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Richard Gallo, *Transformative Problem-Solving as Mindful Practice*

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THEODOR DAMIAN

Religion and the Culture of the Internet

Abstract: Through the tendencies, temptations, the capacity of manipulation, the offers of sensational and many other more or less visible methods, the internet affects in major ways both religion and culture, in particular at the level of the relativization of values, of spreading confusion, of the subjectivization of problems.

Keywords: globalization, culture, education, Internet, religion, God, transcendence

Preliminaries

Globalization, in its different forms, is an old phenomenon. If, for example, we look at antiquity, the spreading of the Greco-Macedonian culture and of the Greek language in the then “known world,” and also the Roman Empire’s civilization represent phenomena of globalization. If we come to the Middle Ages we can think of the expansion of the Byzantine empire under Justinian, then, the Enlightenment Revolution that greatly affected the European civilization for centuries, as other examples. The globalizing character, with its positive and negative aspects in the present time, is a powerful feature of the internet technology, which, as we see, influences all aspects of personal and social life including culture and religion that represent two essential areas in the human development and life.

In what follows I will try to show the major impact that the internet technology has on these two areas. I will place the emphasis on the negative side of it because it is this that implies risks, big and small, that passionate users are taking. Thus, besides a few reflections on culture, then on religion, I will focus on the way these two are affected by the technology and utilization of the Internet.

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Culture

Generally speaking, a culture is constituted by the totality of a community's characteristics, including mentalities and values that lead to a certain way of seeing and understanding life and the world (*weltanschauung*), consequently generating a certain way of being.

This implies therefore establishing a set of values and its own hierarchy, and in particular the free, conscious and voluntary assumption of these values considered as normative and their application in the daily life.

It is a given that each individual, with his or her formal or informal education contributes to the dynamics of the cultural phenomenon in that society.

Having as a foundation a system of values, like any system, culture, too, is defined by two fundamental features called *status quo* and change. The *status quo* is what maintains the structural identity of the system and change is what helps it to adapt to ever new conditions, especially external circumstances.

This corresponds with the two big types of values - absolute and relative - where absolute values offer the stability that each system needs in order to survive, and the relative values offer the flexibility also necessary for survival. A healthy system, a healthy culture maintains a salutary balance between these two dimensions.

The cultural phenomenon, due to the diversity that it implies, in particular in the context of the relative values, is not only home to beauties, but also to concepts and manifestations less beautiful, often in direct contradiction to its absolute values.

One concrete example is related to the choice of readings for small children. Which books do parents choose to be read by their children? Evidently, those that illustrate the parents' fundamental values, the foundation they want their children to grow on, thus offering them the necessary stability for a healthy life at the psychologic, spiritual and social levels.

A Romanian proverb says: "Tell me who are your friends, and I will tell you who you are". Paraphrasing it one could say: "tell me what books you are reading (or what you are doing on the internet) and I will tell you who you are". This reminds of another proverb: „Bad company spoils good habits”, or even, based on what one learns from there, the interdiction of the seventh commandment of the Church (according to the Orthodox catechism): "You shall not read heretical books".

Speaking of culture one can ask the question: Who makes a culture? A simple answer could be: the elites. Already from prehistoric times when there was no formal education in the way we see it today, there were wise people, leaders, elders, whose wisdom and experience were validated

through the recognition by the other members of the community. They were the ones who would set the tone and were watching that all things of life stay their due course.

Yet, since there is formal education, the general culture or the quantity and diverse amount of knowledge and experience of a person from several areas of life gives him or her more authority in society and places this person in the circle of the elites.

At the beginning, the elites functioned next to the traditional leaders and wise men. Gradually though, the role of the elderly was marginalized, until today, when these people are almost invisible, and do not take part any longer in the decision making process in the life of the community, except in some cases where they themselves are part of the elites.

Thus, the general culture of a person, especially today, consists in education and information, not in the informal sense such as the ability to navigate the ocean with no landmarks of the internet, but in the formal sense, that is, through programs that are systematically elaborated based on age, knowledge, ability, afterwards validated through certificates, diplomas, licenses, distinctions offered by authorities recognized in a particular field (excluding here fake diplomas, for example, obtained in dishonest ways).

The Crisis of Education Today

It is astonishing that today the human civilization is considered by many to be on the heights of its history, having in view the scientific and technical development (but ignoring the moral under-development), and yet, in countries super-developed economically and technologically, like the USA and England among others, one can see an ever more alarming crisis of formal education, especially now in the age of the ubiquitous and almighty internet.

For example, a researcher in this field, Sarah Mervosh, notices that in the United States, on a very large scale, the knowledge in the area of phonics, that in English is at the basis of reading and writing and that is normally taught starting in kindergarten at age 3-4 and in school in the first two or three grades, is extremely deficient in many students, so that it has to be taught even in high school. In parallel, the vocabulary of this large group of students is extremely poor and the reading so faulty that attempts to approach a problem of reading for understanding, analysis and interpretation represents a shameful failure. That is why a new method of approach to this problem appears now in the schools' curricula, called „the science of reading”.¹

¹ Sarah Mervosh, „Literacy Low, Phonics goes to High School”, in *The New York Times*, vol. CLXXII, Nr. 59.649, Monday, December 26, 2022, pp. 1 and 12.

More specifically speaking, according to the USA Department of Education's statistics, at a national level, two out of three students in eighth grade cannot read at the required level for this age, and also, almost one out of three students is found to be under the basic level of a text's understanding for the same age category.²

Another significant example is England where the educational crisis is not far from that of the US. England acknowledges this problem, for instance in the field of mathematics. That is why prime minister Rishi Sunak, in a recent and important public address, promised the implementation of a plan of national education according to which all students until the age of 18 study mathematics. He calls this plan one of the greatest changes in mentality regarding the approach of the problem of general education.³

Yet, let's see how things go in Romania, too. Almost paradoxically, at the end of the XIXth century, the education system in Romania was in a worrying crisis; M. Eminescu, with his experience as a school inspector, deplores it in several articles in the daily *Timpul*. Then, in the interwar period, but also in that of the communist regime, there was a phase of certain improvement, qualitatively speaking; yet, after the fall of the communist regime it started to abruptly fall, coming back to the condition criticized by Eminescu, or even worse, thinking of how life evolved since.

In the prestigious journal *Tribuna Învățământului* [*The Education Tribune*] professor Sorin Ivan, in several articles, deplores this decline and analyzes both the real situation and the causes for it and possible remedies. He shows that the educational system in Romania today has reached a low point by making references to current statistics according to which almost half of the students do not understand what they are reading, a fact that reflects accurately the low level of knowledge and general culture among a big part of them.⁴

Therefore, we see a similar situation at this level between the US and Romania!

