The Challenges of Autonomy and Autonomy as a Challenge

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Thinking Autonomy in Challenging Times

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and Maria Cristina Clorinda Vendra

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Michal Kern (1938-1994)

Michal Kern belongs among the most significant conceptual artists of the Slovak art scene in the second half of the twentieth century. He was an essential presence on the unofficial art scene, having lived and created the vast majority of his works under the totalitarian Czechoslovak communist regime, and having been relegated to the periphery due to his worldviews and artistic expression, too free-spirited for the rigid power structure.

The omnipresent oppression undoubtedly impacted the nature of Kern's work. His focus on documenting and creating personal traces in natural space and time in his artwork makes his oeuvre particularly fitting for this book. Throughout his art, which combines staged and natural photography, collage, drawing, painting, and a wide variety of materials and objects, we see explorations and a blurring of boundaries between man and nature, marking one's space in the universe, seeking meaning and spiritual groundedness.

Although Kern exhibited his work domestically and internationally, his international expositions were mostly limited to the countries of the Soviet bloc. Opportunities for broader acclaim were cut short by his untimely death in 1994. We are happy to bring some of his work to the attention of a global audience and to introduce younger generations of Slovaks to this remarkable artist and free thinker.

Table of Contents

II. The End of Autonomy?
Challenges to Autonomy in Social and Political Contexts

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Sophie Vlacos, Ph.D., is a lecturer in literary theory and post-1900 literature at the University of Glasgow. She holds a Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of Cardiff. Her book *Ricoeur, Literature and Imagination* focuses on Paul Ricoeur's philosophy of imagination and his relation to Anglo-American literary theory and was first published in 2014. More recently, she has published on works of contemporary theory, and on British and American fiction. She is currently writing a book on contemporary literature and genre.

Acknowledgments

On November 3–5, 2022, two parallel International Conferences titled "Paul Ricœur and the Challenges of Autonomy" and "The End of Autonomy?" were held at the Bratislava International School of Liberal Arts (BISLA) in Slovakia. These events were organized by Maria Cristina Clorinda Vendra (University Jana Evangelisty Purkyně, Ústí nad Labem; Institute of Philosophy of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague), Paolo Furia (University of Turin), and Dagmar Kusa (BISLA), who also serve as the editors of this book. The essays collected in this volume were selected on the basis of the advice of the Editorial Committee from a large number of papers initially presented during the two colloquia. We are eager to acknowledge with gratitude our colleagues and institutions, the conference participants and the volunteer students, the editorial assistants, and the publisher *Kritika and Kontext*, whose invaluable contributions enabled the conferences and the publication of this book to be successfully undertaken.

First and foremost, we are grateful for the fortunate coincidence that brought the two teams and two conferences together around a shared interest in studying autonomy and its destiny in present-day social crises. Both the "Ricœurian" and the "Liberal Herald" organizers deeply believe in the value of interdisciplinary and post-disciplinary approaches to sharing research among renowned experts and students and engage both in in-depth philosophical inquiry and in its practical application.

Above all, we wish to acknowledge Lukáš Siegel (BISLA) for the co-organization of the conferences, development of the conferences' websites, and for his patient assistance during the process of collecting and editing materials for this publication. We also express our sincere thanks to our colleagues, Jaroslava Vydrová (Institute of Philosophy of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, Bratislava) and Robert Karul (Institute of Philosophy of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, Bratislava), for their unwavering personal and professional support in organizing the practical details for the sessions of our invited keynote speakers.

The host institution, the Bratislava International School of Liberal Arts (BISLA), and the partner institutions, the Institute of Philosophy of the Slovak Academy of Sciences in Bratislava, and the Institute of Philosophy of the Czech Academy of Sciences in Prague, deserve acknowledgment for having provided their facilities and services for the realization of all the parallel and plenary sessions. We are especially thankful for the financial support of the Slovak Research and Development Agency (APVV) within the project "Philosophical Anthropology in the Context of Current Crises of Symbolic

Structures" (APVV-20-0137), and the project "Culture and Empathy" of the Czech and the Slovak Academy of Sciences (SAV-21-06), which has allowed us to organize the conferences and to publish this collective monograph. We also thank the Society for Ricœur Studies and the Fonds Ricœur for their symbolic support.

We would like to acknowledge all the conference participants for bringing their knowledge and creativity in discussing the topic of the events from many interdisciplinary perspectives. We are particularly grateful to our two keynote speakers, Jakub Čapek (Charles University, Prague) and Johann Michel (University of Poitiers; École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris), for their insightful discussions and for their enthusiasm in accepting our invitations. We owe our gratitude to the contributors to this volume, from doctoral students to renowned professors, for their flexibility and the remarkable efforts that they have made to ensure the success of this editorial project. We sincerely thank the anonymous reviewers for their generous time, a careful reading of each chapter, and insightful comments.

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Last, but certainly not least, we would like to truly thank the Publisher, *Kritika and Kontext*, and the director doc. Samuel Abrahám (Rector of BISLA), for their trust in our project.

Finally, we do not want to draw conclusions. We hope this book provokes honest and open discussions with researchers across disciplines about one of our times' most challenging and controversial issues: autonomy.

Editors' Introduction: The Challenges of Autonomy and Autonomy as a Challenge. Thinking Autonomy in Challenging Times

Paolo Furia (University of Turin)
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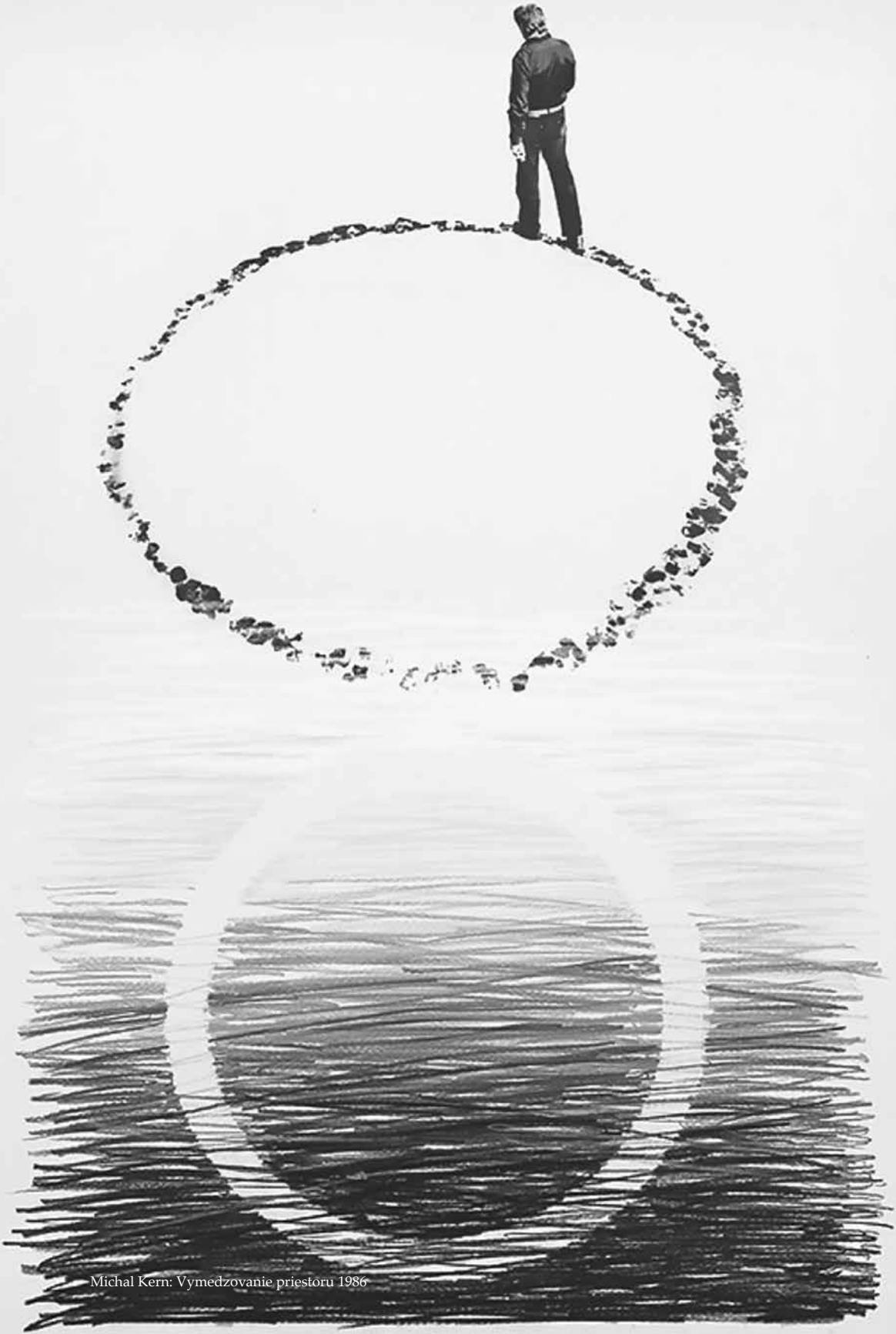
What Autonomy? A Prismatic Concept

The aim of the present book is to discuss the concept of autonomy as one of the most pressing issues of our times. This volume finds its roots in the joint conferences "Paul Ricœur and the Challenges of Autonomy" and "The End of Autonomy?", held at the Bratislava International School of Liberal Arts (BISLA) in November 2022. It contains original contributions selected from a large number of papers presented by international participants, who animated interdisciplinary work sessions and intense conversations. The sections of the following introduction aim at giving a general theoretical and practical conceptual framework to the chapters that compose this oeuvre. This introduction will serve, then, as a background to the various analyses on the topic of autonomy proposed by the authors contributing to this book. Although this work restricts itself mainly to a philosophical focus on autonomy with reference to different perspectives arising from Paul Ricœur's approach to this topic, it benefits from an ongoing dialogue with the human and social sciences. It includes, then, not only chapters discussing the Ricœurian understanding of autonomy and its dynamic applications, but also contributions related to other research fields, i.e., political philosophy, environmental philosophy, aesthetics, social sciences and digital studies. In considering the issue of autonomy as touching individual, social, political, cultural, environmental, technological, and economic matters, the fruitful encounter between Ricœurian and Liberal Herald scholars offers the opportunity to critically rethink the notion of autonomy in today's context in which this concept seems to be stuck between the danger of its decline and the power of its exaltation.



Michal Kern: Vymedzovanie priestoru 1986

To use a metaphor, autonomy can be conceived as a prismatic notion. For those who are not acquainted with physics, a prism is an object made up of transparent material, which can disperse beams of white light into its component colors (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and violet). As long as autonomy cannot be unequivocally defined, it is a prismatic concept whose meanings can be refracted into many different contexts. These meanings can not only be projected but they can also be diffracted into various directions when they meet obstacles. Autonomy's projection, refraction, and diffraction include the extremes of freedom and necessity, identity and alterity, situatedness and displacement, liberty and opposition. Nevertheless, autonomy cannot always and easily be refracted. Consequently, once autonomy loses the possibility of its own refraction, its meanings remain con-fused. With a play on words, autonomy as a prism runs the risk of being transformed into a crystal prison.

The notion of "autonomy" comes from the ancient Greek word αὐτόνομος, which literally means "one who gives oneself his or her own law." According to the definition given by the *Cambridge Dictionary*, autonomy is: "1. The right of an organization, country, or region to be independent and govern itself; 2. The ability to make your own decisions without being controlled by anyone else" (Cambridge University Press, n.d.). Although the etymology of the term and its definition might seem to be clear, autonomy is a polysemic and often contested concept. Involved as an essential dimension of our personal life and embedded in wider social, cultural, political, economic, and financial systems, autonomy deals both with one's own power to act and the instituted power structures (i.e., institutions, laws, policies, governing bodies). The ideal of autonomy has always been connected to a wide range of struggles related to individual and collective interests. Generally speaking, autonomy is involved in controversies dealing with morality and governance, namely with ethical, social and political issues concerning the personal and the societal sphere of our existence. The notion of autonomy seems, then, to be inseparable from that of challenge. More precisely, it appears to be too narrow to discuss the *challenges of autonomy* without recognizing *autonomy as a challenge* in itself. On the one hand, one has to consider the plurality of the challenges of autonomy within individual and social contexts: autonomy has had to confront a variety of challenges throughout the centuries. From this broad historical perspective, we can observe that the genesis and the development of autonomy relate to the evolving challenges corresponding to the different concerns that characterize each historical epoch (Schneewind, 1988). Autonomy is, then, associated with the challenges related to the self-realization of individuals and the independence of a designated group, such as regions, nations, cultural and religious collectivities. On the other hand, autonomy cannot be understood as something that, once achieved, can be unquestionably preserved once and for all. Therefore, there

are not only many challenges of autonomy, but autonomy is in itself a complex challenge. Rather than being a static achievement, autonomy demands the constant movement of a critical evaluation and reevaluation. As a notion marked by motion, autonomy as a challenge is not a label ready to be applied to individuals and groups, but an ideal that needs to be defended from all possible dangers and menaces. Autonomy, therefore, can be considered as a challenge embedded in time and space. As far as time is concerned, autonomy may be viewed as a goal to be achieved in the lifetime of an individual, or through the transformation of collective organisms. But the project of autonomy also has to do with space: at stake is the possibility for a living organism (both individual and collective) to affirm itself in a symbiotic relationship with a proper space, endowed with enough resources to meet its vital exigencies. It is no coincidence that invasion, understood in concrete terms as the movement of progressive occupation of the other's place by an invader, is one of the figures that are contrary to autonomy. Invasion is a spatial process involving collective actors, but it can be used metaphorically to refer to situations in which an individual's intimate space is haunted by the more or less explicit influence of another. In this sense, autonomy may be the result of a conflictual process in which the asymmetries of the social bond must be identified and faced.

Although the concept of autonomy is associated with modern Western thought, particularly with the work of Immanuel Kant, it would be impossible to understand the very meaning of this notion if seen exclusively as a modern invention. To phrase it differently, autonomy is not something that magically appeared in the modern world out of nowhere, like a rabbit out of a hat. Without any pretension to being exhaustive, let us sketch out the principal stages of the development of the notion of autonomy in the history of Western thought. The term autonomy was originally used by the ancient Greeks to define the characteristic of the city-state, that is of the polis (πόλις), as a self-governed dimension in which the community of citizens (δημος) discussed and instituted the body of laws (νόμος) or rules. Conceived as the autonomous community of citizens, the Greek polis is the context in which the political form of society called democracy, literally translated as the power (κράτος) of the people (δημος), achieved its highest early development. Therefore, autonomy was considered in the context of the autonomous collective decision of citizens, that is, as a predicate of the political form of the city-state as a collective entity. Although this collective connotation of the word autonomy is at the core of ancient Greek history, in the works of Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics, we can find the roots of a more self-centered conception of autonomy. More precisely, autonomy is conceived not only as the essence of the polis, but also in terms of self-direction and self-control, namely as "the actualization of the soul according to reason or involving reason" (Aristotle, 2009, pp. 1098 a7–8). During the

Middle Ages, the recovery and the translation into Latin of Aristotle's writings led medieval philosophers to deepen and extend the analysis of the communitarian aspect of autonomy. Nevertheless, it would be too simplistic to conclude that there was, in the Middle Ages, any consistent development of the notion of autonomy; it would, even, be wrong to maintain that medieval thinkers gave an exclusively communitarian and anti-individualistic orientation to the term. Through the image of the "two suns," i.e., the Papacy and the Empire, as having divine, autonomous origins and coequal autonomous powers, for instance (Alighieri, 2003, pp. 12–22), Dante's political thinking presented significant elements for the idea of pragmatic autonomy (Cacciari, 2022). Medieval writers, however, did not limit their interest in the notion of autonomy to the political and legal spheres. On the contrary, they commonly recognize autonomy as the self-government of all human beings that live their life not just according to reason, but also in accordance with the sovereignty of God's will. Many medieval thinkers, such as Moses Maimonides, John of Paris, Marsilius of Padua, and William of Ockham, contributed to the understanding of individual autonomy, developing this idea on the basis of the medieval political worldview (Nederman, 2010, pp. 551–64). Against the eminence of the clergy and the morality determined by the Church as key references for the medieval period, the Renaissance shaped the framework from a renewed notion of the individual self and consequently of autonomy. Figures such as Berthold of Moosburg, Nicholas of Cusa, Marsilio Ficino, and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, moved in the direction of the development of the autonomy of the empirical subject with respect to nature, and to religious and political orders. The Renaissance epoch contains in germinal form the seeds of the modern conception of the human being as a subject existing as an individual with an independent personality, and consequently for the modern approach to autonomy. As noted by the American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, "If Protestantism represents the final heightening of the idea of individuality within terms of the Christian religion, the Renaissance is the real cradle of that very antichristian concept and reality: the autonomous individual" (Niebuhr, 1941, p. 61). However, in the context of the Renaissance, the autonomy of the self always remains embedded in a cosmo-ontological hierarchy where the human is identified as the mediating term (*copula mundi*) between the purely material and the purely spiritual.[1] It is in the context of European modernity, namely during the Enlightenment and the Age of Revolution, that the idea of autonomy received a renewed contextualization. Specifically, it was with Immanuel Kant's transcendental idealism that autonomy was associated for the first time with the power of transcendental reason. More exactly, freedom of will is a property of the human being as a rational being which does not depend

[1] See, for instance Ficino, M. (1482). *Theologia Platonica.* Antonio Miscomini.

on physical laws, but which is a law to itself. Practical reason has to be the universal and necessary law, it has to take the form of an imperative or, as Kant puts it, "I ought never to act except in such a way that I can will that my maxim should become a universal law." Thus, the principle of autonomy is understood as "the sole principle of ethics." Kant's conception of autonomy left an indelible mark on ethical and political debates concerning individual and communal autonomy, liberal democratic states, distributive justice and human rights. Of course, in modern political thought, not every trend or author has subscribed to Kant's radical position; however, autonomy will thereafter become one of the main tenets of ethical and political systems and projects, often brought into dialogue and dialectic with other principles such as the search for happiness and self-realization, empathy, and solicitude towards others. In Romanticism, the emphasis on autonomy against any kind of external dependence has broadened the scope of the idea of autonomy from the strictly moral field to the domains of sensibility, aesthetics, and imagination. On the other hand, it is well known to have also led to solipsism, irony, and nihilism. It is always within a romantic framework that the collective dimension of autonomy has been retrieved and transformed into a claim for national sovereignty against post-Napoleonic restoration. The search for authenticity of the modern self is echoed in much of the European movements for the birth of the modern Nation-States (Taylor, 2018), which had to retrieve and affirm the original character of the nation against baseless, irrational or even foreign authorities and, at the same time, was centered on respect for the inviolable freedoms of the individuals. In the present time, authors like John Rawls, Michael Walzer, and Michael Sandel, as well as critical theorists such as Jürgen Habermas, Nancy Fraser, and Axel Honneth, are well known for their contributions to philosophical thought on the nature and the meaning of individual self-rule. The political, the personal and the moral connotations of the word autonomy call the attention of those philosophers who attempt to discuss autonomy and to broaden its meaning within a variety of research fields, e.g., bioethics, care ethics, philosophy of technology and artificial intelligence (AI), environmental philosophy, etc.

Two considerations can be made at this point. First, we can affirm that there is not just one philosophy of autonomy, but many *philosophies of autonomy*. As this short excursus on Western thought has shown, the philosophical analysis of the concept of autonomy gave rise to different perspectives related to worldviews that vary from one epoch to another. Basically understood as self-government and self-determination, autonomy's meaning is multifarious according to the political, moral, and personal orders in which it is problematized. The fundamental question that arises here is if there is a continuity or rather a discontinuity among the different philosophical approaches to autonomy. In other words, we are invited to think about whether autonomy can be analyzed through a dynamic view that sees in its different

meanings an essential continuity across difference, rather than static separations or oppositions. Second, the notion of autonomy implies a positive and a negative dimension (Kekes, 2011, pp. 192–204). First, autonomy is linked to the quest for the social, political, and cultural independence of a designated group, to the claim of the flourishing of individual life and self-realization as grounded in the recognition of the equality of individual abilities and rights, up to the demand for equal opportunities and fair treatment of all individuals considered as free members of a society. In this sense, autonomy refers to the establishment of the positive conditions that allow for the achievement or the maintenance of self-government and self-determination. Autonomy reveals itself as inseparable from human agency and freedom, but not mixed up with them. Second, autonomy's negative dimension corresponds to its goal to prevent situations that can cause serious personal and moral harm or that can shake the political and social orders. The problem is to understand if the positive and the negative dimensions of autonomy are incompatible or if they complement each other dialectically.

From the claim of the flourishing of individual life and self-realization as grounded in the recognition of the equality of individual abilities and rights, to the demand for equal opportunities and fair treatment of all individuals considered as free members of a society, and to the quest for the social, political and cultural independence of a designated group, autonomy is inseparable from heteronomy. Autonomy is a concrete ideal that is to be accomplished in time and space precisely because, in everyday life and history, social bonds are largely asymmetric. In the asymmetries of the social bonds, there are those who have the power to decide for others in many fields of everyday life. A possible unsettling consequence of the asymmetries of the social bond is that the autonomous selves must impose their law on others in order to be truly able to give law to themselves. It could even be argued that the very project of one's own autonomy includes someone else's heteronomy, whose resources, spaces and workforce are considered necessary in order to grant the autonomy of those occupying the more powerful relational pole. In the Greek polis, the cradle of the concept of autonomy, there were slaves, colonies and subjugated settlements. All this can be seen as an aporia, or even a contradiction inherent to autonomy. One possible way to envisage this problem is represented by the Ricœurian perspective according to which the asymmetries of the social bonds may be amended by solicitude, that is, by recognizing the mutually constitutive dependence of the selves. In this framework, the project of autonomy is not in opposition with the recognition of the vulnerability of the self and the other. To a certain extent, everybody is heteronomous and vulnerable, the most powerful included. By recognizing that they depend on others, even the most powerful are faced with the recognition of their inherent vulnerability. In this frame-

work, autonomy is not the solipsistic self-determination of oneself against the other. On the contrary, autonomy can best be achieved together.

Autonomy in the Social and Political Realms

The concept of autonomy is also explored, if with somewhat different foci, in the political science literature, where it became increasingly central as the understanding of democracy and development underwent seismic shifts after the Second World War. In social and political contexts, autonomy is closely intertwined with the concept and fate of liberal democracy, and realizing one is not fully possible without realizing the other.

Membership in a liberal democratic state—citizenship—is the outcome of the centuries-long struggle for human rights. T. H. Marshall, in his classical study *Citizenship and Social Class* (Marshall & Bottomore, 1987), maps the history of citizenship through the assertion of individual categories of human rights as they historically emerged at the forefront of political battles for inclusion, voice, and the right to have a say in decision-making. Though first published in 1950, this rights-based conception of democracy was ahead of its time and foreshadowed the evolution in the thinking about democracy in the decades that followed. In this conception, the story of democratic citizenship is the story of a growing number of people fighting for civil rights (17th, 18th century), political rights (19th century), and social, economic, and cultural rights (20th century). Democratic citizenship is, then, defined largely, if not exclusively, by the catalog of rights (and corresponding duties) which safeguard the quality of life and opportunities of every individual. Unlike other, minimalist definitions of democracy in those times, which tended to limit their focus to elite democratic leadership, fair elections, and plurality of political parties and interest groups competing for power, the spotlight is here on the main recipient and the main end of a democratic state—its citizen and resident. The focus on rights, as an end and as a means for the development of society and its inhabitants, gradually became the dominant understanding of liberal democracy, so much so that the United Nations defines democratic governance as "a set of values and principles that should be followed for greater participation, equality, security and human development. Democracy provides an environment that respects human rights and fundamental freedoms, and in which the freely expressed will of people is exercised. People have a say in decisions and can hold decision-makers to account. Women and men have equal rights and all people are free from discrimination" (UN, n.d.), and refers to the code of international human rights treaties and covenants in which those rights are stipulated.

Autonomy is connected with democracy through the liberal conception of human rights, but also through the idea of the collective rights of com-

munities of identity—nations, ethnic groups, language groups, religious groups, and more. Fukuyama ties the two conceptions to the bifurcated development of individual and collective concepts of dignity since the time of the Enlightenment, when the individual and their worth started to be valued (Fukuyama, 2019). In his account, the foundation for dignity is the inner self's craving for recognition. Fukuyama links this to the "third part of the soul," taken from Socrates, which (next to the other two parts—desire and reason) is the seat of judgment, worth, anger, and pride (p. 23) and thus also the seat of identity politics and conflicts. The drive for recognition means that individuals as well as communities wish to be recognized as equal to others. While this part of the soul, Fukuyama asserts, has always been a part of human nature, "the belief that each of us has an inner self that is worthy of respect, and that the surrounding society may be wrong in not recognizing it, is a more recent phenomenon. So while the concept of identity is rooted in *thymos*, it emerged only in modern times when it was combined with a notion of an inner and an outer self, and the radical view that the inner self was more valuable than the outer one. This was the product of both a shift in ideas about the self and the realities of societies that started to evolve rapidly under the pressures of economic and technological change" (Fukuyama, 2019, p. 27). The quest for self-determination followed two paths—one linked to collectivities, especially ethnic groups and nations, requiring the competitive environment of modern (not necessarily democratic) states, and the path toward the realization of individual dignity, requiring a liberal democratic state defined by the notion of individual rights. Liberal and national revolutions simultaneously swept across the Western world, conflicting with and complementing each other at the same time. The increasingly individualized and uprooted societies needed nationalism to form new identity bonds and replace, to some extent, the function of socialization and value order that religion previously fulfilled. The tension between the prioritization of the liberal concept of individual dignity and the conservative notion of collective dignity is still alive and well and, in fact, on the rise, finding expression in identity politics and the so-called "cultural wars" that characterize many political scenes today.

The interconnection between liberal democracy and autonomy has also been explored from an economic perspective. As Western societies stabilized and experienced steady economic growth after the Second World War, a new generation emerged, which was born in peace and existential security. Ronald Inglehart has observed this generation and its difference from older generations through cultural values and has mapped the rise of postmaterialist culture, which arose from growing autonomy in the economic, social, and knowledge realms (Inglehart, 2018). While the Industrial Revolution led to the secularization of values and societies (but also to hierarchical order structures in the quest for the conquest of nature, and respect for author-

ity and conformity), the Post-industrial Revolution resulted in the rise of self-expression values and the self-empowerment of ascending generations. It is an economic argument, as this development is dependent on a steady economic growth and existential security, enabling the reorientation from materialist values focused on survival and order to postmaterialist values focused on self-actualization, rights, and social issues. According to this argument, a steady economic growth leads to the birth of generations that need not worry about day-to-day survival and which take peace as a given. This growing individual economic security and independence is accompanied by an increase in attained education and thus more knowledge-based autonomy—the capability to be more and better informed and to make decisions pertaining to one's own life, as well as by growing social autonomy—allowing people more mobility, traveling, settling in distant places, meeting new and diverse people. The result, besides an increase in personal autonomy, is a more open, diverse, tolerant, and caring society. The most significant shift towards postmaterial values occurred, not surprisingly, in the most advanced liberal democracies that are also socially redistributive and care about the environment and quality of life.

The liberal and national revolutions are accompanied by decolonial revolutions which combine elements of both movements and, at the same time, add the element of geopolitical and class struggle to redefine economic and political relations in the former colonies. This decolonization literature criticizes the power, class, and race relations between the former colonies and colonial powers (e.g. Césaire, 2000/1955), but also within the newly independent states, transforming existing relations and installing a new political class into the colonial power structure (Fanon, 1952), as well as through distorted legal codes that reflect the colonial legacy and misconceptions of the state (Mamdani, 1996). These relations and tensions, in turn, define and limit individual as well as collective autonomy, the struggle for which still shapes decolonial movements today. However, exploration of autonomy in this context, as well as its critique by feminist and intersectional authors, would warrant separate publications, which will hopefully appear in the near future.

A Decline of Autonomy?

The perspective that connects the scope of personal autonomy with political life leads to the important question of the reversibility of autonomy in relation to changing conditions. It is apparent that autonomy can be fully practiced in favorable institutional, political, social, cultural, and economic contexts. The present era has been dubbed the era of democratic decline. Over the past several years, indexes measuring quality of liberal democracy

have shown a decline in scores of liberal democracies worldwide. Individual freedoms, minority rights, and the rule of law are declining not only in new or less developed democracies, but in the most advanced as well. Decline in democracy is linked with global decline in trust, especially towards political leaders and media, a trend that the Edelman Global Trust Barometer has been observing for the past twenty-two years (Edelman Trust Barometer, 2023). There is also a growing gap in trust towards institutions and leaders between national elites and the majority of population. Less than half of citizens in democratic countries trust their institutions. This cycle of mistrust breeds further polarization within countries and serves as a feeding ground for the pandemic of misinformation, disinformation, hoaxes, and conspiracies. Personal autonomy, dependent on information, set in the web of interdependent relationships and institutions, is therefore necessarily impacted by such developments.

Part of the decline and polarization plaguing many societies today is the phenomenon of a "cultural backlash"—a conservative reaction to the postmaterialist developments which, by bringing new rights groups to the forefront, was perceived by many communities enjoying their status at the top of social hierarchies as a threat to their own status and a form of humiliation (Inglehart & Norris, 2019). It is also a result of two major shifts taking place in our times: the shift in the major political cleavages from the left-right cleavages to the conflicts of cultural values, and the technological revolution and the rise of social media that aided the re-tribalization of societies (Fukuyama, 2020, p. 11) and facilitates the politics of identity, challenging of authorities, and the rise in mistrust.

In sum, democracy and autonomy are challenged by the same developments, and their intersections and interdependence in light of their future prospects deserves more academic attention.

Overview of the Book

The essays collected in the first part of this volume extend the scope of Ricœur's analysis of autonomy through their various interdisciplinary explorations into phenomenology, semantics, aesthetics, literary theory, theology, education, politics, philosophy of technology, environmental philosophy, and theory of justice and memory. These essays share the conviction that autonomy can be said in many ways. For the authors of these essays, Ricœur's conception of autonomy goes far beyond his own work.

I. Paul Ricœur: Thinker of Autonomy. Interdisciplinary Perspectives

In the first chapter of this section, Jakub Čapek argues that, in Ricœur's work, the concept of autonomy has both a moral and a personal meaning. Without denying the complex question of moral autonomy, Čapek refers to

Ricœur's early phenomenology of the will (*Freedom and Nature. The Voluntary and the Involuntary*, 1960) and to his mature philosophical hermeneutic anthropology (*Oneself as Another*, 1992), to offer significant insights into the issue of personal autonomy, understood as the capacity to decide and act or refrain from acting. By following Ricœur's line of thought, the chapter carefully presents a critical study of the connection between autonomy and will and between autonomy and interpretation, underscoring the intertwining between the phenomenology and hermeneutics of human agency. Čapek finally turns to the problem of autonomy in current media contexts, providing a highly illuminative approach to the relationship between attention and autonomy.

Johann Michel draws on Ricœur's hermeneutics of the text and shows how it can be extended to images. More precisely, Michel aims at broadening the validity of the processes of autonomization and fixation of the meaning from the intentions of the authors to the aesthetic domain. The attempt to reconcile text and image from a hermeneutical perspective is developed with reference to examples such as Vincent van Gogh's 1889 "Self-portrait with Cut-off Ear and Bandage" and Edgar Degas' 1895 photograph of Renoir and Mallarmé. This framework is not limited to the development of a renewed approach to Ricœur's concept of autonomy. Rather, it also opens up a significant reconsideration of Ricœur's circle of triple mimesis (prefiguration-configuration-refiguration) and an original rethinking of the dialectic between explanation and understanding.

Sophie Vlacos' chapter addresses the issue of autonomy in relation to the concept of critique and its role in the philosophy of Ricœur. She starts from the skepticism towards the idea of critique displayed by contemporary realist and post-critique theories like Meillassoux's. The author argues that Ricœur's understanding and use of Kant's critical philosophy is compatible with the main assumptions of realism as long as, thanks to the critical gaze, it is possible to see reality as autonomous, that is, as non-reducible to the subjective and relativist standpoints of the subjects. At the same time, the authors considered by Vlacos as representatives of post-critique thought, such as Latour and Sedgwick, in opposition to Kant's correlationism, subscribe to conceptions of reality as open, pluralistic, multi-layered, and multi-dimensional, which makes it possible for different subjective points of view to emerge and be confronted in the public space. The author argues that Ricœur's peculiar reappraisal of Kant's critique serves precisely the purpose of defining reality in terms of pluralism and openness, as an "orchestration of appearance and limit": a definition which, by the way, fosters a non-dogmatic interpretation of realism itself.

Monica Gorza's chapter explores the concept of autonomy by proposing a critical analysis of Ricœur's reflections on biblical hermeneutics. Referring specifically to Ricœur's 1966 article "La Parole, instauratrice de liberté," she

focuses on the relationship between the Word of the Bible and autonomy. Considering the Word as a passive background in which human beings are originally inscribed, the chapter proposes to understand autonomy in terms of emancipation and freedom. These reflections lead Gorza to turn to a hermeneutic approach to the concept of listening grounded in Ricœur's comments on the Sermon on the Mount. In this biblical narrative, the hermeneutic motif of listening takes the place of the concept of "cura," a Latin word meaning to care and to worry. Through a philosophical rereading of the Word, Ricœur's reflection finally highlights the ethical value of listening. Listening goes hand in hand with the intelligence of autonomy and the joy of living. The unity of these elements leads to the conclusion that the human word is the only one that is free, emancipated, and wonderful.

In her chapter, Francesca D'Alessandris applies Ricœur's conception of autonomy to school-level education. More precisely, she sets up a dialogue between Ricœur and John Dewey's philosophy of education. The connection between these authors is motivated by their similar approaches to the problem of autonomy. This comparison lies in the framework of the ongoing research about a theoretical connection between hermeneutics and pragmatism. These two philosophical traditions share an interest in the philosophy of action, but also and more importantly a rejection of, on the one hand, any metaphysics, and on the other hand, any relativism and nihilism. Following Ricœur's and Dewey's theoretical and practical perspectives, D'Alessandris shows that autonomy emerges as a fundamental task for a democratic education. In doing so, she proposes a cross-reading of Ricœur's essay "Autonomy and Vulnerability" (1997) and Dewey's *Democracy and Education* (1916). Moreover, she acknowledges that this task can be pursued by educating to and through narrative, i.e., by supporting learners in being autonomous as a never-ending process of the realization of the self, with others, in democratic institutions.

Paolo Furia's chapter focuses on the concept of political autonomy and draws on different texts and parts of Ricœur's work to show the limits and the possibilities inherent in his approach to the issue. The author proposes three meanings of political autonomy: independence of the self from political power, collective autonomy underpinning the legitimate exercise of political power, and autonomy of the body-politic understood as a full-fledged subject endowed with agency and responsibility. If the first two meanings of political autonomy are clearly present in Ricœur's works, the third owes too much to the organic metaphor of the state as a living entity, a metaphor that seems incompatible with Ricœur's emphasis on personal autonomy and free will. The author argues that Ricœur's conception of institutions, in particular in *Oneself as Another* (1992), paves the way for a phenomenological account of political autonomy that recognizes the dependence of the capable selves on institutions, acknowledges the relative autonomy of the intersubjective

organized in political bodies, and sees institutions as ever-changing forms ultimately dependent on the creative character of subjective experience and the historicity of life.

Guido Gorgoni studies the issues of identity and autonomy within the context of our digital society. The author sees in Ricœur's conception of personal identity a good way, on the one hand, to understand the narrative and fragile constitution of the self in the digital era, and, on the other hand, to counter the risks implicit in the collapse of the self to a sum of data shaped by algorithms and dependent on the structures of digital and social media. According to the author, the idea of digital citizenship elaborated by authors like Isin and Ruppert (2020) blends well with the Ricœurian theory of the self as the subject of rights and capabilities, as elaborated in *Oneself as Another* (1990) and *The Course of Recognition* (2007). This entails a conception of digital space as a conflictual dimension where the self is exposed to various forms of influences and even abuses, but still can fight, also collectively, to turn into a digital citizen, aware of her possibilities and limits.

In her chapter, Maria Cristina Clorinda Vendra explores autonomy from the standpoint of the intersection between phenomenology of the embodiment and philosophy of the environment. More precisely, she aims at extending Ricœur's early phenomenological work to argue for a form of "ecological autonomy." The chapter presents a vital reconsideration of the concept of autonomy within contemporary emphases on the human being's challenging relation to the natural environment. In considering autonomy as related to the complex issues of body adaptation and movement, Vendra seeks to rethink the meaning of autonomy by insisting on human beings' situatedness within the natural environment. Who or what is, then, autonomous when we speak about "ecological autonomy"? Without denying the problem of the autonomy of the natural environment itself, Vendra points out that ecological autonomy can be understood through the relationship between the human organism, as a constitutive part of the human being, and the natural environment in terms of what she calls a "dependent independence."

The final chapter in this section brings us to the topic of the autonomy and possibility of justice through the concept of a *capable subject*, explored in Ricœur's description of juridical justice (Ricœur, 2000). Relying on case studies of subjects of law that cannot be described as *capable*, the chapter examines the limits of justice in relation to autonomy. These subjects are either minorities, like the Roma minority in Slovakia, who are incapacitated in this sense by systemic discrimination and by their marginalization and resulting voicelessness, or they may be subjects incapacitated by temporal passing, like the victims of the totalitarian Communist regime. The chapter then ponders whether *memory work* can achieve or simulate justice on behalf of those who cannot stake their own claim on the grounds of the institutions

of justice. The chapter is a segway to the next part of our book, which seeks to enrich the discussion on autonomy through its empirical application.

II. The End of Autonomy? Challenges to Autonomy in Social and Political Contexts

Ricœur was a philosopher deeply concerned with and inspired by the events unfolding in the present and historical time around him. His main hero, the capable human being, is situated in the social and political world and its institutions, the main purpose of which is the "good life." Therefore, in the second part of the book, we cross the boundaries of Ricœurian studies and explore autonomy through the lens of other approaches, such as Hegel's philosophy of nature, phenomenology, moral development theories, the capability approach, existential philosophy, and geopolitics. This spectrum of applications of autonomy to various social, historical, and political contexts will hopefully broaden the horizons and open avenues for future research, whether in relation to the work of Paul Ricœur or around the concept of autonomy in general.

The first chapter in this section, "Self-Determining Animals: Human Nature and Relational Autonomy in Hegel's Philosophy of Nature," by León Antonio Heim, considers the concept of autonomy in light of current critiques of the concept by naturalist and feminist philosophy and turns to Hegel for inspiration, finding that his understanding of autonomy has withstood the test of time and is of relevance in the current discussions on autonomy and its shifts.

Moved by the contemporary assaults on the institutions and values of liberal democracy, Andrzej Gniazdowski brings us back to the interwar period to consider the phenomenological critique of the solidarist and Fascist concept of the corporate state developed within phenomenological thought, primarily in the writings of Othmar Spann, which deny or subordinate personal autonomy to the community or state. The chapter "Corporate State and Personal Autonomy: A Phenomenological Approach" presents arguments against this conception of a corporate state; it also stands as an important critique of current Catholic thought and as a warning against developments towards authoritarian corporatism in countries such as Russia.

Lukáš Siegel's chapter draws attention to the consideration of autonomy in the day-to-day life of a diverse democratic society. His chapter on "Everyday Autonomy: Applying the Capability Approach to the Case of People with Disabilities" introduces the capability approach, which closely resonates with Ricœur's own perception of the capable subject in relation to society and vice versa. The author argues that autonomy, as the agency over one's life and freedom to decide and act on one's destiny, is best understood when applied to a day-to-day context and tested on situations pertaining to people whose capacities to act or think are limited by disabilities. The capability approach, grounded on the notion of a good life as life in dignity,

emphasizes the autonomy of any and all individuals. The purpose of the state, then, is to facilitate such a life for all, including for those with severe handicaps.

In a similar vein, though with a different conclusion, Dila *Özenç* explores the concept of autonomy in relation to people with psychopathy. Her chapter, "Free Will from the Viewpoint of Moral Development," studies the stages of moral development in children as described in development theories, and the link between empathy, conformity, and free will in the individual stages. The author hypothesizes that psychopathic individuals may be more able to practice autonomy as their empathic skills, essential for conformity to social rules and norms, are less developed. However, in light of these theories, it appears that people with neurodevelopmental disorders are not able to undergo all six stages of moral development and thus not able to reach the final stage in which personal autonomy fully forms.

The next chapter brings us to a consideration of the topic of autonomy in light of another limitation experienced by many in recent years. The global Covid-19 pandemic, whose reverberations can still be felt, has curbed the freedoms of millions around the world as they have had to endure lockdowns, undergo vaccinations, wear masks in public, etc. In the chapter "Absurd Rebellion Against Covid," Dominik Kulcsár explores the notions of freedom and autonomy during this trying time from the perspective of existential philosophy. Many also rebelled against these measures, a rebellion against "the absurd" that the human mind struggles to grasp. The feeling of absurdity was awakened by the disruption of routine and a harsh reminder of our mortality. The rebellion against the Covid-19 measures took place in the name of freedom, but often with deadly consequences for the rebels and others. Such freedom is mistaken, as its pursuit harms others. A true rebellion takes place in the name of shared values and goals; actions against the Covid-19 measures show a lack of solidarity with others, and therefore fail to be a true rebellion.

In his chapter, "Inside the Submarine: Europe's Dreams of Autonomy and Global Perspectives," Adam Bence Balázs considers the geopolitical dimensions of autonomy in present-day Europe, in a world in flux after the breakdown of the bipolar Cold War world. The urgency of recent global crises and the shock of a conventional war on European soil in Ukraine cast a spotlight on European delusions of grandeur, and urge the reconsideration of Eurocentric understandings of autonomy, which the author likens to Jules Verne's submarine Nautilus. Europe's struggle to maintain its status in the changing power structure of the world reminds us of the illusory and fragile nature of autonomy and its place in the web of interdependence.

This book helps us to cross some of the complex and risky routes of autonomy as a challenge, while shedding light on the challenges of autonomy. It serves, then, as a lantern providing some brightness to explore the spaces of autonomy. Enriched and deepened by interdisciplinary conversations, our understanding of autonomy will be opened to new issues and paths of inquiry. Therefore, we strongly believe that it would be misleading for this volume to draw a conclusion, if with this word we intend its customary signification of closure and a fixed end. Rather, we should acknowledge that it seems appropriate to complete our work with the sigh of the Ricœurian incompleteness (*inachèvement*). This is not an incapacity, but a productive paradox, enabling us to look consciously at the depth and the breadth of a reflection on the notion of autonomy that cannot be universally exhaustive.

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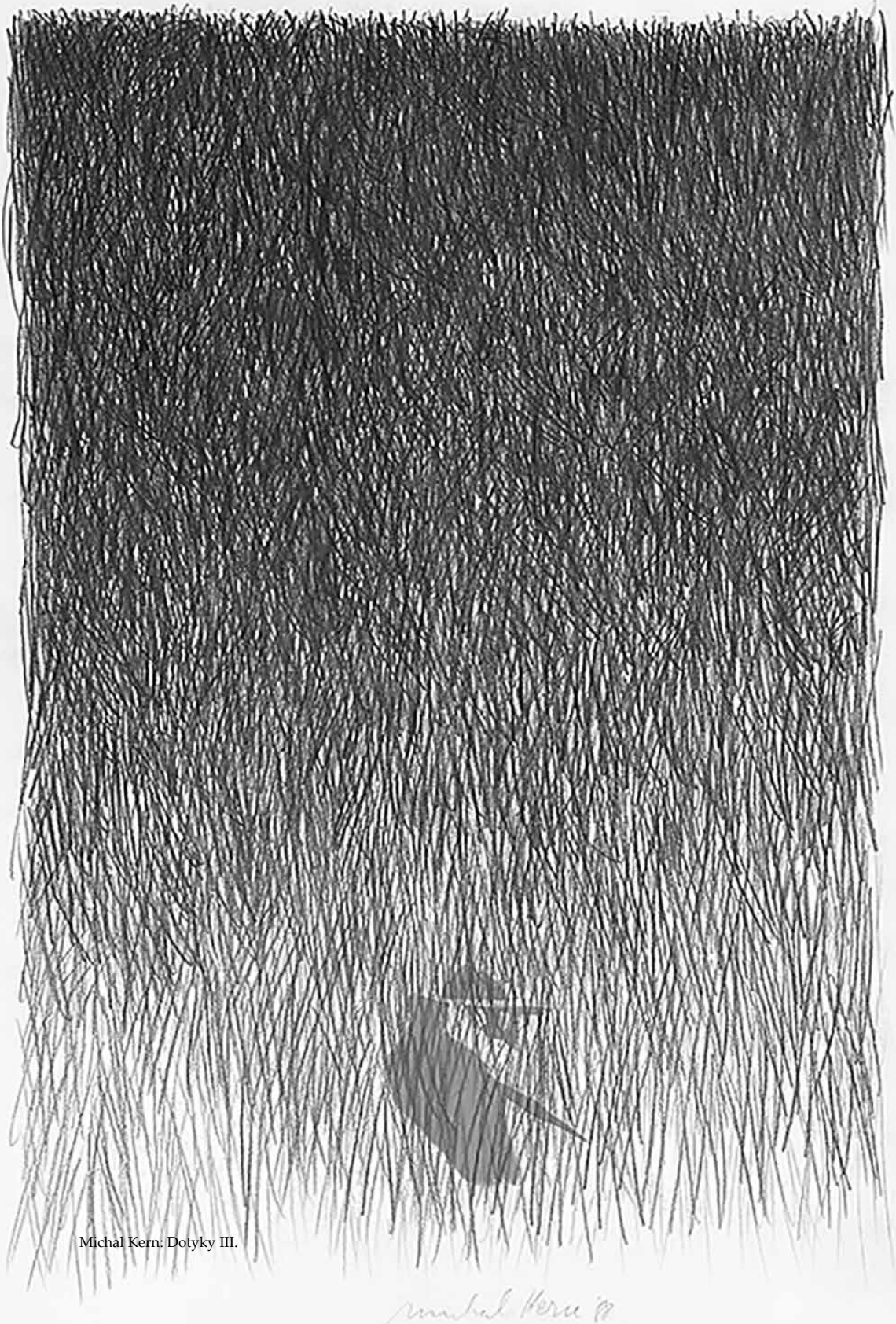
Part I

Paul Ricœur: Thinker of Autonomy. Interdisciplinary Perspectives



Michal Kern: Dotyky III.

Freedom of Will and Freedom from Will: Personal Autonomy in Paul Ricœur

Jakub Čapek

Abstract

Personal autonomy can be understood either in morally neutral terms as the capacity of individual self-determination, or in the more Kantian terms as the free self-legislation, a person being autonomous only if he or she is subject to the laws established or accepted by him or herself. The paper does not deal with autonomy in this latter, moral sense, but only in the sense of the individual's capacity to decide and to act accordingly. This capacity was considered by Ricœur to be an important expression of human activity both in his early phenomenological work *Freedom and Nature* and in his hermeneutic monograph *Oneself as Another*. Ricœur repeatedly underlines the largely dependent character of human decision and agency, but at the same time, he discards the existentialist emphasis on the experience of anxiety, dizziness, and indecisive hesitation as a "castration of an initial willing." This might suggest that his account of autonomy is voluntaristic in a sense. The paper examines the link between autonomy and will, as we find it in Ricœur's early phenomenology, and between autonomy and interpretation, developed in Ricœur's hermeneutics of human agency. The author questions the identification of freedom with the will in the early work and shows that the later, hermeneutic theory of personal autonomy moves away from this identification. While the late theory is inspiring in the way it transcends the will paradigm in thinking about individual autonomy, the early theory retains relevance for the contemporary analysis of autonomy in media. The online media's "battle for attention" represents a threat to personal autonomy. This threat can be grasped phenomenologically through Ricœur's analysis of the relationship between attention and autonomy.

Keywords: decision, attention, free will, phenomenology, hermeneutics.

Throughout his philosophical work, Paul Ricœur keeps coming back to the concept of autonomy, both in a personal and a moral meaning. Even though the two meanings are connected, they should be kept separate. Moral autonomy draws on Kant's idea of self-legislation, i.e., an individual is autonomous if he or she is subject only to the laws which he or she has established or accepted by him or herself. The concept of personal autonomy is taken to be independent from reflections on morality, it is "morally neutral" and focuses on the fact that persons are sometimes able to decide and act accordingly on their own. Personal autonomy is thus "the person's competent self-direction free of manipulative and 'external' forces – in a word, 'self-government'." (Christman & Anderson, 2005, p. 3).

This paper focuses solely on personal autonomy, i.e., autonomy understood as an individual's capacity to decide and act (or refrain from acting) accordingly. Ricœur considered such capacity of self-determination to be an important expression of human activity both in his early, phenomenological work *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary* (Ricœur, 1950 and 1966), and in his later monograph *Oneself as Another* (Ricœur, 1990 and 1992). In his early phenomenology of the will, he sometimes uses the term autonomy in the meaning of self-determination, for instance when talking about "the autonomy of a person with its own intentions and its own initiative" (Ricœur, 1966, p. 47). In his later hermeneutics of the self, Ricœur reserves the term "autonomy" solely for moral (Kantian) autonomy. Nevertheless, even here Ricœur makes a sustained effort to analyse human agency in relation to one's own life. I believe that Ricœur never abandoned the idea of personal autonomy as self-determination, though he did not want to pit this autonomy against the idea of dependence either. What he develops then, be it in his phenomenology or his hermeneutics, is a philosophy of dependent autonomy.[1]

The article reconstructs his idea of autonomy as dependent independence both in his early phenomenology of the will (part 1) and in his later hermeneutics of the self (part 3). During this exposition, some reservations are articulated concerning Ricœur's identification of the concept of freedom with the concept of the voluntary. These reservations will be spelled out on the background of his polemic with existentialism (part 2). I believe, consequently, that his early account should be revised in three respects, the main being the very concept of freedom. As I will show in the conclusion, Ricœur developed at least two concepts of personal autonomy in his philosophy. His early account can best be seen as advocating for the personal autonomy based on attentive (voluntary) intentional acts. His later, hermeneutic account develops a personal autonomy which consists in discovering what

[1] From the very beginning of his philosophical career, Ricœur resolutely dismisses any possibility of personal autonomy understood as radical independence. He states as early as 1950 that the "self as radical autonomy... is precisely fault" (Ricœur, 1966, p. 29).

a good life is by oneself. This account is less burdened by the conflation of freedom and will.

1. Personal Autonomy in Ricœur's Phenomenology of Decision-Making

As the title of the work *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary* clearly suggests, Ricœur starts with the idea of a fundamental bipolar character of human existence. Through the acts of our will, we have a certain hold on our life, yet it remains partly beyond our control. Our decision-making and actions are limited and remain dependent on non-voluntary sources, on our motives, emotions, and habits. This is clearly expressed in his choice of opening poem for the whole book. Ricœur cites Rilke's poem that describes a horseman who is connected to his horse, yet he is not one with the horse (Rilke, 1997, I/11, p. 63).[2]

In Ricœur's early thought, deciding is one of the three basic forms of willing, along with acting and consenting ("le consentement"). Each of the three forms of the voluntary is connected to a specific form of the involuntary. The decision is related to the motivation on which it is based. The second form of the voluntary, the action, stands in complex relation to "bodily spontaneity" (unlearned bodily faculties, emotions, habits). Lastly, through consent, the will relates to that which it cannot change, such as different phenomena of organic life, aging and the passage of time in general, personal character, and the unconscious. An analysis of decision-making thus forms a key part of Ricœur's philosophy of will. It elucidates, for example, how Ricœur conceives of freedom.

When defining the concept of decision, Ricœur states that a decision is, phenomenologically speaking, an intentional act. To decide is to "mean something," "to intend" or to have something in mind. A decision, once adopted, "means" (or "indicates") a state of affairs which is, for the time being, only future. Ricœur sets decision apart from other acts through which our consciousness refers to future states. We do not decide whether it will rain tomorrow. Decision is distinct, for example, from prediction, wish or command, all of which also refer to a particular future state. A decision, unlike the other acts, is related only to that which "*depends on me and which is within my power*" (Ricœur, 1966, p. 43). This first definition of decision—an act of intending a future which is in my power—is completed by Ricœur in many respects; let us mention but two. Every decision is based on certain motives, even if they are unclear or hidden, and every decision is made by someone

[2] Interestingly enough, Freud mentions the very same metaphor in *The Ego and the Id,* pointing out that "Often a rider, if he is not to be parted from his horse, is obliged to guide it where it wants to go" (Freud, 1961, p. 25).

who is to execute it. Consequently, even without my awareness, my decision is a determination of myself and by myself. I am pre-reflexively implied in my choice. The decision thus has a tripartite structure which comprises a plan for a future action, motivation, and self-determination: I decide to do something by myself based on certain motives. Once a decision is taken, this tripartite structure becomes articulate: I know *what* I want to do, *why*, and I understand, even if implicitly, what it means for *me*. Self-determination is thus a constitutive part of every decision, even though it often remains implicit: I am focused on what is to be done, not on myself.[3] Prior to the decision, that is, while our decision is only taking shape and we are hesitant and undecided, the holistic structure of the decision it already in place, though inarticulate: it is unclear what I am to do, my motives are ambiguous, too many or too scarce, and my commitment to the action is tenuous. Deciding is a progression from indeterminacy (indecision) to determination.

