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CHARITY IN JOHN OF SALISBURY'S *POLICRATICUS*

OANA-CORINA FILIP*

ABSTRACT. *Charity in John of Salisbury's Policraticus.* In the *Policraticus*, charity is used synonymously to wisdom. Charity accounts for the deeply social character of John of Salisbury's political philosophy. Together with wisdom it rests at the core of the treatise, tying together all the subtopics into one cohesive system. Charity is essential for one to truly be a philosopher. In opposition to avarice, it involves the detachment from earthly goods and the manifested love towards one's peers. In addition, it has a regulatory function, being the origin of all virtues.

Keywords: *John of Salisbury, Policraticus, charity, wisdom, Political Philosophy*

Introduction

At a first glance, charity seems to be one of the topics of secondary importance tackled within the *Policraticus*, with few passages explicitly referring to it. However, when analyzing the text in greater depth, it becomes evident that charity lays at the core of John of Salisbury's work, together with reason. In fact, the social character of the treatise is entirely based upon John's approach of the concept of charity.

Charity versus Avarice

Firstly, charity unveils itself in John of Salisbury's *Policraticus* in opposition to avarice. Avarice is treated extensively within the seventh book of the *Policraticus*. It appears as an inversion in the balance between body and soul. Because the human body is matter and the soul is form, within the normal paradigm form needs to rule matter, not the other way around. It is this exact reversal which takes place in the case of avarice.

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It is agreed that avarice is not only to be avoided but detested, particularly from the fact that it removes and sequesters its votaries far from the celestial, from association with divinity and the enjoyment of celestial beatitude. The nearer all things are to the celestial the less covetous and grasping they are. The winged creatures of the heaven neither sow nor do they reap nor spin nor gather into barns nor pile up stores, but disregard all solicitude for the morrow. On the other hand mice and creeping things store up for the future, and they are said to be the generations for whom the earth is food; they live on the same sparingly, fearing that someday, even that earth may fail them into which they themselves none the less will undoubtedly be resolved.¹

Thus, through greed, man strays away from his divine essence, reducing the difference between him and the rest of earthly creatures. At the same time, avarice impairs man's way to his ultimate purpose, salvation. In the case of salvation, man reunites under spiritual form with God. The clinginess to material goods impedes the development of man's spiritual nature. Spiritual evolution makes one both worthy of appearing in the presence of the Creator and capable of connecting with Him.

The excessive attachment to earthly goods becomes more obvious when taking into account that avarice does not limit itself to the love of money, but extends to the love for goods which can be accommodated by money:

One not falling victim to the love of money is at times conquered by greed for its trappings. Horses, apparel, spurred falcons, hunting dogs, numerous herds of cattle and smaller beasts, and the varied furniture of the world (since it exceeds human capacity to enumerate each) are preferred to money by many, and they exhaust the strength of their whole being in acquiring and keeping these possessions.²

¹ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Oxonii, 1909, ed. Webb, Book VII, ch. XVI "Auaritiam uel ex eo non modo fugiendam sed detestandam constat quod a celestibus procul sectatores suos, a consortio diuinitatis et usu celestis beatitudinis, remouet et elongat. Omnia siquidem, quo celestibus uiciniora sunt, minus cupiunt et congregant pauciora. Volatilia celi neque serunt neque metunt neque nent neque congregant in horreis nec penum construunt sed omnem excludunt sollicitudinem crastini. E contra mures et reptilia congerunt in futurum; et generationes perhibentur esse quibus terra est in cibum; et eodem parce uiuunt, timentes ne quando eis terra deficiat, in quam tamen ipsae proculdubio resoluentur.", transl. Joseph B. Pike.

² John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Oxonii, 1909, ed. Webb, Book VII, ch. XVI "et quem non subigit amor pecuniae, interdum superat cupiditas specierum. Equos, uestes, aues armatas, uenaticos canes, numerosos greges armentorum et pecorum, et uariam mundi supellectilem (quoniam per singula currere uircs humanas excedit) plerique pecuniae praeferimt et totius hominis uires exhauriunt in adquirendis his aut tenendis.", transl. Joseph B. Pike.

As man's actions are determined by his relation to material goods, they become a purpose in themselves, not a means for supporting the soul. Furthermore, the search for material goods goes beyond natural needs, since nature is the will of God, in John's view, and, as a result, its laws reinforce the dominance of form over matter. "For the frenzy of avarice in the abstract is based upon two considerations: that it covets to excess the possessions of others or guards its own too tenaciously; and that he who seeks to excess what he lacks, makes demands beyond the law of necessity or utility."³ The resulting image of the greedy man is of one going against nature at multiple levels. On the one hand, the miser seeks material gain beyond necessity, becoming even lower than some animals, causing himself even more harm, as his excess often entails other vices, such as gluttony, debauchery etc. On the other hand, he goes against his spiritual nature, replacing the soul's craving for the divine with that for the material:

Greater indeed is the greed of the mind than that of the body; and unless God pours in his being, it can never be satisfied; for since the element of spirit in virtue of its nature contains corporeal matter in such a manner that it is itself filled by no amount of matter, and since one object having taken possession of its own space does not prevent another from being situated in space (the more received, for the more is there room), it is as clear as day that a corporeal object cannot fill soul, which is spirit. The whole universe is narrow as compared to the quantity of soul.⁴

The soul's natural longing for God is willingly ignored by the avaricious, demonstrating folly. This idea is reinforced by the fact that God is the truth, therefore the source of all true knowledge. Hence he who puts matter before the source of knowledge is a fool. Such a fool is not the one unaware of divine commandments and the righteous balance between form and matter, but the one who is aware of them and decides to defy them, expecting no negative consequences:

³ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Oxonii, 1909, ed. Webb, Book VII, ch. XVI "Nam in his duobus articulis furor totius auaritiaie constat quod immoderatus appetit aliena aut sua tenacius seruat; et quidem immoderatus appetit quisquis quod deest, legem necessitatis excedens et usus, exposcit.", transl. Joseph B. Pike.

⁴ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Oxonii, 1909, ed. Webb, Book VII, ch. XVI "Maior enim est hiatus mentis quam corporis; et, nisi seipsum Deus infundat, omnino nequit impleri. Nam, cum natura spiritualis uirtute propria sic corporalia comprehendat ut nulla quantitate distendatur, nec res una loco praeoccupato alterius impedimento sit quominus illa comprehendatur, et quo plura concipiuntur, eo pluribus loeus est, luce clarius est quia res corporalis animam, quae spiritus est, implere non potest; totus enim mundus angustus est ad animae quantitatem.", transl. John Dickinson.

Folly is associated with it as its fellow, persuading men to love and seek for that which cannot be retained; and folly is the blameworthy ignorance of those things which it is our duty to know. So the book of the great Augustine on Free Will describes it. For if a man does not know that which it is not possible for him to know, this is not set down to the account of folly; but when he is in bondage to ignorance of himself, then he passes over into the ranks of fools. If he prefers ends which are patently inferior to those which are of greater value, he judges foolishly; if, pursuing the vices, he chooses the worse for the better part, he is condemned to the ill-repute of folly; if his error was caused by cupidity, a many-forked road of destruction yawns before him, since error leads a man not to know the right end to pursue, and while he wanders in the wilderness, the furnace of cupidity burns him with its fires from within. And yet the words of the unjust still prevail, and man, ignorant of the knowledge which belongs to him, and refusing to bear the yoke of the obedience which he owes, aspires to a kind of fictitious liberty, vainly imagining that he can live without fear and do with impunity whatsoever pleases him, and somehow be straightway like unto God; not, however, that he desires to imitate the divine goodness, but rather seeks to incline God to favor his wickedness by granting him immunity from punishment for his evil deeds.⁵

Moreover, folly is not only exhibited through the miser's poor prioritization of what should be sought, but also through his unawareness that material things derive from and are obtained only through the celestial ones. Greed makes one ignorant of the frailty of material things, especially in comparison to eternal life, gained only through a detachment from earthly life belongings: "To come to the point; whatever charity pays out will be paid back by the Lord; what vanity spends, vanishes."⁶ By contrast, charity is an expression of virtue considered at the expense of material gain. It depicts the normal balance between form and matter, where

⁵ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Oxonii, 1909, ed. Webb, Book VII, ch. XVII "Sociatur ei stultitia comes, suadens id amari et quaeri quod teneri non potest; et est stultitia eorum quae scienda sunt uitiosa ignorantia. Sic eam liber magni Augustini de Libero Arbitrio pingit. Si enim nesciatur quod sciri non potest, in nomen stultitiae minime cadit; at, cum sui ignorantia quis tenetur, transit ad stultos. Si in bonis quae minora patenter sunt maioribus praefert, stulte iudicat; si uitia sequens partem suam deteriorem faciat, stultitiae maledictione dampnatur; si ergo error fuerit cupiditate succensus, praecipitii multiplex uia patet, cum ab errore sit ut homo quid sit sequendum ignoret et ipsum in inuio abeuntem fomax cupiditatis inflammet. Et quidem adhuc praeualent uerba iniquorum, dum homo, propriae cognitionis ignarus et debitae subiunctionis detrectans iugum, fictitiam quandam affectat libertatem ut possit uiuere sine metu et impune quod uoluerit facere et quodammodo iam esse sicut Deus; non tamen quod diuinam uelit imitari bonitatem, sed Deum dando impunitatem malis ad suam uult malitiam inclinari.", transl. Joseph B. Pike.

⁶ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Oxonii, 1909, ed. Webb, Book VIII, ch. IV "Quicquid caritas erogatur, remuneratur a Domino; quod dispensat uanitas, euanescit.", transl. Joseph B. Pike.

the latter is subjected to and acts only as a mean for the former. Within the same logic, practicing charity is rewarded by God with eternal life, while avarice is sanctioned. Man moves between these two types of consequences in a conscientious manner, since he chooses to focus his attention on one to the detriment of the other, seeking either the material or the spiritual.

Holy Scripture specifies that two passions have existed in man from the beginning, to wit the craving for justice and the craving for self-advancement. [...] The love of justice therefore, since it is a soldier in the service of charity, seeks the things that are of God, while devotion to self-interest is occupied with its own advancement and relegates the things that are of God and of one's neighbor to second place.⁷

The free choice between these two tendencies permits one to go as far as judging individual character based upon it, especially since it defines one's relation to peers.

Character has its origin in these two sources: good, if one does for another what he would have another do for himself and refrains from imposing upon another what he would not wish another to impose upon himself; bad, if one harms another or does not help him when he has the power. Instances of both types are numerous. From the first originate love of liberty, of country, and ultimately of those outside its bounds. For he who loves himself and his country cannot fail to love liberty, and in due course whosoever truly loves his neighbor will love him outside this circle since consistent charity demands it.⁸

Man's relation to others defines his relation to God, because "Those who say, "I love God," and hate their brothers and sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also."⁹ Moreover, the substitution between man's relation to God and the relation to his peers is explicitly mentioned in the New Testament, as part of the motivation for the Final Judgement:

⁷ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Oxonii, 1909, ed. Webb, Book VIII, ch. V "Duos quidem affectus in homine ab initio extitisse sacrae Scripturae designat auctoritas, appetitum scilicet iusti et commodi appetitum. [...] Alter ergo istorum, quoniam militat caritati, quaerit quae Dei sunt; alter in propria utilitate uersatur, postponens quae Dei sunt aut proximorum.", transl. Joseph B. Pike.

⁸ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Oxonii, 1909, ed. Webb, Book VIII, ch. V "Ab hoc duplici fonte mores oriuntur. Recti quidem, si faciat quis alii quod sibi uult fieri et ab eo absteineat alii inferendo quod sibi nollet ab alio irrogari; distorti uero, si quis alium ledat uel non prosit, cum possit, a quae quidem utrimque multipliciter fiunt. A priori quidem amor libertatis, amor patriae, et tandem extraneorum amor. Nam libertatem non amare non potest qui se ipsum et patriam amat et in gradu suo extraneum quicumque sincera caritate diligit proximum; siquidem in eo consistit caritas ordinata.", transl. Joseph B. Pike.

⁹ 1 John 4:20-21.

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. And all the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.' Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' Then they will also answer, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?' Then he will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.¹⁰

It can be observed that the choice between charity and avarice is in fact a choice between eternal life and eternal damnation. The love for one's peers measured through its manifestation into deeds is not optional for Christians and implicitly for citizens. It results that a second enemy to charity, and implicitly to society, is envy:

There is nothing that is more inimical to charity than the poison of envy. Envy is, as philosophers agree, the moroseness that originates at sight of the prosperity of another. If however one is rendered morose by the sight of the prosperity of a tyrant or wicked citizen, he is by no means disfigured by the stain of envy; for it is abhorrent even to the good to see success crown the efforts of those who are thought to be intent on evil to the destruction of the many. If therefore jealousy is aroused by the success of others it is self-evident that it is far removed from charity, which seeks not its own but its neighbors' good.¹¹

¹⁰ Matthew 25:31-46.

¹¹ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Oxonii, 1909, ed. Webb, Book VII, ch. XXIV "Plane nichil est quod magis caritatem impugnet quam uenenum inuidiae. Est autem inuidia, ut philosophis placuit, tristitia ex apparenti prosperitate alicuius initium (habens). Si enim de tiranni uel peruersi cuius apparenti quis prosperitate tristatur, nequaquam deturpatur inuidiae macula. Nam et bonis displicet, cum in

It becomes more evident that charity goes hand in hand with the love of justice, since sadness at the sight of a tyrant's prosperity is not deemed to go against it. Consequently, charity is compulsory for the citizen, but it is conditioned by the moral stance of one's peers.

Charity as Wisdom

In the *Policraticus* John of Salisbury does not provide a definition per se of charity, however he explicitly correlates it with wisdom:

Fear, then, is the beginning, and in fear is the increase; and the apex of all the virtues, whether you call it charity or wisdom, is not far removed from fear. Distinguish, however, servile from filial fear; the former is the beginning, the latter the achievement and perfection, of wisdom. In whatever manner the pomp of words clothes its vanity, the truth is that wisdom begins in fear, and that the holy fear of the Lord endureth forever. And so the root remains, and, drawing strength from increments of grace, puts forth into the branches of the virtues, until its vital force issues finally in the fruit of perfected charity, which no longer acts under the stimulus of penalties; for in charity there is no terror or servile fear, which acts by penalties, but rather it is the mark of this holy fear that it continually performs good works, and, clinging to justice, holds it fast. Terror then is seen to pass away, while grace grows into virtue; because now there is no servile fear, but instead filial affection, which instigates to reverence and good works.¹²

Charity and wisdom are used interchangeably, both originating in the fear of God, but being the ultimate results of the perfected state of this fear. For this reason, in John of Salisbury's view, one cannot truly become a philosopher in the absence

perniciem multorum succedit his qui ad mala creduntur proniores. Si ergo liuor bonis affligitur alienis, planum est quod a caritate plurimum distat quae sua non quaerit sed proximorum.", transl. Joseph B. Pike.

¹² John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Oxonii, 1909, ed. Webb, Book V, ch. IX "Timor ergo initium et in timore processus est et omnium uirtutum culmen, siue illud caritatem siue sapientiam dicas, non usquequaque alienum est a timore. A filiali seruillem diuide; in hoc initium, in illo sapientiae constitue perfectionem. Quocumque modo se luxus uerborum extollat, uerum est quia sapientia initiatur in timore et quod sanctus timor Domini permanet in seculum seculi. Manet itaque radix et incrementis gratiae inualescens in ramos uirtutum proficit, et uis eius ad fructum perfectae caritatis usque pertingit, quae penarum nescit aculeos, cum non sit metus in caritate, qui penam habet, et sit timoris indicium quod bona opera iugiter facit et iustitiae continens eandem apprehendit. Metus ergo uidetur cedere, dum gratia proficit ad uirtutem; quia iam non timet seruiliter qui filiali affectu ad reuerentiam et bona opera incitatur.", transl. John Dickinson.

of practicing charity “Whoever then by the agency of philosophy acquires or spreads charity has attained his aim as a philosopher. Consequently, this is the true and unvarying rule of philosophers, that each one busy himself in all that he reads or learns, does, or abstains from doing, with advancing the cause of charity.” The reasoning behind the necessity of practicing charity in order to be considered a philosopher comes from the fact that, for John of Salisbury, philosophy is the love of wisdom, therefore philosophy is the love of God, since God is the unique source of true wisdom. At the same time, God is not only the truth, but also “God is love”.¹³ Charity is the expression of love, as it should be manifested both in relation to God and in relation to other people.

So also the Incarnate Wisdom of God, though He limits many things, enjoins that love for God be limitless; except that this mode is prescribed for charity, that God be loved with love that has no limits; for Jesus said “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” He likewise had said before “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul and with thy whole mind and with thy whole strength.”¹⁴

Charity should be limitless, just like man’s love towards God. This reinforces the idea that one’s relation to peers acts as a substitute in the earthly life for one’s relation to God.

In addition, charity, together with the detachment from the noise of the mob, is shown as the way for man to appear undefiled before God at the final judgement “Yet I do know the rule of truth by which I am convinced that religion clean and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their tribulations and to keep oneself unpolluted by the world. This rule applies to all laymen as well, and happy they if they faithfully keep it.”¹⁵ In this sense, the image of the monk serves as an example of the wise man, detached from earthly matters, but applying charity in his life. In fact, charity is the only reason for which the monk is saddened, just like the angels, empathizing with the rest of humanity

¹³ 1 John 4:8.

¹⁴ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Oxonii, 1909, ed. Webb, Book VII, ch. XI “Sic et incarnata Dei Sapientia, cum multis praescribat modum, Deum sine modo praecipit diligendum; nisi quia caritati modus ille praescribitur ut Deus sine termino amoris diligatur. Qui enim ait: Diliges proximum tuum sicut te ipsum, idem praemisit: Diliges Dominum Deum tuum ex toto corde tuo, ex tota anima tua, ex tota mente tua et ex omnibus uiribus tuis.”, transl. Joseph B. Pike.

¹⁵ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Oxonii, 1909, ed. Webb, Book VII, ch. XXIII “Noui tamen regulam ueritatis qua michi constat quia religio munda et immaculata apud Deum et Patrem haec est, uisitare pupillos et uiduas in tribulatione eorum et immaculatum se custodire ab hoc seculo. Haec autem politicorum ao omnium est; et bene cum istis agitur, si eam fideliter seruant”, transl. Joseph B. Pike.

"If there is aught which seems to sadden them, it is to be attributed to their affection for their brethren, since even the angels in heaven somehow take compassion upon our lapses, and rejoice together over a single sinner brought to repentance."¹⁶

John's approach is an exhaustive use of God's definitions, which link together the entire *Policraticus*. God is reason and God is love, therefore reason is interchangeable with love in John's philosophy. As a result, the reason/love duo is the driving force of the wise man's life and consequently of the ideal human community. It is around this conceptual pair that all the other subjects of the *Policraticus* gravitate, exploiting their multiple facets, in an attempt to provide a practical guide of good living, both for the individual and for society, so as to achieve salvation as the ultimate goal.

Charity as Social Wisdom

The correlation between charity and wisdom, taken to the degree that the two are interchangeable from John of Salisbury's perspective, has a major impact when considering his political theory. For John, politics, like all human affairs, need to be guided by reason, since God is "indisputably a God of knowledge".¹⁷ Reason is the distinguishing criterion between vice and virtue. Its use separates the frivolous from the philosophers. Reason is the common faculty between man and God, functioning as a permanent connection between the two. In addition, it is from divine reason that clerical law springs, and from the latter, in turn, lay law springs. When lay law goes against clerical law, it strays away from divine wisdom and becomes null. Those who attempt to change lay laws so as to go against the clerical one are to be considered tyrants. It is charity seen as wisdom which explains the profound social nature of John's political philosophy, in which all parts of the body politic need to be taken care of "the more humble elements of the commonwealth should receive proportionately greater care and attention from those in higher station as part of their public duty."¹⁸

Being synonymous to wisdom, charity too has a regulatory function. Irene O'Daly examines John of Salisbury's concept of charity when discussing the system of duties within the commonwealth. She traces the roots of John's use of charity in a political context back to Augustine:

¹⁶ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Oxonii, 1909, ed. Webb, Book VII, ch. XXI "Si quid autem est quod eos contristare uideatur, ad caritatem fraternam referendum est, quia et in celis angeli nostris quodammodo lapsibus compatiuntur et super uno peccatore penitentiam agente congaudent.", transl. John Dickinson.

¹⁷ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Brepols 1993, ed. Keats-Rohan, Book II, ch. XXVII "procul dubio scientiarum Dominus est", transl. Joseph B. Pike.

¹⁸ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Oxonii, 1909, ed. Webb, Book VI, ch. XXV "quae in re publica humiliora sunt, maiorum officio diligentius conseruentur.", transl. John Dickinson.

The term '*caritas ordinata*' was coined by Augustine in *De doctrina christiana*, and derived from Song of Songs 2:4, '*ordinavit in me caritatem*'. In 1.3–40 of *De doctrina christiana*, Augustine discusses how one can 'use' other people. They are correctly used when they are loved for God's sake, but incorrectly used when exploited for earthly or temporal ends. Correct use requires '*caritas ordinata*', that is, love that is properly directed towards appropriate ends. Written in the mid-twelfth century, the *Summa decretorum* of Rufinus suggested that proximity, extending from the familial circle to incorporate strangers, was a guide to the appropriate exercise of charity. Rufinus described this system of discrimination as '*caritas ordinata*'. Therefore, the notion of charity as a duty-system constructed on the basis of associative bonds was a familiar idea in medieval Christian writings. Indeed, the *Glossa ordinaria* on the *Decretum* would propose a hybrid scale of merit based in part on one's virtue and in part on one's relational proximity to the giver. These examples demonstrate that in Christianising Stoic principles governing the performance of duties, John was inspired by contemporary discourse on Christian *caritas*. Like Augustine, John sees justice as defined not only in Ciceronian terms of giving to each their due, but also as founded on the Christological precept of not doing to one's neighbor what one would not have done to oneself.¹⁹

While Augustine's origin of the term hints at the afore mentioned oscillation between man's love of earthly goods and his love for God, in the *Policraticus* one's fellows are depicted more as objects of love, rather than means to manifest one's love. The difference is subtle, but it shifts the emphasis from the act of love for its own sake to the ones love needs to be manifested upon. Going further, the influence of Rufinus, with meritocracy involved in choosing the objects of charity, is clearly present in John of Salisbury's approach. However, for John of Salisbury, the lack of merit does not completely exclude those deemed frivolous from becoming the beneficiaries of charity, but it requires a correction of the vices prior to the manifestation of charity.

For it is indeed a just deed to give gifts to the richly deserving and a pious deed to give succor to the needy; in such a way however that attention be given to that in each instance which can without shame or blame be exposed to the gaze of the sage, since we should imitate Him who maketh His sun to rise upon the good and bad and raineth upon the just and the unjust. For if we see a destitute actor or mimic, we should assuredly not foster evil; but after having reproved it and if possible corrected it, we are bound in the spirit of brotherly love to supply his

¹⁹ Irene O'Daly, *John of Salisbury and the Medieval Roman Renaissance*, Manchester University Press, 2018, p. 102.

natural wants. It is quite proper to give to everyone that asketh us our compassion or the solace of our love. At times however it is more beneficial to chide the sluggard and to disconcert the harlot or actor than to lavish upon them what they are demanding.²⁰

In this way, vice is not encouraged, and, at the same time, charity is practiced indiscriminately. Although O'Daly introduces the analysis of charity within the context of discussing duties, she also correlates it with John of Salisbury's tackling of justice. Like in the case of wisdom, charity stands at the basis of the legal system:

He also added "On these two words dependeth the whole law and the prophets." If therefore all that has been written attends on the prophets and the law, that is to say, if all teaching has the aim of subjecting man to the law of God, who doubts that all things are accredited to the law of God; who doubts that all things are accredited to the realm of charity? [...] Charity is never meaningless and apart; it conducts honor, self-control, and sobriety, modesty, and the whole army of venerable virtues to man as to the temple of the Lord and dedicates him to piety.²¹

It can be observed that charity acts as a moral compass. It is both the source of all the other virtues, without which these cannot exist, and the only way by which man can achieve his ultimate goal, salvation

The Christian Fathers have long since agreed that beatitude rests upon virtue and that there can be no virtue without charity. The fruit of this is indeed most agreeable on the testimony of the apostle, who clearly opposes to the works of the flesh the works of the spirit, which avail for life, and these are peace, patience, longanimity, goodness, joy, mildness, continence, and chastity.

²⁰ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Oxonii, 1909, ed. Webb, Book VIII, ch. IV "Illis enim qui praemeruerunt donare iustum est, et eis qui indigent subuenire pium; ita tamen ut id respiciatur in singulis quod in facie eapientis sine rubore et nota ualeat denudari; siquidem imitari debemus eum qui solem suum facit oriri super bonos et malos et pluit super iustos et iniustos. Si enim pauperem histrionem uideamus aut mimum, non debemus utique fouere malitiam, sed correpta et, si fieri potest, emendata, fraternae caritatis iure oportet sustentari naturam. Expedi quidem omni petenti tribuere uel affectum mentis uel solatium caritatis. Interdum tamen increpare pigrum, meretricem uel histrionem confundere salubrius est quam quod exigunt elargiri.", transl. Joseph B. Pike.

²¹ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Oxonii, 1909, ed. Webb, Book VII, ch. XI "Idem quoque adiecit: In his duobus uerbis pendet tota lex et prophetae. Si ergo omnia quae scripta sunt prophetis famulantur et legi, id est, si omnis doctrina illuc tendit ut homo subiectus sit legi Dei, quis ambigit ad regnum caritatis uniuersa referri? [...] Ipsa uero numquam inanis aut sola est, sed honestatem, modestiam cum sobrietate, pudicitiam et aliarum uenerabilium uirtutum cetum in ipsum hominem quem pietati consecrat quasi in templum Domini introducit.", transl. Joseph B. Pike.

Therefore they who lop off these branches of virtue from the soil of their heart and destroy the root of charity whence they spring, by what path do they advance to beatitude?²²

Practicing charity appears as the greatest opportunity for the rich. At the same time, it comes out as the greatest benefit of possessing riches, since they have more means to manifest virtuously.

If however one possesses wealth, there is nothing more glorious than the type of liberality which expresses itself in giving, especially since even Socrates, it is said, being asked what the essence of beatitude was, replied "Giving to those deserving." I think that the explanation of Socrates' definition is found in the belief that the honor resulting from relieving the necessities of others belongs as well to those who have deserved such help.²³

Charity is such an impactful virtue that its presence significantly betters the person manifesting it. This is valid even in the case of individuals who could otherwise be considered tyrants.

No tyrant in any state approached closer to the legitimate prince than did Caesar; for though he oppressed his country yet the Roman People approved all his decrees, doubtless through fear of sedition caused by the passions surviving the civil war. The opinion prevailed however that because he was endowed with the greatest of virtues, that is with clemency, the people approved his measures as being for the most part favorable to their interests. Consequently Cicero says in his praise, "None of your virtues are more admirable or acceptable than your compassion."²⁴

²² John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Oxonii, 1909, ed. Webb, Book VII, ch. XXIV "Patribus siquidem pridem placuit beatitudinem consistere in uirtute, et nullam sine caritate posse esse uirtutem, cuius utique fructus iocundissimus est, Apostolo testante qui operibus carnis haec opera Spiritus quae ad uitam proficiunt euidenter opponit; quae sunt pax, patientia, longanimitas, bonitas, gaudium, mansuetudo, continentia, castitas. Qui ergo hos uirtutis ramos a terra cordis sui succidunt et radicem caritatis, de qua oriuntur, exterminant, quam uia ad beatitudinem pergunt?", transl. Joseph B. Pike.

²³ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Oxonii, 1909, ed. Webb, Book VIII, ch. IV "Si tamen archa suppeteret, nichil gloriosius est ea liberalitate quae consistit in donis; maxime cum et Socrates, ut dicitur, interrogatus quaenam esset substantia beatitudinis: Dignis donare, respondit. Ego quidem Socraticam diffinitionem sic interpretandam arbitror ut dignitas in accipientium necessitate credatur esse uel meritis.", transl. Joseph B. Pike.

²⁴ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Oxonii, 1909, ed. Webb, Book VIII, ch. VII "Ergo bene agitur cum principibus popularibus qui ex necessitate coguntur ad custodiam famae uilissimis nebulonibus adulari; nam in re publica nemo tyrannorum Cesare magis accessit ad principem; licet enim rem publicam oppressisset, populus tamen Romanus omnia quae ipse decreuerat approbavit, forte ueritus seditionem

By guiding individual human conduct, charity should implicitly guide society as a whole. In John of Salisbury's view, the result of collectively following charity would potentially lead the commonwealth to a common mindedness "Charity regards nothing as its own in blessings and nothing in misfortune as alien to it; it pities the woes of others and expends upon its neighbors its own goods, for it unites minds so that they have the same likes and dislikes."²⁵ An ideal situation for humanity is depicted as one in which each individual within the commonwealth cultivates charity, with its two aspects, empathetic actions towards peers and disregard for earthly goods. This, paired with a prevalence given to reason would lead to a hive mind like state, generating a paradise-like society, in John's opinion "For if every man were to labor in the cultivation of himself, and were to regard things external to himself as no proper concern of his, straightway the condition of each and all would become the best possible, virtue would flourish and reason prevail, and mutual charity would reign everywhere, so that the flesh would be subdued to the spirit and the spirit would serve God with full devotion. And if these things come to pass, the members will not be bowed down beneath the weight of the head, nor will the head languish because of the weakness and cowardice of the members; for such are the results which follow from the infirmity of sin.

For the offences of his subjects detract from the merits of the good prince, and the sins of those in high place give to subjects an excuse and example of transgressing."²⁶ What results from here is that man can achieve a paradisiac society by exploiting the two definitions of God (God as love and God as reason) on which the entire *Policraticus* focuses.

et ciuilibus belli reciduum passionem. Opinio tamen praeualuit ut, quia summa uirtute, id est clementia, praeditus fuerat, statuta eius quasi ex maxima parte benigniora populus approbaret. Vnde in laude eius Cicero ait: Nulla de uirtutibus tuis nec admirabilior nec gratior misericordia est.", transl. Joseph B. Pike.

²⁵ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Oxonii, 1909, ed. Webb, Book VII, ch. XXIV "Caritas in bonis nihil suum, in malis nihil reputat alienum; malis compatitur alienis, bona sua diffundit in proximos; nam et animos unit ut idem uelint idemque nolint.", transl. Joseph B. Pike.

²⁶ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Oxonii, 1909, ed. Webb, Book VI, ch. XXIX "Si enim in sui ipsius cultu quisque laboret et quae exteriora sunt reputet aliena, profecto optimus erit status singulorum et omnium, uigebitque uirtus et ratio praeualebit, regnante undique mutua caritate, ut sit caro subiecta spiritui et spiritus plena deuotione Domino famuletur. Quae si processerint, nec tumore capitis onerabuntur membra nec destitutione membrorum aut ignauia languebit caput; ista siquidem a peccati infirmitate proueniunt. Nam ab inferiorum delicta bonum principem demerentur, et peccata superiorum subditis sunt occasio et auctoritas delinquendi.", transl. John Dickinson.

Teaching as Intellectual Charity

A particular hypostasis of charity is found under the form of teaching philosophy. John of Salisbury presents it as more admirable even than practicing philosophy since it provides even less material gain, which makes it even more rare.

Rare is the person who essays in humility and love the path of wisdom that he may be taught himself or may teach others, for everything is referred to the shallow standards of filthy pleasure or futile utility; these are the aim of a soul astray. Meanwhile philosophy is the passport of but few because another way seems far shorter; for as the saying is, love of genius never made any man rich.²⁷

Furthermore, teaching philosophy opens the path to wisdom and thus to salvation for others. It is a way of perpetuating virtue and a potential means to obtain the paradisiac state of society.

Teaching is not specific only to philosophers. At times, those who do not practice philosophy, but only pretend to, can also attempt teach it. However, this is a rare situation when they truly succeed. Both teaching and practicing philosophy is what makes a true philosopher complete: "Therefore to give expression to truth and justice is common both to those who are philosophers and to those who are not; to tell the truth and lies, to teach good and evil, is not a characteristic of philosophers. It is only at times that the mere imitator of the philosopher teaches righteousness, but he who practices the righteousness which he teaches really is a philosopher."²⁸

The reason is that teaching philosophy involves both charity and wisdom reunited. It fulfills the need of the soul to get closer to God. In this way it fulfills a need which is more essentially specific to man. As a result, teaching philosophy is superior to other forms of charity, which are aimed at assisting with corporeal needs. Thus, it is a form of intellectual charity.

²⁷ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Oxonii, 1909, ed. Webb, Book VII, ch. XV "Rarus est qui caritatis aut humilitatis pede sapientiae uias scrutetur ut doceatur aut doceat. Nam ad immundae uoluptatis aut uanae utilitatis ineptias omnia referuntur; in his enim finis est animae aberrantis. Philosophia interim uiaticum est, paucorum tamen, quia alia uia longe uidetur esse compendiosior; nam, ut dici solet, amor ingenii neminem umquam diuitem fecit.", transl. Joseph B. Pike.

²⁸ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Oxonii, 1909, ed. Webb, Book VII, ch. XI "Loqui ergo uera et iusta philosophantibus et non philosophantibus commune est. Vera et falsa loqui, bona docere et mala non philosophantium est. Sed et recta dumtaxat interdum docet uanus philosophi imitator; sed qui recta quae docet sequitur, uere philosophus est.", transl. Joseph B. Pike.

Conclusion

All in all, for John of Salisbury, charity is synonymous to wisdom. It is charity that is accountable for the social character of his political theory, as it appears in the *Policraticus*. All virtues originate in charity and its practice is the criterion for the final judgment, as well as for being a true philosopher. Charity should not encourage vice, but it should be practiced only after the vices of its benefiter have been corrected. The unanimous practice of charity within society could lead the commonwealth to a paradisiac state.

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A SHORT MODERN HISTORY OF STUDYING SACROBOSCO'S *DE SPHAERA*

CORFU ALIN CONSTANTIN*

ABSTRACT. A Short Modern History of Studying Sacrobosco's *De sphaera*. The treatise generally known as *De sphaera* offered at the beginning of the 13th century a general image of the structure of the cosmos. In this paper I'm first trying to present a triple stake with which this treaty of Johannes de Sacrobosco (c. 1195 - c. 1256). This effort is intended to draw a context upon the treaty on which I will present in the second part of this paper namely, a short modern history of studying this treaty starting from the beginning of the 20th century up to this day. The first stake consists in the well-known episode of translation of the XI-XII centuries in the Latin *milieu* of the Greek and Arabic treaties. The treatise *De sphaera* taking over, assimilating and comparing some of the new translations of the texts dedicated to astronomy. The second Consists in the fact that Sacrobosco's work can be considered a response to a need of renewal of the curriculum dedicated to astronomy at the University of Paris. And the third consists in the novelty and the need to use the *De sphaera* treatise in the Parisian University's curriculum of the 13th century.

Keywords: astronomy, translation, university, 13th Century, Sacrobosco, Paris, curriculum

The context. The *De sphaera* treaty of Master Johannes de Sacrobosco in the Curriculum of the University of Paris of the 13th Century

In this first part of the research I aim to present the place of the treatise *De sphaera*, written by Johannes de Sacrobosco, at the beginning of the 13th century at the Parisian University in the curriculum of the liberal arts and the content of the treatise. The treatise *De sphaera* is one of the four treatises that form the corpus of the works of the master Johannes de Sacrobosco, the other three being the treaty on algorithms (*Algorismus*), the treaty dedicated to calculating the calendar

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date of Easter (*Computus*), and the *Tractatus quadrant*. For a better picture of the context in which the treaty was written it is necessary to present first the efforts of previous centuries that led to the need to write the treatise *On the Sphere*.

The first stake, which consists in the well know translation episode of the XIth-XIIth centuries in the Latin environment of the Greek and Arabic treaties has as main promoter Gerard of Cremona and his efforts to translate the *Almagest* to Ptolemy. Gerard's translation of the *Almagest* led to its use as a central treatise on astronomy at the University of Paris. It can be considered that, due to Gerard's effort of translation, some Greek and Arabic terms occurred in Latin: *zona*, *orizon*, *zenith*, *nadir*, etc. Gerard of Cremona translates not only Ptolemy's *Almagest* but also 75 other works from Arabic, many of which Dedicated to the subject of natural philosophy. Sacrobosco uses in his treatise *De sphaera* some of these translations, namely, *The Elements*¹ of Euclid, *On the Sphere* by Theodosius and the treatise *On Heaven*,² by Aristotle.

Through the efforts of Gerard of Cremona and the large number of treatises translated by him, one can assume one of the first major steps that led to the satisfaction of the desire to recover the practical part of astronomy and the entry of treatises dedicated to Aristotle's natural philosophy in Paris. Another reason for this approach may be one that consists in a need to renew the subjects that were present in the curriculum of the seven liberal arts. This theory is supported by Lemay, R. in his work *Abu Ma'shar and Latin Aristotelianism in the Twelfth Century*³ which, drawing a parallel between the texts translated by Gerard of Cremona and the four subjects of the quadrivium, relies on the need to receive Greek and Arabic texts as aiming to change the entire university curriculum. According to this theory, the assumption of the position of the translator aiming at such an approach is clearer as they already announce an assumed role.

With the presence of these treatises on astronomy and mathematics translated from ancient Greek and Arabic, the university environment of the thirteenth century was able to begin a rethinking of the curriculum and texts that were considered capital for the training of both teachers and future students. This approach to the renewal of astronomy in the university curriculum can be considered as one of the first steps by which the liberal arts changed their status, becoming more of a first preparatory stage for future university training. According to McCluskey, the student was required to sustain a *pro forma* (summary) reading of a *De sphaera*

¹ T. L. Heath, *The Thirteen books of Euclid's elements*, University Press, Cambridge, 1968.

² Aristotel, *Despre cer*, trad. Nicolau Șerban, ed. Paideia, București, 2005.

³ Lemay, Richard, *Abu Ma'shar and Latin Aristotelianism in the Twelfth Century*, American University of Beirut, Beirut, 1962.

treatise in order to obtain a degree in arts. In the 13th century, this reading was mandatory in Paris, while at Oxford in the fourteenth century on *Computus*. To this effort were gradually added treatises on arithmetic and geometry, but also treatises dedicated to the way in which astronomy instruments were used (astrolabe, quadrant, etc.) to demonstrate and put into practice the theories of this science.

One of the first moments of the entry of these new translations in the Parisian and English university curriculum of the twelfth century can be characterized by two main figures of the Latin environment. One of the first appeals was instituted by Bernard of Chartres (c. 1124) who proposed the renewal of the Parisian university curriculum by studying and assimilating new translations. The treatises he proposed, according to Montgomery,⁴ were devoted to the study of natural philosophy, treatises that were very little remembered or studied in the liberal arts curriculum; in the curriculum dedicated to astronomy, the works of authors such as Martianus Capella (360-428), Macrobius (370-430) or Isidore of Seville (560-636) were studied until then.

