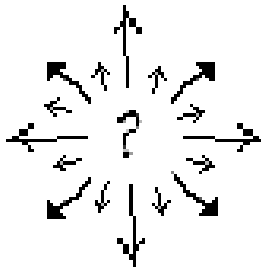


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I. THE GENUINE AND SURROGATE CANON

A Philosophical Education

Donald Phillip Verene
(Emory University)

Abstract

Programs of graduate study in philosophy have abandoned the study of the history of philosophy as their basis. Reading the canon of the great philosophical texts has been replaced by training in social criticism based on writings selected according to their author's race, gender, and ethnicity. What has been lost in replacing the traditional canon with this new canon? And, how has this new canon come about?

Introduction: The Problem

Programs of education in philosophy in American universities have moved away from reading the great works of the great philosophers. Or, if read, their importance is minimized by mixing the study of such works with the discussion of writings selected on the basis of the race, gender, and ethnicity of their authors. The study of the history of philosophy has been replaced with training in the doctrine of social criticism. The writings in this newly formed canon have none of the complexity of thought of the works of the traditional canon. Little can be found in this new canon that addresses the fundamental questions of metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and aesthetics.

Today's graduate students are tomorrow's professors. We can thus expect philosophy to become a spectacle of ever-changing doctrines of social criticism, coupled with ideological reform of modes of speech, in pursuit of a standard of "correctness" in place of the pursuit of truth. The realm of ideas and the Republic of Letters ends not with a bang but a whimper.

What is lost in giving only nominal attention to the history of philosophy? How did the mentality of social criticism come about, through which philosophy becomes a kind of journalism?

The School of the Ages

In his Preface to the *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (*Phenomenology of Spirit*), Hegel says: “The study of philosophy is as much hindered by the conceit [*Einbildung*] that will not argue, as it is by the argumentative [*räsonnierende*] approach. This conceit relies on truths which are taken for granted which it sees no need to re-examine. It just lays them down, and believes it is entitled to assert them, as well as to judge and pass sentence by appealing to them.”¹ The social criticism mentality believes it reaches its position by an argumentative approach, but in fact it proceeds by means of the conceit Hegel describes.

Hegel says: “In place of the long process of education [*Weg der Bildung*] towards genuine philosophy, a movement as rich as it is profound, through which Spirit achieves knowledge, we are offered as quite equivalent either direct revelations from heaven, or the sound common sense [*den gesunden Menschenverstand*] that has never laboured over, or informed itself regarding, other knowledge or genuine philosophy.” Hegel says it is not pleasant to witness such substitutes for the real pursuit of philosophical truth. We are left with thought taken with its own imagery, “an imagery that is neither fish nor flesh, neither poetry nor philosophy.”² The mentality of social criticism cannot reach the level of true philosophy and its language cannot reach the level of poetry. We are left with the dead-serious drone of protest thought and speech.

A philosophical education, as well as an education in poetry, its necessary companion, can be obtained only in the School of the Ages.³ The School of the Ages is the memory of the European peoples as preserved in their languages and literatures. Wilhelm Windelband, in his *History of Philosophy*, says: “The History of Philosophy is the process in which European humanity has embodied in scientific conceptions its views of the world and its judgments of life.” This fact, Windelband

¹ G. W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, vol. 3 of *Werke* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), 62; Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977), 41–42.

² *Ibid.*, 64; 42.

³ I take the terms, the “School of the Ages” and the “School of Resentment,” from Harold Bloom, *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1994), 15–41.

says, “is the reason why a knowledge of the history of philosophy is a necessary requirement, not only for all scholarly education, but for all culture whatever; for it teaches how the conceptions and forms have been coined, in which we all, in every-day life as well as in the particular sciences, think and judge the world of our experience.”⁴

Education is memory. To be learned is the ability to bring forth, on a particular point, something that illuminates an issue that takes the issue beyond its personal or present significance. Learning is musical. It is the art of the Muses to express what was, is, and is to come in a harmonious voice. Memory, as Aristotle says in the *De anima*, has imagination within it. What is in memory is first in the senses. “Since sight is the chief sense,” Aristotle says, “the name *phantasia* (imagination) is derived from *phaos* (light), because without light it is not possible to see” (429a).

Imagination provides content and light for reason. It tempers the tendency of the intellect to take reason to abstraction. Memory as imagination acts against abstraction as the past acts against the abstraction of the present. Philosophy, as guided by the School of the Ages, gives form to culture and keeps us from forgetting. Like myth and music, philosophy is a denial of time. To separate philosophy from the memory that is the School of the Ages is a great mistake. Then philosophy becomes just words in the service of some ideology; the words, pressed into such service, lose their connections with ideas. They become simply an instrument of critical thinking, devoid of their natural poetry.

The four masters of the School of the Ages are Plato, Aristotle, Kant, and Hegel. Around them revolves the history of philosophy. In Plato and Aristotle all of ancient philosophy comes together. All of Medieval and Renaissance philosophy can be read in terms of the reactions to their ideas. Goethe, in his *Materialien zur Geschichte der Farbenlehre* (*Materials on the History of the Doctrine of Colors*), says: “Plato relates himself to the world as a blessed spirit, whom it pleases sometimes to stay for a while in the world; he is not so much concerned to come to know the world, because he already presupposes it, as to communicate to it in a friendly way what he brings along with him and what it needs.” Plato is a welcome visitor but one who will too quickly

⁴ Wilhelm Windelband, *A History of Philosophy*, vol. 1, trans. James H. Tufts (New York: Harper, 1958), 9–10.

return whence he came. “Aristotle,” Goethe says, “on the contrary, stands to the world as a man, an architect. He is only here once and must here make and create.” He gathers materials from all sides and arranges them in pyramid fashion to the top. “Whereas Plato, like an obelisk, indeed like a pointed flame, seeks heaven.”⁵

Cassirer, in commenting on this passage, says: “This division, which found its first classical expression in Plato and Aristotle, henceforth runs throughout the whole history of philosophy. . . . Again and again we become aware of these two opposed tendencies in the systematic development and expansion of philosophical thought.”⁶ The history of philosophy can be read as the coincidence of these two opposites. It is, however, not their separation that is important; it is their dialectical interrelationship. They are not two substances standing apart; they are each a function of the other. And so they make up the inner form of philosophy itself.

All of the period of modern philosophy terminates in Kant. The oppositions imbedded in its streams of rationalism and empiricism coincide in Kantian critique. The key sentence for understanding Kant appears in the footnote to his Preface to the first edition of the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*: “Unser Zeitalter ist das eigentliche Zeitalter der Kritik, der sich alles unterwerfen muss [Our age is the proper age of criticism, to which everything must submit].”⁷ Kant’s philosophy of criticism offers us no more than a metaphysics confined to experience. The transcendental method limits philosophy to the pure understanding.

Kant says he has fully surveyed the territory of the pure understanding and assigned everything to its rightful place. He says: “This domain is an island, enclosed by nature itself within unalterable limits. It is the land of truth—enchanted name!” He says there are those who would wish to go beyond this island (i.e., speculative philosophers), deluding themselves with empty hopes of thinking beyond experience. But such a seafarer would be engaging “in enterprises which he can never

⁵ Goethe, *Naturwissenschaftliche Schriften*, vol. 16 of *Gedenkausgabe der Werke, Briefe und Gespräche*, ed. Ernst Beutler (Zurich: Artemis, 1949), 346–47.

⁶ Ernst Cassirer, “The Concept of Philosophy as a Philosophical Problem,” in *Symbol, Myth, and Culture: Essays and Lectures of Ernst Cassirer 1935–1945*, ed. Donald Phillip Verene (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 51.

⁷ Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1956), 7. My translation.

abandon and yet is unable to carry to completion.”⁸ In this claim Kant is paraphrasing Descartes’ warning, in his *Discourse on the Method*, to those who would desert the method of right reasoning and “fall into the extravagances of Paladins of our tales of romance, and conceive designs that surpass their powers.”⁹ So much of recent philosophy has been unable to escape the confines of the Kantian island.

Counter to Kant’s sentence, that ours is an age of criticism, is Hegel’s sentence, that “The True is the whole [*Das Wahre ist das Ganze*].”¹⁰ The whole is attained by means of “the speculative sentence [*spekulativer Satz*].” To illustrate such a sentence, Hegel refutes Kant’s claim, in his criticism of the ontological proof, that being is not a real predicate that can be asserted of God. Hegel says that, in the proposition: “*Gott ist das Sein*,” *Sein* is a real predicate, with genuine meaning extracted from the subject.¹¹ Kant is able only to regard the copula as an external connection between two terms. Trapped on the island of the Understanding, Kant cannot see how the predicate is dialectically drawn forth from its subject and that, to acquire its own meaning, it must return to the meaning of the subject. Subject and predicate are not independent entities. They form a circle. Any sentence, when grasped speculatively by Reason, not simply by the Understanding, is a whole.

Hegel’s land of truth is not an island but a “gallery of images [*Galerie von Bildern*]” through which Spirit (*Geist*) moves toward “absolute knowing [*absolutes Wissen*].” This phenomenology as the “science of the experience of consciousness” is a process of memory in the sense of recollection [*Erinnerung*]. Consciousness recalls all of its guises until it realizes its “inner form” (*Er-Innerung*).¹² The passing of consciousness through this gallery of images allows it to emerge from Plato’s cave into the realm of ideas as the categories of Hegel’s

⁸ Ibid., 287. See *Immanuel Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1958), 257.

⁹ René Descartes, *Discours de la méthode*, vol. 6 of *Oeuvres de Descartes* (Paris: Vrin, 1996), 7. My translation.

¹⁰ Hegel, *Phänomenologie*, 24.

¹¹ Ibid., 59. Cf. Kant, *Critique*, 571–72.

¹² Hegel, *Phänomenologie*, 590–91. See also Donald Phillip Verene, *Hegel’s Recollection: A Study of Images in the Phenomenology of Spirit* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1985), esp. ch. 9.

Wissenschaft der Logik. This ascent to the Absolute is something most contemporary philosophy has been unable to accomplish.

The essence of philosophy is metaphysics. In metaphysics, philosophical thought is taken to being, to the really real (*to ontos on*), which for Plato were the plural *eide*. For Aristotle, the object of metaphysics is being *qua* being (*to on he on*), as distinct from individual beings that are the objects of the particular sciences. Being as *absolutum*, the term first introduced in Latin by Nicholas of Cusa to refer to God, is that which is self-contained, perfect, and complete, not limited by or comparable to anything else. This sense of an unconditioned reality, referred to as *Das Absolute* by both Kant and Hegel (although with very different views of it), runs throughout modern idealism. Without the command of the divine science of metaphysics, of the “what is,” philosophy is just another way of thinking about things. Philosophy becomes just another form of critical thinking, and critical thinking is to be found in any of the particular fields of knowledge.

The promoters of social criticism often include some texts of Asian thought in their reading lists, as if, in so doing, to discredit the Western canon. In fact the study of the Western philosophical canon is enriched by attention to what is outside it. Take two examples—the *I Ching* or *Book of Changes*, the oldest known book in the history of humanity, and the *Tao tê Ching*, the central text of philosophical Taoism. In the *I Ching* the speculative philosopher finds conceptions of the nature of opposites, causality, and temporal repetition that are not prominent in Western metaphysics. In the *Tao tê Ching* is the conception of *wu wei* or actionless action, a principle of human comportment not found in the major works of Western ethics. The study of such texts does not displace what is present in the history of philosophy. Instead it provides the groundwork for a valuable dialectic. For this reason, I have taught a course in Asian philosophy throughout my career.

The School of the Ages includes whatever can bring forth the truth as opposed to what is regarded as useful for a particular purpose. Cassirer says: “Truth is not a matter of usefulness; it is a formal value. There is an *eidos* of truth. . . . The recognition of this purely formal value of truth ‘itself in itself’ is what distinguishes the ‘philosopher’ from the ‘sophist.’”¹³

¹³ Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, vol. 4, *The Metaphysics of Symbolic Forms*, ed. John Michael Krois and Donald Phillip Verene, trans. John Michael Krois (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 187.

Without the richness of thought and the pursuit of truth that stands above any particular purpose, we are like Aeneas, who, early in the *Aeneid*, must confess to his mother, Venus: “We wander ignorant of the men and the places [*Ignari hominumque locorumque erramus*]” (1.332–33).¹⁴ Once the teachings of the School of the Ages are comprehended there is nothing in all of philosophy that is closed to us.¹⁵

The School of Resentment

In *Zur Genealogie der Moral (On the Genealogy of Morals)* Nietzsche speaks of a morality that derives from resentment.¹⁶ Resentment is a feeling of indignant displeasure because of something regarded as a wrong, insult, or other injury. Nietzsche says that the attitude of resentment: “says No to what is ‘outside,’ what is ‘different,’ what is ‘not itself’: and this No is its creative deed.” Resentment is not a self-defining act; it is a reaction to what is not liked. Nietzsche says: “This need to direct one’s view outward instead of back to oneself—is the essence of *ressentiment*.”¹⁷

Philosophical education in the School of Resentment consists of learning how to reduce the great narratives of being that are present in the School of the Ages to the politics of race, gender, ethnic, or class interests. In the School of Resentment philosophy becomes a kind of politics. Morality becomes just the demand for “social justice.” Social justice is whatever it is thought to be by those calling for it. Justice ceases to be the chief virtue of the ancient four cardinal virtues, along with

¹⁴ These are the words with which Vico begins the first book of his *Scienza nuova prima* (1725). See Giambattista Vico, *Opere*, 2 vols., ed. Andrea Battistini (Milan: Mondadori, 1990), 2:979.

¹⁵ For a broader statement on the study of the history of philosophy see Donald Phillip Verene, *The History of Philosophy: A Reader’s Guide; Including a List of 100 Great Philosophical Works from the Pre-Socratics to the Mid-Twentieth Century* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2008).

¹⁶ Nietzsche uses the French term *ressentiment* (from which the English is derived). Walter Kaufmann points out that there is no close equivalent in German (“to resent” in German is *übelnehmen*). See Kaufmann’s comments in Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage, 1967), 5–10.

¹⁷ Nietzsche, *Genealogy*, 36–37.

courage, temperance, and wisdom. Justice is not regarded as a rational standard, transcendent of ideology or the interests of any group.

Inherent in group ideology is the problem that nothing can be beyond it. There is no universal standard of reason to which ideology must answer. The ideological mentality is always unsure of itself. It is always re-defining the meaning of its terms, in an effort to generate an ultimate standard. But such an immanent standard repeatedly remains out of reach. No compliance with its ever-shifting standard is ever enough. Nothing answers critical thinking except more critical thinking. Nothing answers suspicion of what is other but more suspicion of what is other.

The masters of the School of Resentment are Nietzsche, Freud, and Marx. Paul Ricoeur calls them the “masters of suspicion” of the “school of suspicion.”¹⁸ Nietzsche himself becomes a master of suspicion in calling for the “transvaluation of values.” In the secondary literature, Ricoeur’s characterization has become known as the “hermeneutics of suspicion.” In this literature this sense of hermeneutics designates the reading of texts so as to uncover the meanings that lie below the surfaces of their narratives. It is a reading between the lines so as to unmask the secrets that are hidden within, to uncover the politics of the author’s views. The School of Suspicion and the School of Resentment may be regarded as synonymous. The suspicious hermeneutical reader resents what the text says and seeks to discredit it. Such a hermeneutical reader is always looking through the keyhole.

It is likely that the source for Ricoeur’s list of the three masters of suspicion is Cassirer’s naming of them in his thesis of the “crisis of man’s knowledge of himself,” in *An Essay on Man*. Cassirer says that in modern thought there is no common view of human nature in terms of which disagreements concerning it can occur. Instead of attention to empirical evidence available from the study of human culture, theories about human nature are based on arbitrary assumptions from their outset. Cassirer says: “This arbitrariness becomes more and more obvious as the theory proceeds and takes on a more elaborate and sophisticated aspect. Nietzsche proclaims the will to power, Freud signalizes the sexual instinct, Marx enthrones the economic instinct.” Cassirer concludes:

¹⁸ Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. Denis Savage (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 32–33, 35.

“Each theory becomes a Procrustean bed on which the empirical facts are stretched to fit a preconceived pattern.”¹⁹

The School of Resentment is not limited to the hermeneutics of suspicion; it has the movements of post-modernism and deconstruction as allies. They help to provide the stage on which resentment plays its roles. The hermeneutics of suspicion, in its drive to reveal the preconceived patterns in the texts to which it turns its attention, does so on the basis of its own preconception of what it is determined to find. In fact, hermeneutics is flawed from the start, whether driven by suspicion or not. Since hermeneutics as a method eschews the metaphysical pursuit of an ultimate truth, its activity is groundless. Hermeneutics cannot answer the question of what is worth being hermeneutical about. Its attention can be guided by political interests. Such interests replace the object under investigation with what they wish it to be. Biblical hermeneutics, by contrast, and what Ricoeur calls the “hermeneutics of faith,” do not have the problem of an ultimate ground to determine which texts contain truth. Secular hermeneutics is a form of intellectual homelessness.

Analytic philosophy, which has dominated Anglo-American philosophy and philosophical education for over fifty years, is also part of the School of Resentment. Although there are today analytically trained thinkers who have interest and expertise in particular figures and issues in the history of philosophy, analytic philosophy has largely regarded past philosophy as deficient. Major figures in the analytic movement, such as Russell, Moore, Wittgenstein, and Ryle, have not seen ideas developed in the School of the Ages as politically incorrect; they have seen them as simply wrong, unsupported by scientific evidence, or logically and linguistically confused. Analytic philosophy, whether it be logical positivism, logical empiricism, or ordinary language analysis, understands philosophy to be argumentative problem-solving.

In its acme in the 1960s and 1970s, practitioners of analytic philosophy often completely dismissed study of the history of philosophy. An expression common at that time was that to study past thinkers was “like reading inscriptions on tombstones.” Ordinary language analysts claimed all that was needed to do philosophy was the “O. E. D. and a pencil.” A later, more

¹⁹ Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay on Man: An Introduction to a Philosophy of Human Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1944), 21.

moderate view regarded the history of philosophy as nothing more than a large warehouse in which arguments could be found, criticized, and put to use. The analytic mentality regards philosophy as nothing but the formulation of arguments, a kind of advanced form of debate. In so doing it never faces the fact that, for any argument put forth on a philosophical issue, it is never beyond human wit, sooner or later, to formulate a counterargument. There are no knockout arguments in philosophy.

The analytic philosopher does at least engage in ratiocination. Analytic philosophy has this commitment to reason, even if it is unable to engage in the speculative power of reason. In the *Function of Reason*, Whitehead says: “The Greeks have bequeathed to us two figures, whose real or mythical lives conform to these two notions—Plato and Ulysses. The one shares Reason with the Gods, the other shares it with the foxes.”²⁰ Ulysses is a problem-solver; Plato takes us beyond ourselves. The hermeneutics of suspicion uses reason in neither of these two ways. Instead of confronting the School of the Ages with evidence and argument, as the analytic tradition at least does, it employs reason simply as critical thinking, in a series of ever-changing ideologies. Presented with such maneuvering, we might respond with Ezra Pound’s reaction, when James Joyce first sent him the Shaun book of *Work in Progress*, which was to become an episode in *Finnegans Wake*, that: “Nothing, so far as I make out, nothing short of divine vision or a new cure for the clap can possibly be worth all the circumambient peripherization.”²¹

Of the masters of suspicion, Joyce tells us: “in the Nichtian glossery which purveys aprioric roots for aposteriorious tongues this is nat language at any sinse of the world”; “we grisly old Sykos who have done our unsmiling bit on ’alices, when they were yung and easily freunden, in the penumbra of the procuring room and what oracular come-pression we have had apply to them!”; “nompos mentis like Novus Elector, what with his Marx and their Groups, yet did a doubt, should a dare, were to you, you would do and dhamnk me, shenker, dhumnk you.”²²

²⁰ Alfred North Whitehead, *The Function of Reason* (Boston: Beacon, 1962), 10.