The description of the *process* of deciding—the "history of decision"[4]—represents the very core of Ricœur's phenomenology of decision. The focus is no longer on the static structure of the constitutive parts of every decision, but on the temporal process in which a decision is sought and takes shape. The person thus considers various options, evaluates the motives which support or invalidate these options, without immediately arriving at a decision. Ricœur conceives of this sequence as an ambivalent one. On the one hand, I do not invent the different sources of motivation that divide me, as I am passively exposed to my affective impulses and conflicts of duty. On the other hand, I can actively search for clarification, and it is me who has to take the choice. Within this experience, the flow of time is both "undergone and carried out" (Ricœur, 1966, p. 136). This ambivalent experience of time as a flow we suffer and as a flow we can steer reflects the fundamental duality of Ricœur's *Philosophy of the Will* (Ricœur, 1966, pp. 483–484). Consequently, the process of decision formation can be interpreted both in terms of continuity and discontinuity. The interpretation or – as Ricœur puts it – the "reading of decision in terms of continuity" (Ricœur, 1966, p. 168) portrays choice as a rational conclusion drawn from certain premises. The "reading in terms of discontinuity" conceives of choice as a leap that must be undertaken by the individual.

The "reading of decision in terms of continuity" is more characteristic of rationalist philosophy, represented for Ricœur by such figures as Aquinas, Descartes, and Malebranche. This reading can evoke cases where we look for the appropriate means to attain our ends, or – in Ricœur's words– where our decision involves "technical discussion, resolved on the basis of economy"

[3] Self-determination in this pre-reflective sense is an implicit and built-in feature of each decision and action, and not something we can choose or abstain from. The question is not whether we can determine ourselves, we do this all the time, but rather how precisely we do it.

[4] Ricœur 1966, p. 135. See the title of the chapter "History of Decision: From Hesitation to Choice".

(Ricœur, 1966, p. 169). When deciding how to get home from work, I am not faced with a very difficult choice, as I only have to assess the expediency of the given means. Although in such cases, the choice can be very similar to the necessary conclusion, the two are not one and the same.[5] The decision will not arise by itself, someone must take it upon him or herself. A decision thus always remains a project: the self projects the action, i.e., casts the thing to be done ahead of itself (Ricœur, 1966, p. 171). This impossibility to completely negate the voluntarist aspect of decision-making invites us to side with philosophers such as Nietzsche, Kierkegaard and Sartre, and to embrace the "reading of decision in terms of discontinuity". Our decision cannot be fully derived from the reasons we have. This reading particularly brings to mind cases where our ends or duties clash, "where our choice is ethical rather than technical" (Ricœur, 1966, p. 173). We can think of the example Ricœur himself gives in his book-length interview. At the beginning of the Second World War, Ricœur was an officer of troops that had been surrounded and he was faced with the decision whether to fight or surrender (Ricœur, 1995, p. 31). We can also give examples of decisions that had to be taken in the absence of sufficient information and knowledge (as in many covid-related decisions). The decision Winston Churchill was forced to take in his early days as prime minister can serve as another example here (i.e., his refusal to seek peace treaty with the Nazi Germany, as depicted in the 2017 movie *Darkest Hour*). The general point Ricœur makes here is as follows: even the most "logical" and continuous decision-making process has a voluntaristic aspect, and even the most voluntaristic or irrational decision refers to some reason and is thus not a mere discontinuity. Each decision is a combination of reasoning and boldness. The decision-making process is the practical reconciliation of a paradox which does not allow for a theoretical solution.[6] In philosophical literature, similar descriptions of the decision-making process can be found. To name but one, let us cite Ernst Tugendhat:

> The choice cannot be understood as self-determination, either (a) if one denies its irreducible volitional character, that is, if one claims to be able to reduce it to rationality, or (b) if ... one denies that it must be able to rest upon justification. (Tugendhat, 1986, p. 217)

The most original part of Ricœur's early account can be found in the next step, once he introduces the concept of "attention."

Ricœur compares the process of decision formation with perception. While doing this, he makes an important distinction. Perception can be ex-

[5] "I do not have to come to a conclusion" (Ricœur, 1966, p. 170).

[6] See Ricœur 1950, p. 159: "conciliation pratique du paradoxe" (or p. 197 : "réconciliation dans l'acte"). See also Ricœur 1951, p. 21: "il faudrait que le choix satisfasse à la fois à la légitimité et à l'inventivité ; à la valeur et à l'audace d'exister."

perienced either passively—I can be enchanted, obsessed, or fascinated by that which I perceive—or actively, in the mode of attention. In the latter case, I am not simply seeing something, but looking at it, no longer hearing, but listening to it, etc. In the former case, I do not have the "power of changing the object" (Ricœur, 1966, p. 165), I become, on the contrary, "a victim of the object" (Ricœur, 1966, p. 155). In the latter case, I do have the "power of making appear … objects or aspects of objects, by drawing them from the background." They then start to "stand out," they receive an "outline in space" or a "clarity" (Ricœur, 1966, p. 154), which are not qualities of their being, but of the way they appear. Although I am guided by objects, "*I* orient myself among the appearances" (Ricœur, 1966, p. 155). Attention is a general ability that can be associated with different intentional acts.

The process of perceiving is one possible application of attention, the process of deliberation and decision-making is another. Our consciousness it now focused no longer on objects and their aspects, but on motifs and values. They start to "stand out" in their outline and clarity. The gaze directed at them is both receptive and active because it combines the docility and "the mobility of vision" (Ricœur, 1966, p. 159).[7] Moreover, attention can both move and come to a standstill, i.e., it is both a continuous and a discontinuous process. Ricœur does not believe this could solve the paradox of the double interpretation of deciding as being both continuous and discontinuous. The paradox at a theoretical level remains. Yet what has changed is that it is only in the attentive mode and not in the degraded mode of "bound attention" (Ricœur, 1966 p. 155) that the process of deliberation and decision-making can be qualified as free. It is only if I can change my focus, if I am capable of allowing motives and options to come to the fore or recede into the background, that I am free. Ricœur even compares such deliberation to legal deliberations in court. An individual who deliberates—when considering different motives—is similar to a judge who calls witnesses forward and then sits them back on the bench. This is of paramount importance for the concept of freedom in Ricœur's *Philosophy of the Will*: freedom of decision consists in the mobility of the gaze. Our acts—remembering, perceiving, imagining, deciding, acting—are free only if executed in a certain attentive mode. The freedom we can aspire to is "freedom of attention." It is precisely in this ability to steer the course of our deliberation that, according to Ricœur, the "free" or "voluntary" character of choice consists. The terms "free" and "voluntary" refer to the mode in which our intentional acts are executed. "Free" and "voluntary" are synonymous terms (Ricœur, 1966, p. 152), standing in opposition to "fascinated", "obsessed" or "bound".

[7] It is when we are the most attentive, i.e., active, that we are also the most receptive, "the highest activity brings about greatest receptivity" (Ricœur, 1966, p. 155).

2. Ricœur's Exchange with Existentialism: Freedom and Anxiety

Nevertheless, we can call into question the identification of freedom with the voluntary character of our acts, be they acts of perception or deliberation. For authors such as Kierkegaard, Sartre and Heidegger, the fundamental experience of freedom is the experience of dizziness and anxiety, which implies our incapacity to act. Ricœur himself describes this feeling of incapacity in terms which resemble Jean-Paul Sartre's (Ricœur, 1966, p. 63). When deciding, I relate to my future existence, to something which is merely possible, and which depends only on myself. When I realize the power I have over my own future, I can experience anxiety, I can be overcome with vertigo. Thus, I will be separated from my project, unable to give my future a clear outline: my action is suspended, and my capacity turns into impotence. Anxiety is precisely my capacity deprived of its project ("le pouvoir sans projet", Ricœur 1950, p. 80; Ricœur, 1966, p. 83 "ability without project").

In opposition to this existentialism of anxiety, Ricœur claims that capacity can never be completely separated from the action in question. It is, in Ricœur's words, "the capacity which an act opens up before itself" (Ricœur, 1966, p. 64). In a situation where my capacity is disconnected from my action, I do not experience freedom at all. This is where Ricœur and Sartre disagree. Sartre gives an example of a book he is writing. The fully completed book is but a possibility:

> This work is a possibility in connection with which I can feel anguish; it is truly *my* possibility, and I do not know whether I will continue it tomorrow; tomorrow in relation to it my freedom can exercise its nihilating power. (Sartre 1992, p. 36–37)

I believe that Ricœur would redescribe this example by stating that the very concept of power consists precisely in connecting the possibility with the actuality of the book, not in separating the two. Our capacity is always a capacity to do something, a positive power. Ricœur connects the experience of freedom with Descartes' concept of "generosity":

> It seems to me completely mistaken to tie the experience of freedom to madness [vertige] or dread [effroi]. The experience of *exercised* freedom is free from anxiety... The "generosity" [générosité] which Descartes teaches is free of anxiety. (Ricœur, 1966, p. 65)

Ricœur's argument, I believe, is a conceptual one: the capacity and act are mutually related. The capacity is that which the action "opens up" before or ahead of itself, and the action can only be considered an action, and not

merely a process, if it retains the meaning of the fulfillment of a capacity. A reflection on my having the possibility in question and on the fact that I have not yet performed the respective action does not in itself lead to anxiety.

And yet, anxiety exists, and it can arise in the middle of our decision-making. This is not something that Ricœur denies. Instead, he undertakes to give an alternative interpretation of anxiety by connecting it with hesitation. When hesitating, we realize that not only the choice but also the lack of choice is up to us. Ricœur interprets anxiety as indecisiveness. He even maintains that the experience of anxiety as indecision qualifies us as human beings.[8] However, anxiety is not tantamount to freedom. The freedom to act is reborn once we put an end to our hesitation and set out to act. Freedom thus implies a leap.

> But this leap is not the fruit of anxiety, it is wrenched from it [il est repris sur elle] as a second immediacy of willing. Yet anxiety itself was not initial, but rather wrenched from the generosity of the thrust [élan]. I suspend the parentheses which suspended the act. ... I unmask the potential ability [le pouvoir-pouvoir] as a castration of an initial willing which discovers its own power in exercising it. (Ricœur, 1966 p. 189; Ricœur 1950, p. 179)[9]

According to Ricœur, the movement of the will in the formation of a decision is dialectical in nature. It starts from the "initial willing", or first immediacy, which Ricœur expresses with the Bergsonian term "élan" ("thrust"). This positive striving is interrupted, put into brackets. After attentive deliberation, we arrive at a decision, and we accomplish our action. By doing this, we rediscover the original, positive striving in a more mature form, we come back to some sort of naïveté. The original naïveté has to be broken. This is what anxiety understood as hesitation or indecision does. It is then reborn as the second naïveté or "second immediacy", as "a naïveté which has matured in the experience of anxiety" (Ricœur, 1966, p. 83; Ricœur, 1950, p. 80).

I believe that this reveals one of the key assumptions of Ricœur's *Philosophy of the Will*: the positive thrust is the most fundamental layer of activity to which there is no alternative. While the formation of a particular decision involves hesitation between different options, the individual's consciousness is constantly being driven by the fundamental "thrust." As articulated by Ricœur, "all hesitation, all alternatives stand out of a ground of a willing without alternatives" (Ricœur, 1966, p. 165; Ricœur, 1950, p. 157: "vouloir sans alternative"). Ricœur even concludes: "Maybe there is no absolutely

[8] He describes it as "a loss of thrust, loss of naïveté and of youth" (Ricœur, 1966, p. 189).

[9] For a similar structure—negativity is not prior, but comes after positivity—see Ricœur's highly complex analysis of negativity, esp. the concept "de-négation": we deny denial, we are in the positive both at the beginning, and at the end (Ricœur, 2001).

radical alternative in the form of 'to be or not to be'." (Ricœur, 1950, p. 157). I believe that we also find this willing without alternatives later in *Oneself as Another*, this time in the more teleological, Aristotelian sense of pursuing a good life, or in Ricœur's return to Spinoza's term "conatus."

We can thus summarize the picture of autonomy at hand here. Ricœur is advocating for a certain concept of autonomy in the sense of independence, yet it is a "dependent independence" (Ricœur, 1966, p. 483). We do have the autonomy of choice, but we create neither the options for the given situation, nor the affective forces or ethical values that motivate us and thus furnish our decision with the necessary framework. This is why Ricœur describes willing not as the beginning of movement, but as the modification of already existing movement: "Willing only moves on the condition of being moved" (Ricœur, 1966, p. 276). The freedom we have is, as he posits in the conclusion of his *Freedom and Nature*, "only human."

And yet, the question arises: even in light of the above, is not the existentialist objection still sound? I believe that Ricœur does not provide enough space for difficult decisions. While he does mention cases of conflict where different ends of one's life or different duties clash, he fails to draw the relevant philosophical consequences. I have already mentioned the example of Ricœur as an officer of surrounded troops at the beginning of the Second World War, having to decide between fighting in vain and surrendering. Aristotle calls this type of action "mixed," such as the case when sailors throw goods overboard during a sea storm. As they are acting out of external urgency, the action should be considered involuntary, but since it is up to them to decide, it is voluntary. "Mixed actions" prove that one can be compelled to choose something that one does not actually want *per se* (Aristotle, 2009, 1110a 11–12). According to Heidegger, there is a built-in negativity and even guilt in each decision, a negativity which manifests itself precisely in anxiety.[10] As a model example, we can recall the dilemma described by Sartre in his 1946 lecture *Existentialism Is a Humanism*.[11] If Ricœur believes that such dilemmas are real, and I believe he does, he should have revised his own analysis of the continuity and discontinuity of decision-making. Let us briefly sketch such a revision.

Firstly, each reading covers a different type of decision and implies a different concept of freedom. While the more technical decisions allow for an understanding of human freedom as coextensive with the voluntary, the less technical and more "ethical" decisions introduce a different concept of freedom. The context of such a decision is often not self-selected, but something

[10] "Die gemeinte Nichtigkeit gehört zum Freisein des Daseins für seine existenziellen Möglichkeiten. Die Freiheit aber ist nur in der Wahl der einen, das heißt im Tragen des Nichtgewähltthabens und Nichtauchwählenkönnens der anderen." (Heidegger 1993, § 58, p. 285).

[11] A young man during WWII is confronted with a choice: either to go to England and join the Free French Forces, or to stay with his mother for whom he was the only close person left (Sartre, 1996, p. 41).

we passively arrive at, whether through aging (career related decisions, important decisions pertaining to family life or public engagement) or through events that we find difficult or impossible to influence (such as whether and how we engage in conversation with a dying person). A decision we take in these cases can only be described as "voluntary" with reservations, echoing the famous existentialist freedom to which we are condemned. This inspires us to refuse Ricœur's identification of freedom with the voluntary. Maybe we can make a distinction here between the freedom we have and the freedom we are. I believe that Ricœur was later much more willing to incorporate this into his philosophy, e.g., by writing a chapter on the "tragic action" in his *Oneself as Another*.

Secondly, a decision, once taken, does not necessarily represent the end of all hesitation. There is a second life to our decisions. The "mature" life Ricœur refers to might be a life unsettled by the necessity of adopting a controversial decision, a life that still carries the uneasiness within it. The decision made by Winston Churchill still attracts the attention of filmmakers and repeatedly enters the process of negotiation of the British collective identity. The decision of Czechoslovak president Edvard Beneš in favor of the expulsion of German citizens after WWII has had and still has a long and very contested afterlife. A past decision lives on, as we revisit, reconsider, correct, confirm, or abandon it. Ricœur eventually became much more open to this involuntary and unwilled aspect of our freedom when he said: "we never stop rectifying our initial choices" (Ricœur, 1992, p. 178).

Thirdly, hard choices stand in a relation to our identity. They have revealing and transformative potential. As Charles Taylor suggests, "A self decides and acts out of certain fundamental evaluations" (Taylor, 1985, p. 35). They constitute the pre-existing background of my decisions and even enable me to "define an identity for myself that is not trivial" (Taylor 1991, p. 40–41). This invites us to see difficult cases as situations which are revealing of ourselves and are even potentially transformative.[12] They present an opportunity for personal change that we would not initiate on our own, voluntarily. Again, "free" and "voluntary" do not coincide here.

3. Autonomy in Ricœur's Hermeneutics of the Self

Ricœur's later hermeneutics of the self in his *Oneself as Another*, in the part dedicated to what could be called "personal autonomy," subscribes to a fundamental claim which opens Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. Every action and every decision aim towards some good. Since some goods are subordinate

[12] Ricœur hints occasionally to such a perspective already in *Freedom and Nature,* without nevertheless transforming it to a more developed account. See e.g.: "La personne naît de son écartèlement dans les conflits de devoirs" (Ricœur, 1950, p. 141).

to other goods, there may be an overarching good which is the aim of different human activities, identified by Aristotle as the happy or successful life. Ricœur transposes this into his own philosophy under the heading "Aiming at the 'Good Life'" ("visée à la vie bonne"). This aiming does not represent a particular intention, such as the intention to learn to play piano, but an overall perspective. Such aiming thus does not have clearly determined criteria of success or failure as in the case of piano playing; the individual must therefore find out on their own accord, through concrete decisions and actions, what exactly the good life means to him or her. It is in this way that Ricœur approaches the idea of the limited or dependent autonomy of the individual in his later work. The key concept is no longer attention, but interpretation. According to Ricœur, individual life decisions are to be understood as different interpretations of the orientation toward the good life.

In this context, the term "life" is an evaluative term; it denotes "the unity of the person as a whole, as that person casts upon himself or herself the gaze of appraisal" (Ricœur, 1992, p. 178). The term life is both evaluative, and indeterminate. Life is "the nebulus of ideals and dreams of achievements with regard to which a life is held to be more or less fulfilled or unfulfilled" (Ricœur, 1992, p. 179).[13] However indeterminate the whole of life may be, it is in its light that we interpret partial choices and actions. The idea of interpretation distances this philosophical account not only from Sartrean voluntarism but also from Ricœur's early emphasis on the will.

The idea that our decisions are interpretations of our aiming at the good life is understandable when contextualized within the "hierarchy of units of praxis" (Ricœur, 1992, p. 153). Ricœur distinguishes three units of praxis: practices, life plans, and the unity of life. "Practices" are the lowest level in this hierarchy. They refer to socially established complex activities, such as professions, games (not only chess or soccer, but also language games) and the arts. Once we have chosen, say, the profession of a concert pianist, teacher or politician, we determine only to a rather limited extent what can be considered the successful performance of that profession. It is then not the individual but the practice which prescribes what is to be done and how, should we succeed. The fact that practices have their own intrinsic good is of great importance for Ricœur, since it helps to "refute ... any solipsistic interpretation of self-esteem" (Ricœur, 1992, p. 176). It is thus both at the basic level of practices and at the top level of the unity of life that our decision-making and action is limited and dependent. As far as practices are concerned, we do not choose the goals that are intrinsic to these practices. Returning to the Aristotelian example, a doctor does not decide whether to

[13] This sentence shows that Ricœur is departing from Aristotle after all. Aristotle defines the good as the "activity of soul exhibiting virtue" (Aristotle, 2009, 1098a 16–17), not as the fulfilment of an ideal or individual project. For an elaborated version of this critique, see P. Canivez (2013, p. 156): "Cette interprétation fait problème en ce qu'elle attribue à la visée aristotélicienne du bonheur la structure moderne du projet."

heal, but how. As far as the unity of life is concerned, we neither decide whether our ultimate goal is the good life, nor do we decide which events deeply affect our lives. What, then, do we actually decide? Is there any field in which Sartre, and thus the voluntarism attributed to him by Ricœur, can retain his limited right? Decisions of life importance, according to Ricœur, concern the middle level of the hierarchy. Between the practices and the unity of life there are "global projects" which Ricœur calls "life plans." This term emphasizes "the voluntary, even willful, side of what Sartre termed the existential project" (Ricœur, 1992, p. 178). Life plans include, e.g., the choice of a profession and its consequences, the choice of a life partner, the decision to have a family with children or not, to become a political activist or to take up a long-term leisure activity as a response to one's mid-life crisis. How are such choices made? Ricœur characterizes them according to their intermediate position, that is, as a "back-and-forth movement between more or less distant ideals..., and the weighing of advantages and disadvantages of the choice of a particular life plan on the level of practices" (Ricœur, 1992, pp. 157–158). The choice concerns neither the aiming at the good life, nor the rules of the practices, but the individual practice as such: the choice is "the choice of a practice" (Ricœur, 1992, p. 178). A choice of vocation, life partner or leisure activity does not take place entirely in a vacuum. The choice of a life project has "advantages and disadvantages", however "willful" it may be, and can be repeatedly affirmed or questioned:

> We never stop rectifying our initial choices. Sometimes we change them entirely, when the confrontation shifts from the level of the execution of practices that have already been chosen to the question of the adequation between the choice of a practice and our life's ideals, however vague these may be, and yet at times even overriding the rules of a profession we have considered up to that moment to be invariable. (Ricœur, 1992, p. 178).

The decisions about our life plans are fundamentally revisable. Ricœur seems to be more open to fundamental hesitation and doubt here than in his phenomenology of decision-making. We can never preclude that "doubts arise about the direction of our life" (Ricœur, 1992, p. 179). According to Ricœur, the possibility of fundamental doubt regarding an individual's most important life choices shows that there is always "a tension, most often a discrete and tacit one, between the closed and the open within the global structure of praxis" (Ricœur, 1992, p. 179). Even though Ricœur does not speak about freedom here, it is this interplay of the "open" ("l'ouvert") and the "closed" ("le clos") that makes a person free in his or her search for the good life. Interestingly enough, this freedom ("l'ouverture") is not connected to agency and will, but to the possibility of hesitation and doubt. The question that can

always arise is whether the activities that occupy most of our time and the goals we strive for within them really reflect our idea of the successful life.

Doubts about our life choices are, nevertheless, very different from existentialist anxiety, because they are not completely unstructured. They can be transformed into the evaluation of our life choices in terms of their appropriateness or adequacy. Not only can a life decision be judged as good or bad, as adequate or inadequate. Moreover, it is defined by Ricœur as a search for adequation. This view bears the clear markings of hermeneutic philosophy:

> It is in unending work of interpretation applied to action and to oneself that we pursue the search for adequation between what seems to us to be best with regard to our life as a whole and the preferential choices that govern our practices. (Ricœur, 1992, p. 179)

Decision-making concerning our life plans is an interpretation in two respects. First, there is a kind of circle between the "good life" and the individual decisions, which can be seen as a hermeneutic circle between the whole and the part, where the understanding of the whole (the ideal life) influences the understanding of the part (a particular case: the choice of a practice) and vice versa.[14] Second, the meaning involved in life choices is a meaning *for someone*: what is interpreted is one's own life. The person who decides and acts is, in the words of Ricœur drawing on Charles Taylor, a self-interpreting animal. The appropriateness of a life decision can be evaluated, but never fully verified. We may possess "experiential evidence" that we have chosen well or badly, but this has epistemic status to which Ricœur returns again and again in his hermeneutics of the self: we do not have certainty, but conviction. In this case, we have the conviction "to judge well and to act well in a momentary and provisional approximation to the good life" (Ricœur, 1992, p. 180).

Ricœur extends this interpretative model far beyond the limits of the individual's life orientation. It applies not only to decisions concerning life plans (career, partner, family), but also to conflict situations that arise unexpectedly and that can take the form of a moral dilemma. For example, an individual must decide whether and how to tell the truth to a dying person (Ricœur, 1992, pp. 269–270). Again, this is a decision that cannot be clearly deduced from existing rules and consequently bears the epistemic status of conviction. Yet, because it takes into account the rules of society and the views of others, this conviction that one has decided well translates into the self-esteem that internalizes, so to speak, these external evaluative aspects (rules, others, institutions). Ricœur goes so far as to make self-esteem, in line with Hegel, dependent on "recognition," and to make this recognition

[14] As Gadamer has already shown in his reading of Aristotle, the individual determines at once the rule and the particular case (Gadamer, 1975, pp. 295–307).

a "structure of the self". Our self-esteem is thus profoundly conditioned by others and society. Ricœur explicitly allows for these "conjunctions of the same and the other" to enter the very heart of the individual, i.e., his or her conscience (Ricœur, 1992, p. 296). In his hermeneutics, the self is inconceivable without others. Nevertheless, this constant presence of otherness does not take from the individual the burden of situational choice.

Conclusion: Personal Autonomy in Paul Ricœur

In different parts of Ricœur's work, autonomy and dependence are compatible: in his early account, the autonomy of a person in decision-making and action is dependent on the motives and bodily capacities; in the later account, personal autonomy in the shaping of one's own life is dependent on the socially established practices and recognition of others.

In *Freedom and Nature*, "the autonomy of a person with its own intentions and its own initiative" (Ricœur, 1966, p. 47) consists in his or her capacity to decide and act accordingly in a way which qualifies as "voluntary." The criterion of "voluntariness" refers to whether the deliberation was conducted attentively. It is not primarily the content of our deliberation—or of some other type of intentional act—but the mode in which it is executed which makes it voluntary. When hesitating, we undergo the temporal flow, but we can also carry it out actively. If the latter is the case, the resulting decision and action can be considered "our" decision and action. This is clearly a procedural account of autonomy.

Now, what would a lack of autonomy look like? Non-autonomous deliberation and action would most likely reveal different failures of attentiveness. One example could be unfocused, distracted decision-making caused by physical fatigue or insufficient training and self-discipline in attentiveness or mindfulness. This proves that attention is a capacity that must be protected and cultivated. Attention comes in varying degrees and can be learned and unlearned. Attention can even be alienated and sold. Ricœur's idea appears to be very timely in this respect. The notion that our autonomy is connected with our capacity for attention has recently resurfaced in the discussion about our online presence, our "onlife." Internet marketing is described by marketing consultants as an attempt at "Winning the Battle for the Attention" (Atkins 2015). The strategies for online visibility deprive us of our capacity to direct the attention. Our attention becomes something to be occupied, captured and sold. Thus, the link established by Ricœur between attention and autonomy can be useful in order to demonstrate that our personal autonomy is in danger. Recently, a group of authors reflecting on what it is to "be human in the hyperconnected era" wrote an "Online Manifesto", claiming the following:

> To the same extent that organs should not be exchanged on the market place, our attentional capabilities deserve protective treatment. Respect for attention should be linked to fundamental rights such as privacy and bodily integrity, as attentional capability is an inherent element of the relational self for the role it plays in the development of language, empathy, and collaboration. (Floridi, 2015, p. 13)

On a general level, the account of autonomy developed by Ricœur in his early phenomenology of decision-making is not, in the first place, an account of the autonomy of a person, but rather of the autonomy of certain processes—deciding, acting, perceiving, imagining. Here, autonomy is the voluntary mode in which certain episodes of our mental life can unfold. However, the autonomy of an attentively made decision reaches further and extends to the self of the one who decides. This is one of the consequences of Ricœur's claim that every decision is a pre-reflective self-determination. Thus, the autonomy based on attentive acts can be transferred to the person who performs them, but apparently only for as long as the person is in that mode (attention). It seems that the autonomy based on attention cannot be extended to include the individual person as such.

Oneself as Another is in a sense much more holistic. The autonomy we find here is the *autonomy in finding out what constitutes a good life.* This autonomy combines acts of self-determination (life choices) with acts of self-discovery, i.e. voluntaristic self-governance with interpretative self-disclosure. Ricœur's later account is much less voluntaristic, precisely because it presents decision-making not as direct self-determination, but as a mediating activity, as a "back-and-forth" movement in which we interpret our conception of the good life on the level of everyday practices. A decision is not only a choice, but also a judgment. The concept of freedom is not reduced to the voluntary, but it also extends to the flip side of the voluntary: the openness to fundamental doubt which may arise unexpectedly, and which can free us from our voluntaristic life plans.

A person has autonomy—autonomy in finding out what constitutes a good life—because it is only up to the particular person to determine what is good for him or her. This autonomy translates into conviction that the person leads a good life, and subsequently into self-esteem, because he or she receives recognition from others and internalizes it in the form of self-recognition. This also means that Ricœur's later account of autonomy is in many respects a relational one. Only as relational beings can we have personal autonomy. The fact that this autonomy consists in finding out, i.e., of our own accord, what a good life is for us, does not contradict the relational character of ourselves.

What would a lack of autonomy look like from this perspective? We can imagine a person living in the moment, unable to see how their activities re-

late to the overreaching unity of his or her own life. To use the terms coined by G. Strawson, only a diachronic person, not an episodic person, would lead an autonomous life (Strawson, 2004). Here we touch on the limitation of this account: this concept of autonomy sets the conditions for autonomy high, making it rather difficult to attain. This would imply that people unable or unwilling to make life plans, like the episodic Galen Strawson or Ulrich from *The Man without Qualities,* are lacking in autonomy, at least some part of it.

I have criticized Ricœur's early account of autonomy by calling attention to the erroneous equation of freedom with the voluntary; such an account cannot accommodate the phenomena of fundamental self-doubt and the process of self-discovery through identity crisis as valid experiences of freedom, freedom in the sense of liberation from oneself. Nevertheless, this early theory also has advantages. It is a less demanding concept of personal autonomy than the later one, as it poses no need to focus on the unity of one's own life in order to be an autonomous agent.

Upon examining the two phases of Ricœur's thought, we can observe a pronounced shift from a concept of autonomy which equates autonomy with freedom of will to a concept which is much more open to the possibility that one is autonomous not only in cases where one freely articulates their will (or life-project), but also in cases where the individual is liberated from such articulation. Freedom of choice and will is thus not necessarily the only form of personal autonomy.[15]

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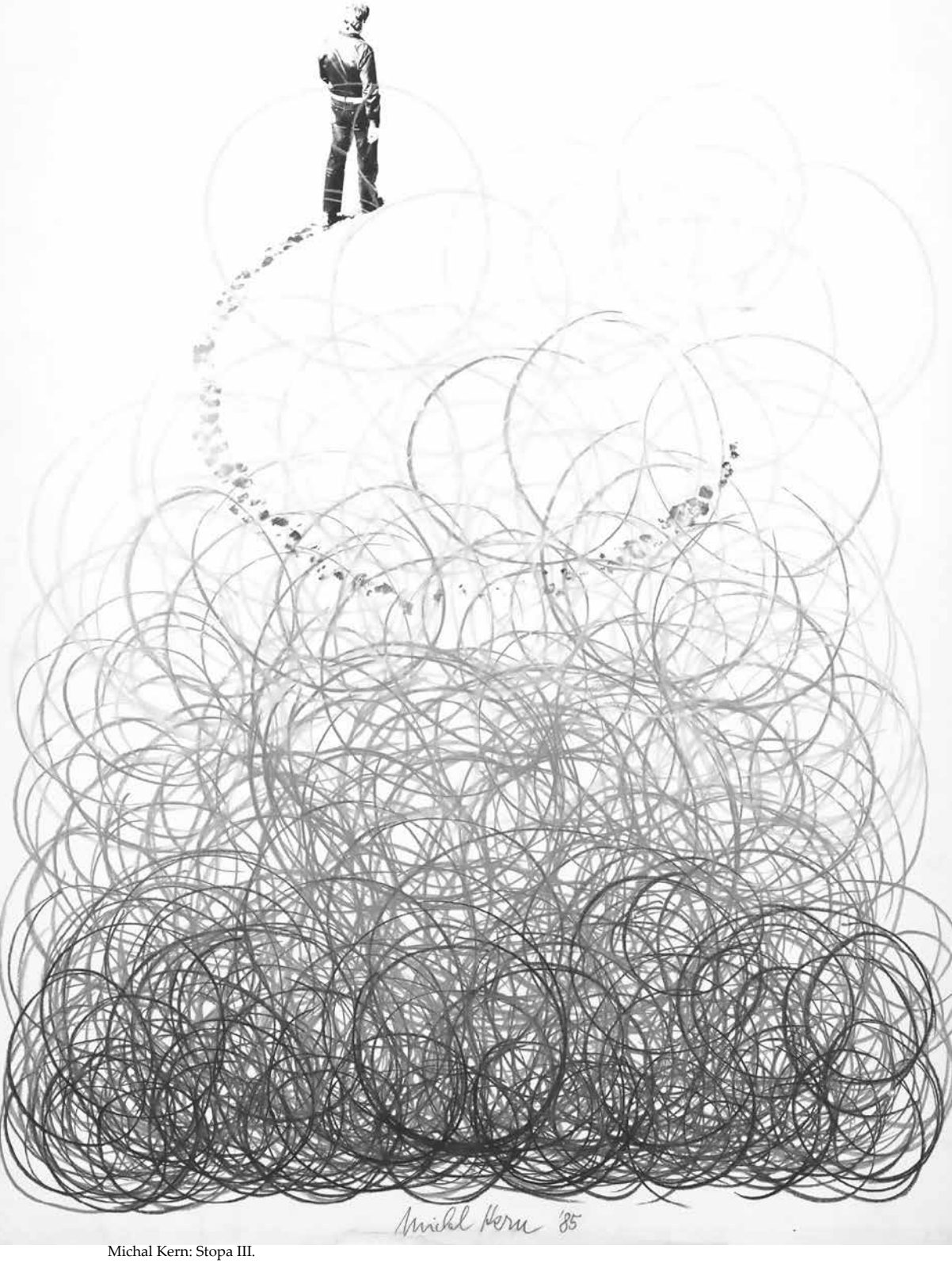

Michal Kern: Stopa III.

Du texte à l'image: l'autonomie du sens en question

Johann Michel

Résumé

Le cœur de l'herméneutique textuelle de Paul Ricœur se cristallise autour de la notion d'autonomisation et de fixation du discours, par contraste par la parole vive prise dans l'événement du dialogue interhumain. L'autonomisation du texte a des implications directes sur le plan méthodologique dans la mesure où il permet une objectivation et une explication de ses logiques internes de significations. Si Ricoeur a peu écrit sur la peinture, est-il possible de transposer à l'image picturale ce qui est valable pour le texte ? Le pari de notre contribution est de montrer que l'image est susceptible de connaître un processus d'autonomisation du sens, analogiquement, avec le processus à l'œuvre dans un texte.

Mots clés: texte, image, autonomisation, Ricoeur, art

L'herméneutique de l'image est quasiment inexistante, à l'exception de Gadamer, dans le paysage philosophique contemporain. Le contraste est saisissant si l'on compare cette absence avec le dynamisme de la phénoménologie, de la sémiotique de l'image ou de l'iconologie en histoire de l'art. Ce qui pourrait apparaitre comme une négligence regrettable est en fait explicable par la nature même de l'objet par excellence de l'herméneutique: le texte. Le primat herméneutique du texte comme œuvre écrite serait responsable de l'oubli relatif de l'image.

La philosophie de Ricœur ne fait pas exception à cette tendance forte. Paradoxe il y a dans la mesure où Ricœur est un penseur majeur de l'imagination, même si ses *lectures on imagination* sont encore en attente de parution. Mais c'est davantage en phénoménologue qu'en herméneute que le philosophe privilégie l'analyse de la production de l'image mentale ou de l'image verbale. Force est alors de reconnaitre que l'image comme support de sens objectivé, comme expression durablement fixée *qui se donne principalement à voir* est largement absente de son herméneutique, à l'exception d'une note sur un tableau de Rembrandt. Ricœur est pourtant l'un des artisans majeurs de l'élargissement de l'objet de l'herméneutique au-delà du texte, notam-

ment en direction de l'action. Mais l'image, et singulièrement l'image en art, reste un parent pauvre de son herméneutique.

Le pari de la présente contribution consiste pourtant à montrer que, malgré cette absence, l'herméneutique de Ricœur est assez riche pour se transposer, sous certaines réserves, au monde des images. Dans quelle mesure peut-on considérer l'image sensée comme texte à interpréter? En quoi l'herméneutique de Ricœur venant des textes peut-elle nous aider à mieux comprendre le sens d'une image en art?

Ces questions croisent directement l'enjeu de l'autonomie. Le cœur de l'herméneutique textuelle de Ricœur tourne en effet autour de la notion d'autonomisation, de fixation du texte par contraste avec la parole vive prise dans l'événement du dialogue interhumain. L'autonomie du texte par rapport aux intentions de l'auteur, de son premier public, de sa référence première, de ses conditions historiques lui permet de développer, par le jeu des interprétations et des réinterprétations, des effets de sens propres et de le définir comme "œuvre ouverte." L'autonomisation du texte a des implications directes sur le plan méthodologique dans la mesure où il permet une objectivation et une explication de ses logiques internes de significations. Ne peut-on alors transposer pour l'image ce qui est valable pour le texte ? Ne peut-on soutenir que l'image est susceptible de connaitre un processus d'*autonomisation* du sens, analogiquement, avec le processus à l'œuvre dans un texte?

De la textualité à l'iconicité

A compter des années 1970, l'herméneutique de Ricœur a connu un élargissement significatif des symboles à des séquences discursives plus larges que sont les textes (Ricœur, 1986). Quatre critères principaux permettent de distinguer la textualité de l'oralité.

Le premier critère concerne le caractère fixé du discours écrit, par contraste avec l'événement furtif de la parole vive. Dans l'écriture, le *dit* survit au *dire*, c'est-à-dire à l'acte d'énonciation.

Le second critère de textualité repose sur l'émancipation du texte à l'égard des intentions de l'auteur. C'est l'une des premières déclinaisons de l'autonomisation du texte. Dans le dialogue vivant, l'intention du sujet parlant et la signification de son discours tendent à se confondre. Avec le discours écrit, l'intention de l'auteur et l'intention du texte tendent à se disjoindre.

Le troisième critère prolonge ce processus d'émancipation et d'autonomisation au plan de la situation. Dans l'échange dialogique, la signification est indexée à la situation commune des interlocuteurs, *ici et maintenant*. Dans le discours oral, la référence est ostensive. Il n'en va plus de même dans le

discours écrit qui peut ouvrir un "monde" de sens qui excède les limites de la situation dialogale.

Le quatrième critère de la textualité porte sur le sujet d'adresse du discours et définit la dernière déclinaison de l'autonomisation du texte. Dans l'échange vivant, le discours s'adresse à une ou quelques personnes présentes. Dans le discours écrit, le public n'a pas de limite, sous réserve des possibilités techniques de diffusion du texte et bien entendu de la capacité de lecture.

Dans quelle mesure l'image sensée peut-elle être considérée comme un texte? Dans quelle mesure peut-on transposer ces critères de la textualité à l'iconicité? Le rapport entre le texte et l'image peut être de nature plurielle, selon l'acception que l'on donne au premier. Dans une acception très large de la notion de texte, le rapport peut être sinon d'identité au moins de similitude. C'est le cas si l'on revient à la parenté étymologique du texte avec ce qui est tissé (*textus*) et avec l'activité de tresser (*texere*): de même qu'un texte tisse un ensemble de mots, de phrases, de discours pour assurer une unité signifiante, de même une image tisse un ensemble de formes, de figures, de couleurs pour assurer une unité de signification. Dans une acception plus restreinte, notamment dans sa forme écrite, le texte est d'une nature bien différente de l'image objectivée du fait de leurs unités sémiotiques élémentaires, linguistiques pour le premier, iconiques et plastiques pour la seconde.

C'est moins sous l'égide du *même* et de l'*autre* que sous l'égide de l'*analogue* que l'on peut espérer penser le rapport entre textualité et iconicité. C'est du reste avec la même méthode analogique que Ricœur a cherchée à établir un rapport entre le monde du texte et le monde de l'action. Reprenons donc chacun des quatre critères de la textualité pour les transposer à l'iconicité. A la différence des images mentales qui restent aussi évanescentes que les paroles vives, qui apparaissent et disparaissent, les images picturales, et plus généralement, les images objectivées qui reposent sur un support physique, connaissent un processus d'*inscription* analogue à celui que l'on rencontre dans le discours écrit. Les images picturales ou photographiques comme les textes écrits peuvent *fixer* des scènes, des personnages, des événements, des époques aujourd'hui disparus. Les images picturales relèvent d'expressions vitales durablement fixées, pour parler comme Dilthey. Les images objectivées s'inscrivent dans une temporalité historique plus longue encore que les discours écrits qui n'apparaissent qu'avec les premières sociétés historiques. Les images objectivées témoignent de la vie de l'esprit de sociétés humaines bien avant l'invention de l'écriture, telles qu'elles nous apparaissent encore sur les parois des grottes préhistoriques. Les images objectivées, à la différence des textes qui ne concernent qu'une partie des sociétés humaines, sont présentes de surcroit dans la quasi-totalité des cultures humaines. L'image autonomisée est le mode d'inscription du sens le plus universalisable, bien

qu'il s'exprime selon des schémas culturels bien différents, comme l'a montré récemment Philippe Descola (2021).

Le second critère de textualité peut s'appliquer sans difficulté à l'iconicité. De même que la signification d'un texte cesse de coïncider avec l'intention subjective de son auteur, de même la signification d'une image objectivée excède le sens qu'a voulu en donner l'artiste ou son premier public. L'image objectivée développe des sens en fonction de générations successives d'interprètes, sans être cantonnée à son sens originaire. C'est ainsi qu'elle connait, comme le texte, un processus d'*autonomisation* du sens. Le phénomène est renforcé par une situation de fait : ce n'est surtout que depuis la Renaissance que l'artiste est pleinement reconnu en sa qualité de créateur. Si bien qu'il était difficile auparavant d'assigner une œuvre à un auteur et donc de lui attribuer des « intentions », sans même parler de l'art pariétal où les historiens ne disposent de peu d'informations sur les intentions des hommes préhistoriques qui peignaient sur les parois. Lorsqu'en revanche nous disposons d'informations, il serait regrettable de s'en priver, sans vouloir pour autant sonder l'âme de artistes. Le titre que l'artiste donne à son tableau constitue bien une forme d'intention *publique* qu'il a voulu donner à son œuvre. Il s'agit là d'un élément clé qui oriente l'interprétation du spectateur à partir d'une interprétation initiale de l'artiste.

Le troisième critère de la textualité peut se transposer sans difficulté à l'iconicité. De même que le monde du texte dépasse toute référence ostensive, de même le monde de l'image objectivée transcende la situation originaire de sa création et acquiert un degré supérieur d'autonomie.

Regardons par exemple *l'Autoportrait à l'oreille coupée* (1889) de Vincent Van Gogh. La situation ostensive initiale connue sous le nom de la "tragédie d'Arles" raconte comment Van Gogh, après avoir tenté de blesser Gauguin, s'est coupé l'oreille gauche avant de se précipiter dans une maison close, avec un bandage qui lui entoure une partie du visage. Si le tableau de l'artiste fait bien entendu *référence* à cette scène originaire, le monde du sens porté par le tableau ne s'y réduit pas. Suivons l'analyse qu'en fait Georges Roque (2008). La manière dont le peintre s'est représenté lui-même témoigne d'un contraste. D'un côté, la mâchoire crispée, les traits fermés, et le regard perdu semblent indiquer un sentiment de grande tristesse. De l'autre, les effluves de fumée qui se dégagent de la pipe peuvent donner l'impression d'une sérénité. Ce contraste s'expliquerait selon George Roque, à l'appui de la correspondance entre le peintre et son frère Théo, par l'intention de Van Gogh de rassurer ses proches et lui-même, après ce nouvel épisode de folie qui l'a amené à une automutilation. L'image rassurante de la pipe fumante serait le signe en contraste que le peintre aurait retrouvé une forme d'apaisement. Plus fondamentalement encore, le tableau manifesterait une recherche d'équilibre qui se joue aussi bien dans l'agencement des figures et des couleurs que dans la quête psychologique d'une harmonie du peintre avec

lui-même. Cette recherche d'équilibre qui se dégage du tableau n'est aucunement réductible à sa référence première, situationnelle et biographique : elle est susceptible de porter d'autres références et d'entrer en résonnances avec d'autres mondes. On peut tenir ainsi l'*autoportrait* comme une *possibilité d'être* (la recherche d'équilibre) qui excède l'être particulier du peintre et la situation tragique qu'il a vécue.

Reste enfin le dernier critère de textualité, dans le prolongement du précédent, qui tend à universaliser le public d'adresse du discours écrit, par opposition aux limites de l'interlocution vivante. Si le texte s'adresse, comme l'affirme Ricœur, à quiconque *sait lire*, l'image objectivée et ainsi autonomisée s'adresse à quiconque *sait regarder*.

Comprendre et expliquer une image

Conforté dans la possibilité de transférer, par analogie, les critères de la textualité à l'iconicité, on peut s'autoriser, tout aussi analogiquement, à transposer la dialectique méthodologique entre expliquer et comprendre du texte à l'image objectivée et autonomisée. La contribution épistémologique majeure de Ricœur à l'herméneutique tient dans la volonté de dépasser la dichotomie venant de Dilthey entre expliquer et comprendre. On rappelle que le philosophe allemand, contre le positivisme régnant, n'a pas ménagé ses efforts pour dégager une méthodologie, proprement compréhensive, aux sciences de l'esprit, par opposition aux méthodes explicatives en vigueur dans les sciences de la nature.

Sans chercher aucunement à rétablir un monisme épistémologique, l'ambition de Ricœur est bel et bien de réintégrer l'explication dans la méthode herméneutique afin de gagner en objectivité et en scientificité, sans que toutefois celle-ci n'emprunte ses principes au modèle d'explication dans les sciences de la nature. La recherche d'un modèle alternatif d'explication s'accompagne en même temps d'une remise en cause du modèle de la compréhension tel qu'il prédomine dans l'herméneutique romantique, de Schleiermacher au premier Dilthey. Ce modèle repose sur la possibilité psychologique de l'interprète de se transposer dans un psychisme étranger, sur la possibilité de l'interprète de mieux comprendre l'auteur d'un texte qu'il ne s'est compris lui-même.

Ce modèle psychologique de la compréhension, qui est en même temps intentionnaliste, apparait, aux yeux de Ricœur, trop fragile épistémologiquement pour prétendre fonder une science rigoureuse du texte. D'où sa recherche d'un modèle alternatif à la fois de compréhension et d'explication, pour ne plus les opposer, mais pour les dialectiser en montrant que *expliquer plus, c'est comprendre mieux*. L'enjeu de l'autonomie se pose à un double niveau, du côté de l'objet, en tant que le texte subit un processus d'autonomi-

sation du sens dès lors qu'il dépasse les intentions de l'auteur et la situation ostensive, du côté de la méthode, en tant que le modèle d'explication n'est pas emprunté aux sciences de la nature, en tant que la science textuelle est en mesure de se donner ses propres principes épistémologiques. En d'autres termes, l'autonomie épistémologique des sciences textuelles est possible non parce qu'elle reposerait sur un modèle seulement compréhensif, mais parce que leur modèle explicatif s'appuie sur la possibilité d'objectiver un texte fixé et autonomisé.

De quelles méthodes explicatives s'agit-t-il? Ricœur en trouve des sources dans la tradition herméneutique elle-même, qu'il s'agisse du cercle herméneutique consistant dans la compréhension réciproque du tout et des parties d'un discours, qu'il s'agisse des passages parallèles visant à prendre appui sur des passages similaires à l'intérieur d'un texte ou d'une œuvre pour éclaircir (par comparaison et analogie) des lieux corrompus ou des passages obscurs dans d'autres parties du texte. En fait, l'ensemble des techniques interprétatives, venant de l'exégèse et de la philologie, s'apparente à des procédures explicatives au service d'une meilleure compréhension du texte, lorsque l'interprète est confronté à des confusions, des contradictions, des obscurités dans un discours. Or, il est remarquable que ces modalités d'explication sont pleinement autonomes dès lors qu'elles appartiennent aux sciences textuelles. Mais c'est surtout dans les sciences structuralistes du texte que Ricœur tourne son regard pour fonder une méthode explicative solide et rigoureuse (Ricœur, 1986, p. 207).

Ainsi, la sémiologie appliquée au texte propose un genre d'explication étranger au modèle causaliste et nomologique que l'on rencontre dans les sciences expérimentales. Il s'agit d'une explication construite sur des corrélations à l'intérieur d'un système. A l'encontre d'un pur formalisme structural qui ferait de l'autonomie du texte une sorte d'absolu, sans portes ni fenêtres, Ricœur milite pour faire sortir le texte hors de lui-même, à destination du lecteur. Car le texte dit quelque chose sur la vie et la mort, le courage et la lâcheté, la souffrance et la joie, le hasard et le destin, le bien et le mal… C'est sous cet aspect que le texte *signifie* proprement quelque chose, peut faire l'objet d'une interprétation et contribuer à mieux nous comprendre. L'herméneutique reprend ses droits sur la sémiologie.

Le modèle sémiologique n'épuise pas toute procédure d'explication du texte. Ricœur a exploré dans *Temps et récit* (Ricœur, 1983) des modalités proprement narratives d'explication, à l'appui d'une relecture de la *Poétique* d'Aristote et des théories narrativistes contemporaines, sans avoir là encore à puiser ses méthodes dans les sciences de la nature. L'autonomie épistémologique est assurée par des méthodes venant des sciences textuelles elles-mêmes. C'est que le modèle de mise en intrigue, dérivé du *muthos* aristotélicien, est déjà un genre d'explication en tant qu'opération que Ricœur appelle de *configuration* (*mimèsis 2*), c'est-à-dire une fonction de médiation et

d'intégration d'éléments thématiques et temporels (une "synthèse de l'hétérogène"). Cette fonction intervient, d'une part, entre les événements et l'histoire prise comme un tout. Cette fonction intervient, d'autre part, dans la composition de buts, d'intentions, d'interactions, d'agents, des circonstances reliés les uns aux autres dans une totalité intelligible. Cette fonction intervient, enfin, dans la configuration temporelle du récit qui permet d'articuler la temporalité épisodique (évènements, péripéties…) et la temporalité globale qui contribue à assurer l'unité du récit.

Reste désormais à savoir comment nous pourrions transposer la dialectique de la compréhension et de l'explication de la textualité à l'iconicité. Peut-on expliquer plus pour comprendre mieux une image objectivée, analogiquement avec un texte autonomisé? Ricœur ne donne pas directement d'indications pour autoriser un tel transfert. En revanche, son ambition, au moins concernant le modèle sémiologique, est bien d'élargir la dialectique de l'explication et de la compréhension à des supports non textuels. C'est le cas pour l'action sensée. Nous pourrions dire à la suite que les images objectivées peuvent présenter comme les textes et les systèmes sociaux un caractère sémiotique; elles sont constituées également de codes et de message, d'unités spécifiques de significations, de structures de communications. Nous sommes d'autant plus autorisés à faire ce transfert qu'une vaste littérature sémiotique de l'image s'est développée (Klinkenberg, 1996), dans l'héritage aussi bien de Saussure que de Peirce, qui contraste avec la relative pauvreté de l'herméneutique de l'image. C'est dire par conséquent que la sémiotique de l'image est de nature à enrichir considérablement l'herméneutique elle-même, au-delà de son attention privilégiée au texte.

On peut d'abord faire droit à une procédure narrative d'explication, sous certaines réserves cependant qui obligent à une certaine prudence dans l'application de la textualité à l'iconicité. A la différence d'un récit de fiction, l'image objectivée comme une peinture ou une photographie n'est pas soumise à la même temporalité : elle tend à fixer une représentation, une scène, des personnages pris dans une même unité temporelle. En d'autres termes, l'image objectivée ne répond pas à la même synthèse temporelle de l'hétérogène que l'on rencontre dans une histoire racontée. Il n'y a pas de progression dans une image fixe. La situation est différente lorsque nous avons affaire à une succession d'images dont chacune constitue un événement dans un récit linéaire, comme c'est souvent le cas dans certaines églises. Ainsi de la Passion du Christ dont chaque tableau raconte un évènement qui a précédé et a accompagné la mort de Jésus. Chaque tableau ne représente pas une simple occurrence, mais constitue un événement qui s'agence dans une histoire prise comme un tout et fait progresser temporellement l'intrigue. Le même processus n'est pas contingent mais constitutif de l'image-mouvement que l'on retrouve dans l'art cinématographique qui a la particularité en

outre d'articuler discours et images dans une configuration qui peut pleinement s'apparenter à une opération de mise en intrigue.

L'image fixe échappe-t-elle pour autant à toute procédure explicative de type narratif? Si toute image fixe et autonomisée n'est pas narrative, pensons par exemple aux monochromes, on aurait tort toutefois de penser qu'elle ne pourrait pas par constitution raconter une histoire, bien qu'elle le fasse autrement qu'un texte fictionnel ou un film. Ce serait ignorer des pans considérables de l'histoire de l'art qui puisent directement aux sources de mythes, de récits bibliques, de tragédies, d'épopées. Loin d'opposer dans ce cas textes et images, il faudrait parler de textes *mis en image*.

