information Age" have the real potential of offering a number of benefits to the citizens of information societies. Nevertheless, I do also believe that at this stage most of the tools and mechanisms which are required to make these new forms of governance effective are still in their infancy. As a consequence, none of these tools and mechanisms has managed to gain widespread support and for this to be one day possible the underlying technologies need to both improve and also become more available.

Throughout this paper I have also amply demonstrated that as consequence of the use of information technologies and also as a consequence of the processes of globalisation, nation states have to endure a number of drastic changes in relation to how they control their subjects. Indeed, most nation states have no other option other than to share their power with a number of local, regional and global social actors and together with these they actively participate within a number of informational power networks.

---

[35]   Ibid.

At the same time, there are still a few nation states which aggressively persist in not sharing their power with others and as a consequence of this they are being excluded from being part of the informational power networks.

It must also be noted that all governments of those nation states which have decided to embrace the information revolution, are still trying to put certain restrictions in relation to their citizens' privacy rights and in this regard mass surveillance can be easily carried out through the use of information technologies.

Finally, I will end this paper by reminding all readers that the information society is still evolving. Consequently, in the years to come, all that I have discussed will need to be re-examined on a continuous basis, and in this regard I indeed believe that this is one of the main missions that philosophy has to undertake in the 21st century.

III. FORTHCOMING BOOKS

Alexander Gungov, Karim Mamdani, eds., *Rights and Values in Expanding Europe: A Mutual Enrichment through Different Traditions* (Sofia: Sofia University Press, 2011).

One of the crucial questions, which emerges in the process of the EU expansion is "How to avoid the alienation of the values and rights from the vivid culture of the European nations?" No doubt, they should not be limited to formal principles of communication. The point is to determine what should be done within the frame of politics, economy, education, healthcare, legislation, art, etc. in order to implement the principles of the European culture as guidelines for European citizens.

Discussing rights and values in the Enlarging EU, it is usually assumed that the new member states are going to adopt the standard of the current members or at least appreciate an ideal set of already existing exemplary items. It is a common place that values such as humanism, rationalism, social cooperation as well as various human and civic rights and freedoms need to be confirmed and improved among the countries accessing to the Union. However, it is worthwhile to ask if the approbated rights and values themselves will remain the same or should undergo a certain transformation.

In its Contribution to the October Meeting of the Heads of State and Government entitled "European values in the globalised world", the European Commission concludes: "Through modernisation, we will preserve our values" (25.10.2005). All kinds of transformation within the EU always presuppose keeping intact the values and rights. Is this the only productive position or some different approaches are possible too? Can the nations that have just entered the Union contribute to the common values and rights or the only thing they could do is to stick to the approved

ones? Is there any chance a need for change in this field to arise
after the EU expansion even though the traditional members and
the new members share the same standard?

The International Symposium on Rights and Values in Expanding
Europe (University of Sofia, June 3-4, 2006) addressed the above questions
from an interdisciplinary and multinational angle. It was co-organized by
the Italian Cultural Institute in Sofia, Goethe Institute Sofia, Austrian Sci-
ence and Research Liaison Office Sofia, Institute for Axiological Research –
Vienna, and University's of Sofia Graduate Program in Philosophy Taught
in English. Among the participants were scholars representing some long
standing EU countries such as Italy, Germany (Professor Dr. Maurizio
Bach's, University of Passau, paper "The Enlargement Crisis of European
Union: from Political Integration to Social Disintegration?" was presented at
the Symposium but not submitted for inclusion into the proceedings), and
Austria. A number of Bulgarian experts took part too. Prof. Dr. Mihail-
Constantin Eremia from the University of Bucharest passed away just before
the Symposium. We are publishing here the summary of his presentation.

Alexander Gungov, Karim Mamdani, eds., *The Addressees of the EU Internal and External Policy: De Jure and De Facto* (Sofia: Sofia University Press, 2011).

The International symposium dedicated to the 120th Anniversary of Sofia University and the 50th Anniversary of the Commencement of the European Economic Community was organized by the Department of Logic, Ethics, and Aesthetics at Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski, the Italian Institute of Culture in Sofia, and the Austrian Science and Research Liaison Office Sofia. It was held at the SU main campus on 15 Tsar Osvoboditel Blvd., known as the Rectorate, on September 23-25, 2008 as the news of the bizarre and troubling financial crisis poured in from all sides.