Another call of the need to revise the English university curriculum but also of the Parisian one in the 12th century is made by Daniel of Morley (c.1140 - c. 1210). He repeatedly criticized the way in which the professors of the University of Paris were rigid or disinterested in this great flow of treatises that could change the way they understood or thought what was known to be part of the sphere of natural philosophy.⁵

These first two examples are not isolated, the way in which figures such as John of Seville, Plato of Tivoli, Gerard of Cremona and many other translators, professors or students criticized and advocated for the introduction, importance and necessity of Greek-Arabic texts in the university curriculum it is also one well-known. Thus, these criticisms can easily denote the fact that translators assumed the stakes that these texts came with.

The translator put in front of this image, between what was written on natural philosophy in the Greek and Arabic traditions and those with which the Latin environment was familiar until the 11th century, undertook the creation of a link that was intended to pass through the Latin environment with the main purpose of assimilating, thinking and militating a possibility of innovation through these new translations. The central stake of the translator lied in the creation of a wide and concentrated transmission of these writings in and for the Latin cultural environment.

⁴ Scott L. Montgomery. *Science in Translation, Movements of Knowledge through Cultures and Time*. University of Chicago Press, 2000, pp. 145.

⁵ *Idem*.

As for the novelty and need to use the *De sphaera* treatise, it is necessary to mention from the beginning the character of this treatise. Sacrobosco's work is a textbook of astronomy in the liberal arts. Being an introductory to the study of astronomy, it was conceived as a tool for understanding Aristotle's *De caelo* and Ptolemy's *Almagesta*. Its need and novelty reside, as mentioned above, on the one hand in the need of students to obtain a degree in arts, who were required to sustain a *pro forma* reading on this treaty, and on the other hand from the desire of the Latin environment to a own tradition, the treatise *De sphaera* was wishing to be a Latin cultural product.

Studying Sacrobosco at the beginning of the 20th century: Before Lynn Thorndike's critical edition

The short modern history presented in this paper starts with Pierre Duhem's *Le système du monde: histoire des doctrines cosmologiques de Platon à Copernic*, Tome 3⁶ which offers from page 238 to 240 a short chapter on Sacrobosco. In his two pages and a quarter Duhem starts by naming 3 of Sacrobosco's works (*Algorismus*, *Sphaera* or *Sphaericum opusculum* and the *Calendrier ecclésiastique*) criticizing Sacrobosco's treaty *On the sphere*: „*Cependant, les quatre chapitres qui devaient assurer à leur auteur cette réputation étendue et durable ne formaient qu'un petit traité bien humble, bien pauvre d'idées comme de faits et, pour tout dire, bien médiocre.*”⁷ This criticism may have been due to the lack of a critical edition at that present time, must probably Duhem consulted a vernacular or incunable writing, and of the opportunities with which the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th had come. The third part of Duhem's work appears in 1915, a year before his death in 1916 and his enormous work remains one of the first pillars in any effort of studying ancient and medieval astronomy.

If Duhem introduced the name of Sacrobosco in his 10 volume work in 1915, Thorndike Lynn publishes in 1949 at the The University of Chicago Press, *The Sphere of Sacrobosco and Its Commentators*,⁸ the first critical edition known up to this day. Lynn's effort did not concern only the treaty *On the sphere*. In his book he offers a critical edition on the commentary of Robertus Anglicus (XIIIth century), better

⁶ Pierre Duhem, *Le système du monde : histoire des doctrines cosmologiques de Platon à Copernic*, Hermann et fils, Paris, Tome 3, 1915.

⁷ Trans.: However, the four chapters which were to assure their author of this extensive and enduring reputation formed only a small, very humble treatise, very poor in ideas as in facts and, in short, very mediocre. *Le system du monde*, Tome 3. pp. 239.

⁸ Thorndike, Lynn, *The Sphere of Sacrobosco and Its Commentators*, The University of Chicago Press, 1949.

known for his commentary in 1271 upon *De sphaera*, as well as a Latin transcription ascribed to Michael Scot, the commentary of Cecco d'Ascoli, an Anonymous commentary and 5 Appendix that name Sacrobosco's works.

Lynn's critical edition of *De sphaera* uses 12 manuscripts. Those textual witnesses will be presented in the table below. The need of this table is for showing Lynn's effort in 1949 and the progress that was made up to this day.

A	Oxford, Bodleian, Canon. Misc. 105, fols. 23-11r, text of the <i>Sphere</i> ; 11r-61r, anonymous questions and commentaries
B	Oxford, Bodleian, Canon. Misc. 161, fols. 9r-19r, <i>Sphere</i> ; 8v-19r mgs, Glosses
C	Oxford, Bodleian, Digby 166, fols. 1r-6r, anon. commentary; 21ra-26vb, <i>Sphere</i>
D	Oxford, Bodleian, Digby 228, fols. 61va-65vb, <i>Sphere</i> ; 66ra-73va, commentary of Robertus Anglicus
E	Oxford, Bodleian, Digby 48, fols. 48r-88r, <i>Sphere</i> with commentary of Robertus Anglicus
I	Cambridge, University Library li. III. 3, fols 25r-35v, <i>Sphere</i>
J	Cambridge, University Library Ff. VI. 13, fols. 17v-20r, 26v-34v, <i>Sphere</i>
K	Boston, Mass., Medical Library 20, fols. 88r-97v, <i>Sphere</i>
M	Cambridge, McClean Collection, Fitzwilliam Museum, 166, fols. 20r-38v, <i>Sphere</i>
N	New York, Public Library 69, fols. 80r-113v, <i>Sphere</i>
O	Princeton University, Robert Garrett 99, fols. 124ra-136vb, <i>Sphere</i> with glosses
Q	Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Latin MS 7392, fols. 2ra-43rb, <i>Sphere</i> with commentary of Robertus Anglicus ⁹

As can be easily seen, Lynn uses 5 manuscripts from Oxford (England), 3 from Cambridge (England), 3 from the United States, and one from Paris (France). Although he covers the influence that Sacrobosco had in England after writing *On the sphere*, surprisingly he uses a single treatise from the Parisian environment in which and for which the treaty was initially written. To this list, as we shall see, it will be added a new treaty which Olaf Pedersen¹⁰ considers to be the earliest.

⁹ Lynn's edition (1949) on page IX does not offer the treatises ordered in this form, the need for a table was made for an editorial reason.

¹⁰ Pedersen, O. (1985). "In Quest of Sacrobosco", *Journal for The History of Astronomy* – J HIST ASTRON. 16. 10.1177/002182868501600302.

According to Thorndike¹¹ Johannes de Sacrobosco was known as the author of the treatise *On the Sphere (De sphaera)* which was written in the early thirteenth century (possibly in 1220). In the same passage, Thorndike also informs us about the lack of biographical data about the author, although starting from his name, Sacrobosco, his origin can be assumed to be English, namely from Hollywood or Halifax. During his lifetime, he taught at the University of Paris, where he died. Thorndike¹² informs us that he was buried at the church of St. Maturin, and on his tomb is an inscription dedicated to his memory that mentions his name.

Sacrobosco's treatise *De sphaera* consists of an introduction and four chapters. After an analysis of the text established by Thorndike¹³ the topic identified in this treatise is in the order as follows: the definition of the sphere, the division of the sphere, about the four elements, a definition of the sky, the sky and its motion, about the shape of the Earth, the Earth, its motion and position, about the shape of the water, about the celestial circles, about the equinox, the North and South Pole, the Zodiac and its signs, the Ecliptic, what does "a sign" mean, the color, the Meridian, the Horizon, the Tropic of Cancer and Capricorn, the arctic and antarctic circle, the five tropics, sunrise and sunset signs, cosmic location, sunrise and sunset time, sunrise and sunset, right ascent, oblique ascent, day inequality, sun movement, day and night, the straight and oblique ascent, the inhabitants of the equator, between the equator and the tropic of cancer, about the seven climates, the movement of the sun (again), about the other planets, the causes of the lunar eclipse and the causes of the solar eclipse. Thus, the treatise comprises around 30 different topics, each being discussed in at least one specific paragraph.

Besides Lynn's 12 manuscripts, I have identified another 26: 24 from the Oxford Libraries, from point 2 up to point 26 as can be seen in the table below. Even if not all the manuscripts are needed to make a critical edition, Sacrobosco's text being an astronomy textbook that had a great widespread in the European university's environment, I only wanted to point out that a *census* of all the manuscripts of *De sphaera* still remains a *desideratum*.

1	USA, New Haven, Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Beinecke MS 797 [cc. 1450 and 1500]
2	USA, University of Pennsylvania, Collection The Scholarly Tradition, UPenn LJS 26 [c.c. 1225-1275]

¹¹ Thorndike, Lynn, *The Sphere of Sacrobosco and Its Commentators*, The University of Chicago Press, 1949, pp. 1-2.

¹² Thorndike, Lynn, *The Sphere of Sacrobosco and Its Commentators*, The University of Chicago Press, 1949, pp. 2.

¹³ Thorndike, Lynn, *The Sphere of Sacrobosco and Its Commentators*, The University of Chicago Press, 1949.

A SHORT MODERN HISTORY OF STUDYING SACROBOSCO'S DE SPHAERA

3	MS. Add. A. 2 — 15th century, middle; Italian North
4	MS. Ashmole 1285 — Composite manuscript
5	MS. Ashmole 360 — Composite manuscript
6	MS. Auct. F. 5. 23 — Composite manuscript
7	MS. Auct. F. 5. 25 — Composite manuscript
8	MS. Auct. F. 5. 29 — Composite manuscript
9	MS. Bodl. 472 — c. 1437; French, Louvain
10	MS. Bodl. 491 — 14th century, late; English
11	MS. Bodl. 607 — Composite manuscript
12	MS. Bodl. 679 — 13th century, late; English
13	MS. Canon. Ital. 157 — Composite manuscript
14	MS. Canon. Misc. 436 — 15th century
15	MS. Canon. Misc. 561 — 15th century, middle; Italian, North
16	MS. Digby 15 — 15th century, middle; English (?)
17	MS. Digby 193 — 14th century
18	MS. Digby 215 — 15th century, middle; Italian, North
19	MS. Digby 81 — Composite manuscript
20	MS. Digby 93 — Composite manuscript
21	MS. Digby 98 — Composite manuscript
22	MS. Fairfax 27 — Composite manuscript
23	MS. Lyell 36 — 15th century, second half; English
24	MS. Rawl. C. 677 — 14th century
25	Merton College MS. 261 — Composite manuscript
26	Merton College MS. 35 — Composite manuscript

The purpose of the aforementioned considerations is that Edward Grant in his book *Planets, Stars, and Orbs, The Medieval Cosmos*¹⁴ selected a number of over 300 *questiones* (questions) each dedicated to a topic related to the sphere of astronomy between the 12th and 17th centuries for showing the continuity of these questions. The subjects present in Sacrobosco's treaty do not make an exception to such an incorporation of them into a much broader framework of thought of astronomy and its continuity. Although this treatise deserves a study in itself for its placement in a historical-scientific paradigm, in addition to the fact that in Grant's work it is not used *per se* but only recalls some issues that the treaty raised.

Olaf Pedersen in 1985 (36 years after Lynn's edition) writes an article named *In Quest of Sacrobosco*.¹⁵ Here he recalls 2 hypotheses regarding the possible place where Sacrobosco could have been born (the English and the Irish one), recalls 4 of his works (*Algorismus*, *Computus*, *Tractatus de quadrante*, *Tractatus de sphaera*) presenting their size, a good number of manuscript of each one and some spurious works that were considered to be written by Sacrobosco. One of the great merits of Pedersen's paper is the identification of MS Copenhagen GKS 277,2¹⁶ which Lynn omitted in his critical apparatus (we don't know if deliberately) when he drafted his critical edition. The Copenhagen MS it is believed to be the oldest manuscript of Sacrobosco's *De sphaera*.

It is interesting to see how the number of vernacular treatises in Pedersen's research increases significantly when Matteo Valleriani in 2020 publishes *De sphaera of Johannes de Sacrobosco in the Early Modern Period*¹⁷ together with a group of researchers. In the project "The Sphere: Knowledge System Evolution and the Shared Scientific Identity in Europe" which aims to reconstruct the transmission that the treatise of John of Sacrobosco (*De Sphaera*) had at the second half of the 15th century until 1650. This study focuses mainly on introductory treatises on the liberal arts in European universities. The authority of *De sphaera* was already established in the 13th century in the Parisian university environment, the study of the researchers in this book is to see how it was used in early modernity (its university character persisting until then). In order to sketch the effect of Sacrobosco's work between 1550 and 1650, the authors had to study one author at

¹⁴ Edward Grant, *Planets, Stars, and Orbs, The Medieval Cosmos, 1200–1687*. Cambridge University Press, 1994.

¹⁵ Pedersen, O. (1985). "In Quest of Sacrobosco". *Journal for The History of Astronomy – J HIST ASTRON*. 16. 10.1177/002182868501600302.

¹⁶ Pedersen, O. (1985). "In Quest of Sacrobosco". *Journal for The History of Astronomy – J HIST ASTRON*. 16. 10.1177/002182868501600302. pp. 185.

¹⁷ Valleriani, Matteo (Ed.) - *De sphaera of Johannes de Sacrobosco in the Early Modern Period*, Springer International Publishing, 2020, pp. 197.

a time who either commented on Sacrobosco's treatise or was influenced by it. Not all the authors presented in the catalog of their research are present in this study but their files can be consulted in the site made by this group <https://sphaera.mpiwg-berlin.mpg>.

The following table shows the data offered by Pedersen in comparison with Valleriani's research. All the data comes from Pedersen's article.¹⁸ Valleriani's research is being marked by his name and the year 2020. As can be seen Valleriani adds 309 new incunable texts and presents 30 vernacular ones, but up to this day, as I have already presented, no complete census of the manuscripts of Sacrobosco's works has ever been made.

Treaty	Nr. of words	Incipits	Nr. of MS.	Incunable 1400-1673	Vernacular Texts	Modern editions
<i>Algorismus</i>	5600	"Omnia quae a primaeva origine rerum"	+50	+5 1488-1582	?	F. Saaby Pedersen (1983)
<i>Computus</i>	19000	"Computus est scientia considerans tempora"	+26	+35 1531-1673	0	0
<i>Tractatus de quadrante</i>	2000	"Omnis scientia per instrumentum operativa"	5	0	0	0
<i>Tractatus de Sphaera</i>	9000	"Tractatum de spera quattuor capitulis distinguimus"	+200	1472-1673 Pedersen(1985) + 50 Valleriani(2020) 359	Valleriani (2020) +30	Lynn - 1949
Others	<i>Theorica planetarum</i>	Catalog Vatican= MSS Ottob. 3024 şı3290	<i>Com. De caelo</i>	<i>Com. De generatione et corruptione</i>		

¹⁸ Pedersen, O. (1985). "In Quest of Sacrobosco". Journal for The History of Astronomy – J HIST ASTRON. 16. 10.1177/002182868501600302.

Conclusions

In this article, I have tried to present the place of the treatise *On the Sphere* in the context of the 13th century focusing on 3 stakes with which the treaty came. The first stake consisting in the episode of translation of the XIth -XIIth centuries in the Latin environment of the Greek and Arabic treaties, the second stake in the need to renew the curriculum dedicated to astronomy at the University of Paris and the third consisted in the novelty and the need to use the *De sphaera* treatise in the Parisian University's curriculum of the 13th century. With this purpose, in the second part of this paper I have presented a short history filtered through the works of Pierre Duhem, Thorndike Lynn, Olaf Pedersen and Matteo Valleriani that gave, starting with the year 1915, an image of Sacrobosco's works and influence. Thanks to Valleriani's *De sphaera of Johannes de Sacrobosco in the Early Modern Period* we now have a better image of Sacrobosco's treaty *On the sphere*, an image that has it's beginning with the printed press up to the second half of the 17th century. Although the modern scholarship recorded some serious progress regarding the study of the aforementioned treatise, the period starting from the beginning of the 13th century up to the printing episode covered by Valleriani still remains a topic to be explored.

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LIPSIUS' *DE CONSTANTIA*, 17TH CENTURY STILL LIFE PAINTING AND THE USE OF CONSTANCY TODAY

ANISIA IACOB*

ABSTRACT. *Lipsius' De constantia, 17th Century Still Life Painting and the Use of Constancy Today.* The present article revisits the main ideas from Justus Lipsius' *De constantia* in the light of the present ongoing pandemic. Through his interest for the Stoics, Lipsius was able to contribute to a more general and European interest towards this topic, reviving the Stoic philosophy under the name of Neostoicism. The influence of his ideas can be seen in some art production, especially the one that is connected to the places where Lipsius lived and it is a testimony to their popularity and the various ways of transmitting them. Even if the Stoic ideal remains an ideal, the Neostoicism of Justus Lipsius is meaningful in as much as any philosophy that deals with crises because it can help us view the text from both its relevancy and our recent general experience. The isolation, the anxiety, the uneasiness and fear are emotions that have been more or less present in our lives during this pandemic and they require a solution. Constancy is the solution that Justus Lipsius proposes.

Keywords: *Justus Lipsius, Neostoicism, Still Life Painting, Pandemic, Moral Philosophy, Crisis Philosophy.*

Introducing Humanism and the Rise of Neostoicism in Northern Europe

Contemplating on humanism, Jozef Ijsewijn notes that it was not rapidly accepted in Northern Europe, nor was its spread something that occurred without difficulties. Humanism emerged in Italy in the 14th century and spread throughout Europe up to the 16th century. Humanism was ambivalent, carrying in itself both its past traditions and influences, but also a desire for the new.¹ The humanist curricula included a variety of disciplines and among them only the discipline of

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¹ Nicholas Mann, "The origins of Humanism" in Jill Kraye (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism*, Cambridge Companions to Literature, Cambridge, 1996, pp. 1-4.

moral philosophy was present, explaining the humanistic inclination towards moral.² This movement had a keen interest in ancient Latin literature and gained several followers in Northern Europe only in the latest phase of its European spread. After the death of Erasmus, it took some 40 years for the humanist movement to gain more followers in the North.³ Given this situation, it appears quite unexpected that in the period between the death of Erasmus and the generation of 16th-century humanists, the Northern provinces seemed glad to embrace the Neostoicism, through the work of Justus Lipsius. As Neostoicism takes root from the Stoicism and Christianity, having a practical side to it. It appealed to the Low Countries because of their humanist predilection for ancient moral-philosophical texts mixed with their contemporary concerns.⁴

As Jan Papy observes, the late humanism from the Low Countries still has room for further exploration. The political views and the Stoic thought developed survived the modernity and got transmitted into the Baroque thought and still echoed in the Enlightenment. With his Stoic studies, Lipsius played a part in the start of the history of philosophy and the general interest in Stoicism.⁵ Because of their popularity, the ideas of Neostoicism are reflected in later writings but also traces of them can be found in art production. It is known, after all, that Rubens was part of Lipsius' circle. However, the Neostoic dispersion of ideas can be suspected in other artists and genres such as still lifes.

By looking at the main ideas of *De constantia* and trying to correlate them with a few examples from the art production of artists that worked in Leiden, the final question is as such: to what end does the constancy from Lipsius' *De constantia* and, ultimately, the Neostoic message reflect some art pieces? To what end is it relevant and worth revisiting? In light of the recent pandemic, constancy may be a possible approach to this situation because both Stoic and Neostoic theories are philosophies designed for times of crisis.

² Jill Kraye, "The Humanist as Moral Philosopher: Marc-Antoine Muret's 1585 Edition of Seneca" in Jill Kraye, Risto Saarinen (eds.), *Moral Philosophy on the Threshold of Modernity*, Springer, Dordrecht, 2005, p. 307.

³ Jozef Ijsewijn, "The Coming of Humanism to the Low Countries", in Paul Oskar Kristeller, Thomas A. Brady, Heiko Augustinus Oberman (eds.), *The Profile of the Italian Renaissance in the Mirror of Its European Transformations. Itinerarium Italicum. Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought*, Vol. XV, Brill Academic Publishers, Leiden, 1975, pp. 193-198.

⁴ Jill Kraye, "The Humanist as Moral Philosopher: Marc-Antoine Muret's 1585 Edition of Seneca" in Jill Kraye, Risto Saarinen (eds.), *Moral Philosophy on the Threshold of Modernity*, pp. 307-308.

⁵ Jan Papy, "Justus Lipsius as Historian of Philosophy: The Reception of the *Manuduction as stoicam philosophiam* (1604) in the History of Philosophy", in Anthony Ossa-Richardson, Margaret Meserve (eds.), *Et Amicorum. Essays on Renaissance Humanism and Philosophy in Honour of Jill Kraye*, Brill, Leiden, 2017, pp. 388-389.

Article Approach

This research interest regarding Justus Lipsius appeared during my art history dissertation that dealt with the 17th-century vanitas from the Netherlands. As the dissertation was written from the art history perspective, this prevented the exploration of Neostoicism, Lipsius' works and their possible connection with still life painting produced in that period. This article will use interdisciplinary data from history, art history and philosophy, with an emphasis on the latter. It will begin with a short review of Lipsius' activity and the main ideas of *De constantia*, then will continue with looking at a few examples of still-life pieces that were produced by artists who activated in Leiden (as Leiden was a humanist centre and the home of Neostoicism), ending with a part that aims to forward possible answers to this contemporary pandemic, trying to see how the strategies presented by Lipsius can be relevant. In light of this recent global crisis, it is worth revisiting Neostoicism, its possible reflections in art, and the uses it might pose for our current predicament.

Justus Lipsius and the Foundation of the Neostoicism

Northern humanism flourished in the University of Leiden as it promoted and had attached to it, some of the most famous humanists that shaped the Dutch culture through their Latin works.⁶ At the time of Lipsius' appointment, the Leiden University wished to enrich its humanism and to be better connected to this intellectual movement. To achieve this, it set to hire a number of scholars with good recommendations. One of these scholars was Justus Lipsius that returned to the Low Countries with a letter of recommendation from Marc-Antoine Muret with whom he studied in Rome.⁷ In this environment, Lipsius wrote some of his most popular works and it is here where the Neostoic movement took root.

As Dirk Van Miert writes,⁸ he was the first *lumen Academiae* in his thirteen years of activity in Leiden. The prestigious position, the high salary and reputation he achieved were impossible to accomplish by Hadrianus Junius, the one to follow

⁶ Dirk Van Miert, "Hadrianus Junius and Northern Dutch Humanism", in Dirk van Miert (ed.), *The Kaleidoscopic Scholarship of Hadrianus Junius (1511-1575). Northern Humanism at the Dawn of the Dutch Golden Age. Brill's Studies in Intellectual History*, Vol. 199, 2011, Brill Academic Publishers, Leiden, pp. 2-5.

⁷ Jill Kraye, "The Humanist as Moral Philosopher: Marc-Antoine Muret's 1585 Edition of Seneca" in Jill Kraye, Risto Saarinen (eds.), *Moral Philosophy on the Threshold of Modernity*, p. 313.

⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 17-19.

into Lipsius' seat after his leave.⁹ What Lipsius started at Leiden ended up making the university to be the "largest and most fashionable university in the Northern parts of Europe".¹⁰

We do know that he was born in Brabant in 1547 and came from the Southern provinces. He acquired a bachelor's degree in Arts and was known as a Latin philologist, publishing four books under the name of *Variae lectione*. It is in 1574 that he publishes his translation of Tacitus, together with commentaries, that his fame grows. Because of this success of his Tacitus translation, he secures a chair in Leiden in 1578, enjoying a good reputation and all the prospects for further works. He argued that the humanist curriculum should look for guidance not only in the writers of the Roman republic but also in the writings of Tacitus and Seneca, despite their sententious style.¹¹ In 1591 he gives up his Leiden chair, due to a conflict, and leaves the city. The following year he occupies a chair in Louvain where he resumes his activity.¹² It is the span between 1578 and 1591 that we are concerned with, as it is the span in which *De constantia* is produced.

His influence stretched beyond university and that is supported by the contemporary accounts of him having ties with scholars and other groups as well. For example, Michel de Montaigne and other prominent European scholars were readers of Justus Lipsius, with Montaigne having read his *De constantia*.¹³ If we look at Peter Paul Rubens' *The Four Philosophers*, also known as *Justus Lipsius and his pupils*, and proceed unto identifying the men, a connection between Lipsius, Rubens, and his brother Philip is revealed. What this piece shows is that Lipsius had a circle of pupils and friends that was not related to university. This is evidence of how intellectual and artistic circles were not isolated, but rather intertwined. In the painting, Rubens presents himself in the posture of a pupil of Lipsius that not only illustrates the respect of the former for the latter but also displays the interest of a well-known artist towards the Neostoicism promoted by the humanist. One can wonder, what was there that interested the 16th-century artist regarding the Neostoic view? Lisa Rosenthal offers us a possible answer. It was the idea of self-mastery and

⁹ *Idem*.

¹⁰ Anthony Grafton, "The new science and the traditions of humanism" in Jill Kraye (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism*, p. 218.

¹¹ Anthony Grafton, "The new science and traditions of humanism" in Jill Kraye (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism*, pp. 212-213.

¹² Christopher Brooke, *Philosophic Pride. Stoicism and Political Thought from Lipsius to Rousseau*, Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford, 2012, pp. 12-13.

¹³ Jan Papy, "Justus Lipsius as Historian of Philosophy: The Reception of the *Manuductio ad stoicam philosophiam* (1604) in the History of Philosophy", in Anthony Ossa-Richardson, Margaret Meserve (eds.), *Et Amicorum. Essays on Renaissance Humanism and Philosophy in Honour of Jill Kraye*, p. 390.

development of a pragmatic philosophy that was more than just pure theory, but a way of life that was of interest for an artist. Here lies the success of Lipsius' work and its relevance to Rubens, as it was something the artist could apply himself.¹⁴ To create Neostoicism, Justus did as the scholastics did with Aristotle. Namely, he Christianized the Stoics.¹⁵ Was there a need for the Neostoicism in the Netherlands? The Netherlands had growing tensions with the Habsburgs.

As Israel Jonathan shows, the 16th century was, in his later half, marked by its revolts and rising tensions. Pointing to the revolts of Holland and Zeeland in 1572, that are considered to be the start of the process of independence, or even to the Union of Utrecht where the provinces sign a treaty in 1579 to help each other in the face of Spain, is enough proof to highlight the distress that the Netherlands faced. It is only in 1609, when a peace treaty with Spain is signed, that the turmoil is starting to weaken and eventually cease, making way for a new state that will be the Dutch Republic.¹⁶ It can be assumed that the forming of Neostoicism aimed at this state of affairs, trying to offer an answer to the current political and social situation, as the *Leviathan* of Hobbes tried. It was an answer through reason that could offer happiness and peace inside's one mind and being.¹⁷ With Lipsius, the appreciation that Muret held for the Silver Age Latin texts became practice. He highly regarded Seneca because he perceived him as the one to offer the most appealing and accessible variant of the Stoic philosophy.¹⁸ In order to prove or disapprove the need of Neostoicism and its applicability, exploring *De constantia's* main points is necessary.

Lipsius' *De constantia*

De constantia libri duo qui alloquium praecipue continent in publicis malis is comprised of two books and was published in 1584, becoming a well-known work

¹⁴ Lisa Rosenthal, *Gender, Politics, and Allegory in the Art of Rubens*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2005, p. 82.

¹⁵ Jan Papy, "Justus Lipsius as Historian of Philosophy: The Reception of the *Manuduction as stoicam philosophiam* (1604) in the History of Philosophy", in Anthony Ossa-Richardson, Margaret Meserve (eds.), *Et Amicorum. Essays on Renaissance Humanism and Philosophy in Honour of Jill Kraye*, p. 403.

¹⁶ Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic. Its Rise, Greatness and Fall*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995, p. 179, pp. 313-314.

¹⁷ John Sellars, "The Early Modern Legacy of the Stoics", in N. Powers and J. Klein (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Hellenistic Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, New York, Forthcoming, Preprint via Academia.edu, pp. 2-4, https://www.academia.edu/37646446/The_Early_Modern_Legacy_of_the_Stoics (accessed 15.02.2020).

¹⁸ Jill Kraye, "The Humanist as Moral Philosopher: Marc-Antoine Muret's 1585 Edition of Seneca" in Jill Kraye, Risto Saarinen (eds.), *Moral Philosophy on the Threshold of Modernity*, p. 328.

of the 16th and 17th century. The success of the book is supported by its many prints and translations: forty-four times printed in Latin, fifteen times in French, with several other translations such as Dutch, German, English, Spanish, Italian and Polish, getting more than eighty editions in the span between the 16th and the 18th century.¹⁹

As Gerhard Oestreich outlines²⁰, Lipsius' work aims to be a moral philosophy that offers the reader a pattern for one's behavior that is laid on both Stoic and Christian foundations. It seeks to offer solutions to problems regarding the state, society, and politics. The work is shaped as a dialogue between Lipsius himself, that is on his way to Vienna, and Langius the humanist that he visits. The action is set off by the fact that Lipsius has decided to run away from the city of Louvain, due to the ongoing revolts and wars. Langius takes in this scenario the role of the wiser man that scolds Lipsius for his choice.²¹ This is the premise that allows the author to discuss at length the main points of Neostoicism.

The first important point, as seen in chapter two,²² is made when Langius tells Lipsius that travelling to another country while trying to escape war will not solve anything. This implies that what disturbs him is rather internal than external. This idea in *De constantia* is highly reminiscent of the Stoic theory. In *Letters from a Stoic*, Seneca elaborates on self-possession as a solution for a peaceful existence, restraint of one's instincts, and no emotional attachments. Langius sets to argue that Lipsius is not genuinely concerned because of the war and what happens to his countrymen, but because of what could befall him. His sorrow has as root selfishness and fear for oneself, rather than the compassion for his countrymen. Seeking any form of pleasure to alleviate his pains is merely an illusion, for they do not help him recover, but make him suffer some more by reviving his wounds. The only true remedies are wisdom and constancy.²³

Constancy is discussed and defined, in chapter four, as an invincible strength of the mind that cannot be influenced by anything external. Constancy is connected to the strength that is described as fidelity, faithfulness, that is a product of sound reason. For constancy to retain its constant character it appears that strength ought to be part of it as it provides the fortitude of enduring faithfulness. It is clarified that constancy takes root from patience, described as its mother, while recalling its

¹⁹ Gerhard Oestreich, *Neostoicism and the Early Modern State*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2008, p. 13.

²⁰ *Idem.*

²¹ John Sellars, *Justus Lipsius, On Constancy*, Exeter University Press, 2006, pp. 2-5.

²² Justus Lipsius, *On Constancy. De constantia Translated by Sir John Stradling (1594)*, Liverpool University Press, Liverpool, 2006, The First Book, Chapter 2.

²³ *Idem.*

connection to strength. Even though constancy appears as the most important element, it is part of a web or structure that helps to build the invincible character of constancy in the face of adversities.²⁴ Without strength, constancy would be less constant as it would shatter easily, while without patience, constancy would be hopeless and would look useless to the user. By adding these two other elements and forming this structure where the three are connected, constancy gains the invincibility that allows it to be a faithful remedy.

Another important point can be found in chapters five and six which deal with the differences between reason and opinion. Reason leads to constancy and opinion to inconstancy. Reason has heavenly descent, is the perfection of the soul that has a divine and fire-like nature, while opinion is born out of the body that is defined by the element of earth. Interestingly enough, Langius notes the fact that these two parts, the soul that is fire and the body that is earth, have a point where they mingle and mix, explaining that they cannot live with each other entirely pure, untouched by the other. Thus, the individual has the task of seeking reason in that part of the soul that is pure of body.²⁵ While Lipsius lived in a century that tried to separate quite clearly between reason and body, it is intriguing to see that he mentions that there is a point where the soul (that is of heavenly descent like reason) mixes with the body. This suggests that as long as two elements are bound to live with each other, they are unable to stay pure of the other. The description present in chapters five and six is highly reminiscent of the cosmology that can be found in the writings of Empedocles and other thinkers that followed the Presocratics. The similarity stands in linking some parts of our being with natural elements such as fire and earth. Empedocles too stated that the world is formed out of things that have their descent in one of the four elements and these elements mix and unite with each other under the guide of Love (in D73, 250-260) that was seen by the thinker as a uniting force.²⁶ Even the point where Lipsius states how these elements mingle and mix is almost identical with the passages by Empedocles from D53.²⁷ Of course, the elements differ but the dynamic and logic of things are what really connects Lipsius with the ancient thinkers, hinting at his inspiration.

In the seventh chapter, the things that might disturb our constancy, together with the notions of public and private evils are introduced. These disturbances are

²⁴ *Ibidem*, Chapter 4.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, Chapter 5-6.

²⁶ Andre Laks, Glenn W. Most (eds.), *Early Greek Philosophy* Vol V, Harvard University Press, Harvard, 2016, pp. 413-415.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 397.

false goods, identified as riches, honor, authority, health and long life, while the others are false evils, identified as poverty, infamy, lack of promotion, sickness, and death. Both false goods and false evils are being born out of four primal affections felt by the human: desire, joy, fear, and sorrow. It is worth mentioning here that the false goods seem to be the opposites of the false evils, while the four affections can be taken into pairs: desire with joy, corresponding to the false goods and fear with sorrow, corresponding to false evils.²⁸

Having established the need for constancy and what may disturb it, Langius moves on to discuss the public and private evils, from chapter eight onwards. The public evils are the evils that befall a group of people, a society, a nation, while the private ones affect individuals or families. The companion argues that the public evils are given to us by God and they are a necessity. These are two of the four arguments he brings, while the third and the fourth are as follows: the public evils are profitable for us and they are not uncommon or sorrowful. As John Sellars writes,²⁹ Langius mentions four points where the Stoic theory should be revised: the point of God being submitted to fate, the existence of a natural order of causes, the inexistence of contingency, together with the lack of free will. Through these, he differs from the materialist and determinist theories, while also aligning himself to the Christian views.

The second book of *De constantia* continues the talk about the public evils, exploring the last two arguments. Lipsius' friend and host develops the explanation of the public evils as being a part of God's plan, thus they are profitable for us, humans. He identifies a few of the benefits of public evils as such: the acquirement of will, the exercising of will and the evils as punishments for sins. It is further suggested that the events through which the Low Countries went are not something rare or unseen, invoking history to support this claim. He gives various examples of nations and cultures that were subjected to different kinds of trials, as a natural course of history. They were not unlucky or damned, they simply had a period of glory that was followed by one of decay, as everything that is born is destined to eventually die.³⁰

John Sellars emphasizes that what Lipsius is conveying is the Stoic conclusion of the fact that we humans cannot avoid suffering. The only solution might be

²⁸ Justus Lipsius, *On Constancy. De constantia Translated by Sir John Stradling (1594)*, Chapters 7, and John Sellars, "Justus Lipsius's *De Constantia*: A Stoic Spiritual Exercise", *Poetics Today*, 28:3, 2007, Porter Institute for Poetics and Semiotics, pp. 339-340.

²⁹ John Sellars, "Justus Lipsius's *De Constantia*: A Stoic Spiritual Exercise", *Poetics Today*, 28:3, 2007, Porter Institute for Poetics and Semiotics, pp. 339-343.

³⁰ Justus Lipsius, *On Constancy. De constantia Translated by Sir John Stradling (1594)*, Liverpool University Press, Liverpool, 2006, The Second Book.

offered by the way we decide to tackle and face suffering. We can choose sorrow, or we can choose constancy that, opposed to sorrow, is a product of reason and is a type of wisdom. For the philosopher, constancy is the only viable option in the face of suffering. Compared to the first book, the second one has the addition of linking directly wisdom, in the form of philosophy, with constancy and stability in one's life. By making this link, Lipsius provides a privileged status to the pupils of philosophy that have the best chances to achieve a life of constancy and stability in a world of tumult and distress. This very linking is important as it hints to the author's belief regarding philosophy, showing that it has a prestigious place among other respectable arts and sciences. *De constantia* shows that he provided philosophy with a special status.³¹

From a retrospective, the dialogue *De constantia* instructs the reader with the basic Stoic teachings, all applied to a specific situation of crisis. It associates the Stoic teaching with the Christian beliefs, criticizing the classical Stoicism where it does not corroborate with the Christian view while making it all very accessible to any reader through the practical way in which it is composed. By giving several applied examples of situations the 16th-century reader can relate to, it becomes highly available anyone that is in any way affected by the revolts, the war or the general anxiety that comes with such events.

The Neostoic Moral Reflected in Still Lives

Stoic philosophy was suited for modern Northern Europe because it was a philosophy fit for a crisis. The Stoic ethics were also appealing because they were not concerned with the *polis*, but with the individual.³² It was through peace of the individual that Stoic thought aimed to achieve political peace and stability.

In discussing the Neostoicism in the 17th century, Thijs Weststeijn³³ highlights a few things. The ethics were represented mainly by Neostoicism, that was one of the most influential, authoritative schools, intellectually speaking. The works of Dutch Stoics like Hendrik Laurensz Spiegel, Pieter Cornelisz Hooft or Dirck Volckertsz Coornhert were highly discussed in circles attended by educated citizens, and this ethical view that was marked by the Stoicism had a part in the way in which theories

³¹ *Idem* and John Sellars, "Justus Lipsius's *De Constantia*: A Stoic Spiritual Exercise", *Poetics Today*, 28:3, 2007, Porter Institute for Poetics and Semiotics, pp. 345-352.

³² Christoph Strohm, "Ethics in Early Calvinism", in Jill Krayer, Risto Saarinen (eds.), *Moral Philosophy on the Threshold of Modernity*, p. 274.

³³ Thijs Weststeijn, *The Visible World*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, 2008, pp. 39-40.

of art developed. In commentaries about art and literature, moderation and modesty were often appreciated. This was a mark of the Stoic view and artists were also advised to have an ethical side to their works, preaching about the Stoic morals. As Svetlana Alpers points, the realism of the Dutch paintings, especially those of minor genres, is only apparent. While they cannot be judged generally but only particularly, some paintings are imbued with moral lessons because there is a traceable connection between certain motifs and the printed mottoes and emblem texts that emphasized this moral aspect.³⁴

This idea can be connected to the philosophical theory according to which nature contains in itself the rules of commendable human behavior. The natural world and ethics are related, and so is their study. This is the reason why painting had to achieve an ethical aspect as well. Painting had the task of studying nature and by doing so, it entered the study of ethics through their relation.³⁵ For example, the painting of landscapes, seascapes or still life were genres that were quite popular in the Netherlands. As they studied and depicted the natural world, they were also in close relation to the ethical study and had to include this aspect as well. When analyzing this relation, between philosophy and the artistic production of the early 17th century, Thijs Weststeijn³⁶ shows that it ought to be noted how philosophy had a practical side to it, especially in the early modern period. It was often seen as a set of rules that would enable escaping calamity by providing a solution. If one would argue that Neostoicism did not have a lasting impression on the Netherlands, this can be countered by the fact that the work of Arnold Houbraken, *The Great Theatre of Dutch Painters* (1718-1721) was still influenced by Stoicism, even if it was a century apart from the Stoic peak. In this respect, connecting the Neostoicism with Rubens or a painting genre that was popular in this period does not seem a stretch. After all, Jill Kraye emphasizes how the Northern humanists had a general interest in contemporary art, often commissioning pieces meant to edify certain ideas.³⁷

Returning to the city of Leiden and its university, in terms of artistic production, Leiden becomes a centre. As Philip Hooks³⁸ shows in his analysis regarding the artistic production and market in the Netherlands, there were the cities of Utrecht, Delft and, Amsterdam that developed first in this sense, as the northern provinces

³⁴ Svetlana Alpers, *The Art of Describing. Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1983, p. xxiv.