Privée de la synthèse temporelle, l'image fixe ne peut donc raconter à elle-même *toute* l'histoire. Elle tend à se focaliser sur une partie de l'histoire, sur un événement ou une péripétie en particulier : la scène de crucifixion, la chute d'Icare, la vision des rois mages, la découverte du miel par Bacchus… Mais ces événements s'inscrivent dans une totalité implicite, dans une histoire inchoative qu'il revient au spectateur de refigurer. Si l'image fixe ne peut être une intrigue à part entière, on peut la considérer comme une quasi-intrigue : l'événement fixé sur l'image, s'il raconte déjà quelque chose, attend la suite du récit que le spectateur, s'il ne la connait pas, peut retrouver dans le texte, du moins lorsque l'image prend directement sa source dans un texte particulier. L'image fixe, si elle peut se suffire à elle-même, peut être aussi un appel au texte pour poursuivre l'intrigue.

Dans certaines peintures, la synthèse temporelle fonctionne toutefois *a minima*. C'est le cas par exemple de la représentation du *Martyre de Saint Blaise* peint par un artiste anonyme roman dans l'église de Berzé-la-ville.

Louis Marin en propose une analyse remarquable (Marin, 1994). La fresque représente deux moments distincts de la décapitation : d'une part, le moment où la tête roule sur le sol, le corps agenouillé, d'autre part, le moment où le bourreau lève son épée pour asséner le coup mortel. La synthèse temporelle, *a minima*, peut ici s'opérer entre un début (le bourreau lève son épée) et la fin (la tête est décapitée) qui permet de construire un récit, au moins un fragment de récit. L'unité temporelle de deux instants est spatialisée sur une même surface iconique et non sur deux supports différents. La succession est spatialisée.

Certaines images fixes ne procèdent pas de mythes ou d'autres supports textuels préalables, mais elles racontent quelque chose, quelque chose d'une histoire vécue. On peut s'appuyer ici sur la riche analyse d'E. Souchier (2008) de l'image photographique prise par Degas qui a immortalisé *Auguste Renoir et Stéphane Mallarmé*, que l'on peut croiser avec la dialectique de l'explication et de la compréhension, en venant de Ricœur. La scène raconte quelque chose qui n'apparait qu'en partie dans la représentation et que le spécialiste doit refigurer dans une unité narrative, à l'appui de témoignages et de documents externes à l'image. Elle raconte l'histoire d'une rencontre,

un soir du 16 décembre 1895, dans la demeure de Julie Manet, fille de la peintre Berthe Morisot et d'Eugène Manet (frère d'Edouard Manet), qui réunit, outre Degas, Auguste Renoir, Stéphane, Marie et Geneviève Mallarmé. La réunion n'a rien de fortuite. La photographie n'est pas un simple portrait du peintre et du poète qui verrait la célébration d'une amitié et en même temps la consécration, à travers eux, de trois arts (la poésie, la peinture et la photographie). Elle rend hommage à une disparue qui n'apparait donc pas dans la représentation, mais qui est présente comme spectre, condition même de leur présence à toutes et tous en cet hiver 1895. Vêtus de noir, les protagonistes se retrouvent autour d'un deuil, la mort de Berthe Morisot, présente dans son absence même.

Parce qu'elle est figée et fixée, la photographie de Degas s'autonomise de la référence ostensive initiale, autant que des intentions supposées de son auteur. Il est vain pour l'interprète de vouloir revivre le psychisme de l'artiste au moment où il a réalisé son œuvre. En revanche, la connaissance de l'expérience vécue, des liens unissant les protagonistes entre eux, y compris avec l'artiste, de leurs rapports intimes avec une peintre décédée quelques semaines plus tôt sont des informations capitales pour accroître la compréhension de l'œuvre. Sans être psychologique, l'interprétation nécessite l'appropriation d'éléments contextuels extra-iconiques, sous peine de passer à côté d'une part substantielle de l'œuvre. L'autonomie de l'œuvre ne peut être que relative si l'on veut voir autre chose dans cette représentation qu'une simple célébration de l'amitié d'un poète et d'un peintre, si l'on veut voir une histoire qui raconte une cérémonie de deuil qui réunit des proches de Berthe Morisot. Mais si l'œuvre est fixée, rien n'empêche d'y voir encore d'autres représentations, d'autres histoires, d'autres références qui appellent autant d'interprétations.

Pour mieux s'en rendre compte, on peut s'en remettre à une explication sémiologique qui prend le relais de l'explication narrative. Suivons l'analyse brillante d' E. Souchier de la configuration interne de la photographie, entre lignes, points et surface: "Les lambris Empire et le cadre de la glace dessinent, nettes, les verticales du décor, parallèles qui se répètent dans le miroir et soulignent ou encadrent la stature du corps debout de Mallarmé. Les horizontales assoient—sur le bord du cadre de la glace prolongé par le mouvement des mains et de la poche de veste de Mallarmé—l'espace propre aux deux mondes représentés : ici, les artistes, là les reflets et les ombres" (Souchier, 2008, p. 99). Des lignes encore: la diagonale descendante qui va du regard de Mallarmé vers le visage de Renoir. Soutenues par le mouvement de la tête, des bras, du buste et de l'épaule, les diagonales "sont ponctuées par les mains des deux hommes et la montre à gousset et du poète. Comme si Renoir et Mallarmé ne constituaient qu'une seule et même entité bicéphale, leurs corps fondus en une masse noire de laquelle s'extraient, blancs et vivants, les visages et les mains" (Souchier, 2008, p. 99). Les lignes verticales,

horizontales, diagonales convergent vers un point focal qui est le visage de Renoir: l'horizontale et la verticale du miroir, la diagonale qui part de la tête de Degas, comme celle qui vient du regard de Mallarmé. En fait, tous les regards convergent vers le visage de Renoir: celui de Stéphane Mallarmé, au premier-plan, celui de Degas, ceux de Geneviève et Marie Mallarmé dans le miroir, au second-plan. Lignes et points de focal dessinent en même temps des zones d'ombre et de lumière et deux surfaces principales, "au-devant, la scène des vivants, Renoir et Mallarmé ; au second plan, le royaume des ombres que révèle le miroir. Dans cet espace, les visages ont perdu toute expression, les regards se fondent à l'ombre de la lumière. Passés *de l'autre côté du miroir*, les corps ne sont plus que des fantômes. Les formes oscillent entre l'ombre et le flou, à la fois proches et lointaines" (Souchier, 2008, p. 100).

L'explication sémiologique, magistrale, que propose Souchier de la photographie de Degas n'en reste pas au seul niveau formel: la forme vise le sens, des messages se dégagent du code, un contenu des expressions iconiques. Pour le dire alors dans les termes de Ricœur, l'explication sémiologique est au service d'une meilleure compréhension de l'œuvre. Les habits noirs des protagonistes autant que les ombres portées, les visages diaphanes dans le miroir mettent en scène un deuil autour d'une image absente: Degas a figé pour la postérité un univers de chagrin dans la noblesse de cette femme. Si les personnages sont en deuil, si les lignes et les surfaces contribuent à construire cet "univers de chagrin," la photographie elle-même n'est-elle pas en même temps *travail de deuil* ? Une manière donc d'accepter la réalité de la perte de la mère ou de l'amie, en cherchant à dépasser le chagrin par l'investissement dans l'art lui-même. Une forme d'art-consolation ou de sublimation symbolisé par le puits de lumière qui troue l'espace de la photographie.

S'il y a bien une spécificité de l'image fixe par rapport au discours écrit, rien n'interdit de considérer l'image sensée comme un texte. Tout autorise au contraire à transférer un certain nombre de critères qui définissent la textualité à l'iconicité, au premier chef la fixation et l'autonomisation du sens. Si Ricœur n'a pas fait directement ce pas, les ressources de son herméneutique nous invitent à le franchir. C'est vrai également de la dialectique de l'explication et de la compréhension qui peut, sous certaines conditions, s'appliquer aux images objectivées. A rebours d'une compréhension immédiate, l'interprétation explicative suppose un "détour du sens" qui est l'explication elle-même, qu'elle soit narrative, contextuelle ou sémiotique. Bien qu'elle échappe en partie à la synthèse temporelle de l'opération de mise en intrigue, l'image objectivée et autonomisée est susceptible de raconter une histoire, fût-elle fragmentaire, fût-elle figée en un événement.

Du texte à l'image, il n'est pas seulement question de transfert herméneutique. Mais d'un va-et-vient, d'un appel réciproque, lorsque le texte est *mis en image*, lorsque l'image est *mise en texte*, avec chaque fois des transformations créatrices générées dans leur langage propre. Les images font parler

et écrire; les textes suscitent des images et invitent à peindre. Jeu de regard et jeu de mise en abyme où les arts se font miroir, sans se confondre. La photographie de Degas encore: le poète (Mallarmé) regarde le peintre (Renoir) qui regarde le peintre devenu photographe-metteur en scène (Degas), qui nous regarde en retour dans le miroir, nous invite à parler et à *d'écrire* (Marin, 1994, p. 191).

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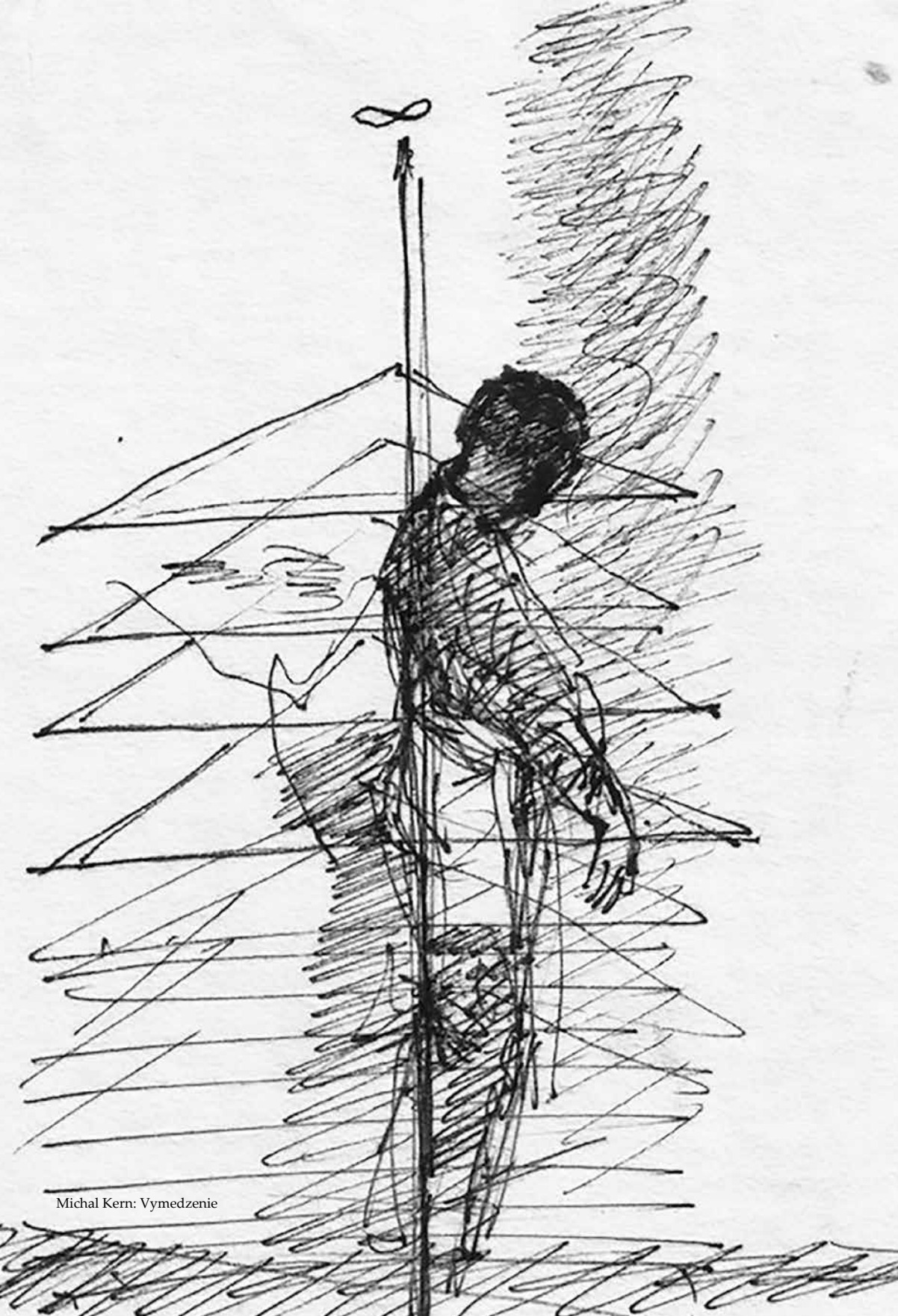

Michal Kern: Vymedzenie

Ricoeur and the Limits of Critique

Sophie Vlacos

Abstract
Critique plays a central role in Ricoeur's system of thought. Its role is no less crucial than that somewhat louder, wholly triumphant account of the productive imagination in *The Rule of Metaphor*. But critique in recent years has fallen into disrepute, along with the post-Kantian heritage of Critical Theory. Recent turns to realism within literary studies and Continental Philosophy register this rejection of, or at least fatigue with, the post-Kantian worldview; a view potently summarized by the Speculative Realist philosopher Quentin Meillassoux as "correlationism" (the inability to countenance a mind-independent reality beyond the correlate of thought and world). This position, directly attributed by Meillassoux and other contemporary realists to Kant and Kantian critique by extension, is commonly associated with the ills of cultural postmodernism, including the rise of conspiracy theory and post-truth culture in general.

In this essay, I bring the post-critique arguments of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Bruno Latour into dialogue with Ricoeur's distinctive hermeneutical reading of Kant. My contention here is that critique, read through Ricoeur's Kantian–ontological lens, should not be viewed as a scourge on contemporary thinking, but as a helpful and philosophically germane resource with which to counter the challenges of post-truth culture. This focus on critique also helps us to appreciate aspects of Ricoeur's philosophical method and disposition that are sometimes overlooked, I claim. Ricoeur is, by rights, a highly syncretic philosopher, but on account of his dialectical method, he is often also viewed as a programmatic thinker. This reputation for programmatic plurality belies the critical rigor subtending Ricoeur's dialectical orchestrations. It also conceals Ricoeur's acute attunement to the contingency of our understanding in the absence of such rigor and, by extension, his profound respect for the contingency of our predicament more generally.

Introduction

Ricoeur's mature philosophy is closely identified with the linguistic turn of his so-called "hermeneutical detour," whereby competing discourses and expressions of understanding are subjected to critical analysis and a form of speculative recuperation. With its emphasis upon signification and the production of meaning, the Ricoeurian detour operates within the ambit of linguistic and imaginative mediation and a tradition broadly construed—from the outside at least—as a form of anti-realism. It would be far-fetched to suggest we reappraise Ricoeur as a realist, but what I wish to foreground in what follows is an important point of consensus and convergence between Ricoeur's philosophy and the neo-realist arguments of some recent Continental thinking. The concept of critique, integral to Ricoeur's system of thought yet regularly maligned in Continental defenses of realism, is an important point of cleavage for these seemingly conflictual positions. Critique's fall from favor is symptomatic of a larger turn away from Kant and the post-Kantian heritage of Critical Theory. Addressing recent critiques of critique in light of Ricoeur and his distinctive, ontological reading of Kant, I present critique as an ally, rather than a scourge, of contemporary realist modes of thinking.

Critique and Post-Critique

Critique and the liberal adage of critical thinking have declined in prestige in recent years, with the presumed rationality of their operations coming under scrutiny. "Ours," Kant memorably asserts in the first Preface to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, "is the age of criticism, to which everything must be subjected" (Kant, 1781/2018, p. ix). But it is precisely the dogma of this Kantian "everything" to which contemporary commentators of critique object. "Why is it that critics are so quick off the mark to interrogate, unmask, expose, subvert, unravel, demystify, destabilize, take issue, and take umbrage?" asks Rita Felski in the introduction to her 2015 polemic *The Limits of Critique* (Felski, 2015, p. 5). Felski's argument in fact builds upon a 2003 essay by the queer theorist Eve Sedgwick entitled "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading"; an essay which takes its terminological cues from Ricoeur's well-known description of a "hermeneutics of suspicion." Critical suspicion is now uncritical orthodoxy according to Sedgwick—a canon of, I quote, "infinitely doable and teachable protocols of unveiling" determined not through reason, but through a contagion of paranoic affect (Sedgwick, 2003, p. 143).

Much of Sedgwick's essay is devoted to the illustration of this irrationalism which she claims borders on the tautological. Her illustration, exemplary in its orchestration of a single concept, is a study of carcerality, in

which the author draws upon culture and society to furnish an abstracted and extended conception of the carceral, which they then use to diagnose an endemic condition of social carcerality. So it is that a flexible and accretive relation to terminology rebounds in a deterministic reading of the culture it surveys. This theory is paranoid because it sees the so-called enemy everywhere, marshaling a wide array of phenomena under its aspect. For this tendency, Sedgwick also terms it "strong theory." In contrast to this theory of paranoic inexorability, Sedgwick espouses a weak theory, characterized, as she quite beautifully puts it, by "a heartbeat of contingency" (Sedgwick, 2003, p. 147). In what follows, I suggest that Ricoeur's philosophy, with its capacious dialectics and apparent syntheses (unfashionably programmatic and architectonic from the outside, one must concede), in fact pulses to a similar beat of contingency, illustrating a laudably weak—or to use the more Ricoeurian term "fragile"—mode of theory. But in order to connect this claim for Ricoeurian fragility to Ricoeur's reading of Kant and Kantian critique, it is first necessary to incorporate a further interlocutor of the post-critique landscape.

In the 2004 essay "Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam?," Bruno Latour extends Sedgwick's analysis of the paranoic liberal enclave to the populist realm of conspiracy. What's the difference, Latour asks, between post-truth conspiracists and the kind of social critique taught in universities? Both strategies entail suspicion and an appeal to what he describes as "powerful agents hidden in the dark" (Latour, 2004, p. 229). Whilst the names for these agents differ, ideology or the unconscious, or a secret cabal of the global elite, the mode of the reasoning behind these names and the paranoic flavor of the conclusion are ultimately the same. Latour also draws attention to the way parties from both camps vacillate uncritically between appeals to social constructivism on the one hand and appeals to putatively hard science or brute fact on the other. "A certain form of critical spirit has sent us down the wrong path," Latour claims, and he explicitly names Kant's transcendental philosophy—with its bifurcation of knowledge and the in-itself—as the source of this fateful misdirection.

For Kant, of course, critique is immanent and transcendental. Our *a priori* intuitions and concepts are objective, Kant claims, to the extent that they are formal and universal, but they are subjective to the extent that they originate and dwell solely within us. In this way, Kant forecloses on the possibility of mind-independent knowledge, restricting knowledge (and the post-Kantian tradition) to the limits of what the Speculative Realist Quentin Meillassoux describes as a thought-world "correlate." Latour holds correlationism responsible for our naïve handling of facts, as if facts were themselves beyond interpretation and critique and as if realism could only ever amount to the assertion of these brute facts. Critical thinking must renew itself, Latour claims, through "the cultivation of a *stubbornly realist attitude*." A realism or

"renewed empiricism," defined not by "matters of fact" (a phrase redolent of naïve realism and its false neutrality), but by what Latour terms "matters of concern" (Latour, 2004, p. 231).

This is how critique comes to prominence within the ontological context of recent philosophical realisms. Latour's ontological model, the sociology of associations or Actor Network Theory, is inspired by A. N Whitehead's process philosophy and involves the deposition of subjects, objects, facts, and suspicious fancies, all to the status of "gatherings," by which he means complex, dynamic, intra-categorial relations. "Objects," according to Latour, "are simply a gathering that has failed" (Latour, 2004, p. 246); an intra-active complexity reduced via the correlationist *Gestell* to that lumpen and inert status. But if we cease to reduce the non-human to simple matters of fact and stop the dualistic division between discursivity and materiality, our uncritical and paranoid flip-flopping between constructivist arguments and appeals to brute scientific fact would also stop. Latour ends his essay on a similar note to Sedgwick when he writes that

> [T]he critic is not the one who alternates haphazardly between antifetishism and positivism […] but the one for whom, if something is constructed, then it means it is fragile and thus in great need of care and caution. (Latour, 2004, p. 246)

The shadow of Kant's transcendental solution to the laws of nature looms large over Latour's analysis. By this account, the path from suspicion to paranoia completes a process begun in the early bourgeois Enlightenment, when, according to Seyla Benhabib (citing Reinhardt Kosseleck), the terms "critique" and "criticism" lost the sense of an earlier etymological connection between subjective judgment and objective processes (Benhabib, 1986, p. 19). This connection was rediscovered, Benhabib tells us, in the 18th century, when the art of criticism was called on to question the legitimacy of the absolutist state and to name the limits of its authority. But Benhabib points out that for Kant—as indicated in the infamous assertion from the 1781 Preface to the *Critique of Pure Reason* quoted earlier—no such *objective* limits apply to reason itself.

The claim I am making for Ricoeur's philosophy is that it is precisely *his* interpretation of the transcendental deduction, of critique's transcendental limits, that enables his text to respond to Latour's and Sedgwick's affiliated calls for a weak or fragile mode of critical theory.

The Limits of Critique

Key to this justification is an appreciation of Ricoeur's ontological reading of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason.* Whilst Kantian critique sanctions its own operations, this rational autonomy is not to be confused with a form of idealist self-founding. Concepts and intuitions are *a priori* properties of the subject, but they are objective to the extent that they are universal, the basis for shared experience: this formal unity of experience grounds Kant's claim to a mode of empirical realism.

In his 1966 essay on "Kant and Husserl," Ricoeur qualifies Kant's distance from idealism proper via a comparison of Kant's transcendental deduction with Husserl's phenomenological reduction. Ricoeur's central thesis is characteristically dialectical: using Husserl as a guide, he claims, we can deduce an implicit phenomenology within Kant's immanent critique. Whilst the Husserlian reduction (developed in *Ideas 1* and *Cartesian Meditations*) was, in Ricoeur's words, the "flowering" of this implicit phenomenology, it also marks a fateful point of departure into the realms of epistemological idealism, one that Kant's text corrects (Ricoeur, 1966, p. 147).

Ricoeur claims Husserl to be subject to an illusion: having deposed the illusion of naturalistic perception (the naïve *Cogito* which takes the outside world as given), Husserl institutes a second illusion when he elides the intentional focus of the reduction with a metaphysical claim for the centrality of the *Cogit*o. Key to this false conversion, as Ricoeur defines it, is Husserl's failure to acknowledge the Kantian distinction between intentions and intuitions (appearances): eliding our relation to something with its intuition, Husserl presumes the object's total fulfillment within appearance, and forecloses considerations of a being beyond appearance.

The glory of Husserl, Ricoeur writes, was "to have raised to the dignity of science, by the 'reduction,' the investigation of appearance" (Ricoeur, 1966, p. 167). Contrastingly, the glory of Kantianism was "to have known how to co-ordinate the investigation of the appearance with the limiting function of the in-itself and to the practical determination of the in-itself as freedom..." (Ricoeur, 1966, p. 167). The key issue for us, with regards to this analysis of Husserlian idealism, is the contrary emphasis Ricoeur places, by means of a corrective to Husserl, upon the ontological orientation of Kantian critique.

Too much stress, Ricoeur claims, has been placed upon Kant's epistemological concern to establish the unity of apperception. Kant's *Critique*—and this is where Ricoeur's interpretation of Kant clearly diverges from Latour and other caricatures of correlationism—is, he writes, much "more than a simple investigation of the 'internal structure' of knowing: it is even more so an investigation of its limits" (Ricoeur, 1966, p. 156). This thought of limits gives the *Critique* its properly ontological dimension, according to Ricoeur.

By the current interpretation, it is the thought of this critical-ontological limitation that sanctions Ricoeur's dialectical methodology, vouchsafing it in terms of its epistemic legitimacy and the wider hermeneutical claim for interpretation to reflect something of the structure of the being that interprets. My claim, therefore, is that critique, read through Ricoeur's ontologized lens, is the methodological pivot upon which his dialectic turns, bequeathing its twin orientation towards rationality and ontology. Ricoeur writes that

> The rooting of the knowledge of phenomena in the thought of being, not convertible into knowing, gives to the Kantian *Critique* its properly ontological dimension. To destroy this tension between knowing and thinking, between the phenomenon and being, is to destroy Kantianism itself. (Ricoeur, 1966, p. 156)

Drawing on the idiom of Heidegger, Ricoeur emphasizes the axiomatic and productive tension within Kant's critique between knowing and those conditions which stand behind the movement of thought itself. Ricoeur would evidently disagree with those contemporary realists who hold Kant directly responsible for philosophy's ontological forgetfulness, for constraining metaphysics to a hinterland of appearances and false antinomies between subject and object. Latour in his essay calls for a "renewed empiricism" to counter these false antinomies and what he takes to be the parlous state of critique to have issued from it. My suggestion here is that Kantian critique, as read and developed by Ricoeur, is consistent with and useful to this agenda.

In rather poetic terms, Ricoeur elaborates on this tensive orchestration of appearance and its limits, which we could describe in terms of our finitude, as instituting "a sort of disappointment at the heart of Kantianism" (Ricoeur, 1966, p. 156). But rather than condemn thought to quietism or an absolute idealism, the impossibility of knowing Being operates in Kant "in some active and even positive sense." He goes on to state that

> In the face of the impossibility of knowing being, *Denken* still posits *Being* as that which limits the pretension of the phenomenon to constitute ultimate reality […] One can trace throughout the *Critique* this connection between a *disappointment* (with regard to knowledge) and a positive act of *limitation.* (Ricoeur, 1966, p. 156)

What Ricoeur is of course describing here, through the lens of Kantian disappointment and productive limitation, is the very ethos of philosophical hermeneutics, an ethos of enlightened finitude, one might say, and a position stated most explicitly and succinctly via Ricoeur's figure of the *wounded cogito:* this is the figure of the understanding denied transparency and apo-

dicticity (a denial symbolized by the suspicious triune of Freud, Marx, and Nietzsche), but capable of rationality and self-understanding nonetheless. Ricoeur's patient, wide-ranging mode of analysis, his dialectical methodology, describes the indirect, interpretative means by which the understanding can come to know itself. It thereby instantiates hermeneutic's ontological orientation towards being-as-interpretation.

In the 1969 essay collection *The Conflict of Interpretations*, Ricoeur outlines his mature philosophical position and methodological program via a series of analyses and critical appropriations of key thinkers and schools. As a collection of interlocking essays, the edition brings Ricoeur's dialectical philosophy and the formative interpretations grounding this methodology into sharp relief. Ricoeur's critical appropriation of Heidegger, via an "ontology by degrees"; his legitimation and philosophical limitation of the Freudian unconscious; and his justification, via the discussion of the symbol and double meaning, of a dialectical philosophy entailing both the subject's "archaeology" and a regulative and hopeful "teleology," are all key to the substantiation and the orientation of Ricoeur's onto-hermeneutical mode of philosophy.

What Ricoeur also conducts in this work is his own bit of Kantian orchestration, between appearances, in this case the stated claims of other discourses and positions and their philosophical limits. But what, beyond that formative critique of Huesserlian idealism or of Heidegger's direct ontology or the general claim for a hermeneutical questioning backwards, sanctions the highways and byways of Ricoeur's hermeneutical detour? By what means does he sanction his own epistemic restrictions on other systems of thought?

The legitimation, when we find it, appears modest and fleeting, but the answer is definitive, and the answer is critique, understood, as Ricoeur describes it in the essay "Consciousness and the Unconscious," "in the Kantian sense of the term, as a reflection on the conditions and limits of somethings validity" (Ricoeur, 1969, p. 98). This reflection on conditions and limits circumscribes a thing's epistemic validity, but it must also be understood—following Ricoeur's reading of Kant—as ontologically invested, as if bringing the grounds conditioning those contours into something like negative relief.

This dual orientation informs Ricoeur's reading of the Freudian unconscious in "Consciousness and the Unconscious," where the question of their philosophical relationship to one another is framed in terms of a critique of Freudian realism. What kind of being comes to understand itself through the positing of an unconscious, we may ask. A philosophical appreciation of the unconscious's role in understanding first requires the dismantling of its naively psychologistic interpretation as a kind of hidden agent. Ricoeur describes this critique of Freudian realism as being

> epistemological in the Kantian sense of a "transcendental deduction" whose task is to justify the use of a concept through its ability to organize a new field of objectivity and intelligibility. (Ricoeur, 1969, p. 101)

So, a false Freudian realism will be supplanted, via critique, with what is effectively a Kantian mode of realism. The distinction Ricoeur draws here between a naively psychologistic unconscious and a rationalistic interpretation of the unconscious as a valid concept, in fact resonates with that earlier distinction drawn between a Kantian objectivity founded in the apprehension of limits and that false conversion following the Husserlian reduction of method into metaphysics: from intentionalist methodology to an absolute and self-founding perception. Kantian critique is the remedy to Husserl's false conversion with its false immediacy, and likewise, critique is the remedy for the unconscious as it is falsely converted or substantialized in its psychologistic treatments as a kind of substratum of agency. "Against this naïve realism," Ricoeur writes, "we must continually emphasize that the unconscious does not think" (Ricoeur, 1969, p. 105).

The reality of the Freudian unconscious for Ricoeur, by contrast, is a diagnosed reality, and one to which the principle of critique is axiomatic:

> We define […] the reality of the unconscious [through the] exercise [of] a *critique* of the concept of the unconscious […], i.e., as a justification of the concept's meaningful significance and a rejection of all claims to extend the concept beyond the limits of its validity. [… T]he unconscious is an object in the sense that it is "constituted" by the totality of hermeneutic procedures by which it is deciphered. Its being is not absolute but only relative to hermeneutics as method and dialogue. (Ricoeur, 1969, p. 104)

What Ricoeur's methodological relativization of the unconscious is not, of course, is a statement upon relativism in general. Psychoanalytical theory, as with its critique, reflects the reality of the operations which stand behind the positing, testing, and application of a concept and the consistency or reciprocity of concepts within the general economy of a given theory or a wider constellation of discourses and theories. In the humane sciences, Ricoeur reminds us, "'theory' is not a contingent addition but, in fact, constitutes their very object." "Doctrine," he goes on to state, "is method" (Ricoeur, 1969, p. 98). Crucially, the reality of the methodological object is, for Ricoeur, no different to the reality of physical objects "whose reality is [also] relative to the set of scientific procedures by which it is constituted." "Psychoanalysis," he concludes, "depends upon the same 'rationalistic approach' as the natural sciences" (Ricoeur, 1969, p. 104). In Ricoeur's hands, critique is thus a rationalism of relations: a constituting method correlative to the procedures of science.

What we therefore gain from this illustration of Ricoeurian critique in the context of the unconscious, is an indication of both critique's methodological centrality, of how it vouchsafes Ricoeur's epistemic credibility, and of Ricoeur's critical and rationalistic mode of realism—one which chimes harmoniously with Latour's call for a renewed realism framed, not by naive "matters of fact," but by the full panoply of constitutional operations implicit to objectivity, which Latour summarizes as "matters of concern."

Ricoeur's Fragile Theory

I started this essay by drawing attention to recent post-critique arguments and by foregrounding the similarities between Sedgwick's diagnosis of paranoid reading and Latour's condemnation of conspiratorial critique. Both thinkers hone in on the peculiar irrationalism of postmodern critique, calling for revised, less deterministic, or tautological modes of cultural engagement.

In Sedgwick's case, she laments the paranoia of the so-called strong theory, which, following our discussion of Ricoeur, looks like a distorted or monomaniacal Kantianism, whereby the very narrowness and force of the conceptual analysis leads not to the application of constructive limits but to their erosion, and to a concomitant expansion of the concept which works to undermine its credibility. By contrast, Sedgwick calls for a reparative reading practice "no less acute than a paranoid position," but one which "undertakes a different range of affects, ambitions, and risks" in order to learn "the many ways selves and communities succeed in extracting sustenance from the objects of a culture" (Sedgwick, 2003, pp. 150–51).

In apparent contrast to Sedgwick's critical-emancipatory agenda, Latour's ontological corrective to Kant involves what he terms "a second empiricism," attunement to the microscopic complexity and macroscopic entanglements of a modern scientific lens, under which objects rarely conform obediently, and generally resist being treated as lumpen matters of fact. To this new empirical attunement, one must also add appreciation for the historicity of objects and for the methodologies of their constitution. We must, therefore, replace the old opposition between interpretation and factual matter for an ontology of associations, entanglements, and process.

Ultimately Latour's objective is not so very different from that of Sedgwick; his re-orientation for critique being likewise focused upon thoughts of openness, plenitude, multiplicity, and community. "The critic," he writes,

> is not the one who debunks, but the one who assembles. The […] one who offers the participants arenas in which to gather [… and…] the one for whom, if something is constructed, then it means it is fragile and thus in great need of care and caution. (Latour, 2004, p. 246)

Careful assemblage, and meticulous reflection upon the hermeneutical constitution of the object, the assemblage itself, are exactly what Ricoeurian critique entails. A method—inherited from Kant no less—sensitively attuned to the limits of objectivity and to the interpreter's co-implication and co-constitution.

Kant's empirical realism, as contemporary realists are keen to point out, was really a form of intersubjectivity anchored by the universal, transcendental structures of the understanding. It was not a concern for things as such. Framing Kant's transcendental method, of course, was the need to square Newton's deterministic laws of physics with our moral and God-given freedoms. This project necessitated a starkly divided framework between the blind determinism of nature on the one hand, and the anthropos, with its questioning and dynamic autonomy on the other. However, a Ricoeurian appropriation of Kantian critical realism need not be constrained in the same manner. The parallel Ricoeur draws between the unconscious and the scientific object, with their shared dependency upon procedure, confirms this.

Secular suspicion and post-Newtonian physics present rather different challenges to autonomy than God and Newton; indeed, the challenge to autonomy today is not determinism so much as complexity, but there is nothing incommensurate about the call—*à la* Latour—for a renewed empiricism of entanglement, even a Whiteheadian entanglement, and the spirit of Kantianism conceived following Ricoeur, as an orchestration of appearance and limit, the positing of an unknown Being "as that which *limits* the pretension of the phenomenon to constitute ultimate reality" (Ricoeur, 1966, p. 156). Indeed, Ricoeur is keen to illustrate how this non-totalizing interpretation of critique implies Kant's refutation of dogmatic naturalism and the positing of "the empty position of an impossible science of creation" (Ricoeur, 1966, p. 157). This impossible science finds its positive expression within the immanent framework of process ontology and a vision of the world, such as Ricoeur himself depicted in later years, as somehow unfinished or still in the making (Reagan & Ricoeur, 1996, p. 123).

To conclude, Ricoeur's ontologized mode of critique illumines the limits of a concept's usefulness, the co-ordinates of its reality, but it also illumines the process of structuration and, indeed, the limits of its own operations without presuming to name the Being which sets those limits. Hence the open or unfinished nature of the Ricoeurian dialectic. Hermeneutical understanding, like Whitehead's process ontology, is always in the making. We can therefore characterize Ricoeur's philosophy—contrary to how one might describe it based on an external description of his dialectical methodology—in terms of openness and contingency and in terms of a philosophical invitation, in which regions of thought are very carefully constellated, in the Latourian manner of an arena, in which we can gather.

Ricoeur has never been a particularly fashionable philosopher. Yet as his presence in Eve Sedgwick's work confirms, he exerts a profound and enduring influence, usually eliciting the utmost respect. This respect and enduring influence are borne of his rigorous, patient, and wide-ranging mode of critical philosophy, coupled with a pedagogical generosity that can occasionally be mistaken for neutrality.

This is the strength, perhaps also the weakness, of Ricoeur's fragile mode of critical theory; one less concerned with the discovery of new theoretical objects than with the testing and limiting of their conceptual validity, with their constellation, and with speculation upon the type of being that they imply.

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Michal Kern: Strom

Parole et autonomie

Monica Gorza

Abstract
Dans cet article, il s'agit d'explorer le thème de l'autonomie à partir des analyses que Paul Ricœur a consacrées à l'herméneutique biblique. Nous examinerons notamment le rapport étroit existant entre Parole et autonomie qui figure dans l'article intitulé "La Parole, instauratrice de liberté," publié en 1966, dans les *Cahiers universitaires catholiques*. Notons que le contenu de cet écrit est similaire à celui de l'article intitulé "Autonomie et obéissance," publié en 1967, dans les *Cahiers d'Orgemont*. Aux yeux de Ricœur, le concept d'autonomie est synonyme d'émancipation et de liberté. En outre, ce concept est indissociable d'une vision critique de la Parole.

Mots clés: herméneutique biblique, émancipation, liberté, écoute, action

Paul Ricœur accorde à la religion une place importante dans sa réflexion. Dans la conférence intitulée "La Parole, instauratrice de liberté," tenue devant un groupe d'amis de la Paroisse Universitaire, au cours de l'année 1966, Ricœur a introduit le motif de la confession, en partant du constat que la parole est liée à la sphère de l'action. De plus, il a insisté sur les concepts de témoignage et d'œuvre pour expliquer que confesser, c'est agir. Aux yeux de Ricœur, la parole des Écritures a précisément le pouvoir de modeler et de transformer la compréhension que nous avons de nous-mêmes. Toutefois, confesser signifie aussi obéir, c'est-à-dire répondre, ou plus exactement: être responsables. L'obéissance que requiert la foi incite alors Ricœur à réfléchir sur ce qui sépare la soumission de l'autonomie. Nous nous efforcerons d'analyser cette notion d'autonomie que le philosophe expose dans "La Parole, instauratrice de liberté" et procèderons en deux temps. Tout d'abord, nous interrogerons la vision protestante de la confession. Pour les protestants, l'aveu conduit à s'émanciper de toute autorité, qu'il s'agisse de celle du dogme ou de l'Institution, à la faveur d'une nouvelle conception de la su-

jectivité qui s'appuie sur la Parole que l'homme écoute, lit et profère[1]. Dans la seconde partie de cet article, nous reviendrons sur la dette que Ricœur entretient avec la pensée de Heidegger afin de mettre en lumière la liberté qui résulte de la parole entendue, comprise et agissante.

L'action

La parole n'est pas dissociable de l'action. Selon Ricœur, la parole désigne "quelque chose qui est déjà à l'origine d'un agir, en ce sens que la parole entendue et comprise change la compréhension que nous avons de nous-mêmes, et ainsi nous change nous-mêmes" (Ricœur, 1966a, p. 506). Cette affirmation s'avère importante pour deux raisons distinctes. En premier lieu, elle rejoint les thèses que le philosophe avait précédemment élaborées dans *Histoire et vérité* alors qu'il s'intéressait à l'agir comme fragment initiateur, puis régulateur, de l'œuvre (Ricœur, 1955). En second lieu, il convient de rappeler que c'est durant les années 1980—dans la trilogie intitulée *Temps et Récit*—que Ricœur a approfondi la question du changement de nous-mêmes par le biais de la compréhension. En particulier, la sphère du texte a le pouvoir de modifier notre manière d'être au monde car comprendre un texte signifie essentiellement "interpoler parmi les prédicats de notre situation toutes les significations qui, d'un simple environnement (*Umwelt*), font un monde (*Welt*)" (Ricœur, 1983, p. 121). Aux yeux de ce philosophe, nos identités personnelles se constituent par la fréquentation de récits d'histoire ou de fiction. En ce sens, Johann Michel explique que nos identités se font et défont "en vertu d'un 'double transfert': d'une part, le transfert de la dialectique gouvernant le récit vers les personnages eux-mêmes, d'autre part, le transfert de cette dialectique à l'identité personnelle" (Michel, 2003, p. 127). Le transfert de l'identité du personnage de récit vers l'identité personnelle correspond à ce que Ricœur appelle la *refiguration* (*mimèsis III*).[2] Celle-ci désigne la fonction qui renoue les relations entre le monde du texte et celui extérieur à ce dernier. Selon Ricœur, un texte n'existe pas, en effet, pour lui-même, mais pour être lu: ce constat primordial fait que "le récit ne consiste pas seulement dans un 'agacement interne;' il est encore une 'proposition de monde' dont la finalité est de revenir à la vie même et de transformer ainsi les identités personnelles" (Michel, 2003, p. 128).

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[1] Notons qu'en 2001 Ricœur publia dans *Le Juste 2* deux articles qui abordaient les motifs de l'autorité et de l'autonomie d'un point de vue philosophique. Cet ouvrage comprend une étude consacrée au paradoxe de l'autorité, datant de 1996 et une autre qui explore les rapports entre autonomie et vulnérabilité, publiée pour la première fois en 1997.

[2] La *mimèsis I* correspond à la *préfiguration* narrative, tandis que la *mimèsis II* renvoie à la *configuration* narrative. Michel met en évidence que la *configuration* consiste en "une opération de mise en intrigue de l'action racontée. Ajoutons ici que cette opération suppose une suspension de l'action réelle, bien que P. Ricœur n'admette pas pour autant une discontinuité absolue entre la vie et le récit. Ainsi l'action racontée—fût-elle fictive—, suppose une pré-compréhension de l'action réelle, mieux définie comme *préfiguration (mimèsis I)*" (Michel, 2003, p. 128).

Au moment où Ricœur prononce la conférence intitulée "La Parole, instauratrice de liberté," il oriente ses analyses vers le concept d'œuvre comme action et témoignage. Il s'appuie plus précisément sur la conception paulinienne du salut afin de montrer comment les rapports entre homme et Parole pourraient être à "l'origine d'une obéissance qui serait en même temps la source d'une autonomie, d'une liberté responsable" (Ricœur, 1966a, p. 494). Ricœur (1966a) écrit:

> Saint Paul nous propose de prendre comme axe fondamental de notre vie éthique la confrontation du salut par les œuvres et du salut par la foi. Nous sommes alors avertis que nous ne pouvons pas poser le problème de l'obéissance de la foi dans le cadre d'une éthique de la loi, et qu'il n'est pas possible de faire coïncider l'obéissance authentique avec le régime même d'une existence soumise à la loi, sous peine de retourner à ce que saint Paul appelait les 'rudiments du monde.' (p. 496)

Comme le montre cet extrait, Ricœur opère un basculement sémantique, car dans son argumentation, le mot œuvre ne désigne pas seulement le texte, la Parole, mais aussi l'acte humain, ou mieux, le témoignage.[3] C'est ainsi que s'ouvre le champ de la confession et, notamment, celui de la confession de foi. Johann Michel (2015) souligne fort bien que Ricœur hérite sa vision de la confession de la tradition protestante, dans la mesure où

> Le protestantisme a essayé de mieux ajuster herméneutique du soi et herméneutique des textes en faisant en sorte "que ce que l'on découvre au fond de soi-même, ce soit la vérité même de la foi, c'est-à-dire la vérité même qui est donnée dans le texte" [P. Ricœur, *Philosophie de la volonté, t. 2, Finitude et culpabilité*, Seuil, Paris, 2009, p. 166]. C'est en ce sens que le sujet avouant, tel que Ricœur le pense dans *La Symbolique du mal*, est déjà historiquement un 'sujet réformé'. (p. 149)

Ces lignes expliquent que, chez les protestants, l'aveu est une pratique privée qui rompt avec toute forme d'autorité au profit d'un dialogue personnel entre le fidèle et les Écritures. Plus exactement, en se sentant interpellé par la Parole, le lecteur du texte biblique entreprend un travail herméneutique ayant pour objectif la compréhension de soi-même. "La première fonction positive des œuvres," explique Ricœur, "est d'attester que notre foi n'est pas simplement profession des lèvres, qu'elle nous engage existentiellement: attestation d'authenticité, égalisation, dirions-nous aujourd'hui, de notre faire et de notre dire" (Ricœur, 1966a, p. 497).

[3] Rappelons que Ricœur consacre un article à l'herméneutique biblique (1972) et un autre au motif du témoignage dans la pensée de Levinas (1989).

Confesser c'est agir. Plus encore, "la dimension du service atteste bien que la foi sans les œuvres n'est rien" (Ricœur, 1966a, p. 497). Confesser signifie donc servir une cause, c'est-à-dire obéir. Ce verbe semble désigner un acte de soumission. Il renvoie, en effet, à l'idée d'une vie morale soumise à des commandements et à la supériorité d'une volonté étrangère.

Dans *Vérité et Méthode*, Hans Georg Gadamer met en évidence la place essentielle des Lumières. Si l'Illuminisme provoque une rupture avec toute forme d'autorité traditionnelle, les penseurs ou maîtres du soupçon—Marx, Nietzsche et Freud, selon Ricœur—ont également appris aux hommes à remettre en cause toute forme d'autorité tyrannique et, en particulier, la supériorité "d'un sur-moi méchant, identifié à la volonté de Dieu, en tant qu'elle est seulement la projection de notre faiblesse, revenant sur nous à la façon d'un commandement qui nous écrase" (Ricœur, 1966a, p. 495). Ces perspectives pourraient bien miner le discours ricœurien portant sur l'établissement de la liberté par la Parole. Il en découle la nécessité de distinguer le concept d'obéissance de celui de soumission pour montrer que celui-là—sous-entendu par le concept de confession de foi—constitue, d'après Ricœur, le foyer d'une autonomie et d'une liberté responsable. À ses yeux, il existe en effet une obéissance de la foi qui doit être dégagée du plan de la loi, si l'on veut bien admettre que le verbe obéir désigne un mode d'*être* et non de *faire* (Ricœur, 1966a, p. 498).

Autrement dit, il existe une conception non morale de l'obéissance, conception que met en lumière l'analyse de la relation de l'homme à la Parole. D'un point de vue ricœurien, l'obéissance est mieux garantie et libérée de toute influence excessive de la Loi et de la morale car la Parole s'adresse avant tout à l'imagination humaine—c'est-à-dire aux capacités que l'homme exprime en prononçant *Je peux*—et non à sa volonté, qui s'explicite par l'affirmation *Je veux*. Dans le troisième tome de *Temps et Récit*, Ricœur explique en effet que "le récit exerce l'imagination plus que la volonté, bien qu'il demeure une catégorie de l'action" (Ricœur, 1985, p. 358).[4] Cela est d'autant plus vrai qu'une forme non-éthique de l'obéissance est perceptible au cœur même de l'autonomie de l'homme moderne, "au cœur de son autonomie conquise […] non comme son antithèse ou limite, mais comme son âme" (Ricœur, 1966a, p. 499). Pour établir ce que signifie véritablement l'obéissance de la foi, Ricœur explore alors trois dimensions de la Parole qui sont la Parole entendue, comprise et agissante. Concernant la Parole entendue, les recherches ricœuriennes s'inscrivent dans le sillon des réflexions des

[4] Voir également l'article de Ricœur intitulé "Herméneutique philosophique et herméneutique biblique" qui date de 1975 et a été repris dans *Du texte à l'action. Essais d'herméneutique 2*. L'auteur y affirme de manière éloquente: "[…] c'est dans l'imagination que d'abord se forme en moi l'être nouveau. Je dis bien l'imagination et non la volonté. Car le pouvoir de se laisser saisir par de nouvelles possibilités précède le pouvoir de se décider et de choisir. L'imagination est cette dimension de la subjectivité qui répond au texte comme *Poème*" (Ricœur, 1986, p. 132).

théologiens—comme par exemple Bultmann et Ebeling—qui ont travaillé sur l'événement de la parole.[5] Il est important de rappeler ici la place que le concept de démythologisation occupe dans la pensée de Ricœur. Inauguré par Rudolf Bultmann, ce concept désigne une forme d'exégèse qui s'applique au Nouveau Testament. Cette méthode herméneutique consiste à interpréter les textes bibliques en distinguant les phénomènes miraculeux de la réalité historique. Elle s'attache également à conserver le caractère particulier du message biblique—le kérygme—événement tout à la fois historique et surnaturel, tout en le rendant accessible aux exigences de la conscience de l'homme contemporain.

Au moment où cet événement de parole se produit, l'homme découvre que quelque chose est dit sans qu'il en soit à l'origine. Dans l'événement de la parole, l'être humain est démuni; Ricœur note, en effet, "[j]e suis dans une situation de non-maîtrise absolue, dans une situation où toute maîtrise est mise en question" (Ricœur, 1966a, p. 499). Afin d'expliquer davantage ce qu'il entend par suspension de toute maîtrise, Ricœur évoque l'épisode biblique du Sermon sur la Montagne, durant lequel Jésus s'adresse à une foule immense. Lors de ce discours qui correspond au plus long enseignement oral néotestamentaire, Jésus demande aux présents d'abandonner toute forme de souci. Dans l'*Évangile selon Matthieu*, nous pouvons lire ces mots:

> C'est pourquoi je vous dis: Ne vous inquiétez pas de ce que vous mangez [et boirez] pour vivre, ni de ce dont vous habillerez votre corps. La vie n'est-elle pas plus que la nourriture et le corps plus que le vêtement? Regardez les oiseaux du ciel: ils ne sèment pas et ne moissonnent pas, ils n'amassent rien dans des greniers, et votre Père céleste les nourrit. Ne valez-vous pas beaucoup plus qu'eux? Qui de vous, par ses inquiétudes, peut ajouter un instant à la durée de sa vie? Et pourquoi vous inquiéter au sujet du vêtement? […] Ne vous inquiétez donc pas et ne dites pas: Que mangerons-nous? Que boirons-nous? Avec quoi nous habillerons-nous? (Mt 6, 25-31)

Ces versets mettent en scène un événement de langage au cours duquel Jésus enjoint ses disciples à ne pas se préoccuper du lendemain. Cet enseignement est important dans la mesure où l'interprétation que Ricœur en propose met en évidence que "le non-souci, c'est l'écoute; un autre parle, j'écoute" (Ricœur, 1966a, p. 499). L'écoute remplace donc le souci, c'est-à-dire

[5] Rappelons que Ricœur a consacré plusieurs études à la théologie herméneutique protestante. Un exposé est consacré à Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1966b). Durant les années Soixante, Ricœur a consacré à Rudolf Bultmann un cours (1967b), deux articles (1967c; 1967d) et une préface au texte intitulé *Jésus, mythologie et démythologisation* (1968a). Ricœur a également consacré deux articles (1967e; 1968b) à Gerard Ebeling.

l'angoisse, le chagrin, ou plutôt, l'acte d'écouter désigne ici, tout à la fois, l'obéissance et la liberté.[6]

L'écoute

Afin d'expliquer davantage sa vision de l'écoute, Ricœur s'appuie sur *Être et Temps*, ouvrage dans lequel Heidegger affirme que l'ouïr est l'ouverture existentiale du *Dasein*, à savoir l'être-là, qui est au monde avec autrui. Ricœur s'intéresse à *Être et Temps* car Heidegger instaure lui-même un parallélisme entre obéissance et écoute. Il s'appuie notamment sur un passage où le philosophe de Marburg explique que l'écoute attentive et mutuelle représente l'un des modes possibles de l'obéissance. Certes, chez Heidegger, la parole de Dieu est évacuée au profit de l'humain, c'est-à-dire de l'écoute réciproque entre individus. Cependant, la réflexion heideggérienne permet à Ricœur de faire basculer son discours, du plan humain à celui divin, dans la mesure où la Parole de Dieu irrigue "le terrain de l'écoute attentive et commune" (Ricœur, 1966a, p. 500). En ce sens, Ricœur (1966a) écrit:

> Là, pour la première fois, avant toute morale et tout moralisme, nous découvrons ce que c'est que suivre, au sens où Jésus dit 'suis-moi;' et nous découvrons aussi les modes négatifs du refus d'entendre, de l'opposition, du défi, de l'aversion. Bref, nous sommes à la racine de l'obéir. Avant obéir, il y a suivre, et avant suivre, il y a ce que notre texte appelle 'savoir-ouïr.' *Ce savoir-ouïr originel et existential rend possible une action comme celle d'écouter, qui est elle-même plus originaire encore que ce que le psychologue détermine ordinairement comme étant l'ouïe*, celle de nos oreilles. De même que dans la métaphore de la vue nous parlons de l'œil de notre esprit, il y a une oreille de notre esprit. (p. 500)

Ces lignes sont d'une importance capitale. Écouter signifie non seulement entendre, mais aussi suivre quelqu'un, modèle et paradigme de nos actions. Le fait d'écouter est premier. L'obéissance en dérive et vient donc après. Mais Ricœur pousse sa réflexion plus loin, en analysant la question du silence, et le motif du se taire. Il s'intéresse notamment au silence qui appartient à la sphère de l'écoute, c'est-à-dire au "silence que je fais pour laisser parler" (Ricœur, 1966a, p. 500). Les pages d'*Être et Temps* s'avèrent être, une nouvelle fois, pour lui, un point de repère incontournable. Heidegger explique, en effet, que "[c]elui qui dans un dialogue, se tait, peut 'se faire comprendre' plus authentiquement, c'est-à-dire contribuer davantage au développement

[6] Il est important de rappeler que Ricœur revient sur cette forme de libération engendrée par l'écoute dans les dernières pages de l'ouvrage intitulé *Le Mémoire, l'Histoire et l'Oubli*. Ce philosophe explore la conception d'un oubli qui n'est plus stratégie, ni travail, mais "oubli désœuvré" (Ricœur, 2003, p. 655). En ce sens, il affirme: "[n]'y aurait-il pas dès lors une forme suprême d'oubli, en tant que disposition et manière d'être au monde, qui serait l'insouciance, ou pour mieux dire l'insouci?" (Ricœur, 2003, p. 655).

d'une compréhension, que celui auquel les mots ne font jamais défaut" (Ricœur, 1966a, p. 500). Il en tire la conclusion que le silence se trouve à l'origine de l'écouter et de l'obéir car il en constitue la racine.