²¹ Ezra Pound, letter of Nov. 15, 1926, quoted in Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce*, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford, 1982), 584.

²² James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* (New York: Penguin, 1999), 83.10–12; 115.21–24; 365.19–21. For Joyce’s connection to philosophy see Donald Phillip Verene, *James Joyce and the Philosophers at Finnegans Wake*

The masters of suspicion take themselves very seriously. All thinkers in the School of Resentment take themselves very seriously. But Joyce shows us how to take them not seriously. Bad philosophy, like bad poetry, is always sincere. Such philosophy lacks irony.

Much of contemporary pragmatism has also taken its place within the School of Resentment. Pragmatism shares the view with it, that reason is essentially an instrument to be applied to shape social process. The contemporary pragmatist is like Ulysses, a figure of “twists and turns.”

As mentioned above, the canon of the School of Resentment is based on race, gender, and ethnicity. It prominently includes the writings of W. E. B. Du Bois, Judith Butler, and Enrique Dussel. I cite these three as examples because they are thinkers of the first order. But their work does not attain to the greatness, the complexity of thought of the figures whose works make up the canon of the School of the Ages. Each of these three thinkers has one principal idea. Their works are important for the understanding of contemporary thought, but the study of such works does not supplant the need for the study of the canon of the great books for a philosophical education.

Du Bois explains the sense in which the black American of his era has a “double consciousness” (a term having its roots in Emerson and William James), two souls in one body, that remain unreconciled—as an American and as a black American. The black American world is behind a veil that exists between it and the white American world.²³

Judith Butler holds that gender identity is a reflection, not of nature but of politics, which supplies the terms through which gender identity is articulated. The “binarism of sex” is to be denaturalized, leading to the view that gender is a matter of choice, not an identity determined by biology.²⁴

Enrique Dussel is an Argentine with an international academic career, one of the founders in the 1970s of “Liberation Philosophy” and the author of a great number of books. His version of this type of philosophy is based on a criticism of Eurocentric and North Atlantic modernity, to the goal of advancing a universally valid but distinctive Latin-

(Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2016).

²³ W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and Terri Hume Oliver (New York: Norton, 1999).

²⁴ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

American philosophy. In his formulation of liberation philosophy, Dussel conceives the philosopher as a prophetic teacher who could speak for the poor and oppressed in Latin America, those who are otherwise without a voice.²⁵

The School of Resentment eliminates political philosophy as a subject matter by defining all of philosophy as a kind of mental politics. Political philosophy, having its sources in Plato's *Republic* and *Laws*, Aristotle's *Politics*, Kant's *Perpetual Peace*, and Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, and other great works, such as Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* and *Letters on Toleration*, and Rousseau's *Social Contract*, can be largely set aside for the higher aim of having philosophy itself become a political agent. Philosophy is not to illuminate the political in human experience; it is to become political, to take up the cause of making all things right. The politics of resentment is a bad infinity in which no improvement of a social condition is ever enough—more must always be done. The sun never sets on the pursuit of social justice.

Conclusion: The False Socrates and Waiting for Godot

Adherents to the School of Resentment believe they are like Socrates. They believe that Socrates saw himself as an agent for political change, that he was condemned by the Athenians for his political views. Although this view of Socrates, the protest figure, can be derived from portraits of Socrates in popular literature, there is nothing to support it in the Platonic texts. Anyone who knows these texts knows that Socrates had no quarrel with the laws of Athens, as he makes clear with his dialogue with those laws in the *Crito*, shortly before his death (*Crito* 50–54). In the *Apology* Socrates says he has served the state as a gadfly, placed there by the god (30e). It is an instance of Socratic irony, directed to remind the Athenians that they should examine what it means to be a human being in order to confront their own individual mortality.

In the *Phaedo* Socrates states, with complete clarity, the purpose of philosophy. He says: “Those who rightly philosophize are practicing to die [*hoi orthos philosophountes apothneskein meletosi*]” (67e3–4; see also 81a1–2). What Socrates urges on the Athenians, and on all who would know of his views, after him, is not political reform, but to seek

²⁵ Enrique Dussel, *Philosophy of Liberation* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2003).

the examined life in order to acknowledge one's mortality and in so doing to make no one the worse for knowing you. Socrates' doctrine is both completely personal and completely universal. To know the good is what matters; no harm can come to a good person. Socrates has no program of social criticism or social reform. He is known to engage in all the observances of the Athenian religion and he believes in the gods. He is convicted of irreligion because of his adherence to a proto-version of Plato's forms, which are a divine order of supernatural reality, above that of the Athenian pantheon (*Apology* 27c–e).

To see Socrates as an archetype of political activity is to see a false Socrates. Socrates resents nothing; his doctrine of self-knowledge, taken from the inscription on the *pronaos* of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi (*Gnothi seauton*), is the positive doctrine repeated throughout the School of the Ages. In beginning *An Essay on Man*, Cassirer says: "That self-knowledge is the highest aim of philosophical inquiry appears to be generally acknowledged. In all the conflicts between the different philosophical schools this objective remained invariable and unshaken; it proved to be the Archimedean point, the fixed and immovable center, of all thought."²⁶

The School of Resentment is a philosophical version of the phenomenon of the "cargo cult." The cargo cult was first observed in the mid-twentieth century as a religio-political movement among peoples of various South Pacific islands, characterized by the messianic expectation of the return of their ancestors, in ships or planes carrying cargoes of the products of modern civilization, which would suffice for all their needs, render work unnecessary, and free them from colonial control. The cargo cult as a political idea is that all social problems must be solved at once, in a complete way. Until this is accomplished nothing can come to rest. In the secular version of the School of Resentment this solution can be achieved by seeing through the great narratives and reforming speech, so that only the right words are permitted and we escape the prison-house of traditional language. Even the past must be cured. Once our suspicions of the great narratives of the pursuit of truth are confirmed, we cannot wait on the gods to deliver what is missing. We must do this ourselves. The problem of resentment, of critical thinking, is to know when and how resentment is to cease.

²⁶ Cassirer, *Essay*, 1.

The state of resentment is one of perpetual unease. It is the state of being, captured by Samuel Beckett in *Waiting for Godot*. Vladimir and Estragon are unable to find what they need in themselves. They find themselves waiting for the solution to their condition, which they see as external to themselves. They resent their condition. The solution is the arrival of Mr. Godot, who, if he comes, will save them.²⁷ Godot is the presence of a bad infinity, for he will always arrive tomorrow. They are waiting on Being. They can only wait to have an authentic existence. It is at this point that the School of Resentment intervenes. It promises to have Godot arrive by putting aside the past, and, by means of its critical thinking, to produce the future. The future can be produced only by the present in relation to the past. Once our backs are turned on the past, we are caught in the eternal present, repeating ourselves. The song of the Muses, of what was, is, and is to come, cannot be heard. We are left with an ideology of the future. Until everything is corrected we cannot have social justice.

Resentment, then, is the ultimate pragmatism. Reason is directed to the forming of tomorrow. Any steps taken in this direction are never enough. Any desire fulfilled in the present is only temporary. Desire, like suspicion, engenders a further version of itself. Ultimate satisfaction is always just out of reach. Philosophy, turned into politics, finds itself, finally, in Hegel's *Das geistige Tierreich*, his human menagerie or zoo, in which each person is busy with a personal project—a desire to be fulfilled.²⁸ None of the projects are that of the true Socrates—how to confront the fact of human mortality.

The mortality of the human being requires the pursuit of self-knowledge. Devotion to social criticism is bad faith, for it acts as if politics is the highest concern for a human being. In politics there is nothing divine. Philosophical education begins with this realization. Politics has nothing to say to the concern of Socrates. Politics leaves the individual wholly within the world, unable to comprehend Socrates' last words: "We owe a cock to Asclepius."

²⁷ Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot: A Tragicomedy in Two Acts* (New York: Grove Press, 1956), 60.

²⁸ For a discussion of Hegel's *Das geistige Tierreich* see Verene, *Hegel's Recollection*, chap. 8.

II. VARIOUS EMBODIMENTS OF DIALECTICS

Marx's *Capital*: a Philosophy of Capitalist Society

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Abstract

This article focuses on the place of the capitalist society in the general perspective of the historical development as a part of Karl Marx's socio-philosophical conception developed in his major work *Capital: The Process of Capitalist Production*. We believe that Marx's main conclusion is expressed in his defining the capitalist society as the first and only society in history whose *differentia specifica* is the reified relationship. We attempt to prove that Marx's theory of the alienated labor as it is developed in his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscript of 1844* opens the avenue for understanding the ultimate essence of the capitalist society, that is, the dominating reified relationship, which conceals the real social character of economic relations.

The philosophical fields to which Karl Marx's *Capital* contributes the most is, besides logics, the philosophy of capitalism. On the one side, as long as the exposition structure is concerned, there are not just mechanically compiled economic data, but rather a carefully thought-out and strictly applied logical conception. On the other side, the very content is not just an interpretation of some economic phenomena, but a thorough analysis of the capitalist society. Even when Marx refers exclusively to some particular economic phenomena, his analysis develops their sense and meaning in the context of the entire system of social relations. The analysis of the economic base implies conclusions about the superstructure, whereas the analysis of the social life grows up into an analysis of the social consciousness. At the same time, by virtue of its coherency, which is both scholarly rigorous and aesthetically delightful, Marx's analysis reveals the prospects of capitalist society, i.e. its historicity. Furthermore, this is not just a matter of capitalism's immediate

negation, but rather of its place within the perspective of the total historical development. Marx's fundamental conclusion consists in the characteristic he gives to capitalist society as the first and only society in human history, whose *differentia specifica* are relations-mediated-by-things.

Every individual possesses social power in the form of a thing. Take away this social power from the thing, and you must give it to persons [to exercise] over persons. Relationships of personal dependence (which originally arise quite spontaneously) are the first forms of society, in which human productivity develops only to a limited extent and at isolated points. Personal independence based upon dependence mediated by things is the second great form, and only in it is a system of general social exchange of matter, a system of universal relations, universal requirements and universal capacities, formed. Free individuality, based on the universal development of the individuals and the subordination of their communal, social productivity, which is their social possession [*Vermögen*], is the third stage. The second stage creates the conditions for the third.¹

This paragraph from Marx's 1857-58 manuscript is in its own a periodization of human history. Allow me the remark that this is not Marx's first historical periodization, nor is it the only one in the total corpus of his works. Furthermore, each of his periodizations follows its own theoretical principle. Let us suppose that Marx's 1844 periodization of history has, as its theoretical foundation, the correlation between freedom and necessity. If this is the case, then the above cited periodization criteria is the relation between the individual and the society. The periodization we are interested in here, however, includes the following stages: 1. relations of personal dependence, i.e. pre-capitalist forms of society; 2. relations of personal independence based on dependence mediated by things, i.e. capitalism; 3. free individuality, i.e. the communist form of society. The principle of this periodization is determined by the different types of social dependence. It allows to establish the historical place of capitalism and reveals that capitalism to the great extent, as a

¹ Marx, K., Engels, F., *Collected Works* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2010), v. 28, 95.

separate period in the history of humanity, is definitely different from all societies that came earlier, on the one hand, and from the future communist society, on the other. Moreover, as we can see, according to Marx, such a distinctive mark are the relations-mediated-by-things.

In addition, I would like to point out that the above cited periodization—and above all its theoretical foundation concerning the forms of social dependence, i.e. the individual-society relation—clearly shows the error of the allegations due to which Marx underestimates the question of personal freedom. I am to draw the attention to only one fact: Marks characterizes the future communist society as a society of free individuality. This is a definition of the essence of such a future society; this is not just pointing toward an accessory, subsidiary consequence or to some additional aspect.

At the same time, the above-cited periodization also reveals the path young Marx had to go through to reach his own theoretical maturity. In 1843, Marx characterizes the expected future society as a society of human emancipation. The essential part of this characteristic is sublated (*Aufheben*) in his later definition, while the very picture of capitalist society is deepening.

The Problem of Alienation

As it is well known, the problem of alienation in Marx's philosophy has provoked intensive discussions which starts in 1932 when his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* are published. And this discussion continues to this very day. This topic has become one of the pillars for Marxist philosophers' distinguishing and contrasting the two fundamentally different stages in Marx's work: the first one marking the period of a humanist philosopher, and the second one being the period of Marx's theoretical anti-humanism when the problem of alienation is neglected. Let us use the aphoristically expressed Marxist methodology according to which "the anatomy of man holds the key to the anatomy of the monkey." If so, what does then the analysis of Marx's economic manuscripts prove? This is namely from the standpoint of the 1857-58 *Manuscript* that we can reveal the real theoretical value of Marx's 1844 discovery: the concept of "alienated labour." This is namely the development of the theory of alienated labor in 1844 that traces the path to a deeper understanding of the nature of capitalist society, i.e. a mediated-by-things relation that dominates and hides the social character of the

human relations. That is why, the analysis by the concept of alienated labour has such an heuristic value since this is the first insight that goes beyond and overcomes the mediated-by-things understanding of the private property.

This discovery is preceded by an analysis of the intellectual, religious, and political alienation. This analysis reaches at their common origin, the alienated labor. A conclusion follows stating that the production determines all aspects of public life; a discovery made in 1844 too and clearly interconnected with the theory of the alienated labor. As a result, Marx's conception of alienation undergoes substantial development. The concept of alienation itself directs the whole theory to an entirely new level of development. It becomes apperant that this theory cannot be anymore a synonym to a philosophy of capitalist society. It turns out to be too general and, in this sense, not up to the task to reveal the specificity and the diversity of the ontology and the phenomenology of capitalist society. At a certain stage of the analysis, the heuristic functions of the theory of alienation turn out to be decisive for the development of the whole. At the next stage, it limits itself to only one area. In Marx's theory, the concept of alienation keeps being theoretically significant for elucidation of one of the most important parts of the social whole, namely, the relation of the individual and the society.

The new stage in the alienation analysis consists in the revelation that the very nature of alienation is within the mediated-by-things relation. It means that the alienation turns out to be not only a suspension of certain relations, but, above all, a creation of a certain new and radically different type of social relations. This happens mostly within the socially determined production—on the one hand, it destroys, while on the other hand, deforms the social relations between people. In the Manuscripts of 1844, the deformation of social relations is accentuated. In the economic works of Marx, the disintegration of those relation is emphasized. It is clear, sure, that these two moments do not exclude each other, on the contrary—they presuppose one another. Marx writes in the Manuscript of 1857-58 “how their own exchange and their own production confronts individuals as an reified relationship [i.e. mediated-by-things, H.P.] independent of them.”² As we can see, Marx links the both

² Ibid., 98

processes: the alienation process and the objectification process, and their linking manifests the facts that the social laws are objective, i.e. this is the very objectivity in the capitalist society.

The Mediated-by-things, i.e. Reified Relationship

A first feature of the reified relationship [the mediated-by-things relation] as a historical form of a social relation, is its universal nature. Personal dependence being substituted by reified dependence [mediated-by-things dependence] means the following: while in antiquity the class relations consist in a personal dependence of a slave on the slave-owner, and in feudal society a personal dependence of the peasant on his liege, in capitalist society such type of personal dependences does not exist. The two main classes are, in a formal political sense, independent, and their interrelations are constructed through purchase and sale, through values' exchange. The dependence becomes reified (mediated-by-things) and consequently indirect, mediated, hidden. The exchange value plays a basic role, and this is the source of the universality of the reified relationship (the mediated-by-things relation), of the reified dependence—the one in which Marx discovers the essence of alienation. "Exchange and division of labour condition each other. Since each person works for himself but his product is nothing by itself, he must naturally engage in exchange, not only so as to take part in the general capacity to produce, but to transform his own product into means of subsistence for himself."³

What goes on the surface through the analysis of the reified relationship (the mediated-by-things relation) as essence of the alienation? Marx detects that capitalism is the first society whereby the production of exchange value becomes an end in itself. In every other types of society, the production aims at creating use values. The production of exchange values as an end in itself changes the very interrelation between production and consumption. The pre-capitalist production is stimulated by the needs, while at the same time the very needs limit it. In capitalism the consumption itself expands limitlessly thanks to the universal production, because the production always produces newer and newer needs. Thus, capitalism demonstrates a new tempo of historical move-

³ Ibid., 95

ment. Whereas all pre-capitalist societies are static, capitalism is the first dynamic society. A constant revolutionizing of the means of production has its roots and reasons once again in the same base of capitalism—the exchange value. In opposition of the use value, it is a manifestation of the social form, i.e. of a peculiar stage in the development of the production rather than of its reified nature, i.e. of a moment, which is common to every production.

The production of exchange values determines yet another peculiarity of capitalism: it is the first urban society built on industrial labor, as opposed to all previous societies, which are rooted in agriculture and consequently are of a rather rural character. Thus, through the analysis of an economic fact are the production of exchange values, Marx manage to characterize capitalism as a whole. This is a sort of analysis where the functions and the heuristic role of the concept of alienation is taken on by other concepts: by objectification (mediation-by-things), exchange value etc., whereas the absence of the general philosophical term alienation does not (not at all!) imply an absence of the problem and the social condition which are to be defined as alienation. So, the term is absent but the analysis through going in detail in the most complex labyrinths of the capitalist social weave targets namely this common philosophical problem (though it is not a purely philosophical problem). In other words, it is a matter of not only detecting a problem, but rather of unveiling its essence, unveiling of that “particular universal” which shows the very genesis of the researched phenomenon, while at the same time puts it in perspective.