The conference organizers observed that since the last two enlargements of the EU a number of new challenges face its citizens, institutions, legislation procedures, economic and moral principles. The same recent developments have been affecting the EU allies, neighbors, friends, competitors, and critics. The conference was convened with the intention of examining how the Union copes with this situation through its various internal and external policies; and most importantly—to whom are these policies addressed. What are the reasons for optimism or pessimism?

In a lively and friendly exchange, the participants and the audience spent two days enjoying themselves in defiance of the mounting financial catastrophe. The convivial gathering (based on a radical pessimism concerning the current state of affairs) maintained the highest level of scholarly rigor throughout the symposium and ended with an official dinner at the Czech Club just a short walk from the University. The topics included in the current proceedings range from whether the European community is a political construction to who are the beneficiaries of EU expansion, cover the issue of the dismantling of the nation-state, touch upon the controversy of international law versus supranational sovereignty, consider European and American educational traditions as well as the opposite directions of reform export: from West to East and from East to West.

A number of the papers presented could not be included in these pro-

ceedings for various reasons. Among them are Assoc. Prof. Dr. Maria Dimitrova's (Sofia University) "Challenges to the Common European Social Space Construction," Assoc. Prof. Dr. Valentin Petrusenko's (University of Plovdiv) "Institutional Framework of the New EU-Latin American Approach," Mr. Nicola Zambelli's (Italy) "Philosophy of Mirroring in the Bulgarian Context," Mr. Ted Efremoff's (USA) "Intercultural Collaboration for Artistic Response to Global Hatred," Ms. Hege C. Finholt's (Boston University) "The Non-Sovereign Nation-State: A Cultural Interpretation of National Self-Determination," and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Alexander Gungov's (Sofia University) "Intellectual Isolation in Europe: Some Reflections on the History of Italian Philosophy."

The editors hope that this collection will go some way toward dispelling the mist surrounding the fate of Europe or at least do it no great harm.

Master's and Doctoral Studies in Philosophy Taught in English at Sofia University

Sofia University was founded in 1888 following the best patterns of the European higher education. Sofia is the capital city of the Republic of Bulgaria. Bulgaria is a Member of the European Union (EU).

MASTER'S PROGRAM IN PHILOSOPHY TAUGHT IN ENGLISH

The MA Program in Philosophy taught in English provides instruction in all major areas of Western Philosophy; besides, the master's thesis can be written on a topic from Eastern Philosophy as well - an expert in this field will be appointed as the supervisor. This program secures guidelines by faculty and leaves enough room for student's own preferences. The degree is recognized worldwide including the EU/EEA and Switzerland, the US, Canada, Russia, Turkey, China, Indian Sub-Continent, Latin America, and the Middle East.

Courses offered: Philosophical Anthropology, Ethics, Axiology, Philosophical Method, Truth and Meaning, Philosophy of Intercultural Relations, Social Philosophy, Continental Philosophy, Philosophy for Children, Philosophy of Culture, Logic in the Continental Tradition, Theories of Truth, Existential Dialectics, Philosophy of the Subjective Action, Phenomenology, Renaissance Philosophy

Faculty Members: All faculty teaching at the program are approved by the Bulgarian State Highest Assessment Commission. They feature successful teaching experience in this country and abroad and are well published in Bulgarian and English.

Duration of Studies: two semesters of course attendance plus a third semester for writing the master's thesis; opportunities for distance learning.

Admission Requirements: Bachelor's degree in any field of humanities, social science, science, or professional disciplines. No tests or applica-

tion fee are required (for citizens of EU/EEA and Switzerland applying for a state scholarship 16 € fee is charged and an interview is held). No previous degree in philosophy is needed.

Tuition fee:

1) citizens of EU/EEA and Switzerland – 500 € per school year
2) international students - 3 850 € per school year

Financial aid:

A) *The citizens of EU/EEA and Switzerland* are eligible for state scholarships carrying 50% tuition waiver plus a monthly stipend beginning from the second semester.

B) The Fulbright Graduate Grants are offered to *American citizens* as a form of a very competitive financial aid; for more information see www.fulbright.bg. Furthermore, the American applicants are eligible for Federal Loans; please check for more details at the Education Department web site, http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSFAP/DirectLoan/index.html; at Sallie Mae, http://www.salliemae.com/, and at Student Loan Network, http://www.privatestudentloans.com and https://www.discoverstudentloans.com. It is possible to use some other sources of government financial assistance by the American citizens (please contact the Program Director for details).

C) Financial aid to *Canadian nationals* is provided in the form of Government Student Loans by the Province where they permanently reside.