³⁵ Thijs Weststeijn, *The Visible World*, p. 40.

³⁶ *Idem*.

³⁷ Jill Kraye, "Artists and Humanists" in Jill Kraye (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism*, p. 179.

³⁸ Philip Hook, *Escrocii galeriilor de artă*, Baroque Books & Arts, București, 2017, pp. 14-16.

had a general quicker growth. Following Jonathan Israel³⁹, Leiden, Haarlem, Antwerp and the southern provinces in general developed, artistically speaking, in a second wave, a thing that comes off as a bit surprising, because in Leiden the Neostoicism and the humanism were promoted through the university. If the assumption that the Stoic teachings that were found in this new, adapted and modern form made a lasting impression in the Netherlands, later in the Dutch Republic, is right, then one should be able to test it. It can be done through some selected art pieces from the said timeline that, when analyzed, should be able to show the key ideas from the Neostoic moral philosophy.

Concerning the works of the 17th-century artists, the genre of Still Life will be of interest, because the painting of Rubens of *The Four Philosophers* has already been discussed in several studies.⁴⁰ As the said genre was widely spread, with an



Fig. 1. David Bailly, *Vanitas with the Bust of Seneca*, first half of the 17th-century, via Studfile.net.

estimation of two million and a half of paintings, around the year 1650⁴¹ and was a popular genre in Leiden, it may shed light on how the Stoic moral was regarded by a wider public. Such a great number of paintings is supported by the fact that their price range was accessible to the average man, thing that partially explains their success on the market.⁴²

³⁹ Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic. Its Rise, Greatness and Fall*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995, pp. 548-551.

⁴⁰ Such as Lisa Rosenthal, *Gender, Politics, and Allegory in the Art of Rubens*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2005 and Christopher Brooke, *Philosophic Pride. Stoicism and Political Thought from Lipsius to Rousseau*, Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford, 2012.

⁴¹ Philip Hook, *Escroicii galeriilor de artă*, Baroque Books & Arts, București, 2017, pp. 28-30.

⁴² Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic. Its Rise, Greatness and Fall*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995, p. 559.

If we are to look upon Leiden, the works of the painter David Bailly, that was born and worked here,⁴³ might be able to convey a few aspects of the theory that Lipsius developed during his time at the Leiden University. In this respect, of great interest is the work with the title *A Vanitas Still Life with the Bust of Seneca*. Three types of objects can be found in it: creations that emulate the human body, organic matters, and books as an object of knowledge and study. The central piece is the bust of Seneca, followed by another classical bust and a smaller statue. The positioning of a skull between them is noteworthy, as it gives the work its *vanitas* character. Going back to the observation made by Thijs Weststeijn,⁴⁴ that the study of nature and ethics were closely related, as philosophy had a practical side to it in the early modern times, the opened books, containing the sketches that are a study of nature become connected to philosophy.

A painter was no stranger to philosophy, as he dealt with the study of nature and this study was connected with philosophy. It should be kept in mind that the natural sciences were very prolific in modern times and even philosophy was thought to be one of them.⁴⁵ It ought not to be debated whether or not the skull has the meaning of *memento mori*, as Svetlana Alpers and other art historians proved.⁴⁶ It is this association of *memento mori*, which was a popular medieval theme long before the Vanitas occurred, with the bust of Seneca that marks a change in which this cautionary message is being read. Because of the Neostoicism of Justus Lipsius and the rediscovery of classical Stoicism in a humanistic context, such a painting gains philosophical meaning, becoming a testimony to the increased popularity of both the stoics and authors like Lipsius. Having a look at Seneca's philosophy, the Roman philosopher dealt at length with the topic of death and how to conquer its fear.

One of the solutions he offered was the premeditation of death during one's life, to prepare for it. Learning how to die became the core of learning how to live and a key feature of his philosophy.⁴⁷ Concerning this, a painting can fulfil this very role of premeditation as it urges the viewer to think about this message of *memento mori*, while also remembering the recipes provided by both Stoics and Neostoics for overcoming the fear of death.

⁴³ As seen on *David Bailly*, RKD, Neederlands Instituut voor Kunstgeschiedenis <https://rkd.nl/nl/explore/artists/record?query=david+bailly&start=0> (accessed 10.02.2020).

⁴⁴ Thijs Weststeijn, *The Visible World*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, 2008, pp. 39-40.

⁴⁵ *Idem*.

⁴⁶ See Svetlana Alpers, *The Art of Describing*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1984 and Ingvar Bergström, *Dutch Still-Life Painting in the Seventeenth Century*, Hacker Art Books, 1983.

⁴⁷ Noyes Russell, "Seneca on Death", *Journal of Religion and Health*, Vol. 12, no. 3, 1973, Springer, pp. 223-240.

Another example shall be able to prove the point. Jan Davidszoon de Heem had a Leiden period as well, studying under David Bailly.⁴⁸ He is considered to be one of the most acclaimed still life painters. While in Leiden, de Heem had a change in his painting subject: from flowers and food to books with the theme of *vanitas*.



Fig. 2. Jan Davidszoon de Heem, *Still Life of Books*, first half of the 17th-century, via Wikimedia

As far as the Baroque painting is concerned, details were an important part of it and de Heem made no exception. In his Book Still Life period, he often painted open books, just like in this work called *Still Life of Books*, detailing them so that the viewer could read what was on the pages. The pages usually contained passages about the futility of life, its meaningless character, and brevity.⁴⁹ What can be easily deduced from here is the fact that this painting conveys the same Stoic message,

through *memento mori*. While in the given example there is no skull, the message is the same through the readable passages that make this still life a more subtle *vanitas*.

Even though the examples bear striking similarities with the classical Stoic theory, it is advisable to not claim them as such. Recalling the success and fame of both Justus Lipsius and his works, together with the fact that the early modern times were still a religious period, the paintings ought to be viewed in the light of Neostoicism. While they do not stray far from the traditional Stoicism, they do differ when it comes to general beliefs. The modern world is a world that believes in life after death, a belief that alters the Stoic perspective through hope.

Constancy, to What End?

One may justly wonder to what end may the values of Neostoicism and this entire discussion be any useful, outside the field of abstractions? Stoicism, in

⁴⁸ As seen on *Jan Davidsz. De Heem*, RKD, Nederlands Instituut voor Kunstgeschiedenis <https://rkd.nl/nl/explore/artists/36842> (accessed 12.02.2020).

⁴⁹ Ingvar Bergström, "De Heem's Painting of His First Dutch Period", *Oud Holland*, Vol. 71, No. 4, 1956, Brill, pp. 173-183.

general, is often critiqued to be idealistic, unable to be put in practice. The image painted in the article so far seems idealistic, putting the mentioned thinkers in a good light. This may change through what Wiep van Bunge points. A reading of Tacitus or Cassius Dio will paint a different picture of Seneca who is said to have earned quite the fortune while educating Nero.⁵⁰ The same can be said about Justus Lipsius that is said to have stolen part of Muret's writings and presented them as his own or who often plagiarized.⁵¹ To what good shall we inquire further into Neostoicism and Stoicism as they turn out to be impossible and a bit rotten?

I did not have an answer to this when I first wrote this article, all because the pandemic did not happen back then. Revisiting my draft and ideas the realization of the actuality of Justus' *De Constantia* came to me. It is now, precisely, that Neostoicism may be more accessible, more relevant and closer to where we stand as a society. Why the Neostoicism, instead of Stoicism in its classical form? I will list a few of the reasons for this choice. Historically speaking, in the broadest sense, we are closer to modern times than we are to the Antiquity, sharing more cultural similarities. Moreover, we find ourselves in a type of crisis that is similar to what Justus Lipsius has lived: we are, at least metaphorically, in an ongoing war. To argue for this rather bold affirmation, let me support it with some instances. As Nigel Warburton pointed out in his "(Hospital) trolley problems. Some philosophical responses to coronavirus", the ongoing pandemic has been described as a metaphoric war by various leaders around the globe. The current situation with the coronavirus is described as an invisible war, in an attempt of making us stay alert and united against this common *enemy*.⁵² As the author emphasizes, it's interesting to think about the fact that we chose to depict an almost-invisible virus as an enemy, humanizing it in a sense, putting it in a war narrative. When viewing the situation from the lenses of the mentioned metaphors, the current situation sounds more similar to the actual war that Lipsius witnessed during his times.

Because of some similarities in our circumstances, Lipsius' work may sit closer to us than before, allowing us to put his writings in the perspective of this generalized epidemic. It suddenly becomes more relevant than before as we can find a real and practical mean for his advices, all in order to keep our constancy that may have been threatened by the recent lockdown, government measures and,

⁵⁰ Wiep van Bunge, "How Not to Cope with Crises" in *Erasmus School of Philosophy*, <https://www.eur.nl/en/esphil/how-not-cope-crises>, (accessed 2.10.2020).

⁵¹ Jill Kraye, "The Humanist as Moral Philosopher: Marc-Antoine Muret's 1585 Edition of Seneca" in Jill Kraye, Risto Saarinen (eds.), *Moral Philosophy on the Threshold of Modernity*, p. 313.

⁵² Nigel Warburton, "(Hospital) trolley problems. Some philosophical responses to coronavirus", in *The TLS* <https://www.the-tls.co.uk/articles/philosophical-responses-coronavirus-nigel-warburton/>, (accessed 2.10.2020).

most important, deaths. It gives us an occasion to reflect, as individuals, on the various ways presented to guard our mind against the chaos of the world. Had we not lived through this pandemic so far, it would have been difficult to imagine the world entering a rather chaotic state where fear is more present than it used to be. It would have been difficult, probably, as it has been for me, to imagine the actual use and purpose of this writing.

Because fear plays an important role in such a distressful situation, being a main destabilizing factor, Hobbes comes to mind. To be more precise, a few recent readings of him in the light of the actual situation might prove quite insightful. Daniel Mc Carthy suggests that a broader reading of Hobbes' works highlights the role that fear played in his views on history and society. Fear is seen by the philosopher as the main catalyst of any war. The prosperity of one state brings about the fear of the other and so on and forth in a never-ending cycle. He brings up the position of Hobbes on the topic of continual warfare that is rather not an eternal war, but rather the fear of one breaking out. Following the philosopher, McCarthy notes how a sovereign or a government that cannot protect the subject throws it back in a natural state.⁵³ While this might appear as not directly connected to the current discussion, it is so. After all, Hobbes too lived the Thirty Years War. Why is fear worth mentioning? It is so because, from a Hobbesian view, it is the main factor that is able to commence the series of events that would eventually lead to chaos if the proper measures are not enacted. By mentioning this catalyst that fear is, constancy becomes a possible option for countering this. What does constancy mean? It is the aptitude of keeping oneself in the same state of mind and heart during a period of time, it is *the quality of staying the same and not changing*⁵⁴. Of course, what Lipsius asks of the reader is a tremendous, if not impossible task.

It appears clearer now why the Stoicism was critiqued as too ideal, impossible to practice. In uncertain circumstances as the ones that we face now, some more than the others, it is difficult to keep our constancy, not let the fear and uncertainty creep in, and act in accordance with some ideals. While Stoicism made quite the comeback in recent, more pleasant, times through a number of books that were addressed to the general reader and made Stoicism become a popular thing outside academia, it might have achieved this because we enjoyed peaceful times. While this point cannot be thoroughly proven, nor can we know what the fate of those books would have been, had they been published in 2020, we have to

⁵³ Daniel McCarthy, "A Philosophy of Fear--and Society of Scolds: What Thomas Hobbes Tells Us about the Response to the Coronavirus--and Why the Unafraid Cannot Be Tolerated by Right-thinking Liberals" *Modern Age* (Chicago) 62, no. 2, 2020, p. 7.

⁵⁴ According to Oxford Learners Dictionary, <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/constancy>, (accessed 5.10.2020).

agree on at least one point. That is the recent experiences which made us rethink the writings that advised on life and attitudes during a crisis, and this includes Neostoicism.

Going to what Eileen Hunt Botting is pointing in “A novel (coronavirus) reading of Hobbes’s *Leviathan*” we find an interesting observation. When Hobbes wrote about how people, when they are isolated from society, lose the account of time, but also the meaning and purpose of industry and other activities, he must have indicated living in a form of quarantine,⁵⁵ in the sense of isolation. Undoubtedly, the isolation from the time of Hobbes is different from our current isolation during the pandemic, and yet they seem to both somehow be able to suspend to a degree our lives. Just as David Runciman argues, Hobbes indicates how this suspension, in this case of politics, is a mean to highlight and uncover the “nature of power”.⁵⁶ It’s almost as if this isolation and this loss of normality make us aware of things we did not realize up until now.

How can constancy serve us and what has art to do with this? There are several points in which *De constantia* may be applied to our predicament and I will highlight those. First of all, as the beginning of the First Book states, trying to run from the problem will not solve our discomfort towards it. The present virus spread virtually everywhere and even if you do run to a remote island that has no cases, you will still live with the fear that this might change in the future. Lipsius advises conquering fear through compassion for those around us and through constancy as constancy leads to stability which, in turn, to less discomfort. From his point of view, constancy is connected to strength, fidelity and faithfulness and it is a product of reason. Due to its descent, it has the ability to counter fear that is irrational. By sticking to these traits, one can remain steadfast in constancy.

Stability requires strength, fidelity requires virtue and faithfulness requires trust. By enacting these towards our companions we make sure that we do not stray from the rational way. Another important thing would be how opinions, that are opposed to rational thinking, lead to inconstancy and I think the current general situation and our personal experiences can support the danger of irrational opinions when it comes to a crisis of any sort. The last point worth mentioning here is that of the public and private evils that are characteristic of a generally difficult situation. We all face private evils and public evils, probably more often now than before and even to this stressful situation the constancy may help or at least inspire

⁵⁵ Eileen Hunt Botting, “A novel (coronavirus) reading of Hobbes’s *Leviathan*”, in *History of European Ideas*, DOI: 10.1080/01916599.2020.1792059, 2020, p. 3.

⁵⁶ David Runciman, “Coronavirus Has Not Suspended Politics It Has Revealed the Nature of Power”, *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/mar/27/coronavirus-politics-lockdown-hobbes>, (accessed 5.10.2020).

to remain steadfast in their face for as long as possible. After all, as Lipsius notes, the current crisis is nothing special. The human history is filled with death, war and disease. While we should not despair, we should at least reconsider our hardship in comparison to past hardship and find a way to derive hope from the past.

The given examples of paintings that are enriched with Neostoic meaning may play the role of a reminder because they are accessible to us from the comfort of our home and are already part of our shared material culture. Moreover, they can perform a double-movement effect. The first would be that of being affected by the ideas of Neostoicism when they were created, and the second would be how they can affect us in contemporary times. While it was indicated how the Stoic ideal is rather ideal and, consequently, impossible to achieve, sometimes the mere power to affect and produce an effect is to be regarded. This is an ability that is specific to art. By viewing these still lifes we may be able to find inspiration, hope, and strength and by letting us be affected we may have the power to remain in constancy.

Conclusion

The philosophy of Justus Lipsius and his dialogue *De constantia* are worth revisiting in the light of the recent events. Through his interest for the Stoics, Lipsius was able to contribute to a more general and European interest towards this topic. He had the merits of comprising his edition of Seneca that was essential to humanistic scholarship and to reconstruct the Stoic moral and natural philosophy. Some Stoic ideas survived this interest peak of the late 16th century and 17th century and were adopted by philosophers such as Descartes and Spinoza. The latter adopted and emphasized the idea of the irrelevancy of the external world for the internal one and argued for the primacy of the intellect over emotions.⁵⁷ This influence of his ideas can be seen in some art production, especially the one that is connected to the places where Lipsius lived and it is a testimony to their popularity and the various ways of transmitting them. Even if the Stoic ideal remains an ideal, the Neostoicism of Justus Lipsius is meaningful in as much as any philosophy that deals with crises because it can help us view the text from both its relevancy and our recent general experience. The isolation, the anxiety, the uneasiness and fear are emotions that have been more or less present in our lives during this pandemic and they require a solution. For some, constancy may prove useful.

⁵⁷ Jill Kraye, "Philologists and Philosophers" in *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism*, p. 152.

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ALVIN PLANTINGA'S REFORMED EPISTEMOLOGY

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ABSTRACT. *Alvin Plantinga's Reformed Epistemology.* Alvin Plantinga is a well-known defender of Reformed epistemology. The main thesis of the Reformed epistemology argues that faith in God is rational and justified without the aid of arguments or evidence. In this paper, we intend to describe Alvin Plantinga's perspective, more precisely, the A / C model (Aquinas / Calvin) proposed by him, in which faith in God is innate and does not need arguments or evidence, and then to analyze the objections on this model, in order to determine whether faith in God can be considered basic.

Keywords: *epistemology, reformed, Alvin Plantinga, warrant, justification*

Introduction

Almost every book or paper you begin to read about Reformed epistemology, almost every one of them starts with the simplistic definition "Reformed epistemology is the thesis about religious beliefs that can be rational without arguments or evidence", and this affirmation is true. But who says that to be considered rational you need arguments or evidence? After all, there are many domains in which we accept beliefs without arguments or evidence. William Lane Craig in a debate with Peter Attkins states five domains in which we accept truths without the help of arguments or evidence: mathematical and logical truths (science presuppose math and logic, trying to prove those kinds of truths is like arguing in circles), metaphysical truths, (for example, other minds, or the reality of the past, the reality of the external world cannot be proven by scientific methods), ethical truths (statements of values cannot be proven by the scientific methods) aesthetical judgments, and finally science itself which in many cases is based on unprovable assumptions.

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In his trilogy (*Warrant: The Current Debate, Warrant and Proper Function and Warranted Christian Belief*) Plantinga tries to refute the traditional epistemological perspective and to prove that belief in God is a basic belief and is rational without evidence or arguments.

In this article, we will try to present Alvin Plantinga's Reformed Epistemology. For doing that we will try to describe the A/C Model proposed by Plantinga which came in two versions, the shorter and the extended version. And after that, we will try to present some of the objections to these models and how Plantinga answer to those objections. This paper aims to describe and analyze if the reformed epistemology proposed by Alvin Plantinga can be a good source of knowledge regarding religious beliefs.

1. A/C Model

The A/C stands for Aquinas/Calvin. In *Warranted Christian Belief* Plantinga presents two versions of his model, the first one is called simply "A/C Model", which we think is a shorter version, and the „extended A/C Model". Before presenting the two models Plantinga claims that these models are first of all, possible, therefore theistic belief and especially Christian belief have warrant. The type of possibility involved here is not just logical possibility but according to Plantinga, these models claim epistemic possibility, in the sense in which these models are consistent with what we know.

Second, according to Plantinga, there is not any "cogent objection to the model", no objection of any kind, philosophic or scientific. The only objections that we can raise against this model are the same objections against the theistic and Christian beliefs. As Plantinga suggests, if the Christian belief is true, then his model „or some variation" is also true.

Third, according to Plantinga these models are not just possible and beyond philosophical challenge, but are also true, and Plantinga does not try to prove that, and he has a justification for that. The shorter version entails the truth of theism, and the extended version entails the truths of Christian belief. To prove that these models are true, he has to prove that theism and Christian beliefs are also true.

And finally, according to Plantinga, there are multiple models for warrant of Christian belief, which are similar to his models, and if indeed classical Christian beliefs are true, then one or more of these models is true. After those claims are stated in place, Plantinga makes a step forward in presenting his model. Plantinga begins from the writings of Thomas d'Aquino and John Calvin which both affirm

that we have a kind of natural knowledge of God. According to Aquinas "To know that God exists in a general and confused way is implanted in us by nature".¹ In the opening of chapter III of *Institutes of Christian Religion*, Calvin states that the knowledge of God is naturally implanted in the human mind and "That there exists in the human mind, and indeed by natural instinct, some sense of Deity".² According to Plantinga, Calvin's concept of natural knowledge is taken from apostle Paul, in Romans 1:

"since what may be known about God is plain to them because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse."

So according to apostle Paul, Aquinas, and Calvin we have an innate human ability to know or to form beliefs about God which is called by Calvin "*sensus divinitatis*". In addition to that, the rejection of God, according to Calvin, is a testimony of this *sensus divinitatis*:

"All men of sound judgment will therefore hold, that a sense of Deity is indelibly engraved on the human heart. And that this belief is naturally engendered in all, and thoroughly fixed as it were in our bones, is strikingly attested by the contumacy of the wicked, who, though they struggle furiously, are unable to extricate themselves from the fear of God."

From these passages, Plantinga concludes that we have a kind of faculty or cognitive mechanism, called *sensus divinitatis*, which, under some circumstance produce beliefs about God. The circumstances are the triggers for this mechanism to produce theistic beliefs.³ One thing to notice here is, even if Plantinga considers that the circumstances are the triggers for this kind of beliefs, the circumstances are not generating these beliefs, neither these beliefs are the product of my own cognitive mechanism:

„...rather these beliefs are formed in us; in the typical case we don't consciously choose to have those beliefs. Instead, we find ourselves with them, just as we find ourselves with perceptual and memory beliefs."⁴

¹ St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Volume 1, Cosimo, Inc., 2013, p. 12.

² Jean Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, P. H. Nicklin, 1816, 51.

³ Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 171-72.

⁴ Plantinga, p. 172.

According to Plantinga, these kinds of beliefs are not in my control, you do not decide to have or not to have these types of beliefs, these beliefs are similar with the perceptual and memory beliefs. For example, says Plantinga, I look in my back garden and I see a tree, and I form this belief that in my backyard is actually a tree. Or I am asked, what I have had for breakfast, I check my memory and I remember that I have had had pancakes with blueberry. According to Plantinga, theistic beliefs are the same as perceptual and memory beliefs.

The second thing to notice is that Plantinga, and Calvin as well, thinks that knowledge of God is innate. In Plantinga's words „innate...such that one has from birth”, in Calvin's word „from his mother's womb”.⁵The objection that may arise from here is with the awareness of this kind of belief. Neither Plantinga, and neither Calvin, suggests that we are aware of the existence of this type of belief in God from the birth, but both of them suggest that we have a capacity for this type of knowledge, and that is innate. Plantinga compares this capacity for the knowledge of God, with the arithmetical knowledge, we don't know elementary arithmetic from birth, but we have the capacity for this type of knowledge.⁶ According to Plantinga, this model has six features that worth to be mentioned.

First, *basicity*, according to Plantinga we do not arrive at this type of natural knowledge by way of inference or arguments, but it is a more immediate way. Plantinga refutes the natural theology argument by which someone can behold the night sky or the Australian outback or something like that and conclude that such a person like God exists. It is rather that upon the perception of these things that makes these beliefs arise within us. According to Plantinga, these beliefs „are occasioned by the circumstances; they are not conclusions from them”. The heavens declare the glory of God and the skies proclaim the work of his hands, but this must not be used as a premise for an argument says Plantinga, or, the awareness of guilt, „I am guilty, so there must be a God”, this type of argument is very weak. The perception of guilt may trigger the *sensus divinitatis* to produce belief in God, it does not work by way of an argument.

The *sensus divinitatis* resembles perception, memory, and *a priori* beliefs. Regarding the perception beliefs Plantinga says:

„I look out into the backyard; I see that the coral tiger lilies are in bloom. I don't note that I am being appeared to a certain complicated way (that my experience is of a certain complicated character) and then make an argument from my being appeared to in that way to the conclusion that in fact there are

⁵ Christopher Metress ed., *Teaching the Reformations*, MDPI, 2018 p. 69.

⁶ Plantinga, p. 173.

coral tiger lilies in bloom there... It is rather that upon being appeared to in that way (and given my previous training), the belief that the coral tiger lilies are in bloom spontaneously arises in me. This belief will ordinarily be basic, in the sense that it is not accepted on the evidential basis of other propositions.”⁷

Regarding memory and *a priori* beliefs:

„The same goes for memory. You ask me what I had for breakfast; I think for a moment and then remember: pancakes with blueberries. I don't argue from the fact that it *seems* to me that I remember having pancakes for breakfast to the conclusion that I did; rather, you ask me what I had for breakfast, and the answer simply comes to mind. Or consider *a priori* belief. I do not infer from other things that, for example, *modus ponens* is a valid form of argument: I just see that it is so and, in fact, *must* be so. All of these, we might say, are starting points for thought. But (on the model) the same goes for the sense of divinity. It isn't a matter of making a quick and dirty inference from the grandeur of the mountains or the beauty of the flower or the sun on the treetops to the existence of God; instead, a belief about God spontaneously arises in those circumstances, the circumstances that trigger the operation of the *sensus divinitatis*. This belief is another of those starting points for thought; it too is basic in the sense that the beliefs in question are not accepted on the evidential basis of other beliefs.”⁸

According to Plantinga, perception, memory, and *a priori* beliefs are not based on arguments, or some other propositions, these beliefs are basic in the sense that they are independent of other beliefs.

Second, *proper basicity with respect to justification*, according to Plantinga, on his model a belief produced by *sensus divinitatis* is properly basic in at least two senses. First is basic because the belief in question is not accepted on the evidential basis of other propositions. Second, the person is justified in holding this belief, meaning that is not violating no epistemic rights or duties in holding that belief in that way.⁹

Third, *proper basicity with respect to warrant*, on Plantinga's view: „*p* is properly basic for S in *this* sense if and only S accepts *p* in the basic way, and furthermore, *p* has warrant for S”.¹⁰ According to Plantinga, perceptual, memory, and some *a priori* are seen not just as basic beliefs but they often have warrant. This means that are produced by cognitive faculties functioning properly in a congenial environment according to a design plan successfully aimed at truth.

⁷ Plantinga, p. 175.

⁸ Plantinga, p. 175–76.

⁹ Plantinga, p. 178.

¹⁰ Plantinga, p. 178.

Then the A/C Model can also be properly basic with respect to warrant. According to Plantinga on his model, the belief can have warrant for the person, and this is often sufficient for knowledge. The *sensus divinitatis* triggers under the right conditions true beliefs that are not evidentially based on other beliefs. Therefore, these beliefs say Plantinga, meets the conditions for warrant, and if these beliefs are strong enough, they constitute knowledge.¹¹

Forth, *natural knowledge of God*, at this point Plantinga makes the distinction between this natural knowledge of God, which is part of our original cognitive equipment and the internal instigation of the Holy Spirit. The former applies to all human beings, the later

“is an element in the divine response to the human sin and the human predicament, a predicament in which we human beings require healing, restoration, and salvation. According to fundamental Christian teaching, the central divine response to our predicament is the incarnation and atonement: the life, sacrificial death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the divine son of God. By virtue of this divine response, we human beings can be put right with God and live triumphantly with him in this life and the next.”¹²

According to Plantinga, the work of the Holy Spirit is a special type of cognitive instrument or „agency” which is not part of our original noetic equipment and is a response to our sinful condition, and again the *sensus divinitatis* is a response to our fallen condition.¹³

Fifth, *perceptual or experiential knowledge*? At this point, Plantinga says: if the A/C Model is correct and if knowledge of God does not come from inference from other things then it follows that our knowledge of God comes from perception, and the warrant of the Christian belief is actually perceptual warrant. Not necessarily, says Plantinga, there is a person like God, and we have the possibility and actuality of perceiving him. The problem involved here is what perceiving is? According to Plantinga if perceiving involves specifically sensuous imagery then perceiving God in this way is not possible. But Plantinga thinks we can take perception in other senses, for example, bat’s echolocation.¹⁴ William Alston provides us with another example, putative perception of God, which does not involve sensors imagery. Another example is that Christian believer may feel (in Plantinga’s words this type of perception is called „palpable”) the presence of God,

¹¹ Plantinga, p. 179.

¹² Plantinga, p. 179.

¹³ Plantinga, p. 180.

¹⁴ Plantinga, p. 181.

according to Alston, when Moses met God on Sinai, God had neither form, color, odor, no taste, no localization.¹⁵ According to Plantinga, there is no doubt that perception of God or „something like it” occurs but is not easy to say that in every situation when *sensus divinitatis* operates it will make use of perception to produce warranted beliefs. It seems that in some situations the operation of *sensus divinitatis* involves perception but in others not. Plantinga and Alston as well make the distinction between the indirect perception of God, in which the presence of God is mediated by something else (the sky, the mountains), but in other cases God doesn't seem present or presented in the various form, powerful, glorious, obeyed, worshiped. And in other cases such as guilt, danger, gratitude, the operation of *sensus divinitatis* may trigger the sense that God is actually present. So according to Plantinga, the *sensus divinitatis* does not necessarily involves perception of God.¹⁶

Regarding the experiential knowledge, Plantinga proceeds the same way, first by defining what religious experience is. In his opinion, this definition is constructed in thousands of different ways which are very ambiguous between them, but none the less the *sensus divinitatis* will always involve experience of some sort or another. Plantinga presents some examples, in some cases, there is sensuous imagery when sometimes the believer feels the presence of God, no sensuous imagery is present, „but perhaps something (necessarily hard to describe) like it”. In other cases, we have the experience that comes with being frightened, feeling grateful, angry, pleased, etc. According to Plantinga, none of these are connected strictly to the operation of the *sensus divinitatis*. But we have a type of experience that is always connected to the operation of *sensus divinitatis* and that is called by Plantinga *doxastic experience*.

“The sort of experience one has when entertaining any proposition, one believes. Entertaining, for instance, the proposition that $3+2=5$ or that Mount Everest is higher than Mount Blanc *feels* different from entertaining one you think is clearly false $-3+2=6$, for example, or Mount Blanck is higher than Mount Everest. The first two feel natural, right, acceptable; the second two feel objectionable, wrong, eminently rejectable.”¹⁷

Even so, with all these varieties of experience, we cannot conclude that knowledge by way of *sensus divinitatis* is based on experiential knowledge. Plantinga is aware that this question involves “a long and essentially irrelevant effort to answer” and for the moment is better to lay it aside.¹⁸

¹⁵ William P. Alston, *Perceiving God: The Epistemology of Religious Experience*, Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1991, p. 13.

¹⁶ Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, p. 182.

¹⁷ Plantinga, p. 183.

¹⁸ Plantinga, p. 183.

Finally, the last characteristic of this model, *sin and natural knowledge*. According to the A/C Model this natural knowledge of God “has been compromised, weakened, reduced, smothered, overlaid or impeded by sin and its consequences.” And the *sensus divinitatis* is restored „to proper function by regeneration and the operation of Holy Spirit”. According to Plantinga, the *sensus divinitatis*, the operation and the knowledge produced by the operation of the *sensus divinitatis* prior to faith and regeneration “is both narrower in scope and partially suppressed”, or as well this faculty may be “diseased and thus partly or wholly disabled.” By faith and regeneration and the work of Holy Spirit, the *sensus divinitatis* is partly healed and restored to proper function.¹⁹

After presenting all the characteristics for the A/C Model, Plantinga says that this model is incomplete, and we must proceed forward to the extended A/C Model to complete this picture.

2. Extended A/C Model

As we mentioned before, the extended A/C Model applies to the Christian belief, according to this model the classical Christian doctrines are justified, rational, and warranted. In presenting this model, Plantinga addresses topics such as, the Bible, the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit, and faith.

Plantinga starts by defining what *faith* is and *how does faith work*. In his acceptance, faith is not as Mark Twain explains it “believing what you know ain’t true”. The definition of faith used in developing this model is the same or „closer” to Heidelberg Catechism definition of faith:

“True faith is not only a knowledge and conviction that everything God reveals in his word is true; it is also a deep-rooted assurance, created in me by the Holy Spirit through the gospel, that, out of sheer grace earned for us by Christ, not only others, but I too, have had my sins forgiven, have been made forever right with God, and have been granted salvation. (Q. 21)”

According to this definition, Plantinga concludes that faith is a cognitive activity, and it involves the will, affection (faith... “it is sealed upon our hearts”, the believer says Plantinga manifest affections like gratitude, love, etc.), and it involves executive function.²⁰

¹⁹ Plantinga, p. 185–86.

²⁰ Alvin Plantinga, *Knowledge and Christian Belief*, Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans, 2015, p. 54.

How does faith work? What is involved, what sort of phenomenology is taking place in a person to accept the great truths of the gospel. According to Plantinga, there are three things, reading Scriptures, internal invitation or instigation of the Holy Spirit, and faith which is “the human belief that results”.²¹ On this model, the Holy Spirit produces the “internal invitation or instigation” this can happen when some reads Scriptures, hear the gospel preached, or is exposed in one way or another to the Bible teachings. Under these circumstances the Holy Spirit cause people to have faith.²² At this point, Plantinga mentions that Scripture could be seen as, I will call it, simple testimony, one that is taking place between two friends for example, but Plantinga is referring to another meaning of testimony, a special type, called divine testimony. So, faith is the belief in the divine testimony, that results from the internal instigation of the Holy Spirit.²³

Another thing worth mentioning is that on this model, *faith has a positive epistemic status*, this means that belief will have justification, rationality (internal and external), and warrant. According to Plantinga, Christian belief is deontologically justified, or at least there should be a little doubt, in fulfilling the duties and responsibilities. Plantinga is aware that are some intellectual obligations and duties that require to be fulfilled, but clearly, there is no violation of intellectual obligation in accepting faith as a result of the instigation of the Holy Spirit.²⁴ Of course, there are some objections to that, as John Macquarrie mentions, someone how thinks that his beliefs come from God is arrogant, hence is not justified.²⁵ This type of objection is very simple to answer by appealing to *argumentum ab auctoritate*. We will deal whit this type of objection in the next section.

Internal rationality requires first, proper function of the cognitive mechanism and second that you have done your best in forming the belief in question, how it fits with your other beliefs, what are the weakest and strongest points, what are the objections. Clearly, says Plantinga, someone who is accepting the Christian beliefs in this way can easily meet these conditions, and belief in this way, on the testimonial model, enjoys both justification and internal rationality.²⁶

External rationality and warrant, according to Plantinga faith is knowledge, and should not be *contrasted* with knowledge, because faith *is* knowledge of a special kind (Plantinga’s emphasize). Is of a special kind, because, according to Plantinga, is the most important thing a person could possibly know, and because of the way

²¹ Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, 250.

²² Erik Baldwin, “Could the Extended Aquinas/Calvin Model Defeat Basic Christian Belief?,” *Philosophia Christi* Vol. 8, no. 2 (2006): p. 384.

²³ Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, p. 252.

²⁴ Plantinga, p. 253.

²⁵ John Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology*, New York: SCM Press, 1977, p. 50.

²⁶ Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, p. 255.

in which is known. It involves the activity of God.²⁷ This is one of the reasons Plantinga is to be placed between externalists, in his acceptance, the „belief-producing process is dual” in which both the Holy Spirit and the Scripture are involved in revealing the great truths Christian beliefs.

Now, faith is a belief-producing process, like memory and perception, but differs from these because it involves the activity of the Holy Spirit. Memory and perception must meet some conditions to qualify as knowledge, the same is for belief. In *Warrant and Proper Function*, Plantinga states some conditions under which belief is warranted. First, belief must be produced in me by my cognitive faculties that are working properly. Here the meaning of „properly” is to work as they ought to, the subject in cause must not suffer from any cognitive dysfunction, says Plantinga. Not only to be free of malfunction in the production of beliefs but as well in sustaining them. The second condition is to work according to a design plan, according to Plantinga, the „design plan of an organism or artifact specifies how it works when it works properly...it specifies how the organism *should* work.”²⁸ And third, this belief-production mechanism should be successfully aimed at production true beliefs. The belief production mechanism could produce a belief that has other purposes, for example, survival, or wish fulfillment, as Freud thought.²⁹

According to Plantinga, this model is also *proper basic* meaning that Christian belief is not the conclusion of an argument nor is accepted on the evidential basis of other beliefs, nor because is a “good explanation of phenomena of one kind or another.”, and Christian beliefs are neither conclusions from religious experience. Christian belief is immediate, says Plantinga, and if the belief is basic this means the belief is justified, rational, and warranted. On the other side, we have *Scriptures* which has “its own evidence with it”.³⁰ Here Plantinga makes use of Calvin's writings. According to Calvin, Scripture is „self-authenticating”, meaning that, Scripture is knowledge that “has flowed from the very mouth of God”³¹

From the writings of Calvin, Plantinga draws the conclusion that self-authenticating means that, the truths of the Scripture are indeed evident and their evidence is immediately, and they are not evidently by way of propositional evidence, nor are based on other basic beliefs. What Calvin means is that we do not need arguments, from examples, history, or authority and reliability of Scripture to conclude that Christian beliefs are true.³²

²⁷ Plantinga, p. 256.

²⁸ Alvin Plantinga, *Warrant and Proper Function*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1993, p. 22.

²⁹ Plantinga, p. 12–20.

³⁰ Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, p. 259.

³¹ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, p. 87.

³² Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, p. 262.

Finally, *cognitive renewal*. Plantinga suggests that we cannot believe until our cognitive mechanism, or belief producing mechanism is renewed. He quotes, the words of Jesus Christ “unless a person is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3), and apostle Paul, who states that believer becomes a new person in Christ. So, the believer must be regenerated, transformed, renewed, restored brought in the state it was originally created. According to Plantinga, sin has damaged our nature, sin induces blindness, dullness, stupidity, imperceptiveness, sin induces some sort of madness of the will, but by the work of the Holy Spirit “regeneration heals the ravages of sin” and this work begins in this life and is perfected in the afterlife. What are the benefits of regeneration? First says Plantinga, the *sensus divinitatis* is repaired, now we can see God. We can see much clear “the beauty, splendor, loveliness, attractiveness, glory of God. It enables us to see something of the spectacular depth of love revealed in the incarnation and atonement.” At the same time, it gives us a much clearer view of the abomination, „heinousness” of sin. Second, not only that I see who God is, but now I can see clearly what my place in the universe is. “Perhaps I will no longer see myself as the center of things, or see my wants, needs, and desire as more important...than anyone else’s.” Third, it enables us to see what is most important about ourselves. Meaning that we are created in the image of a loving God, and our origins are rooted in the person of God, belief which is, as Plantinga says, “the Achilles heel of naturalism”.³³

In conclusion, the extended version of the A/C Model is the classical, Christian perspective on how someone can have warranted beliefs in the absence of arguments or evidence. In this process, the Scripture, the Holy Spirit, and faith are involved to produce in us belief. These beliefs are justified, rational (internal and external), and warranted. The Holy Spirit is responsible for the regeneration act, in which our cognitive mechanism, or our belief production mechanism or our *sensus divinitatis* is renewed, in this way the Holy Spirit is working in accordance with God’s teaching in Scriptures.

3. Objections

Plantinga in WCB analyzes analyze and refutes five objections, some of them have to do with religious experience, the great pumpkin objection, and circularity objection. We will not go in all the details; we will try to summarize the objections and how Plantinga refutes them.