A second peculiarity of the reified relationship (mediated-by-things relation) is the fact that it is depersonalized. It is namely this aspect of it that emerges in the destruction of the traditional moral human relations which are described so masterfully in the *Communist Manifesto*. In the *Manuscript of 1857-58*, Marx writes: “The activity, whatever its individual form of manifestation, and the product of the activity, whatever its particular nature, is *exchange value*, i.e. something general in which all individuality, all particularity is negated and extinguished.”⁴ “The exchangeability of all products, activities, relationships for a third, *reified* entity, which in turn can be exchanged for everything *without*

⁴ Ibid., 94

distinction—in other words, the development of exchange values (and of monetary relationships) is identical with general venality, with corruption. General prostitution appears as a necessary phase in the development of the social character of personal inclinations, capacities, abilities, activities.”⁵

The last sentence of Marx emphasizes that this is namely the exchange value as something universal (for a historical phase, i.e. within the framework of the particular), something depersonalizing—denies the individualities, while at the same time denies the very personal limitation that is an obstacle in the way of the development of production in the previous types of society. “This is indeed, writes Marx, a condition very different from that in which the individual, or the individual extended by a natural or historical process into a family and a tribe (later community), directly reproduces himself from nature, or in which his productive activity and his share in production are dependent on a particular form of labour and of the product, and his relationship to others is determined in this particular way.”⁶

Thus, Marx demonstrates the implicit deep connection between the static nature of pre-capitalist economy and the domination of traditions in the interpersonal relations. Marx’s very approach is quite important; he is studying simultaneously economic relations, inter-class, and interpersonal relations as well as the superstructure. Nevertheless, it is precisely the reified relationship that, while ensuring a dynamic development of the social production through its universality and depersonalization, provokes the appearance of negative phenomena of alienation. The reified relationship has a dual character, which is its third feature. It is a connection and at the same time an absence of connections, it is a creation of social relations and at the same time their destruction, whereby the consequences in the realm of morality are extremely severe. This is a result of its economic nature. “Of course, exchange as mediated by exchange value and money presupposes the absolute mutual dependence of the producers, but at the same time the complete isolation of their private interests and a division of social labor, whose unity and mutual complementarity exists as it were as a natural relation-

⁵ Ibid., 99-100

⁶ Ibid., 94

ship outside the individuals, independently of them.”⁷

The above-cited paragraph is taken from the *Manuscript of 1858-57*. I will add that in the *Capital* Marx talks about the social development as a “natural historical process.” Furthermore, he and Friedrich Engels determine the “making of history” by people as a clash between multitudes of wills. These specificities and objectivity of the historical process derive once again from the nature of the reified relationship. “The social character of the activity, as also the social form of the product and the share of the individual in production, appear here as something alien to and existing outside the individuals; not as their relationship to each other, but as their subordination to relationships existing independently of them and arising from the collision between indifferent individuals.”⁸

Accordingly, the reified relationship turns out to have two sides: on the one hand, it means creation of new, unseen until now in history universal relations; on the other hand, it is based on private interests and leads to the phenomena of alienation. Therefore, a paradox emerges in capitalism: the creation of universal relations leads to an incredible expansion of society as a super-system, which suppresses personality. The unseen development of production starts to look like a destiny that looms over the individuals who produce. This is the reason of the deep relativity and the contradictory nature of the capitalist progress, something that is so eloquently described in *The Communist Manifesto*.

In the bourgeois economy—and in the epoch of production to which it corresponds—this complete unfolding of man's inner potentiality turns into his total emptying-out. His universal objectification becomes his total alienation, and the demolition of all determined one-sided aims becomes the sacrifice of the [human] end-in-itself to a wholly external purpose. That is why, on the one hand, the childish world of antiquity appears as something superior. On the other hand, it is superior, wherever fixed shape, form and established limits are being looked for. It is satisfaction from a narrow standpoint; while the modern world leaves us unsatisfied or, where it does appear to be satisfied with itself, is merely vulgar.⁹

⁷ Ibid., 95

⁸ Ibid., 94

⁹ Ibid., 412

According to Marx, however, this does not mean that we have to give up the capitalist progress. The reified relationship “is to be preferred to the lack of any connection or to a purely local connection.”¹⁰ This is through the universal production that the premises of a free association of individuals are created and this is the dialectics of history. This is maybe also the greatest historical paradox: it is essential for a super-system to fully develop in order for the conditions for its destruction to appear. Individuals cannot master their own society without being bound through universal connections and relations corresponding to the universal nature of this society. These connections, however, cannot arise in any other way, but on the base of the reified relationship. Therefore, the social progress is necessarily antagonistic in that phase of human prehistory (if we use Marx’s term for this part of human history as he did in 1844; this is one of his periodizations of history, corresponding to Engels’s periodization in *Anti-Dühring*—the “kingdom of necessity” and the “kingdom of freedom”, which in Marx are respectively prehistory and real history). If Marx comes to this conclusion about the necessarily antagonistic nature of the social progress during this historical stage, then it is clear that it is a matter of a very deep asynchrony of social development. Marx formulates his conclusions directly: „the concept of progress is not to be taken in the usual abstract form.”¹¹ Marx also looks at the uneven development of arts. Let us summarize. It is namely in the *Capital*, i.e. in his economic studies that Marx proves the fundamental nature of alienation as a characteristics of capitalism. Marx determines the main periods of historical development, i.e. he creates a periodization of history, targeting precisely those relations which in a certain aspect express themselves in the concept of “alienation”—relations between a person and the society. That is what, represents the theoretical base of the *Manuscript of 1857-58* periodization of history. Marx distinguishes three periods:

- During the first period, the relations between people are in the foreground. These relations, however, are ones of raw dependence. People themselves are empirically limited. Their relations are local. Nevertheless, the people seem to be the creators of their own history.

¹⁰ Ibid., 98

¹¹ Ibid., 46

- During the second period, the relations between objects, between things stand out. The human nature of the social dependences is hidden. The social process here resembles the phenomena of nature with their inherent unpredictability. Nevertheless, at the same time these are the relations in which universal society and universal individuals appear for the first time.

- During the third period, again we have the people in the foreground, however, now the relations between people are built on their free association and on mastering the laws of human society. Thus, the third period is not just a return to what was in the beginning, but rather to its new historical phase; this is not a circle, but a spiral.

In the basis of the dualistic contradictory nature of social progress of capitalism stands the reified relation. It is the expression, the bearer of the contradictory nature. Due to its contradictions, the alienation develops parallel to the development of the social relations quantitatively as well as qualitatively. In terms of quantity, the expansion of the social connections means increase of the force that dominates over the individuals. In terms of quality, because of the exchange relations a whole range of new needs, abilities, and talents emerge but they develop through their reduction to the market, through their transformation into exchange values, and finally, through their reification. Thereby, new unexpected aspects of human knowledge and human abilities are discovered and at the same time they are being alienated. The road to a free and full development of individuals necessarily goes through the flames of a total devastation; this is one of the historical paradoxes. There is a final dialectical paradox: within the context of capitalist society, history looks like a natural history and society itself looks like a nature. This happens because human being has not yet fulfilled his/her “natural” determination, his essence of a social being.

Historical Horizon of Capitalism: Social and Economic Aspects

Marx analyses in detail not just the genesis of capitalism and his interrelations with pre-capitalist social formations. He demonstrates the historical limits of capitalism. In that aspect, the importance of *Capital* is very timely. Being submerged in the contemporary theoretical debates about so-called “postindustrial society,” “information society,” “global society,” “the future of capitalism,” “the retardation of the world revolution,” etc., it is all too important to study Marx’s concepts of the eco-

nomic and historical limits of capitalism. To be aware of this, it is important in connection with the polemics around Marx's own views. The main attack against Marx is based on the fact that his prognosis about the expected end of capitalism still in the 19th century has never come true. In such criticisms, we shall note, the authors never differentiate what is of a principle importance, i.e. they never differentiate between the economic ending, exhausting of capitalism, and the specific socio-historical conditions which could accelerate or delay the overcoming of capitalism. This is the question about the historical circumstances and the activity of the subject. Marx's conception is being identified with one or another aspect of his prognosis, and the result is that its main aspect, which is the question of the objective limit of capitalism, is totally overlooked.

Let me now take a look, in accordance with Marx's own methodology and his views, first, at the technological limits of capitalism, i.e. at that highest level of development of the forces of production, which can be accomplished under capitalism; and second, at the socioeconomic limits of capitalism, i.e. at the limits, to which capitalist relations of production could be a context for the development of the forces of production. Studying the tendencies in the development of productive forces, Marx writes:

Labour no longer appears so much as included in the production process, but rather man relates himself to that process as its overseer and regulator. What is true of machinery is equally true of the combination of human activities and the development of human intercourse. No longer does the worker interpose a modified natural object as an intermediate element between the object and himself; now he interposes the natural process, [VII-3] which he transforms into an industrial one, as an intermediary between himself and inorganic nature, which he makes himself master of. He stands beside the production process, rather than being its main agent.¹²

It is easy to see that this description equally refers to the nowadays processes and tendencies of scientific and technological development. The very automation of production is exactly a qualitative change of the

¹² Marx, K., Engels, F., *Collected Works*, v. 29, 91

place of man in the production. And that is the essence of the scientific and technological revolution which has started in the 1950s, i.e. approximately a hundred years after Marx's prognosis appeared. Without foreseeing the technological discoveries which are the base of the contemporary scientific and technological revolution, without even speaking about them, Marx with stunning accuracy explicates the technological level of this revolution. The automation and the radical shift in man's place in the process of production is the first aspect of his extrapolations. This first aspect is connected to the second one, that is to the growing importance of science and its transformation into an "immediate productive force." "The development of fixed capital shows the degree to which society's general science, KNOWLEDGE, has become an *immediate productive force*, and hence the degree to which the conditions of the social life process itself have been brought under the control of the GENERAL INTELLECT and remoulded according to it. It shows the degree to which the social productive forces are produced not merely in the form of knowledge but as immediate organs of social praxis, of the actual life process."¹³

Marx is the first writer to introduce the term "immediate productive force" in order to define the new situation of science in the context of capitalist society. This concept of Marx logically derives from his general conception about the perspectives of the technological progress and not quite accidentally works as a prognosis. If the worker puts, between himself and the object of labor, a "natural process" rather than "a modified natural object." it could happen only with the help of science. In such a way, it is namely in the production process the closest interaction of science and technology is fulfilled; science becomes "immediate productive force." Because of such a deep penetration in the tendencies of the development of capitalist production, Marx foresees that unity and interrelation of science and technology, which is later expressed in the term "scientific and technological revolution." It is impossible for those deep changes within the production process not to reflect upon the socioeconomic system of the social relations. The unfolding of these tendencies studied by Marx (automation of production, transformation of science into an immediate productive force, the worker being brought

¹³ Ibid., 92

out of the immediate technological process) outline the technological limit of the development of capitalism. In this connection Marx writes:

Once this transformation has taken place, it is neither the immediate labour performed by man himself, nor the time for which he works, but the appropriation of his own general productive power, his comprehension of Nature and domination on it by virtue of his being a social entity—in a word, the development of the social individual—that appears as the cornerstone on production and wealth. The *theft of alien labour time, which is the basis of present wealth*, appears to be a miserable foundation compared to this newly developed one, the foundation created by large-scale industry itself. As soon as labour in its immediate form has ceased to be the great source of wealth, labour time ceases and must cease to be its measure, and therefore exchange value [must cease to be the measure] of use value. The *surplus labour of the masses* has ceased to be the condition for the development of general wealth, just as the *non-labour of a few* has ceased to be the condition for the development of the general powers of the human mind. As a result, production based upon exchange value collapses, and the immediate material production process itself is stripped of its form of indigence and antagonism. Free development of individualities, and hence not the reduction of necessary labour time in order to posit surplus labour, but in general the reduction of the necessary labour of society to a minimum, to which then corresponds the artistic, scientific, etc., development of individuals, made possible by the time thus set free and the means produced for all of them.¹⁴

In this way, according to Marx, the radical shift in man's place in the production process is an expression of the deep change in the very economic mechanism of society, and demonstrates the limits of applying the economic laws of capitalism. Here we can also see yet another important feature of Marx's prognoses. They refer not just to our contemporaneity capitalism but also to the entire historical existence of capitalism as a social formation. In order to understand the importance of Marx's prognoses we have to keep in mind that Marx here disregards

¹⁴ Ibid., 91

the correlation between subjective and objective factors in the social process, and examines the correlation between the forces of production and the relations of production in its pure state. As a result, Marx highlights an irresolvable contradiction of capitalism, one that will keep on deepening even further—the radical shift in man’s place within the production process means new opportunities and new requirements for the human labor force, and these are requirements for a versatile personality development. Marx fixes these requirements in his law of the shift in the labor. The dynamic in which the inner contradictions of capitalism develop makes it impossible the versatile personality development to take place. In this way, it enters a deepening contradiction with the requirements of production. The relationship between the two aspects of the reified relationship—“the positive,” or the universal connection, and the “negative”, or the universal alienation, determines the historical horizon of capitalism, the limit of its economic laws’ functioning. To a certain point, the alienation plays the role of a sapper; it clears the way for establishing the reified relationship in its positive aspect. At a certain level of the development of production, i.e. when man’s place in the production goes under a radical transformation, together with the automation of the production and the transformation of science into an immediate productive force, alienation stand out as a barrier in its negative aspect. “The barrier to *capital* is the fact that this entire development proceeds in a contradictory way, and that the elaboration of the productive forces, of general wealth, etc., knowledge, etc., takes place in such a way that the working individual *alienates* himself; that he relates to the conditions brought out of him by his labour, not as to the conditions of *his own*, but of *alien wealth*, and of his own poverty. But this contradictory form is itself vanishing and produces the real conditions for its own transcendence.”¹⁵ This conclusion represents a peak in the scientific justification of Marx’s real humanism. Of course, the problem of the historical limit of capitalism is set by Marx not just from the point of view of the place of the individual, science, and technology in the production system of capitalism. It is also set from the viewpoint of the objective tendencies of development of the economic structure in capitalist society. We could for example stress the heuristic value of Marx’s analysis

¹⁵ Marx, K., Engels, F., *Collected Works*, v. 28, . 465

regarding the financial capital's tendency to transform itself into a dominating factor in the entire economic system of capitalism. Such a fact is more than obvious today.

It might be surprising that some peculiar aspects of credit and stock speculations are not just discovered and explained by Marx in the terms of his theory, but they continue to be quite timely when it comes down to the contemporary financial markets. In the third volume of the *Capital* it is pointed out that

the credit offers to the individual capitalist, or to one who is regarded a capitalist, absolute control within certain limits over the capital and property of others, and thereby over the labour of others. The control over social capital, not the individual capital of his own, gives him control over social labour. The capital itself, which a man really owns or is supposed to own in the opinion of the public, becomes purely a basis for the superstructure of credit. This is particularly true of wholesale commerce, through which the greatest portion of the social product passes. All standards of measurement, all excuses more or less still justified under capitalist production, disappear here. What the speculating wholesale merchant risks is social property, not *his own*. Equally sordid becomes the phrase relating the origin of capital to savings, for what he demands is that *others* should save for him. The other phrase concerning abstention is squarely refuted by his luxury, which is now itself a means of credit. Conceptions, which have some meaning on a less developed stage of capitalist production, become quite meaningless here. Success and failure both lead here to a centralisation of capital, and thus to expropriation on the most enormous scale. Expropriation extends here from the direct producers to the smaller and the medium-sized capitalists themselves. It is the point of departure for the capitalist mode of production; its accomplishment is the goal of this production. In the last instance, it aims at the expropriation of the means of production from all individuals. With the development of social production the means of production cease to be means of private production and products of private production, and can thereafter be only means of production in the hands of associated producers, i. e., the latter's social property, much as they are their social products. However, this expropriation appears within the capitalist system in a contradictory form, as ap-

propriation of social property by a few; and credit lends the latter more and more the aspect of pure adventurers. Since property here exists in the form of stock, its movement and transfer become purely a result of gambling on the stock exchange, where the little fish are swallowed by the sharks and the lambs by the stock-exchange wolves.¹⁶

The financial crisis we witness in the last ten years showed well enough several things:

- the private initiative is not able of handling or resolving any global problem, precisely because it is a private initiative belonging to private interests;
- the crisis turns out to be unexpected and the overwhelming opinion is that it does not follow the traditional models of business-cycles. There is no yet described any possibilities of ending the crisis (i.e. the existing economic theories and models are made according to the measure of everyday life);
- saying goodbye to illusion that the financial speculations create wealth (for everyone or for the entire society); an illusion resulting from the false appearance that financial capital is independent of the real economy.

What is the reason for all this? It is so because under capitalism, as Marx points out, and as also Engels says in his short *addendum* to Marx's text:

the wealth of society exists only as the wealth of private individuals, who are its private owners. It preserves its social character only in that these individuals mutually exchange qualitatively different use values for the satisfaction of their wants. Under capitalist production, they can do so only by means of money. Thus, the wealth of the individual is realized as social wealth only through the medium of money. It is in money, in this thing, that the social nature of this wealth is incarnated.—*F.E.* \\ This social existence of wealth therefore assumes the aspect of a world beyond, of a thing, matter, commodity, alongside of and external to the real elements of social wealth. So long as production is in a state of flux this is

¹⁶ Marx, K., Engels, F., *Collected Works*, v. 37, *Capital*, vol. III, 436-437

forgotten. Credit, likewise a social form of wealth, crowds out money and usurps its place. It is faith in the social character of production, which allows the money form of products to assume the aspect of something that is only evanescent and ideal, something merely imaginative. But as soon as credit is shaken—and this phase of necessity always appears in the modern industrial cycle—all the real wealth is to be actually and suddenly transformed into money, into gold and silver—a mad demand, which, however, grows necessarily out of the system itself.¹⁷

The financial speculations are a peculiar type of virtualizations of the real economy and that is why they create the false appearance that in their realm certain qualities of human mentality play a bigger role than in the immediate reality of the social relations. Actually, the subjectivity of the subject is taken into account here. But this is not its entire subjectivity that is taken into account and rather one of its aspect trained well enough to be used in a process of lying and extortion; extortion in which the reality always slips out of reach while one thinks one is controlling it. Hence, the specific mark of contemporary financial crises is the obvious contrast between the real economy of producing goods and services and the irrational drive towards quick and easy gains on the financial markets of shares, debentures, banks, investment funds, derivatives, etc. One of the brightest examples of the immanent instability of capitalism as a specific historical form of society is the way it creates and acquires public wealth and more precisely, the contradiction between the public, social way of creating the wealth and the private way of its appropriation, distribution and redistribution. Although capitalism has made wonders in the sphere of social ontology as well as on the various levels of the complex social life, it still has one irresolvable inherent disadvantage. It is a society in which man is neither an end for other men, nor man is an end for oneself.

¹⁷ Ibid., 568-569

Mathematical Interpretation of the "Science of Logic" of G.W.F. Hegel

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Abstract:

We maintain that dialectical logic does not need mathematical interpretation, because it is already formalized in mathematics. In this article, we will show that the meanings of basic mathematical abstractions can be explained by the concepts of Hegel's logic, that mathematics itself is an applied dialectical logic, and dialectical logic is an ontology of mathematics. The above thesis will be supported by a dialectical analysis of the Euler Identity, which is considered one of the basic abstract theoretical constructs of mathematics.

Keywords: dialectics, mathematics, ontology

Introduction

In the 20th century, Hegel's logic remained outside the development of modern cognitive science. We will not investigate here in depth the reasons for this. It may be due to the thriving tradition of analytical philosophy during the last century, which examined the dialectic way of thinking as speculative, "not scientific."¹ On the other hand, continental philosophy moved away from the philosophy of science: it developed more in the context of existentialism, phenomenology and hermeneutics. To many scholars it seems that the way Hegel's logic is explicated makes it almost impossible for its mathematical formalization. Hegel's attitude to mathematics also contributes to this, as noted by Alan Paterson.² Yet many authors believe that mathematical formalization of Hegelian logic

¹ Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1945), 730.