D) *The Western Balkans citizens* are welcome to apply for Erasmus Mundus/BASELEUS Project scholarship carrying full tuition waiver and monthly stipend, http://www.basileus.ugent.be/index.asp?p=111&a=111.

E) *Students from Turkey* can receive financial aid within the Erasmus Student Exchange Program.

F) Financial aid for *Chinese students* is available within the bilateral Chinese-Bulgarian Cultural Agreement. Please contact the Chinese Ministry of Education for more information.

H) *Students from Russia* (Financial aid for *Russian students* is available within the bilateral Russian-Bulgarian Cultural Agreement. Please contact the Russian Ministry of Education for more information), *Ukraine, Belarus, and the other CIS countries, Indian Sub-Continent, Latin America, and the Middle East* receive financial aid in the form of inexpensive dormi-

tory accommodation (about 50 € per month including most of the utilities) plus a discount on public transportation and at the University cafeterias. The same type of financial aid is available for *the citizens of EU/EEA and Switzerland, American citizens, Canadian nationals, Western Balkans citizens, students from Turkey,* and *Chinese students.*

Application deadline: September 30, to start in October; January 31, to start in March.

Student Visa Matters: The Sofia University in cooperation with the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science provides the necessary documents for student visa application to all **eligible** candidates outside the *EU/EEA and Switzerland.*

Cultural Life and Recreation: Being the capital of Bulgaria, Sofia features a rich cultural life. In most of the cinemas, English language films can be seen. There are a number of concert halls, dozens of art galleries, and many national and international cultural centers. Streets of Sofia are populated by cozy cafés and high quality inexpensive restaurants offering Bulgarian, European, and international cuisine. Sofia is a favorable place for summer and winter sports including skiing in the nearby mountain of Vitosha. More about Sofia and can be found at http://www.sofia-life.com/culture/culture.php. You can follow Sofia and Bulgarian news at http://www.novinite.com/lastx.php.

Contact person: Dr. Alexander L. Gungov, Program Director E-mail: gungov@sclg.uni-sofia.bg,   agungov@yahoo.com Phone: (+3592) 9308-414 (Bulgaria is within the Eastern European Time Zone)
Mailing address: Department of Philosophy, Sofia University, 15 Tsar Osvoboditel Blvd., Sofia 1504, BULGARIA.

DOCTORAL PROGRAM IN PHILOSOPHY TAUGHT IN ENGLISH

The Ph.D. Program in Philosophy taught in English, besides studies in residence, offers an opportunity for extramural studies (extramural studies is a Bulgarian version of distance learning). This Program provides instruction in all major areas of Western Philosophy; besides, the doctoral dissertation can be written on a topic from Eastern Philosophy as well - an expert in this field will be appointed as the supervisor. This program secures guidelines by

faculty and leaves enough room for student's own preferences. The degree is recognized worldwide including the EU/EEA and Switzerland, the US, Canada, Russia, Turkey, China, Indian Sub-Continent, Latin America, and the Middle East.

Courses offered: Psychoanalysis and Philosophy, Philosophical Anthropology, Applied Ethics, Epistemology, Philosophy of Science, Social Philosophy, Philosophy of Intercultural Relations, Philosophical Method, Continental Philosophy, Philosophy for Children, Philosophy of Language, Philosophy of Culture, Time and History.

Eligibility Requirement: Master's degree in any field. No previous degree in philosophy is needed.

Checklist: CV, two letters of recommendation, standardized tests scores are NOT required. No application fee (for citizens of EU/EEA and Switzerland a 32 € fee is charged and an entrance exam is held).

Tuition fee:

1) citizens of EU/EEA and Switzerland – in residence: 940 € per school year; extramural: 600 € per school year

2) international students - in residence: 6 500 € per school year; extramural: 3 300 € per school year

Dissertation defense fee: 1 400 €

Duration of studies: in residence – 3 years; extramural – 4 years; opportunities for distance learning.

Financial aid:

A) *The citizens of EU/EEA and Switzerland* studying in residence are eligible for state scholarships carrying full tuition waiver and waiver of the dissertation defense fee plus a significant (for the Bulgarian standard) monthly stipend. For extramural studies only tuition waiver and the dissertation defense fee waiver are available.

B) The Fulbright Graduate Grants are offered to *American citizens* as a form of a very competitive financial aid; for more information see www.fulbright.bg. Furthermore, they are eligible for Federal Loans; please check for more details at the Education Department web site, http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSFAP/DirectLoan/index.html; at Sallie Mae, http://www.salliemae.com/,   and   at   Student   Loan   Network,

http://www.privatestudentloans.com   and
https://www.discoverstudentloans.com. It is possible to use some other
sources of government financial assistance by the American citizens (please
contact the Program Director for details).