First, a belief cannot have warrant from religious experience. Anthony O’Hear in his book *Experience, Explanation and Faith* writes how difficult is for a non-believer

³³ Plantinga, p. 281.

to grasp the idea of “direct personal contact with a non-sensory reality”. What O’Hear is trying to show is the point to which a belief can be justified by experience.³⁴ According to Plantinga, this objection is not very specific, O’Hear although is writing about justification he is not being very accurate. Plantinga ask’s “is O’Hear talking about *justification, rationality, or warrant, or what?*”

O’Hear is neither very specific about the contact with a nonsensory reality like God. He just presupposes that there is a problem or difficulty in this type of thinking, but he does not respond to the problem. According to Plantinga, “This *sounds* like he thinks the way to answer the question”. The way he tries to answer is (1)theistic belief can have warrant from religious experience only if there is a good argument from the existence of God and (2)this argument has to involve a premise in which the existence of God is the best explanation of religious experiences.³⁵ According to Plantinga, (1) is just an assumption, another way to put it is that “theistic belief can have warrant by way of religious experience only if some theistic argument from religious experience is successful. According to Plantinga, this type of objection is false, we have to discuss if a belief can receive warrant by way of religious experience and not whether there is a good argument from the existence of religious experience to the existence of God. Plantinga compares religious experience and belief to, perceptual experience and belief, memory experience and belief, *a priori* experience, and belief, and concludes that all resemble with Christian belief.³⁶

The second objection that Plantinga tries to refute must do also with religious experience. “Theistic belief could never receive warrant from religious experience because the religious experience could never indicate or show anything as specific as that there is such a person as God”.³⁷ This objection originates in John Mackie's writings. According to Mackie, religious experience is incapable of showing that the traditional doctrines of theism, or that the attributes of God or the uniqueness of God are actually true.³⁸ What Mackie really says, according to Plantinga, is that “I can’t be sure.” In trusting my experience but does not follow that my experience cannot reveal a creator who displays these attributes like God.

Plantinga refutes this objection based on past experience. All of us belief in the fact that we exist for many years, but it is logically possible that I “have existed for only a microsecond or two” and displaying all the properties that I do in fact

³⁴ Anthony O’Hear, *Experience, Explanation, and Faith: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*, London; Boston: Routledge & K. Paul, 1984, p. 27.

³⁵ Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, p. 327–28.

³⁶ Plantinga, p. 328.

³⁷ Plantinga, p. 331.

³⁸ J. L. Mackie, *The Miracle of Theism: Arguments for and against the Existence of God*, Oxford [Oxfordshire]: New York: Clarendon Press ; Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 182.

display. If I existed for two or three seconds, I wouldn't have the properties of being sixty years old, says Plantinga, but I would have other properties like thinking. So, again it does not follow that my present experiences cannot reveal a person like God. It is also compatible, with my present experiences. Plantinga thinks that my past experience could be compatible with my present experience and even if existed for two or three seconds. It is possible that I have existed for two or three seconds and display the same beliefs as one that is sixty years old.³⁹

Plantinga suggests that there are other types of experiences that reveal something to us, for example, perceptual experience that reveals an external world, this type of experience involves sensuous imagery. There is also *doxastic experience*, which involves sensuous imagery and affective experience. According to Plantinga, we use all the time our experiences to form some belief.⁴⁰ In the end, there is a fallacy in Macky's argumentation the conclusion does not follow the premises.

The third objection targets the cognitive aspect of religious experience. Richard Gale tries to refute an argument associated to many other philosophers; the argument goes like this:

1. Religious experiences are analogous to sense experience.
2. Sense experiences are cognitive.

Therefore:

3. Religious experiences are cognitive.⁴¹

According to Plantinga, Gale is objecting strictly the first premise, therefore, his conclusion would not be that religious experience is not cognitive, but only this particular argument for its cognitivity fails. Second, he believes any experiential awareness of God would have to be like the perceptual awareness of God, therefore he concludes, that is impossible to have knowledge of God by way of experience because the religious experience is not cognitive.⁴² So, according to the second premise, any religious experience would be cognitive if it is part of a veridical perception of God. But Plantinga, in presenting the extended A/C Model is speaking about knowledge of God by way of experience, not perceptual knowledge. According to Plantinga, Gale's arguments, „doesn't even begin to show that perception of God is impossible, or that religious experience is never cognitive, or that there couldn't be knowledge of God by way of *sensus divinitatis* and IHS. Gale's argument depends upon a lot of assumptions that have little or no claim to assent. All these assumptions seem monumentally dubious at best.⁴³

³⁹ Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, p. 333.

⁴⁰ Plantinga, p. 335.

⁴¹ Richard M. Gale, *On the Nature and Existence of God*, Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2016, p. 288.

⁴² Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, p. 336.

⁴³ Plantinga, p. 342.

Son of great pumpkin, the fourth objection. On the A/C Model, *simpliciter* or extended, a belief can have warrant, not by way of arguments or evidence, or to have warrant transferred from other's beliefs. These beliefs are like memory beliefs, perceptual beliefs, and some *a priori* beliefs. Therefore, these beliefs are considered to be basic beliefs.

According to Michael Martin, if a belief is considered basic belief, then it is beyond rational appraisal, meaning that arguments and objection are not relevant to it. „Plantinga’s foundationalism is radically relativistic and puts any belief beyond rational appraisal once it is declared basic.”⁴⁴ According to Plantinga, this objection is false because theistic belief is not immune to arguments and defeaters by being basic beliefs.⁴⁵

But according to Martin, reformed epistemologists can take any proposition *p* in the basic way, and that proposition could legitimately claim that *p* was properly basic. For example, says Martin, even if reformed epistemologists would not have to accept voodoo belief as rational, still the voodoo followers would be able to claim that their beliefs are properly basic and rational.⁴⁶

Plantinga structures Martin’s argument this way:

“(1) If Reformed epistemologists can legitimately claim that belief in God is rationally acceptable in the basic way, then for any other belief accepted in some community, the epistemologists of that community could legitimately claim that *it* was properly basic, no matter how bizarre the belief.

But

(2) The consequence of this conditional is false.

So

(3) The Reformed epistemologist can't legitimately claim that belief in God is rationally acceptable in the basic way.”⁴⁷

According to Plantinga, Martin must provide some definitions, what he means by ‘rational’, deontological justification, internal rationality, rationality in terms of warrant? And what he means by ‘legitimately’, that the voodooists could legitimately claim that are justified, no matter what.

So according to Martin, if the Reformed epistemologists can legitimately claim that Christian beliefs are properly basic with respect to rationality, then other communities with different beliefs can legitimately claim the same. But according to Plantinga, they could not make such claim, because the usage of terms like

⁴⁴ Michael Martin, *Atheism: A Philosophical Justification*, Temple University Press, 1992, p. 276.

⁴⁵ Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, 344.

⁴⁶ Martin, *Atheism*, p. 272.

⁴⁷ Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, p. 345.

“legitimately’ and “rationality” are very ambiguous, as both are referring to the same concept of warrant. According to Plantinga the argument construed in this way is annoying and is making false promises. The “Son of Great Pumpkin does no better than the Great Pumpkin.”⁴⁸

The last objection is regarding circularity. Plantinga identifies this objection in Paul Noble's writing. Noble is writing about Jonathan Edward's theistic defense. According to Noble, Edward's is appealing to some epistemic circularity in vindicating the truth of theism. Here Plantinga is asking “Isn't it true that my own proposal has warrant for me (or anyone who accepts it) only if theistic belief is, in fact, true and, indeed, warranted?”⁴⁹

This objection is false because Plantinga says that his extended A/C Model is a way in which Christian belief can have warrant, not that he is warranted in proposing this model.

Conclusion

Paul Ricoeur thinks that to understand religious concepts we must distinguish between two models “the hermeneutics of recollection” and “the hermeneutics of suspicion.”⁵⁰ According to Ricoeur, the hermeneutics of recollection is used by religion because the Christian believer thinks that it is in some connection with something real and it is his duty to retrieve or “recollect” a message. The hermeneutics of suspicion denies that there is a divine reality in religion, according to Freud and another religion is just the product of illusion or wish fulfillment or something like that.

In the first part of this article, we tried to show that the Christian believer is justified in holding the belief that God exists. According to Alvin Plantinga and his A/C Model, the belief that God exists can be considered basic and does not need arguments or evidence. This belief is like perceptual, memory and some *a priori* belief. More than that, the belief in God, according to Plantinga's model is to be considered immediate knowledge.

In examining this model, we saw that the roots of Plantinga's thought are in the writings of Jean Calvin and Thomas d'Aquino. Both writing about a *sensus divinitatis* that we have implanted in our mind from birth. *Sensus divinitatis* that is affected by sin and our fallen condition, and that we need to be restored to our previous condition,

⁴⁸ Plantinga, p. 349.

⁴⁹ Plantinga, p. 351.

⁵⁰ Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. Denis Savage, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970, p. 28–36.

by the life, sacrificial death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and by the work of the Holy Spirit. Only in this way the *sensus divinitatis* it will function properly working according to the design plan and aiming at the production of true beliefs. On this model, or something similar, Plantinga, concludes that belief in God is justified, rational (internal and external), and warranted.

The extended A/C Model covers the main doctrines of Christian belief. The two models are similar, and the principles from the first one applies as well to the second. Here, we have presented faith and how faith works, the role of the Scripture, and the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit, in production beliefs that are justified, rational (internal and external), and warranted. According to this model, the instigation of the Holy Spirit is working in accordance with the Scripture, and that is a cognitive process or belief-production mechanism that produces in us beliefs that constitutes faith alongside other beliefs.

Finally, these models are not free of objections. The main objections are targeting religious experience. Like religious experience cannot provide warrant, religious experience is useless if the existence of God cannot be proven, and religious experience is not a cognitive process. Plantinga analyzes and rejects other objections as well, like the “Son of Great Pumpkin” in which if a belief is considered basic no matter how bizarre it is, then it is accepted and not subject to any argument or objection. And circularity objection, and surely there are many other objections regarding the A/C Models proposed by Plantinga.

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“THE JEWISH QUESTION” IN THE PAGES OF *CONTIMPORANUL*¹

EMILIA FAUR*

ABSTRACT. “The Jewish Question” in the Pages of *Contimporanul*. It is my interest to investigate how one of the Romanian leading interwar avant-garde magazines, *Contimporanul* (1922-1932), tackled the “Jewish question”. In this respect, I will consider the various standpoints the contributors took on the matter, presenting it in all its facets and complexity, as both a political and a cultural phenomenon. The analysis of the numerous articles covering the “Jewish question”, its causes and consequences, is meant to illustrate the sensibility *Contimporanul* demonstrates in regard to the “Jewish question”. Finally, I will conclude that, as in all matters covered, the magazines’ ideological position is democratic – For its contributors’ main claim is that the young Romanian state should prove itself to be united, modern, democratic based on the principles of integration and plurality, and not a nation-state based on ethnic and religious discrimination.

Keywords: *Contimporanul*, cultural and political anti-Semitism, anti-Semitic movements, democracy, modernity

“Solidarity is at the root of a great deal of turmoil”²

Introduction

The literature covering the “Jewish question” in the interwar Romania is extensive. Still, the main focus of today’s researchers remains the 1930s-40s, for this decade marks the pitch of the anti-Semitic movements and the growing power

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² *Antisemitismul universitar în România (1919-1930). Mărturii documentare [Antisemitism in the Romanian Universities (1919-1930). Documentated confessions]*, Lucian Năstasă (ed.), Preface by Carol Iancu, Editura Institutului pentru Studierea Problemelor Minorităților Naționale, Kriterion, Cluj-Napoca, 2011, p. 40. [All translations from Romanian to English belong to the author of the article.]

of the fascist political parties on the nation's political scene³. The scholarship notably invests all attention in the articles from the journals of the time as a source of information. Understandably, most of the scholars went for the right-wing, fascist oriented magazines – e.g. *Cuvîntul studențesc* (1923-1940) [*The Students' Word*], *Gîndirea* (1921-1944) [*The Thinking*] and others. Less attention received, however, the left-leaning or democratic newspapers and magazines – such as *Adeverul* (1871-1872, 1888-1916, 1919-1937) [*The Truth*], *Dimineața* (1904-1937) [*The Morning*] and others.

Regarding the avant-garde magazines, the scholars were mostly preoccupied with the innovative, transnational and international attitude the avant-garde members display. Some suggested even that the Jewish origin had some influence in shaping such attitudes.⁴ I am not keen in assuming that the avant-gardes international and transnational spirit stems from a Jewish attitude; nor that the fight against anti-Semitism is a reflection of the avant-garde members' political attitude (e.g. because they were socialists); or to suggest the avant-garde members fought against Jewish discrimination because most of them were themselves of Jewish descent. I find such presuppositions presumptuous and, in some respects, biased. Instead, I aim to capture *Contimporanul* (1922-1932) take on the "Jewish question", in the effort to give a comprehensive account of the problems and questions raised by the leading organ of the Romanian avant-garde with respect to the subject – stretching from the way the contributors reflected upon the acts of vandalism and violence against the Romanian Jewish population; to their response to the social turmoil bursting in 1922-1923. As a result of the analysis of their articles, I attempt to formulate a broader conclusion in regard to *Contimporanul's* ideological option. Whether the ideological option can be considered the equivalent of 'the reason why' they stood against the rampage towards Jews, it is neither my concern in this paper, nor its purpose.

A Glimpse into the Background. the Turmoil

In 1922-1923, the institutions and the streets are flooded with manifestations against the Jews. Its main instigators are the Romanian students – the "academic

³ Z. Ornea, *Anii treizeci. Extrema dreaptă românească* [*The Thirties. The Romanian Far-Right Wing*], IVth Edition, Preface by Marta Petreu, Cartea Românească, 2015; Marta Petreu, *De la Junimea la Noica. Studii de cultură românească* [*From Junimea to Noica. Romanian Culture Studies*], Polirom, 2011; and others.

⁴ Paul Cernat, *Vase comunicante. (Inter)fețe ale avangardei românești interbelice* [*Communicating Vessels. (Inter)facets of the Romanian interwar avant-garde*], Ed. Polirom, 2018, p. 55.

«youth»” [“«tinerimea» universitară”], as *Contimporanul* called them. This is not a new phenomenon, “even at the end of the XIX century, our Romanian and Christian students got themselves a reputation good enough to terrify any Jew”⁵. Still,

“the anti-Semitic movements came one after another and were taking proportions. By 1919-1921, many of the Romanian students formed organized groups which entered, for instance, into the Jewish neighborhoods from Bucharest, attacking shops, homes and synagogues, mistreating all the Jews they encountered”⁶.

The “spark” [“scânteia”] – as the start of the protests latter came to be called – is set in the University of Medicine, from Cluj. There, în November 1922, a group of Romanian Christian students, „have beaten up and drove away their Jewish colleagues from classes and their aggressions extended throughout the city [...] The pretext of the incidents was the reclamation by the Jewish students of the dead body of one of their coreligionist, brought to the Institute of Anatomy (the Orthodox Jews opposed the dissection of the bodies)”⁷.

Petre Ciorăneanu, a frequent guest in the pages of *Contimporanul*, comments the incident stressing the anachronism of the unseemly situation for a democratic state: “the spark came from the fire set in the dissection class of the Medicine School in Cluj, caused by an improper and anachronistic bigotry and the flame had spread”⁸.

The contributors take a close-up of the fire-branded mobs. It is a grim glimpse into the intolerant, xenophobic and nationalistic attitude hoisted up to the rank of patriotic enthusiasm by the deluded crowds. The titles of the columns underlie the hypocrisy and poor understanding of the national values: “Românii care se deșteaptă”⁹ [“Romanians awakening”], “Alți români care se deșteaptă”¹⁰ [“Other Romanians awakening”] – alluding to the well-known patriotic song that became the national anthem after 1989. For instance, I. G. Costin bitterly recounts:

In the past days, our newspapers bring delightful news. The old cities of Moldavia [...], broom and the dustpan in hands, chant the national anthem of our Romanian people, meaning the extermination of the Jews. [...] On the corridors

⁵ Carol Ianu, “Cuvânt înainte” [„Foreword”], in *Antisemitismul universitar în România (1919-1930). Mărturiile documentare* [Antisemitism in the Romanian Universities (1919-1930). Documented confessions], p. 37.

⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁷ *Ibidem.*, pp. 9-10.

⁸ Petre Ciorăneanu, “În jurul unei cauze” [“About a Cause”], in *Contimporanul*, Year II, No. 29, Saturday 3 February 1923, p. 1.

⁹ I. G. Costin, “Românii care se deșteaptă” [“The Romanians that are awakening”], *Contimporanul*, Year I, No. 16, 4 November 1922, pp. 3-4.

¹⁰ Unsigned, “Povestea vorbeii” [“The Tale of the Talk”], *Contimporanul*, Year I, No. 21, 9 December 1922, p. 16.

opened by the Peace Treaty from Versailles, our Romanians from the above-mentioned cities reckon that after the attainment of all our national ideals, paid through the nose, the time has come they themselves to be awakened for the purpose of putting in the greatest safety the hard earned goods [...] With their nose full of ink [...] these Romanians that are awakening proceeded to shutting down the theatres in which only the awakened Romanians play, pull the beards of the elderly Jews [...] and put together concert programs only from the masterpieces of the Romanian polyphony¹¹.

All of this, the blind violence against the Jews, committed by furious mobs of Romanian ‘patriots’, the entire turmoil that beset the universities and the sluggishness of the Romanian authorities in restoring law, order and safety are summed up as follows, in the pages of *Contimporanul*:

– These past days, there was a display of acts of bravery. In Cluj, in Iași and even in Bucharest. ‘The Jews is to blame’¹² was rerun with fury by the nation’s heroes, in the rhythm of broken glasses and smashed heads. [...] Finally, once the deeds were done [...] the order, incarnated in the government and the policemen of Mr. Brătianu,¹³ taken, for a moment, by surprise [...] has resolved to drastic measures. (Iași, for instance, the residence of an entire military body has urgently asked for a few sergeants from Bucharest.).¹⁴

This is the image *Contimporanul* offers to its reader: a young Romanian state – recently united – of discord, hostility, enmity, and xenophobia, in a full-blown anti-Semitic rage. What are the causes, what led to this outburst of hatred and violence, some ask. What is to be done?

One Question, Different Agendas

The leading avant-garde magazine, *Contimporanul*, has in its first two years of appearance – before it takes, in 1924, the turn to an exclusively artistic program –, the display of one’s usual cultural outlet. Meaning it gathers in its pages a wide range of subjects, covering both cultural and socio-political topics. It comes as no

¹¹ I. G. Costin, “Românii care se deșteaptă” [“The Romanians that are awakening”], *Contimporanul*, Year I, No. 16, 4 November 1922, pp. 3-4.

¹² “‘Jidaniile este cauza’”. The grammatical error is purposely made. Also, is a vulgar use of the wording (a way people talk in the southern part of Romania).

¹³ Liberal Prime-minister and head of the Government.

¹⁴ Unsigned, “Povestea vorbei” [“The Tale of a Talk”], *Contimporanul*, Year I, No. 21, 9 December 1922, p. 16.

surprise, therefore, that the magazine has a special interest in the recent public disturbances, such as the assault on the Jews. Besides, the outburst of brutality against the Romanian Jewish population actually coincides with the first years of *Contimporanul*.

Owing to the topics' complicated outlook and consistent with their own agendas, the contributors take different approaches in their critique. Some are interested in the factors that generated the anti-Semitic movements; others, simply state the relation between the anti-Semitic movements and the to-day political events; and some others still aim at dismantling the constructed prejudices surrounding the Jews, by reinforcing a positive image of them. Throughout their analysis the authors engage both against the old-time prejudices and against the long-lasting social and political discrimination. At all times, as we shall see, their criticism is based on the democratic principles.

a. A Historical and a Sociological Explanation

Looking for a socio-political explanation, Ion Vinea and Petre Ciorăneanu set out to investigate the historical causes that led to the latest turbulences. The authors spot two factors that contributed to the present turmoil. One, the “social unbalance” [“dezechilibrul social”] ensued after the World War I – and, alongside, the dissatisfaction it raised among the social classes. The other, a geo-social factor, understood as the absence of migration from the rural area to the urban area – caused by the poor educational policies.

Though Vinea and Ciorăneanu agree that the anti-Semitic attitude is a symptom of a “social unbalance” that led to the individuals' malcontent, their reasoning is slightly different.

For Vinea, the “social unbalance” is caused by the “overthrow” of the old, privileged classes. That is, the anti-Semitic movements are only a means of deflation, an action taken by those unhappy with their material conditions or with the changes in their social status after the World War: “The Intellectuals that find themselves with no job or means to improve their knowledge, military left with a skimpy compensation, and, especially, the expropriated landlords, this are the anti-Semites”.¹⁵

Ciorăneanu claims that the present social disturbances are the result of a “social unbalance” created as the Romanian petit bourgeois class changed its inner structure. After the War, he claims, once it acquires its constitutional right, the Jewish minority takes part in the structure of the Romanian petit bourgeoisie. By taking a more preminent role on the Romanian social and political scene, the petit bourgeoisie is perceived as a rival of the Romanian middle-class bourgeoisie:

¹⁵ I. Vinea, “Silberman la noi” [“Silberman to us”], *Contimporanul*, Year II, No. 31, Saturday 17 February 1923, p. 2.

It may well be that the War had produced a social unbalance. The young Romanian academics, as well as the Jewish young academics, were being recruited from the urban middle-class bourgeoisie. As long as the Jews had no political rights, the Romanian middle class was that which provided the individuals [...] for our leading classes. Today, as the petit bourgeoisie came into its political rights, being economically stronger – because the economic activity was left by the Romanians exclusively in its hands – she appears to be a rival of the Romanian middle class, now weakened by the War.¹⁶

The two opinions differ mostly as Ciorăneanu advances the idea that the “social unbalance” is not only the result of the changes in the bourgeoisies’ structure or the aftermath of the Great War. He further argues that a geo-social factor should also be taken in account. From his part, the “de-vitalization” of the Romanian middle class – that which makes this class so suspicious and resentful – is also the consequence of the lack of migration from the rural area to the urban area. And this unfortunate situation is a result of a misguided educational policy. One of the side effects of this flawed circuit is that the Romanian middle class comes to be poorly represented in University – making it even more vulnerable and spiteful:

Yes, we are in a full social ebullience. New social classes ask for their right to life; old classes crumble [...] The causes for the University crises? The true ones are to be found far back and [they] are deeper than the enrichment brought by war and the expropriation. The wave of new life, which is the big reservoir of the rural area was supposed to power the urban class [...] [n. but it] was systematically deviated from the cities through our educational policy.¹⁷

Under the influence of the nationalist propaganda, which claimed there are too many Jewish students enrolled at the university, the Romanian students called for the authorities to institute “*numerus clausus*” for the Jews. What Ciorăneanu tries to explain is the reason why such a claim was possible. He implicitly argues that the dysfunctional educational policies – lack of schools, teachers, teaching material in the rural area –made it so that hardly any young Romanian from the rural area was enrolling in those few universities in the city. Since Romania was still in most part an agrarian state, it becomes clear why the presence of the rural young Romanian in the academic life of the cities really counted. It also makes it even clearer that the young academics gave voice to the frustration of the Romanian

¹⁶ Petre Ciorăneanu, “În jurul unei cauze” [“About a cause”], *Contemporanul*, Year II, No. 29, Saturday, 3 February 1923, p. 1.

¹⁷ Petre Ciorăneanu, “Tot criza universitară” [“The University in Crises, Again”], *Contemporanul*, Year II, No. 32, Saturday 24 February 1923, p. 2.

middle class – especially as their main claim is the implementation of „*numerus clausus*” – “one of the main slogans of the nationalistic anti-Semites between the two World Wars, approved and implemented even before 1900”.¹⁸ Horia Verzeanu makes this correlation explicitly as he paints the picture of the scandal breaking out into the dissection class; at its core, he says, lays the demand for “*numerus clausus*”:

So many idealists started reckoning with the mosaic religion bodies in the name of a humble principle – *numerus clausus* – and those who paid for the broken pots were the Jews themselves and a few more or less Jewish editorial offices.¹⁹

Compared to Vinea’s general remark, Ciorăneanu gives a more precise cause for the anti-Semitism’s outbreak: He follows the root of the scandal that breaks on the corridors of the University – the Hotpoint of the instigation. It does not mean, though, that, as Vinea noted, the changes brought by the War were of less importance. Surely the changes in the social and the economic structures made the Jews easy scapegoats and targets of the discontented classes.

b. A Double-edged Political Game

For the contributors, the cause is not to be found merely in a social or geo-social context, but in an outright political one. Some of the contributors claim that the violence against the Jewish population is a smoke screen. That is, the scandals are a political maneuver set to silently shift the attention away from the political games taking place behind the curtains. Especially, from the debates reignited by the expected changes in the new Constitution.

In his memoirs, one witness of the time, Zaharia Boilă, recalls that the anti-Semitic students’ movement was set up by the liberals – which came to power in 1922. He recounts how, in the fall of 1922, a student from Medicine School, D. Munteanu, pays him a visit and how, on the occasion, he finds out that “Brătianus’ Government agents, by using a considerable amount of money, are trying to recruit students from Cluj for a diversionist movement”²⁰. Shortly after, Boilă remembers

the same D. Munteanu came to tell me that the undersecretary for the Internal Affairs, Ghiță Tătărescu, came to Cluj, and, with the knowledge and with

¹⁸ *Antisemitism universitar*, p. 8.

¹⁹ Horia Verzeanu, “Jos Jidani!” [“Down with the Jews”], *Contimporanul*, Year I, No. 24, 30 December 1922, p. 7.

²⁰ Zaharia Boilă, *Amintiri și considerații asupra mișcării legionare [Memories and considerations upon the Legionary Movement]*, Preface by Liviu Titieni Boilă, edited by Marta Petreu and Ana Cornea, notes on the edition by Marta Petreu, Ed. Biblioteca Apostrof, Cluj-Napoca, 2002, p. 22.

the approval of the minister of the Internal Affairs, and even that of Ionel Brătianu, staged an anti-Semitic movement, in order to shift the public attention away from the campaign set by Maniu to overthrow [the government]”.²¹ The campaign consisted mainly in weakening the power of the liberals by “sabotaging the brătienist legiferation, firstly, the Constitution that was about to be passed through Parliament”.²²

Sharing the same view as Boilă, H. St. Streitman notes:

It is the phase of all falls and downfalls [...] The phase of the supreme hopelessness, in which the wicked wizards can unleash, at will, all evil spirits [...] And then, without much quest [...] the cure must be found. [...] This calls for a diversion. A scapegoat is needed. And the diversion must be at hand [...] Of course, luckily for our rulers, when there is a large number of Jews in the country... This wretched Jewish population is the best defense, the brave shield of those who – to our happiness, honor and safety – rule us and watch over us, from banks and ministries, including the old and new Jewish magnates and peddlers. [...] With a <down with the Jews!> [‹jos jidanii!›] [...] the heavy and threatening clouds scatter.²³

Moreover, *Contimporanul* warns its reader that the government has prepared all sorts of “diversions”, in order to protect and preserve its political status and power, the anti-Semitic movement being just one of them:

when the ruling parties awake from their reminiscent dreams [...] it will be just the time to come up a new diversion [...] what will that be? The Jewish one has become dangerous, the Hungarian one is too recent, playing peasants’ riot is not advisable ... All that is left is, of course, the question of Bessarabia and the Bolshevik assault.²⁴

These “diversions” are meant, in the contributors’ view, to distract the Romanian citizens’ attention from the games taking place on the political stage and, mainly, from the preparation of the articles of the new Constitution: “We expect an enemy at the gates on its way to the Carpathians and we find ourselves in the face of an unexpectedly liberal Constitution”.²⁵

Ștefan Antim, another contributor, recognizes as well that the anti-Semitic movements are just a smokescreen masking the rivalries and the ambitions of the

²¹ Iuliu Maniu was the leader of the National Party of Transylvania.

²² Zaharia Boilă, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

²³ H. St. Streitman, “Diversiunea” [“The Diversion”], *Contimporanul*, Year I, No. 23, 23 December 1922, p. 2.

²⁴ V., “Alarma” [“The Siren”], in *Contimporanul*, Year II, No. 27, Saturday 20 January 1923, p. 4.

²⁵ Unsigned, “Povestea vorbeii” [“The Tale of the Talk”], *Contimporanul*, Year II, No. 26, Saturday, 13 January 1923, p. 4.

political parties. He reminds its readers that the talk over the articles of every Constitution so far has been accompanied, always, by conflicts and anti-Semitic movements. The only difference this time around is its tools, the students:

In 1866, when the Jewish question was brought into discussion, heads and windows were smashed, and even a synagogue was tore down; in 1879, when the problem resurfaced in the debates over the new Constitution of the time, the same anti-Semitic excesses repeated; now, when a new Constitution is in debate and when the problem is yet again put through, the street speaks again. The only difference [...] is that [...] in the past we didn't had a satisfying number of students, the slums had the decisive word.²⁶

The discord apple becomes article 7 of the Constitution, which dealt with giving political rights to the Jews. Antim sums it up: “It sinisterly started with the dead bodies, it cheerfully moved on to *numerus clausus* and it logically ended up at the narrow gates of article 7 [n. of the Constitution]”.²⁷

Why are the students “opposing full citizenship for the masses of Jews [...] and demand the preservation of the old article 7”?²⁸ One might argue that this opposition comes down to different factors, interests, strategies, and, of course, irrational fears. Full citizenship for the Jews meant creating the space for equal opportunities: for social mobility, education, jobs etc. The Jews were having for the first time the chance to hold elected office and higher ranked positions in the administration. Surely, to receive a better position in the administration meant taking up high public school education. The general public, and the academics, received this news badly. Instead of considering the idea as means of integration of the minorities, it considered it the start of a fierce competition. That is, a competition between ‘the Romanians’ and ‘the others’, ‘the foreigners’; meaning, between the locals and those who, in the populations’ *imago*, were going to take over the Romanian institutions and wealth. This contorted image of ‘the other’ was fed and fueled by the nationalistic propaganda. Which claimed, for instance, that there is a very large number of Jews enrolled in universities and too many of them are taking a prominent role on the market; that the Jews are a “danger”, for they want “«to take over» the countries’ economy”; and that they exert a high amount of control in the public sphere as “opinion makers”²⁹ (as journalists, editors, publicists etc.).

²⁶ St. Antim, “Minorii și minoritățile” [“The minors and the minorities”], *Contimporanul*, Year II, No. 32, Saturday 24 February 1923, p. 1.

²⁷ *Ibidem*.

²⁸ *Ibidem*.

²⁹ Lucian Boia, *Capcanele istoriei. Elita intelectuală românească între 1930 și 1950* [*The History's Traps. The Romanian Elite in-between 1950s-1950s*], The IInd Edition, revised and added, Humanitas, București, 2012, p. 54.

In short, the political parties danced the tango of power, while fueling the citizens' irrational fears. The opposition saw to weaken the strength of the main political party, by sabotaging the vote of the new Constitution. Meanwhile, the political party at the helm, the National Liberal Party, presided by Ionel I. C. Brătianu, Romania's prime-minister, entertained, as it seems, the illusion of permanent siege – whether it was one taking over from the inside (the Jews) or from the outside (the Bolsheviks, the Hungarians) – in order to reinforce its position on the political stage. All that *Contimporanul* does is hopelessly remark and emphasize the hypocrisy of the political parties, their selfish interests in the political affairs and their clear disregard for the wellbeing of the electorate.

Against Anti-Semitic Attitudes

Since in the public discourse, the Jewish question is set on both socio-political and cultural terms, *Contimporanul* brings forth a series of arguments meant to defuse the anti-Semitic movements and to disarm and dismantle the socio-political and cultural anti-Semitism. When it comes to socio-political anti-Semitism, *Contimporanul* argues for granting political rights to the Jews. As against the cultural anti-Semitism, the contributors show the important contribution the Jewish men of culture, editors and publicists have in the Romanian culture. Throughout their argumentation, the contributors reinforce a positive image of the Jews in contrast to the negative biases and prejudices.

Since the unity of the young country is still a hot topic in 1922-23, *Contimporanul* argues that it is of great importance to bring together the nation's population by giving political rights to the minorities. On this point, though different, their arguments converge: for a peaceful cohabitation, the civic and political rights should be enjoyed by all. Antim, for instance, asserts that the Jews in the Principalities automatically gained the political rights from the moment of the annexation: "The Jews from Bucovina, from Bessarabia, from Ardeal and Banat, do not need article 7, nor do they need the infamy of the Treaty from Versailles. They are rightful citizens by virtue of the annexation principle".³⁰ In Antim's opinion, there is no legitimate reason for which the Jews should not be granted full citizenship – not doing so meant keeping a divided country:

³⁰ St. Antim, "Minorii și minoritățile" ["The minors and the minorities"], *Contimporanul*, Year II, No. 32, Saturday 24 February 1923, p. 1.

The triumph of the academic youth would lead us to the truly monstrous situation of having 750.000 Jews, foreign to the language, the customs and our aspirations, being still undisputed Romanian citizens; [...] while 250.000 Romanian-born Jews [evrei pământenii n.] [...] would continue to be foreigners.³¹

Furthermore, for G. Spina, another contributor, the Jews are entitled to citizenship since they, just as the local population, gave their “tribute of soldiers every year”³² during the War, proving their loyalty to the Romanian motherland.

For this reason, *Contimporanul* voices out that the integration of the minorities, and implicitly of the Jews, should not be considered a whim, or a political toy, but a true necessity.

The attainment of the political rights, however, could not automatically annul the biases and long-time prejudices. Therefore, *Contimporanul* sought to emphasize the major contribution the Jews have to the Romanian culture. Hence, the contributors prove that the negatively perceived attributes of the Jews are actually working as positive attributes when it comes to the commitment proven by the Jewish men of letters and editors on the Romanian cultural scene. For instance, V. Danoiu points out the business focus attitude and entrepreneurship of the Jews – which was negatively advertised by the nationalists and unfavorably perceived by the locals – in a favorable manner. The author recounts with gratitude the commerciality of the books published by the Jewish publishing houses, which were offered to the average Romanian at an affordable price, making available a wide range of great Romanian writers (like Creangă, Eminescu and others):

what strikes us when we look at the question of cultural contribution [...] of the Jews in the Romanian culture, is their remarkable input, is their activity mainly on the editorial ground. Their commercial skill, so incriminated by the anti-Semites, counted a lot in this crucial problem of creating an intellectual atmosphere. Without a public invited to read [...] through a methodical and perseverant spread of the cheap editions, what would they have done: Eliade’s guys that wrote, the grandchildren and grand-grandchildren that write still? [...] Who has forgotten Creangă, Eminescu, Conta, read in the prints of Șaraga? Attentively looking at one’s childhood, we all remember the editions of Samitca, Pinoth, Cuperman, Braș, and Steinberg, through Alcalay’s «Biblioteca pentru toți» [«A Library for All» n.] [...] Publishing houses [like] Segal, ed Brănișteanu, ed Calafeteanu, are printing to this day [...] cheap and good books.³³

³¹ St. Antim, “Minorii și minoritățile” [“The minors and the minorities”], *op. cit.*, p. 1.

³² G. Spina, “Antisemitism cazon” [“Anti-Semitism among militaries”], *Contimporanul*, Year I, No. 3, 17 June 1922, p. 14.

³³ V. Danoiu, „Evreii în Cultura Română” [„The Jews in the Romanian Culture”], *Contimporanul*, Year II, No. 39-40, 21 April 1923, p. 4.

As to the accusation that the Jews are manipulating the public opinion, the same author argues that the Jewish publishing houses were and are still being neutral and do not censor their publishing content. In this respect, he asks in a rhetoric matter: “Where are the subversive intentions of these enterprises, which printed often even anti-Semite books?”³⁴

The political and cultural recognition of the Jews becomes one of the main topics on the magazine’s agenda. It also becomes a manifest for tolerance, unity and togetherness. All in the effort to awaken not the rage of the national ideology, but the peaceful rejoice of the countries’ citizens. To counteract the violence and xenophobia, the magazine strives to bring to the fore those aspects of the political and cultural life that are an example of collaboration and common national goals – And for that matter the undeniable participation of the Jews to the nations’ political and cultural ideals.

Conclusion

The “Jewish question” is one of the many subjects *Contimporanul* covered in its first two years of appearance. Placed among other topics such as dysfunctional economy, press freedom, social injustice and many others alike, “the Jewish question” is discussed for it represents another symptom of the general and endemic dysfunctional state of affairs in the Romanian interwar period. This might be the reason why the problem is covered from so many different angles.

Some of the contributors define the anti-Semitic attitude as “anachronistic bigotry” pointing out its contradiction with the principles the young democratic state was about to put at the foundation of its new, modern Constitution. Others seek to explain the intolerant, xenophobic attitude pointing to the main generator of social changes and disturbances: the First World War. Some others suggest that the general dissatisfaction found among the citizens is not merely the result of the changes and upturns brought about by the War. They are also the product of the persistent flaws and impairments already present in the Romanian society – the poor educational policies, for instance. Others still are preoccupied with the lack of political consciousness displayed by the state’s citizens. In this sense, the bitter irony with which the contributors criticize the Romanian ‘patriotism’ and the xenophobic component of the nationalistic discourse is telling. On the same note, the contributors amend the lack of political responsibility evidenced by the main political parties. Acting in self-interest,

³⁴ *Ibidem*.

the political parties seem oblivious to the populations’ cries, or worse, they harness the peoples’ fears – fears generated and replenished by the general sense of disarray, uncertainty and insecurity that characterized the Romanian society in-between the Wars. Hence *Contimporanul* speaks of the hypocritical political affairs with a great sense of disappointment and revolt.

Finally, *Contimporanul* strives on numerous occasions to plead for social and political solidarity. Consequently, it argues why the new state must grant equal rights to all its citizens, no matter their ethnicity, religion or language. If only because the new citizens – the young states’ minorities –, have already put in their part to the social and cultural wellbeing of the nation.

Democratic in its essence, *Contimporanul* speaks not only against anti-Semitism, but also for solidarity. The young democratic Romanian state should prove, in this respect, that it stands united not only on paper, but also in reality. This is the imperative *Contimporanul* voices out.

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FEMINIST INTERPRETATIONS OF ACTION AND THE PUBLIC IN HANNAH ARENDT'S THEORY

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ABSTRACT. *Feminist Interpretations of Action and the Public in Hannah Arendt's Theory.* Arendt's typology of human activity and her arguments on the precondition of politics allow for a variety in interpretations for contemporary political thought. The feminist reception of Arendt's work ranges from critical to conciliatory readings that attempt to find the points in which Arendt's theory might inspire a feminist political project. In this paper I explore the ways in which feminist thought has responded to Arendt's definition of action, freedom and politics, and whether her theoretical framework can be useful in a feminist rethinking of politics, power and the public realm.

Keywords: *Hannah Arendt, political action, the Public, the Social, feminism*

Introduction

The reception of Hannah Arendt's work has been met with many difficulties in interpretation — while *Eichmann in Jerusalem*¹ was notoriously controversial and often misunderstood even in its time, even her fundamental works such as *On Revolution*² or *The Human Condition*³ pose challenges for the critical reader. While it is not the aim of this paper to answer why this is so, we can turn to Arendt's arguably most thorough monographer, Margaret Canovan, for an explanation: first, Arendt's particular methodology lends her texts a genre of their own. She combines a phenomenological approach with a strategy of analysis that attempts to crystallise meaning from a series of loosely related historical phenomena.⁴ Second, a challenge

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¹ Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: a report on the banality of evil* (Penguin classics), Penguin Books, New York, 2006.