² Alan L.T. Paterson, "Does Hegel Have Anything to Say to Modern Mathematical Philosophy?", *Idealistic Studies* 32.2 (2002): 143-158.

is possible. Yvon Gauthier states, "It is important to notice that dialectical logic in the Hegelian sense is, in principle, amenable to a formal treatment."³ Other authors such as Kredik and Shpenkov⁴ make efforts to develop algebraic models of the dialectics of Hegel, but apparently, a formal working logic model based on "Science of Logic" does not yet exist. It seems that such attempts are poised for failure, because what M. Kosok describes as a central meaning in Hegel's dialectics: the movement of the negation itself, not the concepts (moments) of this movement.⁵

Thus, Hegel's logic has two important properties:

(a) It cannot be formalized as algebra under well-defined conditions;

(b) It has an inherent functionality of introspection, which contradicts the fundamental theorem of Gödel for the incompleteness of formal analysis.

How can one overcome these seemingly insurmountable difficulties in the mathematical interpretation of Hegelian logic? Yvon Gauthier states, "With Hegel's logic, we are not given at first an axiomatic skeleton, an uninterpreted or semi-interpreted language, but a fully interpreted one. We are faced with the interpretation, and we have to make our way to the abstract framework."⁶ However, any interpretation also represents an abstract structure that transforms a specific content in reasonably organized abstract knowledge about reality. The question arises: what is the specific content that we shall interpret to achieve a mathematical form of dialectical logic?

Traditionally, attempts to formalize dialectical logic are symbolic interpretations of the dialectical concepts in "Science of Logic." It proceeds from the idea that these concepts are kinds of dialectical axioms

³ Yvon Gauthier, "Hegel's logic from a logical point of view," in Cohen, R.S., & Wartofsky, M.W., eds., *Hegel and the sciences* (Spring, 1984), 303-310.

⁴ Leonid G. Kredik and George P. Shpenkov, "Philosophy and the Language of Dialectics and the Algebra of Dialectical Judgements," at <https://www.bu.edu/wcp/Papers/Logi/LogiShpe.htm>.

⁵ M. Kosok, "The Dynamics of Hegelian Dialectics, and Non-Linearity in the Sciences," In Cohen, R.S. & Wartofsky, M.W., eds., *Hegel and the sciences*, 311 -349.

⁶ Yvon Gauthier, "Hegel's logic from a logical point of view," 303-310.

that can be arranged and interpreted symbolically within some algorithms to achieve logical inference. However, it must be kept in mind that “Science of Logic” is the concreteness of Hegel’s idea how the dialectical logic should look. This is the Hegelian logic, the way in which Hegel thought the dialectics. The result of its symbolic interpretation can only be an abstract symbolic description of Hegel’s interpretation of dialectical logic. This will not be a mathematical interpretation of the dialectical logic itself. In this sense, it will not hold the validity of a universal, formally described knowledge that can be used as a tool for analysis in science. What is the particular form of the dialectical logic that would be a subject to productive interpretation?

The dialecticians, whatever their place within historical and cultural tradition, have always indicated that dialectics is a universal law of everything that exists. If this is true, we can turn our attention to any specific content and through its analysis deduce all dialectical concepts. In fact, this is the meaning of Marx’s reversal of Hegelian logic. Instead of displaying the dialectical concepts of Hegel’s abstract “pure being,” Marx extracted them out of the concreteness of use-value in the economy. It can be said that “Capital” itself is something like a formal interpretation of dialectical logic through the terms of the economy. Such would also be the interpretation of the dialectical logic by the terms of mathematics, which interpretation should reveal isomorphic structural meanings between the two. We could take any particular mathematical reality and interpret it through the contents of dialectical concepts. The product of this interpretation will be the discovery of their dialectical analog. At the same time, these mathematical entities would represent a symbolic diagram or algorithm for dialectic inference. This product would also have a meaning as an ontology of mathematics. What would be a particular mathematical reality that can undergo such dialectical interpretation?

Euler’s Identity

Euler’s Identity occupies a special place in mathematics.

$$e^{i\pi} + 1 = 0$$

It is believed that it is a summary of all mathematics, as it presents the basic constants of mathematics—the number π , the base of the natu-

ral logarithm e , the imaginary unit i , *the one* and *the zero* as basic concepts in number theory, and all mathematical operations—addition, multiplication and exponentiation applied in the Identity only once. Thus, Euler's Identity brings together the reality of the whole mathematical continuum and is a good object for the application of dialectical analysis. This analysis will be in the form of a direct comparison of the mathematical definitions of the terms of Euler's Identity with the content of dialectical notions in Hegel's logic.

The Result of Euler's Identity: What is the Zero?

In mathematics, *the zero* is regarded as a special single set: the empty set. In many ways, it is unique. It is possible to have infinite sets with one or more elements, but only one is the empty set, which does not contain any element. On the other hand, the mere expression empty set is a contradiction—It presumes elements and, at the same time, it lacks any of them. On the other hand, in terms of ontology *the zero* is a specific object, some *being*, named *zero*. However, being an empty being, it is devoid of content, it is *nothing*. In other words, in terms of ontology, the zero is also a contradictory notion—it is both *being and nothing*. That, however, is the definition of Hegel's pure being, with which he began his "Science of Logic": "Being, pure being, without any further determination... the indeterminate immediate, is in fact nothing, and neither more nor less than nothing."⁷

The Nature of the one

We see that in mathematics and the dialectical logic of Hegel *the zero* has essential common definitions that match, and which are contradictory in their content. Hegel's dialectical logic uses this contradiction as a basic internal principle for its development and the emergence of the dialectical concepts. In fact, such a thing happens in mathematics, too. Using the same dialectic principle of negation, Georg Cantor constructs his Set Theory, displaying *the one*, the first non-empty set, as a negation of *the zero*: the singleton set is a set with one element and this

⁷ G.W.F. Hegel, *Science of Logic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 59.

element is the empty set. From the standpoint of dialectical logic, that is constructing Hegel's concept of *determinate being*. A being that is no longer nothing, pure uncertainty, but existence, which is definitely being different from nothingness: "Existence proceeds from becoming. It is the simple oneness of being and nothing. On account of this simplicity, it has the form of an immediate. Its mediation, the becoming, lies behind it; it has sublated itself, and existence therefore appears as a first from which the forward move is made. It is at first in the one-sided determination of being; the other determination which it contains, nothing, will likewise come up in it, in contrast to the first."⁸

Hegel argues that in *being* is also hidden its *negation*—the nothing, because without it *being* will also become *nothing*. However, in the same way, the notion of the singleton set in mathematics cannot be held without *the zero* as its main element: without *the zero*, this will also become an empty set, zero, nothing.

This dialectical logic, that is at the core of Hegel's "Science of Logic," and the foundations of Cantor's Theory of Sets, has a different fate in Hegel's philosophy and in mathematics. Once the singleton set in mathematics has been constructed, it becomes the object of standard mathematical operations, through which the entire mathematical continuum unfolds without the need explicitly to follow the dialectical principle of negation: the existence of contradiction as an internal engine of rational thought. Every contradictory object is explained as non-contradictory in another mathematical space of a higher order. Thus, Cantor's Theory of Sets develops as long as it does not reach another contradictory boundary of mathematics—the infinite set of all infinite sets. Since it is not possible anymore to construct a larger mathematical continuum than infinity, the contradiction that lays in the foundation of the Set Theory is again explicitly visible in the form of the famous antinomies of Cantor and Russell. It turns out that the beginning of mathematics—*the zero*—and the end—the infinite set of all the infinite sets in Set Theory—are contradictory objects. Let us see how these contradictions are dealt with by Hegel.

According to Hegel, *the nothing* is opposite, and at the same time identical to *being* in *pure being*. From the point of view of formal logic,

⁸ Ibid., 83.

this is an absurd statement. Let us see, however, whether this is so for mathematics. If *the one* represents a *negation* of the empty set, then *the nothing* should also have such a *negation* that turns into being—*determined being*—as a *negation of the one*. Thus, it turns out that *the zero* as a contradictory mathematical object contains two opposing forms of being—positive and negative—one and minus one. The very expression that *the zero* contains something is itself a contradiction, but in mathematics, it is considered quite a rational contradiction: the unification of +1 and -1 is 0. Therefore, it turns out that in terms of dialectical logic *the zero* can also have another definition: the set of all infinite sets and their negations. Interestingly, in this way *the zero* coincides with the infinite set of all infinite sets: it is not only an empty set, but it contains all opposites. The zero is an infinite set, which contains infinite sets, but by definition contains itself because all sets are its own negations.⁹

The Contradiction—The Driving Force in Dialectics Recorded Symbolically by the Imaginary Unit *i*.

It is important, however, to emphasize that the extraction of the singleton set in mathematics and existence in dialectics rests on contradiction. The essence of this category, of central importance for dialectics, was first given to us in "Science of Logic" in the category *becoming*.

According to Hegel "Pure being and pure nothing are therefore the same. The truth is neither being nor nothing, but rather that being has passed over into nothing and nothing into being—'has passed over,' not passes over. But the truth is just as much that they are not without distinction; it is rather that they are not the same, that they are absolutely distinct yet equally unseparated and inseparable, and that each immediately vanishes in its opposite. Their truth is therefore this movement of the immediate vanishing of the one into the other: becoming, a movement in which the two are distinguished, but by a distinction which has just as immediately dissolved itself."¹⁰

⁹ This dialectical concept of zero was developed in the work of Bulgarian philosopher Ivan Punchev, *Introduction to dialectical logic*, without translation available in English.

¹⁰ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 83.

This is the content of the dialectical concept of *becoming*, described by Hegel. In mathematics, this process of transition from being to its opposite is described symbolically by the *imaginary unit i*. The *becoming* itself is also a kind of *being*—it is something definite, something "being." However, according to Hegel, it is the pure expression of the contradictory nature of *the being* that constantly turns into its opposite, in *nothing*, and vice versa. Similarly, *the imaginary unit* is at the same time +1 and -1: that is why it is called *imaginary*, a non-existent, some strange thing in mathematics. Nevertheless, it does work, and it is in the very foundations of mathematics: without it all modern mathematics and physics would be impossible. Represented on the numerical axis, *the imaginary unit* also demonstrates that it is the opposite of the real numbers, of the individual beings—the axis of the imaginary numbers is perpendicular to the axis of the real numbers. Therefore, the construction of the continuum of complex numbers actually just illustrates the transition between *being* and *nothing* in the dialectical logic of Hegel, the "becoming."

Examined here from the perspective of the dialectic, nature of the zero reveals the essential meaning of the outcome of the Eulerian Identity:

$$-1 + 1 = 0$$

or nothing and being united give content to *the zero*.

What is the Nature of Nothingness?

How does *the negative form of being* (-1) occur?

Taken together, elements of complex numbers summarize the content of Hegel's evolving abstract pure being:

- *The zero*, center of the plane of complex numbers as a union of *being* and *non-being*;
- +1 and -1 as symbols of *being* and *non-being*;
- *The imaginary unit* as a mathematical expression of *becoming*, as being directly contradictory, as a transition between *being* and *non-being*.

In Euler's identity -1 is the product of the limit of the natural logarithm of the product of the number π and *the imaginary unit i*:

$$e^{i\pi} = -1$$

Let us see the dialectical meaning of this mathematical expression.

What is the meaning of number π ?

As it is known from mathematics, the number π is a mathematical constant expressing the ratio between the circumference of a circle and its diameter. This simple explanation is sufficient for the foundations of mathematics. Nevertheless, what does this explanation tell us? Why does this constant relationship between the length of a circle and its diameter exist at all? In other words, what is the ontological meaning of the number π ?

If we look at the plane of complex numbers and its elements we will actually see that they construct a circle where zero is its center, +1 and -1 form its diameter, and complex numbers between them form the perimeter of the circle. Translated into the language of Hegel's dialectics, this means the following:

- *Being* is the distance from any point on the axis of real numbers to the circle's center, to the pure being, *the zero*;
- As such distance, it is already a being, but a *determinate being*, a certain *quality*;
- Every *quality* has its opposite being—its negation;
- The transition between this *determinate being* and its non-being *becomes* as *the quality* refers to itself as something else;
- This relation of *the quality* to itself as something else expresses the degree of *becoming* given by the imaginary unit i as a transition between *being* and *non-being*.

According to Hegel, *the quantity*, unlike *the quality*, finds its definition in itself, and not in relation to other qualities: "Plurality is posited in continuity as it implicitly is in itself; the many are each what the others are, each is like the other, and the plurality is, consequently, simple and undifferentiated equality. Continuity is this moment of self-equality of the outsideness-of-one-another, the self-continuation of the different ones into the ones from which they are distinguished."¹¹

Quality X (number 1 for example) is different with respect to some other quality Y (number 2 for example), or Z (any other number on the real axis), etc. *The quantity* is just the number of referrals of one *quality*

¹¹ Ibid., 154.

to itself. Presented by geometry, *the quality* is any section along the axis of real numbers from zero to the corresponding number. *The quantity* is the perimeter of the circle described by *the quality* as the circle radius. However, Hegel also makes an additional step that reveals the meaning of the number π : both *the quality*, the distance between +1 and -1, and *the quantity*, the perimeter of the circle, are just two different definitions of *the determined being*, and just because they are different, they relate to each other. The ratio of quantity to quality in Hegel's logic is called *measure of being*: "Abstractly expressed, quality and quantity are in measure united."¹²

At the same time, every *being* is a *singularity*. We can have infinitely many singularities, but their essence remains always constant—this is their common *measure*. Therefore, in terms of dialectics, the number π is the quantification of any singularity—this is the *measure of the singularity* as ontological object.

After determining *the measure of singularity*, the dialectical logic defines the measure of its opposite—*the measure of multiplicity*. Any quality finds its definition in relation to another quality. Thus, each circle as a symbol of a single *determinate being* becomes defined in relation with any other circle. However, the question arises, what is that being between them, between the two circles? Here again we find a striking correspondence between mathematics and dialectics. What is between two qualities or numbers is *the boundary* between them, which is a mutually *shared being*. In mathematics it is expressed through the base of *the natural logarithm*

$$e = \left(1 - \frac{1}{N}\right)^N$$

In terms of dialectics, this math expression reveals the border of *reality* of any *singularity*: it is determined by the number of other qualities to which it relates. The more are these qualities (numbers), the more N grows, and the more reality of a single being tends to infinite determination based on the natural logarithm. Speaking philosophical language this is the transition between *abstract* and *concrete*: the small N (number

¹² Ibid., 282.

of related qualities) means *reality* that is more abstract. And vice versa—the more related qualities we have, the more specific is the reality. Here we again find the relation of quantity to quality as it is in Hegel's logic: the base of the natural logarithm is *the measure of reality*.

Having clarified ontological definitions of the terms in Euler's Identity, let's see how they form a common semantic integrity.

The base of the natural logarithm raised to the power of product of π with i according to mathematics gives -1 as

$$\cos \pi = -1 \text{ and}$$

$$\text{but } e^{i\pi} = \cos \pi + i \sin \pi$$

Speaking the language of dialectics it can be translated as *the measure of each singularity, powered by the maximum degree of its contradiction, turns into its nothingness*.¹³ In other words, each *singularity* as a *controversial reality* always becomes unreality, nothingness. Placed as *uncontroversial reality* it resides in its positive or negative forms as a *being* or *non-being*. The unification of the two opposite forms of every single available being gives the definition of being at all—the *existence*, which finds its definition in continuous transition between the opposite states, in the motion that never arises or disappears, only manifests in its two opposing forms—genesis and disappearance. Neither of them can be determined without the other one.

Similarly, in mathematics the positive integers find their conclusion in the negative integers; integral calculus in differential; addition in subtraction; multiplication in division, etc. It turns out that all mathematics can be described as groups of symmetries and asymmetries that are isomorphic as abstract descriptions of the reality of the dialectical concepts of being and non-being, singularity and plurality, concrete and abstract, but as we will see in another study, they are united by two other fundamental common for mathematics and dialectics concepts—*finite*

¹³ In fact, this is the meaning of the law of non-contradiction truth of Aristotle: if something is contradictory it does not exist, it is imaginary, until it becomes one of its polar definitions. It can be seen that logical laws for consistency of truth are special case of the contradiction as such, reflected in the mathematics of the imaginary unit i .

and *infinite*.

There is another, even deeper isomorphism between mathematics and dialectics. The development of dialectical concepts in the "Science of Logic" of Hegel is a going through the application of the basic principle of the dialectical inference. In the dialectical inference a concept (thesis) is represented by its negation (antithesis) in the form of mutually excluding polar differences, the negation of which (synthesis) is the transformation of the differences into one another and merging them again in an actual infinity.

The same scheme we find in the theory of groups in mathematics. According to Hermann Weyl, the term for a group of transformations is "any system \mathcal{G} of transformations of a given point-field, which is closed in the sense of the following conditions:

1. It contains the identity;
2. If S belongs to \mathcal{G} , then its inverse S^{-1} does also;
3. The resultant TS of any two transformations S , T of \mathcal{G} is also transformation of \mathcal{G} ."¹⁴

Indicative is one of the examples that Weyl gives for a group of conversion: "A kinematic example of a group is offered by the motions of a space-filling substance, in particular those of a rigid body. The positions or numbers of the preceding example are here presented by the material points and the point-field is the space itself. The one-to-one correspondence p - p' connects the initial with the final state: that material point, which originally covered the spatial point p is taken to the point p' by the motion. Congruent correspondences of space onto itself will also be briefly referred to as 'motions' in the geometric sense."¹⁵

Interestingly, with this example, Weyl gives a definition of the movement, which is based on the difference between space being (point-field in the language of mathematics, the infinite in the language of dialectic, the continuum both in the dialectics and mathematics) and being of a body (material point in the language of mathematics, the finite in the language of dialectics, the discrete in both languages of dialectics and mathematics). Initially they match each other, but then by trans-

¹⁴ Hermann Weyl, *The Theory of Groups and Quantum Mechanics* (Courier Corporation, 1950), 112.

¹⁵ Ibid., 111.

forming into themselves they split only to match again at the end by transformation of the transformation. Similarly, Hegel says, "This identity with itself, the negation of negation, is affirmative being, is thus the other of the finite which is supposed to have the first negation for its determinateness; this other is the infinite."¹⁶

The material point in the example of Weyl is the finite shape of the space, the volume of the rigid body, which is the negation of the infinite continuum of the space, the product of its transformation into something finite and discrete. However, the negation of this finiteness by reverse transformation leads to recovery of the identity of the space with itself in the new spatial position of the rigid body (material point, finite, rigid body). It could be said that the mathematical groups of transformations are a symbolic theory of the dialectical logical rule of negation of the negation.

Discussion

The question that arises is what is the heuristic meaning of thus established identity between mathematics and dialectics?

So far, mathematical logic always has been developed within the paradigm of consistency of truth, which dates back to Aristotle. It could be said that this paradigm has created one of the deepest crises in mathematics reflected in the antinomies of Cantor and Russell. As a logical consequence, it was further developed in the cognitive pessimism of Gödel's theorems of incompleteness of formal-logical knowledge. In practical terms, these seemingly abstract theoretical problems are transformed into the current failure to model the human mind. Ultimately, the human mind applies the mathematical abstractions into concrete computational operations, but we still do not have an ontological model of the human mind which creates and comprehends all scientific theories. We can free mathematics from its limitations imposed by the paradigm of consistency of truth (as we have seen, it is actually a special case of the dialectical truth), that could result in a widening of its fields of application in areas that now are still far away from its range: mathematical modeling of society (not statistical descriptions of social phenomena) and human intelligence.