A major cause of this terrible decline in the quality and efficiency of education, in the analysis of professor Sorin Ivan, a decline that generates what is called "functional analphabetism", is "the dependency on technology with devastating effects for the formation and spiritual edification of the new generations"; more precisely in the sense that "life of today's youth develops preponderantly on the net, in a virtual space that is chaotic, not for documentation and study but for socialization and entertainment with special

² *Ibidem*.

³ Mark Landler and Stephen Castle, „Sunak Promises He'll Lead British Return to Prosperity”, in *The New York Times*, vol. CLXXII, Nr. 59.659, Thursday, January 5, 2023, p. A 26.

⁴ Sorin Ivan, “Riscul formelor fără fond [The Risk of Forms without Content]”, in *Tribuna Învățământului*, July 14, 2022 (<https://tribunainvatamantului.ro>).

accent on the sensational. And this virtual space abounds in pseudo-models and pseudo-values that discourage intellectual work, plagiarism for any type of work or project being at hand for anyone.”⁵

Things will be even more problematic for education and thus culture, once systems of Artificial Intelligence are becoming accessible to the larger public on common electronic platforms, systems that can generate texts, projects, works on a given theme and at a level required by the user and also according to other indications; then such work can be presented as personal, a fact graver than even plagiarism or falsification or exaggerations in a CV.

Thus, as long as an education of quality is a cultivation of the spirit, bad education is nothing but a passage from one spiritual ankylosis into another, similar to wanting to be a good sportsperson without training.

There is also the expression “internet culture”, yet, in fact, in the context of these reflections that is rather a sub-culture with a sure direction to ignorance or illiteracy.

Religion

If I have spoken about culture, in order to better see its connection to religion, it is useful to make a short incursion in the word’s etymology. The term “culture” retains in its depth a religious dimension, in that it indicates the sacred. Culture appears, at its origin, around the sacred, around worship or cult (in the general sense of veneration and not in the pejorative sense as it is often used). In Latin *colo, colere, colui, cultum* means to inhabit, to cultivate, but also to honor someone greater than you, to make a prostration, to worship. To cultivate a place means to carefully maintain a relationship with that place on which, in fact, you depend. To cultivate a relation with a person that you consider greater than you or with God as conceived as a super-natural power, implies care and attention as well.

This honor, worship, with time, takes certain fixed forms that becomes tradition. Here begins what cult is in the positive meaning as mentioned above. And its repeated forms generate a culture. That is why between *cult* and *culture* there is this inner connection that transfers the sacred dimension from the first phenomenon to the second one. And the *cult* as a form of worship of a super-natural power that one is cultivating, on which one depends, is a type of link, connection, that in Latin is *ligare*, hence, *re-lig-ion*.

Because from the dawn of his conscious existence on the given place man maintained the connection with the super-natural power, man can be called, as Mircea Eliade put it, *homo religiosus*.

⁵ *Idem*, “Un paradox al educației românești [A Paradox of Romanian Education]”, in *Tribuna Învățământului* February 15, 2023 (<https://tribunainvatamantului.ro>).

This is all anthropologically speaking. Theologically, things have a nicer and better explanation. Man, as being created in the image of God, initially knew his Creator directly and personally. The fall from divine obedience meant breaking the connection to God. Yet, even if fallen from the face of his Creator, man did not totally forget God and the attempt to remake the connection to Him, led to religion, in Latin *re-ligare*.

The cult is therefore based on worship as recognition of man's dependence on God and of the way in which he relates to God, the way he stands *coram Deo*. And because God is on the top of this relation, all values generated by it will be on the top of all other values, thus becoming normative. Hence morale, morality. There are things you are allowed to do and things you are not allowed to do.

Thus, culture is developed around the cult, around these supreme values and is impregnated by them, in particular when this cult, worship, religion becomes institutionalized.

Even if these values are called moral in religion and, with a more relativized term, ethics, in culture, the flow from the first to the second is implicit. That is why the American mathematician and physicist Frank J. Tipler, speaking of culture in the sense of a certain amount of knowledge, writes that “knowledge is blended inextricably with ethics”,⁶ of course, knowledge being considered as belonging to culture.

Speaking of the hierarchy of values implied in religion and culture, one can notice that, at least historically speaking, but today as well, the moral absolutes build character, offer power, stability and a clear sense of direction. As the American social critic David Brooks writes, these values “are given to us by strong, self-confident communities and by institutions. People absorb these values recognizing the authority of these communities and institutions and participating in the conversations that are taking place there”.⁷

Theologically speaking, man is and must become *fiat*, that is “so be it”, as when we say the prayer *Our Father*: “Thy will be done”, and this is because being image of God, man mirrors the original Trinitarian divine consent “let us make man”, which implies a positive response on the part of God and consequently on that of man. This *fiat* is recapitulated by the Holy Virgin Mary at Annunciation, when to the angel's news, after the natural awe, she responded *fiat*, “be it onto me according to your word”.

⁶ Frank J. Tipler, *Physics of Immortality. Modern Cosmology, God and the Resurrection of the Dead*, Doubleday, New York, 1994, p. 322.

⁷ David Brooks, “Five Lies Our Culture Tells Us,” in *The New York Times*, Tuesday, April 16, 2019, p. A25.

Therefore, man cannot stand *coram Deo* except for an authentic *fiat*, a permanent *Yes*, because, as A. von Heuer explains, *Yes* is the primordial word, *urwort*, the fundamental word initial and initiator.⁸

The need to belong to God is ontologic, it is part of the metaphysical condition of man, and religion is the belief system that takes care of this. Since early childhood, the child does not learn to relate metaphysically to the universe, to himself, to the surrounding reality through philosophical theories. Rather, the child learns this through religion (when he or she has somebody to learn this from). Through parables, metaphors and representations, even anthropomorphic representations, religion has the capacity to bring the transcendent to the level of the child's understanding and perception. When the parents tell him or her about God, even on the basis of traditional iconography as in the Orthodox Tradition, they implicitly explain that God is beyond any representation, the He is eternal, infinite, etc.

This is what teaches the future adult not to see in man only the external aspect, but to realize that there is also an inner, invisible, immeasurable dimension, and that is what man is as well, or even first of all.

St. Theophilus of Alexandria, bishop in the 2nd century was speaking to an atheist who wanted the bishop to show him God. The bishop replied: "Yes, of course I will show Him to you. But first you show me man." The conversation ended there.