² Hannah Arendt, *On revolution*, Penguin Books, New York, 2006.

³ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd ed, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1998.

⁴ Margaret Canovan: *Hannah Arendt: a reinterpretation of her political thought*, Cambridge University Press,

in interpretation may arise from attempting to read Arendt's corpus as a system that is broad and loose at the same time, one made up of theoretical motifs that converge towards the epicentre of problems that Arendt was truly concerned with: the great political catastrophes of the 20th century.⁵ This opens up the question: if Arendt's theory is firmly rooted in its historical context, precisely what relevance does it hold for the contemporary reader of political theory not primarily concerned with these specific events?

The *Human Condition*, generally considered to be Arendt's magnum opus, defies interpretation in many ways, raising questions such as: how does the book fit into the broader context of the oeuvre? And, on a related note, how does it contribute to Arendt's "non-systematic system-building"⁶ in theorising totalitarianism in the immediate, and politics in the broader sense? According to Canovan, *The Human Condition* is more than a systematic work of political theory: in fact, it is concerned less with politics itself and more with *the human condition* that makes politics possible. In order to lay out a theoretical foundation for politics, Arendt introduces a conceptual separation between political action and other forms of human activity.⁷

In *The Human Condition*, therefore, Arendt is more concerned with establishing which aspects of human life make politics possible (and necessary), rather than providing a straightforward theoretical thesis on the nature of politics. The fact that the central problem of the book is the human condition, and not "human nature", has a double significance: first, as Canovan argues, in contrast to the "hubris of totalitarianism", Arendt wishes to emphasize that human existence is determined by its fundamental circumstances.⁸ Second, against the totalising, unifying idea of "human nature", Arendt bases her analysis on the fact that human action, and as an extension the human world, is determined by man's openness to pluralism. As Linda Zerilli notes, for Arendt pluralism is ontologically given, the world, however, is a political achievement.⁹ The shared world of man is created through action (distinct from the other forms of human activity, labour and work), which is always done in *public*, in the space of appearance inhabited and shaped in cooperation with others. In developing her own definition of politics understood through human action and speech, Arendt refers back to the private–public distinction as seen in ancient Athens,

Cambridge, England, New York, NY, USA, 1992.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Margaret Canovan, *Hannah Arendt*, 5.

⁷ *Ibid.* 100.

⁸ *Ibid.* 104.

⁹ Linda M. G. Zerilli, "Value Pluralism and the Problem of Judgment: Farewell to Public Reason", *Political Theory*, 40(1), 2012, 22–23.

where the *oikos*, the household, functions as the opposite of the public space, the *polis*. Here, freedom begins with the freedom to leave the home and enter the Public. Similarly, equality itself is created in the *polis*, where the different perspectives that make up human plurality can be shared in the form of speech.

Another central idea of *The Human Condition* is that from a historical perspective, the emergence of the social as kind of mediator between the private and the public has blurred the boundary that, for the Athenians, gave both areas meaning in contrast with each other. According to Arendt, for the ancient Greeks the distinction between the two realms of human life was not only self-evident but an axiomatic principle of political thought.¹⁰ The emergence of the social, a particularly modern phenomenon in this reading (one that coincides with the appearance of the nation state), has obscured the distinction between the different realms of human activity, also changing our concept and experience of politics in the long run. This is Arendt's central thesis that goes beyond the immediate historical context in scope and is significant for contemporary political thought. However, this is also what serves as a point of contention for contemporary interpretations, especially feminist readings of Arendt.

In this paper I will review several feminist critiques of Arendt's theory that are concerned with her "blind spots" on issues such as the gendered nature of the private and the public realms, and the role justice might play in understanding the function of the social. As the feminist reception is often ambivalent in reading and applying Arendt's theory rather than being overtly critical, I will also briefly mention some possible meeting points that feminist authors identify between the claims of contemporary feminism and Arendt's definition of politics, and some of the challenges that such a reading might face.

The Private and the Public

Arendt distinguishes between three types of human activity: *labour*, or the reproductive activity done by the *animal laborans*, the productive *work* of the *homo faber*, and, distinct from both of these, the *action* done by the *homo politicus*, the one human activity that has political significance. Arendt locates these activities on the spectrum of the relation of Man to Nature and World. With a focus on the short-term maintenance and long-term reproduction of life, the labour of the *animal laborans*, closely tied to the body and its functions, mirrors the natural cycles of birth and decay.¹¹ This cyclical nature stands in opposition to the permanence of

¹⁰ *The Human Condition*. 28.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 96

the built world, the existence of which fulfils the basic human needs of security and stability. Building this long-lasting world is, in part, the task of the *homo faber*, this activity, like labour, is also rooted in the materiality of human life. However, the need for stability and permanence is not limited to the material aspect of the built world, and this is what calls *action* into being.¹²

Permanence is always created collectively, as the inhabited world always bears the traces of other people.¹³ In the typology proposed by Arendt, out of the three types of human activity, *action* is the one that differentiates man from the rest of nature. Plurality, the diversity of points of view as the distinguishing feature of man, shows itself through action. Furthermore, action is inherently collective, as it both requires and implies the presence of others. Politics, then, unfolds through this collective action, which, in the form of speech, creates a *space* for people to work together and decide which elements of their life-world they deem worthy of permanence. This collectively created public space is where truth itself makes an appearance.¹⁴

From this follows a spatial separation of the distinct human activities: Arendt introduces the relational concepts of the Private and the Public, explained through the Ancient Greek distinction between the two realms of human existence. Through the example of the ancient Athenians, Arendt attempts to show that the appearance of the Social in modernity has blurred the line between private and public to the extent that we are now deprived of a real experience of politics. Or, as Hannah Pitkin argues, we have difficulty understanding Arendt's concept of the Public precisely because we have lost the experience of a real political public space.¹⁵

The Private and the Public, thus, attain their meaning in relation to one another. They are defined as the "proper" place of certain human activities (it is ambiguous whether this place is natural or assigned, as we will discuss later on), but they also imply their opposition to, and dependence on each other. The separation between the household – the *oikos* – and the public realm – the *polis* – is a clear one.¹⁶ What happens in the *oikos* stays hidden from the eyes of the others,

¹² *Ibid.* 196.

¹³ At this point in her argument, Arendt refers to the Aristotelian concept of *zoon politikon*. The transformation — or mistranslation — of *zoon politikon* into *animal socialis*, however, sheds a light on the distortion that the Ancient Greek concept of politics went through across the years. See Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 22.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 23.

¹⁵ Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, "Justice: On Relating Private and Public", in Lewis P. Hinchman, Sandra Hinchman (ed.), *Hannah Arendt: Critical Essays*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1994, 263. The article originally appeared in: Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, "Justice: On Relating Private and Public", *Political Theory* 9, 3 (1981).

¹⁶ Hannah Arendt, *The human condition*, 24.

and moving from one realm of the other involves a crossing of a boundary. The citizen thus leads a “double life”: his “own” in the confines in the household, driven by biological necessity, and a completely different one in the public, where his life becomes a *bios politikos*. The private life, lived in the *oikos*, is complemented by a collective, publicly lived life – this constitutes the specifically human life, the one that differentiates the Greek from the barbarian.¹⁷ The household is thus a pre-political sphere that is subordinate to politics, but also serves as its necessary precondition, as it ensures the survival of the individual (and the human race).

The household follows a logic distinct from the organising principles of the public: the *animal laborans* carries out his or her activity in the *oikos*. He/she sustains life, takes care of the everyday needs of the body, and, on the long term, raises children – future citizens. The specific organising principle of the household is that people are motivated to live together because of their material needs, or, in other words, the principle of the private realm is life itself, the maintenance and reproduction of biological existence. The communities that share a household are formed by necessity (driven by the primacy of life itself), not by freedom of choice. The *polis*, on the other hand, is a space of free association. It interacts with the *oikos* only to the extent that the satisfaction of the basic conditions of biological life is an essential precondition for citizens to enter the political sphere as free people.

First, freedom only has meaning in the context of the political realm, understood as freedom to participate in public life. Second, necessity is always pre-political, as it is tied to the private realm. Third, relations of domination can only be legitimate in the private realm as well, as their only acceptable role is to control necessity – by exercising his dominion over slaves (and here Arendt, surprisingly, makes no mention of women), the citizen (the *pater familias*, the free man), can transcend biological necessity and step out freely into the public to participate in the collective creation of the World. Since all men are subject to necessity, they all have the right to exercise this dominion to free themselves from necessity in order to enter this public space. As Franco Palazzi notes,

In the domestic dimension, human needs constitute the element which pushes people to live together – this is what ‘all Greek philosophers’ regarded as a ‘pre-political phenomenon’, thus justifying the appeal to violence in the private sphere as the only means able to master necessity. On the contrary, the polis distinguished itself from the *oikos* as it was grounded on the equality of all citizens; indeed, being free in the polis meant ‘both not to be subject to the necessity of life or to the command of another and not to be in command oneself’.¹⁸

¹⁷ Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, “Justice: On Relating Private and Public”. 265.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 31–32; 32. Franco Palazzi, “‘Reflections on Little Rock’ and Reflective Judgment”, *Philosophical Papers*,

The citizens of the *polis*, once out in the light of the public, do not rule and are not ruled by anyone; they are free to engage in dialogue with their fellow citizens as equals. But this notion of equality, like freedom, exists only in the realm of politics, as the majority of the inhabitants of the city-state are "non-equals." Freedom, then, in short, meant that the head of the family was free to leave the realm of the private, which was organised along the logic domination and inequality, to step into a space where there was neither violence nor domination.¹⁹

Understanding politics along these lines poses a challenge for the possibility of a feminist reading – as Seyla Benhabib notes, the attitude of feminist thought towards Arendt's work is quite ambivalent. First, Arendt's definition of politics is in many ways gender-blind, which may be a source of disappointment for the feminist reader. Hannah Pitkin poses the question with a tone of surprise: could it be true that Arendt would intentionally reserve freedom for a handful of privileged men?²⁰ Second, defining politics through the exclusion of the private gives way to difficult theoretical questions. As Kimberly Maslin notes, a contemporary reading of Arendt's specific, "gender-blind feminism" is bound to lead to frustration, as Arendt was not primarily concerned with the "woman question".²¹

Therefore, it might seem doubtful whether the principles of feminism and the Arendtian distinction between the private and the public are conceptually compatible at all. Feminist critics are right to be puzzled even by the way Arendt describes the private realm and the activities that are conducted in it. After all, the greater part of life-sustaining activities, as well as giving birth and childrearing, are commonly understood as activities done by women, or have been naturalised as "women's work". Arendt, however, never makes a statement regarding a sexual division of labour reflected in the separate realms of human activity. What can appear as a strange omission at first raises complex questions in the long run concerning the possibility of women's emancipation (and workers' emancipation, who, in their state as *homo faber*, are also linked to the material aspect of human existence) in the Arendtian conceptual framework.

The ambiguity of a feminist reading becomes poignant at the very beginning: as Benhabib notes, it is hard to avoid the impression that Arendt ontologises the sexual division of labour, which would point towards a harmful biological essentialism that would reduce women's role to a reproductive one, confining them to the household.²²

46:3, 2017, 397, referencing Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*.

¹⁹ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*.

²⁰ Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, "Justice: On Relating Private and Public".

²¹ Kimberly Maslin, "The Gender-Neutral Feminism of Hannah Arendt." in *Hypatia* 28, 3, 2013.

²² Seyla Benhabib, "Feminist theory and Hannah Arendt's concept of public space", 98.

However, some feminist authors attempt to leverage the same reproductive aspect in proposing an emancipatory project. This particular application of the principle of “The Personal is Political”, as promoted by Adrienne Rich²³ among others, not only accepts women’s position as intrinsically related to reproduction, but also assumes it to be a privileged epistemological position. The political (or more precisely, practical or pragmatic) aim of this line of thinking is to include this specific (“feminine”) experience into the realm of politics, and translate this experience (presumed as homogenous) into the language of politics while preserving its inherent “feminineness”.

This reproductive politics, as described by Rich and Mary O’Brien,²⁴ attempts to posit the body itself at the very centre of politics. According to Benhabib, however, the language of politics cannot be reduced to the materiality of human existence alone. This could not be coherent in the Arendtian framework. Furthermore, this position does not question in any way the “naturalness” of the sexual division of labour, it merely tries to make the private apparent in a public way. This, in turn, is incompatible not only with the division proposed by Arendt, as well as the private–public distinction present in some form in most existing political theories, but also does not propose a challenge or alternative to any of these frameworks in a theoretically sound and/or politically actionable way.

Mary Dietz, however, proposes a different way to pose the question: what could we learn if we interpreted the condition of *animal laborans* as the historical-social construction of femininity? First, we could conclude that the various human capacities are not sterile, ahistorical categories. Rather, they are relational positions instilled along the sexual difference and solidified over time: the activity of the *animal laborans*, the cyclical reproductive labour, has been naturalised as “women’s work”, while the productive activity of the *homo faber* is seen as men’s work. As Dietz argues, the *vita activa* is not a gender-neutral territory where the individual, male or female, can freely occupy *any* position. The different areas of human life become accessible or inaccessible along (often invisible) criteria of gender.²⁵ According to her, the concept of freedom used by Arendt is thus hardly compatible with a feminist approach, primarily because it applies only to a select

²³ Rich critiques Arendt on several perceived omissions, including not talking about the gendered nature of reproductive labour, and devaluing the political significance of the body. However, the consequences she draws are rather personal: she thinks that these omissions are the effect of the toxic influence of “male ideology” that has influenced Arendt. Adrienne Rich, “Conditions for Work: The Common World of Women (1976)”, in *On lies, secrets and silence: selected prose, 1966 - 1978*, Norton, New York, 1995.

²⁴ Mary O’Brien, *The Politics of reproduction*, Repr, Routledge & Kegan, Boston, Mass, 1983.

²⁵ Mary Dietz, “Hannah Arendt and Feminist Politics”, in Lewis P. Hinchman, Sandra Hinchman (ed.), *Hannah Arendt: Critical Essays*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1994, 241.

few. Going further, we can also argue that locating freedom in the public realm also means a devaluing of the private, and the gendered nature of the different areas of human life assigns an underlying relation of subordination to them. Considering all this, Dietz argues, a feminist concept of freedom should orient itself towards guaranteeing a free transition between the separate areas of human life (in both directions), and a free participation in all kinds of human activities, regardless of gender.

The Social

One of the challenges in understanding the significance of public life as seen by Arendt lies in the fact that we have no experience of it – according to Arendt, the modern man spends most of his time in the realm of the social. Indeed, her argument is rather unique in the broader context of political theory in that she sees the social as something that exists to the detriment of a real political public space. She claims that the social is not a historically given: it is very much the product of modernity, and its emergence coincides with the appearance of the nation-state. The social is neither private nor public: it functions as quasi-public space by giving elevating certain elements of the private realm into public, common concerns.

The emergence of the social, the incorporation of "housekeeping" and administration into the public space changed the meaning we assign to the private and the public. In antiquity, the meaning of the word "private" was much closer to the original sense of the word. To live in the private realm meant, quite literally, to be deprived of something, namely the highest human capacity. However, Arendt argues, today we do not think about our own private sphere in the terms of privation, since modern individualism has enriched this realm of human life to a great extent by making it the primary place of appearance of *the individual*. It is important to note that modern private life stands in opposition with the social as much as it contrasted the public realm in antiquity.²⁶

Arendt's critique of the social is two-fold, as she claims its appearance has affected both the structure of the private and the public. First, she links the emergence of the social with certain issues gaining the status of "common" or public concerns. Arendt not only thinks that these issues "belong" to the private realm, but that they have to remain private in order to exist at all. Second, the "victory" of the social over a real public life has led to the appearance of certain "non-political political forms"²⁷ that have eroded true political discussion, and relegated the function of government to an administrative role.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, "Justice: On Relating Private and Public", 268.

Arendt provides another definition for the social, understood as neither private nor public, in her controversial work *Reflections on Little Rock*,²⁸ The text was first published in 1959, at the height of the Civil Rights Movement and the increasing tensions underlying in the Southern society of the time: the focus of *Little Rock* is one of the epicentres of this tension, building around the desegregation of schools. Arendt specifies her own point of departure as a picture of a Black girl as seen in newspapers at the time: “on her way home from a newly integrated school: she was persecuted by a mob of white children, protected by a white friend of her father, and her face bore eloquent witness to the obvious fact that she was not precisely happy.”²⁹ While she begins her commentary from a factual error,³⁰ she attempts to use the case of *Little Rock* to point out an inherent tension between the organising principles of the political and the social. While the article drew heavy criticism even at the time of its publication, many commentators have attempted to “salvage” Arendt’s thesis from the racial overtones of the text. Indeed, despite the questionable treatment of the Black minority in her argument, read together with *The Human Condition*, *Little Rock* provides the most complete account on how Arendt sees the role of the social in modernity and its drawbacks concerning the function of politics.

The starting point of her analysis is a distinction she makes between fundamental human rights and social preference: in her interpretation, the choice of school belongs to the realm of the latter. In other words, while segregation itself is incompatible with the principle of equality that stands as the very basis of American republican politics, education is a matter of social tradition. The distinction clearly builds upon her separation of the social and the public: Arendt locates the source of the “color question”³¹ in „American tradition”, thus rendering it a social, rather than political issue. The USA is not a nation-state in the European sense, and even in its heterogenous population Black people are made visible by the colour of their skin. This holds great significance in a conception of the public in which things exist by being made to be seen. As soon as it is made to be seen in the public, however, this difference immediately enters into conflict with equality: as Tocqueville argued, equality is the

²⁸ Hannah Arendt, „Reflections on Little Rock”, in *Responsibility and judgment*, 1st ed, Schocken Books, New York, 2003.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ As Franco Palazzi notes, the picture she used to confirm her analysis was not taken in Little Rock at all: “On September 1957, the New York Times featured on its front page two quite similar photographs about school desegregation. The first depicted the National Guard preventing Eckford’s access to Central High, whereas the second portrayed Dorothy Counts and Dr. Edwin Thompkins surrounded by hostile white students while walking toward Harding High School in Charlotte, North Carolina.” Franco Palazzi, “Reflections on Little Rock’ and Reflective Judgment”, 401.

³¹ Hannah Arendt, “Reflections on Little Rock”, 198.

very foundation of American politics, but it brings about tensions that ultimately endanger the “American way of life”.³² The principle of equality cannot completely equalise by itself, nor can it homogenise by erasing visible difference. In addition: the more equal a society, the more it resents difference – according to Arendt, this is the “danger” threatening the balance of society.³³ Therefore, the social tension point does not stem from the political franchise of Black people (a clearly political right), but from the question of desegregation of schools (a social issue).

One of the main arguments Arendt derives from the tensions at Little Rock is the question of discrimination: she claims that discrimination serves the same role in the social as equality does in the political. The social is a hybrid realm that exists between the private and the public, and is organised along the logic of similarity and difference: we form communities with those who are similar to us, who share our particularities. Mass society, which erases the differences between various groups is dangerous to society as a whole. Therefore, for Arendt, the main question is not how to eradicate discrimination completely, but how to keep it in the realm of the social so as not to let it endanger political equality.³⁴

Here, Arendt does more than simply provide a historical explanation for the transformation of the public. Rather, she aims to point out that the disappearance of real politics from public life is not without its dangers. Read from the perspective of her critique of totalitarianism, the public is significant first and foremost as the *space* between people: totalitarianism, Arendt warns, collapses this space, and presses people together into a “mass”. While the emergence of the social does not coincide with totalitarianism itself, the disappearance of a space where collective political action can be done and truth can assert itself through speech makes it harder to defend the space of freedom that exists between people.³⁵

Besides criticising *Little Rock* along Arendt’s apparent racial biases, feminist authors also argue, on a theoretical basis, that Arendt weakens her own argument by building on the sharp distinction between the political and the social to delimit a very narrow definition of the political. In other words, she gives a normative definition regarding the content of political action and speech that excludes significant problems from the public realm. Furthermore, the distinction she makes between social attitude and legislation can be read as self-contradictory. As Franco Palazzi notes,

A thing Arendt should certainly have known, instead, was that educational segregation in the South was not a kind of spontaneous social tendency replicated

³² *Ibid.* 199.

³³ *Ibid.* 200

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Hannah Arendt, *On revolution*.

by local laws and suddenly abolished by the Supreme Court. Actually, the period between 1865 and 1877 had experienced a notable increase in the number of integrated schools with a reported 170,000 African Americans attending parochial integrated schools by 1869 and several antidiscrimination laws approved[.]³⁶

He also calls attention to the contradiction in defining the education of children as a private matter: “the only way to grant them to (mainly white) segregationist parents was to deny the same rights to (mainly black) integrationist ones.”³⁷

Similarly, Mary Dietz claims that what Arendt does not consider to be a fundamental right (according to her, the right to attend a desegregated school belongs to a different category than the inalienable right to “life, freedom and the pursuit of happiness”), is in fact a category error stemming from an imprecise differentiation between political association and social preference – the right to attend a desegregated school is not the equivalent of deciding who to invite over for dinner.³⁸ The right to equal education belongs more to the realm of politics than to the social in which private issues may appear to gain public significance.

Feminist readings therefore often reflect on the normative definition given by Arendt regarding the content of political speech and action. There are two main problems that appear in critical readings: first, that Arendt prescribes the content of political speech in such a restrictive way that she renders her own argument contradictory. And second, that she does not give due attention to the concept of justice in the public–private division.

The first point can be understood through another distinction that Arendt draws, this time between the “agonistic” and “associative” aspects of the Public as seen in ancient Athens – although it is important to note that neither of these have existed in a pure form.³⁹ The citizens of the agonistic public compete with each other for excellence and recognition – their heroism and political performance become real through each other's gaze and acknowledgement. The “associative” public, on the other hand, is the space in which people (“Men”), act together, in coordination with each other, to decide on a common present and future that affects them all – it is the space in which freedom and equality in the political sense can make an appearance. The public will thus be a place of *power* that unfolds through common speech and action.

However, this concept of power differs both from violence and domination. In the Ancient Greek private–public structure, domination belongs strictly to the

³⁶ Franco Palazzi, “‘Reflections on Little Rock’ and Reflective Judgment”, 402.

³⁷ Ibid. 403.

³⁸ Mary Dietz, „Hannah Arendt and Feminist Politics”.

³⁹ See Benhabib, „Feminist theory and Hannah Arendt’s concept of public space”, 102.

realm of the private: the head of the family rules unconditionally over the women and slaves who run his household (in other words, everyone in the household is equally subordinate to him). The head of the family – the individual, the citizen – begins to exercise his freedom when he exits the realm of “his own,” the “intimate,” to be in the presence of his peers, where no one rules and no one is ruled. The place of violence in this structure is ambiguous – it exists in an indirect connection to the possible content of political speech (as Benhabib puts it, Arendt’s *homo politicus* is in many ways the Homeric war hero tamed into a deliberative citizen),⁴⁰ but, at the same time, violence itself cannot speak in the public, as it is “mute”.⁴¹

From a feminist viewpoint, there is another issue raised by the definition of the agonistic political space: this definition of the *polis* presupposes the existence of a morally and politically homogeneous, but therefore exclusive (in the literal sense of the word) community, in which action means the revelation of the *self* in relation to others, under equal circumstances. The modern public realm, in which the social is the predominant structure, is not characterised by this kind of homogeneity as a given precondition. After the French and American revolutions, more and more groups demanded the right to access public, based on their specific needs: workers' movements made property rights the primary subject of public discourse, while for women's movement the issues of the household, the family and reproduction gained political significance. And, as we have seen, the Civil Rights Movement has raised a multitude of both social and political issues. Within this public–social–private distinction, freedom is still equivalent to the freedom of entering the public, of participating in politics, but it is immediately met with the challenge of a pre-determined content of political speech.

According to Benhabib, however, this is not an inherent self-contradiction, but a blind spot concerning social justice in Arendt's argument that confuses the issue of public justice with social preference, as seen in the case of Little Rock. The implicit premise that all human activity has its place (Benhabib calls this “phenomenological essentialism”)⁴² contributes to Arendt's effort in determining what public discourse can be about (or, more definitively, what it should *not* be about), and, in a similar vein, what can (and what should not) be the subject of political action. A normative definition of the public, Benhabib argues, narrows down the scope of the public in such a way that makes its associative form impossible: the content of political speech cannot be prescribed or predicted, as new problems will continuously arise through collective action.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 103.

⁴¹ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 25.

⁴² Seyla Benhabib, „Feminist theory and Hannah Arendt's concept of public space”, 104.

By placing the associative model in the centre of discussion, Benhabib favours a procedural model instead of a substantive or normative one: what matters is not what the political discourse is about, but *how* it takes place. Force and violence make political discourse impossible, replacing it with the silence of coercion.⁴³

Hanna Pitkin formulates her critique around the notion of justice, or, more precisely, the absence of this concept from Arendt's thesis on politics. Pitkin's main question is: if we exclude all material references from political discourse, inextricably attributing them to the private sphere, what could be the factor that unites those in participating in the public into a single political body? And, derived from this: what *can* be the content of political speech and action?⁴⁴

In attempt to find an answer, she refers back to the Aristotelian concept of politics. Aristotle's definition of man is twofold: on the one hand, he describes man as a political being, and on the other hand, as *zoon logon echon*, whose main ability is *logos* – the capacity for speech, language, and rational thinking.⁴⁵ The role of language, of speech as a political action, is therefore to decide together what is fair or just and what is not. It is striking, then, that Arendt's argument omits this dimension, but it does converge with the general scope of her argument. As long as the goal is to restore the original function of the public, the inclusion of the concept of justice makes it difficult to redraw the original distinction, especially in that it inevitably implies a rethinking of the material dimension of survival. The things that Arendt considers to belong strictly to the private inevitably make an appearance in a public defined along the lines of justice.

According to Pitkin, Arendt rightly comes to the defence of political freedom in her attempt to re-legitimise the political public space. However, a necessary step in this direction would also involve exploring the ways in which justice can contribute to linking material distribution to public action. Choosing this direction of inquiry would also change the goal of what feminist action might mean in the framework of private–social–public: the aim should be not to separate the different realms of human activity as perfectly as possible, but to reintegrate the social into politics in such a way that the issues of the social can be translated to the language of collective political action.⁴⁶

⁴³ *Ibid.* 104–105.

⁴⁴ Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, „Justice: On Relating Private and Public”, 270.

⁴⁵ Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Transl. David Ross, Oxford University Press, USA, 2009.

⁴⁶ Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, „Justice: On Relating Private and Public”, 277–280.

A Feminist Rethinking of the Public — Further Lines of Inquiry

As we have seen, feminist readings of Arendt, ranging from critical to reconciliatory, have found her arguments on the private, the social and the public lacking in several key issues related to the possible political goals of the feminist movement. First, as several authors have pointed out, a gendered perspective appears to be absent from the examination of human activity and the corresponding realms of human existence, as well as the division of labour between them. Second, the absence of the concept of justice seems to be another significant omission from her theory, even though, as for instance Pitkin suggests, it has the potential to translate a material, and even a gendered viewpoint into the language of political speech and action. However, some authors such as Seyla Benhabib, are hopeful that contemporary feminist theories may still find a meeting point with Arendt's political theory. Yet it remains a question as to what extent can feminist thought maintain its position in a framework defined by the strict separation of the private and the public.

Based on the above, the theses formulated in *The Human Condition* make the possibility of an actual feminist reading uncertain. The gendered aspect present in the delimitation of the private sphere represents a fertile ground for the feminist reception precisely *because* its absence from the discussion, and the concept of justice is also significant *because* of its lack. It can be argued, however, that contemporary feminism, shares Arendt's goal of re-politicising politics and may turn to the Arendtian definition of politics in order to reconceptualise a participatory public informed by dialogue and collective action.

At the centre of Arendt's views on politics are collective action and pluralism – none of which are inherently incompatible with the foundational principles of feminist thought. Benhabib suggests that feminist theories should turn to Arendt to develop their own coherent, positive theory of the public.⁴⁷ It is insufficient to base an emancipatory political project merely on reproductive issues, she states, especially considering that in political systems operating on some sort of distinction of private and public, this would not be consistent at all – the issues of the reproductive sphere can inform feminist theories of subjectivity, but feminist political action cannot be limited to them.

A feminist reconceptualisation of power appears to be a crucial step in this process, and the Arendtian framework may offer a possible point of departure. A conception of the public that is based on equality, in which different perspectives based on different fields of experience can be freely expressed, allows for a concept of power that sees it unfold through collective action. In other words – as Habermas

⁴⁷ Seyla Benhabib, „Feminist theory and Hannah Arendt's concept of public space“.

himself suggests – Arendt connects power with communicative action, detached from its teleological dimension: power unfolds in public speech, and it is not primarily aimed at achieving a goal, but at the process of building consensus. The role of power is to maintain the collective, non-coercive, consensual practice that has created it.⁴⁸

While it is important to note that Habermas's communicative model of action does not fully correspond to the concept of action used by Arendt,⁴⁹ a critical reinterpretation of communicative action has also contributed to the evolution of certain feminist conceptions of the public: Nancy Fraser, for instance, attempts to define an equal public space along the lines of communicative action and justice understood as parity.⁵⁰ Working with the idea of power understood as collective speech and action can be a way for feminist politics to move beyond simply incorporating the relations of domination present in the private realm into political speech, and to transcend the depoliticised understanding of power that stands at the basis of feminist theories of subjectivity.⁵¹

The aim of rehabilitating a genuine political public space, complemented by a gender perspective, also relates to the feminist goal of overcoming the bureaucratism present in politics that has been criticised by several feminist authors. Feminist critiques tend to describe politics in the traditional sense as patriarchal in itself (i.e., they believe that the role of actual politics has been replaced by bureaucracy structured along the logic of “patriarchal rationality”).⁵² Following a critical reading of Arendt however, we can argue that there is nothing inherently “masculine” about politics, as the private realm is not inherently “feminine” either.⁵³

⁴⁸ Jürgen Habermas, „Hannah Arendt’s Communications Concept of Power”, in Lewis P. Hinchman, Sandra Hinchman (eds.), *Hannah Arendt: Critical Essays*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1994.

⁴⁹ Seyla Benhabib, *The reluctant modernism of Hannah Arendt* (Modernity and political thought), New ed, Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, Md, 2003, 125–127.

⁵⁰ Nancy Fraser, *Fortunes of feminism: from state-managed capitalism to neoliberal crisis*, Verso Books, Brooklyn, NY, 2013.

⁵¹ The most well-known of these concepts of power is the one put forward by Michel Foucault, who understands subjectivity as subjectivation („*assujettissement*”), or the submission to the power working through society as a whole. See: Michel Foucault, *Dits et écrits I*. (Dits et écrits. 1954 -1988 Michel Foucault. Ed. établie sous la dir. de Daniel Defert 1). This notion of power has inspired feminist theories of subjectivity, such as Judith Butler’s theory of the performativity of gender, which describes gender as performative process of subjectivation. (See: Judith Butler, *Gender trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity* (Routledge classics), Routledge, New York, 2006. However, these concepts of power have drawn criticism for being difficult to translate into political action.

⁵² Among other feminist critics of bureaucratic institutions, Kathy Ferguson suggests that political institutions, especially in their bureaucratic, administrative forms, perpetuate social patterns of the subordination of women. See: Kathy E. Ferguson, *The feminist case against bureaucracy* (Women in the political economy), Temple Univ. Pr, Philadelphia, 1984.

⁵³ See Mary Dietz, „Hannah Arendt and Feminist Politics”.

In a similar vein, against what she identifies as the apolitical stance of the liberal strategy of avoidance that posits difference and dissent as a potential threat to stability, Linda Zerilli turns to Arendt's concepts of representative thinking and reflective judgment,⁵⁴ the latter of which Arendt expanded on in her *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, nearly a decade after formulating her thesis on political action in *The Human Condition*. However, as Franco Palazzi argues, in her attempt to link a political conception of reflective judgment with "some kind of dialectical corrective action,"⁵⁵ Zerilli falls into the trap of reaffirming the public as the proper space of human action along the same lines Arendt has originally defined it – appearing as neutral, but defined along terms of exclusivity that is bound to keep certain groups and their demands outside the boundaries of politics.⁵⁶

As it were, it remains doubtful that a feminist politics of difference may still remain coherent in the strict Arendtian definition of the political public. While contemporary feminism may share Arendt's goal of repoliticising politics in order to move beyond apolitical governance, rethinking participation in the political public in terms that allow for the diversity and difference of the participants to be translated into political speech and action might require a shift away from the Arendtian substantive definition of the public space.

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⁵⁴ Linda M. G. Zerilli, "Value Pluralism and the Problem of Judgment: Farewell to Public Reason".

⁵⁵ Franco Palazzi, "'Reflections on Little Rock' and Reflective Judgment", 425.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 429-434

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FROM LETTER TO PHANTASM. SOME REMARKS ON DELEUZE AND PSYCHOANALYSIS IN *LOGIC OF SENSE*

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ABSTRACT. *From Letter to Phantasm. Some Remarks on Deleuze and Psychoanalysis in Logic of Sense.* Our aim is to show how the two heterogeneous series of “letter” and “phantasm” make possible, through their convergence understood as the event of sense, a double passage. First, in the order of the Symbolic, the passage of the signifier into the signified. Second, the passage of the whole Symbolic order out of the desiring body. It will be shown that this amounts to a re-conceptualization of causality as sense – event.

Keywords: *meaning, sense, paradoxical entity, phantasm, desire, causality*

Introduction

What is the letter? By Lacan's definition it is “the material medium (support) that concrete discourse borrows from language.”¹ Is the letter the “property” of language since it disposes of it to borrow? And should speech be an exception to language, something other than language, so that it “borrows” something like the “letter”, something seems to be missing, though? Or is it about the “material” consideration of the letter, in which only discourse can make the “materiality” of language appear? It is understood that this is a question concerning the structure and the concrete.

What is certain is that, however we look at it, the capacity of the letter to be “dislocated” has excited many philosophies passionate about language. It is as if you spotted the “disappearing mediator” just after its erasure, to paraphrase Jacques Derrida. Just like him, Deleuze took Lacan's statement seriously: “Plagiarism does

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1 Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, transl. Bruce Fink, ed. W. W Norton & Co., 2007, p. 413;

not exist. There is no such thing as symbolic property.”² Therefore an interpretation based on textual “reality” cannot produce an effect, and the mere fact of knowing very well what Deleuze “stole” from Lacan would be a permanently premature symbolization. But then why would we intervene on these texts? Because there is a desire in talking.

If there is no symbolic property, and this means only that for little Hans, for instance, “horse” does not have the same meaning as it does for anyone else, but also that the lexicon and grammar of the unconscious have nothing to do with hermeneutics, if symbolic property does not exist, then what *is* the letter?

The mirroring of structure and the concrete

In *Logic of Sense*³ Deleuze will show us how, as soon as the Symbolic dimension appears, we will be dealing with a minimal difference between an element that occupies a position, and the structural position that the element occupies: structure and concrete, so. Hence the concrete element, according to the logic of sense, is preceded by that place in the structure that it occupies. We will thus have two series: the series of the “empty” formal structure - the signifier, and the series of the elements that fill these spaces - the signified. The paradox is that these two series never overlap. Everything we encounter is an entity that is, at the same time, an unoccupied place from the point of view of structure, an evasive object, without an assignable place. Although the structure “has” what the object “lacks”, Deleuze insists on the incongruity of the two series which, as Lacan has already stated, is the minimum condition of *fantasy*. If Deleuze is really a follower of a certain “perversion”⁴, of course the most convenient comparison with Lacan would be at this very level: perversion is an inverted fantasy.

In continuing the exemplification of these two series Deleuze equates – not in vain - the function of the letter with that of the *mirror*:

What are the characteristics of the paradoxical entity? It circulates without end in both series and, for this reason, assures their communication. It is a two-sided entity, equally present in the signifying and the signified series. It is the mirror. Thus, it is at once world and thing, name and object, sense and *denotatum*, expression and designation. It guarantees, therefore, the convergence of the two series which it transverses, but precisely on the condition that it makes them

2 Cf. Bruce Fink, *Lacan to the Letter*, ed. University of Minnesota Press, 2004, p. 52.

3 Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, trad. Mark Lester, ed. The Alhorne Press, London, 1990.

4 “Perversion which at least benefits the system of provocations of this new type of philosopher – if it is true that perversion implies an extraordinary art of surfaces.”, in *ibid.*, p. 133.

endlessly diverge. It is the property of being always displaced in relation to itself. (...) We must say that the paradoxical entity is never where we look for it, and conversely that we never find it where it is. As Lacan says, *it fails to observe its place (elle manque à sa place)*. It also fails to observe its own identity, resemblance, equilibrium and origin.⁵

This element is so paradoxical that its mere “fantastic” existence is itself a phantasm: “nothing finalizes itself to such an extent.”⁶ The effectiveness of this fantasy, however, is to ensure the permanent imbalance of the two series, as for example Lacan notes that there is always a surplus of the significant over the signified, that it sometimes fills completely and incestuously. At the end of this divergent convergence, we could only meet *sense*. Not just the meaning that things “have”, but the sense that things “make”. Sense is oriented. For Deleuze it is always an event when things “make” sense because, emerging against the background of nonsense, from the chaos in which they are caught, often symptomatically, those words are pronounced (the letter as phoneme) that have never been said before. Some things are signified for the *first time* only late in life, with much effort, and always very sudden.

This is where the materiality of language as such begins. A pre-reflexive, pre-significant substantiality that is the letter as Real, something like the eventual emergence of language as such. Of course, caught in the language, the structure is already complicated, with everything that means the Symbolic and the ambiguity that is introduced by desire, judgment, that letter that the unconscious uses to create its conundrums: metaphor, metonymy. As such, the letter has no meaning, but the meaning is the effect of the directionality of the letter, precisely because we cannot locate its element, so it assures a minimum of circulation.

Talking with desire

This discussion about structure and concrete brings us closer to the kernel of Deleuze's *Logic of Sense*, that is that of the emergence of the universal Symbolic structure out of the particular corporeal economy. As we have seen so far, this is a question targeting the phantasm. Nonetheless, the real difficulty is to understand a kind of “transubstantiation” of the corporeal effect into an autonomous domain of the Symbolic in an immanent way. The problem of structure and concrete was strictly a problem of coordination. Here we have encountered the mirror, that is letter as imago:

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 40.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 217.