¹⁶ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 108.

There is also another very important aspect of the proposed mathematization of dialectics and dialectization of mathematics. The above dialectical interpretation of Euler's Identity revealed isomorphic key concepts in Hegel's logic and the elements of the plane of complex numbers in mathematics. As noted above, the next step requires comparative analysis of the concepts of *finite* and *infinite*. In mathematics, the product of the inclusion of a point of infinity in the plane of complex numbers is *the Riemannian Sphere*: a mathematical construct of great importance to modern physics. Dialectic interpretation of *the Riemann Sphere*, which we will cover in another study, could serve as a means of developing new theories about the structure of the universe, both at cosmological and quantum level.

III. CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE HISTORY OF ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY

The Riddle of Life and Death: An Interpretation of the Relationship between Presocratic Fragments and Vase Paintings of the Dark Ages

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Abstract:

This paper explores the relation between Presocratic fragments and vase paintings in the Greek Dark Ages. In some texts of Anaximander, Heraclitus, and Parmenides, there is a theme that can be read as philosophical reflection on the riddle of life and death. This theme can be traced back earlier to vase paintings in the Dark Ages instead of the written records of Hesiod and Homer. The geometric pattern and funeral scene on the amphora A 00804 symbolize the potters' and vase painters' cosmological views of the same theme. The first section of this paper will analyze the Presocratic fragments and the following section will explore how these themes were depicted in the vase paintings of the Dark Ages. On the one hand, there is the relation between the art of writing and pottery in cultural inheritance, which relies on revealing the superiority of pottery as a medium of cultural inheritance during the Dark Ages. On the other hand, the artistic value of decorated pottery in this period should be affirmed adequately, especially in a context where people usually consider the black and red figure periods to be the summit of ancient Greek vase paintings, and the Proto-Geometric and Geometric periods to be relatively inferior. Furthermore, there is an important argument that should be made that life and death are central themes in Pre-Geometric and Geometric pottery.

Key Words: Ancient Greece; pottery; cosmology; Anaximander; Heraclitus; Parmenides;

1. Introduction

Presocratic thought is comprehensively concerned with the cosmos, one theme of which is the riddle of life and death. It is worthwhile to investigate from where this cosmologically-informed came. This paper argues that it is the decorated pottery in the Greek Dark Ages that conceives and preserves ancient Greek's cultural inheritance and breeds Presocratic cosmological thought whilst the previous art of writings of Linear A and B was lost during that era. The written records on papyrus scrolls before the Presocratics also benefited from the plastic arts. Namely, before Hesiod and Homer, the histories and genealogies have not only already been manifested in oral recitals and dances of bards and priests/priestesses, but also in the plastic arts, of which decorated pottery was the most remarkable medium.¹

Either in the geometric patterns or in funeral images, vase paintings show us that cosmological scenes originated from the souls of anonymous primitive potters and painters in the Dark Ages.² That is the real face of the starry night—a black glaze and reddish brown, rather than the blue and white under the sun of the Parthenon temple that the philosophers in classical period can see. Those patterns and images in the Proto-Geometric and Geometric vase paintings symbolize the reflections on the riddle of life and death in the Dark Ages.

2. The Philosophical Reflection on the Riddle of Life and Death in Some Presocratic Fragments

Anaximander showcases early explorations of the original sin of life in the second part of his fragment as follows,

the limitless is principle and element of the things which exist...it is neither water nor any other of the so-called elements but some

¹ The attention to the ancient Greek oral recitals can be traced back to the relevant ideas in Plato's *Phaedrus* (274a-278d), where Plato emphasizes the difference of significance in cultural inheritance between oral recital and written record.

² From the 7th century BC onwards, Greek artists became more familiar with their own personality and artistic merit and began to sign their name on their works of art. During the Dark Ages, artists' signature was quite rare.

different limitless nature, from which all the heavens and the worlds in them come into being. The things from which existing things come into being are also the things into which they are destroyed, in accordance with what must be. For they give justice and reparation to one another for their injustice in accordance with the ordering of time. (B1)³

From the very beginning, Presocratic thinkers have already probed the issue of justice or injustice through the fact that all living things come into being and are destroyed, namely, the phenomena of life and death.⁴ Anaximander brings the Milesian school into ethics from the philosophy of nature, and grapples with the issue of goodness. Thales' focus is merely upon where cosmos and life come from, while Anaximander mainly questions why cosmos and life decay. What stimulates Thales to explore is childlike curiosity, but, what triggers Anaximander to contemplate is adult solemnity. Unsurprisingly in Nietzsche's imagination, Anaximander wears black clothes.

Obviously, such a thought on this 'original sin' is not an odd conclusion caused by Anaximander's individual brainstorm, rather, it is a collective conception of the ancient Greeks'. Hesiod and Homer depict the genealogy from Uranus through Zeus in chaotic pictures. According to the ancient Greek texts, not only for mortals, but also for the heroes

³ Jonathan Barnes (trans. & intro.), 2nd revised ed, *Early Greek Philosophy* (London, 2001), 21.

⁴ The meaning of life and death, especially the latter is an important part in many ancient rituals and sites, including the ancient Irish burial site at Newgrange and the UK Stonehenge site. Research on Stonehenge shows that, "Stonehenge marked the special days in the cosmic calendar. Spring and Autumn, as well as the well-known alignment of the midsummer sunrise. The midsummer sun rise exactly matches another event, the setting sun at midwinter." It suggests that, "our most famous prehistoric monument of all might not have been a celebration of summer and life, but a commemoration of winter and death." See the BBC documentary *A History of Ancient Britain*, section 3, "Age of Cosmology". Further evidence is obtained, according to the Daily Mail (9 October 2012): "the latest 3D laser technology revealed new evidence of the importance of the midwinter sunset to the ancient creators of Stonehenge, along with 71 new images invisible to the naked eye due to weathering of the stone."

and immortals, life is not self-evidently good. 'To be or not to be' has been a question since the ancient Greeks rather than Shakespeare.

The discussion of death in Heraclitus' fragments occurs frequently. That can explain why Heraclitus was called "the tearful philosopher." "Man, like a light in the night, is kindled and put out." "One alone is the wise, unwilling and willing to be called by the name of Zeus."⁵ In the first sentence, the tension between brightness and darkness makes the expression very charming. Light to be kindled means the brightness; night and to be put out indicates the darkness. Darkness here is a background, and a theatre, and brightness is an actor. Darkness is static and eternal, and brightness is temporal and dynamic. One more thing that needs to be noticed is the passive voice here. Human beings are determined by external forces. Lack of autonomy is not merely the situation of human beings, but also of the gods. In the second sentence, the only wise entity is the one rather than Zeus. The one could be called by the name of Zeus, but Zeus here is merely a name of the one, which can be called by any name, similar to what we see in Plato's dialogues. When Socrates swears an oath, he could easily and cheerfully do it in the name of anything that happens to be nearby, a tree, a dog and so on.⁶ According to ancient Greek mythology, why was Prometheus tortured by Zeus? Not only did he tease Zeus by distributing sacrificial offerings and stealing fire for human beings, but he was the god of prophecy and knew the ultimate fate of Zeus. This manifests the unavoidable lack of autonomy of even the lord of Olympia.

Here Heraclitus' reflection on life and death is conveyed in a few words. The mortality of the mortals and so-called wisdom of Olympian gods imply a wiser and higher entity, no matter whose name is called 'night,' 'one,' 'divine law,' and 'child' by Heraclitus, because of which, both gods and human beings are merely draughts and dice played by the other. By being aware of such a tragic fate of the immortals and mortals, Heraclitus as a tearful philosopher could take the attitude of deep pity toward all existing things and inspire Hellenistic Stoics several hundred years later, whose thought, in turn, basically became the ethical

⁵ (B32); Barnes, *Early Greek Philosophy*, 66)

⁶ It also reminds me of Crane's poems, like *The Bridge*. He asked the bridge to lend a myth to God, and suggested that is something every age must do because our names for God are always metaphors, poems or, acts of speech.

and religious foundation for the Romans and the Middle Ages.⁷

The obscure entity in Heraclitus' poetic writings is developed in Parmenides' *On Nature*, and becomes logically clear: that is, 'being.' The only road to this truth is to abandon life and death. Or, as he puts, to abandon life, therefore, to abandon death. Being is ultimately symbolized as a perfectly well-rounded ball, a self-identified rational formula $A=A$. A continuously becoming world of sensations can not accord with this formula, therefore it must be unrealistic.

As for an individual, when death means the biggest limitation, there is no meaning to distinguishing life from death. Are they not identical? Further, are 'being' and 'non-being' not identical? Are A and $\neg A$ not identical? Innate reason logically denies this, or perhaps, this kind of polyphony of existential experiences of life and death impinges tremendously upon the authority of Hellenistic ideals of truth as monistic terms. Only that which contains no contradiction is true and only that which is true is authoritative. Hence some approaches are constructed to solve the problem. Anaximander denies A in a perspective of value judgment, therefore $\neg A=\neg A$. Heraclitus affirms the $A=\neg A$ formula from an aesthetic perspective rather than a logical one, therefore A is still equal to $\neg A$. Parmenides denies A in a perspective of fact judgment, therefore, $\neg A=\neg A$ again. In other words, as for Anaximander, the contradictory and chaotic world of sensations $A=\neg A$ becomes an ethically unjust world $\neg A=\neg A$. For Heraclitus, this world of sensations $A=\neg A$ transforms into an aesthetic world $A=\neg A$. According to Parmenides, the sensational world $A=\neg A$ again converts into the ontological world $\neg A=\neg A$.

3 The Appearance of Contemplation on the Riddle of Life and Death in the Vase Paintings of the Dark Ages

As mentioned in the introduction, from where Presocratic cosmological thought derives is a question that deserves to be examined. In approaching this question, people usually tend to seek a relationship among similar cultural media, for example, between writing and writing. Therefore, it is considered quite reasonable to view the poems of Hesiod

⁷ Here what should be pointed out is that the lack of autonomy as a feature of the mortals in Heraclitus becomes a more complicated question in the Bible. From biblical texts, human beings are either with or without autonomy.

and Homer as origins of Presocratic thought. Their texts are indeed the earliest written texts after the Dark Ages. It is reasonable to observe that the reborn Greek art of writing is totally and completely different from the Linear A and B of the Bronze Age, since during several hundred years in the Dark Ages the old art of writing gets lost. The cultures are transformed too, however. People have ignored the possibility that the extraordinarily thriving pottery in the Dark Ages could remedy the cultural wounds that the fracture of the art of writing caused.

Some arguments along the following lines should be made to support this possibility. On one hand, is the relationship between the art of writing and pottery in cultural inheritance. This relationship relies on revealing the superiority of pottery as a medium of cultural inheritance in the Dark Ages. On the other hand, artistic value of decorated pottery in this period should be affirmed adequately, especially in such a context that people usually consider black and red figure periods are the summit of the ancient Greek vase paintings, and Proto-Geometric and Geometric periods are relatively inferior. Furthermore, there is an important argument to be made that life and death are a main theme in Pre-Geometric and Geometric pottery. This is certainly not an easy feat to achieve within this article, nevertheless I would like to attempt the task.⁸

During the Dark Ages, written records vanished, and oral recitations could not be preserved. Remote antiquity has not faded away completely, however, thanks to the plastic arts, which included pottery, gold and silver wares, bronze or pot sculptures and so on. However, art archaeology shows that, during this time, decorated pottery is uniquely brilliant, compared with other plastic arts. The reason deserves to be examined.

⁸ The 7th century BC is widely viewed as the most important period for the ‘Renaissance’ of Greek art, such as the emergence of monumental sculpture, the birth of the first large stone temples, and the start of depiction of Greek myths on vases, all of which symbolize a sort of artistic ‘prosperity,’ and seeing that this point has already been prevailing, “The darkness of this Dark Age is not just due to our own comparative ignorance about what was happening, but represents a real and traumatic transformation” (Michael Grant, *The Rise of the Greeks* (London, 1987), 2), the objective of this paper is to inspire more research into the relationship of Presocratic fragments and vase paintings of the Dark Ages.

Vase paintings in the Dark Ages originated in the Sub-Mycenaean period during 1100-1050 BC. In their beginnings, vase paintings were relatively inferior: "at this juncture, as pollen-analysis reveals, populations sharply declined, reverting to pastoralism. The art of writing was lost for several centuries to come, the use of stone for construction purposes vanished, and Greece became a country of villages, making an impoverished pottery (Sub-Mycenaean, c.1100-1050) which displayed stolid, insensitive shapes and hand-drawn designs of circles and half-circles."⁹ However, things soon changed. The widely distributed pottery known as "Proto-Geometric (c. 1025-900), initiated by Athens and then developed in the Argolid and over a wide area extending from Thessaly to the northern Cyclades, displayed circular designs drawn no longer by hand, like those of the preceding Sub-Mycenaean wares, but by the compass, and painted by multiple brushes with patterns that neatly define the clear-cut shape of the vessel."¹⁰

Grant argues the reason why pottery developed rapidly in this period was that Greek pottery was much more important than its counterpart today, fulfilling the combined modern roles of porcelain, glass, wood, leather and basketry, and in consequence, it attracted the services of outstanding painters. Furthermore, since during that period Greece was no longer a wealthy country, those painters were called upon to provide the decoration which no gold or silver vessels were available to supply.¹¹

Benefiting from the participation of outstanding painters, pottery patterns became quite varied, geometric patterns primarily, accompanied by animals, plants and figure patterns. Geometric patterns include rhythms of thick and thin lines, triple lines, wavy lines, zigzags, cross-hatch triangles, and concentric circles and semi-circles.

900-700 BC was the Geometric period. Pottery reached its highest peak. During this period, Athens still displayed brilliant creativity. The geometric patterns were gradually extended, until they covered the entire pottery surface, in the place of a large area of black glaze in Proto-Geometric period. Decorations became more and more elaborate and exquisite with quite complicated rhythm. "Some scholars have likened

⁹ Grant, *The Rise of the Greeks*, 2.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 332.

this complicated new rhythm to that of an epic hexameter, as Homer's."¹² John Boardman thinks this analogy is not absurd because, "this is the first intimation of the Greek artist's interest in the almost mathematical disposition of complex patterns and images, but the effect is more like that of a carpet, or patchwork."¹³ Besides the geometric patterns, figurative elements are also highly stylized. In the beginning, single or repeated bands appeared, then they encircled the whole surface with a high degree of schematization.

Compared with pottery, how did other plastic arts fare in the Dark Ages? David Piper holds that, "in sculpture, during the Geometric period, small schematic figurines in bronze and terracotta were produced."¹⁴ Even the famous, enigmatic archaic smile did not occur until the middle of the seventh century. Similarly, stone temples developed their essential forms during the archaic period, providing scope for both painted and sculptural decoration. Their paintings have disappeared by now. The figures with sharp but exquisite precision would have responded dramatically in the bright Aegean sun; their original effect, further enriched by colour, was far removed from their usual bland, monochrome appearance in museums.¹⁵

It is thus clear that in the Dark Ages, pottery and vase paintings are exclusively brilliant in comparison with other plastic arts. They reached maturity during the Geometric period and various patterns were extraordinary elaborate. While at the same time, bronze and terracotta sculptures were relatively coarse and crude, and no stone temples were made. Although iron, gold and silver vessels have already been used, their decoration and popularity cannot catch up with pottery. In a large part, it is because pottery is uniquely adapted to the requirements of artistic development in the Dark Ages.

For some reasons which are yet to be affirmed, the glorious Bronze Age finally falls into economic exhaustion, with the loss of the art of writing and a sharp drop in population. Contemporary archaeologists even found evidence of human sacrifice during this age, as some cooking containers and human skeletons with axe markings were excavated

¹² John Boardman, *Early Greek Vase Painting* (London, 1998), 23.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ David Piper, *The Illustrated History of Art* (London, 2005), 34.

¹⁵ Ibid., 35,

together. From these excavations, historians infer that during this period ancient Greeks likely encountered horrible threats, and the panic or sense of insecurity caused by this kind of tragedy may have been directed by priests.

Since there are no concrete or precise records, it is hard to analyze the extent to which economic exhaustion impacted the ancient Greek's choice of artistic materials. Pottery undoubtedly began to show its importance as cultural media. Archaeologists discovered pottery was exclusively used by various people in various situation regularly, from ordinary people to elites, from daily life, funeral to religious and sacred situation. Gold and silver wares were too expensive to be owned by the common Greek peoples. For the same reason, their sizes cannot be compared with pottery. Therefore, during the Geometric period there are many monumental pots as grave markers. On the other hand, from the perspective of preservation, pottery can endure thousand of years with painting and glaze as good as new if they are not broken. By contrast metal works cannot withstand oxidization over time, and stone temples also cannot withstand the effect of erosion over time.

With regards to the significance of pottery as a historiographical method, Boardman also comments,

The production and use of decorated pottery is the only universal (for Greeks), prolific and relatively sophisticated source which might enable us to draw comparisons about the visual and social experiences of ordinary people in different parts of the Greek world and in their colonies, over centuries. They are sufficiently differentiated to invite explanations, sometimes of broader historical relevance. This may seem a bold claim, but it is what archaeology is about, and we are less likely to be misled by evidence that is full and articulate than by accidental survival from later periods of 'historical' accounts, or by the very partial survival of other artefacts of whatever quality or value. The only comparable medium, for later periods, is coinage.¹⁶

It is not a bold claim, rather, a sensible analysis. Archaeologists have certainly considered other media, such as metal work. "Metals

¹⁶ Boardman, *Early Greek Vase Painting*, 263.

were available in Greece too but are less informative, less well preserved, and gold and silver were largely in the possession of the fat cats.”¹⁷ And with regarding to size, “in Geometric Athens the vessel can be enlarged to monumental proportions, on which the figure decoration can be explicit about rites. There is no question here of pottery substituting for metal or stone.”¹⁸ How about comparison with sculpture? “Ubiquitous objects like profusely and significantly decorated pots, might have even more to offer than formal sculpture when it comes to understanding antiquity and ancient Greek taste.”¹⁹

Here it would not be appropriate to argue that, from the perspective of artistic style, earthen wares come from earth, giving us the sense of homeliness and simplicity, is a pastoralist art itself, and the entirety of Greece is a big village composed of many small villages in the Dark Ages, so pottery matches that era quite perfectly. A female Chinese writer San Mao in *‘Huatao Kiln’* says, “although we can also fight for and talk about political issues, let’s make pottery and enjoy wild flowers.” It appears that pottery symbolizes a peaceful and idyllic life. However, the truth is, behind the beautiful silhouette of pottery in the Dark Ages, archeologists found a turbulent world. In the Bible, we could perceive the very detailed picture of the similar great suffering and grief in a destroyed city and nation, such as Lamentations over Jerusalem and David’s lamentations over Saul, ‘How deserted lies the city, once so full of people! How like a widow is she, who once was great among the nations!’ ‘How the precious sons of Zion, once worth their weight in gold, are now considered as pots of clay, the work of a potter’s hands!’²⁰

In regard to the above topic of woman and pottery, there is a relevant question: who are the painters and potters of that exquisitely decorated pottery? Boardman argues that, these types of figurative patterns probably originated from weaving art, such as basket, carpet weaving and patchwork and in many early societies, they were typically female’s crafts. Therefore, the development of pottery in the Geometric period probably attributes to female endeavor, although women can hardly cope with huge-sized pots, their roles as vase painters can not be ignored

¹⁷ Ibid., 264.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., 270.