Therefore, man is ontologically inclined towards relation, "condemned" to relation, to paraphrase a certain existentialist expression. Man is not a hermetic subjectivity, not a mirror in which he sees only himself, but in conformity to his original condition and calling, a window opened towards the other; he is constantly part of a movement towards outside, towards that which goes beyond himself, meaning the other and God. This is what validates the affirmation of the French philosopher Roger Garaudy when he says that "the other is my transcendence", and just opposite to the famous expression by Jean Paul Sartre, "hell is the others" (*l'enfer, c'est les autres*).

In other words, we are reflecting here about two different approaches to the problem of relation at the psychological and at the social levels: one well expressed through the Latin proverb *homo homini lupus* (man is wolf to man) and the other, sublimely expressed by Christian theology: *homo homini Deus* (man is God to man).

⁸ Anoushka von Heuer, *Le huitième jour ou la dette d'Adam*, Jean-Luc de Rougemont, Genève, 1980, p. 19.

The Internet

The internet is, simply put, an ensemble of computerized networks that interact in view of communication, of transmission and circulation of information. The information is both subjective, including everything that goes through participants' minds, and objective, meaning it is emitted, verified, validated by persons and institutions of authority in the field. The internet is a platform of ever greater accessibility, a tribune, an open stage where anyone can produce what he wants and how he wants.

On the internet's stage you are as on the stage of life: with many people around you and yet alone. You can play well, be admired (get numerous "likes" or "followers"), but you can also make mistakes, and in difficult moments of crisis, even though some will rush to advise you, you don't know if that advice is not wrong and you cannot afford to lose and start again and again.

We read about such situations in a beautiful poem by Alexandru Ștefănescu-Est:

"So is life, like a theatre,
And we are its actors;
Yes, yet in those theatres
When you are on stage you know what you want
However, in the theatre of life
You play your role without having learned it
And you don't even have the prompter
To help you when you get stuck."

In itself the internet is neutral. Whether it is good or bad depends on what you do with it, like in general, in life; it depends on what you do with what you have. This is what confers value to a certain thing or devalues it.

And because here we are speaking of the negative aspects and implications of the machine called internet, it is important to mention that, through addiction, the risk of depersonalization is as subtle as it is dangerous. "Slowly, slowly, often times, without realizing it, man reconfigures himself after the image of the machine, because the machine in its turn is conceived after man's image as far as thinking, logic, functions and functionality are concerned."⁹

Or, as the American philosopher and theologian A. Heschel explains in a different context, becoming dependent on the machine, man takes on the

⁹ Theodor Damian, „Quo Vadis Homo: The Digital Age and the Metaphysical Question”, in *Symposium*, Vol. XXIX, Nr. 1, 2022, p. 10.

machine's image,¹⁰ and that means a disfiguration of the image of God in man, a form of dehumanization which, in Nicolae Berdiaev's analysis, can easily lead to taking on the beast's image that is bestialization, and even worse, to the deification of the bestial.¹¹ In other words, again according to A. Heschel, when man worships the machine, it becomes idol and idols then become monsters.¹²

In such cases of disfiguring dependency one can say that the digital technology transforms man into an object of manipulation that leads to the reification of conscience and to the burial or perversion or de-naturalization of the authentic "I" of a person, which, in turn, greatly affects one's relation with everybody else. Addiction brings with itself a mask and a mask is always hiding something. And as A. von Heuer writes, what vitiates our relationship with the others is exactly this hiding that blocks man from existing fully for others.¹³

In other situations, the internet can be considered a refuge from a certain type of solitude, from a vague feeling of existential vacuum, from depression; such a refuge can create a dependency that offers only the illusion of freedom.

Emil Cioran was right when he wrote that "man accumulates irreality and enjoys in falsity, in an irrational tendency towards gigantism. What throws us into action is our debility and inadaptability."¹⁴

This phenomenon is noticed by Simone Weil as well when she concludes that „we live in a world of irreality and dream."¹⁵

We need to be reminded here that the Enlightenment was known, among other things, to have preached the emancipation from God, from religion. And here is a question: was this emancipation a liberation from irreality and dream (as religion was considered to be) or exactly vice-versa? The same question is valid in relation to the internet technology, to living in the virtual space, a sort of a new Enlightenment: does it take us from something we want to leave behind towards a new reality? Does it take us to a new promised land or does it bring us directly into dream? Then we can ask: how is the awakening or the fall from dream going to be? Will there be an awakening?

Therefore, man builds a computer that in turn builds him and masters him. It is as if he builds his own tyrant who then puts him in a prison. And

¹⁰ Abraham Heschel, *Who Is Man*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA, 1965, p. 21.

¹¹ Nicholas Berdiaev, *The Fate of Man in the Modern World*, Ann Arbor Paperback, The University of Michigan Press, 1973, pp. 27-30.

¹² A. Heschel, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

¹³ Anoushka von Heuer, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

¹⁴ Emil Cioran, *The Temptation to Exist*, transl. from French by Richard Howard, Quadrangle Books, Chicago, 1970, p. 15.

¹⁵ Simone Weil, *Waiting for God*, Harper and Row, New York, 1951, p. 159.

as one knows, the most secure prison is the one where you feel good. You will never get out.

As I mentioned in a different place, internet addiction implies a propensity towards an abnormal behavior that, yet, is considered positive, as normal,¹⁶ thus what is banal, common, the spreading of the practice, becoming steps for the justification of the false normal or new normal, as it is also called.

In order to resist the temptation, one needs courage, because going against the current one would be considered as having an abnormal attitude. Yet, as Victor Frankl wrote: “abnormal reaction to abnormal behavior is normal behavior.”¹⁷

Conclusion

Through the tendencies, temptations, the capacity of manipulation, the offers of sensational and many other more or less visible methods, the internet affects in major ways both religion and culture, in particular at the level of the relativization of values, of spreading confusion, of the subjectivization of problems.

It becomes more and more difficult to distinguish between subjective and objective, between authentic and false, thus between information and disinformation and for these reasons alone, among others, of course, our age is also called “post-truth”. Often, we take in some information posted by somebody with or without arguments, posted intentionally or out of ignorance with false or weak arguments, we take the information only partially or selectively, what we want and how much we want, what we think we like or fits us. We don’t have sufficient time to analyze critically, to compare, to investigate or we are not prepared to do this.

However, in the end, the hope of a possible redress consists in the great divine gift called discernment and in the turn to the stabilizing principles of morality, of faith in God, in particular as one realizes that the technological development evolves in reverse order compared to morality.

It is discernment that helps us choose values, and it is important to know what to choose because we become what we chose. A set of values rooted in religion and culture, thus based on moral and ethical principles, can help in the difficult, often dramatic task of choosing. And when we have stable landmarks, it is less easy to get deviated.