There is a third species, distinct from the emanations issued from the depth and from the simulations detached from the surface of things. These are the phantasms, which enjoy a higher degree of independence with respect to objects and an extreme mobility, or an extreme inconstancy in the images which they form (since they are not renewed by the constant supplies emitted by the object). It seems that here image stands for the object itself.⁷

Once the Symbolic emerge, the complication becomes evident, in the sense that we must retroactively presuppose a “cut”, something like castration in psychoanalysis, in order to understand what the signifier stands for. Once again following Lacan, the struggle for Deleuze is how to get rid of the intervention of some transcendent extra-bodily force and derive the whole Symbolic order out of the inherent impasse of the sexualized body itself. As Deleuze notes:

We must conceive of an infinitive which is not yet caught up in the play of grammatical determinations – an infinitive independent not only of all persons but of all time, of every mood and every voice (active, passive, or reflective). This would be a neutral infinitive of the pure event, Distance, Aion, representing the extra-propositional aspect of all possible propositions, or the aggregate of ontological problems and questions which correspond to language. From this pure and undetermined infinitive, voices, moods, tenses, and persons will be engendered. Each one of them will be engendered within disjunctions representing in the phantasm a variable combination of singular points, and constructing around these singularities an instance of solutions to the specific problem – the problem of birth, of the differences of the sexes, or the problem of death.⁸

These are the dynamic geneses that describe “a new heralding of the body founded on phonology.”⁹ Taking up in his own way the Kleinian pre-Oedipal “depths”, Freudian and Lacanian approaches to sexuality, castration and the phantasm, Deleuze tries to elucidate how events of language and the emergence of the divided subject are produced so that:

[...] in this case, we find ourselves confronted with a final task: to retrace the history which liberates sounds and makes them independent of bodies. It is no longer a question of static genesis which would lead from the presupposed event to its effectuation in states of affairs and to its expression in propositions. It is a question of dynamic genesis which leads directly from states of affairs to events, from mixtures to pure lines, from depth to the production of surfaces, which must not implicate at all the other genesis.¹⁰

7 *Ibid.*, p. 275.

8 *Ibid.*, pp. 214-215.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 231.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 186.

As it is in *Logic of Sense*, very succinctly, we can say that everything starts with the child initially disorganized bodily experiences and object relations. They become a form of an imaginary “good object” (maternal breast) which is in turn signified by a Voice, the familial hum surrounding him. This Voice is not yet a language, although it will become so, and thus be retrospectively made sense of once the child accedes to its organizing principle. The relation to the good object then makes it possible for the child to extract itself from its confused corporeal relations in order to form, from component sexual drives, a total physical surface for the body, as well as for the mother, who is both present and absent. The key to this process is the “phallus”.¹¹

The phallus both integrates the mother’s mysterious presences and absences and is a totally satisfying love object which the child strives to be in order to control the mother’s desire. The child thus competes with the imaginary father in order to be the phallus up to the moment when the real father intervenes as the one who in fact has the phallus. It intervenes as someone who partially represents the social symbolic “law” of the mother’s desire, and who thus “castrates” the child of the imaginary phallus. “Castration” here means that the child abandons the attempt to be the phallus for the mother and identifies with the real father, positioning himself with respect to a rule-governed way of organizing social relationships. In other words, the child positions himself with respect to the structural – symbolic dimension of language and culture. This is, for Deleuze, nothing more than the metaphysical dimension of the convergence of the bodily surface with the Symbolic order through the mark of the letter:

“Letter” which, at the same time would trace its limits and subsumes under its images or object of satisfaction. “Letter” at this point assumes no mastery of language and still less a possession of writing. It is rather a question of phonemic differences in relation to the difference of intensity which characterizes the erogenous zones.¹²

Castration, then, effectively represents the event of the divided subject on the metaphysical bodily surface, or the event of the metaphysical dimension for this subject who is both dissolved in intensive corporeal processes and a form produced by linguistic operations that are inter-subjective. As such, the phallus becomes an agent of coordination, and again it can be equated to the letter.¹³

11 “The phallus should not penetrate, but rather, like a plowshare applied to the thin fertile layer of the earth, it should trace a line at the surface. This line, emanating from the genital zone, is the line which ties together all the erogenous zones, thus ensuring their connection or interfacing (*doublure*), and bringing all the partial surfaces together into one and the same surface on the body of the child.” in *ibid.*, p. 201.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 230.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 231.

The event of language is essentially simultaneous with this event of the divided subject. “Phantasm” is a representation of the satisfaction of the sexual drives and whose “process” is coextensive with the linguistic practices characterizing the metaphysical surface. The phantasm, finding its origin in castration as the child’s passage to the metaphysical, is thus a reinvestment and articulation of the infant’s desire on that surface. At this point, the child is able to gradually connect its speech with the propositions constitutive of events, so does the phantasm become to represent the “satisfaction” of his desire. This process, going from noise to the Voice, from the Voice to speech, and then from speech to the neutrality of the metaphysical surface, is the event of language as such. It is the separation “at the surface” of words endowed with sense and noisy corporeal “things”:

As if the child was learning to speak on his own body – with phonemes referring to the erogenous zones, morphemes to the phallus of coordination, and semantemes to the phallus of castration. This reference must not be interpreted as a denotation (phonemes do not “denote” erogenous zones), as a manifestation, nor even as signification. It is rather a question of conditioning – conditioned structure, of a surface effect, under the double sonorous and sexual aspect or, if one prefers, under the resonance and mirror. At this level speech begins: it begins when the formative elements of language are extracted at the surface, from the current of voice which comes from above. This is the paradox of speech. On one hand, it refers to language as to something withdrawn which preexists in the voice from above; on the other hand, it refers to language as something which must result, but which shall come to pass only with formed units. Speech is never equal to language. It still awaits the result, that is, the event which will make the formation effective.¹⁴

In the second part of *Logic of Sense* we encounter some even more profound shifts, as the subsequent “logic of events” Deleuze is concerned about. Although it seems we have “caught” the letter in fantasy, it appears in the order of the Real. Deleuze now calls the letter “element”,¹⁵ that which is *not* caught in the Other’s speech Mother, Voice and frees, Michael Tournier’s hero – Robinson, from the phallus itself. As a recapitulation: the letter should be a property of the Symbolic, as the discourse borrows it from the language, most often in the form of the phoneme. Now, we find it at the Imaginary level because it is a phantasm. But at most it is something that resists symbolization as such: it has no objective reality, it is nonsense, surface, lack, any name, irrational like the square root of 1 (the phallus),

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 232-233.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 317.

beyond being, any exaggeration. From the chaos of the depths of the Real, to the inter-subjective dimension of Symbolic language, to the phantasm constitutive of the Imaginary, “letter” is the inescapable mark of an ideal event, of a paradoxical agency. This questions: birth, the difference of sexes, death – these cannot be answered with “causes”, so in order to approximate them, Deleuze had to invent a new concept of the event: that of language as such. But his ideal sense – events resemble the psychoanalytic concept of “phantasm” or that of “floating signifier” deployed by structuralism:

The paradoxical agency is defective, the signifier floats because it lacks a determinate signified: it includes non-sense. Since it includes non-sense, the paradoxical agency lacks ultimate determination and a unique direction or one sense. Precisely because it lacks sense, it is able to give too much sense. The combination of not enough and too much explains why, for Deleuze, the paradoxical agency is defined by a question, a question with too many answers because there is no ultimate answer.¹⁶

So, the letter, as this paradoxical element, is the unlimited, the lack, endless. It also has to be something on the corporeal surface, a mark, wound or scar. A mark of the pre-symbolic, of the part of language that escapes orality and stands for the materiality of the signifier as such. It is as if the body already talks out of its desiring intensities.

Conclusion

If we think about the meaning of “letter”, of course we cannot find anything. This is why we said it is this elusive “object”, the paradoxical entity, a principle of emission of singular events. Between them, the hardest to think about is the emergence of language from the body itself. But since the fact that symbolic language cannot represent all phenomena adequately, there is a different “place” for the letter to be inscribed. In order to do so, we must look at another exception, the desiring body of a child. The letter marks the destiny of the subject as something that it will forever try to decipher, because first there are corporeal effects, and only after them comes the Symbolic. This deciphering coincides with the articulation of desire itself. Since it is an “articulation” in place, desire becomes a stuff of language, but also a shield

16 Leonard Lawlor, *Phenomenology and metaphysics, and chaos: on the fragility of the event in Deleuze*, in “The Cambridge Companion to Deleuze”, ed. Daniel W. Smith & Henry Somers-Hall, Cambridge University Press, 2012.

enabling fantasy. As when something as bothering as desire “makes” sense, a sort of primordial event appears, that points to the depths of the Real of our first intensities which made possible every phantasm that sustains our subjectivity. This is the metaphysical bet Deleuze takes, as all philosophers do once: the bridging of two heterogeneous series: that of form and content, done by the doubly inscribed paradoxical entity, simultaneously surplus and lack. When some short-circuit happens, a letter appears as pure signifier, and the event of sense starts a completely new causality.

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REALISM/ANTIREALISM DEBATE: A SELECTION OF THE MOST IMPORTANT ARGUMENTS OF THE DEBATE

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ABSTRACT. Realism/Antirealism Debate: A Selection of the Most Important Arguments of the Debate. The present article intends to explore features of the realism/antirealism dispute. The intention is to offer arguments in favor of both sides for a better understanding of the debate. The article wants to use both logical arguments and sociological or psychological ones.

Keywords: *realism, antirealism, debate, arguments, Dummett, Putnam*

Introduction

The realism/antirealism debate (abbreviated in article as AR/R) is a classical one in philosophy, being almost ubiquitous in it. We discuss about an AR/R dispute in morals, religion, science, etc. The main idea is about the possibility of analysis of nature, i.e. the belief in the existence of concepts that are independent by human and by its knowledge. I give an example, we can believe in some moral values (e.g. the compassion) which we consider objective, independent by our attitude towards them (in a realist perspective), or we believe that these values are entirely created by culture, not existing in fact (in an anti-realist perspective). Some authors¹ suggest that anti-realism and realism do not describe global attitude towards world, rather towards some levels, e.g. someone can be a modal realist but in the same time a moral anti-realist; even in a scientific domain, someone can be realist towards some theories and anti-realist towards other.

Firstly, I will briefly present the historical perspective of the debate. Even though the term “antirealism”, which we use, established in the literature, has only about

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¹ e.g. Wright, 2003; Chakravartty, 2007; Dummett, 1996.

50 years old, being promoted by Michael Dummett in a series of articles², many authors, and Dummett himself, consider that the debate is not so new. Even if the subject of the controversies differs, a common structure exists.³ Hence we can observe a similar debate even in Medieval period, the one between the nominalists and realists.

Then the debate was focused on the existence of universals (some perfect, ideal qualities from which derive imperfectly the material world's qualities), realists (influenced by the Plato's philosophy) believed in this theory, while the nominalists considered that those were just names (from which the denomination of "nominalists"). Later, in the eighteen century, the idealism, being represented by George Berkeley or Immanuel Kant, was opposed to realism. In the field of the analytical philosophy, the debate tackled the existence of abstract objects of logic and mathematics. An example of important antirealist approach is the intuitionism, developed by Brouwer and Heyting, who denies the existence of actual infinity. Hence, there are series of operations which are considered to be false in this approach of mathematics and logic, e.g. the law of excluded middle on infinite sets.

From a historical point of view, there can be observed that the term of realism remained somehow stable, even though it was attached to it different qualities, depending on the discourse space (modal, scientific etc.), while what was opposed to it was changed: from nominalism to idealism, and then the critics to derive from different approaches like empiricism or social constructivism. So, we will present a few types of realism for a broader view on the subject, then the critics which derive from a number of currents that opposed to realism and stays under the umbrella term of anti-realism.

Types of realism

We will present the definition of realism made by Michael Dummett (used by other authors, like Hilary Putnam): a realist argues that, regarding a theory or a given discourse, that the propositions of that theory or discourse are true or false, i.e. that what it makes them true or false are something external, namely out of mental structures, out of language etc. A similar definition, but formulated more specific about the scientific realism (focused on the scientific theory and discourse) is the follow: the perspective that "the characteristic product of successful scientific research involves knowledge of causal structures whose existence and proprieties

² e.g. Dummett 1963, 1969, etc.

³ Dummett, 1963.

are independent of the adoption of the theories and conceptual frameworks that describe them, and (against empiricism) that this remains true even when the causal structures in question would have to be unobservable".⁴

Dummett had observed that the given theories have a pattern, so he tried to abstract the debate AR/R. However, I want to present some approaches of realism. I will use an idea presented in Wang, which argues that the multitude of logic definitions is explained by the purpose of the investigation.⁵ I consider that the same happens also in this case. There are a lot of typologies of realism, with differences between them. Hence we can talk about a structural realism (which comes from the observations made by Henri Poincaré which points out the existence of a pattern at the structural level of theories, even though historically the entities modify, a common structure of the theories remains, e.g. from the concept of atom to the concept of electron and proton etc., the structure of theories remains alike. Some authors consider that the scientific realism „depends on the observation that many apparently central features of scientific concepts and practices seem to involve reference to such theory, independent and unobservable structures".⁶

Another type of realism is the modal one, sustained by David Lewis. He makes reference, as we can see from the denomination, to the modal logic and to the concept of possible world. He advocates for the idea that „our worlds is but one world among many"⁷, the belief of the existence of other possible worlds independent from the human mind. An interesting author is Hilary Putnam, who has a more nuanced view about this debate, because he can be labeled as a semantic realist but also as an ontological antirealist. Related to this view, i.e. the ontological antirealism together with the semantical realism, we no longer sustain the obligation of existence of the objects by these theories, but the truth of the sentences about those objects, hence "it is possible to be a realist with respect to mathematical discourse without committing oneself to the existence of 'mathematical objects'".⁸ Another form of realism, which he rejects, is a form of ontological realism (the one about the existence of the entities), which he termed as "metaphysical realism". We will use his definition about this: "The metaphysical realist pictures the world as a totality of language-independent things, a totality which is fixed once and for all; and, at least in the case of an ideal language, one (and only one) reference relation connecting our words with that totality is supposed to be singled out by

⁴ Boyd, 1990, p. 171.

⁵ Wang, 1962.

⁶ Boyd, 1990, p. 171.

⁷ Lewis, 2001.

⁸ Putnam, 1975, p. 70.

the very way we understand our language".⁹ This description wants to merge two characteristics of the traditional metaphysical realism: the insistence on a singular, unique correspondence (to a "fixed, mind-independent Reality") as the basis for assignment of truth or falsity, and the idea that there is just "One True Theory" of this "fixed mind-independent Reality". The third feature is the focus on the bivalent truth-theory. The main arguments against this type of realism, in the view of Putnam, tackle the fact that the truth is not a fixed thing, being vague, open ended.

The semantical realism, related to a theory or a discourse has two important features:¹⁰ 1) The sentences of that theory or discourse are truth or false in a determined manner and 2) The truth or the falsity of those sentence is something exterior to human minds.

Hilary Putnam had many discussions on the realism and had changed his view along his career, but he offered one of the classical argument in favor to scientific realism, the no-miracle argument.¹¹ In the mature sciences (for this formulation, Putnam was accused for being too vague), the theories are usually true and their central terms have a real referent: the Niels Bohr's electron, Newton's mass, Mendel's gene, etc., while old terms like ether or phlogiston are concepts without real referent. The argument goes like this: if the science is just a simple game, the theories are just some social rules, then the predictive capacity of science would be a pure miracle. Hence a realist can argue that the success of theory (viewed pragmatically, by the advantages of the technology developed by that theory) is the match between the concepts with reality.

However, is interesting to note that different types can exclude one another. For example, we can discuss about a commonsense realism (which believes in the observable entities) and scientific realism (which is related with the existence of the observable and unobservable entities). Even if they had common places, a common sense realist may argues against scientific realism because he does not believe in the notion of electron (being unobservable), and a scientific realist may criticize common sense realism, being skeptical about this, because historically, a lot of common sense observations were rejected by the science (e.g. the Copernican's heliocentrism).¹²

Anti-realism arguments

Before mentioning the comments of Michael Dummett and other analytical philosophers to antirealism, we will present some arguments that sustain this position.

⁹ Putnam, 1994.

¹⁰ Putnam, 1975, p. 69-70.

¹¹ Putnam, 1978.

¹² Devitt, 2000.

Depending on the critics, we divided in three groups: hence, some arguments focused on the psychological characteristics of the researcher, other on the sociological features of the research and other on the research itself.

i) Psychological arguments

If we could use a motto to resume those arguments, it is the ancient quote from Terence: “Homo sum, et humani nihil a me alienam puto” (“I am a human being; of that which is human, I think nothing estranged from me.”). Every research is made with scientists, so the research is influenced by peripherally aspects like emotions, beliefs, etc. An important critique is focused on the reasoning, the manner of obtaining the inferences (especially on the process of abductive reasoning).

The idea is that in philosophy there are considered three types of reasoning, two being more analyzed in psychological literature: deductive reasoning (based on a rule we infer about particular cases), inductive reasoning (based on the similarity between particular cases, we extract a general rule about them) and abductive reasoning (based on the analysis of particular cases we develop the „best explanation”, not necessary the correct one). While the deductive reasoning is a necessary one (from correct inferences we infer correct conclusion), the other two are not necessary (we are not totally sure about the conclusion), but add a new information to the stock of knowledge, developing more than what is contained in premises.

While in the case of induction we infer only based on the statistical arguments (looking at some repetitions and based on a convention, e.g. in psychological research on the statistical points .05, .01, .001,¹³ we can develop a rule about some concepts), in the abductive reasoning we are not restrained to the statistical arguments. In the abduction we can make use of arguments that follow a common sense or other patterns that are correct in other theories (an example of this is the observation about the rising of sun, before the Copernican revolution, which by means of the inductive reasoning we infer that tomorrow the sun will rise, while by the abductive reasoning we try to give an explanation for this phenomenon). As it was sustained by other authors,¹⁴ the mathematical reasoning is not entirely deductive. Even though the mathematics can be translated mostly into a logical language (as it was proved by Peano, Russell, Frege and other logicians), and even mechanized by the means of recursive operations (as it was showed by Alonzo Church and Alan Turing), being near of deductive inference, the mathematical capacity of reasoning goes beyond this type of reasoning. This is argued by Poincaré (the demonstration of

¹³ Popa, 2008.

¹⁴ Poincaré, 1895.

every mathematical formula comes with a new information, adding a new idea, not being just a redundant reasoning; he presents his arguments in the rejection of Leibniz's proof that $2+2=4$) or by Kurt Gödel (with his incompleteness theorems). Hence, in science we make use of not necessary reasoning, like the induction or abduction, so the scientific inferences are susceptible to error.

Another criticism is about the creation of scientific theories. Some authors, especially W. V. Quine, argue that we have the tendency to select the most clear, elegant and efficient theory (even though Quine himself appreciates these features at a theory) at the expenses of other theories, even though we cannot be sure that the Universe is not in fact chaotically, unclear etc. This idea is consistent along with principles of Gestalt theory, used after by the cognitive psychology,¹⁵ like the law of Prägnanz (that we have the tendency to perceive the world as being structured, symmetrical etc.), tending to fill the "informational gaps" so that the information has an acknowledged structure even though the objects are not in reality like this.

Thus, we link the information for a better understanding, being comprehensible even though we avoid the non-consistent information. Another criticism from the psychology, is the influence of cognitive framework and its bias in interpreting reality, being dependent by the previous organized acquired knowledge.¹⁶ Other arguments resides in the need for a good explanation, a logical structure, for believing a story.¹⁷ The idea is the follow: a theory is like a story, it is explained the phenomenon and its causes; we may believe it because it sounds logical, rejecting the parts that may seem unclear or fuzzy, although the fuzzy concepts may explain better some part of theories.

ii) Sociological arguments

Social constructivism considers that the learning is determined by the relation with the environment. So, when I enter in an institutional framework, e.g. a university, I will be guided to perceive a concept (e.g. the electricity) in the manner in which the professor teaches, or in the way the manual or handbook present the concept. So, I do not question the concept, and I will rather start to resolve puzzle problems,¹⁸ for which I am prepared from the university or by the workplace. Only when the failures in explaining the phenomenon accumulate and develop into a crisis, the scientific community will search for a better paradigm to explain and to resolve different puzzle problems.

¹⁵ Miclea, 1999; Atkinson, 2005.

¹⁶ see Atkinson, 2005.

¹⁷ Sperber and Wilson, 1981; Sperber, 2010.

¹⁸ Kuhn, 1962.

Meanwhile, a critique brought by the sociology of science is about the perspective of the science, viewed as a clear, progressive process. One of the main arguments represents the changes of the paradigm in theories. Historically, there were so many wrong conceptions towards science, explications that were magical, or come from domains that were based on questionable reasoning, a lot of them not having a real referent. The question is the follow, how those researchers have done science, lot of them with success, if were based on such concepts. Some authors consider that those are refutation of scientific realism based on historical arguments¹⁹. After, the author gives examples of theories which have real referent (in contemporary scientific opinion) but were unsuccessful: Proutian theory that the heavy objects are compound by atoms or Wenger's theory about the continent's movement etc.²⁰

Another statement argues against the cumulative comprehension of science which is representative for scientific realism, i.e. „earlier and now-rejected theories actually referred to the same entities as our present ones do”.²¹ The problem is the variation of entities, the best example is the concept of number and set, which one were modified after Cantor's theory.

Sociologically speaking, the arguments also tackle other aspects. One of them is the feminist one: along history had been favored some discourses, situated in a position, dominated by male, ignoring other types of discourses.²² This can be observed in the small number of important scientist, e.g. in some of the most important psychologists of twentieth century, domain with an important number of women in practice, the first woman who appears is Elisabeth Loftus on the 58th position.²³ Hence, the argument of an independent rationality which chooses what is „correctly” methodological is questioned because of this bias. In the center of scientific domains, the influence is taken by people who want to keep this status quo and sustain only one position, leaving no room for other scientist to come and add new ideas, the minorities being the women, the scientist from outside west culture etc. Hence, scientific construction of ideas or constructs may be socially influenced and not created by a somehow independent rationality.

Another criticism focus on the following: it can be accepted that the scientific concepts and practices give a quantity of information (e.g. , we know that if we have an action over an object, we have a counter-reaction, after a systematical observation), but the interpretation of language and of scientific concepts by what these information

¹⁹ Laudan, 1984.

²⁰ Laudan, 1981.

²¹ Carrier, 1991.

²² Keller, 1982.

²³ Haggbloom, 2002.

transform in knowledge is rather founded on language convention or social construction rather than knowing an unobservable phenomenon independent by theory.²⁴ Some author, like Rudolf Carnap, discuss about the fact that the unobservable concepts (e.g. the intelligence, which we consider it exists) is knowable only if it can be translated in a physical, visible language (by observation of some actions that are visible and are considered by convention to be representative for that concept. This translation rules, by which I assign to those concepts a physical, sensorial manifestation have to be considered as truth by convention.²⁵

iii) Methodological arguments

In every scientific domain, it exists a quantity of conventionalism, of arbitrary. When is engaged on the notation (e.g. Chlorine in Chemistry is abbreviated as Cl), this thing is not problematic. But the problem opens when we speak about *unexpected conventionality of laws or generalizations*,²⁶ cases where we find nominalist definitions, when a realist expects to find real ones. For example, we are sure that there are species and higher taxonomies, but the cladists insist that although the species are “real”, the higher taxonomies are not „real”, being mostly conventional.

Other criticism is concerned with the bivalent truth function. Putnam discusses it and states that the realists use it in their analysis of scientific sentences. For a realist thinker, a sentence S is true if and only there is a state of affairs which corresponds with the depiction given in S, while for the antirealist, S is true if and only if we have “effective criterion for showing that S holds”.²⁷ In a realist point of view, a sentence has to be true or false, but Putnam argues that in the case of quantum mechanics, we need to use a polyvalent logic (a trivalent one). He compares the trivalent logic with the non-Euclidean geometry, both viewed by the scientific community as technicality, without having a real use. Over time, there were discovered applications which proved not only their theoretical validity but also the ecological one. Hence, the trivalent logic could be put in some correspondence with a real state of fact (in this case, with the quantum mechanics one), rejecting the singularity of bivalent principle.²⁸

²⁴ Boyd, 1990.

²⁵ Boyd, 1990.

²⁶ Boyd, 1990.

²⁷ Oliveri, 1994, p. 94.

²⁸ Putnam, 1975.

Michael Dummett

The shift made by Michael Dummett is about the view of the debate: if before, the dispute was over a class of objects, about which we argue if they exist or not, now the dispute focuses on a class of sentences, which he names the disputed class. For Dummett, the conditions for direct assertability of a sentence A are defined in an absolute and univocal manner, context-independent. In the antirealist position of Dummett, it will always be a group of object which will play the role of judge over the questions of significance, truth or conscience. Hence, the dispute focuses on the referential theory, by which the truth of a proposition is given by the existence or not of the objects which represents the linguistic referent of the sentence, and not the objects itself, and which assume the existence of a reality in correspondence with the sentence.²⁹

In Dummett's view, to be a realist, is not sufficient only to take a bivalent perspective over the truth of the sentences of a given domain, the person has to have a conception about the manner in which this truth is determined.³⁰ One manner is „to base the two-valued semantics on a notion of reference, taking it that singular terms function to refer to objects and that predicate expressions have semantic values.³¹ As an example, „John is student” is true only when „John” has the propriety or is under the extension of the predicate “to be student”. Hence, the conflict AR/R is over the meaning of the sentences from disputed class, i.e. the manner in which someone understands that sentence. The anti-realist understands a proposition in base of the manner in which someone can comprehends that proposition, the truth constitutes only in the existence of evidence.

On the other hand, for the realist, is more important the notion of truth to determine the significance of proposition. If I know what make this proposition true, then I know the meaning of proposition: we can derive what makes that proposition true by learning what is considered as an evidence for its truth, but we make such that, we have a conception of a sentence being true even though it has an evidence.³² If we take an example, outside of mathematical logic, is the psychoanalytical concept of id (the unconscious of a person, in which the impulses develops). An antirealist will deal with the sentence: “John has an id” on the base of observations made over the behavior of John which could be explained as id, while in the lack of evidence (as a cognitivist psychologist may consider) he will comment that to say about John that he has an id is meaningless.

²⁹ Naibo, 2016.

³⁰ Dummett, 1996.

³¹ Weiss, 2002, p. 52.

³² Dummett, 1963.

On the other hand, for a realist (in this case a psychoanalyst), the meaning should be taken by what makes this sentence true (the existence of id by definition). Even if we do not observe in John's behavior something that can be explained by the id (for example, because the control of super ego), we still consider that John may have an id.

Unlike Putnam, Dummett has a stronger antirealist position, being both a semantical and ontological antirealist. A semantical realist position adopts a truth notion that applies on every sentences of that theory, i.e. say about every sentence if is true of false. In other words, we can decide if that sentence is false or not, even if only in abstract (as in an example presented by Putnam about the number of stars in the Universe). For Dummett, a truth notion is realist if does not make the truth of sentences dependent by the evidence that we have for them.³³ Here appears the major differences AR/R about the truth notion, the verificationism. An realist would consider that a notion may be explained by its structure and its reference, without mentioning the evidences, while the anti-realist (going on the line of logical positivism by Vienna Circle) takes a sentence as being true only if he can establish its truth.³⁴

Michael Dummett uses in its argumentation, for rejection of semantical realism the undecidable propositions developed by Kurt Gödel (i.e. in every consistent and ω -consistent system will be an undecidable proposition). The truth of these propositions is found in intuitive manner, so this proposition is true and undecidable. Unlike the subjective content, like the personal experience of "red", content which cannot be communicated (using the idea of Schlick),³⁵ the theorem of Godel presents in a formal expressible manner the idea of undecidability, hence the person cannot assign to some propositions a truth value on the base of a evidence.

Dummett's reasoning is the following:³⁶

1. The meaning of a statement must be such that it makes sense to speak about a person knowing the meaning;
2. Knowledge of meaning must in the end be implicit. In particular, there are undecidable sentences whose meaning can be known only implicitly. Such implicit knowledge can be sensibly ascribed to a person, only if it is fully manifestable;
3. Knowledge of truth-conditions for undecidable sentences cannot be fully manifestable when truth is understood classically.

³³ Devitt, 2000.

³⁴ Devitt, 2000.

³⁵ Schlick, 2003.

³⁶ Prawitz, 1994, p. 80.

Hence the conclusion: the meaning of some undecidable sentences cannot be given by some truth conditions when the truth is understood classically (by this rejecting the realist semantic).

Dummett argues using the example the natural number, a concept whose existence is intuitive for us, but which cannot be expressed totally, leaving place for the undecidable sentence, inherent to every system complex enough. The discussion about natural numbers is a sophisticated one, given the dual aspect of the numbers: they can be treated as real objects, but not physical or space-temporal (mathematical Platonism), but then how can it be acquainted these strange, causal isolated objects? On the other hand, the constructivism (intuitionism) cannot explain how, if we built mathematics just like a simple game like chess or go, is so indispensable for the investigation of world.³⁷ So, Dummett proposes that the dispute between Platonism and intuitionism to be treated as a metaphorical version of the dispute towards the demonstrability conditions in mathematics, hence making a dispute over these conditions from mathematics.³⁸

Critics at Dummett's position

An important critic to Dummett's work is Michael Devitt. Devitt argues that the debate was placed by Dummett in a semantic position.³⁹ He argues that Dummett overlaps the meaning of a proposition with the verifiability principle.

In addition to this, he argues that the switch of the argument for the number, which seems plausible because of the special character of the concept, to the common sense realism is fallacious. Devitt argues that the dispute of realism cannot be transformed into a language problem and cannot be identified with that.

Conclusion

In this article, I wanted to present a part of the complexity toward this debate, showing some pros and cons. At the same time, I wish to emphasize that this dispute is still open, although Dummett's arguments are interesting and offer new perspectives towards the language theory and meaning theory, the dispute is far from being closed.

³⁷ Devitt, 2000.

³⁸ Devitt, 2000.

³⁹ Devitt, 1983.

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THE INVISIBLE WORLD BEYOND THE PERCEPTUAL ONE

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ABSTRACT. *The Invisible World Beyond the Perceptual One.* The purpose of this paper is to show the effects of the invisible world on the visible. The way in which the conscious, which we feel, is affected by the subconscious, which we too often do not perceive. Our life is affected by a hidden mechanism, by a shadow mechanism. Everything starts from the inside, from thinking, vision, mission, objectives... everything starts with a philosophical discourse amplified by a social one.

Keywords: *life, invisible, vision, world, perception*

1.

We all have different lives and what we chose to do with it is not just our business but also is a major factor in what we will become eventually. I think of this because it is quite easy to fall into something that is not really up to you nor does it correspond to whom you have imagined yourself to be. This particular life is not something that we should take for granted. We need to fight hard to keep it, we need to push beyond our comfort zone and realize that there is more to life than what meets the eye.

“The experienced hermeneutic practitioner knows that no matter how enthralling a new configuration of meaning might be or no matter how powerful a transfiguration of actuality it might achieve, that configuration is always marked by the finitude of language.”¹

There are two ways to virtually think and conceive the future of the human being. We detach ourselves as a finitude that can trigger an unknown world, which

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¹ Nicholas Davey, *Unquiet understanding*, Suny series in Contemporary Continental Philosophy, New York, 2006, p. 245

shapes both the past and the present, regardless of the benefits or social situations that are full of illusions. Through a sudden or extreme need we become an alternative through which man is either destroyed or transformed by a game of illusions, a game of feelings, perceptions and perspectives, something that can make him change, make him want to change the world around him, not only in a convenient abstract but in something more than the metamorphosis itself expanded in the current universe. That something that can bring him to the point where he no longer uses the freedom of the soul through which thinking goes to infinity.

We must assume, in other words, that the existence of a just and benevolent God, who created the world, so as to offer the possibility of the supreme good to be realized. Given that the moral sphere leads us to consolidate the existence not only of freedom, but also of an immortal soul and of God, it could be said that this makes him cosmologically superior to any aspect of the phenomenal world.– Paul Crowther used to say.

Unequivocally, the incomprehensible, starting from consciousness as an object to know all that is and will be acquired through philosophy and wisdom, instantly destroys fiction and the interpretation of the initial meaning in the end. And if we were to assume that something, and go beyond the factual, knowable being, how much freedom is there in regard to us, you, me, the hidden or the unspoken? Man is a being: man is finite by his freedom and transcendence, which make him evoke any finite thing in the world but also makes him perceive the finiteness of his body and mind, to transform him into something determined until he manages so that it goes beyond material existence. His concrete environment pushes him into an imaginary but conscious world... only at the level of the subconscious.

“The notion of plurality plays an important role here: there are many cultures and just one single nature. We easily use words such as multiculturalism but refrain from using words such as ‘multinaturalism’. And all these different cultures are supposed, in one way or the other, to ride roughshod on the big passive oneness we refer to as nature.”²

It is quite interesting to try and analyze everything that we encounter or that we came into contact with. The reason that I say this is because we cannot be sure that what we see is always what we think we see. Our imagination is not only a key that hold the answer to different aspects of our lives, but it is also a part of our being that can make or break someone. The way in which we imagine our personal

² *Business Ethics and Continental Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, United Kingdom, 2011, p. 298.

life can be the way that we live our existence or it can be the way we thought we could build our lives but we were never able to do so. The reason behind all of this is that no matter who we end up or who we start as, beyond our mind, beyond what we perceive, beyond everything that we feel there is a world which is full of unknown but at the same time, a world in which sometimes, without even realizing, we end up finding answers to our most difficult questions regarding this life that we are living.

2.

Somehow, we are in front of a very interesting pun. And maybe sometimes we don't want to recognize where we're going, or we already know exactly what destination we want to reach. Denial comes from within, from our invisible world. Denial may or may not be recognized and even more so, appropriated. But I don't think this would be a problem. On the contrary. It would make us stronger, more eager to discover ourselves, to find ourselves. And somehow, we managed to do that. But we must not forget where we started or where we wanted to go. We must not forget what surrounds us. Trying to keep a balance between our world, self-discovery (the invisible world in fact) and the context in which we find ourselves (the perceptible world) is a cornerstone in anyone's life.

For a person who is struggling to advance their happiness (or power) at the same time as others are struggling to advance their happiness, the world may not seem like a harmonious place. Or at least it may not seem so to someone who has retired from the struggle for happiness or who no longer considers that each individual acts according to the same practical principles, especially those that always command us to promote our own happiness – were the thoughts of Samuel Kersten.

Whether we turn our attention to the first type of person or turn our attention to the second type, we can't help but find ourselves, at least in part. The subconscious is the basis of the conscious. The invisible makes the visible real. It is like saying the invisible is the magic, the quintessence of life. Man is both simple and complicated. Thoughts-feelings, feelings, everything that makes us who we are, are not always aspects that we can control. Probably because happiness comes from within us and we manage to enjoy it even in the darkest moments of life. And again, we are faced with the invisible, with what we cannot control, with what we want to achieve but physically speaking, it is impossible.

“Obviously we can keep seeing things in a certain way while at the same time knowing that doing so is absurd in the world of understanding. And is it not language that operates in a creative way, reconciling these stratified living relationships.”³

The invisible world transcends the perceptible world, reaches beyond it and continues on its way. What we don't know exactly, but I think it's moving to another part of our mind, maybe a part we didn't even know we could know or touch – even if we limit ourselves to a subconscious level, is who we are when no one is watching.

The directions addressed in this paper are established only to a certain extent and definitely not in their entirety, because as I advance with this research I discover more and more levels and below levels of human knowledge, of the world around us and equally of the invisible world. The interesting aspect is the fact that we are sure that we live in the known world but with every new discovery we tend to believe that it may not be the actual truth. We are often faced with situations that we cannot control and on top of that, sometimes we do not even have a reason for why everything happened the way it did.

This known world, I believe, is more than just what meets the eye. Because I am sure that both behind it and at the same time with it there is another world, the invisible one, which helps us lead this one, the one that we feel like we can reach. This is quite the interesting aspect because you cannot fully deny it, but you also do not have any actual proof to make it a reality. I believe that, at the end of the day, we are left with the belief, whether it is towards this only known life or it is towards something bigger than that. As Gadamer said in *Truth and Method*,

“A man is characterized by a rupture with that which is direct and with that which is natural to him on the basis of the spiritual, rational side of his nature.”⁴

I begin to wonder what man really is, in all his less physical and more spiritual form. We cannot take anything for granted. We are not sure that we can reach tomorrow. We know that we are living in today – that is a fact. But it does not apply to all of us. Although today is indeed today the way we perceive it may or may not make it feel like today. Sometimes it might become overwhelming. The weight of this world, the weight of the other one, the weight of the both combined being a human being, being part of the humankind is sometimes such a difficult task. But we do our best. We try and improve as much as we can.

³ H.-G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, Continuum, London, 2004, p. 445

⁴ *Idem*.

„Certainly one can inquire into the structure embracing all the worlds that man has ever experienced, which is simply the experience of the possibility of world, and in this sense we can indeed speak of an ontology of the world.”⁵

Conclusions

We are the prisoners of our own world. We may not know it, but we are. We are living in a tangible world which we think is located in front of the invisible one. Sometimes, we do not know if there is even such a thing as an invisible world. But everything that we are faced with makes us rethink this aspect. There are too many situations which involve something more than just our ordinary lives. There too many situations when we cannot find a proper explanation for what just happened. There are too many situations where we know we could not have done anything any other way but somehow feel like something else happened.

Life as we know it is not only filled with mysteries, but it is also filled with a lot of questions. Everything is tied together so strong that no matter how hard we try we cannot undo these bonds. In other words, I believe, that we cannot exist in this tangible world without existing in the intangible one. Because we are both body and soul – one cannot exist without the other. Maybe this is the way in which the world is functioning. The invisible one leads the visible one and we are only allowed to see one at a time – maybe this is why we have so many questions, maybe this is why we tend to try and discover as much as we can even when we cannot explain why we are doing it.

The need for knowledge is not something new, not to the people nor the world. The need for knowledge is the thing that has kept us alive, striving for more, reaching for the stars and beyond them. Although we are just at the beginning, we have this urge for knowledge in any form it might be, because we feel like we have to feel a void, a lack of something. Who knows what that something is?

For me, it is the invisible world. The real engine behind everything. The real magic – because we cannot explain it to the fullest. The reason why we are who we are, why we are here, in this life, in this place, in this time. Because, at the end of the day, we have to admit it: no matter how much we fight, no matter how much we try, no matter how much we push, no matter how much we reach for an explanation, we cannot fully cover everything that is going on just relying on what we know, see or have discovered. There will always be a missing part, something out of the ordinary, something that we cannot explain.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 239

Mankind as we know it is far from being discovered to its fullest. We still have a long way to go and we are still trying to improve everything that we know, trying to discover even more and to solve other dilemmas. We are far from being perfect, but we are working towards that goal whether we like to admit it or not. We are still far from discovering everything there is to be discovered but at least we can dream about it and hope that someday we will be able to face the invisible world on its own, not just through this perceptible world.

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CLOSE: NEARING THE FUTURE BY MEANS OF SYMBIOGENESIS AND HYPEROBJECTIVITY

IOAN-CRISTIAN BOBOESCU*

ABSTRACT. *Close: Nearing the Future by Means of Symbiogenesis and Hyperobjectivity.*

At the beginning of the 21st century we find a call for philosophers to join a new alliance: with artists and architects rather than linguists or physicists. In order to see the ecosystem, we need to switch concepts, look away from “nature” and move towards ambiance and hyperobjects. Along with this rehabilitation of Aristotle (by speculative realism and, more specifically, object-oriented ontology) comes a call for a fresh start as post-humanistic symbionts. These are proposals for alternatives to the catastrophic end of the short-lived drama of the Anthropocene. All this aids the here introduction of near-future hyperobjectivity.