La place primordiale que Heidegger accorde à l'ouïr et au silence par rapport à la parole n'est pas sans conséquences sur la notion de sujet. Bien au contraire, Heidegger remet radicalement en question le caractère d'évidence du *cogito* cartésien. Cette réflexion aide Ricœur à mettre en lumière la préexistence de la parole écoutée et son importance face à la parole proférée et réfléchie. Ricœur (1966a) écrit:

> La parole brise le préjugé qui donnerait la priorité à un 'je parle,' équivalent au 'je pense' cartésien. Au contraire, en mettant en tête le 'j'écoute,' et même le 'nous écoutons,' 'nous nous taisons,' un décentrement fondamental se produit au cœur même de notre relation au langage: je suis en relation avec l'origine du langage, je ne suis pas l'origine du langage. Telle est la première formule de l'obéissance: j'existe écoutant et me taisant. (p. 502)

L'événement de la parole renvoie alors encore au kérygme. Proclamation à voix haute ou profession de foi, le kérygme ne se laisse pas inscrire dans les catégories de l'obligation et du devoir. En outre, il ne peut pas être expliqué par la pensée théorique en raison de son caractère constitutivement relationnel et relève, ainsi, de la non-connaissance: "écouter," affirme Ricœur, "me met d'emblée en relation à un autre sujet. Par là je suis arraché à la relation purement épistémologique, à la relation sujet-objet, pour entrer dans la relation de l'être-en-commun, qui peut fournir l'analogue d'une relation à Dieu" (Ricœur, 1966a, p. 502).

Mais comment l'écoute peut-elle réunir, en même temps, obéissance et liberté? Afin de répondre à cette question, venons-en à la seconde dimension de la Parole, celle de la Parole comprise. Aux yeux de Ricœur, l'événement ne se manifeste pas seulement en tant que parole, mais aussi comme sens. Mieux encore: "un événement de parole ne peut être qu'un cristallisateur de sens, un échangeur de significations, non seulement qui donne à parler mais qui donne de parler, qui commence lui-même d'interpréter quelque chose" (Ricœur, 1966a, p. 502). Nous ne sommes plus ici sur le plan des Écritures, mais sur celui de la parole humaine. En s'inscrivant dans la sphère du langage et du sens, l'événement de parole nécessite d'être interprété. Autrement dit, le kérygme requiert une herméneutique.

Une ancienne tradition des Pères grecs représente le Christ comme étant lui-même interprète (Ricœur, 1966a, p. 504). En ce sens, Ricœur (1966a) affirme:

> Le point de départ de cette tradition se trouve dans le récit des compagnons d'Emmaüs où l'on voit le Christ expliquant en chemin les Écritures—et le verbe ici employé est précisément *hermeneuein*, interpréter. Le Christ est la clé—*clavis*—qui ouvre. Le compagnon de route n'est pas un cri, mais une explication qui ouvre les Écritures, qui explique Moïse et les Prophètes. Qu'est-ce que cela signifie pour nous? Qu'est-ce que cela implique pour notre méditation sur le chemin de l'obéissance à la liberté? Ceci, que la seule obéissance qui soit concevable et viable, c'est l'obéissance intelligente, l'obéissance qui elle-même interprète et déploie toutes les ressources d'une intelligence autonome. (p. 504)

Ce passage montre que l'homme qui obéit n'est pas dépourvu d'esprit critique car l'événement de la parole est lié à la question du sens. L'obéissance, propre à l'écoute, est, quant à elle, associée à la question de l'autonomie du sujet. Dans ces deux cas, la parole constitue un centre névralgique ou, plutôt, le noyau commun à ces notions. Afin d'expliquer les raisons qui unissent obéissance et autonomie, Ricœur revient sur le motif du se taire et, plus particulièrement, sur la différence remarquable qui sépare le silence du mutisme.

Nous parlons de foi muette alors qu'un cri inintelligible engendre une obéissance comparable à une forme de soumission à une autorité. Si l'on méconnaît le concept d'œuvre, l'obéissance n'est rien d'autre qu'une confession de foi par soumission. Or, selon Ricœur, "si l'événement contient son sens, son déchiffrage actif, avec toutes les ressources de notre culture, requiert notre libre pensée. Nous sommes ainsi ramenés au lien tout à fait primitif entre ouïr et comprendre" (Ricœur, 1966a, p. 505).

L'autonomie renvoie donc à la liberté humaine d'interpréter un événement qui a du sens et qui nécessite d'être explicité. Autrement dit, l'autonomie désigne la capacité de l'intelligence humaine à comprendre de manière critique la Parole.[7] Pour ce faire, les hommes écoutent, c'est-à-dire obéissent, en professant librement leur foi. Nous comprenons dès lors que ce second sens de l'écoute implique le silence, voire l'*entendre*, terme qui se différencie radicalement de la soumission muette.

Venons-en désormais au troisième aspect de la Parole, à celui de la Parole agissante et son rapport à l'existence. "Nous arrivons ici à la parole vivante" (Ricœur, 1966a, p. 506), écrit Ricœur dans les derniers passages de l'article intitulé "La Parole, instauratrice de liberté." Loin d'être une pure et simple description ou déclaration, la parole vivante traduit la "puissance de nous rassembler nous-mêmes" (Ricœur, 1966a, p. 506). Ce pouvoir relève du

[7] Comme le rappelle la vision herméneutique de Daniel Frey, Ricœur a "systématiquement soutenu la thèse de *l'autonomie sémantique du texte*: le texte écrit n'est nullement solidaire avec son contexte, mais constitue une œuvre susceptible d'être lue indépendamment de son contexte de production" (Frey, 2021, p. 24).

dire, motif que le philosophe hérite encore de la réflexion heideggérienne. En ce sens, Ricœur (1966a) explique que Heidegger

> appelle le dire *l'articulation significative de la compréhension de l'être-au-monde dans son sentiment de la situation* […]. Dans cette phrase condensée nous trouvons beaucoup plus que dans toutes les analyses du choix, qui se meuvent à la surface de notre existence: l'homme est enraciné dans une situation qu'il n'a pas choisie, il s'oriente dans cette situation, avec un pouvoir de projeter inséparable de la situation; liant le tout—situation ressentie et compréhension active—le dire est l'articulation significative de cette compréhension de nous-mêmes dans le sentiment de situation. (pp. 506-507)

Dès sa naissance, l'homme se retrouve dans une situation existentielle qu'il n'a pas choisie. Il tend donc toute sa vie vers *l'articulation significative* qui consiste à se comprendre soi-même en intégrant, par le biais de la parole, son être dans l'horizon culturel où il est d'emblée inscrit. Selon Ricœur, la Parole de Dieu s'incorpore donc à notre dire dans la mesure, précisément, où Elle constitue un trait culturel ineffaçable et incontournable.

Conclusions

Pour conclure, et au vu de ce qui précède, il est possible d'affirmer que l'article intitulé "La Parole instauratrice de liberté" offre au lecteur une réflexion importante sur le concept d'autonomie. Ce mot est synonyme d'émancipation et de liberté. Ce concept d'autonomie est indissociable, chez ce philosophe, d'une vision critique de la Parole. Ricœur décline cette vision dans une double perspective, la perspective vétérotestamentaire—qui relie la parole à l'action—et celle néotestamentaire—qui associe la parole au corps. Mais le concept d'autonomie convoque également la notion herméneutique d'écoute. L'acte d'écouter remplace, en effet, la notion de *cura*, dans son double sens d'avoir soin et de se soucier. Il ne s'agit donc pas là d'une pure et simple réflexion sur la religion, car, dans ses analyses, Ricœur s'efforce de souligner que la Parole constitue, pour tout homme, une situation de passivité susceptible de se transformer en action. Comme le philosophe l'avait auparavant indiqué dans *Finitude et culpabilité*, ouvrage publié en 1960, l'homme ne doit pas se contenter de confesser sa faillibilité, en étant replié sur lui-même. Tout en admettant sa fragilité, il doit aussi se reconnaître responsable et capable d'agir autrement (Vendra, 2013, pp. 101–107). Cependant, cette action ne correspond pas seulement à un choix, mais également à l'expression d'une liberté qui révèle à quel point la parole humaine est merveilleuse. Comme le note, enfin, Ricœur "la merveille de la parole, c'est

qu'elle est le lieu, le milieu, l'élément dans lequel l'homme vit, comme une indissociable unité, l'obéissance de son écoute, l'autonomie de son intelligence et la joie de sa vie" (Ricœur, 1966a, p. 507).

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Michal Kern: Gravitácia II.

Autonomy as a Task for Education: Hermeneutics and Pragmatism in Dialogue

Francesca D'Alessandris

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to develop some pivotal reflections on the application of Paul Ricœur's concept of autonomy in school education. Since Paul Ricœur did not explicitly refer to formal education in his work, I decided to place him in dialogue with John Dewey's philosophy of education as a means of applying his thought to this field. This comparison is motivated by the similarity between the two philosophers on the issue of autonomy, which Dewey also approaches in the framework of a philosophy of formal and informal education. This cross-reading of Ricœur and Dewey leads to the conclusion, first, that autonomy is a fundamental task for democratic education, and, secondly, that this task can be pursued by educating to and through narrative.

Keywords: Ricœur, Dewey, Autonomy, Education, School, Narrative

Introduction

In this contribution, I will formulate some reflections on the implications of Ricœur's concept of autonomy (intended as self-direction based on self-awareness) in school education (Berka et al., 2000; Gewirtz, 2007; Dworkin, 2015; Wermke, 2013). These short reflections are far from being exhaustive, but I hope they will constitute a first step for a further investigation of how Ricœur's idea of autonomy can be applied in that field when it is brought into contact with other philosophies.

To develop this suggestion, I will first refer to John Dewey's claim that autonomy is one of the crucial aims of education in a democratic society. I chose Dewey because, as will be shown, his idea of education matches Ricœur's philosophy of autonomy in many respects, and Dewey could therefore be the missing bridge connecting this latter to school education. Indeed, on his part, Ricœur explicitly referred to education briefly and only

in a few texts published in the 1950s and 1960s. Additionally, as Luca Alici stressed in his preface to the Italian translation of those texts (Alici, 2014), Ricœur, who happened to be the dean of the University of Nanterre in the 1960s during the students' social movement and mobilization, was rather interested in the significant social changes that were affecting the French university as an institution. When, in those texts, he discusses the role of institutions in education, he mainly refers to universities rather than to schools and focuses on the dialectic of recognition between the individual and the community that is one of the concepts directing university activities. Furthermore, in the few texts that Ricœur dedicated to child pedagogy, he does not explicitly refer to autonomy (Ricœur, 1948, 1953).

This contribution will thus take a path through Dewey and eventually come back to Ricœur to show that Ricœur's notion of autonomy, which is not far from the one developed by Dewey, helps to understand exactly how the education for autonomy advocated by Dewey can be pursued in concrete terms. Even though Ricœur makes only a few explicit references to Dewey, and this always in a critical way, stressing his distance from the idea of action as always instrumental (Ricœur, 1991, p. 287), the two philosophers have something in common when they reflect on autonomy and its value in human life. I believe that they are close enough to each other to establish a dialogue that can adjust some aspects of both philosophies without betraying their spirit.

Today, the dialogue between pragmatism and hermeneutics is at the receiving end of a non-negligible level of attention. What pragmatism and hermeneutics share are, first, their interest in the philosophy of action and, second and more importantly, their rejection of, on the one, any metaphysics, and, on the other hand, any relativism and nihilism. On this basis, promising attempts to intertwine pragmatism—namely the philosophies of Dewey, Peirce, and Joas—with hermeneutics—Heidegger, Gadamer and Ricœur's thought—have been pursued in the last few years (Begby, 2014; Allen, 2017; Busacchi et al., 2022). This research, which cuts across the fields of aesthetics, philosophy of action, ethics and epistemology, opens new perspectives that have not yet been fully explored, and that have almost not been explored at all in the field of pedagogy (one exception being G. E. Haley, 2013). As previously stated, the aim here is to take a step in this direction, shedding light on Ricœur's and Dewey's thought on autonomy and education.

Ricœur's philosophy of action has its roots in French existentialism (Sartre) and French phenomenology (Merleau-Ponty). In *Freedom and Nature*, action is analyzed as one of the fundamental structures of human will from a phenomenological point of view. In later works such as *Semantics of Action* (1977) and *From Text to Action* (1986), Ricœur mixes the phenomenological perspective with hermeneutics. In these texts, the analysis of action stems from the idea that action can be considered a "quasi-text," which has semiot-

ic and symbolic features that can be interpreted (Ricœur, 1991, pp. 144–168). To develop this idea, Ricœur refers to the pragmatic philosophy of language of Searle and Austin, i.e., to the idea that speech acts can be interpreted as actions having a concrete impact on reality. The relation between action and text, as well as between action and speech, will be further developed in *Oneself as Another*. The aim here is not to analyze Ricœur's use of linguistic pragmatism but rather to show how Dewey's pragmatism as a theory of life experience can be fruitfully intertwined with Ricœur's philosophy of autonomy to reflect on the role school education has in supporting autonomy as a human capacity.

Autonomy in Democracy and Education

John Dewey (1859-1952) is considered to be not only one of the most important pragmatist philosophers but also one of the most important pedagogists of the last century. Through his work, he suggested and in part realized an actual revolution in education, which can only be summarized here in a few words as the fundamental switch from *what* it is learned to *who* learns (Fiorucci, Lopez, 2017, p. 9). For Dewey, schooling must be learner-centered. This means that learning must be intended as a process of growth that has nothing to do with absorbing notions and subject-matter. Learning means becoming who we are, in the sense of becoming aware of our capabilities and interests and growing according to them, in an interaction between ourselves and the other—the teacher, the community of learners and the community of citizens.

One of Dewey's most important works, and the one in which he advocates for an education for self-direction and self-awareness—i.e., for what I call autonomy—, is *Democracy and Education*. In this book, first published in 1916, Dewey develops a theory of what education should be in a real democracy and, circularly, of what a democratic society should be to make it possible for individuals to be the actors of a real, lifelong education process.

For Dewey, life is a continuous process of renewal (in this regard, he is influenced by Darwin's idea of evolution). Renewal is a necessity for a living being and is therefore impossible to avoid. As human beings, we cannot but renew ourselves in response to inputs from the environment surrounding us. As living beings, we act upon the environment to perpetuate our life. In this process of adapting ourselves to the world around us, we grow. According to Dewey, education is precisely this act of growing and thus it is a necessity, corresponding to the act of living itself.

However, for humans, this process is a conscious rather than a mechanical process. Dewey tries to intertwine Darwin and Hegel, naturalism, and historicism. For him, nature and culture can be distinguished on an abstract

level only. Human beings are conscious living beings; thus, through their intelligence and through culture, they can *orient* and *direct* their growth, they can be *autonomous* (in the etymological sense of "self-directed") in the process of growing. According to Dewey, proving this point is exactly philosophy's aim in education. Giving a direction does not mean giving specific goals to our life, nor does it mean that we must determine from the outset what specific results our education (and so our life) should achieve. Giving a direction to the living process means living a meaningful life, a life we are aware of and in which we always grow in personality.

Autonomy can be defined as this way of conducting life. Since, as already noted, humans are conscious growing beings, for Dewey, democracy is a society that gives all humans equally the possibility to fully realize their nature, to grow in a meaningful way, to direct their life towards being happy and satisfied with themselves. In short, democracy is a society that gives all humans equally the possibility to be autonomous. Education performs a crucial role towards this purpose. In a paragraph entitled "The Place of Vocational Aims in Education," in the twentieth chapter dedicated to "The Vocational Aspects of Education," Dewey says that:

To find out what one is fitted to do and to secure an opportunity to do it is the key to happiness. Nothing is more tragic than failure to discover one's true business in life, or to find that one has drifted or been forced by circumstance into an uncongenial calling. A right occupation means simply that the aptitudes of a person are in adequate play, working with the minimum of friction and the maximum of satisfaction. With reference to other members of a community, this adequacy of action signifies, of course, that they are getting the best service the person can render. Slavery only illustrates on an obvious scale what happens in some degree whenever an individual does not find himself in his work. (Dewey, 1997, p. 217)

In this quote, Dewey says that the role of schooling is to prevent persons from being slaves, from doing something in which they do not recognize themselves. Dewey here talks about work as one of the most important aspects of society; "Finding oneself in one's work" means working in a way that is consistent with one's personal dispositions. Education plays a key role in constructing the bridge that connects one's personal disposition with society, in order to avoid the schizophrenia of being split between what we are in our personal growth and what we are in the/a social world. For Dewey, dualism is the real enemy of a joyful life and of an education that must perceive continuity and therefore joyfulness in life.

Living according to our dispositions does not mean being determined by them. On the contrary, they can be adjusted according to our projects and our habits must be the instruments of our will. In the paragraph entitled "Habits as Expression of Growth," Dewey writes that:

> A habit means an ability to use natural conditions as means to ends. It is an active control of the environment through control of the organs of action. We are perhaps apt to emphasize the control of the body at the expense of control of the environment. We think of walking, talking, playing the piano, the specialized skills characteristic of the etcher, the surgeon, the bridge-builder, as if they were simply ease, deftness, and accuracy on the part of the organism. They are that, of course; but the measure of the value of these qualities lies in the economical and effective control of the environment which they secure. To be able to walk is to have certain properties of nature at our disposal—and so with all other habits. (Dewey, 1997, p. 51)

In this second paragraph, Dewey reflects on the importance of building habits in education. By habits, he does not mean automatic and mechanical responses to the environment, but, on the contrary, the organs humans use to direct their life in the natural and social environment. Ricœur says something similar in *Freedom and Nature* about habits as instruments of the will. For Dewey, this instrument of the will is fully effective only when connected to the environment and so, again, to the social context.

I thus introduce here a third theme. One must be autonomous in society and not isolated from the intersubjective world. "There is no greater tragedy," Dewey writes, "than that so much of the professedly spiritual and religious thought of the world has emphasized the two ideals of self-sacrifice and spiritual self-perfecting instead of throwing its weight against this dualism of life. The dualism is too deeply established to be easily overthrown; for that reason, it is the particular task of education at the present time to struggle on behalf of an aim in which social efficiency and personal culture are synonyms instead of antagonists" (Dewey, 1997, p. 128).

Indeed, to be autonomous does not mean being independent and detached from the other:

> From a social standpoint, dependence denotes a power rather than a weakness; it involves interdependence. There is always a danger that increased personal independence will decrease the social capacity of an individual. In making him more self-reliant, it may make him more self-sufficient; it may lead to aloofness and indifference. It often makes an individual so insensitive in his relations to others as to develop an illusion of being really able to stand and act alone—an unnamed form of insanity which is responsible for a large part of the remediable suffering of the world. (Dewey, 1997, pp. 48–49)

In *Freedom and Nature,* Ricœur claims in a different framework that "the self as radical autonomy, not only moral but ontological, is precisely the fault" (Ricœur, 1966, p. 29).

In the previous paragraph, Dewey indicated that, in a democratic society, the idea of an absolute independence of the subjects is not only inconceivable from a theoretical point of view, but also, on this basis, strongly undesirable. Educating to autonomy thus means supporting students in their *social* growth, beside any illusion of being self-sufficient. This idea perfectly fits Ricœur's conception of the self as another and therefore of the intersubjective dimension as primordial and necessary from an ontological perspective.

To summarize, I find in Dewey the idea that autonomy, which is meant as a way of living and growing in the society according to our personal "calling," is one of the most important purposes of schooling. However, besides this crucial contribution for a philosophy of education, what is missing in Dewey is an analysis of the concrete means through which schooling can realize such a purpose. In other words, Dewey's thought of autonomy in education is rather normative. Ricœur's idea of autonomy could be the operating part, consistent with the normative one which is missing in Dewey's philosophy of education.

Ricœur's Idea of Autonomy

It is mainly in the texts collected in *Reflections on the Just,* first published in French (*Le juste 2*) in 2001 and in David Pellauer's English translation in 2008, that Ricœur discusses autonomy. This collection of essays and presentations delivered in the 1990s includes the short contribution "Autonomy and Vulnerability," on which I will mainly focus.

In this essay, Ricœur decides to approach the issue of autonomy starting from a previous definition of the human condition from the perspective of philosophical anthropology. He thus introduces his reflections on autonomy with his famous definition of the human being as a capable being. Humans, he writes, are capable in the sense of Aristotle's *hexis* and Spinoza's *conatus*. For Ricœur, this means that humans share specific capacities, such as the capacity to speak, to act, to narrate their own life's experience. These can clearly be recognized as the same capacities that Ricœur has assigned to the Self in *Oneself as Another*, which are translated here in an anthropological framework. These capacities are not something that can be considered to be metaphysical aspects of humans. We cannot establish their existence, rather we attest them, i.e., we *trust* in their existence. This attestation, or belief, can be supported by others. As Ricœur writes:

Attestation/sanction thus upholds the ability to act in language. Its contrary is not doubt but suspicion – or doubt as suspicion. And we overcome such suspicion only by a leap, a sursum, that other people may encourage, accompany, assist by having confidence in us – by an appeal to responsibil-

ity and autonomy, which we shall rediscover later to be the place of all pedagogy, all education, be it moral, juridical, or political. (Ricœur, 2008, p. 75)

In this quote, Ricœur states, as Dewey does, that autonomy, which is related to the conscious attestation of one's capabilities, must be supported by education. However, it does not go deeper in explaining how education and pedagogy should take care of and support the autonomy of the self. It is nevertheless possible to clarify this point by interpreting the following paragraphs of the text, starting with the claim that it is hard, for Ricœur, "to speak of autonomy without also talking about identity" (Ricœur, 2008, p. 78).

Narrative, Autonomy, Education

For Ricœur, personal identity results from the construction of one's life narrative. In this text, he associates the capacity to configure this narrative with autonomy. He writes:

One German author likes to say, *'Die Geschichte steht fur den Mann'*—a person, a human being, is his or her history. The handling of one's own life, as a possibly coherent narrative, represents a high-level competence that has to be taken as one of the major components of the autonomy of a subject of rights. In this regard, we can speak of an education for narrative coherence, and education leading to a narrative identity. To learn how to tell the same story in another way, how to allow our story to be told by others, how to submit the narrative of a life to the historian's critique, are all practices applicable to the paradox of autonomy and fragility. Let us say therefore that a subject capable of leading his or her life in agreement with the idea of narrative coherence is an autonomous subject. (Ricœur, 2008, p. 80)

These lines fit well with what Dewey writes about the role of education and schooling for autonomy in the sense of self-direction of one's life. Furthermore, they suggest ways in which education could concretely perceive this purpose, i.e., by educating to narrate. Ricœur's idea is that what is referred to as autonomy is the capacity and the possibility to organize one's own life in a narrative and to direct this life according to that narrative. Narrative is indeed the means that we have to re-interpret our past, our character, dispositions and habits, and reconfigure our future, as Ricœur argues in *Time and Narrative* and in *Oneself as Another*.

This process clearly involves the other, and this point is even clearer in the following quote:

The identity of each person, and hence his or her autonomy, is constructed between these two poles [i.e., the effort to think for oneself and the domination or rule by the other]. It is the task of education to bring about an interminable negotiation between our seeking singularity and the social

pressure that is always capable of reconstituting those conditions that the Enlightenment called a state of minority. (Ricœur, 2008, p. 82)

The means for this negotiation is the construction of narratives; this is the "pragmatic solution" to the paradox of autonomy as the autonomy of a self always tied to the other and always vulnerable (Ricœur, 2008, p. 90). This pragmatic solution "rests on a practice of mediations" which "stem from a kind of education" (Ricœur, 2008, p. 90). It should be underlined that this narrative also has the capacity to counterbalance the tendency to utilitarianism that an education inspired to pragmatism could have. Making narratives is indeed a way to make sense of action even in cases where this action does not have a clear purpose or aim (a "use"). According to Ricœur, narrative is indeed the act of configuring a plot in which actions find their meanings in the way they connect to each other. Furthermore, for Ricœur, the meaning of an action is retrospective, and this means that their motives appear when a decision is already made. Thus, to conclude, a cross-reading of Dewey and Ricœur leads to the claim that schooling not only must have the purpose of supporting learners in being autonomous as a never-ending process of the realization of the self with the others in democratic institutions, but also that it can actually do that by educating to and through narrative.

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Michal Kern: Život I.

The Challenges of Political Autonomy in Paul Ricœur's Thought

Paolo Furia

Abstract

This essay seeks to shed light on the political philosophy of Paul Ricœur, which revolves around the dialectics between freedom and power. More specifically, the political relevance of the concept of autonomy in Ricœur's thought will be assessed by addressing three issues: first, the concept of personal autonomy between independence and initiative; second, the concept of autonomy as "power-with," according to which personal autonomy is achieved only by means of collective action; and third, the autonomy of the political bodies, of institutions and their symbols.

Keywords: politics, power, self, collective, freedom

Ricœur's philosophy is more commonly associated with ethics, morality, and philosophical anthropology than with politics. This does not mean that Ricœur's thought is insensitive to political issues. On the contrary, it can be argued that there is a political philosophy in Ricœur. It is true that his writings explicitly devoted to the political sphere are dedicated, for the most part, to the political thought of other philosophers such as Hannah Arendt (1983, 1987), Jan Patočka (1977, 1990), and Eric Weil (1957, 1984).[1] However, these writings are not just occasional in that they explore recurring themes in the author's thought. Since Ricœurian political philosophy is not systematically developed in a specific work, we aim to extrapolate some ideas from different sources of the Ricœurian corpus, with no claim to exhaustiveness, to answer two questions: how does Ricœur define political philosophy? And what role does the concept of autonomy play in it?

As an introduction to the subject, it must be noted that Ricœur has always been an engaged intellectual. It is now possible to consult the copious

[1] These essays have been collected in a special volume dedicated to the political lectures of Paul Ricœur, published in French in 1991.

archives of the Fonds Ricœur to discover a significant number of minor texts published in newspapers or local magazines, dealing with the political challenges of his times and with issues concerning the relationships between politics, religion, and society.[2] Ricœur's engaged texts represent, so to say, the extra-philosophical background of political philosophy, the tenets of which are spread across the major philosophical works of the author. Issues concerning the political dimension of authority and power can already be found in *History and Truth* (1965)[3]. In the *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia* (1988), Ricœur addresses the inherently political topic of the relationships between ideology, utopia, and power. Then, in *Oneself as Another* (1992), Ricœur's "small ethics" includes a theory of institutions essentially dependent on ethics. These themes are also taken up in several texts collected in the two collections, *The Just* (2003) and *Reflections on The Just* (2007).[4] Finally, Ricœur's last book, *The Course of Recognition* (2007), draws on the fundamental tenets of modern and contemporary political philosophy (Hobbes, Hegel, Honneth) to build an original theory of recognition.

Ricœur also proposes a definition of political philosophy which can be found in the essay *La Liberté* (1971), included in the volume *Anthropologie philosophique. Écrits et conférences*, published in 2013:

> A political philosophy distinguishes itself from political science in that it has the *realization of freedom* as its central theme. The theory of the state is connected to the theory of freedom insofar as, in the state, one can find the connections between the free will of individuals, the relation between the arbitrary and the normative, and the link between intention and work (…). How can freedom be recognized not only in personal freedom, but also in the collective exercise of power? This is Rousseau's issue in his *Social Contract* (1762). How to move from the wild freedom of the individual to the civil liberty of people in their community? Rousseau called this question "the maze of the political". In fact, the power of the state and, in general, of society seems to be transcendent, stranger, even hostile to anyone, when it embodies itself in the figure of the tyrant. A philosophy of freedom, understood in the sense of the meaningful action, can be realized only if it can be embedded in the field of the practical reason, which is the field of the achievement of freedom, the birth of the political sphere. (Ricœur, 2013, p. 217; author's translation).

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[2] On the topic of autonomy, for example, one can find the paper "Autonomie et obéissance" (https://bibnum.explore.psl.eu/s/psl/ark:/18469/3tbzg), a text originally published in 1965 in the *Cahiers d'Orgemont* and in which the philosopher broaches the issue of autonomy from the engaged perspective of a religious community member.

[3] See especially the fifth chapter entitled "The Question of Power."

[4] See in particular the two studies of *Reflections on the Just* entitled "Autonomy and Vulnerability" and "The Paradox of Authority."

In this essay, Ricœur first clarifies that there is no equivalence between political philosophy and political science. While political science is a modern construct, achieved through a specific process of objectification of the political field as independent from the moral dimension, political philosophy has not lost sight of the enlivening relationship between the political field and the moral sphere of personal autonomy, intention and action. The fundamental problem of political philosophy is the reconciliation of individual freedom and political power. It is on these grounds that Ricœur evokes a leading figure of early modernity such as Rousseau, who did not conceive of personal autonomy as simply opposed to political power but provided an explanatory model in which political power is the expression of the freedom of individuals.[5] What Rousseau named "the maze of the political" is defined by the question of how to balance the autonomous self with the heteronomy implied in the social and political bonds. According to both Ricœur and Rousseau, humans are endowed with free will, but they also depend on each other, so they produce political constraint through their own actions. The paradox is represented by the fact that what is usually considered as something alien and constraining for the actions of the individuals, such as norms delivered by the state, must find its ultimate legitimation in personal autonomy, perceived as an inalienable character of the self.[6] Ricœur feels the need to find an alternative to two opposing and equally one-sided definitions of personal autonomy: on the one hand, the view of autonomy as mere self-sufficiency, working against the "internal as well external obstacles blocking the path to its fruition" (Crittenden, 1997, p. 36), and, on the other, the view of personal autonomy as strictly subjugated to the general will, as an expression of the true historical subject represented by the state.

To penetrate the matter more deeply, it can be useful to differentiate between three layers of meaning of the term "autonomy" in Ricœur's thought. The first layer of meaning is the Kantian one, according to which autonomy simultaneously means independence and self-determination. Independence is the precondition of self-determination, but it is not a pregiven, rationally assumable characteristic of the self. At this first level, autonomy is already more a precarious good requiring collective protection than an essential and untouchable trait of the individual. In order to reach independence, the self must be protected against various forms of abuse: from the most subtle, such as influence, to the extreme forms of captivity, humiliation, and violence.[7] Moreover, the concept of personal autonomy entails the recognition of the individual's capacity to act freely. By acting, the self introduces something

[5] In his commentary on Ricœur's 1957 text *The Political Paradox*, Ernst Wolff has maintained that "For Ricœur, Rousseau essentially continues the teleology of Aristotle" (Wolff, 2011, p. 225).

[6] This is the whole gist of the political paradox, at least in the early formulation of Ricœur's 1957 text: "This paradox must be retained: that the greatest evil adheres to the greatest rationality, that there is political alienation because the political is relatively autonomous" (Ricœur, 1965, p. 296, in Wolff, 2011, p. 224).

[7] See *Oneself as Another*, Study VIII, par. 2.

new into the chain of causalities of the world.[8] Of course, the self is always marked by a certain passivity and receptivity. Ricœur does not see passivity only in negative terms. We depend on each other not only in the sense that we are subjugated by others, but because our tastes, opinions, intentions, thoughts, and even most parts of our unconscious, are forged in social interactions. Therefore, self-determination must be thought of as initiative: it does not represent an absolute start that stands out above the pathological motives of action;[9] rather, it can be defined as the ability of the self to react in non-mechanical ways to stimuli from the social environment and the actions of others. This conceptualization emphasizes the creative character of experience and action without spoiling an overly rigid and idealized notion of the subject, and it includes intersubjectivity and mutual influence in the ambit of autonomy. Moreover, the creative character of experience is not affirmed as an axiomatic principle, deducible a priori from the constitution of the subject, but emerges precisely in the confrontation with what lies beyond the inner circle of the self.[10] Even if the first layer of meaning of autonomy is not immediately political, it prepares the ground for the next layer by introducing the unavoidable role of the others for the emergence of a creative and relatively free action.

The second layer draws on Hannah Arendt's philosophy of action, which Ricœur has referred to in several texts. In this context, autonomy is achieved through voluntary consent and proactive adhesion to a collective body by essentially contributing to defining its identity and goals. At issue here is no longer the individual's ability to act creatively and freely but rather the capacity to bring a political body to life. The political body is realized by people acting together ("power-with"). A political body exists only insofar as its members can interact together in a position of equality.[11] In an Arendtian (and Aristotelian) approach, the equation of autonomy and equality is what distinguishes the political sphere from other kinds of activities, such as labor and work. According to Ricœur, political autonomy is the power of equals. Equality, like autonomy, is simultaneously the hidden principle of fundamental anthropology and a task to be accomplished, a treasure to be discovered under thick layers of soil. Most of the time, in everyday life, equality and autonomy are equally unrealized. Moreover, they are pitted against each other by those political ideologies that emphasize the importance of one or the other as if the realization of one implied the negation of

[8] See *Oneself as Another*, Study IV.

[9] The adjective "pathological" is used by Kant in the first part of the *Critique of Practical Reason* and must be interpreted in the etymological sense as "influenced by the senses."

[10] In Studies V and VI of *Oneself as Another*, Ricœur clarifies that the real self (*ipse*) emerges when the inner circle of the ego (*idem*) is challenged by the alien character of the alterity. A similar conception of alterity is also present in Bernhard Waldenfels' responsive phenomenology (2011), according to which the challenges posed by alterity are what vivifies the lifeworld and allows for a rearticulation of the meanings of experience.

[11] See *Oneself as Another*, Study VII, par. 3.

the other. Ricœur, rather, claims that autonomy without equality cannot be developed by every individual to the same extent and will end up relying on the heteronomy of others; he further claims that equality without autonomy prefigures the sacrifice of the political sphere of action and even of the creative character of experience, imposed by some sort of Leviathan. In both cases, the "power-with" that defines the political sphere and gives birth to the political body degenerates into the "power-on" of domination and abuse. The true nature of political power is the "pure power" in the sense of Arendt: it is dissimulated and concealed beneath the surface of the crystallized relations of power, but it is recognizable in the oppositive moment of resurgence against them. Ricœur, in *Oneself as Another*, notes an interesting connection between autonomy and conflict;[12] in *Pouvoir et Violence* (1981), the author expresses himself in even more straightforward terms. In order to be recognized as an autonomous self, Ricœur says, following Arendt, that it is necessary to act with others whose autonomy is equally denied in order to subvert the established order of domination. Ricœur finds the manifestations of "pure power" in revolutions: to Arendt's American and French revolutions, Ricœur adds (1991 p. 31) Soviets, students' movements, the insurrection of Budapest, the Czechs' resistance. In this sense, autonomy is always the result of a collective process of "collective autonomization" or "emancipation." The "treasure" of autonomy is not discovered through self-reflection and introspection, but through collective action. Political autonomy is not a monologic/egologic character of the subject, but a political conquest to be achieved by acting together. This emancipative side of Ricœur's thought has been recognized especially by those scholars that have been particularly attentive to Ricœur's dialogue with the Marxian tradition.[13] While not accepting economic reductionism and the structuralist background of dogmatic Marxism, Ricœur has always attached the utmost importance to the critique of ideology, as long as it does not pretend to be carried out from the standpoint of a disembodied and scientific gaze.[14] As Johann Michel (2013) has noted, Ricœur's claim that every criticism and struggle for recognition

[12] See *Oneself as Another*, Study IX, par. 3.

[13] See for instance Johann Michel (2013) and Piero Garofalo (2021).

[14] According to Ricœur, neither reality nor science can provide a sufficiently stable standpoint from which ideologies can be criticized, for ideology itself is a primitive function of social imagination, aiming at providing local communities with common values and cohesion: "If it is true that the images which a social group forms of itself are interpretations which belong immediately to the constitution of the social bond, if, in other words, the social bond is itself symbolic, then it is absolutely futile to seek to derive the images from something prior which would be reality, real activity, the process of real life, of which there would be secondary reflections and echoes" (Ricœur, 1981, p. 237). Nonetheless, ideology "poses a constant threat of distorting communal values and ideals to suit the interests of a particular subgroup" (Steeves, 2000, p. 224). Thence, "an antidote to distortive ideology must be found within the very symbolic medium by which a society understands itself. Ricœur finds such an antidote in the literary genre of political utopia" (*Ibidem*). An important effort to update Ricœur's conception of ideology and utopia is provided by the collective volume edited by Stephanie Arel and Dan Stiver (2018).

begins in the embodied perspective of a concrete and vulnerable self brings his approach very close to many post-structuralist reworkings of Marxism.

Autonomy's second layer of meaning therefore achieves the transition from the pre-political sphere of the lifeworld to the political dimension of collective action that manifests itself through the realization of political bodies. However, Ricœur's satisfaction with the notion of "pure power" is only partial. Autonomy cannot be solely defined by the opposition of an emerging political body against a given social order. In fact, power is tied to the capacity to establish norms to govern society; "pure power," by contesting the established order, aims to build a fairer juridical and institutional system, capable of recognizing rights and capabilities that were not recognized in the previous arrangement. In his comment on Jürgen Habermas's theory of communicative action in the *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, Ricœur subscribes to the idea that "the class struggle is not a problem of suppressing one class but of overcoming struggle so that there may be a state where recognition between human beings occurs" (Ricœur, 1988, p. 227). Institutions, as showed in *Oneself as Another*, must be "the point of application of justice and equality" (Ricœur, 1992, p. 194): therefore, they belong entirely to the ethical perspective of the self. At this point, the Ricœurian path discreetly splits into two different directions: on the one hand, it goes towards the clarification of the idea of justice; on the other, it opens up a speculation on the nature of institutions, which leads towards the third layer of the concept of autonomy: the autonomy of the political sphere and of the body politic as a whole.

The question of the autonomy of the political is clearly addressed by Ricœur since his 1957 text *The Political Paradox*. In that work, Ricœur insists on the relative autonomy of the political sphere from other spheres fundamental to society, and primarily from the economy.[15] By stressing the relative autonomy of the political sphere, Ricœur criticizes those regimes (and the corresponding philosophical dogmatisms) in which the political sphere is considered as a super-structural dimension determined by structural economic conditions.[16] By defending the autonomy of the political sphere, Ricœur clearly aims to ensure that citizens have a free space for political participation: a space that is, nonetheless, haunted by the verticality of the power relationships established by the state itself. By taking this path, the young Ricœur actually reconnects with the problem of the autonomy of the self, insofar as the threats posed by the verticality of social relations and the contact between state authority and the exercise of violence are to be understood precisely as threats to freedom of action, i.e., to autonomy as

[15] A complete reconstruction of the meaning of political autonomy in this sense is provided by Ernst Wolff in chapter IX of his book *Political Responsibility for a Globalized World* (2011).

[16] In this sense, the texts Ricœur devotes to China following his trip in 1956 are very instructive. See *Lectures I: Autour du Politique* (1991).

independence, as initiative, and as "power-with." Nonetheless, the inevitability of institutional power and the desirability of its autonomy from other powers, such as economic power, requires us to look for other shades of meaning in the autonomy of the political sphere. Long afterwards, in the seventh study of *Oneself as Another*, Ricœur touches on the topic of political autonomy by defining institutions as "the structure of living together as this belongs to a historical community—people, nation, region, and so forth—a structure irreducible to interpersonal relations" (Ricœur, 1992, p. 194). What is key in this definition is the idea of institutions as irreducible to interpersonal relations. In the *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, institutions are related to the deeper meaning of the word "ideology": "the integrative function of culture" (Ricœur, 1988, p. 259). They are entailed by the very fact of living together and are charged with the very same symbolic dimension that gives meaning to social actions. In *Oneself as Another*, the philosopher does not linger over the issue of the origin of institutions in the lifeworld but refers to that problem by affirming that "what fundamentally characterizes the idea of institution is the bond of common mores and not that of constraining rules" (Ricœur, 1992, p. 194).

Acknowledging the irreducibility of institutions to interpersonal relationships would allow for a further development of the concept of autonomy of the body politic, although this is not explicitly focused on by Ricœur himself. The way is paved for the elaboration of a notion of the body politic as relatively autonomous from the single wills and the various instances brought by those who are part of it. Every body politic (*corpus politicum*) is a polity, that is, a historical community endowed with a certain identity forged over time. The continuity of the political body in time is ensured by the enduring functionality of both its institutions and its symbols. The sacrality of political and religious institutions, the normative contents of social practices, the solemnity and the respect due to the places of power are perduring signs of the autonomy of the symbols in which a political body materializes.[17] The symbols of a historical community have the power to provide people with a sense of unity and commonality. The horizontality of social relations guaranteed by the sharing of common symbols also implies a certain respect due to the symbols in which these common values are embodied. Therefore, not only, as Ricœur clearly maintains, must the autonomy of the self be protected from power abuses, as "autonomy-from;" not only must the political sphere be thought of as a practical, albeit paradoxical, prolongation of personal autonomy as "autonomy-with;" but the political body must also be thought of as relatively autonomous from the arbitrariness and the

[17] Here we do not consider the different historical ways in which the body politic was conceived or took shape, although of course the very metaphor of the community as a body politic is historically determined. For a theoretical and historical overview on the subject, see Rollo-Koster (2010).

discretion of those who are in charge of representing it *pro tempore*.[18] This is why a king must always live up to the crown he wears; this is also why, in constitutional regimes, power must always be exercised according to the limits imposed by the constitution. The difference between domination and legitimate power is set precisely by the constitutive possibility, for a body politic and its symbols, to remain independent from the arbitrary uses of power of the established authorities. This also explains why, even in some secular democracies, those who assume institutional roles have to swear by God or the Bible. There is no need to understand this type of oath in theological terms. The point is that the vertical relations of power that take place within a political body must not be founded on the brute superiority of the powerful over the weak, but on a structure of legitimation of authority that keeps it independent from personal charisma or the socio-economic means of those who contingently hold positions of authority. Thence, totalitarian regimes and dictatorships can be understood as the negation of the autonomy of the political bodies as well as the negation of the autonomy of the personal selves: in a totalitarian regime, in fact, whoever is in charge does not seek to interpret the goals of the whole, does not respect the autonomy of institutions and their symbols, and does not recognize higher sources of legitimacy of power, except instrumentally. On the contrary, the despot bends common mores, cultural narratives, institutions, and their symbols, to her own will, and, in denying the first and the second layers of meaning of autonomy, also ends up denying the third.

It must be acknowledged that Ricœur does not fully elaborate the claim for autonomy of the body politic. That may be due to a metaphysical complication concerning the metaphor of the body politic. The attribution of autonomy to a polity, in fact, seems to imply a strong analogy between the collective and the person, an analogy to which Ricœur does not seem willing to subscribe. This can be deduced not only from the general attitude of Ricœur's philosophical anthropology, opposed to any form of totalization or fusional overcoming of the subject,[19] but also from specific passages of the *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia* devoted to the nature of the socio-political bond. In the first lecture dedicated to Max Weber, Ricœur denounces the risks implied in any nostalgic attitude towards premodern forms of *Gemeinschaft*, where the communal feeling of belonging to the same collective entity does not leave room for criticism and conflict:

[18] Federico Vercellone has approached the issue of the symbolic dimension of political power in his two last books, *L'archetipo cieco* (2021) and *L'età illegittima* (2022). The instability of symbols is singled out as a key characteristic of modernity and mirrors a condition in which socio-political bodies can no longer find themselves around a shared identity. In this lack of legitimation of power, symbols and institutions are subjected to heteronomous drives, such as the market.

[19] Very insightful and innovative lines have been written on this subject by Paul Downes in *Concentric Space as a Life Principle* (2019): here the author contraposes the Nietzschean way to overcome the personal self, built around the idea of a monistic Dionysian fusion, and the Ricœurian one, in which a positive interrelation between the self and the other does not develop into monistic fusion, but preserves and enriches the personal and moral life of both.

> In today's society we often resent the bureaucratic system, and with more right than Weber. What Weber may still teach us, though, is that any dream of a return to the communal instead of the associative may be quite ambiguous. Any effort to reconstruct society as a big commune may have either ultra-leftist or ultra-rightist consequences: anarchism or fascism. (Ricœur, 1988, p. 109)

This warning sounds so topical in our troubled times and sets inviolable limits to the consideration of the body politic as an organic whole endowed with autonomy. The organic interpretation of the body politic, by attributing full personality to the collective, sclerozes public memory and does not recognize the original contributions and changes triggered by individuals and groups that do not conform to the given socio-political forms.

In conclusion, it is useful to outline the three principles around which a phenomenological conception of institutions can be developed, with a view to further research. Based on Ricœur's insights, a phenomenological approach to institutions represents a middle ground between the organic models and the contractarian ones, which reduce political bodies to mere convention consciously stipulated by fully developed and autonomous individuals. A phenomenological view of institutions revolves around three tenets. The first is the dependence of the self on institutions, whereby the self depends on institutions under several respects: she does not choose to enter into a socio-political body, but she finds herself as part of a set of institutions.[20] Moreover, the self needs institutions to enforce the rule of justice in order to achieve a really autonomous development.[21] The second is the creative character of experience: the self's experiences are creative, for they are not strictly necessitated by the context, occurring instead with many organic processes concerning, for instance, the movement of muscles and parts of the bodies in relation to physical stimuli. New cultural contacts, for instance, can produce a transformation in people's lived experience that can be mirrored by an evolution of institutions. The third tenet is the mutual and enactive relation between selves and institutions. Institutions must be recognized simultaneously as necessary and precarious, unavoidable and everchanging, relatively stable in order to ensure processes of self and mutual self-recognition, but designed in ways that include a certain margin of reinterpretation and transformation.

[20] An early phenomenological understanding of institutions as necessary objectifications of the life-world is provided by Peter Ludwig Berger and Thomas Luckmann's *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966).

[21] See *Oneself as Another*, IXth Study.

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Michal Kern: Terč

Reflecting on Identity and Autonomy in a Datafied Society with Paul Ricœur

Guido Gorgoni

Abstract

As embodied subjects of experience in the physical world, we inhabit cyberspace as "dividuals" composed of fragmented and dispersed data as a result of operations performed by algorithms. Within the context of an "algorithmic society" (Balkin, 2017), the intersubjective process of identity building is replaced by algorithmic processes. This leads to a "mortification of the self" since this is not just a computational operation but also a moral experience. In order to react to this situation, some authors have invoked the fundamental incomputable nature of the self, explicitly relying on Ricœur's distinction between identity-idem and identity-ipse, and further arguing that this shall represent the core understanding of privacy (Hildebrandt, 2019). Other authors have proposed a performative theory of digital citizenship centered on the idea of claiming rights: here, I argue that Ricœur's reflection on the Self constituted as a subject of rights may complement this theory and that, in its turn, the latter may provide a valuable reference for reading and integrating Ricœur's analysis.

Keywords: Paul Ricœur, legal subject, responsibility, autonomy, identity, digital citizenship.

The starting point of my contribution is a short reply given by Paul Ricœur during the debate following his speech (titled *Justice, virtue and institution*) at the colloquium *La sagesse pratique. Autour de l'œuvre de Paul Ricœur*, held in his honor in Amiens in June 1997 (Barash & Delbraccio, 1998). Asked what he thought about the inescapably increasing role of computers in decision-making in many fields (such as, in particular, the medical, the legal, and the political) and about the possible threat represented by a society in which decisions were to be taken by machines, Ricœur answered that he could not see any threat and that he was not afraid since "[…] computers do not think. Computers are used by people. They are communication instruments, but

neither do they create a message nor do they think. So what are we afraid of?" (Barash & Delbraccio, 1998, p. 92; own translation from French).

He then continued by asserting that machines are not substitutes for humans in decision-making, but that they will only provide more information to the decider(s); taking as an example the medical or the legal fields, computers—Ricœur added—do not alter the human relationship between the doctor and the patient based on the trust accorded by the latter to the former, just as, in the field of justice, the fundamental situation of a human being judging another human being will not be altered by the auxiliary function of machines. In both these situations, Ricœur says, computers only enlarge the chain of intermediation (*les intermédiaires de la parole*): "I do not see under which profile the material aspect of computers is going to alter the structure of the problem […] we can multiply the sequence of intermediates but the fundamental structure will not be altered" (Barash and Delbraccio, 1998, p. 93; own translation from French).

25 years later, the rise of the contemporary "datafied society" or, to use Jack Balkin's terminology, the "algorithmic society", obliges us to reconsider this statement. The context in which computers are used to decide, and the ways they do it nowadays, unfortunately prove Ricœur's words wrong; nevertheless, they still retain their value if we recognize that their discursive status has changed: from descriptive as they were meant to be, they became normative. This happened not by virtue of their weakness but, on the contrary, as a consequence of the changed role technologies play in contemporary societies. Despite Ricœur's optimism (or myopia?) on this specific case, his thought can still provide fruitful elements for coping with some of the problems linked to the pervasive datafication of contemporary societies and the connected surveillance practices. In particular, I will focus here on the contributions of Ricœur's philosophy for appraising the impacts of algorithmic decision-making on the identity and the capacities of the Self, and therefore contributing to building the relationship between the Self and their digital others, in particular from the perspective of the Self as a subject of rights and as a digital citizen.

The Self in the Algorithmic Society

"Digital hybridity is the de facto mode of contemporary existence."
(Goriunova, 2019, p. 126)

Following Jack Balkin, the current society can be defined as an "algorithmic society," that is as "a society organized around social and economic decision-making by algorithms, robots, and AI agents, who not only make the decisions but also, in some cases, carry them out" (Balkin, 2017). This

is made possible by the pervasive *datafication* of many aspects of our life, that is, by putting (personal) information "in a quantified format so it can be tabulated and analyzed" (Mai, 2016, p. 193), a process accompanied and sustained by "the ideology of *dataism*" intended as "a widespread belief in the objective quantification and potential tracking of all kinds of human behavior and sociality through online media technologies" (Van Dijck, 2014). Within this context, marked by the emergence of a "surveillance capitalism" (Zuboff, 2019) as well as by the diffusion of a generalized "surveillance culture" (Lyon, 2018), the identity of the Self is no longer constructed only through intersubjective processes involving confrontation and reciprocal recognition; instead, it is accompanied by processes of algorithmic profiling based on (personal) data processing (De Hert, 2007). The ways in which reality is translated into data and those through which data are used for categorization and profiling are presented by Cheney-Lippold in *We are Data*, showing that "there is no single, static sense of us but rather an untold number of competing, modulating interpretations of data that make up who we are" (Cheney-Lippold, 2017, p. 35). As stated in an opinion of the Article 29 Working Party, "the widespread availability of personal data [...] and the ability to find correlations and create links, can allow aspects of an individual's personality or behavior, interests and habits to be determined, analyzed and predicted" (Article 29 Working Party, 2017). As a consequence, the online identity of the person is formed only in part on information voluntarily provided, or on other explicit indicators such as feedbacks, which are digital versions of identity-building dynamics belonging to the social construction of identity; instead, it also includes information that can be inferred by algorithms from data associated to someone.

The identity emerging out of algorithmic processes can be defined as that of an "interpolated subject," as "this form of divided individuality reconceptualizes much of identity into an aggregation of membership in different modulating measurable types […]. Without an embodied, always complete and unique identifier to call John, 'John' is an unstable inventory of potential meaning" (Cheney-Lippold, 2017, pp. 170–173). Two aspects are crucial for characterizing an identity computationally determined by algorithms: a) the datafication of identity, and b) the modularity and temporariness of the digital identity reconstructed this way as a result of the pervasive and continuous activities of data processing. In short, data do not *reflect* the identity of the Self: rather, they *assign* it as a provisional and ongoing result of algorithmic operations, so that "[...] you are rarely "you" online [...]. Rather, we are temporary members of different emergent categories [...]. The future of identity online is how we negotiate this emergence" (Cheney-Lippold, 2017, pp. 4–5).