¹⁶ Theodor Damian, *Implicațiile spirituale ale teologiei icoanei* [The Spiritual Implications of the Theology of Icon], 2nd edition, Arhiepiscopia Tomisului, Constanța, 2017, p. 24.

¹⁷ Victor Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning*, 3rd edition, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1984, p. 32.

It is also necessary that once in a while, yet with constant, even programmed periodicity, we enter the room of our soul for a moment of contemplation, of prayer, of reflection on who we are, what we want, what we do, what is our destiny and destination.

The problem of direction in life is both old and ever new, actual. Almost at every step we find ourselves at an intersection and in a situation where we have to choose.

Theologically speaking, when the supreme value is God, it is easier and more secure to choose, because all other values are leading us in God's direction. Yet God Himself respects our freedom, given to us at creation as part of the divine image that we were created in. He offers us alternatives, gives us advice without forcing anything and leaves us, almost paradoxically, to act according to our own discernment, as one sees in a significant text in the Old Testament: "Look, I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life so you can live" (Deuteronomy 30, 19).

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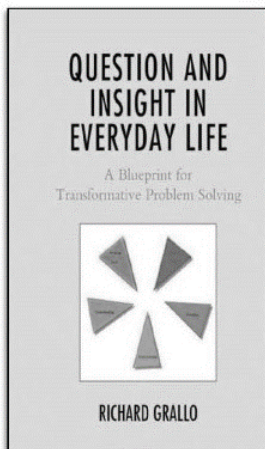
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QUESTION AND INSIGHT IN EVERYDAY LIFE
A BLUEPRINT FOR TRANSFORMATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING

By **Richard Gallo**



CONTENTS

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- Chapter 6: Examples of Facts of Consciousness in Other Perspectives
- Epilogue: Problem Solving as Mindful Practice

ABOUT THIS BOOK

In *Question and Insight in Everyday Life: A Blueprint for Transformative Problem Solving*, Richard Gallo examines the nature and patterns of human problem solving. Gallo identifies four patterns of problem solving that together result in complex human learning and growth. The four patterns constitute a cycle that is transformative not only of problematic situations but of the problem solvers themselves. This book also explores the roles of questions, insights, the desire to know, and social trust in problem solving. Its conclusions apply equally to the problems of everyday life as well as to challenges that arise in educational, counseling, political, engineering, and science fields.

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RICHARD GRALLO

Transformative Problem-Solving as Mindful Practice

*The untold want by life and land ne'er granted,
Now, voyager, sail thou forth to seek and find*
W. Whitman

Abstract: The topic of this paper has been the set of mental events known as *facts of consciousness*, and their functional groupings known as *patterns of problem-solving*. The aim of this paper has not been to describe, predict or explain these events. That has been done elsewhere. While identifying, describing, and explaining *facts of consciousness* are important activities, these activities will have little impact unless the *facts of consciousness* are deployed in mindful practice in real world problems.

Keywords: problems, problem-solving, facts of consciousness, mindful practices, decision-making, values

Introduction

If problems are a constant feature of one's life, then problem-solving would appear to be central in improving that life. If problems are regarded as stumbling blocks, then effective problem-solving would be a way to remove those blocks. If problems are gaps and chasms, then effective problem-solving would be a way to cross those gaps. If problems are opportunities in disguise, then effective problem-solving would appear to be a way to make the most of those opportunities.

While the literature on problem-solving is not large, readers are invited to gain a familiarity and self-knowledge about mental events that

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make up a part of what may be called problem-solving.¹ These mental events may be closer than one thinks. Some individuals may be enjoying their benefits on a regular and systematic basis; whereas others may participate in them only sporadically and to reduced effect.

The aims of this paper are: (1) to invite readers to pay attention and bear witness to the *facts of consciousness* in their own experience, and (2) to show readers something about how to mindfully incorporate these events into what they may already sometimes do in their attempts at learning and problem-solving. If these aims are achieved, then it will become increasingly difficult to pretend that these events do not exist and that they do not matter. It will also become increasingly easy to establish and reinforce the mental habits of *transformative problem-solving*.

Problems and Problem-Solving

A *problem* may be defined as a gap in an individual's experience, understanding, factual or moral knowledge, or practice. Problems can be described in terms of time, difficulty, and content. In terms of time, some problems are rare while others are frequent and recurrent. In terms of difficulty, some are routine and everyday problems, others strange, and still others seem quite intractable. In terms of content, problems may be cognitive, emotional or social. In professional activities they may also be theoretical and methodological.²

In some sense problems seem to be everywhere. If one examines a city skyline, the entire scene may be understood in terms of problems – past, present, and future. The skyline shows the shape of problems from times past that have been solved: problems of transportation, architecture, and social organization for example. The skyline also outlines a city which is a field where problems of the present are currently being addressed. Finally, the skyline outlines a place where problems of the future are now emerging.

However, one does not need to contemplate a skyline to encounter problems. They are part and parcel of everyday life. Attending to them and artfully managing them has the potential to be a mindful practice.

Problem-solving may be defined as “the process by which individuals attempt to overcome difficulties, achieve plans that take them from a starting position to a desired goal, or reach conclusions through the use of higher

¹ Richard Grallo, “Invitation to Self-Knowledge,” in *Symposium*, Vol. XXIX, No.1 2022, pp. 19-26.

² The work of Emory Brown on anesthesia and consciousness provides an interesting example.

mental functions.”³ Because it is a process, problem-solving occurs over time and it consists of mental events that are related functionally and that emerge probabilistically. The mental events, labelled “facts of consciousness”, tend to coalesce into groups or patterns that address specific kinds of questions. There are no guarantees for success, but individuals can learn from mistakes and improve the management of their own learning and problem-solving. In a sense all problem-solving is doubly transformative – transformative of the problem situation and of the problem solver.

This paper has two aims: (1) to invite readers to pay attention and bear witness to those mental events labeled here as *facts of consciousness*, and (2) to show readers how to mindfully incorporate these events into what they may already sometimes do in their attempts at learning and problem-solving. If these aims are achieved, then it will become increasingly difficult to pretend that these events do not exist and that they do not matter. In the history of both psychology and philosophy there were always efforts to eclipse the functioning of mental life in service to some limited project.

Facts of Consciousness and Patterns of Problem-Solving

These details about problem-solving have been explored elsewhere.⁴ It was shown what the *facts of consciousness* are and how they naturally coalesce into four *patterns of problem-solving* and one of rest. It was not shown how to mindfully practice with these facts and patterns to establish habits of *transformative problem-solving*.