Keywords: *ambiance, Anthropocene, symbiogenesis, OOO / object-oriented ontology / flat ontology, nature, ecosophy, deep ecology, dark ecology, time and near future*

Thesis and introduction

Suspicion breeds confidence. It is a pleasurable slide from philosophical speculation to psychological realism. What is particularly of interest here has to do with the possibility of therapeutic applications of a near-future *telos*, in order to create an update to the therapeutic logos proposed by Viktor Frankl. My proposition is that we could work with a particular (novel) concept of time. What we could call fourth time, as different from past, future or present, will be referred to as *near future*. In this view, the discussion is brought about by the contemporary encounter with “the climate” as hyperobject. Classic notions of time can be addressed as intangible past, invented present and dreaming of deep futures. Near future would come into play as a signifier for what is already unfolding but not yet quite manifested. As

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hyperobjects are real but not yet graspable, the near future is lurking, like global warming behind the cool shadow of a summer cloud. Both *symbiogenesis* and *hyperobjects* will be treated as possible candidates for providing insight.

The author of this text relates to philosophy as a pharmacological approach to finding viable concepts. By viable concepts I mean innovations produced by the erosion of concepts through use, or their corrosion by contact with other concepts and/or events. The current urgency I try to address here has to do with not rushing things anymore (towards the future or past and neither any imagined “present”).

This article is projected around four key components (note: contemporary, arriving, their live articulation can be observed), each being allocated a special section, plus an intermezzo: “Nature”, Hyperobjects, OOO, (Intermezzo: *Human, cosmic time scales and our brief Anthropocene, numbers of beauty*), Symbiogenesis.

At this point, I need to propose a radical compression of the idea of nature through history in three main stages: monism, dualism, pluralism. What we encounter “now” as a species is the multitude. Around an elaboration of Badiou’s idea, “we” can only state that what is lurking is the lack of homogeneity that can save “us” only as trans-speciation. Us against nature, us against technology, us against unemployment, “us” might be left without an opposing identity, in the wake of a new hyperobject, ecology appears as hyper-objection to human singularity. Not just a play of words, but a real speculation on the possibility of survival as a planetary pack. Making kin is a way of terraforming the mind. And so, we move from *swallow (pop) ecology* to *deep ecology*, to *dark ecology*. Philosophy is presented with possibilities to look into the abyss, to inhabit the unconscious! Learn from the techno-ecology of living multitude. Symbiosis is a fact, language of translating genetic material. Autopoiesis appeals to *the mind* made possible after the partition with the post-modern experiment and deconstruction.

Along with these, a contributing factor will be inserted: the idea that historicism and futurism cannot be surpassed by presentism or new age styled *living in the moment*. The present is a radical abstraction. The past is a reference and the present a glitch of the imagination. As beings onto death, we can’t escape the gravity of this other abstraction called “the future” (ultimate source of procrastination and other, ideological, forms of alienation). What will be proposed through this text is the (rather inoffensive looking) idea of the *near future* as means (artful, as in the original *techne*) of escaping the pull of classical temporalism (future-past-present). The *near future* is the unfolding in which our participatory being can be manifested. Ecology and automation can play the role of opening this view.

Intrigued by Stiegler’s problematisation of total automation and going along the lines of some accelerationist and some more friendly (as in hopeful, systematic

positive political thinking) proposals to “demand automation!”,¹ approaches of post-work thinking and unworking,² lines of thought³ tend to take us through the (dull and somewhat cliché-like) dusty old binome of technology and nature. What we are quick to find, when investigating recent philosophical production is that (as in the arts) there is a tendency that suggests a low-voiced turning of the tides. On the one hand we get the idea of returning the *techne* to the arts; nothing new! we might be tempted to add, but along with what I will (throughout this article) designate as a speculative-realist rehabilitation of Aristotelian ontology that delivers an unexpected key for approaching the inevitable *oikos*, the other house of being. One great difficulty in approaching such subjects is not getting stuck on bitten paths, but how can one avoid Heidegger or Carl Schmitt when talking about automation and technology as *pharmakon*.

Stiegler makes this jump gracefully, by addressing the problem on Kantian terms and shifting the problem of technology to the field of psychoanalysis. What we need, he argues is rather an unconscious *pharmakon*, a device for bouring our way out of total automation (that would comprise, most importantly the automation of desire) through dreaming. The anti-psychiatric (R. D. Laing) and psychoanalytic lines already moved away from separating nature and technology as opposites. Even the machinic self is not just an object of critique as much as a key of unlocking unconscious structures. Machines and technology in general are not un-human, not against nature as such, but rather mirroring devices, canvases on which the unconscious is displayed. Now, given these neat alternatives, why keep the nature-culture or natural-technological distinction? First of all, and it might suffice for the short extension of this article, there is a link that might help us clear the way for understanding object-relations in the light of embracing the technological as hyper-human, rather than non-human or just plain post-humanistic.

We tend to think in terms of good or bad when approaching “technology” (at least in a social or industrial-economical context) because of inheritance, we are trained to link technology with the idea of the artificial, as opposed to the natural and, as we shall make clear in a few lines later, the natural is already embedded in

¹ I make direct reference to Nick Land, to Srnicek’s and Williams’ *Inventing the future*, Rutgers Bregman’s *Utopia for realists*, Paul Mason’s *Postcapitalism* and whole lot of other proposals that seem to make a move on to a new scene. I am intentionally avoiding direct references for this and other side-subjects in order to keep the main thread as clear as possible

² This refers to a concept proposed by Nancy for the re-planning or forgetting of philosophy and other societal dream-constructions

³ Paraphrasing Guattari’s *lines of flight*, we might consider a careful generalization of philosophical investigation as blindly following threads (like lifelines in a flooded cave) for a telos to be constructed AND discovered.

a historical setting that transported the idea of nature from the bad, savage nature to the good, all luminous gaian-like nature of the art nouveau era and now awaiting its disassembly for a better, non-binary term, like *ambiance*, as Morton proposes. I choose⁴ this path for its aesthetic qualities. I will refer here to clear proposals of thinking for a *telos* is involved, a moving towards the future. In therapeutic terms, we might call it the shift from depression (historical, past oriented thinking) toward a near-future thinking. The anxiogenic⁵ deep future of progressive ideologies and what I call the (too often omitted) *case of the cosmist heresy* are surpassed by accelerationist (“the future is now!”) calls to mental action.⁶ What draws me, in the first place, to the subject of automated post-work society is an interest for what Viktor Frankl (as clinician and proponent of logotherapy, later to be coupled with Existential Analysis by Alfried Längle) indicated as the *weekend anxiety*. In this sense, the interest gravitates towards near future proposals that tend to sprout from post-humanistic techno-pharmakon thinking and *ecologies without nature*. In the following sections a possible near future scenario will be traced: from parting with the romantic idea of nature to post humanitarian rehabilitation of “us” in a fluid identity of symbiogenesis.

1. “Nature”

The partition with the vitalist line will not be discussed here, but must be taken into account as when we take a look at some main points in historical the development of the idea of Nature, we might get confused by apparent re-currencies.⁷ In late modernism, by habitus, we came to name things in generalities as if ever present. Contemporary social imaginary does not hold a clear account of how what we call “Nature” was not always there, more so, that “Nature” is actually a modern invention, fabricated in urban culture, during the emergence of Art Nouveau.

First, the old *physis* was to be buried under middle age grand separation narratives, where “nature” became the green “out there”, the ultimate threat, the mirror of man’s primary evil and uncontrollable instincts. The pre-Humboldtian imaginary, as Andrea Wulf in her meticulous study shows, constituted a perfect mental and/or

⁴ All due irony is intended, as a way of underlining the context

⁵ In clinical jargon, it is considered that depression thrives on a fixation on the past, while anxiety, or rather generalized anxiety is feeding on future-fixations. On the one side, fear of finitude as that which is forever lost and on the other, for what might never be (enough time).

⁶ Alluding to Morton’s serious joke: don-t just do something, sit there! (and think)”

⁷ I want to suggest that, whenever an idea re-appears, even in dramatically new forms, it tends to gain wait, in likens to the way monetary currencies tend to fluctuate (hopefully) in accordance with usage

cultural setting for colonial expansion. Wulf dedicates consistent chapters to illustrate how western thinking (along the tradition of a three level universe: natural, human, divine) moved from, (as for example) Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, that envisioned even The New World as inferior: plants, animals and people are smaller and people are not civilized.⁸ This were manifestations of a grander *manifest destiny* script, by which the world was split in two: the “us”, European, civilized Christians, and “it”/ “them”, the other, savage, uncivilized, “natural” world. In time it eroded, and late romantics as the Humboldt brothers had a lot to do with this.

From the Bolivarian constitution and Jeffersonian attitudes,⁹ small gestures grew into new ontologies and “national parks”. Conservationism was the greatest triumph of romantic dream. Still, dreams of separation from the now good, all harmonic nature. Alexander von Humboldt’s *Naturgemalde* grew from romantic inspirations to concrete urban styles meant for worshipping the perfection of nature through forms, in drawings by Ernst Haeckel and later Art Nouveau architecture. The condition of the modern citizen of the industrial economy polis was linked to alienation, from nature, from true self. Nature was to be visited on vacation and brought to life in cities through means of landscaping and architectural forms.¹⁰

As the romance of Natural Parks (more often “national parks”) did, in a short while created a sense of alienation. Walking a bitten path, nature as a museum, and escapism could not fulfill deep longings of city dwellers. Leading figure in the early ecological activism of the 70s, Professor Arne Naess, turns to Ecology as a means of assuring community, while arguing a shift from argumentation (logical or philosophical) to institutions developed over a long life spent in nature. *Friluftsliv*¹¹ was the concept presented as key to a new ecophilosophy and its two offspring: deep ecology (activism) and ecosophy (philosophical, peripatetic method of living with the environment). Ecosophy T he called it, as in the open possibility for any number of other ecologies (A, B, C, D., etc.). But we are soon to find that if we progress far enough, “environment,, is still shallow. One needs to be immersed, for deep ecology engages us in a continuous act of love.” In love one loses parts of one’s identity, gaining a new greater identity, something that in its truest sense cannot be spoken of¹²

But tree-hugging love-of-nature as self-improvement is itself becoming museal in later perspectives that call for “dark ecology,,. Timothy Morton, traces an ontology

⁸ Wulf, Andrea, *The Invention of Nature. The Adventures of Alexander von Humboldt, the Last Hero of Science*, p. 159

⁹ “the Scandinavian reindeer could walk under the belly of our moose”, *idem.*, p.160

¹⁰ *Idem.*, pp. 293-305

¹¹ Norwegian for life in open air or life in the mountains.

¹² Arne Naess, *Ecology, community and Lifestyle*, p. 11.

from God, to Nature, to matter and proposes the abyss; „ nature is not unlike *the subject*, a being who searches through the entire universe for its reflection, only to find none”.¹³ In assuming the blur between subject and object, nature becomes ambience. As in Badiou's truth process, a relentless and rigorous distillation of the subject from its identifications, “indeed, an ecological collective to come would not look like the nature-notion construct with its fascist-tending ideal of work and wholeness”¹⁴ In this pledge for ambience in dark ecology, “far from remaining natural, ecocriticism must admit that it is contingent and queer”.¹⁵ Appealing to the Heideggerian *Zerstreuung*, the environment becomes the subject of true apophatic practices¹⁶ and so we come to the paradox of hyperobjectivity.

2. Hyperobjects

If we follow Andrea Wolf, *nature* looks like the great entity that, until the expeditions and diplomatic interventions of Alexander von Humboldt, no one seemed to notice. The climate, though a hot topic, remains a secluded object. As Timothy Morton uses the example of the cool shadow of the cloud that hides the fact of global warming, the climate is something real, only graspable by speculation, or other non-direct observational instruments. Viscosity (*absolute proximity*, I would call it) hugeness or scales accessible only by *aprioric* intuition, and along with other qualities like *nonlocality*, *temporal undulation* and *phasing*, hyperobjects partake in a form of non-relationist *interobjectivity*. This kind of objects, they are closer than our perceptions would allow us to grasp. We are stuck with and to them. Zero degree of separation and we “capitalized nature precisely to denature it, as one would do to a protein by cooking it”¹⁷

Hyperobjects (like climate and the solar system or The Dutch East India company) are ontological units that cannot be accessed across a distance. This (viscosity) is their main attribute, for our short span of this article and it will do just fine. We are stuck to them (influenced, integrated), objects in the mirror that are closer than they appear, as the ontological slogan most appropriate for our times goes.

As to Victorian period discoveries (fuel-propulsion, evolution, capital, the unconscious) we must add *spacetime*, the nonlocality (in time and spatial dimensions) of hyperobjects is needed to undermine old (relationist) positions and find ways in

¹³ Timothy Morton, *Ecology Without Nature*, p.15.

¹⁴ *Idem*, p. 141.

¹⁵ *Idem*, p. 143.

¹⁶ *Idem*, p. 175.

¹⁷ Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects*; p. 4.

which “we are poems about hyperobjects”.¹⁸ In all, what hyperobjectivity, including abstraction of action and from realism-activism, comes an *ecology without matter*, where appearance is the past, essence is the future and present-fixations are but cynical distancing methods typical to modernity, maintained by injunctions to act. In the field of hyperobjectivity, I found the idea that this fourth dimension of time (beside future, past and present), that what we address in philosophy is objects of partial analysis.

The present does not exist. We experience a crisscrossing set of force fields, the aesthetic = causal fields emanated by a host of objects. Time is not a series of now-points (Aristotle himself refuted this idea) but rather a sickening surge, like crosstown traffic, or a river without banks, like the title of a painting by Marc Chagall.”¹⁹

This has to be followed through, what Morton calls “Harman’s coral reef beneath Heidegger’s U-boat, that hyperobjects are not simply mental (or otherwise ideal) constructions, but real entities whose primordial reality is withdrawn from humans”.²⁰ An invitation to OOO, or flat ontology.

3. OOO

Ecology opens the discussion for a new ontology. Ethics, it seems, turns to urgency, in a context in which intellectual input might just save the day. At least this would be the main line of argument coming from an anti-Megarian (somewhat Aristotelian) school that wants to rehabilitate philosophy as a medium for art, architecture and aesthetics in a greater project of addressing potentialities of *speculative realism*.

Object Oriented Ontology, Triple O, OOO. This (given its intent to join forces with literary and architectural disciplines), this genre of speculative realism is somewhat born out of the discussions on hyperobjects. In his anti-Megarian approach, Graham Harman often uses two main illustrations of the idea. First, that potentialities can be re-asserted: a house builder is a house builder, even when asleep. Then, making use of an example coming from Islamic culture: fire burns cotton but fire and cotton never meet beyond their burning transaction. *Object Oriented Ontology* (OOO) operates a re-opening of the Aristotelian project by

¹⁸ *Idem*, p. 48.

¹⁹ *Idem*, p. 93.

²⁰ *Idem*, p. 15.

addressing the object-world along with the consideration that something (not magic, not outer-worldly), deeper in meaning and physicality, is always lurking along with the observed. OOO is an exercise in taking Socrates seriously:

“(...) the true danger to thought is not relativism but idealism, and hence the best remedy for what ails us is not the truth/knowledge pair, but *reality*. Reality is the rock against which our various ships always founder, and as such it must be acknowledged and received, however illusive it may be.”²¹

Objects, as presented by OOO are not identical to their properties, *real objects* exist whether or not they currently affect anything else. What we perceive is called *sensual objects*, and sensual objects come with sensual qualities, but it must be noted at all times that sensual objects exist only in relation to some real object. The sensual also constitute the means by which (real) objects relate to one another. Now the key idea that OOO brings to view a symbiogenetic quality to this new ontology is that “objects never make full contact with each other any more than they do with the human mind”.²² Harman identifies the presocratic period with undermining and overmining enterprises specific to the sciences. Physicalism, smallism, anti-fictionalism, or literalism are all just modes of the natural sciences, to which philosophy is urged to solve what they cant.²³ What OOO, as flat ontology (all objects must be treated with equal attention) is so an exercise in loving a unobtainable wisdom, and this is what no-matter, zero distance dark ecology asks for.

As the 2D map of the Earth, literal forms of cognition are unable to depict hyper structures, at least not as accurate as non-literal, metaphoric strategies. “If we give up the literal meaning of words as our privileged route to truth, then how do we save ourselves from a series of inevitable mystical claims?”²⁴ In this view the aesthetics of root for all philosophy is constituted, as “the metaphor (...) is not knowledge about pre-existing objects, but the production of a new object”.²⁵ As “two objects in the real world make contact not through direct impact, but only by way of the fictional images they present to each other”,²⁶ an invitation is presented to meet the world half way, on the grounds of inexact but unconsciously precise strategies. A new style of realism is sketched, as only through aesthetics can philosophy proclaim firm grounds in ethical domains and ontology. Addressing *ambiance* through metaphor.

²¹ Graham Harman, *Object Oriented Ontology*, p. 6.

²² *Idem.*, p. 12.

²³ *Idem.*, pp. 46-47.

²⁴ *Idem.*, p. 50.

²⁵ *Idem.*, pp. 88-89.

²⁶ *Idem.*, p.163.

We came to call *it*, the great unknown/unconscious, *the real* (as good Lacanians or some phenomenologists would not hesitate to agree), as the thing that is never there, the Being (Heideggerian) the opening and the exception, the surprise. Not *reality* as something accessible as a whole, but a side(dish) to perception that always withdraws and (paradoxically) also finds its way in, delivering material for the unconscious. OOO came to name it *real object* as something beyond and related to the perceived or *sensual object*. Along with qualities (again, real and perceived) OOO proposes a model that might just set the foundation for an architecture of a post-ecology or an *ecology without nature*, the "just right" kind of model for tackling hyperobjects such as (the) Ecosystem. By addressing the lines proposed by Timothy Morton (for hyperobjects and ecology after "Nature") and Graham Harman (for *speculative realisms* Object Oriented Ontology) we might find, or for the moment keep an open eye on, the possibility of finding at least two alternatives for a post-nature philosophy (also account as *post romantic* and *post humanistic*). One being the OOO and Hyperobject (parallax) view, the other comes from a *more* post-humanistic (the *post-human* and the *post-humanities*) perspective: the symbiogenetic proposal made by Donna Haraway's latest move.

4. Intermezzo: The human, cosmic time scales and our brief Anthropocene

E-missions / no mission, just exhaust. Professor Sloterdijk would invite readers to observe this innovative form of writing, typical of late modern industrial economy, as writing on air, writing in the atmosphere. Emissions are, right now depositing, in the higher stratum of the Earth, a chemical library as a planetary permanent memory of Humanity. What gained weight in the past two or three decades in the educated-popular imaginary is the idea of the Anthropocene. A layer of deposits is being created right now and the ongoing process is announced as the starting of the next great extinction. It is said to have been set in motion by the James Watts patent for the all-purpose steam propulsion engine. The second grand phase was opened by Oppenheimer. NOW we face the inevitable irretrievable trace of our existence. The half-life of plutonium extend to about 25.000 years and the reversal of global warming would take around 5000 years. These are time dimensions that create an awe-inspiring dizziness. The ISS travels around the Earth at about 7.66 km/s, while the Earth rotates around the Sun at about 30km/s. Meanwhile, our Solar System travels at about 220 km/s around the galactic center. At these speeds, accelerationism seems like an odd attempt at making the best of this existence by embracing technical advances as integrated or hyperintegrated object of our extended phenotype, a way of making the best of our brief anthropic adventure.

5. Symbiogenesis

In her proposal for a SF (speculative feminism) alternative to both techno-apocalypse and techno fixes, Donna Haraway sets the stage for a forthcoming possibility, a form of becoming by assuming a transformative symbiosis with what and who is, “with each other or not at all”.²⁷

“The children of compost. The human and animal symbionts keep the relays of mortal life going, both inheriting and inventing practices of recuperation, survival, and flourishing”²⁸

This *compost utopia*²⁹ proposes a way of, instead starting anew, learning to inherit without denial and stay with the trouble of damaged worlds. If we are already familiarized to her cyborg manifesto, it would appear “natural” to meet her at life-s end with a pledge for embracing decay and radioactive clouds. In this radical exercise for disaster hugging, we find meaning in this form of hyper Buddhism, of fusion without confusion. If plant do not produce language, but rather art, we are invited on a journey of becoming – *phytologists*.³⁰

The image of the ending of the Anthropocene is salvaged by means of constructing viable grounds for a Chthulucene. After collision, entanglement. Gaia, Pachamama, Tangaroa, Medusa. All mother figures, all earth made futures. The end of humanity is fertile, human becomes humus. All disasters, past, present *and to come* are delivering compost material for a myriad, intra-active assemblages. The more-than-human, the other-then-human, the inhuman and human-as-humus, all participate in a construction of inevitable future fusion. The trouble is that we are already entangled. We can fight, flight or join the fundamental transformations given by symbiogenesis. The idea is to stir things up, to make kin, to compose and negotiate composting and symbiotic possibilities. As expected, Haraway urges readers to think and imagine futures made up by not prolonging the end-of-the-Holocene (Anthropocene), but by accelerating its completion.

“I think our job is to make the Anthropocene as short / thin as possible and to cultivate with each other in every way imaginable epochs to come that can replenish refuge.”

²⁷ Donna Haraway, *Staying with the trouble*, p. 5.

²⁸ *Idem.*, p. 140.

²⁹ *Idem.*, p. 150.

³⁰ *Idem.*, p. 121.

(Instead of) Conclusions AND Remarks

Following Berardi on his approach to end-times by means of re-writing AND for endings, I tried to use conceptual elements for assembling a future oriented philosophy. The specific twist comes from the idea insert of *near future*. In this, I try to project the most unpleasant, abyssal, unconscious. The lurking object of fatality.

In the far future we can construct mental playgrounds for relaxation. The far future gives most valuable time for progress-fixations and, in turn, a constant alienation from the ongoing factuality. The present is the other trap, the quicksand of perceptual overmining. The present is either too great to be owned or to abstract to be addressed. The near future in turn is the forthcoming. Not foreseeable, because we are stuck to it like in a hyperobject reality. We can only speculate, investigate its continuations. Looking for margins, for endings and structures might prove fatal. Philosophical thought my get smashed against the inevitability of Being, of the real, of unconscious objects and real world hyperobjects. The invitation we are presented with has to do with perceiving textures, not structures and moving away from deep future-fixations to near futures in-the-making. With these we can make kin, overstand the entanglement and access the abyssal aspects of an ecology that we are ambionts to. The thought that we are the ambiance, that we are the medium, might just move mental objects in ways felt, not expected.³¹

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RECONFIGURATIONS OF THE EXHIBITION SPACE. CASE STUDY: CRISTI RUSU EXHIBITION AT THE “PLAN B” GALLERY

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ABSTRACT. *Reconfigurations of the Exhibition Space – Case Study: Cristi Rusu Exhibition at the “Plan B” Gallery.* In this paper I focus on a case study concerning the Cristi Rusu exhibition, *The Only Thing I Am Sure about in This Life Lies above My Head*, from the Plan B Gallery in Berlin (March 6 – April 11 2020). By integrating some interventions specific to land art in the gallery space (and, therefore, transforming it), Cristi Rusu manages to transgress the conventional limits imposed by the idea of a white cube gallery neutral space. The art gallery’s space functions as a medium for developing artistic discourse as the project tries to detach from the tradition and ideologies already incorporated in a certain place and time, in search for the sublime.

Keywords: *Plan B Gallery, Cristi Rusu, sublime, the archive, “profane space”, non-site*

Introduction

Cristi Rusu’s most recent exhibition – *The Only Thing I Am Sure about in This Life Lies above My Head* – presented at the Plan B Gallery (Berlin) can be seen as representative for the way in which contemporary artists use the exhibition space of the gallery as a work’s medium, transforming it into an adaptable space that is no longer perceived as neutral or intangible. With this project, Cristi Rusu reveals to the public the reconfiguration of the gallery’s space: the artist transforms an imaginary space of “anti-memory” into a physical one (that of the gallery), that can be appealing from an aesthetic point of view, given the artist’s interventions. Cristi Rusu is creating a new setting in an apparently “neutral” space, just like a *story within a story*, and, from this perspective, I shall analyze in the following paragraphs

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the issue of archiving site-specific works by placing them in the aesthetic and institutional context of the art galleries. In order to illustrate the gallery's role in the process of archiving site-specific projects (that are characterized by their ephemerality), I shall consider the concept of "the archive"¹ as defined by Boris Groys. From Groys' philosophical perspective, whether we are referring to the field of art or that of theory, the archive is constituted today as a mechanism that informs us and draws our attention towards that which is seen as new in the real world. For Groys, the idea of "new"² is a philosophical issue in itself, because it is not separated from an entire tradition (or cultural memory) that participates in the development of an artistic act that is intended as innovative.

Concerning Cristi Rusu's exhibition at Plan B, an interesting, yet problematic, feature emerges from an aesthetic point of view: the project was initially designed as a site-specific intervention in the village of Cojocna, but it is actually set up in the Plan B gallery space – here, the archived images from the Cojocna setting prove to be work-instruments in themselves, as the space imagined by artist is brought to reality and given a form. Initially designed as human (artificial) intervention in the natural landscape, the entire project is introduced into the context of the gallery exhibition, thus gaining a new form that is self-contained and allows the public to experience an authentic impression of the Cojocna setting. The site-specific intervention in the gallery space and the assigning of the landscape with a new contextual meaning in relation to the Plan B exhibition are connected by the background concept and by several recurrent themes in Cristi Rusu's work: anti-memory, anti-monument(ality), the issue of isolation, reinstating the sublime, the way in which "history and fictional stories can both define a certain time and place".³

At this point, a question emerges: how are all these themes (constantly present in Cristi Rusu's works) *translated* and included in the project *The Only Thing I Am Sure about in This Life Lies above My Head*, in the setting of the gallery's exhibition space? In other words, how does the artist use the gallery environment in order to approach these topics that are of interest to him, eventually transgressing the imposed limits by means of site-specific interventions?

Cristi Rusu's latest project is an open (and ever-transforming) one and it represents the artist's fictional intervention within the landscape. As the curatorial

¹ Boris Groys, *Despre nou. Eseu de economie culturală*, transl. Aurel Codoban, Idea Design & Print, Cluj-Napoca, 2003, p. 29.

² *Ibid.*, p. 30.

³ Excerpt from the curatorial text of the exhibition (*The Only Thing I Am Sure about in This Life Lies above My Head*), Plan B Gallery, Berlin, March 6 – April 11, 2020, text signed by Diana Marincu: <https://www.plan-b.ro/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Cristian-Rusu-The-Only-Thing-I-Am-Sure-about-in-This-Life-Lies-above-My-Head-press-release-3.pdf> (link accessed on June 13, 2020)

text mentions, this intervention creates a hidden chamber destined for meditation seen as a “third space”, a phantomatic space that the artist imagines and creates from zero using the gallery’s environment. Cristi Rusu develops this third space of meditation and detachment starting from a grave in Cojocna village that carries with it an entire cultural memory based on the dramatic history surrounding it. The story concerning this grave in Cojocna is related to the moment when, in 1940, Northern Transylvania is assigned to Hungary by the Second Vienna Diktat. More specifically, the new borders that were established that year separated the village cemetery from the rest of the village. Thus, the grave selected by C. Rusu as a landmark is isolated on a hill, outside the cemetery, because the family of the deceased wanted to bury him on Romanian grounds. It is not without meaning that Cristi Rusu chooses this starting point for his project as the space itself seems to incorporate a vast ideological background that the artist deconstructs implying a third space, imagined under the grave and adjusted to the context of the gallery.

A long- term recurrent theme in Cristi Rusu’s work is also present in this project: that of anti-monuments. It captures from a critical perspective the way in which the mechanisms of history and “fictional stories” participate in the construction of a physical space perceived by the collective memory through ideological filters. Just like in other exhibitions of his, Cristi Rusu follows this anti-monument principle employing the concept of the *stranded monument*.⁴ In this case, the grave in Cojocna is itself a stranded monument, marginal, isolated from the natural course of history. At the same time, in Cristi Rusu’s approach, as we can see from other exhibitions as well, the monument is implicitly connected to the idea of monumentality and this feature is often reflected in his large-scale installations. For example, the concept behind the 2016 exhibition, *Monuments to the Ruins of Tomorrow*⁵, suggests the fusion between the monument and monumentality in the artist’s approach. The relationship between the two functions as the work’s inner structure, representing a “recodification of space as a relic of the past”.⁶

⁴ See, for example, the *Stranded Monuments*² exhibition by Cristi Rusu and Michael Takeo Magruder at the Plan B Gallery (Cluj-Napoca, The Paintbrush Factory), November 10 – December 10, 2007, curatorial text signed by Diana Marincu and Horea Avram: <https://www.plan-b.ro/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Press-Release-Cristian-Rusu-Michael-Takeo-Magruder.pdf> (link accessed on June 13, 2020).

⁵ *Monuments to the Ruins of Tomorrow* exhibition by Teodor Graur and Cristi Rusu, curator Diana Marincu, Plan B Gallery (Cluj-Napoca, The Paintbrush Factory), June 10 – July 31 2016: https://www.plan-b.ro/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/press_release_cluj_m.pdf (link accessed on June 13 2020).

⁶ Excerpt from the curatorial text of the exhibition (*Monuments to the Ruins of Tomorrow*) signed by Diana Marincu: https://www.plan-b.ro/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/press_release_cluj_m.pdf (link accessed on June 13 2020).

In search of the sublime

In the current project, *The Only Thing I Am Sure about in This Life Lies above My Head*, the grave is also constituted as a relic of the past, however this recodification can be deciphered in the actual space of the gallery. The *monumentality of the monument* is presented in the context of the exhibition by recreating the imagined meditation room from under the Cojocna grave (since a conventional land art intervention did not take place within the landscape). In this sense, that which is normally hidden from sight is revealed to the public by the exhibition from Plan B (Berlin). Cristi Rusu's knowledge in terms of scenography allows him to make full use of the gallery's space, integrating it as a part of the project and thus transforming it into a work medium. The elements of geometry and architecture are combined with interventions specific to land art and they are all *staged* by using (and reconfiguring) the exhibition space. As a clear suggestion of the Cojocna grave, the artist builds a new room, inside the gallery, with the help of an installation, a room in which the public is invited to contemplate from within a "moment of solitude".

As the curatorial text mentions, this installation was adapted to the size and context of the gallery with the purpose of creating a most realistic experience for the public. Cristi Rusu seeks to explore more and more experiences of mediation, of detachment and of the sublime in his art. In addition, with a reflection on solitude and death, the project brings new challenges to the idea of the exhibition space as a neutral space, especially given its transformation based on a land art project that was initially envisioned outside the gallery perimeter.

The search for the sublime and its actualization, a major theme in Cristi Rusu's artistic evolution, is transferred to his own visual language in direct connection with the construction and transformation of space (in relation to the development of a singular artistic object). The exhibition, seen as a whole, becomes a work of art in itself in which all the composing elements correlate aesthetically and conceptually.

Therefore, not just in the current project, but in previous ones as well, the environment (or, more specifically, the site) appears to Cristi Rusu as a synthesis between "geometry and nature", between the artificial landscape created by architectural interventions and the natural one, unaffected by man. For the artist, architecture generally implies a conflict within space, given the simple fact that it can alter nature's framework; however, the main intention here is not necessarily ecological. We are rather dealing with the creation of a new spatiality based on the interaction between geometrical shapes, architecture and nature, to which subjectivity is added in order to seek "the contemporary condition of the sublime"⁷ and its possibilities

⁷ See the curatorial text for the *Space Itself* exhibition by Cristi Rusu, curator Mihnea Mircan, Plan B Gallery (Berlin), June 19 – July 25, 2009:

in today’s art. We can therefore observe the artistic process evolving towards a research effort that the artist undertakes in configuring the final result. The action of transforming an artistic investigation into a proper research endeavor leads Cristi Rusu to conclude that the landscape, as a part of nature, is inseparable from the ideologically contaminated cultural memory that it carries within itself (this approach was also visible in his first solo exhibition in Berlin with the Plan B Gallery, *Space Itself*, 2009). Consequently, all ideological contaminations of the landscape would be, in this case, a corruption of the sublime by means of culture, socio-political features and art specific to the modernism and postmodernism of the past century.

From this point of view, it is not coincidence that, in his attempt to construct a new space (physical or imaginary), Cristi Rusu approaches the idea of the sublime that can be actualized by art *here* and *now*, just as the American painter Barnett Newman suggested in his famous essay *The Sublime is Now*. The fundamental question behind Newman’s text concerns modern man’s refusal to live in an abstract world of ideas: given this refusal, is it still possible for the artist to create sublime art? In the first part of his essay, Newman considers that one of the first manifestations of man was an aesthetic one and, therefore, the first function of language would be an artistic-aesthetic one, and not one of communication. In relation to this idea, Newman mentions that “man’s first cry was a song. Man’s first address to a neighbor was a cry of power and solemn weakness, not a request for a drink of water. Even the animal makes a futile attempt at poetry”.⁸ He criticizes modernism for its failure in creating a sublime image that would separate from the entire tradition of Western European painting. Modern art’s impulse to eliminate beauty in favor of the pure forms and Formalism, although it seems to deny traditional artistic values, it only manages to transfer old values without any new vision.

For Newman, the only reminiscences of the sublime can be seen in modern art because of its “energy to escape the pattern”.⁹ From a rather radical perspective, he only sees the American art of those times as being capable of actualizing the sublime because it develops in a context freed from the “weight of European culture”,¹⁰ a context that authentically allows the complete denial of beauty in art: “The image we produce is the self-evident one of revelation, real and concrete, that can be understood by anyone who will look at it without the nostalgic glasses of

https://www.plan-b.ro/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/pressrelease_rusu.pdf (link accessed on June 13, 2020).

⁸ Barnett Newman, “The Sublime Is Now”, *Tiger’s Eye*, New York, No.1, October 1947, p. 59.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

history".¹¹ As a representative of Abstract Expressionism, Barnett Newman relies on creating images that can be apprehended in themselves, images in which beauty and the sublime do not become impediments, but natural occurrences in an art that separates itself from the burden of cultural memory, whose content includes myths, legends, nostalgia and *the devices of Western European painting*. At the same time, some theorists believe that, starting with the 20th century, art transforms into a neutral space in which contrary aesthetic categories, such as beauty or ugliness, only cancel each other.¹²

From a certain perspective, we can observe that Newman's action of separating from the values of Western European art (and from its cultural memory) has a lot in common with modern art's nihilism in relation to the entire set of values that precedes it. Furthermore, if we consider Boris Groys' approach on the matter, we must admit that despite some tendencies of modern and postmodern artists to deconstruct the myth to the point of excluding it, the myth itself does not disappear completely, but it is transformed into personal myths¹³ that will be re-valued and assimilated into the constituents of a culture's archive. What Groys perceives as a symptomatic manifestation in modern and postmodern art (that can be related to Newman as well) is that artistic practice enters a circle of innovation that implies re-valuing the profane and de-valuing tradition.¹⁴

The concept behind the exhibition *The Only Thing I Am Sure about in This Life Lies above My Head* suggests that Cristi Rusu's creative energies are oriented towards finding the sublime. Whether we are talking about the possibilities of activating the sublime by means of his own works, or we are considering an external search by means of exploring the landscape, the ultimate purpose is to amplify the quality of the relationship that one can have with the sublime. In this sense, the artist's goal becomes his *trademark* and it originates with his projects dating back all the way to 2009. From then until now we can see how his research takes this on-going direction that is far from being concluded. The connection between Barnett Newman's interest in the sublime and Cristi Rusu's current artistic investigation lies in a question that is relevant to both artists, despite the different cultural eras: How can the sublime still exist in a world and in an art that have abandoned narratives?

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² See, for example, Marcella Tarozzi Goldsmith, *The Future of Art: An Aesthetics of the New and the Sublime*, State University of New York Press, New York, 1999, p. 169.

¹³ Boris Groys, *Despre nou – Eseu de economie culturală*, transl. Aurel Codoban, Idea Design & Print, Cluj-Napoca, p. 83.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

Before the aesthetic revolutions that art undertakes throughout the 20th century, the sublime was most often associated with the landscape genre in painting, capturing the *smallness* of man or the overwhelming feeling that one has in contact with the greatness of nature. In relation to the new cultural paradigms emerging near the WW2 period and immediately after (including Abstract Expressionism), the art historian Robert Rosenblum proposes (at the beginning of the 60's) the concept of *the abstract sublime*,¹⁵ describing the new Colour Filed approach on the sublime, where we are no longer dealing with a figurative representation of the landscape.

For Rosenblum, the notion of abstract sublime designates the feeling of vastness and solitude that can be triggered not just by nature's unpredictability, but also by an art such as that of abstract expressionism. It would seem that this confrontation with vastness is the link between the non-figurative paintings of different artists such as Newman, Rothko, Still or Pollock. Even from a Kantian perspective, these approaches can all be correlated to the idea of the sublime, given the fact that in Kantian philosophy the sublime is often correlated to the shapeless object as well. Consequently, the stylistic explorations of abstract expressionism are not entirely separated from the evolution of this aesthetic category in the philosophical tradition. According to Umberto Eco (himself influenced by the Kantian perspective), “the sublime was the recognition of the independence of human reason from nature, thanks to the discovery of the existence of a faculty of the spirit capable of going beyond all sensible measure”.¹⁶

From this perspective, the monumentality of “anti-monument” installations like those adapted to the aesthetic environment of the gallery by Cristi Rusu, the re-utilization of the landscape far from its geographical borders (and outside its historical context) as well as its re-valuing in an universal sense brings the artist closer, in this case, to the actualizations and artistic research that involve the sublime in contemporary art. The feelings of vastness and solitude reflected in the sublime are inter-connected by Cristi Rusu to the uncomfortable thought of death. We find this association between the sublime and death examined in the artist's previous works as well. For example, the already mentioned exhibition, *Space Itself*, features a film entitled “Calle dela morte” consisting of a footage that captures a street sign from Venice. The video manifests as a deconstruction of the moment,

¹⁵ Robert Rosenblum, *The Abstract Sublime*, <https://www.artnews.com/art-news/retrospective/beyond-the-infinite-robert-rosenblum-on-sublime-contemporary-art-in-1961-3811/>, link accessed on June 13, 2020.

¹⁶ Umberto Eco, *On Beauty. A History of a Western Idea*, transl. Alastair McEwen, Seeker & Warburg, London, 2004, p. 267.

when the protagonist's hand starts to shake from the effort as he films the street sign and the image captured on camera becomes more and more unclear until it fades away and "dies".