²⁰ Lamentations 1:1, 4:2. Holy Bible (NIV).

absolutely.

This sort of attention to female's unique status in pottery can also be seen in some other papers. Blundell et al examines the ideological implications of a female focus. Although the article focuses on the pottery scene rather than their potters, it also concerns the issue of female potters or painters, such as here, "the question of who made and commissioned Attic pots is obviously relevant. All the named potters and painters are male, but there is at least one representation of a woman painting a pot, and female painters may well have existed." As Blundell et al notes, although scholars point out that the evidence for female painters is small, it is there nonetheless.²¹

The question of who the potters and painters of the decorated pottery are is not irrelevant to the main argument here. I also have a bold claim to make: since the Dark Ages experienced a sharp population drop, the ratio of the adult male drop is probably exceedingly higher than the adult female drop, since adult males were often massacred after defeat in ancient times. If so, the proportion of female potters and painters in the Dark Ages was probably much higher than it was in the archaic and classical periods. I have noticed that in the Proto-Geometric and Geometric figurative patterns, female bodies were not as prominent as those in the archaic and classical period, whereas male bodies are more prominent. Such a phenomenon indicates the existence of the female artists' perspective. Those elaborate and exquisite patterns and designs seem to show us as well, their styles are quite feminized, lingering, complicated and delicate, which are likely the evidence that female potters and painters exist widely.

In addition, I argue that radical social change in this period gave the ancient Greeks unique life experiences, especially death experiences, and as responsible for giving birth, women's perception of those experiences must surely be equal to those of a man. A transformation between external life-death and its internal projection certainly exists. Internal contemplation on life and death triggers art creation. Indeed, life and death are almost always core themes of literature and art. Needless to say, Paul Klee's *Death and Fire*, and Whitman's "When Lilacs Last in

²¹ See Sue Blundell and Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz, "Women's Bonds, Women's Pots: Adornment Scenes in Attic Vase-Painting," *Phoenix* 62 (2008): 115.

the Dooryard Bloom'd," just as Bloom says in *The Western Canon*, are attendants of death. Looking back to the Dark Ages and the period after it, it is not difficult to infer that Greece was being reborn and pottery provided the little wombs. I agree with Robin Osborne's ideas as follows, it is a mistake to think a concrete feature of the ancient Greek city-states produced 'philosophers'. Only in whole cultural environment of the ancient Greece can we understand the development of philosophical utterance properly.

Obviously, there is less acknowledgment about artistic status of pottery in Proto-Geometric and Geometric period than Greek sculpture. When people mention the ancient Greek plastic arts, usually the first occurring form is sculpture. Even if people talk about decorated pottery, they always pay more attention to the black and red figure periods. People believe black and red figures represent ancient Greek pottery, and to some extent, that point is sensible. Geometric patterns and the primal motif of life and death in the Dark Ages are not exclusively unique stylistic characteristics that belong to the ancient Greek plastic arts. They are in fact primal motifs in many primitive arts. Which culture does not have myths regarding cosmos and life creation, and which plastic arts do not originate from geometric patterns? For example, consider the Japanese Jomon pot in the British museum, which was also quite old. It is worthwhile to question, with regards to the artistic level of Geometric patterns, whether there is any other decorated pottery that is comparable with that of the Dark Ages in ancient Greece?

It is a stereotype that only red and black figure pottery represents the typical Greek pottery style. This stereotype focuses excessively on the epic poems of Theogony and Homeric, and the stories of those gods and heroes within those poems, ignoring the more primitive appearances such as the Geometric patterns and theme of life and death. Such a stereotype can be traced back to Ancient Greece itself, whose mythology embodies the construction of genealogy and order, and whose philosophy manifests the start of rationality and logos.

Nietzsche's prescription for Western civilization should be hailed at least in one respect when it comes to the following question, which god among Ancient Greek gods experienced death and rebirth like Dio-

nysus? Jesus is certainly a great example.²² A god without death experience can not sense the fundamental fragility and loneliness of human life, and therefore cannot value profound grace, charity and goodness. Similarly, a work without touching life and death is merely playing games. From the Proto-Geometric period to the Geometric period, decorated pottery constructs and conserves the plastic arts of the Dark ages. The process is not only the process of Geometric pattern from the coarse to the delicate, but also one of portrayal from the simple to the complex, until specific scenes are finally set and stories are narrated.

A facile equation of some patterns and images with cosmological life and death is not convincing, such as those concentric circles and semi-concentric circles symbolizing the Sun, the Moon and stars; those triangles drawn by cross parallel and wave lines represent mountains and rivers; the black glaze of large space is the Earth, and hunting figures with long spears and animal patterns living secular lives. Art works are never the copy of copies.

Indeed, we can see star patterns directly in the Geometric vase paintings, such as the eight pointed star in Attic LGII dish (Ker. 800), the Sun in Attic LGIb kantharos (Athens 18422), the Sun in attic LGIb oinochoe of Dipylon workshop (Athens 152; H. 21), and the point star in Thera LG amphora (Copenhagen NM VIII. 324) etc. (John Boardman, 42, 40, 61) Those elements can be found almost everywhere, accompanied by plants, flowers, trees, hunters and animals, which do look like the images of cosmos. While if there is no reflection on essence beyond phenomena, all those scenes and portrayals are nothing more than copies.

Archaeologists found there are many large vases in the Geometric period, and the larger their sizes, the more exquisite are their patterns. Remarkably, those large vases are generally used in graves, such as grave markers or grave decorations. The essential distinction between humans and animals is that humans will be buried and animals will not.²³ Those

²² Perhaps this is why Nietzsche signed both of them on postcards in Christmas of 1888.

²³ Of course this point does not preclude the fact that some ancient people also buried their pets. For example, a Chinese emperor Jia Jing of the Ming dynasty is said to have cherished cats very much and when his pet cats died, he proceeded to bury them. Therefore they were no longer animals, they were in fact part of the family of human beings. Interestingly, in Isaiah 11: 6-9, the

large vases demonstrate to us the ancient Greeks' views on death.

The amphora (No. A 00804 in the National Archaeological Museum of Athens) of 155 cm in height is a typical case.²⁴ Besides its incomparably exquisite geometric decorations with delicate rhythms like music of the spheres, the portrayal shows directly the scene of death and burial. A human lies down horizontally and peacefully. Other people stand lined up solemnly and respectfully.

The ideas found painted in this amphora show what is really behind Ancient Greek culture, even the whole of Western culture. The funeral image gives us explicit, deep insight into the reasons for some original questions. It does not appear to have been an improvisation. The creations of ancient anonymous painters and potters were portrayal creations that were committed to memory. They could then be dictated and written and composed again. I should point out that one of the most exciting and significant finds in Western archaeological history is this amphora.²⁵ Why does Theogony tell us the beginning of gods is so unjust—father and son killing each other; why does the Bible say the first ancestor of human beings committed an original sin; why in the beginning of the Presocratic aesthetics, does Anaximander tell us in a fragment that all existing things must be punished for their injustice according to the order of time; and why does Socrates ask Crito to offer a rooster to Asclepius for him? The expected answer is here: the attention and reflection on death and the attempt to seek the significance of death. It is the extraordinarily unique death experience in the Dark Ages that led the ancient Greeks to contemplate this philosophical theme.

The culture about the 'original sin of life' within the Western world is quite unique. At least in China, especially before the Song dynasty when Confucianism, Taoism, and Zen Buddhism influenced each other, there was no such concept. Chinese traditional ideas suggest, "the biggest virtue of the heaven and the earth is vitality" and "Producing and reproducing can be named change." Thus, the meaning of death is nega-

prophet also depicts a world of equality for humans and animals.

²⁴ As I stepped into the Museum in September of 2013 I already felt so familiar with it.

²⁵ I think this can be an additional interpretation toward the reason why the amphora is placed at the entrance of the National Archaeological Museum of Athens, besides its obvious artistic achievement.

tive, which should be avoided as much as possible. Some Taoist practices, such as seeking a longevity drug, try to seek immortality for our bodies. “Long live the emperor” manifests the ultimate dreams. In a few words, the meaning of life in Chinese traditional thoughts is self-evident and prevailing.

Why would the ancient Greeks rather paint the solemnity of death and burial on vases? Perhaps the Greeks in the Dark Ages experienced quite unique death experiences. What horrifying situation could lead to the loss of the art of writing? Archeologists could make a lot of assumptions about the reason and it is indeed a matter of much dispute,²⁶ but there is an obvious fact that cannot be ignored, namely, horrifying death experience. Besides this, when and where else in the world did the loss of the art of writing occur during human history? Pollen-analysis indicates that the population sharply decreased at that time. There is no precise evidence that reveals what led to this and to what extent the decrease in population caused the loss of the art of writing. Imagination cannot be much assistance. Nevertheless, is it not possible that with their unique collective experience, the ancient Greeks reflect like this: if death is just, life is unjust?

To sum up, after the Dark Ages, the reborn Greek texts with their new art of writing begin to recollect their collective memory. The epic poems of Theogony and the Homeric are some records of those collective memories, and Anaximander's fragment reveals the collective sub-

²⁶ There are various assumptions among academics, such as internal corruption, alien attacks, natural disasters, severe plagues, and wars. I consider natural disasters to be more reasonable historically, especially the floods, such as those that were recorded in the Genesis of the Bible even though there are some problems with viewing the Bible as history. It's hard to determine dates for many events within the Bible. When was Genesis written and when did the events in Genesis such as the flood take place? There are certainly problems with chronology. Even still, archaeology supported the basic historic biblical tradition, such as, we agree the Old Testament was written between 1000 BC and 164 BC, and the history and stories in the Old Testament ended before 500 BC. Considering the history, to assume a flood happened during the twelfth century to mid eighth century in ancient Greece sounds reasonable. In an era without modern large-scaled military weapons like we have now, I cannot imagine any other horrifying death experience that could be comparable with a biblical flood when it comes to the scale of death.

conscious. Prometheus and Oedipus Rex narrate life tragedies of mortals, heroes and gods. Except for ancient Greece, which other culture produced such great tragic dramas? The code of Ancient Greece is found here, the unique history in the Dark Ages gives the ancient Greeks unique experience, which is condensed on the vase paintings with death and burial patterns. As Robert Browning says, “time’s wheel runs back or stops, potter and clay endure.” The typical pot mentioned above is of similar size and scene which we can see in the National Archaeological Museum of Athens and other museums.²⁷ Through these vases, exploration of the significance of life and death, and the affirmation of tragedy, as the Greeks’ cultural and genetic heritage, has been rooted deeply in the ancient Greeks, and manifested broadly later. Therefore, we have encountered them again and again, in the Pre-Socratic fragments, in the tragedy of Dionysus’ death and rebirth, even after 2,500 years in Nietzsche’s writings.

4. Conclusion

This relationship between Presocratic fragments and vase paintings in the Dark Ages is difficult to characterize. I believe they must have both originated from the interpretation of the same theme; Life and Death. Interpreting the theme of Geometric vase paintings as the riddle of life and death through a few vases may seem subjective, however are there any ‘actual or objective historical records’ that are not an interpre-

²⁷ Even if the number of archaeological remains of the similar decorated pots in the Dark Ages was just a handful, the conclusions of this paper can still be made. Perhaps it is the sheer economy of archaeological evidence that inspires me to imagine the mystical possibility of this theme. Therefore, perhaps we could play out a drama entitled ‘The Flood in the Ancient Greek Dark Ages.’ The archaeological assumption has already been made that human sacrifice actually happened, through a few excavated human bones with cut traces and pots nearby. Rather than a literary narrative about Abraham and Isaac in biblical canon, or a mythological narrative about the Minotaur and its Labyrinth, why could we not draw a conclusion that ancient Greek potters and vase painters viewed the riddle of life and death as a creative theme on their creative works considering that there are already a handful archaeological vases with the scene out there? This imaginative theme not only demonstrates the sorrow of death but also the sublimity of life.

tation at the time when there is no video technology? We have no direct access to past events, except for mediated access in material, namely, archaeological remains which yield information to us only after the process of interpretation, or in texts that are themselves already an interpretation of events and must still be interpreted by us.

The claim that Presocratic cosmological thoughts originated from Hesiod and Homer relies too much on texts, the transformation from writing to writing,²⁸ thus it ignores the material of archaeological remains, ignores the possible bonds between plastic arts and writing. Maybe we should pay more attention to a simple archeological discovery, namely, before any art of writing appeared, plastic arts had already occurred.

To sum up, compared with magnificent temples, pottery is more like a little womb of ancient Greek thoughts. When traditional wooden temples became ashes due to countless wars and disasters, and all traces seem to be wiped away, it is the earthen pottery that preserves the ancient Greek culture. Indeed, when time's wheel runs, metal wares can not resist oxidation, and gold and silver wares cannot be popularly afforded and used, it is the earthen pottery that conceives the Presocratic thoughts.

The important thing is that, when we pay exclusive attention to the monumental Attic grave-amphora in the late Geometric period (760-750 BCE) whose scene shows the mourning for the dead, we must not ignore other images and patterns in Geometric vase paintings, which adds a level of complexity to the whole picture of this period's pottery. Alongside the hermeneutic portrayal of the life and death theme in this paper, what we find more often at that time are purely geometric patterns, and these images as follows also occur. The Sun, the Moon, stars, hunting

²⁸ Here is another example, "For Iamblichus and his successors...the origins of Hellenic philosophy were to be traced back to ancient revelations. As the Egyptian and Chaldeans were original revelatory sources for all mankind...For the late Neo-Platonists, the true Hellenic 'love of wisdom' could be supported and illustrated not only by the inspired poetry of Orpheus, Homer, and Hesiod, but also by the Egyptian, Phoenician, and Assyrian myths and 'theological dogmas', including the so-called Chaldean Oracles." Please see Algis Uzdavinys, ed., *The Golden Chain: An Anthology of Pythagorean and Platonic Philosophy* (Bloomington, 2004), xxiv.

figures, long spears and animals pricked by spears, plants, flowers, trees and so on which appear secular-inclined. One image does not preclude others. It is going to be important that both the inclinations of secularity and eternity be held in a dialectic tension and that they can be reconciled with each other as one layer of the whole cosmological scenery to show what prompted primitive potters and painters to create in the Dark Ages and convey them to Presocratics later.

This does not exclude another possibility which is, all vase paintings in the Dark Ages do not have to be a uniform or unified image system with a single theme or doctrine of cosmology. Vase paintings in the Dark Ages are not an art book, rather, an art gallery that originates in vastly differently historical situations. It responds to a variety of shifting needs and events and reflects a range of perceptions about those specific centuries in the Greek world and its colonies.



(The picture of the amphora A 00804 is from the website of the National Archaeological Museum of Athens, 5 August 2017.

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On the Reasons for Contemplation to Provoke the Greatest Happiness: Aristotle's Conception of Intelligence

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Abstract

The article is an attempt to show why Aristotle conceives a link between Contemplation and Happiness, and how it is that Contemplation is the activity that constitutes Intelligence. By carefully analysing Book X of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, I try to give an answer to this question. Moreover, the outcome of the article intends to give a different perspective in relation to what we commonly conceive as happiness: Aristotle's position may be a good counterpart to the consumption-satisfaction paradigm that dominates contemporary society.

Introduction

In Book X of his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle defines complete happiness as the activity in accordance with the highest kind of virtue. This activity is conceived as thoughtful and named as contemplation.¹ Its main element is intelligence. This element is the main feature belonging to men (and the one that it is closer to what is divine), and Aristotle considers that life in accordance with it is the happiest.

This assertion, made by the philosopher in the last book of his *Nicomachean Ethics*, has led to many discussions regarding the nature

¹ All references to the *Nicomachean Ethics* will be done using the translation made by Christopher Rowe. The terms *virtue* and *contemplation*, which are used in other translations, are replaced by *excellence* and *reflection* respectively in Rowe's text. I will use, in my own text, the terms *virtue* and *contemplation*, only leading to Rowe's terms when introducing quotations from the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

of happiness, as well as its relation to theoretical and practical activities. These have pointed out, for instance, the problem of how to interpret the distinction between the happy life in accordance with contemplation and the one reached by the rest of the virtuous activities. Moreover, a core question arises in relation to the issue: why is it that this supreme activity (contemplation) is connected to the highest possible kind of happy life?

Aristotle establishes a difference between types of lives when he asserts that “second happiest is the life in accordance with the rest of excellence; for activities in accordance with this are human.”² The existence of this second happiest life denotes that, for any reason, happiness achieved by contemplation is of a better kind, of a greater value. These two “kinds” of life may make us think about the question of what the better kind has (that life based mainly in contemplation), which the other is lacking, for only the first enables the greatest happiness. In addition, we may think about how is that this greatest happiness is achieved, or in other words what is that allows this better happiness to occur.

My intention in this essay, indeed, will be to ask the reasons Aristotle proposes to affirm that contemplation gives the greatest happiness. In order to do so, I will first expose what the Greek philosopher understands by happiness, trying to show his appreciation of it, mostly as exhibited in Book I of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Afterwards, a focus on what constitutes absolute happiness will be posited. The specific condition of this kind of happiness will illustrate what elements of it lead Aristotle to bind it to intelligence and reflection. Finally, a close look at the characteristics he ascribes to contemplation will also be presented, for the relation between these two activities (contemplation and absolute happiness) should shed light on the reasons one entails the other.

Aristotle on Happiness

It would not be futile to start by what Aristotle discusses about happiness in the first book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, because it is indeed in this book where the subject is most discussed. In I. 13, he gives an account of happiness, considering it an activity in relation to two main elements, namely soul and virtue:

² Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*. X. 8 (1178a10).

Since happiness is some activity of soul in accordance with complete excellence, we should discuss the subject of excellence; for perhaps in this way we shall get a better view of happiness too.³

But clearly it is human excellence we should inquire about, because it was the human good that we were looking for, and human happiness. By ‘human excellence,’ we mean excellence of soul, not of body; happiness, too, we say, is activity of soul.⁴

These two quotations clearly show that, according to Aristotle, happiness is only possible thanks to the exercise of virtue (and it will be complete if this last is complete as well) and, at the same time, entailed only by the soul. These two elements seem to be foundational. Thus, according to the philosopher, if we look for the nature of happiness we necessarily have to consider human virtue. This virtue is not tied up with the body, so the soul is the entity that entails it. Then happiness is mainly a soul activity. This immaterial feature of happiness is of great importance, for it may give a cause for the relation of it with the most non-material purposes of theoretical activity and intelligence.

Still, happiness involves other features which are capital too. One of this is completeness. Completeness refers to what is desirable in itself, because it is not sought for the sake of some other thing.⁵ This is consistent with the fact that anything which is not complete is in need of what is lacking. If something is “missed” then this incomplete thing leads us to look for it only if it is a medium for something complete. Aristotle thinks happiness fulfils the conditions for completeness, for its achievement does not imply a looking for something else.

The other important feature is self-sufficiency, for happiness would stand alone and give its own purpose by itself. In other words, it is desirable in itself.⁶ Completeness and self-sufficiency may be tied up together: something that can stand by itself is not in need of anything else to justify its existence.