At an elementary level, these details involve mental events labeled here as *facts of consciousness*. These include: questions*, insights*, desire to know*, desire to grow, sensations, perceptions, images, evidence, formulations, weighing evidence and reasons, judgments of fact, judgments of value, decisions, expressive actions, habits (behavioral, cognitive, emotive), social trust*, dreams, pleasures, pains, emotions, feelings. These facts of consciousness are part of a larger field of conscious events whose frequency, intensity and duration of impressions are highly varied and their constant presence may seem as an ongoing storm.⁵ This state of affairs is identified by William James as the “buzzing, booming confusion” of consciousness.⁶ (Throughout this paper, *facts of consciousness* will be identified in *italics*.)

³ American Psychological Association, *APA Dictionary of Psychology*, American Psychological Association, Washington, DC, 2015, p. 837f.

⁴ Richard Grallo, *Question and Insight in Everyday Life: A Blueprint for Transformative Problem-Solving*, Lexington Press, New York, 2022.

⁵ Epictetus, *Discourses*, II-XVIII.

⁶ William James, *Principles of Psychology*, Martino Fine Books, Eastford, CT, 2010.

The *facts of consciousness* are functionally related to one another. For example, questions call forth insights. *Insights* and *judgments* invite *formulations*. In a probabilistic way, the *facts of consciousness* can naturally coalesce into four patterns of problem-solving: (1) *seeking understanding*, (2) *judging facts*, (3) *judging values* and (4) *deciding*. The patterns naturally call forth each other. *Seeking understanding* results in possibilities as answers to our questions for understanding. At some point, mere possibilities are not enough. We need to establish the facts of the situation. The pattern of *judging facts* is pressed into service. However, at some point, among the possibilities and facts we set out to find what is worthwhile. This activity is the pattern of *judging values*. However, in a world of valuable and worthless things, we may later set out to import the valuable into our lives and to export the worthless. This is the role of the pattern of *deciding*.

Each pattern is propelled by the *desire to know*, guided by a distinct *question* or set of questions, results in a unique endpoint and is integrated by the presence of an *insight*. Hence, of all the *facts of consciousness question, insight* and the *desire to know* take on key propelling, guiding and integrating functions. *Social trust* is another fact, that when present, may enhance problem-solving efforts. (These four have been indicated with an *.) For all the patterns of problem-solving, these four specific mental events are especially important in establishing mindful habits. In such mindful practice we can interrogate each mental event in terms of its presence or absence and in terms of whether or not we are doing anything about it. This interrogation often involves a series of *reflective (yes/no) factual questions*.

Taken individually, the presence or absence of a *fact of consciousness* can provide direction for the next problem-solving step in an ongoing investigation. For example, *questions* anticipate *insights* that answer them; identifying possibilities invite reflective factual questions about whether the possibilities are true. Taken as *patterns of problem-solving* the *facts of consciousness* can help in identifying core issues in any dispute. For example, knowing that direct *insights* are merely possibilities will preclude the identification of that *insight* with a verified *judgment of fact*. Taken collectively, the facts of consciousness can unify the problem-solver's thinking. For example, examined possibilities can lead to well-founded *judgments of fact*; well-founded *judgments of fact* can invite well-founded *judgments of value*; well-founded *judgments of value* can invite well-founded *decisions*. They can also unify otherwise disparate academic disciplines such as human services, business, education, public administration, emergency and disaster management, health care, and so on because the *facts of consciousness* play a role in them all.

Like the problems they address, the *facts of consciousness* and related *patterns of problem-solving* can be found in our own consciousness as well as in the work of others.

Mindful Practice of Transformative Problem-Solving in General

Whatever mindful practice is it will involve “an increased “awareness of one’s internal states....”⁷ This especially involves those states and processes central to coming to *experience, understand, know, value, and decide*. In contrast, mindful practice is not an exploration of abstract concepts and their implications, nor is it a comparison of abstract concepts or conceptual systems.

Its focus is exclusively on the *facts of consciousness* and how we can assist them to coalesce into four *patterns of problem solving*: (1) *seeking understanding*, (2) *judging facts*, (3) *judging values* and (4) *deciding*. Establishing mindful practice in problem-solving involves taking seriously any and all mental events (*facts of consciousness*). As indicated, here the focus will be on *questions, insights, desire to know, and social trust*. *Questions* are important in mindful problem-solving because they focus our attention, push things forward a step and offer clues to what a solution might look like. They identify gaps in our experience, understanding, knowledge, values and decisions. *Insights*, offer potential answers to questions by integrating what has come before. Of all of these, *insight* is the least in our control. Once *questions* are asked, we must await the emergence of answering *insights*. The *desire to know* is important because it drives all inquiry. It pushes past limited agendas and interfering emotions. It is not just a passing curiosity, and it is exemplified by pilots and surgeons operating at their best. *Social trust* can assist in the practice of problem-solving if we are working with others who also have the desire to know and are working on the same questions.

Mindful practice in any *pattern of problem-solving* consists in attending to, facilitating, and managing each event in the pattern as it arises. Since some events, such as *insights*, are not in our control, we must wait for them to occur. Since other events, such as *formulations* are more in our control, we can manage them directly. As we attend to each event, we increase the probability that the next event in the sequence will occur. Failure to attend to, facilitate or manage any event in the pattern is a form of mindlessness and is a prescription for defective problem-solving.

⁷ *Dictionary of Psychology*, p. 655.

Mindful Practice of the Pattern of Seeking Understanding

Seeking Understanding is a pattern of problem-solving that has also been labeled “problem-solving pattern #1”, “possibility thinking”, and “creative thinking.”⁸ It consists of facts such as *sensations, images, unformulated and formulated questions, insights, and formulations of insights*. Under optimal conditions, all of these mental events are motivated by the *desire to know*. Mindful practice in this sequence is attending to, facilitating and managing all of these mental events. Mindlessness in this pattern consists in ignoring, suppressing or failing to manage any event in the sequence.

Through *seeking understanding* we attempt to find out what might be going on in any situation, past present or future. The results are always possibilities. Because the results are only possibilities, this pattern of problem-solving appears to be associated with lower levels of anxiety for many.

Consider a few examples of *seeking understanding*. In the field of transportation, a train has crashed on a major rail line. You are part of an investigative team sent to the site of the crash by the Department of Transportation. Before you submit your preliminary report to the Department, your team seeks to examine the scene and to consider all reasonable possibilities in an attempt to formulate what *might* have happened. Here is a second example from the field of health, a 55 year old patient shows up at a health clinic complaining of coughing, headache and dramatic loss of energy that has occurred over the last week. Doctors and nurses at the clinic are part of an investigative problem-solving team initially guided by the question: What *might* be going on here? They seek to gain a preliminary understanding of what is happening with this patient.