Gilles Deleuze proposed the term *dividual* to designate the subject in the context of the "control society": "[in contrast with the individuated self,]

dividuals are rather fragmented and dispersed data bodies" (Raley, 2013, p. 127). This represents a *moral experience* which leads to a "mortification of the self" (Harcourt, 2015), given that "overdependence on computational decision-systems may result in a shrinking of the inner self, as we learn to internalize the logic of computational feedback to better adapt to our new environment. The elasticity, ex-centricity and ecological nature of the inner mind are what makes us human, but thereby also vulnerable to being hacked by an environment that is conducive to cognitive automation" (Hildebrandt, 2019, p. 105). The impacts of these processes on the contemporary philosophical, juridical and political anthropology are radical, as they are not confined merely to sub-disciplinary theoretical issues, but rather involve the very idea of the human as well as that of identity (Sætra, 2019; Rouvroy, 2016; Hildebrandt & Rouvroy, 2013).

This situation asks for reflection and for a reinterpretation, in the context of these new social digital territories, of the two concepts proposed by Paul Ricœur: "the idem identity (i.e., the third-person view of identity) and the ipse identity (the first-person view)" (Hildebrandt, Koops, & de Vries, 2008, p. 26). In the following, I wish to briefly discuss how we can make sense of this moral and political panorama within the philosophy of Paul Ricœur, in particular in connection with recent theorizations of digital citizenship, which seek to react to this state of affairs by giving an active and proactive role to digital citizens.

Privacy and the Incomputable Nature of the Self

"When our embodied individualities get ignored, we increasingly lose control not just over life but over how life itself is defined"
(Cheney-Lippold, 2017, p. 20)

In the face of the novel problems posed by digitalization, some authors have explicitly invoked, among others, Ricœur's analysis of personal identity in order to reaffirm the fundamentally *incomputable* nature of the Self, in particular by explicitly relying on the analysis of the distinction, proposed by Ricœur in *Oneself as Another*, between identity-*idem* and identity-*ipse*. Subsequently, they argue that this shall represent the meaning of the contemporary privacy idea, which grants the self the possibility to build autonomy and identity in its being simultaneously in the datafied and in the material world: "[…] incomputability is not rooted in the translation from atoms to bits, or in the temporality that forms the abyss of unpredictability of the physical world. It is rooted in the double contingency that erupts whenever I am addressed by another human being who addresses me as a grammatical first person […] this particular first-person perspective cannot be formalized

or captured in terms of data or programs, because this would always result in a third-person (or idem) perspective […]. "Me" and "I" thus form the incomputable self (the ipse) that cannot be represented other than via the bypass of an objectified (third-person, idem) perspective. What matters is that this bypass is necessarily ephemeral; it requires hard work to stabilize and—in the end—remains underdetermined. This is core to our non-essentialist essence" (Hildebrandt, 2019, p. 93).

The implications of this way of approaching the question of personal identity in a datafied society are relevant but cannot be fully discussed here. The relevance of this theoretical proposal is nonetheless manifest when we consider examples of this datafication of identity applied to policing (Redden, 2018), spanning from "traditional" policing in crime management (Joh, 2016), to the surveillance of emotional states (McStay, 2020). I now wish to turn to the implications of this approach maintaining the unity between the digital and the embodied Self, instead of reducing digital identity to a data construct, in particular when dealing with some of those more recent approaches to digital citizenship that are equally committed to reacting to the negative consequences of a pervasive datafication. Here I just wish to stress—as if this was necessary—that this is, above all, a struggle around the meaning of some fundamental categories, in particular personal identity (Sætra, 2019).

The Self as a Digital Citizen

> *"When individuals are replaced by dividuals, the categories of identity that we normally think of as politically owned by us, like gender, race, and citizenship (...) become nonlinearly connected to an endless array of algorithmic meaning, like web use and behavior data"*
>
> (Cheney-Lippold, 2017, p. 42).

Recent theories of digital citizenship, instead of focusing on the inclusive nature of the internet as an enabler of citizenship through participation, as the first theorizations did, focus on readings of citizenship as being based on a self-enactment by individuals. The focus of citizenship is no longer dependent on an attribution by a (supra)national legal order, but rather the emphasis is on the figure of the citizen as an active political subject: "while this may include being a subject to an authority, such as the state, most accounts of digital citizenship have been interested in the digital citizen as a subject of his or her own making. They have thus departed from classic understandings of the citizen as defined through membership of a nation-state and have focused instead on the self-creation and self-assertion of citizens as active participants in society through digital acts" (Hintz et al., 2018, p. 19).

Here, in particular, the discussion focuses on a proposed *performative* theory of digital citizenship, which claims the fundamental unity of the subject acting online and offline, as well as the unity and continuity of the physical space and the cyberspace, so that "who we become as political subjects—or subjects of any kind, for that matter—is neither given nor determined but enacted by what we do in relation to others and things. If so, being digital and being citizens are simultaneously the objects and subjects of political struggle" (Isin & Ruppert, 2020, p. 26). Pushing the idea of digital citizenship beyond its more common sense, that is, "the ability to participate in society online" (Mossberger et al., 2008), the two authors state that it is by *claiming rights* that we constitute ourselves as digital citizens, at the same time ensuring the unity of the claimant subject and that of the (cyber)space of action: "making rights claims inescapably involves a continuous relation between non-digital rights (i.e., civil, political, social, cultural, economic, sexual, etc.) and digital rights (i.e., ownership, access, privacy, anonymity, etc.)" (Isin & Ruppert, 2020, pp. 13–14). Accordingly, these authors speak of cyberspace as "a space of relations between and among bodies acting through the Internet," affirming both the unity of the online and offline space and that of the subject inhabiting it. The emerging figure of the digital citizen as a political subject is thus of an eminently collective and relational nature, so that "the citizen is a collective political subject that requires being and acting with others in the enactment of rights" (Isin & Ruppert, 2020, p. 14).

This performative theory of citizenship implies that citizenship is more than a legal status conferred by the law, emerging instead also from an imaginary of citizenship mobilized by those who claim rights. "If rights of citizenship come into being in law, the citizen comes into being through the performance of that law or performance of the right to claim rights. If the citizen comes into being performatively through rights, the imaginary of citizenship mobilizes this figure of the citizen as a subversive subject. He or she is a subject of power whose acts of citizenship are simultaneously of submission and subversion. Acts of citizenship embody these two contradictions" (Isin & Ruppert, 2020, p. 37). Indeed, I think that a crucial switch of perspective is at play here, from that of the third person of the "body acting" to that of the first person of the "I, we claim rights." If "our performativity always involves relations between ourselves and others" so that "conducting ourselves means to act with others as we place ourselves and take up and carve out social positions" and if "making rights claims are specific to our definition of citizens as not sovereign rights-bearing but performative rights-claiming subjects" (Isin & Ruppert, 2020, p. 27), then what does claiming rights imply from the first person perspective?

It is this aspect of the theory, indeed a crucial one, on which Ricœur's philosophy might help shed light.

The Digital Citizen as a Responsible Self

"When we look at the knowledge construction that takes place after our personal data have been collected, stored and aggregated we will find our selves represented as correlated data subjects"
(Hildebrandt, 2006, p. 10)

Indeed, as "data bodies," or data doubles, we are not constituted as selves but radically as *others*, since *multiple* and *modular representations* are *assigned* to us, which we could also term "identities," or *data narratives*, without the possibility of having a say. Here I argue that, just like Ricœur's theory crucially complements the proposed approach to digital citizenship, this latter reciprocally helps make the implications of the former more explicit. In particular, I argue that the capable self constituted as a "full" responsible subject of rights is a good candidate for the figure of the digital citizen emerging from the proposed theory of digital citizenship, and that, reciprocally, the Self constituted as a "true" subject of rights exceeds the figure of the individual legal subject and involves the reference to the collective dimension of citizenship taken in its political sense, which has to be articulated collectively along the language of rights and the political imaginary of equality and democracy.

If the constitution of the digital citizen is a function of claiming rights, then we shall turn to what it does imply to claim rights from the first-person perspective; in other words, we shall consider what claiming rights implies from the perspective of the claimant. Phrased differently, the act of claiming rights shall be considered from the perspective of an ethical and legal theory of the claimant subject. I think Ricœur's theory of the subject of rights, as developed both in *The Just* and in *The Course of Recognition*, is of particular relevance, since making the right claims implies recognizing oneself, as well as others, as subjects of rights. Ricœur's theory is particularly relevant given the crucial importance played by the legal dimension in his theory of recognition (this distinguishes Ricœur's approach from Honneth's). Indeed, in Ricœur, the Self attains the highest level of capacity when constituted as a "full" subject of rights, so that imputation recaps all the previous forms of capacity since, "with imputability the notion of a capable subject reaches its highest meaning, and the form of self-designation it implies includes and in a way recapitulates the preceding forms of self reference" (Ricœur, 2005, p. 106).

It is within the dialectical relationship between the idea of responsibility and that of imputability that the Self attains a new capacity, and "it is left to phenomenological and hermeneutic philosophy to take up the question (...) about the self-designation attaching to the idea of imputability as an aptitude for imputation" (Ricœur, 2005, p. 107). Ultimately, the "full" subject

of rights in Ricœur has to be understood in the terms of an actively and prospectively responsible self (Gorgoni, 2022), and the inscription within the language of rights is therefore of crucial importance both for the constitution of the identity of the self and for the figure of the (performative) digital citizen. Since struggles for recognition are located within contexts marked by contestation and struggle—even though not exclusively, as Ricœur states, taking some distance on this point from Honneth—it is often going to be articulated in the form of claims. This may include either invoking existing rights (an act of "submission" to conventions or "inscription") or projecting the claim beyond or even against the black letter of the law (an act of "subversion" of conventions).

If digital citizens *performatively enact themselves* by acts of *claiming* rights, the theory has to integrate the consideration of the "internal point of view" (to borrow an expression of legal philosopher Herbert Hart) of the legal subject/digital citizen, which cannot be understood only through its outputs (the acts of claiming and even their contents), but has also to integrate its meaning from a first-person perspective. Indeed, it is not the mere fact of taking the stance of claiming rights which counts as an authentic act of citizenship; instead, the content, the substance, of the claim is of crucial importance here, as the content cannot be separated from the attitudes and intentions of the claimant(s) (e.g., instrumental, formal or purely rhetoric claims are not authentic claims as they do not aim at the substance they formally/apparently bear/convey) since "[it] is necessary to distinguish between making rights claims against injustice, repression, and domination and making claims that are racist, misogynous, xenophobic, ethnocentric, nativist, and sexist that perform and enact such injustices and domination" (Isin & Ruppert, 2020, p. 15).

It is precisely on this point that it becomes possible to connect the two theoretical perspectives under scrutiny: on the one hand, rights claimants shall be *authentically committed to* what they claim, whilst at the same time, they shall inscribe these claims in the shared values and language of rights in order to articulate it in a universal form and not in a partisan and partial one. In other words, the need for *qualified claims* implies both the *recognition of the other* as an equal subject of rights and an *authentic engagement towards the rights that are claimed*. What emerges in both these perspectives are subjects *committed* to their claims and, at the same time, committed to articulating their claims in the universal, and therefore reciprocal, language of rights: "if we constitute ourselves as digital citizens, we have become subjects of power in cyberspace. This involves the inscription of rights in law (legality), claiming rights through performance (performativity), and responding to callings (imaginary) that, taken together, resignify the digital citizen or its enactment" (Isin & Ruppert, 2020, p. 54).

It seems to me that the figure of the digital citizen emerging from this performative theory of (digital) citizenship rejoins Ricœur's idea of a "full" subject of rights, which in its turn—at least in my proposed reading—deploys its full meaning in relation to an active and prospective idea of responsibility, in contrast to the "static" perspective of the ascription of rights and duties to a legal subject conceived in formalistic legal terms. Indeed, in Ricœur, the figure of the subject of rights is clearly more than an abstract or formal legal subject as it shows *attitudes* such as engagement, proaction, motivation, responsiveness, or care. The legal terminology—despite having been enriched by Ricœur with adjectives characterizing it in terms that are alien to the legal language—cannot fully express its nature: this linguistic uneasiness precisely indicates that the idea of the Self constituted as a "full" subject of rights is better framed in terms of the performative and responsible (digital) "citizen." Indeed, when dealing with the struggle for recognition on the juridical plane, Ricœur considers the role of recognition for the constitution of the self as a subject of rights: "[R]ecognition intends two things: the other person and the norm. As regards the norm, it signifies, in the lexical sense of the word, to take as valid, to assert validity; as regards the person, recognition means identifying each person as free and equal to every other person. Thus juridical recognition adds to self-recognition in terms of capacities [...] new capacities stemming from the conjunction between the universal validity of the norm and the singularity of persons. These two dimensions of juridical recognition thus consist in the connection between the enlarging of the sphere of rights recognized as belonging to persons and the enriching of the capacities that these subjects recognize in themselves. This enlarging and enriching are the product of struggles that mark the inscription in history of these two associated processes" (Ricœur, 2005, p. 197).

Recognition at the juridical level therefore clearly has to be intended here not in its purely legalistic sense, but also—and even mainly—in its wider ethical one; this means that recognition does not proceed exclusively from the level of legality, but also—recalling the terminology proposed by Isin and Ruppert—from both performativity and imaginary going beyond positive law. Ricœur writes that "the term responsibility therefore covers self-assertion and the recognition of the equal right of others to contribute to advances in the rule of law and of rights" (Ricœur 2005, p. 114). In my view, this implies recognizing that the figure Ricœur is pointing to—without explicitly naming it—when depicting the self as a "full" subject of rights, is the figure of the citizen intended in its active, performative and subversive sense by the performative theory of digital citizenship considered here. The apparently problematic figure of the "full" subject of rights recalled by Ricœur is well captured by the idea of the "citizen claiming rights": and indeed, in Ricœur's own words, the enlargement of rights and the parallel enlargement of capacities are strictly interrelated.

What, then, makes possible the prospective projection of rights and responsibilities, if not the imaginary underlying and sustaining the rights themselves?

Conclusions

The identification of Ricœur's legal subject as being the subject of a prospective responsibility and as a self-affirming citizen may be of great relevance today in connection with the pervasive role of technology in mediating both our face-to-face and institutional relations, where "humans are confronted with *computational 'others'*" (Hildebrandt, 2019), which also encompass their own data doubles or *dividuals*. Data and algorithms are part of wider societal (or socio-technical) arrangements without which they would not produce, alone, the same effects; they are both and at the same time the *products* and the *enablers* of such arrangements, so that they express, reiterate and enable power relations on which historical dynamics of *power over somebody*, as Ricœur would term these, are at play, producing harm, suffering, and misrecognition.

Ricœur's reconstruction of the identity of the Self also helps us also in acknowledging the abusive displacement of the discourse on the pole of *idem* at the expenses of the *ipse*, doubled by the fact that data are all but "given," instead they are "taken"—*capta* (Gitelman, 2013). It also helps to properly address what Jack Balkin metaphorically names "the homunculus fallacy," i.e., the fact that algorithms *are enabled to speak by* (and *for*) *somebody*. In other words, there are human projects, choices, decisions, and organizations behind their operation: they have not fallen among us like meteorites. Instead, they stand between us as buildings do, and we can, or better said have to, have a say on it. The responsibility for this state of affairs sits well beyond individual agents, but it does not exempt individuals from engaging with it. Institutional arrangements, intended not only in the legal and political sense, but also involving the socio-economic sphere, represent crucial crossroads for intervening in this context; nevertheless, we shall acknowledge that individual citizens (sometimes even "exemplary" citizens such as Julian Assange, or Edward Snowden, to name a few) de facto have the role of leading the struggle for recognition generated by the pervasive datafication of our life, sustained rather than countered by the institutional complex characterizing our contemporary societies.

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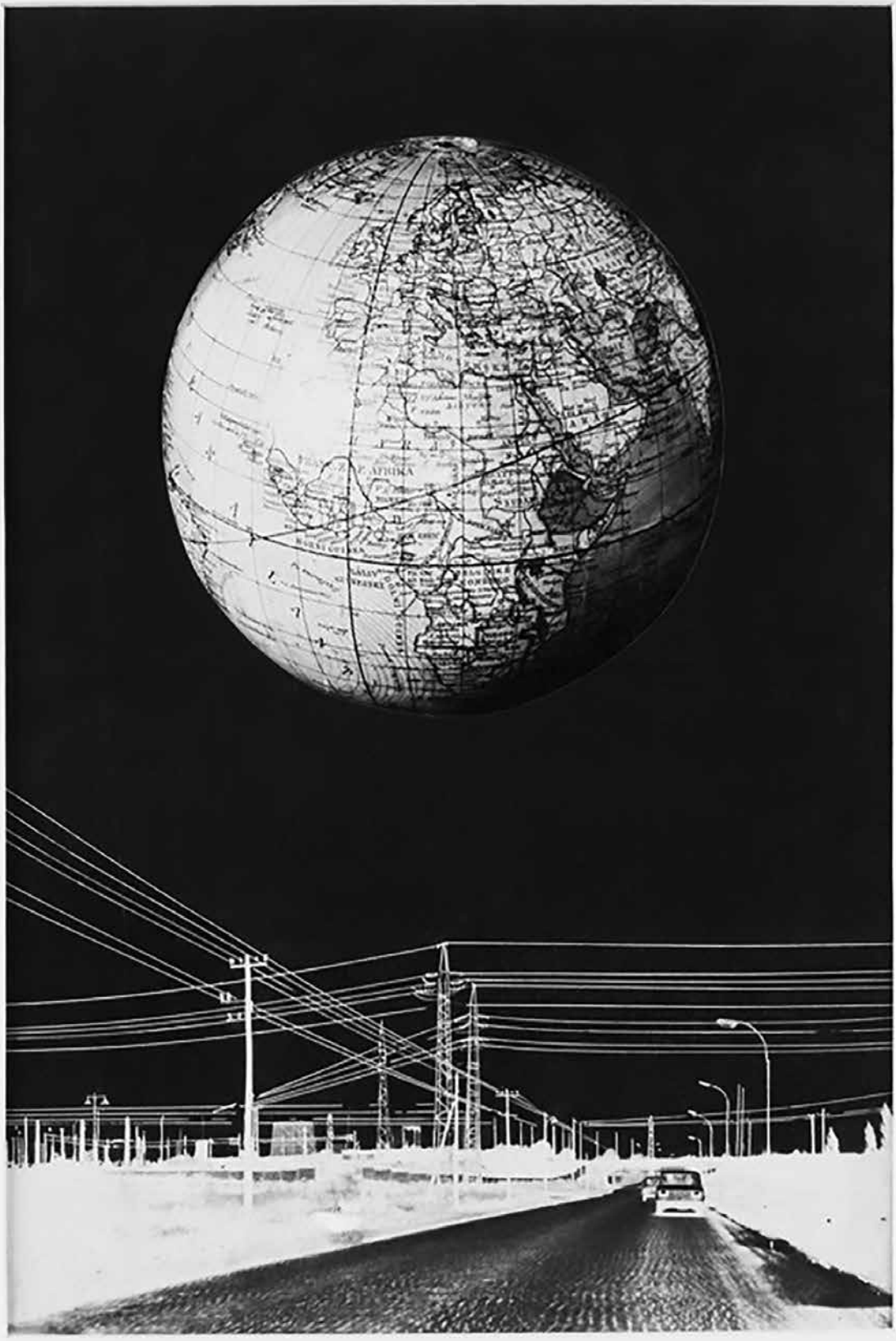

Michal Kern: Jedno z miest na glóbuse

Embodied Autonomy and the Natural Environment: Thinking Ecological Autonomy

Maria Cristina Clorinda Vendra

"In the capacity for autonomy, morality, and transcendence, also the human being emerges from nature"
(Beat Sitter-Liver 1999, 471)

Abstract

Paul Ricœur's philosophy of autonomy develops in an interdisciplinary conceptual framework. While much attention has been paid to the analysis and the application of his conception of autonomy to different research fields, the implications of Ricœur's insights into this topic for environmental philosophy have not been yet sufficiently discussed. This essay aims at filling this lacuna by showing that Ricœur's understanding of autonomy can provide valuable signposts that can orient the study of this notion from an eco-philosophical perspective. With reference to his phenomenological work entitled *Freedom and Nature; The Voluntary and the Involuntary* (1950/1966), this article explores the ecological foundations of autonomy through the consideration of human being's embodied interaction with the natural environment. As grounded upon our dynamic situatedness in the natural world, the development of autonomy will be first analyzed in relation to the fulfillment of vital needs as necessary to sustain the body's organic life. In this context, autonomy will be understood through the mediation operated by the will between the dependence of the body on the natural environment and our capacity of adaptation to it. Then, in continuity with the description of a human being's needful will, the ecological roots of autonomy will be considered as involved in the processes of the body's decentralization and affective immersion in the natural world. Autonomy will be approached here through the movement of interiorization and exteriorization with respect to bodily motivations and values. A Ricœurian inspired theory of ecological autonomy enables us to rediscover ourselves as members of the broader ecological community.

Keywords: ecological autonomy, natural environment, embodiment, dependence/independence, decentralization

To Mother Earth…

An "All Too Human" Sense of Autonomy?

Autonomy has never ceased to be explored as a complex issue dealing with the individual and the collective aspects of human existence.[1] The continuity between the personal and the communal configuration of autonomy is at the core of Paul Ricœur's work. From his early phenomenological project of the will up to his mature thought on justice, memory, and recognition, Ricœur's entire oeuvre provides theoretical and practical lenses to understand autonomy as a polyphonic notion. According to him, autonomy is not just an ideal that has to be pursued for the sake of personal and social flourishing. Rather, autonomy is also a principle that must be constantly protected against all potential and effective threats by each individual (Ricœur 1992, p. 198) and the whole of society. By following a movement of detour and return, that is, a back-and-forth rhythm marked by contextual concerns and the commitment to interdisciplinary dialogue with the human and social sciences, Ricœur presents an evolving conception of autonomy, lending itself to different treatments and demanding constant questioning with regard to the variety of its applications. Consequently, his account of autonomy goes far beyond the boundaries of philosophical discourse, touching cognitive, linguistic, literary, ethical, and juridical fields. Not surprisingly, Ricœur's approach to this topic has received a growing interest from scholars, who have critically applied its resources to several research branches, including theology, literature and social theory, philosophy of technology and artificial intelligence, philosophy of mind, and bioethics.[2] However, the possibility to extend Ricœur's insights into autonomy to the field of environmental philosophy remains largely unexplored. In this chapter, I aim to show that Ricœur's analysis of autonomy can help us to readdress this concept in an environmental fashion, namely in terms of what one might call "ecological autonomy." Undoubtedly, in his overall philosophical anthropology, Ricœur's conceptualization of autonomy can be criticized as offering an "all too human" perspective, using Nietzsche's apt words (Nietzsche 1878). Nevertheless, I believe that in Ricœur's thought, we can find useful reflections that help us think of autonomy as originally dealing with the relationship

[1] I thank George H. Taylor (University of Pittsburgh) for his comments, invaluable encouragement, and careful reading of this chapter.
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[2] The conference "Paul Ricœur and the Challenges of Autonomy," held at Bisla International School of Liberal Arts (BISLA), November 3-5, 2022, and the selected papers collected in this volume, testify the scholars' growing interdisciplinary interest in Ricœur's conception of autonomy.

between humanity and the natural environment. Indeed, in its most fundamental sense, autonomy relates to our embodied situatedness in the natural world, that is, to our dynamic implacement in it.[3] Therefore, autonomy is not merely something individually or socially constructed, but it is fundamentally anchored, in an ontological way, in the natural world as a space shaped by a myriad of direct and indirect relations necessary for the accomplishment of our autonomous life in relation with all other living or natural entities. To put it differently, autonomy would remain an insufficiently grounded notion without the consideration of our common belonging, as embodied and needful subjects, within the natural environment. Who or what is, then, autonomous when we speak about "ecological autonomy"?

This chapter has an exploratory character, making what follows a matter of open discussion for further work. Specifically, it can be considered an introductory step into a Ricœurian inspired theory of ecological autonomy which can find resonance in environmental philosophy as a discipline concerned with the relationship between human beings and the various types of environments, including the natural one. My attempt to show the ecological implications of Ricœur's conception of autonomy will be limited to the outline of an ecologically oriented interpretation of his early and scattered approach to this notion as presented in his first major work, *Freedom and Nature. The Voluntary and the Involuntary* (Ricœur, 1966). In doing so, I will describe autonomy in phenomenological terms as dealing with the lived body understood as the point of negotiation with the world. Autonomy arises, then, at the intersection between the space of our lived experience and the horizon of our embodied expectations related to needs, motives, and values. My investigation will consider the development of autonomy through the analysis of our corporeal involvement with the natural environment, and it will be divided into two parts. First, I will focus on the most basic level of autonomy, i.e., on autonomy as linked to the satisfaction of needs pertaining to the sphere of organic life. In this sense, autonomy will be understood as a dimension connected to the metabolism of the lived body, that is, to the satisfaction of vital needs, e.g., breathing, eating, sleeping, reproduction, etc., arising from the body's demands. Ecological autonomy will be defined as a process of active adaptation in accordance with the play among our needs, our will, and the natural environment. The affirmation of autonomy will result, then, at the same time as inseparable from our dependence on the natural world and from our active participation in it. Thus, autonomy will be understood as a dependent independence. Then, I will operate a shift moving from the receptivity and the activity of the will in dealing with needs to the movement of decentralization as expressed in bodily motives

[3] For the notion of "implacement" see Edward Casey (1993). I express my deepest gratitude to Jakub Čapek (Charles University, Prague) for inspiring discussions on this point.

and values. As decentered and decentralized beings, I will argue that autonomy emerges through the intertwining between interiority and exteriority. As such, autonomy deals with the movement of the lived body with our affective immersion in the natural environment. In conclusion, the discussion of the concept of ecological autonomy enables us to rethink human being's engagement with the natural world. The acknowledgment of the ecological groundings of autonomy opens up the possibility of reflection on the circular relation between human beings as members of the natural environment and the natural environment as part of ourselves as autonomous beings.

Ecological Autonomy and Organic Life: Needful Will and the Natural Environment

In the Western philosophical tradition, the notion of autonomy has been considered in its individual and collective sense as the state of self-determination of a person or groups, such as communities, municipalities, and nations. Oscillating between moral and socio-political discourse, autonomy has been prized as an essential dimension for human personal and communal realization. The idea of autonomy is shaped by the claim of alleged independence from others, might these be deities, individuals, collectivities, or territories. Marked by mental, physical, cultural, and geographical separations, autonomy has a fundamental relation with the space in which it is claimed, established, and preserved. In acknowledging the connection between spatiality and autonomy, philosophers have given most attention to the historical, political, and social spheres of human life rather than considering the relation between autonomy and the natural environment. This stands in line with the prevalent anthropocentric viewpoint in Western philosophy, in which human settings have been considered superior while the natural world has been treated as a subordinate space to be exploited in order to satisfy human needs. This viewpoint does not mean, though, that the importance of the bond between autonomy and the natural world has been completely ignored or that the natural environment has always been reduced to a context of instrumental utility offering merely a means for human ends. Indeed, figures such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Henry David Thoreau have presented an understanding of our autonomy as inseparable from the natural space.[4] These authors do not put the accent on separation, but on human entanglement with the natural environment, i.e., on autonomy as related to our interdependence with nature. Contrary to the nature-culture divide and to a natureless conception of autonomy, I claim that Ricœur's work presents resources that can en-

[4] See Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1790) and Henry David Thoreau (1854).

able us to interrogate afresh the relationship between this concept and the natural environment. Specifically, in order to develop this argument and to outline the features of the notion of ecological autonomy, I will refer to his first major work titled *Freedom and Nature. The Voluntary and the Involuntary* (1950/1966). In this oeuvre, Ricœur depicts our freedom as a finite and situated dimension, namely as "an only human freedom" committed to the world (Ricœur 1966, 482). In dealing with the structures of the will, Ricœur gives us powerful tools with which to discuss phenomenologically the notion of autonomy through the equilibrium between the voluntary power of action and the limits imposed by the very conditions of our existence. More precisely, Ricœur focuses his attention on the relationship between human will and nature broadly understood in terms of necessity. As long as human existence is embodied and engaged in the world, the development of our autonomy cannot be understood as separated from our involvement in it. It cannot be detached from the natural environment just as much as it cannot be detached from the dynamism of our social, cultural, political, and historical belonging to a given society. Moreover, in Ricœur's phenomenological perspective, the distinction between the organic and the social spheres of human life does not imply a sharp division between these levels. Although Ricœur does not provide a direct analysis of the relationship between the development of our autonomy and the natural environment, we can observe that in his phenomenological study of the will, especially in his diagnostics of the lived body, he introduces issues that can enable us to think about the bond between our becoming autonomous and the natural space. More precisely, it is in the analysis of what he calls "the corporeal involuntary" that, in discussing the topics of need, motives, and values, Ricœur offers us a reliable access to the most basic level of autonomy as implying an essential encounter with the natural environment. Against the conception of a total indifference of nature to human being[5] or the idea of an unshakeable equilibrium between humanity and the natural environment, ecological autonomy arises as a challenge linked to our productive adaptation to nature's rhythms, metamorphoses, and unexpected threats. Considered in these terms, our adaptation is not mechanical, but it involves freedom and the power of choice. Opposed to any form of automatism, autonomy relates to "the double movement of corporeal spontaneity and voluntary control" (Ricœur, 1966, p. 136) in the interaction with the natural environment.[6] Autonomy deals, then, with the enactive participation of human beings with the natural world. Therefore, before being taken up in moral reflection, autonomy requires a phenom-

[5] See Emmanuel Levinas (1969; 1998).
[6] For a detailed analysis on this point as connected to enactivism, see Geoffrey Direckxsens (2018).

enological investigation concerning the dynamic connection between the experience of body and the natural space.

To understand the ecological groundings of autonomy from a Ricœurian perspective, we first have to consider his phenomenological description of needs as dimensions involved in the enactive interaction between our body and the world in which we participate. In other words, ecological autonomy unfolds as connected with the space we inhabit by means of the body, the body's competing vital demands, and the possibility of their satisfaction. As Ricœur observes, "my body appears to me not even as an anonymous mask of an alien force but as *the autonomy of a person* with its own intentions and its own initiative […] My relation to myself is like that of a younger and an older brother: I respond for my part like an other who listens, imitates, obeys" (Ricœur, 1966, p. 47). Ricœur understands the body as the source of needs "in the sense that they arise from the body as lived" (Arel 2020, 63). Organic needs, as well as motives and vital values, are expressions of the corporeal involuntary, which provides the foundation for the exercise of all voluntary acts. Ricœur's approach to needs provides a set of resources useful for thinking autonomy ecologically, namely as inseparable from the body's primary organic life and its situatedness in the natural world. Following his line of thought, we can describe the ecological quality of autonomy by taking into account the dynamic connection between human being's "needful will" and its bond to the environment, broadly understood as a web of relationships.[7] Among the different configurations that the environment takes, e.g., urban, social, cultural, economic, technological, etc., the natural environment is the most basic one since it is our life support system that can address and accommodate the resolution of our primary needs. The natural environment and all other environments featuring human existence are, at one and the same time, different and intertwined. It is precisely in the organic configuration of human life that ecological autonomy is originally shaped through the ongoing relations between our will and the processes of productive adaptation to the natural world.[8] More precisely, the fulfilment of needs is not an automatism escaping from any voluntary act. Indeed, according to Ricœur, needs cannot be understood through the stimulus-response model. Rather, needs reveal human being's "life gaping as appetition for the other" (Ricœur, 1966, p. 92). Contrary to any naturalistic and deterministic perspective in which need is seen as "a sensation translating an organic defect and followed by a motor reaction" (Ricœur, 1966, p. 91), Ricœur conceives it as a "lack of…," as a "pre-action" intentionally directed towards something

[7] The idea of "needful willing" is inspired by Hans Jonas's concept of "needful freedom" as developed in his ontology of living organisms. For a clarification of "needful freedom" and its various dimensions, see Jonas (1966).

[8] For the difference between human being's and animals' adaptation to the environment see Ricœur (1966, 95).

(Ricœur, 1966, p. 91). Hence, "need is not self-explanatory," but it acquires "definitive direction only as appropriated by a will" (Kohák, 1966, p. xix). Therefore, since need is always directed towards something, it pertains to the appetite "as an indigence and an exigence, an experienced lack of … and an impulse directed towards …" (Ricœur, 1966, p. 89). Through the description of the circular relation between body and willing, Ricœur observes that "I do not know need from the outside, as a natural event, but from within, as a lived need" (Ricœur, 1966, p. 87). In short, needs are neither inner sensations nor components of a stimulus-response pattern, but transcending behaviors linked to our voluntary acts as intentionally directed towards the world. The flourishing of autonomy is grounded in our belonging to ecological systems, which enable the satisfaction of our needs and the preservation of our own life. Ricœur points out: the "autonomy of life consists here in the maintaining of internal bonds of the organism, certain exchanges with the environment being presupposed. But we can consider the whole of the relations of the organism with its environment as a structural problem whose balance will be constantly redefined and in process" (Ricœur, 1966, p. 417). In his view, adaptation is not the result of biological evolution, that is, of a biological heredity and of a predetermined destiny. Our adaptation to the natural environment is a product of our capacity to choose and to act. As Ricœur observes, "it is always possible to include psychology of conduct within a vast structural problematic, to bring the balance between the organism and its geographic environment into a total structural system" (Ricœur, 1966, p. 417). Hence, it is at the organic level of our life that autonomy begins to develop before extending to the perceptual and intellectual contexts. At this level, ecological autonomy can be defined as the active self-organization of a human being as an organism able to actively keep himself or herself alive through a constant exchange with the natural environment. Yet, the organic level has to be considered as a logical priority. Indeed, autonomy has to be understood with reference to the whole human being (Ricœur 1986, 4), namely through the acknowledgment of the unity among the "diverse capacities and incapacities that make human beings acting and suffering beings" (Ricœur, 1997, p. xxxix).

In considering ecological autonomy, we find that there is no opposition between freedom and dependence, self-legislation and heteronomy, interiority and exteriority. As Ricœur argues, "we should form an absolutely false idea of the Cogito if we conceived of it as a positing of the self by itself: the self as *radical autonomy*, not only moral but ontological, is precisely the fault" (Ricœur, 1966, p. 29). In its most basic form, autonomy deals with our embodied relationships within the complex network of living organisms and natural elements, e.g., air, water, soil, organic matter, etc., which together maintain the flow of energy necessary for the preservation of life.

On the one hand, between our organic needs and the natural environment, there is a relation of dependence. As Ricœur puts it, "to feed myself is to place myself on the level of reality of the objects on which I depend. While I transform them into myself, they drag me to the level of objects and make me a part of the great natural cycles—the cycles of water, carbon, nitrogen, etc." (Ricœur, 1966, p. 87). The vital needs originating from our corporality make us encounter the natural environment as a space of possibilities for our autonomous survival and as a context of limitations on our acting power. On the other hand, though, dependence is not determinism or constriction, since we are capable of choosing not only how to satisfy our needs but also whether to do so. As Ricœur writes, "non-satisfaction of needs can be not only accepted, but can even be systematically chosen" (Ricœur, 1966, p. 93). Yet, as he puts it, "given over to my body, subjected to the rhythm of my needs, I nonetheless do not cease to be a self which takes a stand, evaluates its life, exercises its control" (Ricœur, 1966, p. 93). Related to the connection between our vital needs and the natural environment, our ecological autonomy emerges as a dependent independence. In analyzing the experience of our needs, we are led to consider our autonomy from our situatedness in the natural environment as needy beings originally related to all other living creatures and elements through passive and active interactions. As such, ecological autonomy is shaped by relationships of interdependence with the natural space and all its components. In acknowledging our belongingness to the natural environment, we can observe that "we are neither purely autonomous nor purely heteronomous; we can act in ways not determined by nature, but there are other senses in which we are still determined by nature: one cannot, for example, plant a garden without earth, water, seeds, and so on. Our most basic sustenance is dependent upon nature" (Romanyshyn, 2018, p. 314). The consideration of the ecological quality of our autonomy through the experience of needs allows us to understand ourselves as ecological beings, that is, as members of the larger Earth's biotic community on which we depend (Leopold 1949), in which we are interdependent, and where we can actualize our choices. Since the configuration of our autonomy is not possible without our participative belonging to the natural environment, the issue of autonomy cannot be restricted to the problem of how to treat humanity, for it must include a concern for the treatment of the natural environment as it provides us resources for the development of our autonomous existence as well as for that of all other living beings.

Ecological Autonomy and Affective Immersion: Motivation, Evaluation, and the Natural Environment

Ricœur's analysis of the corporeal involuntary has led us to acknowledge that our autonomy has ecological foundations. We have seen that in its most basic form, autonomy emerges from the interaction between organic needs arising from the body's spontaneity and the natural world as providing the conditions for these needs' satisfaction. Our autonomy is grounded, then, in the interrelation between our embodied will as needful and the heteronomy of the ecological systems in which we are situated. More precisely, the study of needs opens up the possibility of discussing the configuration of our autonomy in connection with the natural environment as involving our dependence, as well as our participation and affective immersion. Contrary to the opposition between "a heartless reason and an irrational heart" (Kohák, 2003, p. 19), Ricœur presents an alternative phenomenological approach to rationality which helps us to construct a renewed vision of autonomy as inseparable from the natural space. In order to explain this point in more detail, we have to consider that for Ricœur, the body manifests not only the total field of needs, but also that of motives and values underlying all voluntary decisions.[9] Indeed, needs relate "to pleasure in terms of various 'motivating values and tendencies'—evaluative discriminations that are not imposed by consciousness or reason but are already operative in our most basic affective relations" (Kearney, 2016, p. 32). As the way one exercises the capacity of decision, autonomy is concerned with the bodily principles and values that orient our choices. Bodily motivations and judgments relate to the natural environment as a space of opportunities and limitations that enable us to satisfy our vital needs, as well as all other needs, such as those of feeling free, capable of acting, and related to others. Thus, motives and values cannot be reduced to our intellectual activity as a dimension detached from the affective interactions we entertain with the world. Rather, we develop our autonomy through the intertwining of our mind, our body, and the space in which we are dynamically placed. Therefore, autonomy is shaped through the fulfillment of needs, the connected power of motivations, and by means of value judgments, as modes of one's embodied engagement with the natural environment as the first source of life.

According to Ricœur, need can be "a motive on which willing can base itself in determining itself" (Ricœur, 1966, p. 93). Otherwise put, needs are the matter of motives and these form our needs into reasons directed towards decisions. Motivation is an intentional stream that inclines the will to decide for something "in order to" as well as "because of." Every motive is,

[9] See Ricœur (1966, 85–86).

then, a motive for a decision that inclines the will towards the realization of its projects. Although motivation is associated with the question "why?", Ricœur stresses that motives are not causes since "a cause is complete prior to the effect, while a motive exists only in relation to a choice" (Ricœur, 1966, p. 142). Consequently, there is an irreducible difference between the unfolding of our autonomous motivations and all psychological determinism. As such, "motive is not what causes a decision but what legitimates it" (Amalric, 2018, p. 28). Ricœur argues that "the circular relation of motive to project demands that I recognize my body as body-for-my-willing, and my willing as project-based—(in part)—on my body" (Ricœur, 1966, p. 85). Originating from the corporeal dimension, motivation is not understood here as a process of reasoning, but "in the sense of the inner move (from the Latin *movere*), in the sense of emotional movement, emerging from the deepest realm, of the emotional and non-rational of the individual" (Busacchi, 2016, p. 62). Following this internal movement, human beings discover themselves as decentered and intentionally directed outside of themselves towards the world. The development of the subject's autonomy lies in the circularity between the manifestation of motives and their fulfillment in the world through the body. Thus, the bond between human being and the natural environment can be described in phenomenological terms as a detour from the body to the natural world and as a return from the natural world to the body. Involved in the circular movement between our lived body and the world, autonomy is linked to our embodied desire to exist, i.e., to what, in Spinoza's terms, is called *conatus vitae* (Spinoza, 1677). It is in this context that imagination plays an essential role. As Ricœur points out, "the fundamental affective motive presented by the body to willing is need, extended by the imagination of its object, its program, its pleasure, and its satisfaction" (Ricœur, 1966, p. 97). It is through imagination as bridging needs and will that a need can be raised "to the dignity of a motive for possible willing" (Ricœur, 1966, p. 95). In short, motivation deals with something affectively anticipated as desired. Imagination and motivation accompany our reasons for acting in order to achieve something. The unfolding of our ecological autonomy relates, then, to the use of the representative function of imagination as a mediation between the body and the world on the basis of previous perceptive experiences. For this reason, we can speak about the ecological configuration of autonomy as coupled with what one can call a "carnal eco-imagination" a function dealing with our affective participation, as acting and suffering being, in the natural environment.[10] Ecological autonomy develops, then, through the use of our practical power to act in connection with the natural sphere. More precisely, ecological autonomy emerges through the dynamic con-

[10] For the carnal as the site of meaning see Kearney (2015).

nection between our bodily needs, motives, and willful actions within the boundaries of the natural world. Since we are in the world in order to act in it, the development of our autonomy is, at the same time, "a matter of feeling, valuing, doing" (Kearney, 2015, p. 181).

Following Ricœur's line of thought, vital values appear as involved in the motivation of our projects and as connected to our vital needs. As he argues, "the first non-deducible is the body as existing, life as value. The mark of all existents, it is what first reveals values" (Ricœur, 1966, p. 94). Given that the body is the fundamental source of organic values pertaining to the preservation of life, all other values are elaborated in relation to it. In this sense, we have an immediate apprehension of values founded on the felt experience of the body. Organic values are heterogeneous and concern, for example, assimilation, security, exercise, rest, etc. The realization of our autonomy depends on a balanced attainment of vital values which allow for our well-being. Consequently, we can observe that the value of body integrity is essential for our autonomy. As such, our body is not just a means for inhabiting the world, but the immediate bearer of values enabling our own self-realization. Vital values emerging from our body's spontaneity are effectively realized through our involvement in the natural environment as a dimension nurturing our integrity. Since the realization of organic values requires an active exchange between the body and the natural sphere, the configuration of our ecological autonomy necessarily has spatial and material bases. On the one hand, the value of bodily integrity is shared with all other living beings. On the other hand, our own bodily integrity cannot be just biological since it is "always embedded in a certain ideology of wholeness" (Slatman, 2012, p. 283). The explanation about how autonomy, bodily integrity, and ideology interact would require a further development of the phenomenological description of ecological autonomy in the direction of a normative theory. Drawing out these connections further is beyond the scope of this paper. The important point here is that autonomy develops through the value judgments connecting the feeling of our body's interiority and the felt exteriority of the world through the body. Ricœur indirectly suggests that vital values, which are sets of competing demands, must not be reduced to subjective assessments or to utilitarian dimensions. The reduction of organic values to utility standards has as a consequence the misrecognition of the bond between ourselves and natural environment. If we do not acknowledge the primordial bond between ourselves and the natural environment, we risk being led to "an inner devastation by which one distances oneself from one's own animality and bodiliness, a distancing that cannot but surely inhabit and/or distort the basic source of our vital value experience—our bodies—and, with it, the perception of ecological values" (White, 2007, p. 186). Hence, the experience of organic values is a question of coming to terms with our animality and vitality; we are not superior crea-

tures situated in the natural environment but equal members of it having our own features.

Conclusion: Watering the Roots of Ecological Autonomy

In this article, I have explored the ecological roots of the notion of autonomy with reference to Ricœur's early phenomenology. In order to show that autonomy is shaped through our situatedness in the natural world, I have discussed the structural interrelation between the experience of our lived body and the natural environment. Specifically, by following Ricœur's diagnostic of the body, I have introduced the notion of ecological autonomy through the analysis of the involuntary correlates of decision: organic needs, bodily motives, and strong values. Contrary to the alternative between total freedom or total determinism, Ricœur's study of the will invites us to think of the development of our autonomy as "always already engaged in concrete situations in which different possibilities take form and make sense with respect to our objectives" (Vallée, 2018, p. 12). Our becoming autonomous depends on the opportunities and the limitations that we meet in our relation with the natural environment. Let me offer some concluding remarks.

Ricœur's phenomenological description of the corporeal involuntary leads us to think autonomy as a dimension linked to the different spaces we inhabit, including the natural space. As embodied and needful subjects, our autonomy has ecological roots, and it is configured through the dynamic tension between the voluntary and the involuntary, finitude and infinitude, activity and passivity, capability and vulnerability, interiority and exteriority. In experiencing our living body situated in the world, the development of our autonomy is inseparable from the place we occupy in the natural environment as a primordial source of life. On the one hand, we depend on the natural environment for our very existence and for the realization of our autonomous life. On the other hand, unlike other animals, we are intentional beings able to exert certain control over the natural space in order to make our "social life together safer and more predictable" (Sutton, 2007, p. 9). It does not mean, though, that we are masters of nature. As members of the natural environment, our autonomy develops through passive and active interactions within it.

In considering the development of the autonomy of the human being in relation to the natural environment, we have seen that this relationship configures as one of dependence (e.g., for food, air, water, etc.) rather than of autonomy understood in the classical sense of ability to live on one's own.

Therefore, these reflections lead us to consider whether our relation to the natural world requires a rethinking of the very meaning of autonomy or its availability. Indeed, rather than conceiving autonomy as self-determination, this chapter considers autonomy more in terms of self-governance. An expanded notion of autonomy would require respect for the autonomy of the natural environment itself. Indeed, autonomy does not offer respect for the natural world only because it serves as a human resource. Further considerations of these arguments must await future development.

The phenomenological analysis of the ecological groundings of our autonomy through the description of organic needs, motives, and vital values, entails an essential ethical character. Our autonomy is challenged by the natural environment conceived as an otherness in which our life takes place, but also as an otherness that is part of who we are. The challenge of autonomy is not merely an experience of passivity in the encounter with the natural environment. In his phenomenological analysis of the body Ricœur shows that the "desire of autonomy can only be satisfied through the otherness that I am, that is, my body, the world" (Rosfort, 2019, p. 981). Therefore, Ricœur can help us to establish an ethics of ecological autonomy, revolving around the concepts of dignity, integrity, respect, and responsibility, grounded in the principles of the phenomenology of embodiment. Not only do we have to rethink the ecological roots of autonomy, but we have to water these roots if we want to move towards an environmentally sustainable future.

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Michal Kern: Dvojité zrkadlenie II.

Memory as Justice?
(In-)Capable Subject and the (Im-)Possibility of Justice

Dagmar Kusá

Abstract

Ricœur 's account of justice rests upon the concept of a capable subject, able to speak and act on their own behalf, accountable for their own actions, and recognized by others and by neutral institutions of justice as an equal—a citizen. However, is justice possible when the subject is not capable—when they are not able to voice their claims, recognized as equal, or when their suffering is not acknowledged by the other and by the institutions of the state?

Justice encompasses the principle of fairness, which can be extended into the past or to those unable to speak on their behalf. The "duty of memory" emanates from it. The question is whether *justice* can be achieved through memory work outside the courts of justice and across the distance of time.

The possibility of memory as justice is explored in the context of unpunished crimes from the communist era and the systemic discrimination of the Roma people in Central Europe today. The chapter finds that justice is not attainable in the absence of an inclusive and equitable narrative of citizenship and social and economic justice, the lack of which also violates the autonomy of the individual as a capable subject. Memory work thus serves as a precondition for a just society, but cannot replace justice as such.

Keywords: justice, capable subject, Ricœur , Roma, communism

> "We have nothing better than memory to signify that something has taken place, has happened, has occurred before we declare that we remember it.
> Ricœur (2006, p. 52)

Duty to Remember and Duty to Justice

This reflection was inspired by mentions of "memory as justice" in the works of I. Bitton and M. Duffy. Maria Duffy explores the role of forgiveness in Ricœur 's work on memory and justice (Duffy, 2009). In speaking about the narrative nature of identity, composed of many sources, including memory, Duffy points out that "[Ricœur] rightly alerts us to the necessity of dealing with memory as a potential source of justice and reconciliation and even of the duty to remember (*devoir de mémoire*) not only out of a deep concern for the past but in transmitting the meaning of past events to the future generations, a task that carries a moral weight" (Duffy, 2009, p. 82). Israel B. Bitton, in his comprehensive and multidisciplinary look at the concept of memory, offers a summary of deontological justice, which he equals to the "memory as justice" approach where justice is pursued "for its cosmic, metaphysical, inexplicable quality, and specifically for the other, on behalf of the collective" (Bitton, 2022, p. 190). Ricœur himself, in *Memory, History, Forgetting* (2006), discusses the duty of memory as a duty of justice (p. 89).

Memory is not usually the first thing that comes to one's mind when thinking about justice. Justice may recall a courtroom with judges, plaintiffs, advocates, and an audience. That is juridical justice, which follows a code of laws, customs, and norms surrounding this profession. There is a specific claimant who asserts that they are a victim, a defendant who is accused of being a perpetrator of harm, and a neutral institution bound by laws and rules. However, is such justice possible when the claimant cannot speak for themselves? Can another speak on their behalf and, if not in the courts of justice, then where? Paul Ricœur has devoted much attention to memory and justice in his works. Concerning memory, he speaks of society's duty to remember. Does this mean that remembering facilitates justice? Or that it merely serves as one of the preconditions for justice?

To explore these questions, Ricœur 's analysis of juridical justice, founded on the precondition of a *capable subject*, will be considered against two cases where the wronged cannot meet the conditions of being capable subjects. One is distant in time and relates to the people who experienced oppression, imprisonment, and mistreatment by the totalitarian communist regime in Czechoslovakia. The other—the Roma of Slovakia—pertains to a community that is part of society here and now but that is distanced from

the possibility of justice by the marginalization of their voice and by their experience of discrimination and relegation to the margins of society. Naturally, the chapter does not provide sufficient space to elaborate on both cases in depth; instead, they serve as illustrations of distance from the "mainstream" society and of voicelessness. In the absence of a possibility of juridical justice for subjects who do not meet the criteria of a capable subject, this paper considers whether and how mourning and memory work can move society in the direction of deontological justice, justice enshrined in fair institutions and serving the end of attaining a "good life."

The Capable Subject

When Ricœur considers justice in the juridical sense, he describes it as a process of restoration of civil peace that should have the components of the application of a penalty and the rehabilitation of the perpetrator through carrying out the punishment (Ricœur , 2000, p. XXIII). It applies to persons, institutions, and actions. To explore the possibility of justice, this chapter will first look at Ricœur 's conceptualization of the bearer of juridical justice—the *capable subject*, the autonomous individual that decides to entrust the claim of their rights being violated to the hands of the representative of neutral institutions of justice. This conceptualization follows the speech act theory, using a framework similar to his conceptualization of identity in *Oneself as Another* (Ricœur , 1990). The fundamental question is who—individual or collective—the bearer of rights is and who has committed something and is responsible (Ricœur , 2000, p. 23).

The capable subject is explored through a set of four questions/conditions:

1. *Speech: Who is speaking?* This question relates to the author of utterances, the speaker, who is presumably the carrier of the burden of the suffered harm (pp. 3–4).
2. *Action: Who did this or that action?* This question refers to the authorship of action and identification of responsible individuals who will eventually be forced to incur a penalty or compensate the victim. Capacity here resides in acting freely and accepting, on the basis of the law, the consequences of the deed they authored in the face of the law (p. 16).
3. *Narrative: Whose story is being told?* This is a question of narrative identity, the story being told and its emplotment, and the story being told about those involved.
4. *Ethical and moral predicates: Who is worthy of self-esteem and self-respect?* This question adds the moral evaluation of the *good* and the bad, and a sense of *obligation* derived from that.

It is apparent that the fourth question links Ricœur 's conception of juridical justice with the broader framework of a just society. It implies the context of the storied self within a web of relations with others, which are mediated through impartial institutions. The institutions provide for a neutral perspective of a third party and facilitate equitable treatment, where any person can be replaced by another (Ricœur , 2006, p. 28).

> Without institutional mediation, individuals are only the initial drafts of human persons. Their belonging to a political body is necessary to their flourishing as human beings, and in this sense, this mediation cannot be revoked. On the contrary, the citizens who issue from this institutional mediation can only wish that every human being should, like them, enjoy such political mediation, which, when added to the *necessary* conditions stemming from philosophical anthropology, becomes a sufficient condition for the transition from the capable human being to the real citizen. (Ricœur , p. 10)

Citizenship in this sense is the realization of a capable subject. For Ricœur as for Kant and Rawls, personal autonomy, is tied to citizenship, understood as "the freedom one has insofar as one is rational to give oneself the law as the rule for the universalization of one's own maxims of action" (Ricœur , 2000, p. 37). Juridical justice and its practice in the realm of institutions guided by impartial rules produces byproducts resulting in civic solidarity and social cohesion as it facilitates one of the most prized features of democratic societies, and a rare commodity today: trust in institutions and interpersonal trust. For that leap of faith, there has to be a willingness of the community to uphold shared norms and values, which in turn requires solidarity and acceptance of equality before the law.