Consequently, happiness would be an activity, given by the soul, and oriented towards virtue. It would be a self-sufficient and complete

³ Ibid., I. 13 (1102a5)

⁴ Ibid., I. 13 (1102a15)

⁵ Ibid., I. 7 (1097b1)

⁶ Ibid., I.7 (1097b15)

activity as well. These characteristics lead to a thinking of happiness as a spiritual act, an act that can involve practical matters related to virtues such as generosity or courage, but retaining its independence from the body. Virtues of character will be dispositions of the soul engaged with daily matters (“habituation”), and happiness would be present in that compound between soul and matter, still keeping its condition of something that may be higher than it.⁷

The Highest Kind of Happiness and its Relation with Theoria (Contemplation)

We see that already in book I Aristotle makes the distinction between two kinds of wisdom, theoretical and practical, when considering two different groups according to the kind of virtues. One of them, regarded as “intellectual”, shows the path for what later will be presented, in book X, as contemplation. Intellectual virtue or theoretical wisdom will be a disposition of the soul when the highest kind of happiness acts. For the latter is also an activity according to Aristotle, and it will be of the highest kind if it acts in accordance with intelligence, contemplating. The question is, again, why is it that contemplation is related to this highest kind of happiness.

Aristotle gives some features of this supreme activity in book X:

For this is the highest kind of activity, since intelligence too is the highest of the things in us, and the objects of intelligence are the highest knowables; further, it is the most continuous, since we can engage in reflection continuously more than we can in getting things done, whatever they may be.⁸

Continuity and stability can be regarded as distinctive features of the supreme. If the greatest happiness is achieved thanks to it, and it also develops as an activity, we may say that, in addition to completeness and self-sufficiency (features that happiness in general possesses), the highest happiness is actually more stable and continuous as well. To contemplate or reflect denotes a steady behaviour too, for the need of quietness and not engagement in practical, pragmatic actions allows this

⁷ Ibid., X. 7 (1177b30)

⁸ Ibid., X. 7 (1177a20)

enterprise to be fulfilled. We can then see that one of the main reasons that contemplation gives the highest happiness resides in the fact that contemplation is indeed the most stable action, and the greatest happiness must not be something evasive or incidental, as could happen with other virtues that may lead to some happiness of lesser extent.

Aristotle also establishes that contemplation fits with happiness in a way that no other activity does. It shows completeness and self-sufficiency in a unique way:

Again, reflective activity would seem to be the only kind loved because of itself; for nothing accrues from it besides the act of reflecting, whereas from practical projects we get something, whether more or less, besides the doing of them. Again, happiness is thought to reside in leisure from business; for we busy ourselves in order to have leisure, and to go to war in order to live at peace. Now the context of the practical activity of the excellences is either the city or war, but actions in these spheres seem to lack the element of leisure, and warlike ones, in fact, lack it utterly (for no one chooses to make war for the sake of making war, or deliberately contrives it: if someone made his friends into enemies in order to create battles and killings, he would seem an utterly bloodthirsty type). But the politician's activity, too, lacks the element of leisure, and aims beyond the business of politics itself – at getting power, or honours, or indeed happiness for himself and his fellow citizens, this being distinct from the exercise of political expertise, and something we clearly do seek as something distinct. If, then, among actions in accordance with the excellences the political and warlike stand out in fineness and greatness, and these actions are lacking in leisure and aim at some end rather than being desirable because of themselves, while the activity of intelligence seems both to possess a greater seriousness, being reflective, and to aim at no end beside itself, and to have its own proper pleasure (and this contributes to increasing the activity); and if, finally, the elements of self-sufficiency, and of leisure, and of freedom from weariness, in so far as these are possible for human beings, and all the other attributes assigned to the blessed, are patently characteristics of this kind of activity: then *this* activity will be the complete hap-

piness of man, if it is given a complete length of life, since nothing about happiness is incomplete.⁹

This long passage shows very important assertions for the relation between the greatest happiness and contemplation. The latter is an activity with no pragmatic purpose or end, thus it distinguishes itself from any practical activity, even from those that are considered virtuous. For these kind of activities have a particular purpose that goes beyond them, therefore they are mediums, instruments, and they look for a thing other than themselves. The incompleteness of this kind of activity is evident in this way, because they lack their end, the objective for which they aim. Conversely, an activity that is complete does not lack anything (including its own end, of course), and that is a reason for completeness. Contemplation possesses this property, because its own nature implies the non-necessity of something else other than itself. It fulfils its own requirements just by being exercised. Thus, it is complete and self-sufficient. In addition, Aristotle introduces the notion of leisure: a state only achieved by being in possession of what is desired. Only complete activities can entail leisure, for they do not go through any roughness in order to be fulfilled. Happiness, in its most absolute, is the opposite of incompleteness according to Aristotle. It would not be then an irrational thought, to think about the exercise of intelligence as bringing this kind of happiness.

The distinction between two kinds of activities, namely contemplative and practical, may then play a role in understanding the reasons Aristotle has for linking the first to complete happiness, and it also may give a chance to understand its nature. And if contemplative activity is stable, complete and self-sufficient, and it reaches happiness in the greatest way (for it fulfils not only the general conditions to have a happy life, but also the stability and continuity that sporadic happiness lacks), then the relation between the two is at least clear in terms of similarity.

However, it is still strenuous to establish the precise reasons why contemplation allows for this highest kind of happiness. This also resides in the fact that Aristotle gives more emphasis to the explanation of intellectual activity than to the greatest happiness in itself. Even so, it

⁹ Ibid., X. 7 (1177b1-1177b26).

appears possible to characterize it, by considering the implicit assertions he makes about it when placing it in relation to different kinds of activity. In his work *Aristotle on the Human Good*, Richard Kraut mentions this tangled situation as well:

What does Aristotle mean by “perfect happiness”? He does not explain this term, and it occurs nowhere else in the *NE*. But if...X. 7-8 compares two competing plans of life, both of which are happy but one of which is happiest, then a certain interpretation of “perfect happiness” suggests itself. The two lives differ in that each assigns a certain primacy to a different good, a primacy that consists in being an ultimate end...Contemplation is desirable in itself, it is not desirable for the sake of anything else, and every other good is desirable for its sake.¹⁰

The highest happiness comes thanks to the fact that the life lived in accordance with intelligence has everything it desires: itself. So maybe Aristotle is concerned with showing this difference with the other kind of lives, those that, even if they are virtuous by other means, nevertheless are intended to look for something other than themselves. Again, for something to bring complete happiness, it must for sure be unmitigated in nature.

Yet, some have seen in this difference between these two lives a problem, for it may be not clear how a person can or should choose one or the other. This leads to confusion about the reasons why the happiest life is the happiest indeed, given that human beings would not always take part in it. This paradox, however, may not be actually present in Aristotle’s thought. And the reason for it is located in the divine character of contemplation.

Godlike Activity

So, does Aristotle mean that human beings, in order to achieve this highest kind of happiness, should be constantly engaging in contemplation? As we said, many authors have considered this as a problem. For instance, John Cooper, in his work entitled *Reason and Human Good in Aristotle*, regards the issue as “unfortunate”:

¹⁰ Richard Kraut, *Aristotle on the Human Good* (Princeton University Press, 1989), 42-43.

How is then one to interpret the other member of this pair of contrasted lives? It is described as a “life of moral virtue,” and of course it is on this aspect of it that Aristotle’s interests focus, since its provision for morally virtuous activities is the salient characteristic of this life, and that which distinguishes it from the intellectual life already discussed. But because his principal aim in these chapters is to explain and defend his preference for the intellectual mode of life he does not enter into the details of the contrasted moral life. This is unfortunate from our point of view, since it makes it difficult to be absolutely certain of the relation between the “moral life” of the tenth book of the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the flourishing life as it is conceived in the *Eudemean Ethics*.¹¹

This supposed problem Cooper manifests is one of the most discussed, and does not even appear central answering the main question of this paper. It is central, however: for the nature of contemplative activity, regarded as the highest kind of possible activity, is distinguished because it is divine as well. Aristotle considers human beings capable of taking part into some degree of divinity¹² when acting in accordance with contemplation. However, the human condition is different from that of the gods: humans can engage in contemplation and this is the best thing to do, but this does not mean they don’t need to be concerned with practical matters. It would be actually more accurate to say that, what Aristotle is trying to show, is that if we have these different kinds of activities and different *degrees* or kinds of happiness, it is not because we don’t want to achieve the highest good always, but because that is only possible for the gods. Indeed, gods do not need the distinction, for their only activity is the most desirable and complete, namely, to contemplate. Virtues of character are human, then, and even though they are not as supreme as the latter, they are indispensable for human happiness as well:

But the one who is happy will also need external prosperity, in so far as he is human; for human nature is not self-sufficient for the purposes of reflection, but needs bodily health too, and the avail-

¹¹ John M. Cooper, *Reason and Human Good in Aristotle* (Hackett Publishing Company, 1986), 165.

¹² Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*. X. 7 (1177b28)

ability of nourishment and other kinds of servicing. And yet, if it is not possible to be blessedly happy without external things, still it should not be thought that the happy person will need many of them, and on a large scale, in order to be so.”¹³

What we have then is human beings, that in order to achieve the most desirable and happiest activity (contemplation) take part in it when this is possible. And this is not *always* possible because they do need to take part in other kinds of virtues as well (namely virtues of character) and practical matters. And this situation is of extreme importance for the understanding of the highest happiness and its relation to contemplation: for it is a divine, godlike activity. Human beings can act like gods sometimes, but they reside and are part of the practicalities of the material world. This divine character also brings us to the beginning of the nature of the highest virtues: they are closer to the soul and the spiritual than to other things or compounds.

Sarah Broadie, in her work *Ethics with Aristotle*, sharply explains it in these terms:

The reason why theōria counts as best, or why that element counts as best of which theōria is the activity, should have a bearing on this question. It is best because ‘divine.’¹⁴

Aristotle is not in a position to argue that theōria is a divine activity on the ground that it is the best, for the latter proposition, so far as it has any practical bearing for us, is what has to be established. Instead he argues the other way round.¹⁵

The cause for this can be traced in Aristotle’s own explanations. The argumentation given by the philosopher may begin from what is divine, and afterwards consider human possibilities. Because we think about gods as happy to the highest degree, we must therefore think of what they do in their lives, what kind of activity they develop, and then we will have before us the activity that leads to complete happiness. So, what do gods do? What is the activity of the gods? For sure, it cannot be a practical activity: for gods do not engage with life by doing things in

¹³ Ibid., X. 8 (1178b33 - 1179a3)

¹⁴ Sarah Broadie, *Ethics with Aristotle* (Oxford University Press, 1994), 400.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 401

order to get to or arrive at something other. And as the purpose of any practical activity is to get to or arrive at other things or states which are lacked, and if we also think that gods do not have needs, then their activities are not practical activities. According to Aristotle, what we have then is only contemplation. The only activity that is not practical, and in addition is not done because it looks for something, is contemplation. Therefore, this is the activity of the gods, and moreover is the one that leads to complete happiness.¹⁶

Consequently, we may think that Aristotle draws a scenario where happiness is possible for human beings, and the highest kind of it as well.¹⁷ However, the latter is only achieved if we exercise the activity considered natural for gods: contemplation. The reason why this is the happiest possible life comprises all those features previously discussed (self-sufficiency, completeness, continuity) which are synthesized in the very fact of divinity. For gods have them all, (therefore they don't *need*), and if they have an activity, then this will be the happiest. And when men participate in it, they are even in a relation with the gods themselves, for that is why Aristotle says that they receive their love. This might constitute an unarguable reason for being blessed with the highest kind of happiness:

And the person whose intelligence is active, and who devotes himself to intelligence, and is in the best condition, seems also to be the most loved by the gods.¹⁸

¹⁶ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*. X. 8 (1178b24)

¹⁷ The argument Aristotle gives for this seems to rely on the supposition that practical activities do not allow the highest kind of virtuosity. This assertion could be challenged or even attacked by someone who thinks that every activity that has a noble purpose may be considered as of the highest kind as well. For the criteria to define what constitutes the supreme excellence of any activity might be relative. However, this relativistic view could face problems, for it would find difficult to refute the arguments for self-sufficiency and completeness that most of virtues do not achieve, for instance.

¹⁸ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*. X. 8 (1179a23)

IV. A GLIMPSE AT PHENOMENOLOGY

Freedom Through Generality: The Body's Atmosphere in the Phenomenology of Perception

Adam Blair

Abstract:

This paper explores how 'generality' both enables and restricts freedom for Merleau-Ponty within the *Phenomenology of Perception*. By thematizing 'generality' as a concept crucial to the project of this text, the paper illuminates a narrative little analyzed before, while also investigating the conditioned nature of our freedom. The paper concludes that the general atmosphere in which the embodied subject exists, according to Merleau-Ponty, is 'general' since it is neither a particularizing determination nor a universal law. Instead, one's personal history and the powers of one's own body provide an open and indeterminate set of possibilities, and this is where both generality and freedom are found.

Keywords: Merleau-Ponty, generality, embodiment, style, freedom

Introduction

In this paper, we will explore how "generality" both enables and restricts freedom for Merleau-Ponty within the *Phenomenology of Perception*. We'll begin by defining two dimensions of generality, a personal generality determined by our history and a prepersonal generality which is our body. Then, we will see how these two levels of generality allow Merleau-Ponty to posit a conditioned freedom.

Let's first look at "generality" itself. "Generality" hovers between the extreme poles of the universal and the particular. A universal truth is unchanging and is necessarily true in all cases. A particular is not a principle, but a distinct entity. A general principle is that which holds "in most cases," informing and structuring them but without necessity. Generalities are porous and fluid, not strict universals which are absolute, but rather categories

which hold for the most part while being open to alteration. The general is a certain directionality or sketching out of something without pre-determining it. Universals contain within themselves all that they will unfold, whereas a generality is what it is only by unfolding in a contingent context, as its principle is never fully self-explicit or complete. We will now see how these characteristics of generality apply for Merleau-Ponty.

Personal Generality

Let's say that I see an apple. While I do see the apple according to the structure of my mind and perceptual capacities, these structures are neither explicit nor unchanging as the intellectualist would argue. While it is also true that I see the apple according to my past as the empiricist would contend, these experiences are not held as associated entities which predetermine my seeing the apple. Instead, bearing on my present perception is my own past *in general*. This past is composed of my past experiences, but these are complex "intertwinings" of causalities—physical, cultural, intentional, etc. I do not explicitly hold each of these past experiences as distinct particulars which I then synthesize into each new experience. Instead, these past experiences create a general atmosphere within which I live.

This atmosphere fundamentally and continuously shapes my world. It is an atmosphere since it is vague and ambiguous, and is not something in-itself, but is that which only exists through its coloration of objects and actions. Through the contributions of my past experiences, my present is, in a sense, determined, as this apple stands out due to my general atmosphere. Further, I know it as an apple, as something for eating, and as something red due to the general suggestions of this atmosphere. However, the past's contribution is general, as opposed to universal as the empiricist or intellectualist would argue. As Merleau-Ponty writes of this atmospheric generation of the past:

Our individual past [c]annot be given to us by...cerebral traces, nor by a consciousness of the past that would constitute it...If something of the past is to exist for us, then this can only be in an *ambiguous* presence...It must exist for us even though we do not think about it, and all of our recollections must be *drawn from this opaque mass*.¹

¹ Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, *Phenomenology of Perception*. Trans. Donald A. Landes (Abingdon, Oxon, New York: Routledge, 2012) 381. [my emphasis]

My past informs my present as an “opaque mass” informing what is possible in any given situation. My past does not absolutely determine how I will see the apple—nor even *that* I will see it—but my personal past is still ambiguously efficacious. At any given moment, I have before me a set of open possibilities—the atmosphere generated by my past delimits certain possibilities and gestures towards others, but never provides an absolutely open field, nor a single possibility. We described generality above as a “sketching out,” which we can now see as characterizing our past in its continual mode of presentation, which I will call our “personal generality.”

Merleau-Ponty writes of traumatic experiences: “...this past that remains our true present...always hides behind [our gaze]. Traumatic experience does not subsist as a representation...Rather, its nature is to survive only as a *style* of being and only to a certain degree of *generality*.”² A traumatic experience is not a *particular* entity, nor is it a *universal* law. Instead, the traumatic experience is that which generates a style of being. The traumatic experience is not a thing which affects or mediates my experiences, but my existence itself has changed its relationship to the world having undergone this experience. There is no explicit world for me beneath or behind this atmosphere, but seeing through a styled atmosphere is fundamentally the way I see the world. The traumatic experience exists for me not as a particular experience I associate with my present, nor as the seed of a universal principle, but as a generality implicit within the fabric of each experience.

Each new experience will contribute to shaping future sets of possible experiences, while simultaneously concretizing these past contributions into an actual event or action, as I realize one of the possibilities. As Merleau-Ponty stresses, we need distance from that which we perceive in order to see it, and it is generality which gives us this distance. Empiricism throws us face-to-face with the object as we blindly and reflexively respond. Intellectualism pulls us up into the cosmos, far away from the world as we oversee it in its constituted totality. Generality puts us concretely within the world, at a distance where we can see it and participate in its unfolding.

This very process can also be understood through the tension and movement of what Merleau-Ponty, in the wake of Sartre, terms “transcend-

² Ibid. 85. [my emphasis]

dence.”³ I am simultaneously determined by my past and factual situation, while remaining indeterminately open to the world. Transcendence is my *movement* of taking up each situation. Human existence is “the change of contingency into necessity through the act of taking up.”⁴ That is to say, I am continuously transcending myself by taking up an indeterminate possibility, concretizing this contingency, and investing it back into the structure of my being, thereby making it part of my past. This movement is determined both by my past and its various “intertwining” causalities, as well as by the world I find myself in. We will now turn to prepersonal generality, as the ground upon which our personal generalities are formed.

Body: The Prepersonal, Anonymous Generality

For Merleau-Ponty, I am always already within the tension of transcendence. But if there is no beginning to the movement of transcendence, then what is held in tension at the beginning of our lives? Without a past, what is conditioning my freedom?

Merleau-Ponty’s answer is: my body. Insofar as my body is open to the world in a certain way as the body that it is, it always already will have an open set of delimited possibilities laid out before it. I will always already exist according to my personal generality from the moment I have an experience, but logically prior to the contributions of this personal generality, my world is still one which carries a style about it, but this is a “primordial,” “prepersonal,” and “anonymous” style. The world solicits me *because* of the ways I am open to it, which is determined by my powers, which are gathered up by the body which I *am*.⁵ Insofar as I have a body, I can touch, hear, cry, and grasp—and there are an infinite number of things which I cannot do. These powers at my disposal do not determine my activities, but since I have these powers and not others, I am not absolutely free. This is why these powers produce *generality*—before my world is personalized, it is already limited without being totally determined.

My personal generality is a narrowing down, or a subset, of this larger set of primordial possibilities; my body’s powers open a vast universe of possibilities, and as I live my life and take on a personal history, many of these possibilities become foreclosed. We again find the ten-

³ Ibid. 172.

⁴ Ibid. 174.