In mindful practice, we seek a preliminary understanding of data presented by sense and memory. Are we attending carefully to the data? Are we following and being loyal to the *desire to know*? Are we excluding other emotions and agendas? Does our *desire to know* issue forth into authentic *questions for understanding*? These include questions such as: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How? How much? How many? How long? How far? How often? How intense?

Not all these questions will be equally important. In our transportation example, questions such as “why?” and “how?” are probably guiding questions. In our health example, questions such as “what? And “why?” may guide the inquiry. In both examples, a comprehensive understanding would address all of these questions.

⁸ Richard Gallo, *Question and Insight ...*, Ch. 2.

In mindful practice, are we seeking *insights* into all these questions? Or, in bias, are we systematically ignoring some of them? In mindful practice, are we *formulating* our *questions* and *insights* into words so that they can be retrieved and more easily dealt with later? Or, are we abandoning that work? Are we seeking and gaining the reliable help of others in *social trust*? Or, are we attempting to do it all ourselves?

In our transportation example, how specifically would team members *seek understanding* of the train crash? (1) At the crash site, they would attend to the presentations of sense and the representations of imagination and memory. (2) In this process, specific gaps in their understanding would be recognized by them. These recognitions are *unformulated questions*. (3) These unformulated questions may become formulated *questions for understanding*.⁹ In the transportation example the questions *why* and *how* are probably guiding questions for the inquiry. (4) Direct *insights* may then emerge as answers to the *questions for understanding*. As yet, these insights are unformulated. (5) To examine them further, we must capture the insights in language as *formulated insights*. These formulated insights are possibilities only (or hypotheses). For example, the train derailed because of mechanical failure (hypothesis 1), or human error (hypothesis 2), or sabotage (hypothesis 3), or weather/track conditions (hypothesis 4) or any combination of these. The direct insight integrates the presentations of sense and memory, the question for understanding and the formulated insight. Items 2 and 4 are not directly in our control, while the other elements are. The *desire to know* propels the entire process, and the element of *social trust* allows the team members to enjoy the benefits of teamwork.

In our health example, how specifically would team members *seek understanding* of the presenting patient's state of health? (1) In the clinic, they would attend to the presentations of sense and the representations of imagination and memory regarding this human body. (2) In this process, specific gaps in their understanding would be recognized by them. These recognitions are *unformulated questions*. (3) These unformulated questions may become formulated *questions for understanding*. In the health example the questions *why* and *what* are probably guiding questions for the inquiry. (4) Direct *insights* may then emerge as answers to the *questions for understanding*. As yet, these insights are unformulated. (5) To examine them further, we must capture the insights in language as *formulated insights*. These formulated insights are possibilities only (or hypotheses). For example, this person has these symptoms because of the flu (hypothesis 1) or because of Covid-19 (hypothesis 2). Here again, the direct *insight* integrates the *presentations of sense and memory*, the *question for understanding* and the *formulated insight*. Items 2 and 4 are not directly in

⁹ Bernard Lonergan refers to these as "questions for intelligence" in his work *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*.

our control, while the other elements are. The *desire to know* propels the entire process, and the element of *social trust* allows the medical team members to enjoy the benefits of teamwork in reference to this case.

Since *seeking understanding* is a process ordered in time, ignoring or minimizing any step in this process will compromise or prevent the desired result. The desired result is a possible understanding of what might have happened to a train, or what might be happening with a patient.

Mindful Practice of the Pattern of Judging Facts

Judging Facts is a pattern of problem-solving that has also been labeled “problem-solving pattern #2” and “factual critical thinking.”¹⁰ This pattern consists of the following mental events: *unformulated reflective questions of fact, formulated reflective questions of fact, collecting reasons and evidence, weighing reasons and evidence, reflective factual insight, judgment of fact, judgment of fact as formulated*. Under optimal conditions, all of these mental events are motivated by the *desire to know*. Mindful practice in this sequence is attending to, facilitating and managing all of these mental events. Mindlessness in this pattern consists in ignoring, suppressing or failing to manage any event in the sequence.

Through the pattern of *judging facts*, we attempt to find out which of our *insights* are true, or at least most likely. The results are *judgments of fact*. Because *judgments of fact* require the commitment that we assert the truth or falsehood of something it may be associated with an increased level of anxiety for many.

Consider an example from the field of health. A 55 year old patient shows up at a health clinic complaining of coughing, headache and dramatic loss of energy that has occurred over the last week. Doctors and nurses have narrowed the causes to: flu or Covid-19. The team is now guided by the reflective questions of fact: Is it influenza? Is it Covid-19? Before action can responsibly be taken, these questions need to be answered.

In mindful practice of *judging facts*, are we seeking factual knowledge by following and being loyal to the *desire to know*? Are other emotions and agendas excluded? Does the *desire to know* result in authentic *reflective questions of fact*? These include questions such as: Is this insight true? Is it probable? These questions take “yes” or “no” as an answer.

In our health example, correctly answering our *reflective questions of fact* will guide treatment decisions, either for flu or for Covid-19. Without answering these reflective questions, decisions become unreasonable.

¹⁰ Richard Gallo, *Question and Insight...*, Ch. 3.

In the mindful practice of *judging facts*, have we identified what the relevant evidence is for our prospective *judgment of fact*? Have we identified a *criterion* for *weighing this evidence*? Have we weighed the *evidence*? Are we seeking *reflective factual insights* into all the *evidence* collected and that reveal that *evidence* to be either sufficient or insufficient to ground a *judgment of fact*? Has such a *reflective factual insight* occurred? In contrast, in bias, are we systematically excluding *evidence* to sway the *judgment* in a particular direction? For example, do we favor the Covid-19 diagnosis for purposes of some outside agenda? On the matter of *social trust*, are we seeking and gaining the reliable help of others? Or, are we attempting to collect and weigh all of the evidence ourselves?

Mindful Practice of the Pattern of Judging Values

Judging Values is a pattern of problem-solving that has also been labeled “problem-solving pattern #3” and “values-oriented critical thinking.”¹¹ This pattern consists of the following mental events: *unformulated reflective questions of value, formulated reflective questions of value, collecting reasons and evidence, weighing reasons and evidence, reflective values insight, judgment of value, judgment of value as formulated*. Under optimal conditions, all of these mental events are motivated by the *desire to know*. Mindful practice in this sequence is again attending to, facilitating, and managing all of these mental events. Mindlessness in this pattern consists in ignoring, suppressing or failing to manage any event in the sequence.

Through the pattern of *judging values*, we attempt to find out in a world of possibilities and facts what is most valuable. The results are *judgments of value*. Because *judgments of value* require higher level of commitment wherein we approve or disapprove of something it is often associated with an even higher level of anxiety for many.