C) Financial aid to *Canadian nationals* is provided in the form of
Government Student Loans by the Province where they permanently reside.
This type of aid is usually unavailable for extramural studies.

D) *The Western Balkans citizens* are welcome to apply for Erasmus
Mundus/BASELEUS Project scholarship carrying full tuition waiver and
monthly stipend, http://www.basileus.ugent.be/index.asp?p=111&a=111.

E) *Students from Turkey* can receive financial aid within the Erasmus
Student Exchange Program.

F) Financial aid for *Chinese students* is available within the bilateral
Chinese-Bulgarian Cultural Agreement. Please contact the Chinese Ministry
of Education for more information.

H) *Students from Russia* (Financial aid for *Russian students* is avail-
able within the bilateral Russian-Bulgarian Cultural Agreement. Please con-
tact the Russian Ministry of Education for more information)*, Ukraine, Bel-
arus, and the other CIS countries, Indian Sub-Continent, Latin America,
and the Middle East* receive financial aid in the form of inexpensive dormi-
tory accommodation (about 40 € per month including most of the utilities)
plus a discount on public transportation and at the University cafeterias. The
same type of financial aid is available for *the citizens of EU/EEA and Swit-
zerland, American citizens, Canadian nationals, Western Balkans citizens,
students from Turkey,* and *Chinese students.*

Application deadline: September 30 (for state scholarship applica-
tions--September 15), to start in October; January 31, to start in March.
*The citizens of EU/EEA and Switzerland please check with the Program Di-
rector about the state scholarship deadline.*

Student Visa Matters: The Sofia University in cooperation with the
Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science provides the necessary docu-
ments for student visa application to all **eligible** candidates outside the
EU/EEA and Switzerland.

Cultural Life and Recreation: Being the capital of Bulgaria, Sofia
features a rich cultural life. In most of the cinemas, English language films

can be seen. There is a number of concert halls, dozens of art galleries, and many national and international cultural centers. Streets of Sofia are full of cozy cafés and high quality inexpensive restaurants offering Bulgarian, European, and international cuisine. Sofia is a favorable place for summer and winter sports including skiing in the nearby mountain of Vitosha. More about Sofia and be found at http://www.sofia-life.com/culture/culture.php. You can follow Sofia and Bulgarian news at http://www.novinite.com/lastx.php.

Contact person: Dr. Alexander L. Gungov, Program Director E-mail: gungov@sclg.uni-sofia.bg, agungov@yahoo.com Phone: (+3592) 9308-414 (Bulgaria is within the Eastern European Time Zone) Mailing address: Department of Philosophy, Sofia University, 15 Tsar Osvoboditel Blvd., Sofia 1504, BULGARIA.

V. INFORMATION ABOUT THE AUTHORS, EDITORS, AND WEB ADMINISTRATORS

Dr. Thora Ilin Bayer is Professor and Chair of the Department of Philosophy and RosaMary Foundation Professor of Liberal Arts, Xavier University of Louisiana in New Orleans, Louisiana, USA.

Dr. Matthew Feldman is Senior Lecturer in Twentieth Century History at the University of Northampton, United Kingdom, EU.

Dr. habil Maria Dimitrova is Associate Professor in Social Philosophy at Sofia University, Bulgaria, EU.

Mr. Godwin Darmanin has completed his PhD dissertation, which focuses on Philosophy of Information and Philosophy of Technology being PhD Candidate in Philosophy at Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski, Bulgaria, EU.

Dr. Peter Borkowski is Lecturer at the Department of Rhetoric and Academic Writing, American University in Cairo, EGYPT.

Mr. Karim Mamdani is Independent Scholar residing in Toronto, Ontario, CANADA.

Dr. Kristina Stöckl is Marie Curie Post-Doctoral Research Fellow, Department of Philosophical Research, University of Rome Tor Vergata, Italy, EU.

Dr. Plamen Angelov is Senior Research Felow at the Institute of Space Research, The Bulgarian Academy of Science, Bulgaria, EU.

Ms. Diana Zankova is the Webmaster at Sofia University, Bulgaria, EU.

Dr. Alexander Gungov is Associate Professor at the School of Philosophy and Director of the Graduate Program in Philosophy Taught in English, Sofia University, Bulgaria, EU.