⁵ Ibid. 151.

sion of transcendence, but now we recognize this as an embodied phenomenon—the body *is* that prepersonal generality which narrows its own possibilities by taking up a personal generality, and thus invests its world simply and immediately. I do not hold my past experiences as something separate and in-themselves which I bring to bear on experience, just as I don't first experience the world and then mediate it according to my bodily powers—*instead, the world which my body is open to is fundamentally structured according to prepersonal generality and the personal generality it has taken up.*

For Merleau-Ponty, I am not an embodied consciousness, but I am an existence *as* a body—and therefore the generality floating about me isn't located explicitly anywhere, but is borne by the body, and this is why it is atmospheric. As we have seen, my consciousness doesn't carry the traumatic experience with it as a separate thing, because my body in its very concrete openness to the world is fundamentally colored by the traumatic experience. Merleau-Ponty famously writes that “the body is our general means of having a world,”⁶ and we can now read this as saying that my body is both that prepersonal generality I begin with, and that which bears my personal generality through the structure of its transcendence.

If it is true, as is often stated, that the ancient Greeks could not see blue, this was not due to a lack of biological sensitivity, but because of the exchange between the possibilities that were open to their bodies and those which they concretized within their worlds. If their prepersonal generality was sensitive to the color blue, then the lack of a cultural context for making blue explicit produced the personal atmosphere in which blue as such did not figure. Indeed, in talking about this exchange between an individual and their world—as well as between the personal and prepersonal generality—it is unclear which variable makes what contribution, as they are all bound up within one another. In the limiting of the possibilities open to us, biology and culture are equally efficacious, and mutually informing. The colloquial conundrum of “nature vs. nurture” quickly falls away as the ambiguous, multi-leveled, dynamic movement of the body's transcendence of itself takes the place of an “order of facts” view of things.

Indeed, both the body and the world are active when seeing blue, as this *situation* is simultaneously the exercising of a power of seeing

⁶ Ibid. 147.

blue, and the soliciting of the world. “Blue” is the concretization of the world’s possibilities and my possibilities into a situation. If this possibility is not open to another, this is not causally connected to the individual’s biology or culture, nor to the world, but is just one expression of the complex, styled intertwining between that individual and the world into which they transcend.

Freedom and Statistical Thought

When asking what freedom is, Merleau-Ponty answers by re-articulating the movement of transcendence we’ve been analyzing:

What then is freedom?...The world is always already constituted, but also never completely constituted. In the first relation we are solicited, in the second we are open to an infinity of possibilities. Yet...we exist in both ways simultaneously.⁷ Thus, there is never determinism and never an absolute choice...

I am never absolutely free, for, as we have seen, I exist within an atmosphere of generality which forecloses certain possibilities and favors others. But I am also never wholly determined—although certain possibilities are foreclosed, I am still presented with an open set of possibilities. As Merleau-Ponty stresses, the world and the general atmosphere permeating it never *force* me to do anything, but instead *solicit* me. Each moment is a concretization of my personal and prepersonal generalities amongst the givens of the world, and, as Merleau-Ponty points out in the passage cited above, it is impossible to parse out fully what in the situation was dictated by my own contribution and what was due to the world. Each situation is a tension of interiority and exteriority, as the two are reciprocally intertwined—I transcend myself into the very world which I simultaneously take up.

Indeed, objective thought recognizes only absolutes—either one is free or is not. But Merleau-Ponty wants to argue against such absolutes, positing that “statistical thought necessarily belongs to a being who is fixed, situated, and surrounded in the world.”⁸ If I have continually led my life as someone with an inferiority complex—to use Merleau-Ponty’s example—then it is true that this is the style of my being. My

⁷ Ibid. 480.

⁸ Ibid. 467.

gestures, voice, thoughts, perceptions—these will all be permeated by an atmosphere that is generally colored by this inferiority complex. Certain thoughts and objects and actions will be privileged in my life, since the opaque mass I am continuously drawing from is one of “inferiority complex-ity.” My inferiority complex will be ever-present, investing the atmosphere that surrounds me—but since the atmosphere and its investments are general and not universalizing, it is only *likely* that I will act in accord with my inferiority complex. Something in my field will certainly be privileged by this inferiority complex, but it is not wholly determined to be selected by me. Indeed, this is what it means to be *privileged*—it will be presented strongly, but is not the only option.

Considering generality as the presentation of an open but delimited set of possibilities, we could say that *most* of my possibilities will be those colored by this inferiority complex, but others are still viable. Indeed, I am free to change my manner of being-in-the-world by continually accepting these other, unlikely options—which, in turn, will gradually weaken the existential reality of my inferiority complex, as it becomes less prominent in my atmosphere over time. We can always break our habits, if only gradually. A habit is not a reflex, but is a privileging, and therefore can be overcome. This is the other way that the opaque mass from which we draw is one of generality—it presents existential relations that hold *in most cases*. Our style dictates what is most likely for us, but we are always free to select another option, through this on-going transcendence which we embody by living out our existence in the world.

Further, I will not be able to force a particular experience upon myself since I am not absolutely free and the world resists. But I can work toward cultivating my being-in-the-world, doing my best to make the sorts of experiences I wish to have more and more likely, gradually styling my own transcendence in the choices I make.

It is important to note that those options not “colored by this inferiority complex,” will be colored by the inferiority complex in a certain sense, because they are the possibilities which don’t fall underneath it—and for an existence which has been long concretizing possibilities in line with this complex, that detail is not insignificant. It isn’t right to say that in breaking my habit I am *ignoring* it—rather, I am *actively* turning my back on it. We are always free to do the unexpected, to draw away from the general atmosphere permeating our existence, but we always necessarily act in relation to this generality, since to exist at all is to exist within a world, and our worlds are always already styled. Indeed, this brings us to

the final point to be made about freedom and its conditioned nature.

Merleau-Ponty equates my insertion in the world—this necessary given of my bodily existence—with my freedom.⁹ To be in the world is to be free. An animal wholly dependent on its reflexes is reduced to their particular experiences, since their whole being is gathered up in the bare responses to which they blindly adhere. But I am not reducible to any one of my experiences, because, given the nature of my body, I always have a certain distance from each situation, and the generality informing my life is never fixed. I have a set of possibilities spread out before me, an opaque mass of generality from which to draw, and therefore I am never determined absolutely. My unique style is reflected in every one of my experiences and choices which contribute back to this style, while the style itself is never wholly captured, much less determined, by any one of them.

This style—a condensed expression of the general atmosphere—is indeterminate and vague. But this destiny of being always free due to this generality is also a limitation, for we always exist in relation to it. As Merleau-Ponty notes,¹⁰ I can only escape from being into more being, and this is because I always exist in relation to both my personal and prepersonal generalities. I can close my eyes and ears, but my body does not cease existing. My atmosphere of generality, insofar as it begins in my corporeal being, permeates all the way down to my most basic bodily functions. Meditative silence may be one of the many possibilities open to me at any given moment, but this will always be the figure against the background of the noise of my existence. I can never escape into non-being, for I am fundamentally defined by my being-in-the-world—by the body which I *am*, which is a constant condensation of the generality borne behind me and the concretization of possible futures spread out before me. I am free to revise my atmosphere and select radically unexpected possibilities, but as long as I exist, I exist in the face of the possibilities I pursue and the world to which I belong.

⁹ Ibid. 377.

¹⁰ Ibid. 377.

V. BOOK REVIEW

**Petko Ganchev. *Philosophy of Universal History as Fundamental Philosophy*. Veliko Turnovo: Faber, vol. I, 2010. 452 pp.; vol. II, 2012. 766 pp.; vol. III, 2016. 414 pp.
(in Bulgarian, Петко Ганчев, „Философията на универсалната история като фундаментална философия“).**

*Alexander Gungov
(University of Sofia)*

In his monumental work, Petko Ganchev gives an original interpretation of the evolution of the Universe, organic nature, and human history. The author follows the principle of teleology on which evolution depends. This teleological principle carries out the divine design which produces the appearance and flourishing of human beings, human society, and history. Free human activity, guided by responsibility and duty, becomes the engine of history. Throughout the development of history, human activity and cognition create various levels of culture, which serve as a bridge between biological evolution and the fundamental essence of being. Human culture materializes the telos of living in the bosom of God and finally accomplishes the theosis of both human society and the rest of the Universe.

Ganchev has structured his book in three volumes. The first volume lays the ground for the entire study, introducing the interaction and interweaving of anthropological and cosmological principles in teleological evolution. Further on, it discusses briefly the historical process against the background of the greatest exemplars of the philosophy of history: Oswald Spengler's self-sufficient cultures and civilizations, Pitirim Sorokin's sociocultural systems, Arnold Toynbee's levels of civilization, and Karl Marx's and Friedrich Engels' socio-economic formations. This overview is completed with an apt analysis of Francis

Fukuyama's *The End of History and the Last Man*, Zbigniew Brzezinski's *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*, and Samuel P. Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*.

The author proceeds to consider the advantages and drawbacks of a number of theories of socio-economic development beginning with Marxist political economy and historical materialism, dominant in Central and Eastern Europe in the second half of the twentieth century, continuing with various management theories, neoclassical economics, Keynesianism and Neo-Keynesianism, social market economy theory, indicative social planning theory, neoliberalism/monetarism, and a variety of Neo-Marxist ideas. These theories transform into ideologies when they serve as a means for taking/maintaining political power or just opposing the established political order. Ganchev subjects most of the currently prominent ideologies to critical and sharp assessment: liberalism and conservatism, socialism/social democracy and communism (defined as "a form of leftist extremism"), nationalism—divided into patriotism and jingoism, national socialism and fascism, anarchism; and finally, ecologism, globalism, and anti-globalism. According to the author, all ideologies to a greater or lesser degree bear an element of false consciousness; in spite of this, they are involved in the realization of the teleological evolution throughout the historical development of humanity.

The last chapter of the first volume pledges allegiance to the view that politics in its extreme form turns into war. The reader encounters the unambiguous statement that "the history of mankind in its substance is a history of wars."¹ In order to prove this position as well as to view the socio-political evolution through the prism of war, this chapter is dedicated to a study of nine types of wars: 1. Wars for the unification of clans and tribes into a larger union; 2. Wars between different factions of the same civilizational center; 3. Wars between powerful subjects of the same civilization in an attempt to dominate the entire world; 4. Wars for control over non-structured weak territory; 5. Wars of nomads against civilizational centers; 6. Religious wars; 7. Civil wars; 8. World Wars; 9. Cold War and local wars during the Cold War period. The first

¹ Petko Ganchev, *Philosophy of Universal History as Fundamental Philosophy* (Veliko Turnovo: Faber, vol. I, 2010), 374.

volume was finished in 2009, which might explain why so-called “hybrid wars” are not taken into consideration.

Laying the foundation for the second volume of his trilogy, Ganchev discusses the essence of culture, as the core of civilization, from a position that resolutely overcomes Spengler’s and Nikolay Berdyaev’s strategies. Unlike Spengler, Ganchev does not view culture in sheer biological terms; and, in contrast to Berdyaev, he does not derive “culture” etymologically from “cult,” thus avoiding the detrimental form of worship of the divine common to any cult. The author bluntly states that culture is the universal means to go beyond human constraints toward the unity with one’s origin and creator. In the enormous variety of its forms, culture expresses the profound sense of the magnanimity of God, while spreading this sense throughout time and space.²

From this worldview perspective, Ganchev depicts a multifaceted masterpiece of the major cultures within the entire human history. His attention focuses on the eternal issues of different cultural epochs. The exposition begins with the specific forms of culture of Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, passes to eternity-aiming Indian culture, touches the magnificent realism of Chinese culture, admires the harmony and rationality of the Ancient Greek spirit as well as classical Roman pragmatism. Thereafter, the evolution of culture goes back to the one God of the European Middle Ages (apparently inheriting Judaic monotheism), transforms into the titanic endeavor of the Renaissance, reaches the explosion of the Islamic spirit and the calamities of the sublime morality of the Protestant and Catholic Reformation (the latter also known as “Counterreformation”). The analysis of the period of Enlightenment is particularly eloquent and significant. During the Enlightenment, humanity finally adopts an immediate relation to the sacred reality based on individualism, humanism, freedom, and duty. People determine their faith on the evaluation and choice of reason and no longer through the mediation of the Church.³

The development of culture after the Enlightenment, according to Ganchev’s comprehensive explication, enters a period of four cataclysms marked by the emergence, growth, and disappearance of Nation-

² Ibid., vol. II, 2012, 32-33.

³ Ibid., vol. II, 2012, 251.

alism, Colonialism, Communism, and Fascism during the twentieth century. These types of culture deviate from the values of the Enlightenment but, at the same time, are an element of the predestined evolution of humanity (the author firmly rejects the trial and error theory of evolution) towards unification with the divine perfection. As moments of light during these times of calamity, Ganchev identifies several varieties of productive national culture, the most prominent being American Pragmatism (developing certain ideas of German Idealism, in the author's opinion) and Eurasianism, as well as a number of European examples of national culture, including some in Bulgarian culture.

The second volume continues with an overview of the arguments for the existence of God and the specific embodiments of the deity in world religions. In this part, a concise examination of the major world religions is offered in order to prepare the ground for the elucidation of the leading role of religion in the emergence of all civilizations and the formation of their innermost spirit. In Ganchev's really well-founded explanation, it turns out that religion influences civilization and significantly contributes to its becoming along four lines. The first is the fact that religion as a syncretic form of culture has made it possible to link the inceptions of civilization "with the idea of eternity, omnipotence, justice, goodness, freedom of spirit, and sense of duty to the creator and the origin."⁴ The second line is the transformation performed by religion of the gregarious instinct into a system of social relations with the help of moral norms, principles, and values.⁵ Furthermore, religion is a form of ecclesiastic power interrelated with secular political power. The author rightly claims that there are several main kinds of such interrelation in the history of human civilization: Cesaro-papist, Papo-cesarist, theocratic, and theistic-individualistic.⁶ Finally, every monotheistic religion claims universality, thus setting the context for the uniqueness of a civilization, which is determined and vitalized by this religion.⁷ Ganchev concludes that, today, some new forms of dialog between the Church and politics are necessary and states that temples should not be made into gathering places but should become nodes in a global network of

⁴ Ibid., vol. II, 2012, 669.

⁵ Ibid., vol. II, 2012, 670.

⁶ Ibid., vol. II, 2012, 672.

⁷ Ibid., vol. II, 2012, 676-678.

communication for believers in a given religious system.

The third volume of this remarkable work studies the role of the subject and the subjective factor in history, as well as human freedom and bondage against the background of history. Essential to the intentions of this volume are the terms “social subject” or “subject of history” and “the subjective factor.” Concerning the meaning of the social subject, Ganchev follows the general line of G. W. F. Hegel, but attempts to interpret Hegel’s absolute idealism in a worldly manner. By “subjective factor,” Ganchev means social, political, and economic elites supplied with a vibrant ideology. The author shows why ideology is crucial for the transformation of a social subject into a subjective factor, since precisely ideology highlights the direction in which a society has to develop; that is, the purposiveness of the subjective factor is substituted for the spontaneity of the social subject.⁸ Presumably, the closer the purposiveness of the subjective factor comes to the teleological evolution of history, the more valuable and more efficient the subjective factor turns out to be.

The central part of this volume treats the most significant philosophical and physical concepts of time and space throughout the Western history of ideas. Ganchev pays due attention to classical Antiquity, then moves to Hellenism and the Middle Ages, outlines the achievements in this respect of Modern Times, concentrates on the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century theories of time and space, including dialectical materialism and the theory of evolution, and concludes his general overview with Einstein’s theory of relativity. He proceeds further on to the manifestations of time and space in history in the form of social time and space. The author makes a decisive contribution to this field by introducing the terms “national psycho-cosmos” and “civilizational psycho-cosmos,” coined by himself. These two terms are consistently interwoven into Ganchev’s system of teleological evolution unfolding on sacred ground.

Sticking to Hegel’s multilateral method of philosophy, Ganchev demonstrates that his own version of philosophy, which he describes as “philosophy of universal history,” unifies in the same productive whole ontology, epistemology, and the dialectical logic of universal history. He goes a step beyond Hegel’s position by adding axiology to unified phi-

⁸ Ibid., vol. III, 2016, 21.

losophical cognition. Axiology becomes a core part of Ganchev's holistic approach to the philosophy of history. Moreover, he sublates Hegel's method by underlining the indispensable role of the theory of reflection in philosophical cognition with a special provision for the crucial place of the activity of the social (historical) subject.

Of tremendous importance for the entire trilogy is the last part of the third volume, which deals with socio-political prognostics. Taking Nikolay Sergeevich Rozov's works as a guide, Ganchev believes that the near future over the next 15-20 years can be viewed through three major tendencies of socio-political development: westernization/globalization, protest and isolationism, and multipolar partnership.⁹ These three tendencies determine three scenarios for the development of humanity. The first scenario features a total crisis of the nation state on a global scale and a gradual decline of social life in all spheres. The second is characterized by a multitude of local wars, which might involve weapons of mass destruction. Ganchev assesses the probability of each of these scenarios at approximately 35-40%. The third and most favorable has a lower probability of 25-30%. According to this last, the financial groups ruling all over the world will become aware that it is in their interest to combine market principles with state regulations, which should lead to overcoming international conflicts and resolving global risks. This salvational scenario accords with the duty to the creator and the profound teleology of evolution. In order for this only optimistic scenario to prevail, Ganchev calls on intellectuals to work for a new metaphorical Sermon on the Mount. The present noteworthy study undoubtedly belongs to this metaphor.

⁹ Ibid., vol. III, 2016, 387.

VI. ANNOUNCEMENT. M.A. AND PH.D. PROGRAM IN PHILOSOPHY TAUGHT IN ENGLISH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOFIA

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

Sofia University was founded in 1888 following the best patterns of 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. In addition, the master's thesis can be written on a topic from Eastern Philosophy - an expert in this field will be appointed as the supervisor. The program is structured, yet leaves enough room for student's own preferences. The degree is recognized worldwide including in 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 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 application 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 – €815 per school year
- 2) international students - €3 850 per school year

Financial aid:

A) *Citizens of the EU/EEA and Switzerland* are eligible for state scholarships carrying a 75% tuition waiver plus a monthly stipend beginning from the second semester.

B) Fulbright Graduate Grants are offered to *American citizens* as a form of very competitive financial aid; for more information see www.fulbright.bg. Furthermore, 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 the Student Loan Network, <http://www.privatestudentloans.com> and <https://www.discoverstudentloans.com>. It is possible for the American citizens to use some other sources of government financial assistance (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) *Students from Turkey* can receive financial aid within the Erasmus Student Exchange Program.

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

F) *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). *Students from the Ukraine, Belarus, and the other CIS countries, the Indian Sub-Continent, Latin America, and the Middle East* receive financial aid in the form of inexpensive dormitory 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: 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. The 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>.

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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. In addition the doctoral dissertation can be written on a topic from Eastern Philosophy - an expert in this field will be appointed as the supervisor. The program is structured, yet leaves enough room for student's own preferences. The degree is recognized worldwide including in 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 – €1450 per school year; extramural: €2440 per school year

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

Dissertation defense fee: €950

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

Financial aid:

A) *Citizens of the 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) Fulbright Graduate Grants are offered to *American citizens* as a form of 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 for the American citizens to use some other sources of government financial assistance (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.

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