Consider an example from the field of business and manufacturing. Project managers attend a technology conference to rate the potential usefulness of different products for their company. These products use algorithms of artificial intelligence. The managers plan to make no decision to purchase at this time. They simply rate the potential worth of each product for their company’s activities.

In mindful practice of *judging values*, are we seeking knowledge of values by following and being loyal to the *desire to know*? Are other emotions and agendas excluded? Does the *desire to know* issue forth into authentic *reflective questions of value*? These include questions such as: Is

¹¹ *Ibidem*.

this good? Is this worthwhile? As *reflective questions*, these questions take “yes” or “no” as an answer.

In our business, correctly answering our *reflective questions of value* will guide future *decisions* to purchase or not purchase particular technologies. Without answering these reflective questions of value, future purchase *decisions* will have no clear alignment with company values. .

In mindful practice of *judging values*, have we identified what the relevant *reasons* and *evidence* is for our prospective *judgment of value*? Have we identified a criterion for weighing these *reasons* and *evidence*? Have we weighed the *reasons* and *evidence*? Are we seeking *reflective values insights* into all the *reasons* and *evidence* collected and that reveal that *evidence* to be either sufficient or insufficient to ground a *judgment of value*? Has such a *reflective values insight* occurred? In contrast, in bias, are we systematically excluding *reasons* and *evidence* to sway the *judgment* in a particular direction? For example, do we favor a particular technology for purposes of some outside agenda? On the matter of *social trust*, are we seeking and gaining the reliable help of others? Or, are we attempting to *collect* and *weigh* all of the reasons and evidence ourselves?

Mindful Practice of the Pattern of Decision Making

Deciding is a pattern of problem-solving that has also been labeled “problem-solving pattern #4” and “deliberative critical thinking.”¹² This pattern consists of the following mental events: *unformulated reflective deliberative questions, formulated reflective deliberative questions, collecting reasons and evidence, weighing reasons and evidence, reflective deliberative insight, decision, decision expressed as action*. Under optimal conditions, all of these mental events are motivated by the *desire to know*. Mindful practice in this sequence is attending to, facilitating and managing all of these mental events. Mindlessness in this pattern consists in ignoring, suppressing or failing to manage any event in the sequence.

Through the pattern of *deciding* we resolve to import into our life what is valuable and to export what is worthless. The results are *decisions* and the *actions* coming from them. Because *decisions* require that we take a stand in the most personal way, the level of anxiety may be quite high.

Consider an example pertaining to career choice. At 40 years old, a well paid executive seeks counseling help in deciding whether or not to change careers. This person has three options: (1) remain at the current situation, (2) accept a higher paying position in a new career in an expensive

¹² *Ibidem*.

city, (3) accept a lower paying position in a new career in an attractive small town. The executive is faced with three *deliberative reflective questions*:

In mindful practice of *deciding*, are we seeking *decisions* by following and being loyal to the *desire to know*? Are other emotions and agendas excluded? Does the *desire to know* produce authentic *reflective deliberative questions*? These include questions such as: Should I do this? Should we refrain from doing that? As *reflective questions*, these questions take “yes” or “no” as an answer.

For this person, carefully answering these *reflective deliberative questions* will guide future career activities and possibilities. Without answering these *reflective deliberative questions*, the future career will have no clear alignment with personal values. .

In mindful practice of *deciding*, have we identified what the relevant *reasons and evidence* are for our prospective *decision*? Have we identified a *criterion* for *weighing* these *reasons and evidence*? Have we weighed the *reasons and evidence*? Are we seeking a *reflective deliberative insight* into all the *reasons and evidence* collected and that reveal them to be either sufficient or insufficient to ground a *decision*? Has such a *reflective deliberative insight* occurred? In contrast, in bias, are we systematically excluding *reasons and evidence* to sway the *decision* in a particular direction? For example, do we favor a particular option to satisfy some outside agenda? On the matter of *social trust*, are we seeking and gaining the reliable help of others? Or, are we attempting to *collect* and *weigh* all of the *reasons and evidence* ourselves?

Summary & Predictions

The topic of this paper has been the set of mental events known as *facts of consciousness*, and their functional groupings known as *patterns of problem-solving*. The aim of this paper has not been to describe, predict or explain these events. That has been done elsewhere.¹³ While identifying, describing, and explaining *facts of consciousness* are important activities, these activities will have little impact unless the *facts of consciousness* are deployed in mindful practice in real world problems.

Rather, the aims of this paper have been: (1) to invite readers to pay attention and bear witness to the *facts of consciousness* in their own experience, and (2) to show readers something about how to mindfully incorporate these events into what they may already sometimes do in their attempts at learning and problem-solving. If these aims are achieved, then it will become increasingly difficult to pretend that these mental events do not

¹³ Richard Gallo, *Question and Insight*

exist and that they do not matter. It will also become increasingly easy to establish and reinforce the mental habits of *transformative problem-solving*.

In the end, readers are left with their own decisions of whether or not to pursue this kind of mindful practice and whether or not to make it central to their growth.

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Pavel Florenski's Eschatological Perspective. A Possible Contemporary Response to Christian Universalism

Abstract: In this study, we offer an Orthodox response to the challenges brought about by the new understanding of Christian universalism. We believe that a contemporary man needs a clear and comprehensive answer to this problem. Universalism is not a concept intended for a closed group of theologians but must be understood by everyone.. Christianity must respond to everyone and at all times, precisely because it takes all people seriously, fulfilling the words of the Apostle Peter, who asks us "to be ready to answer anyone who asks us about our hope" (1 Peter 3:15). In this regard, we will recall some contemporary antinomian views on Christian universalism, wishing to highlight the opinion of the theologian Pavel Florenski. He has an original theory that is well-grounded biblically and patristically according to which the divine judgment will separate „in the holy self” of the damned (which will be maintained without exception and will be contemplated with joy by the righteous, but will exist exclusively for them), from their self-consciousness, the completely independent asceticism in relation to God and the righteous, which will eternally torment itself, burning illusory, in its own empty subjectivity. In this view, hell is the only reality in the self-consciousness of the damned and nothing in the consciousness of God and the righteous.

Key words: Christian universalism, eschatology, universal salvation, apocatastasis, final judgment.

The eschatological perspective on time expresses the possibility of God's infinite communion with all creation, the chance of a free response from creation to be actualized through eternal communion with God. Throughout time, humanity has ambiguously understood the possibility of the Creator's communion with creation. Some, in the early Christian ages, believed in the imminence of Christ's second coming, so that they

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abandoned their occupations, their duties, their whole social life in order to be prepared for the end, and it required the firm intervention of St. Paul the Apostle, who wrote to the Thessalonians two mainly eschatological epistles, in which he states, among other things, that “As to times and seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need me to write to you. For you yourselves know that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.” (1 Thessalonians 5:1); others have projected different eschatological visions according to the social, cultural and religious contexts of different centuries, so that the exaggerated preaching about hell promoted in the West, has produced a decline in faith in eternal torment and has risen personal interpretations without scriptural and/or patristic foundations; the ethic of civility promoted at the end of the 20th century in the United States, which promoted a camouflaging of scriptural language so as not to offend other confessions or faiths, focusing today mainly on issues of pluralism/exclusivity, sexuality and, above all, eschatology.