The capability approach further develops the idea of equitability by placing the responsibility for securing conditions for each individual's human development and capabilities on the state. "If a decent society is to remain stable not just as a grudging modus vivendi, but, as John Rawls puts it, stable 'for the right reasons,' it needs to generate attachments to its principles, and attachment brings vulnerability. This vulnerability would be unendurable without trust. Producing trust must therefore be a continual concern of decent societies" (Nussbaum, 2016, p. 173). The "right reasons" for stability are the protection and promotion of central human capabilities and opportunities for development—ultimately, conditions for the flourishing of human dignity. This idea goes hand in hand with Ricœur 's treatment of Rawls's principles of distributive justice, especially the second principle that emphasizes maximizing the minimal share in a situation of unequal shares (Ricœur , 2000, p. 38)—that is, providing some modicum of dignified living to those most vulnerable in society. It is also linked to the original position,

where participants know what every reasonable being wants to possess—"primary social goods without which the exercise of liberty would be an empty demand. In this regard, it is important to note that basic self-respect belongs to the list of primary goods (Ricœur , 2000, p. 43) and the veil of ignorance assures their fair starting position (Ricœur , 2000, p. 44). Nussbaum emphasizes that the dignity threshold—her term for the minimum conditions society needs to secure for each individual to live a dignified life—requires not just basic civil liberties and political rights but economic and social rights—material empowerment—as well (Nussbaum, 2011). This, in turn, means the recognition of individuals by one another and by the institutions of the state as capable subjects, their equitable treatment, and the provision of opportunities for the development of their own capabilities.

The neutral realm of institutions facilitates the equitable conditions of the application of justice. However, the rules and laws they are inscribed in would not be worth the paper they are written on if there was no basic consensus on shared values. Ricœur speaks about the *will* to live together in a community and a shared sense of responsibility and reciprocity. "You are responsible for the consequences of your acts, but also responsible for others' actions to the extent that they were done under your charge or care, and eventually far beyond even this measure. At the limit, you are responsible for everything and everyone" (Ricœur , 2000, p. 12). The responsibility is not limitless. It is mediated by *phronesis*, moral judgment, which aids in "recognizing among the innumerable consequences of actions those for which we can legitimately be held responsible" (p. 35). Nussbaum emphasizes that trust in a society does not merely mean reliance on institutions to "do their job," for that often happens in situations where institutions are corrupt (we expect them to behave in a certain way). Trust includes vulnerability because the flourishing of the capabilities of others is partially in the hands of the other (Nussbaum, 2016, p. 173).

What ought to follow is a widespread sense of responsibility, accepting the consequences of breaking the established rule, and a sense of solidarity and ethic of care within the society. Juridical justice is historically perceived as retributive justice—responsibility is related to the willingness to comply with punishment for wrongdoing or compensation to the victim. At the same time, it is, for Ricœur , underwritten with the ethic of care for the other A capable subject, authoring their claim of wrongdoing vis-a-vis an identifiable counterpart accused of causing harm, both agrees to delegate the dispute's resolution to a neutral third party and accepts the consequences, trusting the judgment to be morally justified. For its implementation, a cohesive and trust-based community of will is needed. The individuals are partners of equal worth and recognition.

The In-Capable Subjects: Distanced by Time and Peripherality

Two cases will be used to illustrate the applicability of the concept of juridical justice and the capable subject it rests upon. In one, the subjects incurring the harm are removed in time: they are the many victims of the totalitarian communist era that have not received any compensation or seen any punishment for the crimes of that era—and will not receive it as many are no longer alive. For those still alive, the statute of limitations has since expired. The second collective subject, the Roma minority in Slovakia, is distanced by their marginalization, pushed out into the periphery of the society. Naturally, several other case studies could be imagined; these two have been selected merely to enable imagination of this distancing in time and in "space."

Over the four decades of communist rule, the victims of the communist regime are counted in their hundreds of thousands, from those who lost property due to the forceful nationalization of private property, to those who lost their lives or loved ones as a result of political show trials—especially the "Monster Trials" of 1950. Thousands were incarcerated or sentenced to labor in inhumane working conditions, and thousands more lost their freedom to work in a field of their choosing or pursue education. The list is long, and it is difficult to draw a line between crimes that should have been prosecuted at the onset of the transition to democratic rule and those that can be left as bygone. Although some portion of those disowned could reclaim their property after 1989, and some political prisoners received a symbolic sum as a recognition of their suffering, the vast majority of those harmed have seen neither compensation nor penalty, at least for the top layer of the former political leadership. Not a single political leader from the communist era was sentenced after 1989. More than thirty years have passed since then, and the statute of limitations on most of the crimes from that era has elapsed. Many victims died under the communist regime, and many more have died since then. The chance that those remaining, or their descendants, could live to see compensation or penalty take place is dim to nil.

The Roma have been ostracized in Slovak society, physically removed, segregated, and discriminated against for centuries. During the Slovak State's fascist interwar period, they were removed into segregated areas, often a mile or two away from the nearest village. During the communist regime, the nomadic Roma were forcefully settled, moved into cement apartment blocks, and sent to work in factories. They were only recognized as a national minority after 1989. Still, the living situation of many Roma in fact worsened, owing to high unemployment caused by racial profiling and social issues that plague the segregated townships, from intergenerational poverty to broken families and high substance abuse. Roma live on average ten years fewer than the majority population and suffer infectious diseases at a much higher rate than the national average (Hudák, 2021). Roma chil-

dren have been and still are sent to schools for the mentally disadvantaged at alarming rates, and it is nearly impossible for them to gain access to higher education. Roma women have been subjected to forced sterilizations, a practice widespread during communism but continuing well into the 21st century (Centrum pre reprodukčné práva, 2003). Roma have also been subject to police brutality and incarcerated disproportionately. The list of harms committed against the Roma resembles that committed against the African American community. However, in the U.S., a sense of shared responsibility was awakened through the Black Lives Matter movement in at least a sizeable part of the national community. Such a movement is nearly impossible to imagine in Slovakia. One of the key reasons for that is the incapability of the subjects in this relational constellation.

Who is Speaking? The Sounds of Silence

The notion of a capable subject becomes immediately problematic when thinking through these two case studies. Going step by step through the traits of a capable subject, we stumble from the first step to the last. The voice of the harmed in these two cases is largely silent due to a lack of awareness, acknowledgment, and sense of responsibility.

The victims of the communist regime do not have a strong identifiable voice in the present-day discourse. It would be more meaningful to speak about several categories of the harmed, where a responsible culprit could be identified. Several feeble attempts have been made—for example, the one-time compensation of political prisoners in 2003 or the restitution of nationalized or confiscated property. Even here, several thousand were unsuccessful in their claims for compensation or felt a lack of closure due to the complete absence of criminal prosecutions or at least symbolic acknowledgment of the crimes committed by the leaders of the pre-November '89 regime. Furthermore, most crimes went unpunished and were not compensated for at all. Over 400 people were killed on the Czechoslovak border as they tried to flee across the Iron Curtain. Their relatives have never been vindicated in a symbolic, juridical, or economic sense. There have been attempts to try the political leadership that issued the orders to shoot at those fleeing in Germany and the Czech Republic. Still, they failed to touch any Slovak member of the top ranks of the communist regime. Former communist potentates are living in comfortable retirement and gradually perishing without bearing any consequences for their actions. In relation to the crimes of the communist regime, we can think in terms of individual subjects, each person that has been harmed, separately. But the subject is also collective, as the traumatic experience, enhanced by the lack of closure, provides for a certain sense of shared identity.

The silence in the case of the Roma is also related to the absence of an identifiable public voice that would air these grievances, successfully capturing the attention and sympathy of broader audiences. The Roma are perceived the most negatively out of all minorities in Slovakia, and Slovaks perceive the Roma almost the most negatively out of all of the EU countries (EU Special Eurobarometer survey, 2019). The majority population in fact prefers Roma to be treated negatively in public discourse. The voice is also absent as a result of the systemic, long-term discrimination and segregation, resulting in the absence of a "critical mass" of educated leadership among the Roma and a lack of awareness among the Roma themselves, as most do not have equal access to education and survive on the margins of the society. Roma are also a culturally heterogeneous community, which prevents successful political mobilization. From the speech act theory perspective, the speaker is largely absent or invisible to the audience.

Who is the Author of the Harmful Action?

The authorship of the harm in our two cases is difficult to pin down to specific individuals. In relation to the communist past, concrete perpetrators have been identified in the context of transitions from the authoritarian past in other countries, but it depends on the prevailing narrative of that past. In relation to the Roma community, there have been important court trials that can serve as symbolic markers of broader responsibility. There have been far too few successful trials. Still, there were court decisions that ruled against segregation within the school system, recognized and compensated victims of police brutality, recognized violence against the Roma as a hate crime, and more. However, as in the first case, the author of the harmful action is not only an individual. The capable subject here would have to be recognized as the shared societal and state responsibility for the systemic harm against these communities.

Society, however, cannot stand on trial, and responsibility would have to be claimed in arenas other than the juridical. There is resistance towards that in both cases. The communist regime and the era of Normalization after the invasion of the Warsaw Pact armies in 1968 established a totalitarian ideology that required widespread conformity, if not collaboration, from the vast majority of the population. The handful of those who resisted thus is not perceived with sympathy by many, as they are walking reminders of the bent backs of the obedient majority. The criminalization of the regime by law (The Act on Immorality and Illegality of the Communist System from 1996) removes the perception of individual responsibility and places it on the criminal regime itself. Therefore, there is a lack of demand for opening public discussions about the responsibility for the crimes of the

communist regime, and open resistance in the rare instances when that may be attempted.

A shared sense of responsibility, not to mention a felt obligation to compensate the Roma for unequal opportunities, economic hardships, impacted health, and overall, comparatively smaller chances of fulfilling their potential in life, is all but non-existent in society. Suppose the capable subject is anyone who has the power to inflict harm, as Ricœur states in *The Just*, even by condoning the pervasive structure of oppression. In that case, we can expect most Slovaks to be those who ought to feel responsibility on behalf of the vulnerable community. But they mostly do not. Stereotypes are so pervasive, even among the most educated in society, that it is difficult to imagine what would have to happen for the discourse to shift and the "circle of empathy" to enlarge and embrace the plight of the Roma as our own. Singular cases of allies and advocates of Roma rights are exceptions to the rule, lone voices in the sea of silence and blindness.

Whose Narrative is Being Told?

The incapability of the subjects in these two situations is not born of some innate malevolence. It is embedded in the narratives that are being told about the marginalized communities and the dominant community. That narrative is insecure towards otherness, seeped in victimhood, mistrust, and care, but only for one's own kind. The communist era reinforced closedness and exclusivist identities. As the Czechoslovak philosopher Milan Šimečka aptly described in his *Circular Defense* (1985), for thirty years (at the time of the writing), "we were thrown as a nation into patheticness, and we bragged when someone was accidentally lifted out of it. For the vast majority, the world had shrunk to the reality of domestic space, domestic language, and domestic troubles. In social and political dimensions, this devastatingly impacted the statistical average of national thought…. We are now a quiet corner of Europe, we have enough to eat and that, they say, is not a thing to be taken for granted in today's world" (pp. 97–98, transl. by author). Much in the same vein, Kundera (1984) and István Bibó before him (2010/1944) ponder the insecure and mistrustful nature of the small (meaning vulnerable, afraid of perishing at any moment) nations of Eastern Europe, prone to "political hysteria," conspiracy theories, and suspicion of anything that is not our own.

> To be a democrat means, above everything else, not to be afraid: not to be afraid of people with a different opinion, a different language or race, of revolutions, of conspiracies, of the enemy's unknown and wicked intentions, of hostile propaganda, of disdain, and more generally of

> all the imaginary perils that become real perils by the very fact that we are afraid of them. Central and Eastern European countries were afraid because they were not finished and mature democracies, and since they were afraid, they could not become one… (Bibó, 2010, pp. 19–20)

The fall of the communist regime failed to shift the dominant identity narrative towards more openness and inclusiveness. Instead, economic and social reforms, carried out under external pressure, brought in "predatory neoliberalism" and "nationalist conservatism" (Červínková & Rudnicky, 2019), which conserved survival-oriented materialism and social distance from minorities.

When extending the moral responsibility in time, or its possibility, we also have to consider how narratives, or as Heidegger called them, "public interpretations" (Heidegger, 2001) are sustained. We are thrown into them as we experience our being in the world. The dominant narratives can be imagined as narratives of the longue durée through a historical narrative arc, configured in the time of one generation, passed on to the next, and reconfigured by the next generation (Ricœur , 2006). We attune to public interpretations, and if they are not at odds with our personal values and if they successfully make sense of the world, we fall into a state of oblivion, unaware of their mediation of our understanding of the world (Heidegger, 2001). This thrownness and possibility of falling prey to public interpretations is also mediated by the predominant ideologies. Ricœur reconceptualizes them through their integrative function in society. Ideologies are political narratives, and imaginative practices, sustained by those in power, for the purpose of legitimating the political status quo. They can be pathological but are not always so. They mediate meaning and justify political institutions and their occupants (Ricœur , 1986). Ricœur counterposes ideology with utopia, as the latter challenges the status quo and gazes into the future into what ought to be. As shown, the current dominant way of interpreting the world and one's own past is steeped in the present inward-looking, protective, exclusivist, other-phobic frame of mind, nestled in the tradition of victimhood and mistrust and emphasized by the prevailing ideology. What is entirely missing, however, is a vision, a utopia shared by a critical mass of the members of society, that would challenge this interpretive frame and open the possibility for solidarity and care. As Milan Šimečka declared forty years ago, and is still true today: "The world is in such a shape today that it needs utopias. No challenge of today can be resolved by the pragmatism of day-to-day politics… A person almost doesn't have a choice whether to reconcile with a utopia or not. To live without it is to live without human dignity" (Šimečka, 2018, p. 33–34, transl. by author).

Who is Worthy of Self-Esteem and Self-Respect?

In the cases under consideration, the subjects are not capable. As self-esteem stems from mutual vulnerability, solicitude, and care for one another, it falls through in cases where the harmed is distant and absent from the publicly audible narrative.

In *The Just (2000),* Ricœur connects "the juridical form 'Who is the subject of rights?'... with the question with a moral form 'Who is the subject worthy of esteem and respect?'" (p. 23), linked to responsibility and solidarity in a society. The proper focus, according to Ricœur , should be placed on the moral responsibility of individual and collective capable subjects. We can then speculate that in cases of crimes committed in the past or on the periphery of society, this would then mean voicing this responsibility publicly, acknowledging the harm suffered and its consequences on behalf of the injured. But the subjects are not capable and do not perceive the other as capable and worthy of respect. In turn, as this violates the principle of fairness and equitability, it also thwarts the conditions for self-esteem and self-respect.

Mira Erdevički's recent documentary *Leaving to Remain,* on Roma emigrées who experience success in school and professional life in Great Britain although they were treated as second-rate citizens at home, subject to physical attacks or sent to school for mentally disadvantaged children or unable to find any work despite qualifications, is an accurate portrayal of the problem of lack of capability, lack of care, solidarity, and even of awareness of these lacks. In the documentary, a State Secretary of the Ministry of Education of Slovakia visits a school in London and asks the school officers why Roma children strive in their school while they mostly fail in the Slovak school system. "Because we expect them to," says the principal. "Considering the education they received before, they are doing incredibly well. They are very smart." In Slovakia, nothing positive is expected of the Roma, not even by themselves. In turn, for the majority, their lives are severely impacted by this incapability, from the probable shorter lifespan and poorer health to the lack of available opportunities and lack of empathy with the gross and systemic unfairness levied against them.

Just Institutions

Justice, for Ricœur , resides in just institutions. The "just" in just institution is the Aristotelian equitability, which corrects the possible defects of the law (Taylor, 2014, p. 574). In such a way, this institutional framework provides for a "civic minimum," the "equitable (as distinguished from egalitarian) distribution of basic goods required by citizens to live a free life" (Mann,

2009, p. 45) serving as the entry ticket into the society, making justice into a social virtue. Justice rests on the principle of reciprocity "which prohibits the victimization of other by oneself" (Mann, 2009, p. 46).

Institutions, themselves narrative structures, are configured with a specific vision, the "spirit" of the institution, which impacts its functioning and gives it energy (Taylor, 2014). The institution's spirit is, in turn, prefigured before the institution's founding in human thought, values, and actions. In the world, thus also under the influence of the prevailing ideology or public interpretations. However, as much as the founding spirit can work for justice, it may, it seems, also work for injustice and in fact serve not as a corrective to the possible defects of the laws, but as a defect in the application of the law.

Justice as Obligated Memory?

In reformulating the juridical concept of responsibility, Ricœur looks beyond retributive justice—the obligation to comply with punishment and compensation of the victim—and turns his gaze on the idea of a "fault" (Ricœur , 2000, p. 24) in the civil law, where the author of a deed knows the rules, acts freely, and "is in control of [their] acts to the point of having been able to have acted differently." The fault here is divorced from the punishment, "yet it remains attached to that of an obligation to give compensation" (Ricœur , 2000, p. 24). This is a crucial point in considering the possibility of justice in cases where the subjects that incurred and inflicted wrongdoing are not capable. He warns against the increasing focus placed on victims that has been taking place over the years, pointing out that victimization in fact harms solidarity and leads to witch hunts for perpetrators or to the relativization of responsibility, which comes with an inflated sense of entitlement to indemnification. Responsibility ought to take the central stage—responsibility for the action as well as for its effects, including any harm caused (Ricœur , 2000, p. 28).

This responsibility for what is fragile and vulnerable—for all fellow citizens—begs the question that is of core interest to this chapter. How far does this responsibility extend in time and space? How far is one responsible for the consequences of their own actions or for the consequences of the actions of those before them? Here, Ricœur takes leave of juridical justice and outlines the consequences of adding the moral dimension of responsibility. Ricœur tells us that the gaze must deliberately turn from the past of the committed harm to the future to prevent harm from occurring again (Ricœur , 2000, p. 31). He also broadens responsibility from those who acted wrongfully to each subject who has the power to generate harm—highlighting the "indivisibly individual persons and systems in whose functioning

individual acts intervene in a sort of infinitesimal and 'homeopathic' way". This extends individual responsibility for harm to those who are vulnerable as a result of systemic discrimination and oppression just by conforming or standing by and not speaking out loud against injustice. Furthermore, it extends solidarity beyond our present time, bearing responsibility for the effects of our actions as far as they are foreseeable and it is under our control to avoid them (Ricœur , 2000, p. 33). The future gaze is then oriented towards securing the end of a good life, with and for others, in just institutions. The reciprocal bond of equitable citizenship also extends solidarity to the past, bearing responsibility for the suffering of others as members of the same community.

The Missing Trauma of Racism and Communism

Extending time into the past and future, responsibility, as Ricœur understands it, can be approached through the work of memory and mourning. Grieving for losses caused by violence and oppression allows a healing process to begin and empathy to spring and flourish, as the emotional process touches the hearts of those who have not personally incurred this loss. Is mourning necessary in order to reach justice? In cases of a distanced or absent subject, it would appear so. If the lack of responsibility, due to a lack of empathy and recognition of the other as self, is a major stumbling block for reaching equitable access to justice in society, a process that taps the emotional core of individual persons is needed. Jeffry Alexander contended that, without a trauma narrative that allows for mourning, it is impossible to foresee an open, tolerant, cohesive, and kind democracy (Alexander, 2014). He describes it as a speech act, which is carried by a specific subject, aimed at a particular audience (in this case, society at large), with an identifiable victim and harm that was committed, and responsibility for it that it attributes to concrete actors, individual or collective. In this sense, it bears a resemblance to the tenets of juridical justice. But here, the aim is not the punishment of the harmful action or tangible compensation of the harmed. Mourning seeks to enlarge the circle of empathy and open imagination to include the other inside, as someone like me, enabling empathic connection through the perception of the other as oneself, which aligns with Ricœur 's revised conception of justice.

The work of memory, Ricœur contends, when successful, transforms mourning into joy. "[I]nasmuch as the work of mourning is the required path for the work of remembering (*souvenir*), joy can also crown with its grace the work of memory (*mémoire*). On the horizon of this work: a 'happy' memory, when the poetic image completes the work of mourning" (Ricœur

, 2006, p. 77). In *Memory, History, Forgetting* (2006), Ricœur raises the idea of a duty of memory and links it to the idea of justice:

> Extracting the exemplary value from traumatic memories, it is justice that turns memory into a project; and it is the same project of justice that gives the form of the future and of the imperative to the duty of memory. (Ricœur , 2006, p. 88)

Such memory and mourning work combine the truthful and the pragmatic aspect of memory—documenting the facts of the past in combination with how that memory is put to work in a society. He introduces the notion of debt, linked to the concept of heritage (Ricœur , 2006, p. 89)—in other words, responsibility for the other across the horizon of time. Here Ricœur places the moral priority on the victim—not in the sense of seeing the self as a victim claiming reparation but focusing on the other as a victim—enlarging the circle of empathy to include the other as oneself. This, for him, is the "legitimation of the duty of memory as a duty of justice" (Ricœur , 2006, p. 89). The emotional charge linked to the traumatic past makes it easy prey for possible abuse of memory as well, which is indeed our case.

The movement towards enlarging empathy and opening the imagined community to include the previously excluded other can, of course, fail. And often it does. It must successfully convince the audience that the subject of injustice is worthy and "like us." Narratives are mediated in institutional arenas—media, culture, academia, legal arena—which may be unfavorably attuned to the attempts of the work of mourning and letting the "other" in. In such cases, the trauma narrative may fall on deaf ears or be actively suppressed—abuses of memory that Ricœur describes as blocked memory, manipulated memory, or commanded forgetting (Ricœur , 2006). Manipulated memory is "the level where the problematic of memory intersected with that of identity to the point of converging with it, as in Locke: everything that compounds the fragility of identity also proves to be an opportunity for the manipulation of memory, mainly through ideology" (Ricœur , 2006. p. 448). The abuses of memory are at the same time the abuses of forgetting, as the authorized account of the narrative prescribes that which is to be forgotten. It is active rather than passive forgetting.

There are narratives of trauma—the trauma of racism and the trauma of communism—that have evolved more or less successfully after similar historical experiences in other countries. The trauma of racism is the narrative that successfully fueled the Black Lives Matter movement in the U.S. and gained valuable allies for the movement among the mainstream white population. The trauma of racism refers to the "cumulative negative impact of racism on the lives of people of color. Encompassing the emotional, psychological, health, economic, and social effects of multigenerational and histor-

ical trauma, the trauma of racism relates to the damaging effects of ongoing societal and intra-social-group racial microaggressions, internalized racism, overt racist experiences, discrimination and oppression within the lives of people of color. When repetitive and unresolved, these experiences rooted in racism can create severe emotional pain and distress that can overwhelm a person's and community's ability to cope, creating feelings of powerlessness" (LeBron et al., 2015, p. 10). The trauma of communism is described for example as the "deprivation of political and personal freedoms, the silencing of certain discourses and even disciplines, the control of culture, forms of epistemological violence, and the suppression of religion. The private sphere and the lifeworld were colonized by the system; interpersonal trust was made difficult because of a system of denunciation and control" (The Trauma of Communism, 2021).

In the cases of victims of the communist regime and the systemic discrimination of the Roma, neither of the trauma narratives—that of racism and that of of communism— took hold in Slovakia. Instead, the narrative of the trauma of social change after 1989 is more successful, and a widespread Romaphobia effectively blocks the "success" of the trauma of racism. As Alexander emphasizes, trauma is a current successfully performed narrative of a past event perceived as traumatic (from the point of view of the present), which has to succeed in rallying an emotional response from the audience through institutional arenas and their channels (Alexander, 2004, p. 10). The Roma fail to be accepted as a credible victim, as potentially "one of us," as someone the mainstream community members could empathize with. The trauma of racism is not subscribed to even by the Roma community itself, as the discrimination is so widespread and so embedded in institutions and culture that it does not even arise on the plane of possibilities. The more successful social trauma narrative of the transition from communism is, however, not inclusive of the whole community but rather builds on the victimhood of the "losers" of the economic transformation and often melts in with the corresponding polarizing narrative of the globalization crisis. The overwhelming narrative frame into which public interpretations mold is exclusivist, clan-minded, inward-looking, protectionist, and antagonistic towards otherness. This narrative frame provides for an environment hostile to the creation of a just "spirit" of institutions.

Instead of the work of mourning that can build bridges and potentially heal wounds through empathy and forgiveness, public interpretations fall prey to the abuses of memory, which are not forward-looking. As Heidegger points out, inauthentic accounts of the past motivated by current political agendas instead look to the present (Heidegger, 2001). "I did not know the link between the past, the present, and the future, which I gained later from Orwell and which sheds light on the reasons for historical lies I see around myself: He who controls the past, controls the future. Who controls the pres-

ent, controls the past…Today, I know for certain that a falsified past cannot but lead to a falsified future, which will become, sooner or later, a pitiful present" (Šimečka, 2018, p. 36).

Mourning and Enlarging the Circle of Empathy Through Small Histories

The capacity to share in the pain of the other through mourning can only take place within the realm of imagination of personal narratives, or what Šimečka called the small histories. By imagining the other as oneself, one can tap into the emotional pool and share in the same pain, joy, pride, or shame felt by the other. The solicitude requires this personal emotional interconnection through the textures of "small histories."

> What connects us across the canyon of time is the small history of human life, marked by birth and by death. It, too, is full of turning historical events, struggles, aggressions and coups, victims and treasons, victories and losses, altogether events that shine so glamorously in history books. Only, in small history, we don't explain them as results of artificial abstractions but as results of impulses that forever accompany human life, love and hate, faith and hopelessness, modesty and pride, ambitions and weakness, and of all that which magnificently stands out in human stories that are preserved and that we tell again and again." (Šimečka, 1985, pp. 5–6)

It is the small histories that can move us, not the sterilized, official big histories. But this sort of imagination is possible only in a broader frame of acknowledging the other as oneself and thus allowing for the responsibility for the other.

Work of Memory and Work of Mourning as Preconditions for a Just Society

The work of memory and the work of mourning certainly serve as preconditions for justice. Consequently, they also facilitate the restoration of dignity and social solidarity, hence contributing towards developing a stronger and kinder democratic society. But do they actually achieve *justice* as such?

The first and final question of this chapter, "Can memory serve as justice?" still cannot be given a straightforward answer, as it seems to allow for both a "yes" and a "no." Ricœur , Nussbaum, and Heidegger encourage the moral ethos of responsibility, which is forward-looking, and restorative

rather than punitive, focusing on mending the social fabric of society. In this sense, opening up research, holding public discussions on the remnants of the past, developing the networks of collaboration, rethinking how we teach about the subjects of the communist past, and reflecting on the lessons learned, including tolerance, refusal of racism and exclusivist identities in schools, are all indeed a part of the work towards a just society. Similar responsibility fails to address the injustices inflicted on the Roma by the systemic oppression in the past, acknowledging its existence and lingering impact on the current ability of many of the Roma to fulfill their potential in a system where their starting line in life is far behind that of the majority of the people in the society. The freedom to research and publish enables the pragmatic side of the memory work—establishing and documenting facts. Although not nearly enough is done on that plane, it is more successful than the second part of memory—its use in the work with the public. Šimečka already anticipated this difficulty in the late years of Normalization:

> Despite all odds, I don't believe in the final destruction of history. ...the past, by the weight of its years, is always in the advantage against the present, and no establishment has enough resources to quash it permanently. History wasn't erased, only suspended. It continues to exist, as do its sources. It won't be difficult to fill in those black holes in more favorable times and evoke life in them once again. Historians of the nations which don't have black holes in their past will envy those historians whose task it will be to shed light on it. It will be more difficult to make the knowledge of history the property of the people again to open history again for its entry into the national consciousness. Only then will there be a lively flow between the past and present, which will inspire the thought that permanently transgresses the status quo. (Šimečka, 2018)

Ricœur 's expression of the culmination of an addressed memory is forgiveness. Nussbaum has labeled such forgiveness "transcendental forgiveness" (Nussbaum, 2016) as its goal is neither to seek revenge nor turn a blind eye to the past wrongdoing, but to address the roots of injustice and translate that effort into the establishement of just institutions. Such forgiveness stems from acknowledgment, responsibility, though not necessarily punishment or compensation. Such forgiveness provides release, a closure and is associated with healing and restoration. It is a precondition for just institutions, but is it, in itself, justice?

There is a simple story of a stolen bicycle that is often used in conflict transformation practice. A high school boy encounters a bully who steals his bicycle. A kerfuffle ensues, and both are called into the principal's office and reprimanded for the ruckus. Both boys give their account of the story. The

principal just wants to see peace restored in the school. The boys are made to apologize for hitting and shouting at each other and to shake hands. The peace may be restored temporarily. But the bullied boy still does not have his bicycle back.

Perhaps the bicycle is not needed anymore once the boy has grown into a man and is now more concerned about his integrity and dignity. In that case, perhaps a sincere apology and acknowledgment from the bully and the school principal would in fact mean more than the bicycle itself. However, it is also possible that he might want and feel entitled to the bicycle even after all that time. For the Roma, the bicycle is, however, still being stolen again and again.

Ricœur concludes that Rawls's understanding of justice is both distributive and holistic. Justice resides in a fair structural arrangement of society, in which the citizens are partners—"they take *part* inasmuch as society distributes *parts* or shares" (Ricœur , 2000, p. 45). The solicitude that justice depends on stems from the narrative frames that nourish the spirit of institutions. However, seeing *oneself as another* today belongs more among utopias than into the value framework, the ideology, that sustains the current practice of citizenship in Slovakia. And it is not a widely shared utopia. This utopia, however, is absolutely necessary in order for a just society, a liberal democracy, to thrive.

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Part II

The End of Autonomy? Challenges to Autonomy in Social and Political Contexts

Michal Kern: Dotyky II.

Self-Determining Animals: Human Nature and Relational Autonomy in Hegel's *Philosophy of Nature*

León Antonio Heim

Abstract

The concept of autonomy, once central to modern philosophy's self-understanding, is under attack from at least two sides: (1) on the one side, a re-awakened interest in naturalist philosophy questions the hubris of human self-understanding as being "above nature" and essentially free and rational; (2) on the other stands the feminist critique of autonomy as the wrongful generalization of a certain masculine/western understanding of the subject as an independent person. Both aim at the core of what the term "autonomy" normatively stands for: the capacity for rational self-determination. We inherit this concept of autonomy from Kant and encounter a variety of post-Kantian variations of it. In this paper, I will turn to Hegel to show that, although he conceptualizes autonomy as rational self-determination, he incorporates, in his *Philosophy of Nature*, elements of both naturalism and *relational autonomy*. Under revision, his concept of spirit provides us with a picture of the human as a self-conscious animal or as nature grasping itself. His notion of autonomy then turns out to be surprisingly fruitful for current debates, enabling us to understand our animalistic nature and our fundamental interdependency in a way that is not opposed to such concepts as rationality, freedom, and autonomy. As I will try to show, re-reading Hegel thus allows us to reconceptualize autonomy in a way that accords with its critics.

Keywords: relational autonomy, self-consciousness, naturalism, post-Kantianism, teleology, anthropology.

1. Autonomy: A Flawed Concept?

In daily life, most of the practices we engage in presuppose what we call "autonomy" the idea that every mature individual has the capacity to "do something independently of external influence" or, as we may say, "on her

own terms". This is true of property rights, the right to vote, the ability to contract, the concept of bodily autonomy, and many more. Accordingly, it seems almost impossible to imagine modern life without it. The fact that we are autonomous beings appears to be almost self-evident, a given that makes social life possible. Where autonomy is not present, we detect a deficiency that calls for action. We fight against arbitrary state power, for the recognition of hitherto disadvantaged groups, and for national or regional sovereignty. Autonomy thus appears to be one of our most basic and almost unquestionable values. And yet, when we step back from the everyday and look into philosophy, the concept of autonomy suddenly seems anything but clear, let alone indubitable.

In philosophy, we originally inherit the modern concept of autonomy from classical German philosophy, where it was adopted from the works of Rousseau and received its most prominent formulation in Kant's practical philosophy. Here, we encounter the notion of autonomy as self-legislation or *self-determination*. I will call this the *post-Kantian* notion of autonomy, since it is further developed in the works of his immediate successors. In Kant, the notion of autonomy is closely related to his notion of a free will. He writes: "Every thing in nature works in accordance with laws. Only a rational being has the [capacity] to act *in accordance with the representation of laws*, i.e., in accordance with principles, or a will." (Kant, 2002, Ak 4:412).[1] We are thus confronted with a fundamental distinction between the realm of natural laws on the one hand and, on the other, a rational will that is determined independent of those laws, constituting the realm of freedom. Autonomy then refers to rational beings actualizing their rationality by acting not according to any external law, but only in accordance with one they can consider as originating from rationality itself, i. e., a law that is self-legislated. The defining feature of a rational being thus is the *capacity for self-determination*. As humans are the only rational creatures we know, rational self-determination marks what we may call the *anthropological difference*, the fundamental distinction between humans and other living beings such as non-rational animals and plants.[2] In later applications, then, the notion of autonomy exceeds this basic definition: a truly free will determines itself not only independently of the laws of nature, but also independently of the free will of others. The autonomous individual presupposed in our social practices is thus already present in Kant: it is the rationally self-determining agent.

Although the post-Kantian notion of autonomy may be considered one of the most impactful concepts of modern philosophy, it has been subjected to extensive criticism with undeniably good arguments. Let me pick out and

[1] I altered the translation from "faculty" to "capacity", as it is the terminology I use throughout the paper.

[2] Of course, one could argue that, for Kant, rationality is essentially not reducible to being human but can also (in theory) be ascribed to other rational beings such as angels or 'Martians' (Thompson, 2013).

examine two such critiques that are particularly influential in contemporary philosophy – one from a naturalist (1) and one from a feminist (2) point of view.

(1) The naturalist objection: Within the Kantian framework, we encounter a fundamental problem. The two realms seem to form an incompatible dualism and humans seem somehow to belong to both at the same time. As corporeal beings, we move in the realm of laws and are thus subject to causal determination; as rational beings, we realize the capacity to act only in accordance with rational, self-legislated reasons. We may call this the problem of *compatibilism*.[3] Autonomy is then clearly located in opposition to the realm of nature or causality – it is freedom *from* nature and its determinations. Unlike non-human animals, humans thereby seem to be somehow 'above' nature. This is in stark contrast with the conception of a human being that we encounter in the natural sciences. With the increasing ability to explain more and more in causal terms, a human being appears to be first and foremost an animal and thus integrated in causal natural processes. The neurosciences, for example, tend to question the existence of a will, and evolutionary models seek to explain human behavior via instincts of self-preservation (Bickle, 2003, 2006; Churchland, 1981, 1984, 1992; Metzinger, 1993).[4] Following John McDowell, I call this position "bald naturalism" (McDowell, 2002), but one may just as well call it reductionist naturalism, physicalism or eliminative materialism. From the "bald" naturalist perspective, the concept of autonomy appears as hubris: humans consider themselves as standing above natural processes and as basing their action on free choice, while science reveals that this is nothing but an illusion and a causal explanation can be substituted for every so-called choice. For the naturalist, Kantian philosophy thus fails to conceptualize humans as the animals they fundamentally are: beings that execute natural necessities, driven by natural desires and needs. Accordingly, the concept of autonomy must be abandoned altogether, and the notion of a free will is nothing but an illusion. The "bald" naturalist thus seeks to resolve the dualism of nature and rationality by reinstating nature's all-encompassing status. What is at stake, then, clearly is the existence of rationality as such.

(2) The feminist objection: The feminist critic has a somewhat more ambivalent stance towards the notion of autonomy, since most current feminist struggles appear as struggles *for* autonomy. An obvious example is the debate on "bodily autonomy" under the slogan "my body, my choice". The concept itself, however, has been subjected to extensive criticism from a specifically feminist viewpoint (Mackenzie & Stoljar, 2000, pp. 5–13). Its main

[3] Kant discusses this problem himself in his "third antinomy" (Kant, 1998, A444/B472–A452/B480).

[4] The cited "naturalist" positions serve here only as *some* examples, as there is not enough space to discuss them in detail. They certainly differ in their specific accounts of "nature," but seem to agree on this basic argument.

target is the concept of a *rational self* that lies at the heart of the post-Kantian notion of autonomy. In short, it is criticized for being fundamentally biased, as it has been modelled on the masculine ideal of an independent legal person. The feminist objection is twofold: (1) Similarly to the naturalist, it questions the idea that we are *only* rational beings and not just as much motivated by feelings, drives and other non-rational inclinations. (2) In addition, it casts doubt on the notion that we are independent from others. As a response to both, the feminist critic seeks to show that what appears to be an independent rational self is in fact both determined by something non-rational and fundamentally dependent on other selves. This is most evident in the case of children and people who are sick, old or handicapped, but is basically true of all of us: no one can survive without others. Furthermore, we do not only rely on others, but are rather constituted *as selves* only in relation to others. For the feminist, we are dependent, needy, vulnerable and emotional beings, just as well as rational ones. The post-Kantian notion of autonomy therefore fails to understand us as the interrelated and interdependent beings we essentially are. For the feminist, this failure is no coincidence, since it has always been women who have been entangled in close social relations within caring practices. Yet the concept of autonomy has been modelled on the independent 'male' individual operating as a legal person that has only contractual relations with others and is basically indifferent to their fate. After all, within the Kantian framework, to be an interrelated and interdependent self counts as heteronomous. Well aware of its significance for their own struggles, the feminist critic therefore seeks to reconceptualize autonomy in terms of "relational autonomy" (Mackenzie & Stoljar, 2000), rather than abandoning it altogether.

From the point of view of the two objections, the post-Kantian concept of autonomy as self-determination thus seems flawed, since it fails to conceptualize us as beings that are both (1) essentially *part of* and therefore *dependent on* nature, and (2) essentially vulnerable, emotional, desiring, *relational* beings and therefore *dependent on each other*. It is an impoverished form of human self-understanding. What is questioned in both, then, is the capacity for rational self-determination as such.

While these objections may hold true of the original Kantian framework, I will still try to defend the overall notion of autonomy as self-determination.[5] Below, I will argue that, in Hegel, we encounter a further developed but nonetheless post-Kantian version of it that integrates both naturalist and relational elements. This entails two main arguments that I will briefly elaborate on: (1) For Hegel, to be a rational or spirited being is to be an animal that has a specific form of self-relation that he calls *self-consciousness*. Instead

[5] Many contemporary Kantians would surely object to such readings of Kant. This, however, is not what I am concerned with in this paper. For a different interpretation of Kant, see: Korsgaard (1996); Rödl, (2011).

of placing us somewhere above nature, autonomy consists in the self-determination *of a natural being*. (2) This specific form of self-relation is established through what he calls the species-process ("Gattungsprozess"), i. e., the reproductive species activity of higher animals.[6] As such, relating to oneself is mediated through relating to another of the same species, it is *relational* from the very beginning.

2. Autonomy as Self-Conscious Life

Let me thus examine the first argument in order to refute the *naturalist* objection. From the Hegelian perspective, the conflict between the "bald" naturalist and the Kantian framework is based on a false opposition. Both assume that we are *either* rational and therefore free from natural determination *or* we are mere animals and therefore heteronomous. This assumption, however, has two implications: (1) it provides a very narrow definition of *nature* as mere facticity, thereby unduly limiting the meaning of naturalism; (2) it defines *rationality* in a sense that is overly opposed to nature.[7] Hegel, in contrast, provides us with a different kind of naturalism that does not entail any such dualism.[8] It is spelled out in two insightful definitions that we find in his mature work: (1) The 'human' is defined as a *self-conscious animal*.[9] Hegel writes: "Man is an animal" that "because he *knows that he is an animal*, […] ceases to be an animal and attains *knowledge of himself* as spirit." (Hegel, 2010a, p. 80).[10] (2) "Spirit" is defined as "the *truth* of nature", while the process of its emergence is defined as "a return out of nature" (Hegel, 2010b, §381).[11] *Spirit* is Hegel's overarching concept that encompasses reason, freedom, the will, and in this sense autonomy. In my reading, it is Hegel's some-

[6] Thomas Khurana argues that "genus" is a more adequate translation of "Gattung" for Hegel's argument, since he distinguishes "Art" and "Gattung" (Khurana, 2022). For merely pragmatic reasons I stick to the established translation.

[7] The attempt to develop broader definitions of naturalism to include rationality has been inspired to a great extent by John McDowell's paper on "two sorts of naturalism" (McDowell, 2002).

[8] It may be surprising to refer to Hegel when speaking of *naturalism*, as he is known as the great *idealist* thinker. In recent years, however, there has been extensive research into Hegel's naturalism and especially his *Philosophy of Nature* (Corti & Schülein, 2022; Furlotte, 2018; Houlgate, 1998; Illetterati, 2020; Lumsden, 2013; Pinkard, 2013; Stone, 2005).

[9] This thought resonates with Charles Taylor's Hegelian definition of the human as a "self-interpreting animal" (Taylor, 1985), recently taken up in Terry Pinkard's reconstruction of *Hegel's Naturalism* (Pinkard, 2013): "In a nutshell, this is also Hegel's view about the context of the final ends of life: We are natural creatures, self-interpreting animals, and our final ends have to do with how we are to give a rational account – or, to speak more colloquially, to make sense – of what, in general, it means to be a human […]. Everything hangs on that." (Pinkard, 2013, p. 5).

[10] Hegel's *Lectures of Fine Art* have a rather difficult exegetical status, just as all his published lectures, as they are not originally written and published by him but compiled on the basis of notes taken by his students. As long as they provide a lucid formulation of thoughts that are consistent with his philosophical system, I will refer to them as primary sources.

[11] The English translation of Hegel's *Philosophie des Geistes*, part three of his *Encyclopedia*, translates *Geist* as *mind*. This is not an adequate translation, in my view, as it misses the supra-individual status of *Geist* highlighted in the later parts following the *Philosophy of Subjective Spirit*. I will therefore translate *Geist* as *spirit*, similar to Terry Pinkard's translation of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Hegel, 2017).

what opaque conception of the *anthropological difference* (1), that enables us to make sense of his naturalist concept of spirit (2). The Kantian framework clearly assumes a fundamental difference between humans and non-human animals; the "bald" naturalist denies it altogether. Hegel, however, gives us a rather paradoxical definition that can be summed up as "the human is an animal *and* not an animal": it is by knowing that he is an animal that the human ceases to be one.[12] It is precisely this thought that I take as the key insight elucidating spirit's relation to nature. Thus, I will try to shed some light on the self-transgression of the animal.

The concept of the animal ("the animal organism", Hegel, 1970, §350) marks the endpoint of Hegel's *Philosophy of Nature*, in which he unfolds the concept of nature that distinguishes his naturalism from that of the "bald" naturalist.[13] Hegel defines nature as "the Idea in the form of otherness" – nature is "*external to itself*" and "*externality* constitutes the specific character in which Nature, as Nature, exists" (Hegel, 1970, §247).[14] I will try to outline very briefly what this could mean: For Hegel, everything is permeated by conceptual structures and so too is nature. Nature is not a random collection of indeterminate particulars, but exhibits an order, something general. We can grasp things of nature conceptually and relate them to one another.[15] For nature itself, however, there is no such conceptual order, since there is nothing that *thinks* or *grasps* those concepts. Hence, it is external to itself, as it bears no self-relation. The process in which nature overcomes its own externality and attains knowledge of itself, marks the transition into spirit. It is, however, preceded in basic forms of self-relation that Hegel traces in animals. An animal is, in Hegel's terms, the highest expression of what he calls "life," i. e., a living organism. Its *concept* is its principle of existence, or *form of life*. It tells us how it must be shaped in order to be what it is. Concepts are thus understood to be more than mere nominal definitions, they are *normatively* structured.[16] An organism is conceptually structured on an internal level as well, in that it divides itself into parts that do not exist independently of each other but are directed toward the whole, i. e., its organic unity.

[12] For an elucidating and original interpretation of this paradox, see Khurana (2021).

[13] Hegel's *Philosophy of Nature* forms one of the three main parts of his philosophical system, which he unfolds in his work *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*. The *Philosophy of Nature* is the middle part between his infamous *Logic* and his *Philosophy of Spirit*. In German, the *Encyclopedia* is published as one comprehensive work. In English, however, the different parts are only available as separate translations. Additionally, several volumes of Hegel's *lectures* on the philosophy of nature are available in German, but not in English. For pragmatic reasons, I refer (here) only to the published main work, not to the lectures. For a helpful introduction to the *Philosophy of Nature*, situating it in the broader context of Hegel's system, see Rand (2017).

[14] "Idea" is Hegel's term for the concept in its actualization, i. e., conceptual reality as such.

[15] One may call this position "conceptual realism", as Robert Brandom does (Brandom, 2019). For a critical re-evaluation of this thought, see Wolf (2018). This debate exceeds the range of this paper. For the current purpose, the relevant thought is only that concepts are not applied to the world/to nature *a posteriori* by us, but the world/nature itself is already conceptual and therefore intelligible.

[16] For a recent interpretation of Hegel's *Logic* highlighting its Aristotelian underbelly, see Pippin (2018). It shows that Hegel does not subscribe to the fact-value distinction, although nature's normativity is fundamentally different from spirit's *free* normativity.

The whole constitutes its purpose or *telos,* determined by its concept (Hegel, 1970, §245). Unlike an artifact, such as a chair, the concept of a living being is not given from the outside, but is internal to the organism itself (Hegel, 1970, §337 Add.). Also, the concept of a living thing is something that is actualized not at once, but through a continuous process: a living thing realizes itself by living, by dividing itself into parts, forming itself into a unity and by maintaining itself in this unity (Hegel, 1970, §352). The organism's *life form*, however, is not something particular. We grasp it rather in "natural-historical judgments," i. e., in generic judgments that relate a particular to a general concept.[17] We say, for example, "the cat is a four-legged animal," saying nothing about a specific cat, but something about cats in general.[18] But we can identify the particular cat *as* a cat, as an instance of its general concept. It therefore takes a reflexive step, a judgment, to make the concept explicit. Yet, a judgment requires someone who performs it: *we* say "the cat has four legs," the cat itself has four legs and says nothing about it. In this sense, nature is external to itself: it is conceptually structured, but only *in-itself*, it does not yet exhibit any self-relation.

In order to transgress itself, the animal must grasp its own concept: the individual animal needs to develop a self-relation in which it relates itself to its *life form*. This becomes thematic in the section on the *species-process* ("Gattungsprocess", Hegel, 1970, §367). "Species" ("Gattung", Hegel, 1970, §367) is what Hegel refers to as the life form concept of a *specific* kind of animal. Now, Hegel ascribes to the animal a simple form of interiority or subjectivity that enables the animal to have a sense of itself ("Selbstgefühl", Hegel, 1970, §350).[19] The animal can locate itself in space, move itself, refer to something external, and distinguish itself from something else. This form of subjectivity, however, does not yet describe a conceptual self-consciousness, but exists in the form of feeling ("Gefühl", Hegel, 1970, §352). However, it already forms a self-relation. Within the species-process, the animal then relates to other animals. It relates to animals of other species as 'other' and to animals of its own species as "same." It thereby relates to itself as representing a broader conceptual generality, its species, since it recognizes both its other and itself as an actualization of the same concept: the cat relates to another cat *as* a cat and thereby treats itself *as* a cat. Treating something *as* something is an activity that has *conceptual* content. The animal, however, is still unable to retain its general concept *as* concept, because it is not yet represented in

[17] Michael Thompson has developed the concept of "natural-historical judgments" in his Neo-Aristotelian interpretation of human nature (Thompson, 2012). I read Hegel's notion of a concept in his *Philosophy of Nature* parallel to the Neo-Aristotelian understanding of a concept/life form that we find both in the works of Michael Thompson and in Philippa Foot (Foot, 2003). With the emergence of spirit, though, the meaning of the *life form* for human life activity fundamentally changes and is thus not adequately grasped by the Neo-Aristotelian model. For a similar argument, see Feige (2022, Ch. 2).

[18] I borrow this example from Thompson (2012, p. 28).

[19] This thought could possibly open up Hegel's text for a counter-reading of his treatment of animals as property.

thought, but only in feeling. The animal thus realizes its species, but relates to it only in an imperfect and temporally limited way (Hegel, 1970, §369).

Overcoming this limitation is what goes beyond the animal, turning it into a human, the moment in which spirit emerges. The human is an animal that develops a more complex form of self-relation. It brings forth conceptual capacities that enable it to relate to itself in a different manner, in thought. In other words, it refers to itself *by using concepts*. For Hegel, humans do in fact actualize a specific *life form,* just as animals do. Unlike animals, however, they *grasp* their life form *as* life form, thereby transforming the relation between individual and life form/species.[20] While the life form of an animal immediately determines its life activity, humans have *knowledge* of their own species and the activities involved in actualizing it. *Thinking* a concept opens it up for (re-)interpretation. For the human, its life form is no strict determinant but something to be interpreted. It becomes radically indeterminate and is consequently something that is *determined by* humans' self-conscious life activity itself. Humans therefore determine their own species' activity: what and how to eat, forms of sexual reproduction, ways of dealing with death, etc. Human self-relation is therefore one of *self-determination*, or autonomy. Being human consists in shaping what it is to be human. It consists in being a self-conscious *animal* grasping its own nature and thereby radically transforming it.[21] Hegel's *Philosophy of Nature* thus describes the process in which nature attains knowledge of itself and as a result turns into spirit: spirit is *nature grasping itself* or, in his words, "the truth of nature." Hegel's understanding of autonomy as self-determination therefore cannot be understood as *freedom from nature*, but must be understood as *freely relating* oneself *to nature*. It is knowing oneself to be an animal and *thereby* transcending animality, i. e., having a self-conscious relation to one's own life form.[22] Hegel's concept of spirit then incorporates naturalism: we are self-conscious animals, but nonetheless animals. In conceiving of ourselves as being either somehow detached from nature (as the Kantian supposedly does) or identical with nature (as the "bald" naturalist does), we fail to understand ourselves, we fail in being human.

[20] It is thus not an essentialist understanding of life forms, such as the one we find in Aristotle. For the Hegelian approach, it is adequate in describing the animal and its life activity, but inadequate in describing human self-understanding. The way I see it, Hegel's account can be considered *anthropological*, not in the sense of an anthropological essentialism, but rather as an account of humans' self-constitution.

[21] The notion that "self-conscious life" radically transforms the self-relation of a living being is discussed in the debate on so-called "transformative theories of rationality," in which both Kantian and Hegelian scholars have taken part (Kern & Kietzmann, 2017).

[22] It goes without saying that, in order to fully grasp Hegel's concept of autonomy, one needs to include his concept of "free will" as set forth in the Introduction to his *Philosophy of Right*. Here, Hegel shows that the free will necessarily consists in the capacity to 'abstract' from natural inclination. He also argues, however, that mere abstraction is incapable of determination. A free will, thus, needs to determine itself in its other. See Hegel (2008, Introduction, esp. §5–7).

3. The Essential Relationality of a Living Being

Let me now examine the second argument in order to refute the *feminist* objection.[23] The feminist critic proposes reconceptualizing autonomy as *relational* autonomy, rather than as self-determination. They aim to implement a concept of self that is essentially *not* independent and indifferent, but constitutes itself only through being related to others, both physically and emotionally. I argue, however, that Hegel's account of autonomy already entails a basic form of relationality. It is again the concept of the human as a *self-conscious animal* that enables us to refute the objection, since it depicts us not only as natural but also as essentially relational beings.

This becomes clear when we examine the *species-process* in greater detail. I have described above the species-process as the point in nature in which a basic form of self-relation is established. It is the process in which the animal turns onto itself and grasps itself as an instance of a general concept, its species. Now, this process consists to a great extent in the *reproductive* activity of the animal (Hegel, 1970, §369). Briefly outlined, Hegel's description of reproduction goes as follows: the individual animal is only an incomplete realization of its species, since it is of a certain sex; it "feels" that it is lacking something and seeks to complete itself in another; by unifying with another animal of a different sex ("Begattung," Hegel, 1970, §369), it can achieve a higher level of generality; in bringing forth a third they realize this generality in a separate instance, i. e., their offspring.[24] In reproducing, the animal *feels* itself "in the other" and thereby realizes the species (Hegel, 1970, §369).[25] Immediately after copulating, though, the two animals separate and their unity collapses, while their offspring is again sexually specific. This is the temporally limited realization of the species, delineated above. It turns out that, in order to relate itself to its general concept, its species, the indi-

[23] Considering the Hegelian reply to this is somewhat more difficult, as everything I have unfolded above takes place on an abstract level that does not yet involve actual *social* relations. I locate the emergence of autonomy at the end of the *Philosophy of Nature* in which the human distinguishes itself from non-rational animals. However, Hegel's account of social life (or, in his words, *ethical life*) is examined in the later parts of his *Philosophy of Spirit.* Here, a Hegelian reply would most certainly refer to some sort of *Struggle for Recognition* in which human subjects constitute themselves reciprocally as social beings. The most prominent example is Honneth (1996), but more recent publications are also worth mentioning. See, for example Stewart (2021). What I propose here is only the beginning of an argument about how Hegel's philosophy relates to feminist thought. A full-fledged account of this would have to take into account the concept of *recognition* more fully, especially its most prominent formulation in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Hegel, 2017, p. 102-116).