Unlike the *Space Itself* exhibition, Cristi Rusu's latest project reflects on the issue of death in a less metaphorical way, giving it a clearer expression by means of using the entire exhibition space as a work medium. The artist uses the architecture and geometry of the gallery space in order to project the room imagined under the Cojocna grave, creating a space within a space, a place that seeks for the public a close simulation of the limitless after-death uncertainty and solitude. These feelings are associated by Cristi Rusu to what the public may perceive as the sublime. For the artist, the gallery space has often proven to be a medium and this is why many of his works are site-specific, created *on the spot* in the gallery. Research and documentation precede the site-specific projects, a fact noticeable because the works keep a trace of his sketches and, quite often, these sketches participate in transposing and defining *phantasmal spaces*, just like in the case of the exhibition *The Only Thing I Am Sure about in This Life Lies above My Head*. Even though the first stages of his artistic process involve these sketches, when Cristi Rusu moves on to the actual construction of the works in the gallery space, he proves to be open to the idea of modifying and adapting them to the space of the gallery. This helps him create a simulation that is much closer to the emotions one might experience in contact with the places that were the starting point of his art: natural or urban landscapes, certain monuments etc.

The archive and the natural space as "profane space"

As I have already mentioned, the artist documents these featured places with the purpose of creating site-specific projects within the gallery. However, an aspect that one should not ignore is the fact that this documentation, that includes photos taken at the initial site or sketches, ends up as a foundation for a personal archive. Cristi Rusu uses this visual archive as a working instrument, a structure participating in his "artistic laboratory".¹⁷ The personal archive plays an essential role in the project because it allows the artist to create an "imagined land art"¹⁸ project. Given

¹⁷ See the curatorial text of the exhibition (*The Only Thing I Am Sure about in This Life Lies above My Head*), Plan B Gallery, Berlin, March 6 – April 11, 2020, text signed by Diana Marincu: <https://www.plan-b.ro/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Cristian-Rusu-The-Only-Thing-I-Am-Sure-about-in-This-Life-Lies-above-My-Head-press-release-3.pdf> (link accessed on June 13 2020).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

the fact that the actual grave from Cojocna is evidently not present in the exhibition, the transformations we are witnessing are shaped only by their development as a site-specific project in the gallery, unlike in the case of a real land art project. Cristi Rusu's photos and drawings are not just ways of tracking the traces left by his art in the landscape. In addition, the resulting archive is not just a simple way of capturing the ephemeral act specific to land art and inserting it into a gallery in order to validate its existence and to include it into a broader archive of cultural memory (like the one Boris Groys refers to, for example). Finally, art history itself testifies for the need of an artistic movement such as land art (that initially developed by trying to surpass the limits imposed in the context of galleries and museum) to re-enter the institutional circle, because of its transitory nature.

Cristi Rusu's latest project is first designed in the context of the gallery in order to materialize the space imagined by the artist, while the Cojocna site remains, at least for now, a starting point in the construction of the final work. We can analyze the concept of the archive in the case of this exhibition in a double sense: firstly, as a form of recording the profane space represented by the Cojocna grave, the surrounding landscapes and the traces they determine within the project; secondly, we can consider that the resulting project is automatically included in a cultural archive (in Groys' terms) that involves the gallery's participation as a constituent part of the art world.

In a way that might be paradoxical, for Boris Groys "the new", as a sign of innovation in culture, can be identified, particularly in the archive. By the fact that it is included in the archive, *the new* gets its validation within cultural paradigms. In order to demonstrate this phenomenon, Groys deconstructs modernism's "myths" that imply a denial of traditional values and a constant search for originality. Following Nietzsche, Groys sees *the new* as a re-evaluation of values¹⁹. In this sense, everything that might have been previously labeled as profane (that was not hidden from view but suddenly also revealed itself) enters a circle of reevaluation and is assimilated in an archive, thus taking part in a certain tradition. For Groys, the most suggestive example here is the field of visual arts and, not surprisingly, an important argument for him revolves around Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain*.²⁰

The model of the archive proposed by Groys is different from what is traditionally referred to as an archive. As Wolfgang Ernst observes, Groys presents an archive based on the relationship between reality and fiction, understanding the concept of the archive as "a machine for the production of memories, one that

¹⁹ Boris Groys, *Despre nou – Eșeu de economie culturală*, transl. Aurel Codoban, Idea Design & Print, Cluj-Napoca, p. 29.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 82-83.

fabricates history out of the material of unassimilated reality”.²¹ Consequently, we can admit that everything related to cultural memory, even if it positions itself as *anti-memory*, is assimilated in an archive. In addition, Groys talks about a process of universalization and formalization of cultural archives, given the contemporary era determined by globalism.²² The art world seems to function similarly, ignoring national borders and customs in order to develop as a general common cultural fund of values.²³ If we consider the gallery as a microstructure of the art world, it becomes an integrated part of the grand archive called “the art world”; however, at the same time it functions as a smaller archive in itself because it consolidates its own set of values.

In other words, following Groys’s theory, a contemporary art gallery can function according to the principles of the archive because it is capable of drawing out attention to that which is constituted in the real world as *new*. All the innovative artistic tendencies, that initially started as “profane” and defined themselves as opposing the hierarchy of traditional values, were included and revalued in what can be called “the art world archive”. As Groys notes,²⁴ everything functioning according to the logic of cultural economy is eventually constituted as an archive, and the art gallery can certainly fit into that type of logic. What remains outside the cultural archive is referred to as profane space by Groys and he describes it²⁵ as being insignificant, extra-cultural, irrelevant, transitory etc. However, the author also observes²⁶ that the profane space is capable of providing new potential cultural values and, even more, this profane space has been often integrated and revalued in the cultural archive by ready-made objects, land art, performance, Arte Povera etc. Therefore, Groys takes into consideration the possibility of the total disappearance of the profane space because of its assimilation in the grand cultural archive of mankind (because of the way in which visual arts deal with this profane space).

Wolfgang Ernst observes²⁷ that Groys’ cultural archives are powered by a *motor* – that of narratives and these narratives are practically composed of the interpretations that we give to new artworks. The world without narratives that

²¹ Wolfgang Ernst, *Stirrings in the Archives: Order from Disorder*, transl. Adam Siegel, Rowman & Littlefield, London, New York, 2015, p.11.

²² See Boris Groys, *Despre nou –Eseu de economie culturală*, transl. Aurel Codoban, Idea Design & Print, Cluj-Napoca, p. 63.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

²⁶ *Ibid.*.

²⁷ Wolfgang Ernst, *Stirrings in the Archives: Order from Disorder*, transl. Adam Siegel Rowman & Littlefield, London, New York, 2015, pp. 11-12.

Newman spoke about at the half of the 20th century was not, in fact, a world outside of narratives. Mainly the need to escape memory and the Western European tradition, that Newman was talking about, sets the foundation for a new narrative in which the sublime can be actualized by the diverse set of experiences and interpretations that we engage in relation to the same artwork at different times.

Conclusions

In the case of Cristi Rusu we can also talk about a search for the *profane space*, given some recurrent themes in his works: anti-memory, anti-monumentality, anti-history or even the way in which he investigates the sublime. However, an analysis on the role of profane space in the exhibition *The Only Thing I Am Sure about in This Life Lies above My Head* has its difficulties. It is true that the artist uses a language specific to land art (among other things), but, in reality, he creates a site-specific work within the gallery and does not effectively work with the actual landscape from the original site, a landscape that could determine a profane space. On the other hand, the Cojocna grave carries with it an entire narrative developed in correspondence with historical events, a narrative that Cristi Rusu revalues from a cultural-artistic perspective. This revaluing is possible due to the elaboration of a project imagined starting with the Cojocna site and built directly in the exhibition space, thus automatically entering the cultural archive of the gallery in this case. In addition, the themes themselves enter the circle of the archive because in their background a diverse tradition of similar artistic approaches was already consolidated throughout history.

Cristi Rusu's latest project can also be interpreted in relation to the concept of non-site developed by Robert Smithson at the time of his first similar artistic explorations from 1968. These non-sites were created by Smithson at that time as a form of connecting the natural or urban landscapes to the actual space of the gallery by transporting and placing natural raw materials (rocks, earth etc.) in the institutional context of the gallery or the museum. Consequently, a *non-place* was configured, a non-site as Smithson would call it, that challenges the *white cube* limits by introducing the marginal in the central exhibition point of the gallery.

As Peter Osbourne notes, for Smithson, the non-sites are actually other sites designating a certain place that is usually outside the limits of the exhibition space; the sites imagined by Smithson as non-places are generated based on “specific combinations of representations of the 'site/ sight' itself: samples of earth, descriptions, maps and photographs – unified and contained by an imaginary frame, which is literalized in the non-sites themselves by the actual framework of the samples: steel

containers".²⁸ Mapping is therefore an essential part of these non-sites, as they essentially build "mental islands"²⁹ based on the dialectic relationship between presence and absence.

The paradox is that these mental islands, non-places, become perceivable in the exhibition space due to the artist's use of physical materials presented to the public as a synthesis of the information contained by the initial landscape. Therefore, the non-site does not lose its connection to the original source; it ends up as a new place containing some of the information and "a negation of an actual place done through physical meaning".³⁰ This relationship between the site and the non-site, representative for Smithson's approach, is also present in Cristi Rusu's latest exhibition, as the artist creates a *bridge* between the Cojocna site and the exhibition space of Plan B Gallery. Cristi Rusu also creates a 3d mapping of the Cojocna site that can be described as a "synthesis between representation and abstraction".³¹

Cristi Rusu's project discussed here is relevant in illustrating the ways in which the art gallery's space proves to be adaptable and, even more, essential in the creation of the artwork, as it becomes a constituent part of it and, at the same time, a constituent part of a non-site. In addition, the project enables a double archiving process: the artist's personal archive (that documents a profane space from outside the gallery and that he uses as a work instrument) and an archive of the definitive result (given the site-specific status of the project created in the gallery). These types of interventions in the gallery space illustrate the fact that the gallery is not just an institutional part of the art world (where the market would leave its mark on the rules of the system). It can be as well a *medium* for exploring the sublime or themes and artistic approaches such as anti-memory, anti-history, anti-monumentality without losing, due to the "anti" prefix, the meaning of the major ideas that participated in our cultural evolution.

²⁸ Peter Osborne, *Anywhere or Not at All: Philosophy of Contemporary Art*, Verso, London, 2013, p. 112.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

³⁰ Paul Taner, Robert Smithson, *Interview with Robert Smithson (1970)*, in Robert Smithson, *The Collected Writings*, ed. Jack Flam, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1996, p. 238.

³¹ Susan Kandel, *The Non-Site of Theory, Theory and Practice in "Frieze"*, May 7 1995, <https://frieze.com/article/non-site-theory> (link accessed on June 13 2020).

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NATURAL OBJECT OR ELEMENT OF AN ARTWORK? CASE STUDY: ARTISTS, ARTWORKS AND EXHIBITIONS IN CLUJ, ROMANIA

LIVIU RĂZVAN PRIPON*

ABSTRACT. *Natural object or element of an artwork? Case Study: Artists, Artworks and Exhibitions in Cluj, Romania.* In this article, we discuss the relationship between art and natural objects such as stuffed animals, skins, bones, dried plants or minerals and their aesthetical value from their position as artworks or elements of an artwork. In Cluj, between 2017 and 2019, artworks and exhibitions which integrate this type of practices and natural history materiality flourished. We aim to compose an inventory that could contribute to the archive of local art events, artworks, and artists in order to serve further analysis of local specificity, which could eventually find relevance in the theoretic approaches of art. In conclusion, we underline some of the theoretical approaches of the dynamics of natural object's values and of the procedures established by organizations such as museums and galleries.

Keywords: *art galleries, art museums, natural history museums, natural object, BioArt*

Introduction

In the following analysis, we will present a series of artworks and will discuss the transitions of natural objects cultural values, in order to reveal the dynamics of art practices and the popularity of such objects present in artworks exhibited in Cluj. By highlighting a particular situation of Romanian art, this paper may represent a useful archive of an episode in the local art manifestations.

The aim of this paper can be summarized in four central questions that we address here: 1. what kind of natural objects appears in works of art or in art exhibitions? 2. What perspective the artist's discourse brings on the value of the

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naturalized object used in the artwork? 3. What transitions can be identified in the process of artistic processing of a natural object? and 4. which directions and polarization these transitions involve?

Before presenting the examples selected for this analysis, we have to give a more general context to which they subscribe. A representative artwork for this context is Damien Hirst's famous *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living*, first exhibited in 1991. The tiger shark preserved in a huge tank filled with formaldehyde embodied and represents the idea of death and the great fear that the awareness of death brings¹. A series of works followed. They integrated animals preserved in formaldehyde or dried insects that subscribed to different discourses referring to shapes and colours. One work comprising a series of fish conserved in small containers was related to the Bruce Nauman's *One Hundred Fish Fountain*, 2005². Hirst's works may be related to an event of the artist's past in which he was intoxicated with drugs, confusing them with candy.³

Another suggestive artwork in the context of our analysis is that of Joseph Beuys, who in 1974 locked himself up in a gallery with a coyote during the *performance I love America and America loves you*.⁴ This work probably inspired more recent ones, such as that of Cai Guo-Qiang from 2006, entitled *Head on*, which includes 99 naturalized coyotes forming a column that at one point collides with a glass wall⁵. This installation wants to represent a portrait of the human tragedy in which the man tries to reach his objectives without compromises.

In the work of Jean-Luc Moulène, entitled *Donkey*, exhibited in 2016 at the Chantal Crousel Gallery in Paris, it is about a donkey skull integrated in cut cement block. The artist's intention can be synthesized by his brief and statement: the intention is to give a concrete existence of the mental image.⁶

So far, we have only mentioned animals, but plants also appear quite frequently in works of art in different forms. From live plants in pots and fresh plants mounted in installations that simulate vegetable gardens, to pressed dried plants, these organisms are present as constituent elements of some works of art. We have chosen here two slightly different examples. One refers to the work of Marie-Jeanne Musiol - *Nébuleuses végétales. Corps de lumière no 61 Grand (Plectranthus)*⁷

¹ <http://www.damienhirst.com/the-physical-impossibility-of>

² <https://gagosian.com/artists/bruce-nauman/>

³ Holzwarth, Hans, Werner: *Modent art 1870-2000. Impressionism to Today*, Editura Taschen, Bibliotheca Universalis, 2000, p. 638.

⁴ <https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/exhibition/joseph-beuys-actions-vitrines-environments/joseph-beuys-actions-4>

⁵ <https://www.guggenheim.org/exhibition/cai-guo-qiang-head-on>

⁶ Moulène, Jean-Luc, *Donkey*, Artist's statement on Thomas Dane Gallery website, 2016.

⁷ Musiol Marie-Jeanne, "Nébuleuses végétales. Corps de lumière no 61 Grand (Plectranthus)". *The Magazine of the Palais de Tokyo*, nr. 25 – The dream of forms, Paris, 2017, p. 85.

(2017), which is realized by a particular method of electromagnetic photography. The second example is Anicka Yi's work in which artificial reconstructions of plastic plants are mounted⁸.

A last example is Katja Novitskova with *Approximation V⁹* and *Branching I¹⁰* exhibited in Berlin in 2013. These works are cut-outs in aluminium prints and, although they are representations, we have added them here as they consist in a reconstruction on another scale of an actual chameleon, in the first case, and a sloth (the animal - the genus *Bradypus*), in the second case.

First, we will explain how objects, which until recently had a strictly technical role in a certain zoological collection or a natural history exhibition, became aesthetic exhibits, as elements of artworks.

The question mark attached to the phrase *natural object (specimen) or element of a work of art* send to a question that arose from visits in current exhibitions in various Natural History Museums, but also in numerous art exhibitions that integrate natural objects. We can evaluate this question by looking at one of Damien Hirst's works, which closely resembles an insectarium. In this work where the insects are placed in positions that generate certain geometric assemblies, all on a particular chromatic background, we can identify a kind of *uncertainty* principle. It will be difficult to decide at first glance whether they are insects from the exhibition of a zoological museum or an art installation. Due to these considerations, we came to the hypothesis that there is a transition of the object's value from the technical perspective of the natural history museum to the aesthetic perspective of the artistic vision. Thus, another question arises: is there a trend in this regard?

The uncertainty about the status of Damien Hirst's works will be shattered immediately, once we see their description and we find that they belong to a renowned artist who uses in his art works natural objects such as insects, fishes or other preserved animals. Analysing the descriptive text assigned by the artist to a work entitled *Pink*, we note that the ensemble does not suggest the technical aspect of the orthoptera or beetles it consists in, but the chromatic symbolism of the colour pink found on the background of the work and on the body of these insects: "Pink represents childhood and youth; he is (the pink) for open sexuality and choice or care, for summer freedom, for desire, for a new life; pink has traditionally been used for girls."¹¹

⁸ Yi, Anicka, "Our Brand is Crisis". *The Magazine of the Palais de Tokyo*, nr. 25 – The dream of forms, Paris, 2017, p. 87.

⁹ Novitskova, Katja, "Approximation V". *The Magazine of the Palais de Tokyo*, nr. 25 – The dream of forms, Paris, 2017, p. 41.

¹⁰ Novitskova, Katja, "Branching I", In *The Magazine of the Palais de Tokyo*, nr. 25 – The dream of forms, Paris, 2017, p. 43.

¹¹ Hirst, Damien: *Pink*, Artist's statement on Instagramul post of the artwork, 2019.

This transition of the natural object value is not limited only to the physical replacement from a technical museum or collection into an art environment. It also reflects the extraction of these objects from the position they had not long ago in the technical discourse or taxonomy series, specific to the natural history museum and the replacement in a new position integrated in the artistic discourse. Historically speaking, to get from the prehistoric mural paintings to the “sculptures” of Damien Hirst, as he calls them, the natural object goes through a series of numerous transitions, most of which related to the development of the natural history museum.

The transitions of one object from the status of natural element to that of a museum piece, are not limited to a simple collecting and naturalization processes, just as the naturalized specimen is not a simple stuffed animal. The natural object acquires a set of cultural values such as taxonomic, educational, financial and not least aesthetic ones. All these values are determined by a series of transitions, from which the last one mentioned above is the object of our study here.

Artwork and art exhibitions

To answer the first and then the second question addressed here, we must look at the local exhibitions and works of art that integrate natural objects, such as specimens found in collections, and exhibitions specific to natural history, and then study the artist's statement or the curatorial discourse of those artworks.

In 2019, on the graduate student's exhibition from the University of Art and Design in Cluj-Napoca, a series of works were noteworthy, in that they refer to natural objects and natural history. These artworks could have been exhibited in a natural history museum as well. We notice in these works the shift from the technical discourse, specific to the museum of natural history, to a different discourse. The set of works by Teodora Bota entitled *Microlab*,¹² the album *Botanic Herbarium* made by Pavel Cristina, and the works reunited under the title *Atavus* by Robert Sergiu Ujvaroși are some examples in this sense. In the first case, we are dealing with microscopic structures such as seeds, pollen, diatoms, and radiolarians reproduced on a macroscopic scale, based on the work of Ernst Haeckel and Luke Jerram.¹³ In the second case, the artwork is about graphic representations of orchids or carnivorous plants, and in the third case, about mixed technique representations, suggesting certain fossilized organisms to which scientific names were attached, very much resembling the exhibits of a natural history exhibition.

¹² Bota, Teodora, *Microlab*. Text curatorial pentru Expoziția Absolvenților UAD – 2019.

¹³ *Ibidem*.

At the same time at the Matei House, headquarters of the University of Arts and Design in Cluj Napoca, an exhibition was showcased with and about plants, which integrated besides works of art, interactive panels and even live plants in microtransactions. The exhibition, realised under the coordination of Corina Cătană (professor at the Faculty of Horticulture in USAMV Cluj-Napoca) represent the placement of natural objects in an artistic space and the re-placement of a technical discourse in the context of an artistic discourse.

These examples already anticipate the main directions for integrating natural objects into works of art. Before examining the actual examples, it is necessary to mark the two general directions that are highlighted by art practices, which integrate these natural objects (animals, plants or mineral formations). On the one hand, we are dealing with the reconstruction of the natural object, as is the case of works by Axenia Roșca, which uses an artificial crystal growth technique. On the other hand, we are dealing with the relocation (repositioning) of the natural object itself, as is the case of the work of Nona Inescu (curator Vlad Nancă), who uses a geological formation that may be better known as “globes” of Feleac. We use both examples from the field of mineralogy to facilitate the comparison and also because they were accessible to us, these works being part of two simultaneous exhibitions that took place at the Centre of Interest in 2018.

Let’s look at some examples of artists who use natural objects in their works exhibited in Galleries in Cluj. We will use these examples as case studies since they actually synthesize the answers to the first two central questions addressed here.

At the beginning of 2018, at Atelier 4 Gallery, Anda Roman had an exhibition entitled *Senseless* which started from photographs taken in zoology museums representing among others some naturalized animals.¹⁴ We find from the text of the exhibition: “In general, the project invites the public to decipher the ephemerality of a subtle world correlated with the desire to combat the passage of time through taxidermy, in the form of an attempt to preserve an apparent reality.”¹⁵

In another exhibition, at the same gallery, opened just a few months before (November 2017), entitled *FEW STEPS TILL DISAPPEARING*, Alexandra Mocan proposes an installation in which she reproduces a marsupial tiger skin, an extinct species. To give an overview of the curatorial discourse, I quote the following excerpt from the statement of the exhibition:

... the conservation of species as a way of taking over. We are skin, everything goes through the skin, everything hits the skin. The skin as a coating,

¹⁴ Roman, Anda, *Senseless*. Text curatorial al artistei, 2018.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*.

as the first element that deteriorates or regenerates. The first contact with the outside, the most visible part that affirms the material existence. The covering that contains everything that is inside, under which is hidden what we cannot know. Superficial layer. The layer that emanates aesthetic valences, which gains admiration¹⁶ (trad. from Romanian by Liviu Pripon)

Likewise, in Cluj there was a collective exhibition with the opening in October 2017 at the Visual Kontakt Gallery. At least three artists have presented works that we can discuss here. One of them was Dionisis Christoflogiannis, who took a series of photographs of some bird corpses, an image that also appears on the poster of the exhibition. Especially two other exhibitors have integrated natural objects. In the case of Ioana Olăhuț, it is about birds, and in the case of Liviu Bulea, it is about plants.

Ioana Olăhuț uses stuffed birds in her installation, the whole ensemble being very similar to a diorama with a theatrical decor given primarily by the location and lighting. However, from the statement of the exhibition it can be seen that its intention is detached from the typical message of such diorama:

... More than that, this work represents a visual reflection on the absurd, on the fragile boundary between natural and artificial in our contemporary world; the inequality and irresponsibility of the actions of the civilized man, aggressive deforestation, seeds of genetically modified plants created by greedy companies or groups of hard-working people who enthusiastically pollinate each cherry blossom from an orchard in the absence of the bees being gradually exterminated.¹⁷ (trad. from Romanian by Liviu Pripon)

In this artwork we can note the strong discursive nature of the natural objects and their assemblage, rather than the immediate visual appearance of the component elements themselves.

Liviu Bulea exhibits both mineral and vegetable elements. The statement of the exhibition mentions: "This work represents a garden designed and made for the present exhibition. It is a childhood memory of the gardens near the cement factory in Turda. (...) it also represents a metaphor for what we as a society tend to surround ourselves with concrete, nature becoming a luxury ...".¹⁸ In this exhibition are mounted live plants and dried in the form of a small garden with flowers and plants grown for consumption.

¹⁶ Mocan, Alexandra, *Few steps till disappearing*. Text curatorial al artistei, 2017.

¹⁷ Bera, Olimpia, *Dead Gardens*. Text curatorial pentru Expoziția artistei Ioana Olăhuț, 2017.

¹⁸ Bera, Olimpia, *Dead Gardens*. Text curatorial pentru Expoziția artistului Liviu Bulea, 2017.

Nona Inescu is a Romanian artist who has exhibited both abroad, for example in Germany, Poland, Italy, and in various cities in Romania, such as Bucharest or Cluj. In her works she went on both artistic directions that determine the process of transition of the natural object: both on reconstruction and on repositioning. What is interesting about this artist is the fact that she focuses on the actual identity of the natural objects, aesthetically exploiting this aspect in particular. As an example, we will give a brief excerpt from an exhibition statement: “Some animals’ bodies are so vulnerable to their surroundings that they need to be encased in hard shells to survive.” Taken from the text of the exhibition *Hands don’t make magic*¹⁹ realized in 2015 the Sabot Gallery. Another example is the placement of that “Feleac globes” in the exhibition *Lithosomes* of 2017 at the Exile Gallery, Vienna, Austria and reinterpreted in another future exhibition, realized in Romania cities, such as Cluj.

One of her latest exhibitions, *An animal that was thought to be a plant that transformed into stone*, opened at the Spazio Pistoia Gallery, Italy in 2018, integrates a series of corals exhibited on minimalist supports, and some of them on skin upholstered chairs without legs. The exhibition looks at the compatibility between the human body and other non-human bodies and the symbiotic possibilities offered by medical and nutritional practices, such as the consumption of calcium supplements in corals and the use of corals for bone implants. At the same time, corals are a symbol of climate change and acidification of the oceans, a problem that appears in the exhibition discourse related to exposing corals for an aesthetic experience of their overall form or constitution, represented by the organization of the limestone skeleton.²⁰ This exhibition represents an edifying example for the transition of the natural object itself into an element of a work of art, by the aesthetic exploitation of the natural form as well as by its character as a discursive aesthetic element (symbol of discourse) or semiophore in the sense Pomian proposed and Bennett adopted the term for the museum exhibit.²¹

Next example is not an exhibition from Cluj but due to its materials which consist in actual natural objects (bees) will be discussed here. Dragoș Neagoe is another artist who integrates in his works natural objects, which in this case are bees, works that he calls sculptural. I will present a short excerpt from the text of the exhibition *Shape (s)* that took place in Mogoșoaia in the Cultural Center of Brancovenesti Palaces, being opened in 2017:

¹⁹ Dabóczy Géza, *Hands don’t make magic*. Text curatorial pentru Expoziția artistei Nona Inescu, 2015.

²⁰ Inescu, Nona – artist statement, <https://nonainescu.com/an-animal-that-was-once-thought-to-be-a-plant-that-transformed-into-stone/>, septembrie, 2019.

²¹ Bennett, Tony, *The Birth of the Museum. History, theory, politics*. Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, London, 1995, p. 165.

The whole visual alphabet that builds the beekeeper's reality – beehives, honeycombs, bees – is transposed into sculptural objects, in bas-reliefs or installations. D. Neagoe approaches nature, as his predecessors imagined, a Jannis Kounellis or a Giuseppe Penone, in the arts of poverty.²² (trad. from Romanian by Liviu Prapon)

The latest example is *The Museum Affair. Engraftment exercises of the Cluj museum space*, which was held in several museums in Cluj. It was initiated by the exhibition opened on October 17, 2019 at the National Museum of History of Transylvania. From the perspective of our analysis, we are interested in what happened at the UBB Zoological Museum and the UBB Botanical Museum, where a number of art works were installed in the main exhibitions. What we could see from the perspective of the public who participated in one of the guided tours was that people were engaged in discussions about the artistic discourse and even invited to analyse them directly, encouraged to express their own perception. From this point of view, the public had guidance in understanding artworks and even their integration in the native discourse of the museums. On the other hand, the participants visited the basic exhibitions of the two museums being equally interested in the exhibits and the discourse proposed by the museum, in its specificity. Thus, the experience was completely hybrid from this point of view and the artistic and scientific discourses hybridized as it could not be better in a mixed experience.

However, at the Botanical Museum UBB there was an interesting phenomenon that shows yet another asymmetry that is difficult to solve. This concerns the group represented by the scientific discourse that excretes the artistic act from its own inability to detach its strong specificity. The example refers to the work of Lucian Indrei which involved the integration of some packaging and waste in a diorama display, both in the Botanical Museum and in two dioramas in the Zoological Museum. This artwork had a well-defined message: “regarding current problems of the environment ... thus forcing the representations of the natural environment (such as the one in the museum) to reflect its reality.”²³ Despite this warning, the work was removed in order to clean the diorama from the Botanical Museum. The public participating in the guided tour could see only to the place where the artwork had been placed, the display case being restored to its original state, corresponding to the specific discourse of the museum. This proves that, although the museum accepted this intervention, it could not assimilate the artist’s proposal at the expense of a specific attempt to keep the dioramas clean, without waste.

²² Băloiu, Raluca, *Shape(s)*. Text curatorial pentru Expoziția artistului Dragoș Neagoe, 2017.

²³ Indrei, Lucian, Artist’s statement for the works exhibited with the occasion of The Museum Affair Exhibitions, 2019.

The museum did not have the capacity to overcome its own specific discourse, considering the artistic one too virulent and improper, unbearable in its own discourse. This fact, by describing the work of art itself, has shown that the museum is incapable of presenting and representing a real stage of nature, with an aesthetic that attacks the one assumed by itself. In other words, the scientific vision or discourse appeared in its subjectivity, detached from the real knowledge through the double intervention, first that of the artist, then that of the museum. This intervention generated a truly hybrid work that goes beyond the discourse of the artistic work integrating the museum one. This hybrid work that developed by itself after the artist's intervention involved, beside the artistic practice, the museum's specific scientific paradigm. To underline the museum's attitude towards artworks it hosted, the work of Thea Lazar comes to bring a confirmation. She made a model of the *Saussurea porcii* plant, which is a species that was thought to be extinct but has recently been rediscovered. Due to the way of carrying out the work but also of the discourse it integrates, which partially overlaps the discourse of the Botanical Museum, the work was requested to enter the patrimony of the museum. From here it is clear that similar discourses are very well accepted and integrated while foreign discourses are excluded or received with restraint. In the above example there is a polarization towards the nature, in terms of symmetry, as Bruno Latour proposed this concept.²⁴

To summarize, we can answer the first question addressed in this subchapter: what kind of objects appear in works of art or in art exhibitions?

From the first example, we find that we are dealing with microscopic structures, such as pollen or seeds, and microscopic organisms, such as diatom algae or radiolarian protozoa. At the same time, fossilized flowers or formations appear as reconstructions of the natural object through various techniques, such as ceramic, graphic or pictorial.

Among the natural objects that correspond to the naturalized biological pieces or the preserved fragments of the biological organisms, the following could be identified: feathered birds, fragments of mammal skins or birds, collages of these skins, insects preserved in dry form, parts of insects such as butterfly wings, fish or mammals preserved in liquid substances, skeletal fragments integrated in different materials, animals preserved in resins such as frogs, dry plants, and even natural minerals.

In other words, a broad spectrum of objects specific to natural history collections and exhibitions appear integrated in the context of works and art exhibitions. Finally, the objects subscribe to critical discourses that highlight from the outside the methods

²⁴ Bruno, Latour, Nu am fost niciodată moderni. Eseu de antropologie simetrică, Editura Tact, p. 134.

of natural history exhibitions and the functionality of the pieces in these exhibitions. Thus, the exhibitions of natural history gain a much more comprehensive perspective from the cultural point of view: historical, social, psychological. Moreover, we can see how these pieces can undergo cultural movements, which are not so obvious in the context of natural history collections and exhibitions.

From the above examples, we can foreshadow some answers to the second question addressed in this paper: What perspective does the artist's discourse bring on the nature of the naturalized object used in the work of art?

In the works of Teodora Bota, a tendency is to explore a world that is inaccessible directly, through devices that allow microscopic inspection and aesthetically explore these structures. The work directs also towards the technical process of their inspection, as suggested in the text attached to the works: "My intention is to introduce the person in a small laboratory in which what is seen under the microscope materializes through a stylization of microscopic events, bringing them to the forefront."²⁵

The representation of the natural object by graphic, pictorial technique and in general without a correspondent material body, as a variant of the reconstruction of this object, remains a method only in the case of exposing the structure of natural objects, such as the structure of the bone tissue, microscopic elements, such as bacteria that have a vague microscopic visual correspondence or hyper-realistic reproductions, such as cut-outs.

Discussions and Conclusion

In order to answer the first question proposed in this paper, we underline the different types of objects involved in art practices presented here. We concluded that in fact artworks may consist of natural objects in their full corporality, such as stuffed birds in the work of Bera, dried bees in the works of Neagoe, and complete mineralogical structures as "Feleac globes" in case of Inescu's works. Some art works may involve instead only parts, fragments of the animal or plant's body, such as those recognized in the work of Deborah Sengl – *The fox – as robber* (2004), as well as in many other artworks of different artists. The third type is the object resulted by material reproduction.

Two directions may be identified in that case. The reconstructed object is from the same material, as in case of Roșca's crystals, or it is from a different material, as the marsupial tiger skin in the work of Mocan. Another type of objects results from the re-materialisation of the images; a convenient example is provided by the

²⁵ Bota, Teodora, *Microlab*. Text curatorial pentru Expoziția Absolvenților UAD – 2019.

artworks of Katja Novistkova, such as “Approximation V” and “Branching I”. The last type is the one that involves the artistic reproduction of real natural objects, such as Christoflogiannis’ pictures, or involve graphic or painting techniques yet integrating a strong natural history perspective, such as Pavel’s *Botanic Herbarium*. From a more synthetic point of view we can underline two directions of the art practices in relationship with natural objects: 1. the relocation of the natural object, both in terms of spatial means and discourse, yet keeping its authentic materiality and 2. the reconstruction of natural object keeping of its form identity as much as possible, but switching and modelling its representative identity.

In order to respond to the second question addressed here we synthesize the main directions followed by the aesthetic discourses, which are:

1. The problem of timelessness - the fixedness given by the process of naturalization;
2. Aspects related to the negative anthropogenic impact on nature;
3. The capturing of nature by artificial structures;
4. The extinction of species;
5. The aesthetic character from the perspective of an interaction with the body and in fact from the perspective of a human ability;
6. The biological and material identity of an object from an aesthetic perspective (of the perception of the form);
7. The purely aesthetic character or aesthetic features isolated from the complex of morphological or structural characters of an organism.

According to Tony Bennett, in natural history museums, exhibits function as representatives and reflect in their arrangement a discourse about evolutionary series or progress applied to nature as well as to societies and human races, integrating a reflection on national identity.²⁶ Therefore, natural objects reflect nature through taxonomy and systematics as a cultural apparatus to investigate, present and communicate nature to the public. The natural objects in artworks mentioned here are representatives, but in a meta-representation position: a representation of the initial representation of nature (museums and other cultural constructs from which nature was culturally processed). In the context of the artwork, the natural object gains a new representative spectrum and power, similar to the ones manifested in the conditions of the curiosity cabinets, not being restricted to an element of evolutionary or taxonomy series. S

Still, the natural object cannot escape its original nature as stuffed animal integrates the techniques and practices specific to natural history museums. In the context of art this object will be undressed not by an abandon or denial of its initial

²⁶ Bennett, Tony, *The Birth of the Museum. History, theory, politics*, Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, London, 1995, p. 213-215.

state but by its critical discourse about this own nature that it embodied. In conclusion, the natural object suffers a transition from the supposedly objective nature to the aesthetical embodied materiality. This is instilled with a discourse of social, political, ecological or pure aesthetical importance, but mediated through the objects' natural history state, derived from the construct once generated by the natural history museum and other cultural apparatus.

Natural objects can occupy a foreground position as well as a background position in the context of the artwork. The first situation is evident and shown by most of the artworks presented above. The second one is exemplified by works such as those of Lucian Indrei at the *Zoological Museum* of Babeş-Bolyai University. In this case the artwork was constructed on the basis of a diorama. Thus, stuffed animals constituted the "blank canvas ready to paint on". The actual elements of the artwork were the garbage pieces which represented more of an intervention than an actual material construct in itself. Still, the artist's work generates a powerful visual impact and a discomfort of the diorama aesthetic. This process is not related to the actual materials, objects, but the combination and rapport between them. We are dealing with the relation between objects: stuffed animals on one hand and garbage on the other as well as the relation and confrontation between discourses: the museum discourse and the art discourse. In this case, the art work is not dealing with the material manipulation, modelling and transformation, but more with the manipulation and processing of discourse for which material are auxiliary and background construction blocks with no importance in their self (they are garbage).

Regarding the directions and the poles from which natural objects' transitions may be drawn, we identified three such traces and three major organizations involved: art galleries, natural history museums and art museums. We can conclude, from the examples presented before, that art galleries are a major pole in which the trend of integrating natural objects in artwork is encouraged, developed and popularized in the art world, general cultural trend and to the collective mind. In the art museums this trend is rather less manifested but still present. In case of natural history or zoological museums this trend is relatively well manifested, but the situation deserves a more in-depth discussion. The implementation of art exhibitions or integration of artworks in this latter environment supposes three distinct situations: the first one is the artist's implication by its own intention and the natural history museums acceptance of the intervention; the second one reflects the initiative of natural history museum but with the involvement and invitation of artists; and the third one is represented by natural history museum intentionality in realizing the hybrid exhibition through its own curators. In some cases, there can be an initiative of the museum's art department while the implementation is delegated to the natural history department. An example in this case is the "Secret Garden" exhibition

realised at Brukenthal Museum from Sibiu. Such artworks and exhibitions emerged and multiplied in a frequent implementation by a synergic activity from all the directions discussed above.

Our analysis confirms a transition of the natural object from its initial status, proper to an exhibition within the classic Natural History Museum, towards an aesthetic character. Likewise, it confirms a similar tendency, signalled by the reconfiguration of the nature and value of the museum piece. The evidence is provided by:

- The large number of art exhibitions incorporating natural objects;
- The high frequency of these types of exhibitions even in the same galleries;
- The emergence of some steps to unify art with science, as noted in the *Scientifica programs*, which offer residence for artists under the “Our Nature” program to generate hybrid works between art and science;
- The large number of natural history museums that are aligned with an aesthetic discourse and integrate it as much as possible into both temporary and basic exhibitions (see Natural History Museum in London, Museum für Naturkunde in Berlin, and Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature in Paris);
- The fact that such initiatives of natural museums have been recognized worldwide by granting distinctions (Musée de la Chasse in Paris or Oceaneum in Stralsund).

The transition is therefore from a technical discourse to an aesthetic one. In this sense, regarding the Museum of Natural History, to which we can assign/ascribe the natural object itself, one can notice a significant restructuring of the exhibitions’ arrangement. This shifts from an exhibition set up with many pieces to an exhibition with few pieces. If before each species was represented by a limited number of pieces or even a unique specimen/piece, now species tend to be represented in exhibitions by multiple specimens that make up aesthetic, not systematic, assemblies.

Even the labelling changes, because it is precisely the exhibition discourse that changes. Thus, the well-structured and appropriate labels for each specimen, which should be classified from the perspective of taxonomic identity, are modified or merged into general labels that highlight other characteristics, especially the aesthetic ones or those that take into account various problems of perception of natural objects (e.g. information panels in the exhibition *Intelligence of plants*).

We are dealing here not with a relationship between art and nature. It is rather a hybridization between art and natural history, because these practices involve already processed materiality in the context of natural history (stuffed animals for example), and in this case, art is integrating natural history discourses (*The Museum affaire* for example). Thus, artworks discussed in this paper are involved in an indirect process since natural history objects are already cultural processed intermediaries between the actual nature and the messages or experiences

artwork offers. From the point of view of BioArt typical field (living organisms, laboratory practices), we are dealing here with a slightly different direction (dead animals and their reconstructions). Given these practices and the materiality involved, we consider this specific art movement as distinct and well-shaped, pending for its recognition and naming.

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