[24] Here, it is striking that Hegel's account of the actualization of the species is based on a binary conception of natural sexual differences. Within his work, this has wide ranging consequences, as it determines his heteronormative conception of the "Family" in his *Philosophy of Right*. It can be argued, though, that this is not coherent with his idea of a self-conscious animal. Being self-conscious radically transforms the relation one has to one's own nature. Sexual difference in humans is a matter of cultural interpretation, not of natural immediacy. This, however, is material for another paper.

[25] Interestingly, this is one of Hegel's definitions of freedom: "being-oneself-in-the-other" (Hegel, 2008, §7 Add.). Axel Honneth argues that the most basic form of this is the friendship-relation (Honneth, 2001, p. 28). Examining the *Philosophy of Nature* reveals, however, that this structure can already be found in the reproductive activity of animals. This may enable us to reconceptualize freedom as "species-realization" in more naturalist terms.

vidual animal relates to others of the same species in a reproductive manner. Self-relation is therefore mediated through other-relation. Only in relating to another can the individual recognize itself as more than a mere individual. For Hegel, reproduction is then not an individual activity but the actualization of the *life form* as such, it is *species activity*.

We can now say that the self-conscious self-relation of humans is preceded not only by the animal's self-relation, but also by its other- and species-relation. Spirit's emergence is then based on the reproductive life activity of animals, which is motivated by feelings ("Gefühl"). It is the relationality of living beings that allows for spirit to come about. No individual can sustain itself independently of others. We are all radically dependent on the mutual performance of reproductive species activity: on feeding each other, procreating, fostering offspring, and healing each other. These are all activities we can observe in animals. As Hegelians, we can understand them as primitive but prerequisite forms of our very own *self-conscious* life activity. When we speak of autonomy as rational self-determination, we therefore already presuppose a great range of life activity that precedes it. We fail ourselves as humans, as autonomous beings, when we neglect this presupposition or make it invisible. But again, with our being self-conscious, the relation we have to our own life activity changes. As self-conscious animals we cannot perform the process of reproduction as the immediate execution of a given/natural necessity. This means that we must establish a *free* way of relating to our own reproductive nature and thus cease to be *mere* animals. Lifting reproduction into a self-conscious and autonomous endeavor is then something we must do in order to actualize humanity as species.[26] Hegel's theory of autonomy then turns out to be surprisingly compatible with its feminist critics and their demand for a relational concept of autonomy.

To conclude: If we incorporate Hegel's version of it, the post-Kantian concept of *autonomy as self-determination* considers us as both rational and natural beings, as both free and relational beings. Hegel may teach us to not overemphasize one over the other, but understand ourselves as *self-conscious animals*, as nature grasping itself.

[26] Hegel's naturalism could, in my reading, provide a great resource for current debates on ethics of care and reproductive freedom. There, we encounter the call for a democratic and collective responsibility for the reproductive activities we must perform as a species. This can be read as the demand for a political conception of our own reproductive nature. I argue that it is Hegel's philosophical system that enables us to conceive of nature that way. His own account of how freedom takes shape in social life nonetheless strikes us as problematic. His model of the actual species-relations is the bourgeois-nuclear-family and is thus inherently patriarchal. In order to fully adopt his model of reproduction for a feminist account of reproductive *freedom*, one would need to use his *Philosophy of Nature* for a counter-reading of his concept of family. Although this is my overall aim, it has to be postponed to another paper.

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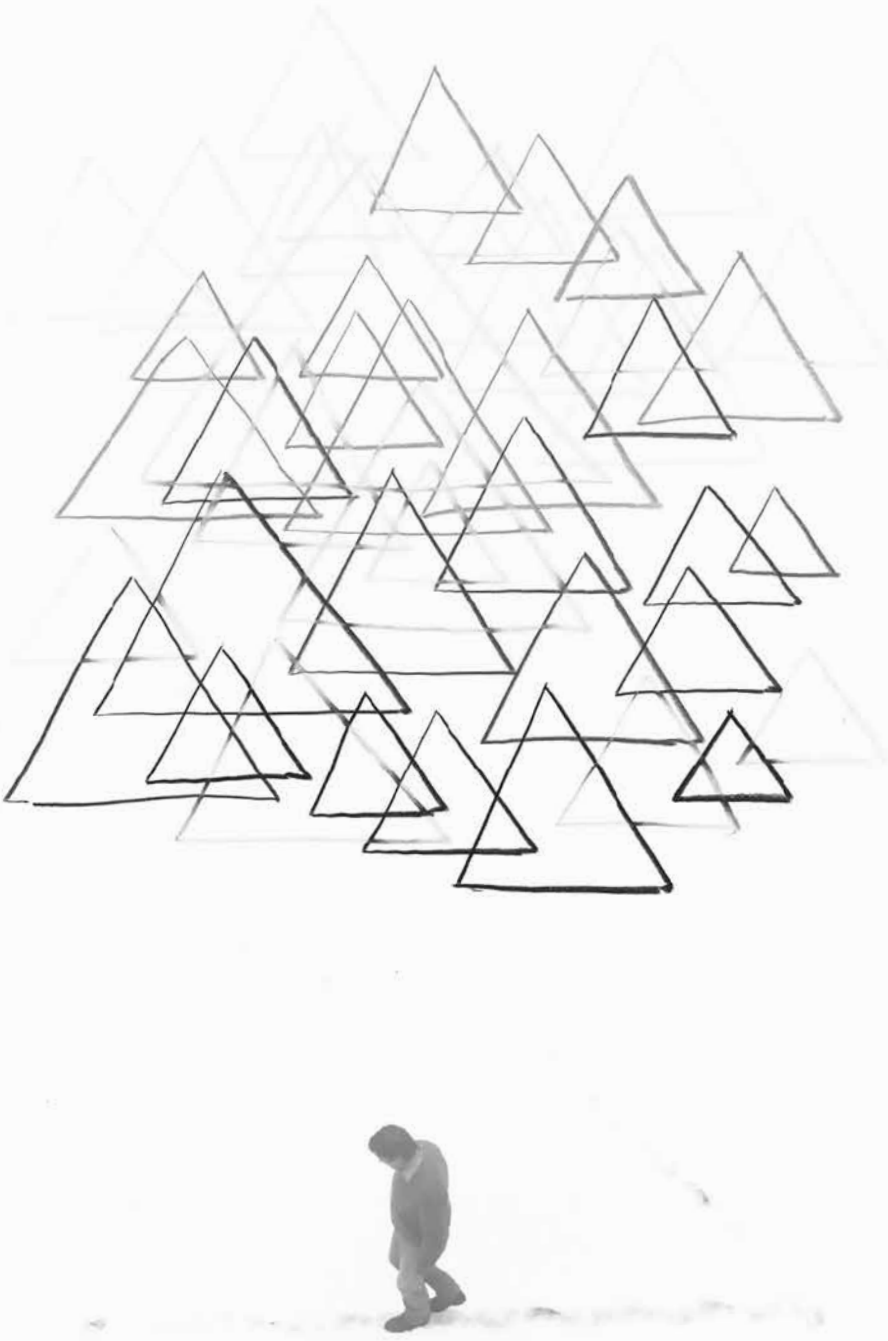

VYMEDZOVANIE PRIESTORU III

Michal Horn '84

Corporate State and Personal Autonomy: A Phenomenological Approach[1]

Andrzej Gniazdowski

Abstract

In order to understand the meaning of the contemporary crisis of modern society, it is worth going back to the challenges faced by liberalism, especially after the First World War. The aim of the paper is the critical reconstruction of the approach to the radically illiberal idea of the corporate state developed in the 1920s and 1930s within the phenomenological movement, especially by Max Scheler, Edith Stein, Dietrich von Hildebrand, and Aurel Kolnai. The discussion of the phenomenological positions in this regard focuses especially on the criticism against the implications of the idea of such a state for one of the most significant liberal values—personal autonomy. The fundamental distinction is made between solidarist, inherent to Catholic social teaching, and Fascist understanding of the idea of the corporate state. Insofar as one of the most influential corporatist theories within both Fascism and National Socialism was developed by the Austrian philosopher and sociologist Othmar Spann, the primary concern of the paper is to reconstruct the phenomenological meaning of the arguments against Spann's concept of the corporate state delivered by Kolnai in his articles published in the Viennese journal "Der Christliche Ständesstaat".

Keywords: State, phenomenology, corporatism, liberalism, personalism, autonomy, fascism, National Socialism, solidarism

The free will, if it exists, may manifest itself in every possible political circumstance. Personal autonomy, in a narrow, social–psychological rather than Kantian sense, is instead considered attainable only in a liberal–democratic state. What distinguishes a modern civil society from a traditional one is precisely that, in contrast to the latter where the personality is determined by the general pattern of the activity carried out by the social group, the

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society labeled as such is supposed to result from a social liberation of the individual, personal self and his or her conduct (Mead, 1934, p. 221). At the same time, according to modern society's self-understanding, being an autonomous person implies a particular mode of reciprocal recognition that is incorporated in positive law (Honneth, 1995, p. 108).

Although political modernity and personal autonomy seem to be mutually defining concepts, adherents of traditional concepts of state are not and have not been the only challengers to liberal democracy and its emancipating function with regard to personality. Admittedly, apart from the different types of political traditionalism, it was in the first instance Catholicism's social teaching that historically opposed the concept of the liberal democratic state. The Roman Church considered that true personal autonomy could only be attained in a community of faith by recognizing God's authority over one's self. However, modern radical political movements also defied the autonomy of the person in liberal democracy by criticizing it as nothing but formal autonomy. For adherents of movements such as Fascism, Communism, or National Socialism, the only possibility for making personal autonomy true was Rousseau's generalization, or, in Kant's spirit, universalization of this autonomy either by establishing a total state or through its complete abolition.

In order to understand the meaning of the contemporary crisis of modern society, it is worth going back to the challenges faced by liberalism, especially after the First World War. The arguments against the possibility of personal fulfillment in the liberal democratic state of that time seem to return today not only in the political rhetoric of Catholic traditionalists and Islamic fundamentalists but also in the criticism proffered against liberal legal formalism by the populist identitarian right and the identity politics of the left. In countries such as Poland, where the legal institutions of the liberal democratic state are challenged first of all with reference to the arguments of both national and Catholic solidarism, the criticism of liberalism from the perspective of, on the one hand, Catholic and, on the other hand, fascist conceptions of the corporate state deserves special theoretical attention. Conversely, among the critical approaches to Fascism in the twenties and thirties, the personalist critique of fascist corporatism then undertaken within the phenomenological movement by Max Scheler, Edith Stein, Dietrich von Hildebrand or Aurel Kolnai was certainly not the most politically relevant one. Nevertheless, it is worth reconstructing it in order to examine the contemporary significance of the concept of the corporate state and its relationship to the concepts of personal autonomy and political modernity itself.

The Corporate State as a Theoretical Phenomenon

What determines the theoretical meaning of the phenomenological approach to the problem of state is, in the first instance, the question of the foundations of political science. As a matter of fact, the representatives of the phenomenological movement have by no means shunned the different forms of immediate political engagement. Husserl, with his open letter to the American public in support of the Central Powers' war aims (Husserl, 1915), Scheler with his war writings (Scheler, 1982), and Hildebrand and Kolnai with their anti-Nazi journalism, however, did not act as phenomenologists but as citizens—or more precisely as subjects—of the German and Austrian empires. Instead, it is, first of all, by examining the legitimacy of the claim to being scientific laid by the state theory of their time that the state in general, and the corporate state in particular, could become a "phenomenon" for them and, as such, an object of phenomenological investigation.

As far as the corporate or corporative state (in German: *Ständestaat*) is concerned, it should be considered to be originally not so much a scientific-theoretical as a theological concept. While it is rooted in the nineteenth century conservative reaction against the liberal economic order and the political legacy of the French Revolution, the concept of the corporate state has received the most relevant "theoretical" justification in *Rerum Novarum*, the papal encyclical issued in 1891. It has since become an important part of the social Catholic doctrine of the "third way" between liberal–capitalist individualism and communist collectivism, which promoted the regeneration of society through the revival of legally recognized trade-related bodies around which an organic social order and harmony could be restored (Pollard 2017, pp. 42—44). The reactionary origins of the concept of the corporate state within this doctrine resulted in the idealization of the feudal or estates' social order and in the idea of alleviating social conflicts by reorganizing society into corporations established on the basis of occupational, professional groups (Cau, 2019, p. 220).

The theological approach to the state, specific to Catholic social teaching, consisted in interpreting the political crisis triggered by the industrial revolution and the "revolt of the masses" in moral rather than in social–political terms. The social doctrine expressed in *Rerum Novarum* attributed the problem of class struggle to political upheaval under the banner of liberty and presented the idea of social solidarism as the only possible way to overcome it. The call for the emancipation of the individual in the modern society was interpreted in the papal encyclical as a manifestation of sinful selfishness and as morally condemnable pleonexia that should be opposed by the institutionalized Christian love of neighbor. What the Catholic doctrine of social solidarism perceived as a modern individual's growing isolation, and identified as a main trigger of social anomie, was supposed to be overcome

by the redefinition of the state–individual relationship in the spirit of collaboration and mutual acknowledgment between bosses and workers within corporations as intermediate bodies (Cau, 2019, p. 220).

The theoretical foundations of the corporate state underwent significant modifications with the start of the fascist experiment in Mussolini's Italy and as it then spread across Europe. The moral–theological justification for the corporatist reaction to the industrial society and liberal political order has been replaced in the twentieth century by a sociological and economic one. The most important political difference between Catholic and fascist corporatism consisted in their different approaches to the socio–economic function of the state. While the social teaching of Catholicism was guided by the principle of state subsidiarity, the fascist political doctrine aimed at dominating and subordinating social conflicts to the state authority's direct control. The encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno,* published in 1931 on the 40th anniversary of *Rerum Novarum,* pointed at the insurmountable divergences between both concepts of corporatism while emphasizing that the fascist authoritarian state "is supplanting free activities instead of confining itself to a necessary and sufficient helping hand," that it is "excessively bureaucratic and political," and that "it seems to serve particular political designs rather than usher in a better social framework" (Pius XI, 1931).

The theory of the corporate state that claimed to be scientific and, as such, became an object of phenomenological criticism, was developed in 1921 by the Austrian sociologist Othmar Spann in his book *The True State*. According to the Austro-Hungarian social philosopher Karl Polanyi, with this theory which placed the idea of anti-individualism as the main guiding principle, Spann had given Fascism its first comprehensive philosophical system (Polanyi, 1935, p. 362). The aim of his "universalist" doctrine was to overcome individualistic and atomistic theories of society and economics by arguing for a social model based on medieval guilds, structured by estates, and characterized by hierarchy (Stegmann & Langhorst, 2005, p. 716). With reference to Hegel's idealism, Schelling's organicism and the philosophy of German romanticism, but also Platonism and medieval realism, Spann developed the holistic theory of the state in which the election of supreme political leaders was based not on citizens' equal voting rights but on decision-making by the leaders of the diverse politically autonomous corporations. In his book, he sharply distinguished between Kant's concept of moral autonomy as "a self-determination or a free will of spirit" and the concept of personal autonomy as individual "self-sufficiency" or "autarky." Spann considered this last instance impossible in both a utilitarian and a spiritual sense (Spann, 1972, 19ff.).

Phenomenology and Political Personalism

Due to the double, partly overlapping, partly mutually opposed, Catholic and fascist understanding of the corporate state, the phenomenological approach to this phenomenon in the interwar period was rather ambiguous. It is true, first of all, with regard to the political applications of phenomenology attempted by those members of the phenomenological movement who, like Max Scheler and Dietrich von Hildebrand, converted to Catholicism during the First World War or, like Edith Stein and Aurel Kolnai, did so shortly thereafter. Their approach to the phenomenon of the state, confessionally determined by the Catholic social teaching and the doctrine of social solidarism, implied a criticism not only against liberal individualism but also against communist or nationalist totalitarian collectivism. Of course, Catholic phenomenologists fought against communism and Nazism as well as against the concepts of state specific to them, both theoretically and practically. Their criticism of Italian Fascism and especially of Austrian political Catholicism, based on Spann's theory of the true state and embodied in the dictatorship of Engelbert Dollfuss, however, turned out not to be so decisive.

The phenomenological approach to the concept of corporate state found its theoretical foundations not so much in Husserl's distinction between worldview philosophy and philosophy as rigorous science as in Scheler's distinction between formal and material ethics. In opposition to Kant's ethical formalism based on the concept of universal moral law, Scheler founded phenomenological ethics on the concept of objective values and their personal, emotional experience. His approach to the phenomenon of state was, to a large extent, authoritative for other Catholic phenomenologists and can be identified as a kind of both phenomenological and political personalism. The focus of his practical philosophy was the person understood not, as in Kant, as an abstract, logical subject of rational activity following ideal laws, but as a concrete unity of acts in the sense of an individual, unique style of acting (Scheler, 1973, p. 382). The autonomy of the person, which Scheler considered always to be participating in distinct types of communities ranging from the herd, through life–community and society to "collective persons" as their higher forms, required, according to him, the principle of the moral "solidarity of all persons," fully realizable only in "the love community" of the church (Scheler 1973, p. 496).

Even though the Catholic phenomenologists were all influenced by Scheler's phenomenological personalism, they referred in different ways in their political writings to the Catholic doctrine of social solidarity, corporatism, and state subsidiarity. Scheler's own approach to the concept of corporate state, determined by the understanding of the state as one of the "collective persons" apart from the culture circle (*Kulturkreis*) and the church (Scheler, 1973, 519ff.) varied over time. While he represented in his early

writings the Catholic left and searched for an alternative to either liberalism or socialism in Christian democracy, the explicitly religious foundations of Scheler's political personalism lessened to a degree in the later stages of his thought. He still hoped in his war writings for the establishment of a "united moral power" resulting from an alliance between "the Oldest and the Youngest," that is between the "Christian Church's corporatist doctrine" and the "internally re-formed labour movement" in Germany (Scheler, 1982, p. 304). After the war, in all his criticism of capitalism, liberalism, and socialism for their reductionist approach to the person, Scheler was ready to admit how impressed he had been, during his stay in Italy in 1922, by Mussolini's fascist movement: according to Dietrich von Hildebrand, he had considered it to be "dynamic," "interesting," and "new" (Hildebrand, 2000, p. 215).

In contrast to Edith Stein, who both in *The Investigation Concerning the State* from 1922 and in the political writings which emerged after her conversion, turned out to be the least influenced by the doctrine of the Christian corporate state, it was Dietrich von Hildebrand who became one of its best-known protagonists. Among other Catholic phenomenologists, his approach to fascist corporatism, both Italian and Austrian, seems to be, at the same time, the most ambivalent one. The paradox of Hildebrand's political personalism was that he fought his "battle against Hitler" and Stalin not only from the theological perspective of Catholic social teaching, but also with the support of Dollfuss's authoritarian government, then representing "political Catholicism" in Austria. The ambivalence inscribed in his theological–political standpoint was already clearly expressed in the name of the journal *The Christian Corporative State* (Der Christliche Ständestaat), which he founded in Vienna in 1934. Hildebrand wrote in his memoirs about the circumstances that led to the establishment of that journal, that he was "not terribly preoccupied by the idea of the 'corporative state'," and that it was not his intention to "offer a special defense of corporatism against democratic government" (Hildebrand, 2014). Nevertheless, insofar as "the corporative state was the goal of Dollfuss," Hildebrand and his associates "ultimately settled on it" (Hildebrand, 2014).

Autonomy and Totality

The theoretically most relevant distinction within Hildebrand's political Catholicism, not unlike within Scheler's and Stein's political personalism, was that established by German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies between "society" and "community" (Tönnies, 2001). Hildebrand laid both Catholic and phenomenological foundations for his "battle against anti-personalism and totalitarianism" in his 1930 work *The Metaphysics of Community*. In it, he insisted that, in contrast to the contemporary world based on artificial

social relations and the "spasms of the I," the authentic community arose only from "devotion to God and one's neighbour" (Hildebrand, 1955, p. 9). Hildebrand criticized the modern struggle for personal autonomy and individuality as an expression of false egotism and argued that personality grew from self-transcendence rather than self-possession (Gubser, 2019, p. 119). In his work, he considered the true community to be the *res publica*, which he interpreted as being based on the recognition of the "primacy of the individual person," but emerged not from bottom up, through social contract or revolution, but from above, through a process of "incorporation" (Hildebrand, 1955, p. 185, 397). What he meant by that was, first, the incorporation of values by persons, then that of persons into wider communities, and ultimately that of persons and communities into the value realm (Gubser, 2019, p. 119).

If Hildebrand admired Dollfuss as a Catholic statesman who fought against Communism and Nazism in the name of both the political autonomy of Austria and of the natural hierarchy of communities, there were also authors of *Der Christliche Ständestaat* who considered this admiration not only expendable, but also deplorable (Ebneth, 1976). For the most original of them, Aurel Kolnai, the very fact of publishing in Hildebrand's journal under the pseudonym "van Helsing" was rather an inevitable cost of fighting that battle. In his articles, written from the perspective of not only Catholic, but also Durkheimian solidarism, he clearly distinguished between Christian-personalist and fascist–authoritarian foundations of corporatism. Unlike Hildebrand, who considered Dollfuss's Christian corporate state, built on the principles of *Quadragesimo Anno*, to be "something completely new" and distinct compared to Fascist Italy (Hildebrand, 1934, p. 59), Kolnai belonged to those who identified it as nothing but "Austro-fascism." If Hildebrand assumed that both Austrian political Catholicism and Italian Fascism, "despite certain concessions to state omnipotence," are more aligned with the culture of the Christian West than Nazism and Communism (Hildebrand, 2014), he argued that it was the "democratic principle of a constitutional 'opposition'" which is the "most peculiarly Western of all social phenomena" (Kolnai, 1938, p. 26).

Kolnai's phenomenological approach to the concept of corporate state and that of personal autonomy, rather conservative–liberal than Christian–personalist, found a clear manifestation in his criticism of the political holism of Othmar Spann. In the article "Othmar Spann's Idea of Totality," published in Hildebrand's journal in 1934, Kolnai argued, in the first instance, against recognizing Spann as a Catholic social theorist. He agreed that Spann's corporatism had many points of contact especially with "catholicizing" Romanticism, such as being hostile to the mechanistic and natural scientific view of reality, together with the liberal conception of society. He admitted that Spann's concept of the whole and its parts was an attempt to borrow from

Aristotelian and Thomist scholasticism, as well as to make use of the expression *Corpus Christi mysticum*, "mystic Body of Christ." Nevertheless, due to the fact that the cornerstone of Spann's theory formed, according to Kolnai, the idea of totality which was supposed to precede the parts through a mediating hierarchy of partial totalities, "somewhat like the relation between the whole organism, organs and cells in a living being" (Kolnai, 2017, p. 136), there was in his interpretation an obvious and irremovable clash with Catholic and scholastic philosophy. While taking into consideration the Austrian sociologist's speculative attempt to derive "all the essential characteristics of the world and of life (…) from the purely formal idea of totality," Kolnai argued for considering Spann "a typical prophet of nationalism, Hegelianism, and, notwithstanding the subjective good faith of his Christian profession, pantheism" (Kolnai, 2017, p. 136).

The main object of Kolnai's criticism against Spann's sociology were the implications of the concept of totality for understanding the relationship between community and person. Both in his article from 1934 and in his main political work, *The War Against the West* from 1938, Kolnai recognized in Spann the theorist not only of the corporate, but also of the total state in the most literal and utterly metaphysical sense (Kolnai, 2017, p. 136). Spann's speculation about totality as a fundamental category of all being implied, according to him, "that, in the ideal, normal and proper state of things, a person, with his entire essence, his complete spiritual and moral being, belongs to the state, and must surrender himself to the state authority through the mediation of the partial authorities" (Kolnai, 2017, p. 136). In spite of his declared organicist approach to the state, Spann's thinking was, according to Kolnai, in reality completely mechanical insofar as his theory regarded a person as a "mere raw material for a national machinery of power and production" (Kolnai, 2017, p. 144). To the extent that the only autonomy of person that Spann acknowledged consisted in an "autonomous 'articulation of totality'," his sociology had nothing to do, in Kolnai's interpretation, with either real personality or "with genuine spiritual spontaneity in life, or with real community" (Kolnai, 2017, 144).

In Spann's theory of the corporate state, Kolnai saw the "Austrian connecting link" between ordinary Fascism and Nazi Fascism. The aim of this theory was, according to him, to delegitimize liberal democracy by providing theoretical support for social inequality (Kolnai, 1938, p. 70). In Spann's fascist philosophy, as Kolnai wrote in *The War Against the West*, "no philosopher's stone is left unturned to destroy every possible foundation for the free association of men and the democratic self-government of groups" (Kolnai, 1938, p. 71). Kolnai formulated the main phenomenological argument against Spann's concept of corporate state through reference to the analyses of the relationship between person and community delivered by Hildebrand in his *Metaphysics of Community*. In light of these analyses, he claimed that

the central thesis of Spann's theory of totality rested on the false analogy between the wholeness of the organism and the wholeness of the state. Insofar as Hildebrand has shown in his work that "different totalities can only be regarded as independent, not merely additive, totalities in very different senses and to different degrees," Kolnai considered Spann's concept of state a scientifically unfounded "combination of a trite platitude with an only apparently self-evident prejudice" (Kolnai, 2017, p. 139).

Conclusion

The contemporary relevance of the phenomenological approach to the concept of state in the twenties and thirties of the former century may seem debatable. The confessional determination of this approach may be considered a limitation of the theoretical significance of the political analyses delivered by Catholic phenomenologists to a narrow, historical, geographical, and cultural context. Even if the political personalism of Max Scheler, Edith Stein, Dietrich von Hildebrand, and Aurel Kolnai has substantially influenced the positions taken by Jan Patočka, Karol Wojtyła, and Józef Tischner in the totalitarian debate (Gubser, 2019, p. 128), their insights into the relationship between "person" and "community" seem not to meet the contemporary political challenges. There is no question that today, in the times of a new European war, pandemics, populism, and identity politics, the problem of the prospects and limits of personal autonomy in its relationship to the state requires a new global approach which, if "Catholic," should be according to the proper meaning of the word.

Nevertheless, especially if taking into consideration the variety of the phenomenological approaches to the problem of state and the fundamental differences between them, the historical facticity of those approaches seem not to limit their possible contemporary theoretical relevance. Scheler's concept of the state as a collective person, the personalist approach to this phenomenon within Hildebrand's social ontology, Stein's investigation concerning the ontic fabric of the state as an autarkic, self-sufficient, and in this sense sovereign community, as well as Kolnai's liberal Catholic understanding obviously do not exhaust the theoretical potential of phenomenology in this regard. The historical reconstruction of the ways in which the state became a problem for phenomenology may also shed some light on the specifics of the contemporary political challenges. It not only concerns the prospects of personal autonomy and self-determination in the liberal democratic world, which today also considers the question of social solidarity (Honneth, 1995), but also the challenges presented to this world by the concept of corporate state. The tragedy of the war against Western liberal democratic institutions declared by Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany, and the communist

Soviet Union repeats itself today in the—by no means less tragic—farce of the Russian war in Ukraine. As the contemporary socio-economic analyses of the Russian political system clearly show, "the state in Russia strives after the self-evident ideal: it is the ideal of the corporate state according to Othmar Spann's concept" (Inozemtsev, 2018). The contemporary relevance of the phenomenological approaches to this concept seems to be out of the question for the same self-evident reason.

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Michal Kern: Lopúchy

Everyday Autonomy: Applying the Capability Approach to the Case of People with Disabilities

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Abstract

This article analyzes the topic of everyday autonomy for people with disabilities. Autonomy, freedom, and choice are fundamental factors for any human in modern society. I argue that the capability approach provides the best method for ensuring that an individual lives in a free, equal, and just society. People with disabilities are often left out in theories analyzing the just society because they do not represent an idealized version of human reality. I primarily use the concept of capabilities provided by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum because they respect the diversity of human life, individual choice, and autonomy. They reflect on the vulnerable groups in society and define a theory that includes specific needs, including those of people with disabilities. Everyday autonomy reflects the fact that many people are vulnerable and dependent on others, and the capability approach reflects the notion that choice and freedom to choose is a fundamental aspect for every human being.

Keywords: people with disabilities, capability approach, autonomy, freedom, justice, equality

Introduction

The idea of people having autonomy is deeply rooted in the understanding of human beings. Every human being desires to make autonomous decisions and to be independent. Whether external or other forces influence our thinking and decisions is an entirely different question.

The problem with the current, primarily academic, description of autonomy is that it often fails to pay attention to an everyday element of choice. When an individual thinks of autonomy, he often thinks of a simplified version. He does not reflect concepts such as free will, determinism, or similar philosophical ideas. Sometimes, the concept can best be understood through

applying it in practice to day-to-day situations. In order to maximize the options of people with disabilities, there needs to be a focus on real opportunities and an everyday understanding of autonomy.

The idea of people having choices and opportunities is deeply rooted in the capability approach, formulated and developed by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum. The individual approach, respect for human rights, dignity, and equality are the foundation stones within the capability approach. We argue that having a simpler and more cohesive version of autonomy is crucial for people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups in general. We refer to this description as everyday autonomy and chose people with disabilities because they are a vulnerable group and depend on various forms of support to achieve the same quality of life as other groups in society. Many people can feel socially excluded[1] by not having the same opportunities as others without several support mechanisms. For instance, during the Covid-19 pandemic, many people experienced a difference in access to proper health, education, or social services. The result was that many felt they were losing control over their lives and had their freedom and everyday autonomy reduced. The contemporary problems demonstrate how vulnerable our society is, and that we must always prepare to mitigate various negative impacts to ensure the highest quality of life for all citizens. For instance, our autonomy also depends on the organization of the state and the structure of its institutions. If the institution is corrupt, poorly structured, and dysfunctional, we can expect that it will severely impact our quality of life and even the autonomy of our decisions.

The Impact of Vulnerability on Everyday Autonomy

One of the many reasons authors tend to ignore people with disabilities is that they represent the vulnerability of human life. Vulnerability is often associated with negative connotations of dependency, uselessness, and weakness. People with disabilities often require support, services, and resources that are very specific and targeted toward their needs on the basis of their diagnosis. Vulnerability is often perceived as something specific to this group. However, that is not the case because every human being is vulnerable, was vulnerable, or can become vulnerable in the future. We were all dependent

[1] Some experts define social exclusion as follows: "an individual is socially excluded if he or she does not participate in key activities of the society in which he or she lives" (Burchardt et al., 2002, pp. 30–31). They also conclude that social exclusion is not restricted to a place; it is relative: "relative, that is, to the time and place in question. It is not restricted to citizens of a particular state" (Burchardt et al., 2002, p. 31). Similarly, in a report about social exclusion by Ruth Levitas and colleagues, it is said that: "social exclusion is a complex and multi-dimensional process. It involves the lack or denial of resources, rights, goods and services, and the inability to participate in the normal relationships and activities, available to the majority of people in a society, whether in economic, social, cultural or political arenas. It affects both the quality of life of individuals and the equity and cohesion of society as a whole." (Levitas et al., 2007, p. 9).

on someone when we were children (parents or state), and we are all dependent on the state when we grow old or when we get sick or have a serious diagnosis. Dependency on others and being vulnerable are not conditions specific only to people with disabilities. The fact that all human beings are vulnerable to different external and internal factors improves our capacity to form ideas and arguments about the organizational structure of society. Eva Feder Kittay argues that we cannot label dependency as something special because it is a natural part of our existence. We all are dependent at some point in our lives (Kittay, 1999, p. 29).

Ethics of care provides an alternative to traditional thinking about intervention and support for various socially excluded groups. For instance, Eva Feder Kittay interprets care ethics as a critique of modern liberal theories of justice[2] that often rely on idealized definitions of human beings. Ethics of care provides a different perspective on human life, justice, rights, and diversity, and reflects the harsh realities that many theories ignore or miss. Vulnerability and dependency, Kittay reminds us, start from the very beginning of our lives, and continue through different stages as we grow older (Kittay, 1999, p. 29).

Kittay focuses on a new element in her analysis: the relationship between the caregiver and care receiver, as she understands care work as a form of employment (Kittay, 1999, p. 30). The importance of the relationship between the caregiver and the care receiver is often underestimated. Some experts argue that we cannot ignore the relationships between individuals as they shape our identity and perception of self. We are always in relationships; we are always connected to other human beings, and we cannot ignore the fact that this influences our perceptions (Davy, 2019, p. 111). Dependency is a normal part of human existence. It is not a unique condition specific to a few individuals (Davy, 2019, p. 107). Everyone, at some point, relies on the state, family, institutions, environment, and other factors. Many philosophers throughout history have recognized the importance of having relations with other people and of how we define ourselves in relation to others. All human beings are self-determining and autonomous actors. They need to be recognized as such to ensure their well-being (Mackenzie, 2014, pp. 41). However, the fact that we are autonomous humans does not diminish the fact that we are inherently vulnerable and dependent. All individuals need shelter, clothes, nutrition, good quality of life, access to services, social interaction, recognition, and much more (Mackenzie, 2014, p. 54).

[2] The most problematic issue for many liberal theories of justice is that they focus on idealized conditions and glorify reason/rationality as the only way to approach the decision-making process. For instance, John Rawls relies on the idea that human beings will make rational choices while deciding their conditions for a just and equal society (Rawls, 1999). Some experts criticize Rawls for approaching the conditions of society in a utopistic and idealized scenario, and argue that he is excluding groups with specific needs as he deems topics like disability to be a medical issue, not a social one (Simplican, 2016, pp. 83-90).

People with disabilities are in a sensitive position as they face more discrimination and prejudices and are vulnerable to many external factors while trying to live an autonomous life. This chapter aims to demonstrate that, despite various external or internal forces, they can still be autonomous and make their life choices freely. They act on their autonomy and decide how to use their freedom without additional restrictions from society. Autonomy, in our understanding, refers to a person's everyday experience and is ascribed to the intuitive/subjective sphere of any individual. The fact that somebody makes a personal choice based on their decision and reflection is essential for everyday autonomy.

Capability as a Means of Improving Everyday Autonomy

The capability approach presents an excellent tool for approaching a diverse society with various needs, characteristics, desires, and destinies. Dignity in life is a crucial element for authors utilizing the capability approach. Sen presents two key concepts in his theory: capabilities and functionings.[3] Sen claims that functionings as a concept have "distinctly Aristotelian roots, reflect the various things a person may value doing or being. The valued functionings may vary from elementary ones, such as being adequately nourished and being free from avoidable disease, to very complex activities or personal states, such as being able to take part in the life of the community and have self-respect" (Sen, 2000, p. 75). Capabilities are defined by Sen as an "alternative combination of functionings that are feasible for her to achieve. Capability is thus a kind of freedom: the substantive freedom to achieve alternative functioning combinations (or, less formally put, the freedom to achieve various lifestyles). For example, an affluent person who fasts may have the same functioning achievement in terms of eating or nourishment as a destitute person who is forced to starve, but the first person does have a different 'capability set' than the second (the first can choose to eat well and be well nourished in a way the second cannot)" (Sen, 2000, p. 75). The choice, in our understanding, reflects the everyday autonomy of a human being. Freedom is deciding what one wants without having to be forced to choose otherwise. However, having options is a crucial element in the capability approach. Capabilities represent our freedom to determine the various actions, lifestyles, and opportunities a person can have. Freedom, in the context of everyday life, is understood as acting on our intuitive autonomy.

3 Sen also worked on economics and the standard of living. For instance, in his work *On Ethics and Economics* (1999), he describes the connection between ethics and the economy and how economics impact the freedom and autonomy of the individual. The economy, capital, and wealth greatly impact the quality of life and the choices one can make in life. Freedom and autonomy are directly influenced by the number of resources one has at one's disposal. Later, he developed these ideas and expanded them in his works on the capability approach and justice.

We stray from the idealized version of autonomy, which always describes a human being as reasonable and rational. As already mentioned, we cannot ignore the fact that, although we are influenced by external forces, we can be autonomous in our lives. Sen points out that, despite all the improvements in our society, it is still disturbing to see how many people do not have the basic freedom to determine their lives (Sen, 2010, p. 226). Sen points out that the ability to choose, to determine one´s life, and to be autonomous and different from others is crucial for a good quality of life (Sen, 2010). We have a diverse society; people have different preferences, characteristics, and predispositions. Sen´s approach is very distinct from others because he values one´s preferences and believes that one´s autonomy should always be respected without discriminating against people with specific needs.

The fundamental question is whether a person can be truly autonomous in everyday actions if their choice is limited by external factors such as lack of resources or opportunities. We must then ask what it means to have everyday autonomy. For Sen, it is crucial to allow people to decide with little interference and leave them to make choices they deem valuable in life or want to make themselves (Sen, 2010, p. 230). We cannot decide for other people how to perceive life and what choices might lead to a good life. For Sen, there is a plurality of good lives (Sen, 2000, pp. 76–77). Diversity and plurality have to be reflected when it comes to everyday autonomy and making decisions related to one´s individual preferences.

Naturally, people can make poor decisions and mistakes or regret their choices. When thinking about choices, autonomy, and freedom, many often identify rationality as a key aspect when being autonomous in decisions. But people do not need to make the right or best choices to be true to themselves. Sen, in his thinking about freedom, dignity, choices, justice, equality, and other phenomena, starts from a non-ideal perspective that reflects the "real world" and does not try to idealize the conditions of human existence. The difference in the capability approach is that it focuses on choices rather than on simple outcomes; people ought to have a choice to act (Robeyns & Pierik, 2007, p. 141). The moral thing to do is to let people make their choices.

There are other variants of the capability approach. Martha Nussbaum highlights the idea of flourishing and human dignity as something central for all human beings (Nussbaum, 2007, p. 182). Nussbaum, in her conceptual framework, particularly focuses on people with disabilities because they are often excluded from the theories of justice as they do not represent the majority of the population. The main difference between Sen and Nussbaum is that Sen does not believe the capabilities can be narrowed down to a specific universal list because society is very diverse, while Nussbaum identifies ten central human functional capabilities. Similarly to Sen, Nussbaum criticizes

the idealized[4] theories of justice that focus on describing a perfectly just society. For Nussbaum, capabilities are the best avenue for creating a just and equal society. Capabilities are understood as a form of freedom in which the individual can choose what to do. When we think of autonomy, we associate it with the diversity of human life and with flourishing. Nussbaum explains that human flourishing is related to Aristotelian thinking and that in flourishing, one can reach one's potential (Nussbaum, 2007). For Nussbaum, this is a crucial aspect because people with disabilities are equal citizens, who need to be treated in a way that does not discriminate against their otherness (Nussbaum, 2007, pp. 98-99). Nussbaum does not exclude from her understanding of just society even people with the most difficult diagnosis, because everyone deserves a life with dignity. Nussbaum argues, "relying on the intuitive idea of human dignity, that the capabilities in question should be pursued for each and every person, treating each as an end and none as a mere tool of the ends of others" (Nussbaum, 2007, p. 70). Nussbaum claims that her approach "uses the idea of a threshold level of each capability, beneath which it is held that truly human functioning is not available to citizens; the social goal should be understood in terms of getting citizens above this capability threshold" (Nussbaum, 2007, p. 71). For instance, this means that every person should have a certain level of capabilities that allows them to live in dignified conditions. A person with severe physical disabilities, who needs specific medical equipment, medications, and assistance in order to obtain the same quality of life as other citizens, should have the options and resources to have these at their disposal. Both Nussbaum and Sen agree that people should live dignified lives and that society should create just conditions for them to flourish. For our analysis, it is sufficient to say that the capability approach uses many of the same elements as ethics of care as it reflects on all human beings' vulnerability and dependency and considers it a natural characteristic of human existence.

Another expert on capabilities, Ingrid Robeyns, demonstrates that the capability approach can increase human well-being and quality of life for many vulnerable groups. She argues that we can measure specific improvements in quality of life and take different steps to ensure that we distribute resources to consider the particular needs of individuals (Robeyns, 2006, p. 366). Respecting the plurality of our world is one of the most crucial aspects inherently contained in the capability approach (Robeyns, 2006, p. 371). Robeyns recognizes the limits of the philosophical approach and acknowledges that different external forces[5] influence the individual. She points out

[4] There is an ongoing debate about the difference between ideal and non-ideal theories of justice. Many authors argue that such theories, as presented by John Rawls and his veil of ignorance, presuppose idealized conditions that do not reflect real-life conditions in society. Rawls is also guilty of creating an idealized version of an always rational and reasonable human. For more on this debate, see (Levy 2016; Simplican, 2016; Farrelly 2007).

[5] Robeyns, in her later works, also recognizes the impact of the environment on human beings, as it is undeniable that this factor also shapes our self-perception and decisions (Robeyns, 2017, pp. 184--186).

that we must distinguish between philosophy and social theories because we must always distinguish between the types of question we are reflecting on, whether philosophical or following other scientific methods. (Robeyns, 2006, pp. 372). Robeyns represents those contemporary experts on the capability approach that consistently improve the theory and reflect on the new issues stemming from scientific development.

The capability approach presents an interesting take on the freedom, choice, and autonomy of people with specific needs as it reflects on knowledge from ethics of care and other fields dealing with vulnerability, dependency, and relationships with other human beings. Our analysis focuses on the analysis of the everyday autonomy of people with disabilities. The capability approach recognizes the need to make individual choices and to have individual preferences and autonomy: to be autonomous, to have values, ideas, and notions that differ from others, and to recognize the diversity and plurality of our world without diminishing other individual preferences and choices. The essence of the capability approach lies in its ability to allow people with unique characteristics to live independently and to be true to themselves.

Conclusion

This paper concentrates on the analysis of everyday autonomy and people with disabilities. The capability approach is useful because it reflects society's diversity and plurality. This paper started with a description of vulnerability and dependency to demonstrate that disability and other health or mental issues are natural states in life. The capability approach shifts the focus away from an idealized interpretation of justice, freedom, autonomy, and equality and reflects on the capacity of every human being to achieve their potential and what they value in life. We often think of oppression and lack of freedom when dealing with autonomy because many groups lack resources, opportunities, or basic freedom to fully use their potential. The lack of autonomy stems from the fact that various internal dispositions (physical or mental disability, family background, immediate surroundings, etc.) and external forces (societal, political, environmental, etc.) prevent people with disabilities from having the same options as other groups in society. The capability approach provides a useful tool for ensuring that the autonomy of people with disabilities is recognized because respect for others, their choice, and the options to choose from must be considered while designing a just, free, and equal society. It is possible that not every theorist of justice will agree that the state should provide resources and support to people with specific needs. However, if we want to give people the same opportunities and chances in life, it is significant to devise a concept that allows a person

to use their potential to the fullest. Amartya Sen proposed a concept that embraces people with unique needs and preferences. The duty of the state, country, or global institutions is to ensure that we design an environment where people can be autonomous in their everyday life, to make choices based on their preferences and not on a predesigned set of options. That people still face many barriers could be observed during the Covid-19 pandemic. Limitations on choices, freedom, and autonomy are still present as many countries do not provide systems of support for vulnerable groups. Many still have prejudices and stigmatize people based on their predispositions or diversity. However, the capability approach significantly contributes to the debate on vulnerable groups as it includes unique needs, recognizes vulnerability, and focuses on individual preferences.

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Michal Kern: Vytvoril som líniu

VYTVORIL SOM LÍNIU SÁM SEBOU, SVOJIM TELOM,
NAPÍSAL SOM JU BOD PO BODE, KROK ZA KROKOM
Michal Kern '21

Free Will from the Viewpoint of Moral Development

Dila Özenç

Abstract

During infants' earlier moral development, the most significant role belongs to the primary caregivers. As reward-punishment systems, discipline methods, and authority figures have an enormous impact on a child's behavior, freedom of choice remains in the background of people's actions during these years. Gradually, individuals' faculty to recognize the mental states of others starts to develop. Empathy skills and the feeling of guilt are the two critical elements of this process (Hoffman, 1979). Individuals with disorders characterized by a lack of empathy skills at a certain level, like psychopathy, therefore go through a different moral development process. Can the difficulty in relating and responding to the particular feelings of others, like fear and sadness, give these individuals more freedom of choice since they are not bound by empathy as much as healthy individuals are? As the development of empathy and socialization are two parallel processes, social interactions, norms, and the need for acceptance start to reveal their effects on moral agents. However, after people develop morals that go against social conventions, being accepted by society starts to lose importance; universally applicable rules and people's own created values become apparent in their way of thinking and acting since they are in the post-conventional part of their development. From this point, it is possible to mention concepts that help us define autonomy, such as justice and liberty. Approaching these concepts at a particular stage of life does not necessarily mean that people think and behave without the influence of others, as the socially provided conformity has already been internalized. This paper analyzes Kohlberg's moral development theory in terms of free will by emphasizing empathy skills and their effects on psychopathic individuals through the lens of R.J.R. Blair's studies and suggests that personal autonomy does not exist at all.

Keywords: free will, moral development, empathy, socialization, psychopathy

The interactionist definition explains the concept of moral development as an output of the communication between individuals' cognitive framework and the sophistication of their environment (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977, p. 57). Therefore, it is necessary to examine the cognitive development of individuals, the transformations in their social setting and the primary agents involved in these processes.

The Moral Development Theory introduced by Lawrence Kohlberg suggests a six-stage model, explaining moral development by subdividing it into three levels: pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional. The first stage is mainly centered around behaviors based on the direct consequence of the actions (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977, p. 54). During this period, reward-punishment systems are critical in determining children's behavior. Besides, the concept of obedience is crucial in identifying the relationship between authority and children. At this stage, the primary authority figures are usually parents and caregivers. In the second stage, behaving according to moral codes is an instrument for the child to achieve personal needs and desires (Kohlberg, 1975, p. 49). Other people's needs are only responded to when they match the child's needs. Some aspects of equality, mutuality and fairness are present at this stage. However, these aspects are viewed practically rather than from a more complex judgement structure.

When individuals reach the conventional level where they become active members of society, social acceptance starts to gain importance. Responding to the norms and expectations of the community is essential, and how the community is defined can vary from a small group like friends, peers, or family to a national state. The third stage at the conventional level mainly focuses on social harmony. Thus, behavior is evaluated in terms of the intention behind one's actions, and whether they fit the social norms (Kohlberg, 1975, p. 49).

In the fourth stage, the relationship between the individual and the system, rather than the relationships with other subjects becomes central (Garz, 2009). Maintaining order and obeying the laws is the distinguishing element of the fourth stage.

Kohlberg (1975) uses the term "social contract" to explain the fifth stage (p. 49). Individuals' rights and uniqueness are valued if the whole of society agrees with them. This democratic approach also involves a gap in altering the laws in a way that will benefit society. The last stage consists of ethical rules applicable in any and every place in the world. They result from individuals' rational precepts about justice, right, equality, and reciprocity; moreover, these principles regard general human rights (Kohlberg, 1975, p. 671).

Dworkin defines autonomy as the reflection of one's choices, motivations, and wills by themselves and without the influence of any external

source (Dworkin, 1981). Defining those elements requires a high level of self-awareness and self-control. Although a certain degree of awareness can provide the person with a vision of the influences of other elements in the self, is it still possible to suggest that thoughts, desires, and goals are derived from such external effects?

Regarding Kohlberg's theory and the cognitive development of individuals, it is possible to suggest that such awareness can only occur at the post-conventional level. In the first two stages, a child's behavior reveals more of a maladaptive characteristic such as instant satisfaction where the reward is obtained after behaving according to parents' moral codes and avoiding other behaviors in order not to be punished. Besides, the conventional level requires a particular consistency and a growing active individual who puts effort into maintaining the social order rather than questioning and analyzing the structure of the social organizations. However, Kohlberg (1975) also uses the term "autonomous" as a synonym for the post-conventional level (p. 671). Although both the fifth and sixth stages are in the autonomous phase, the democratic and utilitarian characteristic of stage five limits personal autonomy in several ways. For example, the individual is aware of the variety of ideas but believes that the right decisions and actions should benefit the whole of society and that the majority must achieve a consensus. This particular feature can influence personal decisions, and even if "-the good of the many-" idea is internalized by the individual, utilitarianist perspectives have several sides may be considered as external.

The only stage on which it is possible to argue that autonomy exists is the sixth one. Deciding what is fair, just, and moral requires a particular moral reasoning and judgment. Although individuals at this stage have the peculiar faculty to act upon such judgment, it is not easy to set universal laws when it comes to applying those in every context. The subjects' awareness of the effects of their current context and background is a long period that can only be achieved during the post-conventional phase which occurs in adulthood. Going through an intense socialization process during the conventional level and learning by sharing everyday experiences with other individuals significantly affect people's decision-making mechanisms. Although unique, abstract ideas are also generated through experience, the time individuals spend in behaving according to norms and order will result in the internalization of some external values. Kohlberg (1975) states that higher stages consist of previous levels of thinking, and that this stage-like process always moves forward (p. 670). Based on this idea, it is possible to suggest that a person cannot go to the next stage without adopting some values from the previous one. Individuals who once placed obeying authority and getting accepted by society as a priority cannot leave their influence behind, even at the post-conventional level.

At this point, it is essential to state that Kohlberg's theory adequately explains Western, especially North American, subjects' moral development (Mathes, 2019). The suggestion is not that there is no being who has freedom of will in the world. However, it is impossible to say that Kohlberg's moral development theory gives individuals enough space to develop autonomy. Furthermore, those individuals who view the world and its development according to their social codes would have difficulties establishing universal principles. As Kohlberg approaches moral development through an individualistic point of view, it is possible to say that all the arguments written so far regard personal autonomy. The theory can be criticized for being ethnocentric since the theory only considers white Americans. Moreover, the concept of free will is related to personal autonomy.

Kohlberg's moral development theory parallels Piagetian development theories. For example, regarding the child's moral judgment, Piaget suggests that the concept of good and the awareness needed to achieve good comes at a later period than the concept of duty (Isaacs, 1934, p. 85). This distinction helps explain the difference in the mindset between conventional and principled (post-conventional) levels. Thus, Piaget views the notion of good as the primary state of reciprocal morality. The first two stages in child development are based on motor functions and egocentric judgment (Isaacs, 1934, p. 87). Moreover, the third stage of moral judgment is about a consensus on the rules, whereas the final stage is centered around strict principles acknowledged by the whole (Isaacs, 1934, p. 87). As has been highlighted, Piagetian theory only considers moral judgement by considering the motivation behind the child's action rather than the behavior and emotions (Isaacs, 1934, p.85).

However, Martin L. Hoffman has studied the role of feelings in moral thinking. The primary focus of this research is on empathy, and Hoffman's definition of morality is highly related to the elements connecting individuals and society (Hoffman, 1979, p. 958). Moral development is seen as a way to diminish the obstacles to this connection. Hoffman also suggests that norms are internalized and still present in a person's morality even though there is no outer authority or discipline system. Several factors such as intense discipline methods and punishment systems cause this internalization (Hoffman, 1979, pp. 958-959). One reason is the child's egocentric state at this level of morality. According to Piaget, egocentrism is a conflict about what belongs to the self and others (Isaacs, 1934, p. 87). The absence of this specific distinction may thus be one factor that arouses the feeling of guilt. Although Bandura argues that identification is not a possible outcome of this process because a child tends to imitate behavior rather than internalize the motives behind it, this claim cannot oppose

the cause of guilt (as cited in Hoffman, 1979, p. 956). The complementary and essential feeling that needs to be talked about while arguing guilt is empathy. Since these feelings are contextually related to concepts of rights and social contracts it is important to highlight them while talking about moral development (Tomasello, 2009). It is a responsive state against something that occurs somewhere other than the self. Additionally, the distress in this state is one of the causes of guilt (Hoffman, 1979, p. 964). The identification and the future distinctions in the child due to different levels of sensitivity and various discipline techniques can affect individuals' cognitive progress and socialization process.

As feelings are an important part of social interactions, it is possible to argue that abandoning the egocentric stages and transitioning to the conventional level is highly affected by the development of empathy. Kohlberg (1975) states that the direction of the stages always goes towards the higher level, the only exception being exposure to trauma (p. 670). Discussing this argument from a Freudian standpoint raises an important question. If an extreme trauma occurs at the egocentric stage, causing a fixation, and the individual cannot develop a certain level of empathy, is it possible to consider such an individual as psychopathic? Is lack of empathy related to psychopathy, and how can a psychopathic individual develop moral values? Is it possible to assume that psychopathic individuals have more freedom of will as they go through a different socialization process?

Firstly, empathic dysfunction is an important criterion when diagnosing psychopathy. Besides, the dysfunctions in psychopathic individuals can cause impairment in their freedom of choice (Glannon,2015). However, a distinction between adults and children is necessary for examining the relationship between empathy and psychopathy. R.J.R. Blair studied the theory of mind impairment in psychopathic individuals. Theory of Mind is a widely used task and is important for assessing whether individuals can predict others' mental states. Research results have shown that psychopathic individuals do not suffer any impairment in Theory of Mind tasks (Blair, 2007).

On the other hand, scholars found that children with psychopathic tendencies show impairment when faced with sad and fearful facial expressions, while for adults this situation only occurs in cases for fear recognition (Blair et al., 2001). This conclusion is was reached after researchers conducted several tests to determine feelings such as happiness, disgust, surprise, and anger. These experiments examine emotional empathy, unlike the Theory of Mind analysis, which focuses on cognitive empathy. Dadds (2009) and his colleagues examined cognitive empathy without including the Theory of Mind, and found that cognitive deficien-

cies exist in childhood; however, males with severe psychopathic conditions may overcome this during their teenage years (p. 599). On the other hand, affective (emotional) empathy deficiency is not a particular feature for females with psychopathy, while it is present in males regardless of whether they are children or adults (Dadds et al., 2009, p. 603). Recognizing the mental states of others is not possible for children who show psychopathic traits; however, during puberty, males can develop this ability, but they are not able to respond with an appropriare reaction. On the contrary, females cannot identify another person's inner states at any period of their lives while they can react appropriately (Dadds et al., 2009)

When this theory is placed on the Kohlbergian scale, it is possible to assume that psychopathic individuals cannot go through conventional and post-conventional levels. The cognitive empathy deficiency in childhood is not uncommon at the egocentric pre-conventional level. Although this specific group of men can overcome this, the lack of emotional empathy and the continuity in women's cognitive skills is the starting point of this argument. However, the place of women in Kohlbergian theory can be interpreted as questionable. It is stated that women are primarily identified with stage three, whereas men generally continue their lives in stage four (Mathes, 2019, p. 3909). The division between having domestic and financial roles has led Kohlberg to make this distinction. Moreover, it is suggested that women cannot go through the post-conventional level. Kohlberg's study could not find any male subjects in the post-conventional level except people who have not studied the philosophy of morality (Mathes, 2019, p. 3911). This situation is due to the dominance of males in academia during Kohlberg's era.

Kohlberg's approach to moral development was severely criticized by some as sexist. Carol Gilligan, a former colleague of Lawrence Kohlberg, has updated the theory by centering a care-based perspective on female moral progress, unlike Kohlberg's judgement focused theory (Baier, 1987). Gilligan's theory assesses the place of women in men's life cycle. Although this is a valuable contribution to the literature, Gilligan's work cannot explain women's roles and status according to the flow of 21st century feminist movements. Besides being able to talk about concepts of freedom, justice, and autonomy, the judgmental approach is necessary. Since Gilligan's approach lacks this judgmental perspective contemporary feminist approaches should be considered in further research.

Whether a fixation causes psychopathy due to trauma to prevent individuals from socializing, internalizing, and responding to norms and expectations, or the psychopathic tendency exists from birth, these individuals continue to exist in the first two stages. If the satisfaction from psychopathic behavior shows the character of a typical reward mecha-

nism, the arguments suggesting that psychopathic individuals stay at the pre-conventional level would be supported. In order to test this argument, further research should be conducted on children, adolescents, and adult subjects with psychopathic tendencies.

In conclusion, the Kohlbergian approach that consists of stages and levels of morality is a much used theory, although it has been criticized for being ethnocentric (Mathes, 2019) and sexist (Baier, 1987). The theory is influenced by Piaget's developmental approach (Isaacs, 1934) and has influenced other theories including Gilligan's care approach to moral development (Gilligan, 1993). There is a hierarchy within the six stages, and the direction of development is from a lower to a higher level (Kohlberg, 1975, p. 670). Besides, the other individuals involved in the moral development of the agent change between these different levels and stages due to the enormous effect of socialization. Although the theory includes a level named autonomous (post-conventional) and considers concepts of justice and equality, the freedom of the will does not exist in either of these stages because of the different characteristics of the fifth and sixth stages such as egocentrism, utilitarianism, and internalization of norms (Kohlberg, 1975). There are counterarguments about cultural, organizational, and gender differences, which were neglected in the theory. However, individuals with psychopathic tendencies have been examined regarding feelings of empathy and guilt, which play an essential role in the transition from the pre-conventional to the conventional level. The conclusion derived from this analysis suggests that individuals with psychopathy are unable to go further than the pre-conventional level due to the dysfunction in their cognitive and affective empathy skills. Since they tend to stay in a position lacking such socialization, psychopathic individuals also cannot develop autonomy due to the Kohlbergian scale of development.

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Michal Kern: Vymedzovanie priestoru II.

Absurd Rebellion against Covid

Dominik Kulcsár[1]

Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic has drastically changed how we lead our lives. One of the responses to the pandemic has been a passionate rebellion against the public safety and health regulations implemented to combat the Covid-19 virus. This paper seeks to examine the motivation behind this rebellion. This author proposes using the lens of the absurd, as developed by Albert Camus, to understand this rebellion. Camus stated that the human mind seeks unity and meaning in the universe. But the universe is indifferent to our desire for answers. This clash between our desire for answers and silence brings about the feeling of the absurd. Rebellion is one possible response to it. The unprecedented restrictions placed on our basic civil and human rights, coupled with massive disinformation campaigns and scientific skepticism, have brought about a feeling of absurdity on a global scale. Therefore, the absurd may provide insight into the rebellion against Covid-19 and its tragic consequences.

Keywords: freedom, Camus, absurd, rebellion, Covid-19, pandemic

The Problem of Freedom

In this paper, I will discuss the rebellion that the world witnessed in response to the public safety and health measures that were taken against Covid-19. I will draw upon the work of the French philosopher and writer Albert Camus, who contended with the problems of the absurd and of revolt. What is the thing in the name of which a person rebels? People rebel because someone or something is restricting their freedom and this encroachment awakens the spirit of revolt. During the Covid-19 pandemic, we contended with a rather puzzling interpretation of freedom: the notion that one is free to do what-

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ever one wants because one is free to do so.[2] The consequences that others have to suffer because of this are of lesser or no concern. Since this interpretation enjoys a far-reaching acceptance, I will examine first the possible source from which it sprang during the Covid-19 pandemic and then the rebellion it awoke.

When we talk about freedom, we usually think along the lines that freedom is the ability to act autonomously or express oneself, and this action and expression are not restricted by outside forces. Since we live in a society, freedom becomes more complicated because communities and states are composed of a myriad of autonomous people who go about their business in their everyday lives. What we do inevitably affects those around us. Sometimes, the effects of our choices are almost imperceptible; at other times, they can mean the difference between life and death. Freedom and citizens' lives are regulated and protected by civil and human rights. A good example is the Fourth Article of the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen: "Liberty consists in the freedom to do everything which injures no one else; hence the exercise of the natural rights of each man has no limits except those which assure to the other members of the society the enjoyment of the same rights. These limits can only be determined by law" (Declaration of the Rights of Man, 1789). One of the underlying conditions of freedom is that this person does not harm or restrict others by their conduct. Russian anarchist Mikhail Bakunin held that one could not be free as long as others do not enjoy the same freedom: "Every enslavement of men is at the same time a limit on my own freedom. I am a free man only so far as I recognize the humanity and liberty of all men around me. In respecting their humanity, I respect my own" (Bakunin, 1970, p. 9).

When the pandemic hit, governments worldwide were quick to impose severe restrictions. Measures such as mask-wearing, maintaining social distancing, and washing hands sound fairly moderate and easy to comply with. But city-wide lockdowns and quarantines meant massive restrictions on civil rights such as freedom of association and movement. Thousands lost their jobs; children were forced to stay at home because schools were closed; the rapid growth in the number of infected people put an unseen pressure on healthcare systems, hospitals, and by extension, medical workers.[3] In short, this existential upheaval has fundamentally changed the way we live our lives due to a lack of preparedness and coherent and timely response. Many people complied with these measures. Masks became a regular part of our lives, Zoom meetings introduced a new way of working and enabled

[2] This interpretation of freedom is not new. What is new is the scale of its acceptance on all societal levels, especially during the Covid-19 crisis, when the lack of personal responsibility could put the lives of others in mortal danger. For example, a person may query the point of wearing a mask at all, arguing that they won't wear a mask because they believe in natural immunity, or that Covid-19 is just a flu, or that everyone will be infected eventually.

[3] These are only a few examples. A complex description of the pandemic is beyond the scope of this investigation.

students to continue their education from the safety of their homes. After several months, new types of vaccines were rolled out and, despite initial skepticism, have proven to be effective tools in providing immunity against the virus. While many complied, there were those who openly refused to do so, whether by denying the existence of the virus or by ridiculing the severity of safety measures. They rebelled against Covid-19 and the measures taken to fight it. I argue that they did so in the name of freedom. Although arguing for their right to be free from restrictions, Covid deniers and rebels unjustly transgressed the rights of others and limited their capacity to choose. In doing so, they disregard the later part of the fourth article of the French Declaration. Their freedom became the highest priority, and their rebellion's deadly consequences have been either ignored or downplayed. With the official death toll of the pandemic measuring in millions, it is necessary to examine this rebellion.[4] What can provoke such a strong response in a person that they decide to conduct themselves in a way that can either kill or endanger the lives of those around them and even kill the rebels themselves? The drastic change in our daily lives, coupled with the unprecedented restriction of civil rights, all contributed to the experience of the absurdity of existence. In *The Myth of Sisyphus,* Albert Camus investigated the phenomenon of a world suddenly losing its meaning. For that reason, I propose to use his philosophy of the absurd to understand this problem of freedom and the subsequent rebellion.

The Pandemic of the Absurd

Camus famously starts *The Myth of Sisyphus* with the line: "There is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide" (Camus, 2004, p. 495). Why suicide? Camus thinks that the question of whether it is worth living or dying is more important than any other and its importance lies in the action that the question entails. We can choose to die at any moment and, in continuing our lives, we express a certain value judgment: that life is indeed worth living. How does one begin to ponder such a question? I can kill myself by admitting that the world has no meaning or, on the contrary, I can kill myself by proclaiming that it has a meaning but that I must sacrifice my life to further some goal.[5] People who rebelled against restrictions to curb covid either consciously exposed themselves to the infection or outright refused to believe that the virus existed. They did not wish to have their freedoms

[4] In a report published in May 2022 by the World Health Organization, the official death toll of the pandemic has been estimated to be close to 15 million in the years 2020 and 2021. The report takes into account those who died directly of Covid or indirectly due to preventable causes because of the enormous strain on public health systems. Available at: https://www.who.int/news/item/05-05-2022-14.9-million-excess-deaths-were-associated-with-the-covid-19- pandemic-in-2020-and-2021

[5] For example, martyrdom.

restricted. Such a course of action seems to defy reason, but reason alone is not sufficient in answering the question of suicide. As Camus wrote: "I see others paradoxically getting killed for the ideas or illusions that give them a reason for living (what is called a reason for living is also an excellent reason for dying)" (Camus, 2004, p. 495).

Like other existentialists such as Kierkegaard or Jaspers, Camus believed that the human mind is at a loss when trying to understand the world. "In a universe suddenly divested of illusions and lights, man feels an alien, a stranger" (Camus, 2004, p. 497). Such was the atmosphere when the measures were first implemented. All of a sudden, we could no longer go out or meet the people we care about. Official announcements were often confusing or contradictory. Regular testing against Covid was required to enter the workplace. Accompanying this experience was severe anxiety and dread about the possibility of getting the virus; the paranoia was only amplified by the fact that some cases were asymptomatic. Becoming infected with Covid-19 was, in a strange way, reminiscent of the game of Russian roulette: a person may be asymptomatic or experience only mild symptoms, such as fever and a loss of smell or taste, or they may suffer from damaged lungs, risk being placed on ventilator support, and even die due to sepsis or respiratory failure. This unpredictability gives rise to the absurd.

The absurd is the break, the tension between the human mind and the universe it lives in. "This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, is properly the feeling of absurdity" (Camus, 2004, p. 497). The human mind utilizes reason and, by its nature, seeks to explain the world to itself, but the world evades such efforts. One of Camus' examples is that we can know a person by the way they act or by what they have done, but at his core, "a man remains forever unknown to us and […] there is in him something irreducible that escapes us" (Camus, 2004, p. 501). Another example involves recognizing the daily routine of our lives, whereby we get up in the morning, go to work, mingle with colleagues, get back home, participate in social activities with our friends and go to sleep. This cycle continues over and over again by force of habit until one day, we recognize this cycle precisely as the habit that it is and the question of *"why?"* appears. "It awakens consciousness and provokes what follows" (Camus, 2004, p. 503). In such cases, we look at the world, divested of the routine, and see the mechanisms behind it. Such was our situation with lockdowns, when we suddenly found ourselves alienated from what we saw as normal. "The strict lockdown led to a sense of time 'just continuing' as an undifferentiated perpetuation of one moment to the next, from one day to another" (Babarskienė et al., 2021). The absurd also awakens the consciousness when it is exposed to death, whether ours or someone else's. We generally accept death as something that will happen at some point in the future, but that we do not need to worry about since it is not here yet. For all of us, the pandemic has burned away the the-

ater set, and, apart from seeing our daily routines for what they are, it has had us all experience the dreadful destiny common to all. When Meursault in *The Stranger* contemplates his future, he sees death as the distant horizon that gives perspective to his entire life and takes away the importance of any future plans he may have had: "Throughout the whole absurd life I'd lived, a dark wind had been rising toward me from somewhere deep in my future, across years that were still to come, and as it passed, this wind leveled whatever was offered to me at the time, in years no more real than the ones I was living" (Camus, 1989, p. 122).

What we have described are instances that awaken the feeling of absurdity, but not the absurd itself. Neither the world nor our existence are absurd. What is absurd is the clash between the natural need of the human mind for unity and the world it finds itself in. "Understanding the world for a man is reducing it to the human, stamping it with his seal" (Camus, 2004, p. 506). Or, as John Foley writes: "to explain the world 'in terms that humans care about,' in ways that make sense 'with respect to human values'" (Foley, 2014, p. 6). But the universe remains silent.[6] It is our natural tendency to unify the world—to overcome the alienation we feel whether by tipping the scales with faith in God or by the absolutization of reason as something that can explain everything. But the meaning we ascribe to the world, and the values we try to assign to it, are not given to us by any metaphysical authority. There is no universal guarantor. We are the sole creators of values and their upholders. Our tendency to unify the world is a tendency to resist the absurd and commit what Camus considers to be a crime of the mind, a "philosophical suicide," which occurs by way "of suppressing the absurd by denying one of the terms of its equation" (Camus, 2004, p. 532). We live with an a priori expectation of the future. We make our plans and organize our activities around the goals we establish. Covid-19 has, like Camus' "dark wind," swept away our future plans and highlighted the figure of death on that distant horizon, amplifying our only true certainty. Suicide also breaks the absurd. Killing oneself means crossing the distance between oneself and the fatality that awaits. That the universe has no transcendent meaning does not mean, however, that life itself is not worth living. In fact, as Camus says, it allows one to live a fuller and richer life. By renouncing hope, whether in some future utopia or in the promise of an afterlife, one can "live without appeal" (Camus, 2004, p. 535). The rebels against Covid are doing the contrary. By desiring a return to the pre-pandemic life, free from restrictions and mandates, they are willing to cross the line separating the present and the future, and in the process, are willing to let other people die. Voluntary infection, combined with faster spreading, may lead to the collapse of the health care system, burnout among medical workers, and to hospitals crashing.

[6] The description of the universe as silent is in itself one example of describing something in "human terms."

These rebels try to unify the disparity between our current situation and their desired state, which is the "end of the pandemic." To bring back Camus' sentiment, their idea of living is worth dying for. They do so in the name of freedom. One of the counterarguments that may be raised is that the rebels may believe that they are doing this for the freedom of others. By ending the repetitive cycle of testing, vaccination, lockdowns and quarantines, society may return to some sense of the normalcy and routine that once existed.[7]

The absurd leads us to a reevaluation of freedom. Camus was not interested in metaphysical liberty but in knowing whether one's actions are free if the conditions of the absurd are accepted. "Now if the absurd cancels all my chances of eternal freedom, it restores and magnifies, on the other hand, my freedom of action" (Camus, 2004, p. 538). Knowing that death will come, actions in the present gain more weight and importance, and one is no longer tied to past notions of freedom. "Death and the absurd are here the principles of the only reasonable freedom: that which a human heart can experience and live" (Camus, 2004, p. 540). We have mentioned before that, by maintaining the absurd premise, we forsake the idea of a universal guarantor. But what do we base our conduct on if there is nothing to anchor our values? Taking the absurd to its extreme, "one can be virtuous through a whim" (Camus, 2004, p. 547). Such a conclusion seems to imply nihilism. Camus indeed illustrated this by creating several absurd characters whose actions were downright destructive. His most evident example of an unhinged nihilism springing from a realization of the absurd is the mad emperor Caligula. After the death of his sister, the Roman emperor is driven mad by the clash between his desire to bring her back and the impossibility of such an act. He realizes that "men die; and they are not happy" (Camus, 1962, p. 19). Since there is no higher principle, all actions are on the same level, including murder. With death being our only certainty, Caligula takes on the role of God and starts a massacre that spills across his empire. He spreads his discontent with the absurd everywhere, reminding everyone of the threat of impending death by committing both random and systematic acts of violence. However dark such a picture of the absurd may be, Camus did not adhere to it. What *The Myth of Sisyphus* was meant to illustrate was the range of possibilities that can emerge when one considers the question of the absurd to its logical conclusion. As Robert E. Meagher shows: "The works of the absurd or Sisyphus Cycle were, as we have called them, experiments in truth, experiments that ultimately fall short, not as works of art but as counsels to live by" (Meagher, 2022, p. 89).

This problem is picked up in *The Rebel*, where the absurd itself lays a foundation for human solidarity. Even though the pandemic broke the hab-

[7] Seeking reasons that might give this rebellion some legitimacy is not the goal of this investigation.

its of our daily lives, it has yielded some positive results, since some people "thrived during the pandemic and liked the situation because they could focus on things that were important to them and enjoy new opportunities" (Babarskienė et al., 2021). While some people positively adapted to Covid changes, discontent grew among people who had enough of restrictions. The arrival of vaccines escalated this polarization. Many people quickly rejected them, claiming that they were hastily developed, not fully tested, and dangerous. This was made easier because governments had lost the trust of the general public in their pandemic responses. Some political parties and public figures used the argument of freedom in their efforts to undermine Covid regulations. This laid the groundwork for conspiracy theories that proposed that vaccines are new instruments of control that governments want to use against their people. Conspiracy theories quickly and easily provided a way out of the chaos of the pandemic for some and helped to restore some sense to the world. But conspiracy theories, by providing quick and clear answers that suit people who want to affirm their own position, are but other ways by which the human mind commits a philosophical suicide.

In response to the absurd of the Covid-19, the rebels rallied behind the notion of freedom that gave them some sense of meaning and stability. Let us now examine their rebellion.

Rebellion against Covid-19

In *The Rebel*[8], the chief problem is a justified murder. In *The Myth of Sisyphus,* the murder is a matter of indifference since all actions are leveled and measured only by the end point of life. But the very premise of the absurd suggests a different solution. The absurd is possible only when both aspects that give rise to it are maintained—human life and the world. If we destroy one, we destroy the other. Thus, the absurd mind cannot agree to the murder because it would destroy itself. From this position, Camus derives a value that serves as the basis for all further conduct. "But it is plain that the absurd reasoning thereby recognizes human life as the single necessary good, because it makes possible that confrontation, and because without life the absurdist wager could not go on" (Camus, 2000, p. 10). If we recognize that there is no universal guarantor and that our reason alone cannot give us the answers, we must remain faithful to that contradiction born out of our need for unity and the world's silence. And from the moment we derive from the absurd reasoning the single value of human life itself, we reject absolute negation, so vividly sketched in *Caligula*. Strong displays of solidarity were

[8] Camus divided his works into cycles. Each cycle has a main philosophical essay, theater plays and a novel. Each cycle is represented by a myth: Sisyphus for the absurd cycle, and Prometheus for the cycle of revolt.

visible during the Covid-19 pandemic. For example, ground-level associations formed independently from the state to ensure that people were not cut off from their essential needs. Some practiced voluntary masking even after Covid measures had been lifted, and persistently kept to social distancing and avoiding people when they suspected they were infected.

If a person commits suicide, they express a certain value judgment—that life is not worth living. But suicide is an individual act. Anyone wishing to destroy others along with oneself must also commit murder or orchestrate a collective suicide. "It can be achieved only by absolute destruction, of both oneself and everybody else" (Camus, 2000, p. 11). When people rebel against pandemic measures, they also express value judgments. Those judgments can, for example, be that Covid-19 is a hoax or that the virus is not very serious. This judgment comes from an autonomous decision to act in the way that they see fit. This is their interpretation of freedom; they believe in their right to decide for themselves, and that no one, regardless of the consequences, should tell them what to do. Some may recognize that the virus can cause harm and yet argue that this harm is unavoidable, and that the faster people get Covid, the faster everyone can return to normal. Some may consciously deny the existence of the virus and carry on in the way they want to see fit. In an age of social media where certain public figures enjoy massive reach and influence over their followers, their decision on how to react to the measures and to Covid-19 may well mean the difference between life and death. By spreading lies or misinformation, or by using their platform to legitimize harmful behavior, they recognize deniers and rebels. Those that freely decided to become infected filled up hospitals. Thus, many oncological patients, patients in need of urgent surgeries, and people suffering from respiratory problems and auto-immune diseases were unable to receive the care they needed. Their freedom was denied. While rebels advocate for freedom, that freedom quickly loses any legitimacy since one person's right to infection becomes superior to the right of others to remain free from mortal danger. To return to Bakunin's sentiment, one cannot be free if others are not. Willing to risk one's death and, in the process, not heeding the consequences that action may bring is tantamount to choosing both suicide and murder. The overwhelming death toll of the pandemic in such a short time seems to prove this. We have established why people rebel and in the name of what they do so. But *who* is the rebel?

The one who rebels is the one who says "no" while at the same time saying "yes." The "no" means that there is a certain boundary in the rebel that is not to be crossed. At its core, rebellion contains a tension between freedom and justice. "He rebels because he categorically refuses to submit to conditions that he considers intolerable and also because he is confusedly convinced that his position is justified, or rather because, in his own mind, he thinks that he 'has the right to…'" (Camus, 2000, p. 1). The "yes" is ex-

pressed in recognition of that internal boundary. The Covid rebels were right in their assessment that the restrictions do indeed violate their rights. While civil rights were restricted, this was done in an effort to protect lives. When the rebels have enough of the oppression, their mind shifts. They do not merely wish for the oppression to stop. "He exceeds the bounds he fixed for his antagonist and now demands to be treated as an equal" (Camus, 2000, p. 2). So far, we can agree. The fact that oppression stops does not automatically mean that the rebel is respected. In the demand for respect, equality, and freedom, the rebels wager everything in their struggle for recognition, up to the point of being willing to die for it. The rebellion itself is not necessarily evil. What matters is the intention behind it. Do I rebel for the sake of others or just for myself? Camus thought that true rebellion is in the name of a value that is common to all of us. "We see that the affirmation implicit in every act of rebellion is extended to something that transcends the individual in so far as it withdraws him from his supposed solitude and provides him with a reason to act" (Camus, 2000, pp. 3–4).

Unlike other existentialists, Camus believed that there is some inherent human nature because we are all mortal creatures and death will come for us all. Revolt against destiny is part of the absurd reasoning. But how can we rebel against a virus? We revolt against the injustice of death.[9] That is why the spirit of rebellion is also awakened when we see others suffer. Their suffering becomes our suffering. Because of this, rebellion can actually be a positive force by illuminating an aspect of ourselves that we may not usually be aware of. Rebels against Covid-19 may feel that their struggle is in the name of others so that some normalcy returns to society. It is possible that Covid-19 is here to stay and will never be eradicated. This may very well be due to incoherent and chaotic responses by states and also because of those who refused to comply or grew annoyed with the never-ending restrictions.[10] But that does not mean that we should give up the struggle. There are people with respiratory problems, others who suffer from auto-immune diseases or from autism and, therefore cannot wear masks: they are the vulnerable. If we rebel, it is them we should have in mind.

Individuals with their misconception of freedom do believe that there is some objective truth but do not trust official institutions to be bearers of this truth. In their rebellion against the pandemic measures, they want their own freedom to be recognized, but they refuse to recognize the freedom and the rights of others. "While people are keen to dismiss the objective sphere as containing anything true, they assert the truth of their own individuality. A part of this involves the validation of this truth by others in the objective

[9] In *The Rebel,* Camus puts forth two forms of rebellion. Metaphysical rebellion is waged against the universal injustice of the human condition. Historical rebellion sees the rebel trying to fill the void left by the divine by means of political order.

[10] It is undeniable that the lockdowns did their share of harm, for example by forcing school-age children to stay at home.

sphere" (Stewart, 2021). Forgetting the impulse that gives birth to rebellion, the actions of the Covid deniers and rebels, lead to indirect murder or at least manslaughter. They may believe that they are in the right or that they are rebelling out of solidarity, but this does not change the results. The solidarity they may feel with others is not extended to all of humanity. "Man's solidarity is founded upon rebellion, and rebellion, in its turn, can only find its justification in this solidarity" (Camus, 2000, p. 10). The vulnerable groups essentially become a necessary sacrifice in the mad rush to reach a faster end to the pandemic. The absurd is destroyed, and life along with it.

Conclusion

The purpose of this investigation was to examine the motivation behind the rebellion against Covid-19 measures. The pandemic has created an atmosphere where Covid deniers feel that their freedom was unjustly taken from them. This was due to the collective experience of absurdity when statewide restrictions were imposed to combat the spread of the virus. We have presented a self-contradictory notion of freedom, one that the Covid rebels rallied behind. In some cases, the value of human life has revealed itself in outpourings of solidarity among people who refused to cause others to suffer. On the other hand, we saw people who were angry, tired, and desperate, in many cases rightfully so, and this dissatisfaction produced a rebellion that, despite its initial premise, evolved into a blind rush to return to the way things were before. And once the solidarity inherent in the revolt is forgotten, the rebel becomes "the doctrinaire revolutionary whose blind pursuit of utopia leads to a uniquely modern form of horror" (Foley, 2014, pp. 58-59). While the scope of this investigation is limited due to the complexity of the problems presented, our modest aim is to open a way to reckon with the tragic consequences of our modern crisis.

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Michal Kern: Nekonečnosť obrazu I.

Inside the European Submarine: Europe's Dreams of Autonomy and Global Perspectives

Adam Bence Balázs

Abstract

Dreams of autonomy are symptomatic of contemporary European politics and imagery. The independence from Russian gas, the EU member states' sovereignty against the continental construction, the isolation in a fortress from global migration processes, or the establishment of a European defense system emancipated from NATO: these vague claims portray an ideal state where the Old Continent could follow its own rules in multiple fields, regardless of the given context (of the global network of energy supplies and migration, the constructive framework of European integration, the North-Atlantic shield paradigm). These symptoms call for a diagnosis. These dreams of autonomy combine two contradictory ideas: isolation and centrality. Europe could be a powerful center yet isolated from global reality and its most pressing contemporary challenges. These toxic symptoms go against the contemporary challenge of being critical of Europe's real place and role in the global world. They have historical origins: the bygone rule of European empires when European centers felt free to appropriate and exploit the outside world in the name of the Western monopoly on power and copyright on modernity. In this inquiry, I will examine the core contradiction of European delusions regarding autonomy through literary criticism, focusing on a specific yet emblematic case: Roland Barthes' reading and interpretation of Jules Verne's popular fiction. The dream of autonomy is that of a submarine, like Captain Nemo's Nautilus, that would guarantee a safe technological bubble for Europeans and allow them to observe the outside world without ever really encountering it. I will show how Verne's popular literature and imagination are still at work because many Europeans fail to understand their actual location in the global world's geopolitical network. Finally, I will highlight that genuine autonomy refers first to autonomous thinking, to our ability to *read* history, politics, and geopolitics as *texts*, in other words, to mobilize our means and tools in textual understanding to overcome the pipedreams and empty promises of loose populist narratives.

Keywords: European autonomy; European imperialism; geopolitics; Roland Barthes; literary criticism; textual understanding; popular fiction; Jules Verne; autonomous thinking

Europe, like the whole of the globalizing world, has been in transition since the end of the Cold War. Within this complex shift, marked by the multi-scale process of globalization – from the intercontinental to the most local realities –, the place and role of the Old Continent are yet to be sketched and clarified. This complexity is easily legible in European politics and in the already worn-out phrases regarding the rise of populism. The present-day symptoms of anxiety are indeed highlighted but also instrumentalized by post-fascist movements and rhetoric.

A recurring theme in this troubled and anxious context is the harsh yet vague demand for autonomy, a symptomatic notion mixing elements of independence, sovereignty, separation, and isolation: independence from Russian gas; creation of a European army distinct from NATO; isolation of Europe from global migration processes; definition of national identities against ethnic diversity; separation of national sovereignty from the European project. At this initial stage of our inquiry, it makes sense to focus on the symptoms and their vagueness. What are the components of these European dreams of autonomy, and how can their hazardous political capital be overcome?

The mentioned cases have a common denominator: the assumption is that energy supplies, defense, identity, and sovereignty could work and exist autonomously, i.e., following their own rules, and regardless of the given context. The dream is that of a European model in advance of the rest of the world yet comfortably secured from it. It is the dream of an isolated center, as if Europeans wanted to live in Captain Nemo's Nautilus, the submarine designed by Jules Verne for the chosen few within the long-gone world of European empires in which the "West" had an undeniable monopoly on power and held the copyright on modernity. Contemporary dreams of autonomy are not one bit less fictional than the hi-tech machine from yesterday's popular literature. I will first examine the aforementioned literary source with the tools of literary criticism. Second, I will attempt to put a name on this symptomatic European dream and highlight the contradiction behind the idea of a secluded center. Third, I will investigate European politics and medium-term history to see what realistic form of autonomy might override the empty promises made in the name of a vague, island-like representation of the Old Continent.

Inside the Nautilus: Barthes' Rereading of Jules Verne

For a popular science fiction novel, Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Seas* has had a remarkable career in the field of literary criticism. As a childhood memory, this novel has inspired autobiographical approaches to literature (Gracq, 1985, p. 21). In the field of cultural and decolonial studies, it has been mentioned as symptomatic of Eurocentric conceptions of the world, to highlight the correlation between imperialism and the imperialist centers' seemingly apolitical literary production (Said, 1993, p. 187). At the crossroads of rekindled childhood memories and social-political criticism, and bringing—as could be expected—a touch of psychoanalysis, Roland Barthes (1991/1957) has pinpointed the basic bourgeois experience behind the reader's pleasure of traveling on an imaginary submarine like the Nautilus—a ship that has obviously been around the different seas of social and human sciences.

Barthes' approach combines the pleasure of rereading childhood classics with a harsh social criticism. The reader of his short essay on the Nautilus becomes somewhat torn between the nostalgic "pleasure of the text" (Barthes, 1973) and the critical blame it contains of bourgeois culture and society. The submarine turns into a mirror, both for the reader of the essay and, presumably, for its author.

Barthes characterizes Verne's novels as resulting in "a kind of self-sufficient cosmogony, which has its own categories, its own time, space, fulfillment and even existential principle" (Barthes, 1991, p. 65). To clarify this holistic dimension of Verne's oeuvre, I will rebuild Barthes' argumentation in three steps.

1. Barthes underlines Verne's "obsession for plenitude." Verne was like an "encyclopedist" who considered the world "finite, […] full of numerable and contiguous objects." He "never stopped putting a last touch to the world and furnishing it, making it full with an egg-like fullness" (p. 65). In other words, Verne's science fiction is more about ordering the long list of available objects than inventing or seeking new ones outside of a circle closed in advance.

Imagination is enclosed: for Barthes, Verne did not indulge in the "banal mystique of adventure" (p. 65) or "mystical plans to reach the infinite." On the contrary, "he constantly sought to shrink [the world], to populate it, to reduce it to a known and enclosed space" (p. 66). This approach might seem unexpected in the case of adventure novels: are not Verne's stories about wide, open spaces, with characters traveling the world and discovering its diversity by boat, submarine, or hot-air balloon, from the center of the Earth to the Moon?

What could be so extraordinary about these *Voyages Extraordinaires* since they lack the basic pattern of discovery? How come "[i]magination about

travel corresponds in Verne to an exploration of closure" (p. 65)? Barthes develops this idea to point in two directions: the experience of childhood and the appropriation of the material world by the bourgeoisie.

2. For Barthes, the "existential principle" of Verne's world has its roots in a basic childhood experience: the "compatibility between Verne and childhood" stems "from a common delight in the finite." Indeed—and most probably based on personal memories—the pleasure taken from enclosed spaces can be found "in children's passion for huts and tents: to enclose oneself and to settle, such is the existential dream of childhood and of Verne" (p. 65). Hence, the emphasis is not on the "twenty thousand leagues," but rather on the secured interior of the submarine. The natural wonders and dangerous creatures we see "under the seas" are mostly kept outside of this hut or tent-like experience. There is adventure and danger, but the comfortable circle always closes again after such hazardous encounters with the outside.

Barthes identifies a childhood experience behind the pleasure taken by the reader in Verne's universe and its "existential principle." According to the literary critique, Verne's *Mysterious Island*, where the reader again encounters Captain Nemo and his submarine, is an "almost perfect novel" where the "archetype of this [childhood] dream" can be identified: the island is a secluded topographical entity; in it, we locate a cave, close to the "hut" experience, and inside this cave, we again see the Nautilus with its hi-tech interior (p. 65). The perfection of the novel might result from the arrangement of the story as a series of concentric circles (island, cave, submarine) where, despite different sources of danger, the characters and the readers can count on enclosed security. That is the thrill of these narratives: danger observed from secured shelters. In other words, magic is inside; imagination is much more invested in the interior than in the fictitious creatures that stay outside.

However, this thrill exceeds mere nostalgia for childhood: in Barthes' opinion, the main characters of these adventures *are* children-like minds, even when they are "officially" adults in the narrative. Indeed, in the *Mysterious Island*, the "manchild re-invents the world, fills it, closes it, shuts himself up in it" (p. 65). Obviously, many adult characters in children's novels are, in reality, children with whom the underage reader can easily identify. Nevertheless, the "manchild" might betray, beyond personal nostalgia, a phenomenon of mental regression, or a refusal to grow up and step out in the real world, as if the Nautilus (the hut, the cave, the island) could guarantee a sustainable form of autonomy against the outside reality. As soon as we reflect on this cloistered thrill from a historical and geopolitical perspective (Europe in the world), the secluded security of the automatic machine turns into a risky pipedream of autonomy.

3. Bourgeois persons are children like everyone else. Barthes does not address the colonialist dimension of Verne's "existential principle"; discretely

revisiting his childhood, his critique focuses on a more domestic sociological phenomenon: the appropriation of the material world by the bourgeoisie.

By filling and securing it, the "manchild re-invents the world […] and crowns this encyclopedic effort with the bourgeois posture of appropriation." For Barthes, "huts and tents" get replaced, in the adult world, by this posture coming along with "slippers, pipe and fireside, while outside the storm, that is, the infinite, rages in vain" (p. 65). The thrill of childhood turns into the very definition of comfort.

For Barthes, Verne would indeed belong to this "progressive lineage of the bourgeoisie" (p. 65), appropriating the world based on the assumption that it is already filled. The aim is not to "enlarge the world by romantic ways of escape or mystical plans to reach the infinite: [the bourgeois] constantly [seeks] to shrink it, to populate it, to reduce it to a known and enclosed space, where man could subsequently live in comfort" (pp. 65–66). Comfort is thus thought of as a secluded pleasure.

In the already well-furnished world, the task is not to explore, but "to make catalogues, inventories, and to watch out for small unfilled corners in order to conjure up there, in close ranks, the creations and the instruments of men" (p. 65). The tendency to fill joins the obsession to quantify and instrumentalize what is given.

Given to whom? In fact, appropriation is thought, not unrelated to childhood and its island, as the opportunity and task of an unrivalled agent. Like the child under the tent, the bourgeois imagines himself to be alone in a world that would be, first and foremost, available for his kind: "the world can draw everything from itself; it needs, in order to exist, no one else than man" (p. 66). This man, however, is not a representative of mankind among many others, but the one who dictates the "existential principle" of his "egg-like" full world.

It is in this enclosed space that appropriation in the hands of the single agent turns into exploitation: the bourgeois "proclaims that nothing can escape man, that the world, even its most distant part, is like an object in his hand, and that, all told, property is but a dialectical moment in the general enslavement of Nature" (p. 65). The comfort of the submarine supposes both the security from and the availability of the infinite seas for exploitation. The Nautilus is not merely a secure shelter: it is also, if not first, the advanced center that organizes the outside world into a catalogue of items and resources at the disposal of the captain.

* *

Barthes' interpretation of Verne's fictional world duplicates the idea of finiteness. On the one hand, the securely enclosed space is the submarine itself. The Nautilus, he writes, "is the most desirable of all caves: the enjoyment of

being enclosed reaches its paroxysm when, from the bosom of this unbroken inwardness, it is possible to watch, through a large window-pane, the outside vagueness of the waters, and thus define, in a single act, the inside by means of its opposite" (pp. 66-67). Here, finiteness characterizes the tent (hut, cave, island) in opposition to the open outside world.

Yet this outside world is also considered as finite, which is the very condition of its appropriation and exploitation:

> Beyond the innumerable resources of science, Verne invented an excellent novelistic device in order to make more vivid this appropriation of the world: to pledge space by means of time, constantly to unite these two categories, to stake them on a single throw of the dice or a single impulse, which always come off. Even vicissitudes have the function of conferring on the world a sort of elastic state, making its limits more distant, then closer, blithely playing with cosmic distances, and mischievously testing the power of man over space and schedules. And on this planet which is triumphantly eaten by the Vernian hero, like a sort of bourgeois Antaeus whose nights are innocent and "restoring", there often loiters some desperado, a prey to remorse and spleen, a relic from an extinct Romantic age, who strikingly shows up by contrast the health of the true owners of the world, who have no other concern but to adapt as perfectly as possible to situations whose complexity, in no way metaphysical nor even ethical, quite simply springs from some provocative whim of geography (p. 66).

The world is available: traveling around it by train, submarine, or hot-air balloon certainly takes time, but this time is that of the exploration of a finite universe already considered as a well-defined property. The "Vernian hero," in full command of (his own) space and time, browses across *his* world to appropriate and "eat" it—in other words, to exploit it. Here and there, blasé outcasts show up, like perhaps Captain Nemo himself, who, in the original novel, is not European. However, the experience of the main characters (Professor Aronnax, the French scientist, his servant Conseil, and Ned Land, the Canadian harpooner) and, with them, the experience of the reader is that of a perfectly readable world, where such "desperados" only appear as exceptions confirming the rule of a safe and enclosed world at the disposal of modernity.

Dreams of Autonomy Between Fiction and Politics

I will now take stock of the main points addressed by Barthes in terms of autonomy to then see how these symptomatic perceptions in Verne's world might be at work in present-day Europe.

First, an idea of autonomy shows through the automatic wonders of hi-tech machines. Technological innovation, the perceived fact that man is in full command of machines that work alone, mirrors in Verne's fictional universe the unquestioned bet on progress. In a sense, the Nautilus, as a machine, is the symbol of an appropriated world where the same rules should apply: man is in control of the world he himself creates, develops, and orders. The autonomy of the automat reflects the autonomy of the innovator, namely the Western ruler. If the automaton works by itself following the laws of science, the innovator should be able to impose his own political laws everywhere his automatons can take him. Mobility, the very advantage Europeans had over other civilizations in the time of colonization, can be defined as "to pledge space by means of time."

Second, this mobility does not make the European leave his or her home. The Vernian hero is, so to speak, at home wherever he can go with his automaton, this symbol of home. Whether a submarine or, perhaps even more emblematically, a "steam house," home is wherever the colonizer can build up his tent or hut, secured from the outside reality by constructions that follow his own rules. What truly confers "on the world a sort of elastic state" is this autonomy of the European home. The idea that perhaps one should not necessarily feel at home wherever one goes would be the antithesis of this colonialist conception. Comfort is opposed to fear and, as a matter of fact, there is no serious source of fear in Verne's novels beyond the necessary adventurous sequences: the legal framework of the highly mobile European home is hardly ever called into question. No matter how fast and performative, this image of home betrays, at the end of the day, an immobile conception of the world. "Home" is the center, wherever the autonomous tent is pitched in the "elastic" world.

Third, the appropriation and the exploitation of the world supposes a solitary (undisturbed) agent. Indeed, if man was not alone in the world, and if he—the bourgeois or the colonizer—had to consider a framework with different sets of rules, the very idea of free appropriation would become impossible. In other words, what is reflected in Verne's stories, in a symptomatic rather than a pretentious way, is that the "world-eating" hero is indeed a "manchild," a mentally regressive individual who cannot accept that rules other than those contained in his purportedly self-sufficient framework might apply outside of the tent. The manchild is at the center of its own world, secluded from the rules that might apply to it.

The common denominator of these three sets of comments is a combined idea of centrality and isolation. Technological innovation is at the center of attention, its autonomy mirrors the superiority of its engineer, whose own rules should apply to wherever this superior mobility could take him. From this point of view, Captain Nemo is an ambiguous character, representing both the autonomy of the outcast and the similarly arbitrary rule of the civilization represented by the other main characters.

Literary criticism examining Verne is certainly tainted with childhood nostalgia. The "manchild" is also Verne's adult re-reader, the child in us. The ideal combination of centrality and seclusion is indeed tempting, hence probably the comfort and pleasure of reading and rereading Verne's novels. Yet, as Barthes shows through social criticism, there is more to these temptations of our imagination than thrilling entertainment.

In Barthes' view, the craving for centrality *and* security is symptomatic of a certain social class, the bourgeoisie. In my view and this through Barthes' hint at the "general enslavement of Nature," the Nautilus might be symptomatic of a more toxic form and object of nostalgia: a craving for different epochs of the European past: the centrality of the Old Continent in the time of colonial empires *and* the comfortable security of Western Europe during the Cold War.

Instead of accusing Verne, his popular novels, and his readers of naivety, I will rather consider how these points on technological superiority, elastic home and regressive rule translate into our contemporary delusions regarding Europe's place and role in the global world. These delusions were already symptomatic of Eurocentrism when Verne published his novels. However, what matters here is the way these symptoms are still ours, in the present-day geopolitical state of global transition.

In fact, it is our ability to critically reread the classics of our own culture (or childhood) and constructively reflect, with them, on our most contemporary challenges, that might lead to a certain degree of autonomous thinking to counter and overcome dreams of European autonomy in an interdependent world where all continents are, so to speak, supposed to be on the same ship.

The European Submarine in the 21st Century

Talking about ships, the one carrying the West's monopoly on power has sailed. According to a deliberately provocative essay, the "West has lost it" (Mahbubani, 2018). Following a short couple of centuries during which science, technology, and the resulting mobility made the West the center of the world, older centers at the other end of the Silk Road – first of all China and India, but now also Indonesia – emerged *again* to occupy the places they had

temporarily lost. The author, Kishore Mahbubani, a former UN diplomat from Singapore uses a questionable approach and methodology to put forward the idea that Western supremacy was nothing but a short-term "parenthesis," and even an "aberration" in world history (p. 12). In this reading, the Nautilus would be the symbol of an intermediary – or, in a more provocative way, almost a "medieval" period.

The question is not the Western or European reader's opinion about an essay that was deliberately meant to be a provocation (for the West, for the International Liberal Order, and for European modernity). The idea would rather be to see to what extent Europeans are able to decenter their home on the map and to consider, at least for the time of a self-critical sequence of reflection, that they are no longer at the center of the map and of global attention.

Autonomous thinking might commence with the ability to play with such a provocative idea: the West has lost it. Hubert Védrine nuances the provocation, suggesting that the geopolitical players behind the somewhat vague label of "the West" are still powerful, but that the monopoly is gone (Védrine, 2021, pp. 266–267). Europe, especially, is not the center it used to be, but one of many ships sailing somewhere on the map. The question is where it is, how to orient ourselves, and what relations to strengthen in an era of global neighborhood. The ability to read and accept such opinions does not mean agreeing with them or showing spontaneous and unreflected contempt for the Old Continent, but showing curiosity for what is outside the submarine, and not only through its protecting "window-panes."

For a reason that is correlated with the loss of the Western monopoly on power—the loss of the West's copyright on modernity—the Nautilus no longer looks so fancy or shiny. Almost the whole world is now modern. Except for shrinking non-modern groups, modern material civilization has become a shared standard on a global scale. It is vital to grasp the anthropological dimension of these recent changes.

As Claude Lévi-Strauss has highlighted, the danger and deadlock of a globally shared modern civilization are that its different parts start to look for differences within this framework of uniformity. Such differences are potentially even more violent than those at work in a "clash of civilizations" type of narrative (Lévi-Strauss, 2011, p. 138). The difference between Europe and other corners of the modern world, the hazardous clash of identitarian fairy tales within a shared global plot: once again, and looking beyond short-term politics, history and anthropology call for a textual understanding. The reader can be autonomous in a way a continent or a "civilization" cannot. From an anthropological point of view, these have lost their autonomy in the longer term, along with the emergence of modernity (Lévi-Strauss, 2011, p. 36).

Dreams of autonomy are tempting in an age of interconnectedness. After all, is not autonomy the opposite of interdependence? Let us briefly examine this latter concept. On the one hand, interdependence is, economically speaking, "blatant" (Védrine, 2021, p. 241). The last forty years have been characterized by an optimistic approach to the iconic global plane and the appraisal of "globalized value chains." However, Védrine continues, if "almost all peoples, states, economies, cultures, individuals have become interdependent and interwoven, then can we still talk about independence, national, European, or otherwise? Of sovereignty?" (pp. 241–242).

It is crucial to put some order in the terminology in order to distinguish between pipedreams of independence and adequate geopolitical room for maneuver. According to Védrine, autonomy is first the ability to think autonomously (a classic philosophical idea of *courage* that deserves revisiting in troubled times of transition and moments of danger). Autonomous thinking comes with the possibility of making decisions with "freely chosen partners." That is almost a privilege if we look at how dependent the majority of the world actually is: "the means to intimidate, to threaten, to manipulate, to sanction, to boycott, to interfere, to use lobbies and diasporas are unequally distributed" in the world (p. 242).

Independence is a pipedream, but interdependence has also been put to the test. The Covid pandemic has revealed the fragility of interdependent actors in international politics (p. 242). More recently, the Russian aggression of Ukraine has emphasized and abused this inherent fragility. Indeed, well-functioning interdependence supposes approximately equal powers and values. If one side is keen on protecting its population while the other is much more careless, interdependence quickly turns into a toxic mutual annoyance. Interdependence would suppose a symmetrical relationship: Europe's weakness (lack of sufficient energy resources) is Russia's power; Russia's weakness (dependence on exporting energy resources) is Europe's power. Such symmetry would suppose comparable respect of the citizens' needs and rights. The European submarine can count on the Northern Asian – i.e., Russian – fuel if Northern Asia seeks to guarantee a similar level of welfare to its population. If the passengers of the European submarine are used to well-established human rights and cannot even comprehend how Northern Asia's population can suffer major violations of basic rights, interdependence gets abused and turns into a cynical tool for blackmailing.

Independence from Northern Asian gas is, however, unsustainable beyond short-term symbolic acts. The European submarine can celebrate its autonomy until it runs out of fuel. According to Védrine, the idea is instead to multiply sources of supply and, somewhat vaguely, "not to be (too) dependent" (2021, p. 435). What matters is to distinguish between notions that might otherwise turn the symbol of autonomy into a conceptual short-circuit: independence, sovereignty, and autonomy.

Postwar European history has blurred these distinctions. A more critical look at the last seven decades should contribute to deconstructing the pipe-dream of a European Nautilus that would be both central and secluded from the rest of the world, and help us see that autonomy is, first and foremost, a virtue of reason and understanding.

European construction as we know it is a postwar process and narrative. The six founding members of the community could not efficiently have joined forces without substantial transatlantic support, both financially speaking (the Marshall Plan, see Steil, 2018) and in terms of US "mentoring" of postwar Europe (Védrine, 2021, p. 168). The Western part of Europe could only develop in the geopolitical framework of the Cold War, in a specific context where the two superpowers met in the middle of the Old Continent.

This allowed, for a couple of decades, the privilege of an "end of history" period (although Francis Fukuyama coined the phrase in 1989, the experience already applied to postwar Europe) where Western Europeans did not have to care about their defense—and could easily forget about their dependence on the North-Atlantic military shield. In this specific geopolitical context, a part of Europe could consider, without contradiction but without guarantees for the longer term, a pleasant combination of centrality as a patchwork of democratic welfare models and security (guaranteed by the transatlantic neighbor).

This form of autonomy lasted until the end of the bipolar world order. For three decades, and despite significant warnings, Europe enjoyed the impression that it could keep on living in the Nautilus, observe the horrors of the outside world through the thick window, and claim to be a model without a defense system that would not depend entirely on the US. The leading idea of European *unification* might have blurred the fact that *strong* and *united* are not interchangeable concepts.

The violent breakup of Yugoslavia—a European conflict that Europe could not handle—was a first warning. The large-scale influx of asylum-seekers to the EU's borders in 2015 brought into the limelight the blatant contradiction of being a more than attractive model for the "rest of the world" while, at the same time, being isolated from it. This contradiction has resulted in the accelerated rise of post-fascist movements and voices (Tamás, 2021, pp. 375–392). These have two common denominators: a vague demand for national sovereignty in the face of the European construction perceived as an authoritarian center, and the deliberate mongering of fear and anxiety with the promise of a secured submarine.

Despite the clashes resulting from the delusional windmill fight of Viktor Orbán's Hungary against "Brussels" as an imperial center, this cynical and opportunistic opposition to European institutions contributes to an idea shared by the Hungarian leader's European opponents: the idea that the EU is a center. National sovereignty and independence, inherited on the

East-Central periphery from the age of Romanticism along with anti-Western resentment, might be more harmful on the side of the all-European illusion of the Old Continent being "central" than on the side of technically weakening institutions. What undermines European credibility on the global stage is the EU's lack of autonomy from its own member states. It cannot decide on its own foreign political agenda and is doomed to a lack of perspectives if it comes to a standstill when faced with the problems it has created for itself—"autonomously," without foreign help or threat.

Fearmongering, or the deliberate use of anxiety in these troubled times of transition, and tumultuous present-day challenges, bring us back to 19th-century fiction. Europe, as a fortress at the very center of the global map but well isolated from it, is closer to Jules Verne's naïve imagination than any geopolitical reality. Fear and anxiety have real sources; the feelings in themselves are legitimate and understandable. They also have long-term origins (Duby, 2020). Post-fascist voices relentlessly rekindle these feelings in the name of a continental, macro-regional, or national specificity within the global world and the emergency to defend them. Such empty identitarian promises of security go against the only form of autonomy we can name without vagueness: that of thinking, i.e., autonomy as a means of orientation. Geopolitically, the aim is to develop multilateralism while remaining keen on choosing our closest allies (in this sense, there is no need to break free from military dependence on the U.S., but should nevertheless motivate Europeans to keep an eye on how close, how powerful, and how reliable the transatlantic neighbor is in this early 21st century). Multilateralism without allies sharing our values and principles is a slippery slope towards dependence and vassalage—the Hungarian deadlock being a useful demonstration of this.

The autonomy of a fictional submarine remains tempting. It is crucial to see that this temptation is more closely connected to 19th-century popular literature than it is a realistic option for the Old Continent in the 21st century. Nevertheless, the secluded center and its artificial adventures sound promising:

> (T)he ship may well be a symbol for departure; it is, at a deeper level, the emblem of closure. An inclination for ships always means the joy of perfectly enclosing oneself, of having at hand the greatest possible number of objects, and having at one's disposal an absolutely finite space. To like ships is first and foremost to like a house, a superlative one since it is unremittingly closed, and not at all vague sailings into the unknown: a ship is a habitat before being a means of transport. And sure enough, all the ships in Jules Verne are perfect cubby-holes, and the vastness of their circumnavigation further increases the bliss of their closure, the perfection of their inner humanity. (Barthes, 1972, p. 66)

The words to emphasize are probably: "in Jules Verne." The temptation can be deconstructed through textual understanding, the main guarantee for autonomous thinking in contrast with the delusions of automatic opinions. Our understanding of politics, history, and anthropology is, first and foremost, textual. The difference between reality and fiction, a substantial strategy and an empty promise, a feeling and a concept, an entertaining illustration and a convincing example – all depend on our ability to read written lines and between them. What we can learn from reading Jules Verne (and his professional readers like Roland Barthes) is how to make such distinctions and then how to make meaningful choices regarding the place and role of Europe in the global world.

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