To some, such a shift in perspective may seem to be merely another example of the relentless dilution of modernity in the Gospel, a shallow optimism that refuses to acknowledge the power of evil in our world and our responsibility for it.

The Romanian Orthodox theologian Adrian Lemeni draws our attention to the fact that in contemporary society, there is a tendency to reject the torments of hell and a desire to fortify through human power a modern, safe and prosperous earthly paradise. This ploy only deepens the tragedy of a personal hell and that of a generalized hell on a planetary scale, and in this way changes in capite et membris all the fundamental values of society, installing a primacy of matter that subordinates the spirit.¹

Hence one of the important ideas evoked by contemporary theologians, is the discrepancy between Christian teaching and the lightness with which we talk about the existence of a full hell, hence the idea that only my friends and I or people who do me good will be present in Heaven, while our enemies or the Church burn in the fires of hell. This idea ran like a red thread through the entire theology of the 20th century.²

The 20th century has been classified by contemporary theologians as the century of universalism.³ Universalism has come to be known as one of the most important themes in theology today;⁴ globalization and constant

¹ Adrian Lemeni, *Sensul eshatologic al creației*, Ediția a II-a revizuită, București, Editura ASAB, 2007, p. 224.

² Rob Bell, *Love Wins: A Book About Heaven, Hell, and the Fate of Every Person Who Ever Lived*, HarperOne, Reprint edition, USA, 2011, p. 4.

³ Ilarion Alfeyev, *Hristos, biruitorul iadului. Pogorârea la iad din perspectiva ortodoxă*, Sophia, 2007, p. 256.

⁴ Michael McClymond, *The Devil's Redemption, A new history and Interpretation of Christian Universalism*, Vol. I-II, Baker Academic, 2018, p. 38.

contact with various non-Christian religions have led theologians to address the issue through the prism of religious pluralism⁵ and present a universalism that is believed even by atheists,⁶ because the God of the 21st century must be accepted by the new generation without religion. Theologian Calvin McClymond reinforces this conclusion, saying that the recent return to universalism is linked to the desire to make Christianity credible in a secular and even hostile world.⁷

The surge in support for universalism clearly seems to have something to do with the current social and cultural situation of the church in the United States. The idea of universalism, in earlier centuries rejected by the Church and often denounced as heresy, has found increasing support among Christian theologians since the 1960s and then in popular Christian literature since the 1990s, and more recently in the film industry. In 1998, a suggestive film was made about the existential perception of heaven and hell by the simple man. This film, entitled *What Dreams May Come*, tells the love story of Chris Nielsen and his wife Annie. Chris dies and goes to heaven, and his wife, unable to bear the pain of parting, commits suicide, ending up in eternal torment. The film tells the story of Chris' journey from heaven to hell in search of his wife. The main message is precisely the impossibility of rational and existential conception of eternal happiness in the absence of loved ones. Driven by love, Chris wants to be with his wife in hell rather than in heaven, since without her heaven is hell anyway. Likewise, the Protestant film *Come Sunday*, released in 2018 and based on real events in the life of Pentecostal pastor Carlton Pearson, succeeds in problematizing the classical teaching on universal salvation and launching some pro-universalism arguments that can hardly be overlooked, while also revealing the growing reluctance of early 21st century Pentecostal church members towards such a theory, is considered outright heresy.

The beginning of the new millennium has brought with it a series of changes, facilitated by widespread access to information, with universalism becoming an issue in the debate in which the Orthodox Church is invited to present a position that is as clear and convincing as possible for a contemporary man.

The aim of this project is to observe new trends in the theological expression of the Church's eschatological teaching, views for and against universalism, and the formation of an Orthodox response to the official foundations of the Church. Through this research, the aim is to re-evaluate this Christian concept in current theological discourse. In doing so, we start

⁵ Nigel M. de S. Cameron, „Universalism and the Logic of Revelation”, in *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology*, Autumn 1988, p. 101.

⁶ Hugh Rock, *God Needs Salvation. A new vision of God for the Twenty-First Century*, Winchester, Christian Alternative, 2014, p. 4.

⁷ Michael McClymond, *op. cit.*, p. 1012.

from the idea that universalism is grounded and sustainable and we ask whether it can be considered an official dogma of the Church or not.

The novelty of the work lies not in the theme itself, but in the approach and the perspectives proposed. The importance of this research can be highlighted by several aspects. Firstly, there is a need for a more comprehensive approach to the subject from a contemporary Orthodox perspective. The imperative to address this topic is also given by the increased access to information in recent decades, which has favored the Church's interaction with the issues raised by theologians and thinkers from overseas who have distinguished themselves in the debate on this topic. There is also insufficient information on the issue in Romanian theology, with foreign research often inaccessible to a large mass of theologians, who also do not obtain sufficient information during their theological studies to respond to the issue in a relevant way. Too few studies deal with this issue from an interfaith perspective. Therefore, the present paper is an attempt to respond to these concerns in the specific indigenous context.

A Short Incursion into Contemporary Theology on Universal Salvation

The Russian theologian N. Berdiaev believes that man has a right to hell by virtue of his inalienable freedom, and Olivier Clement states that only Christ, the God-Man, can know the mystery of salvation without constraint. The theologian makes a bold assertion by saying that “the fate of hell lies in the mercy of the saints who descend into darkness with Christ to deliver the damned.”⁸ At the same time, however, no man can be constrained, so neither God himself nor his saints can violate the freedom of man who refuses God to the end. Clement concludes: “The last word is that of prayer, of hope. Let us not speculate about hell, about the doctrine of apocatastasis. Let us only pray that all may be saved!”⁹

Greek theologian Nikolaos Matsoukas gives the apocatastasis theory the status of theologoumenon. He states that “at the end of time, God will abolish the remembrance of evil”.¹⁰ It admits apocatastasis in the sense given by St. Maxim the Confessor, who says that “the restoration of the original

⁸ Olivier Clement, *Puterea credinței: studii de spiritualitate*, Pandora-M, Târgoviște, 1999, p. 109.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 109.

¹⁰ Nikolaos A. Matsoukas, *Teologie dogmatică și simbolică*, Vol. 4, Editura Bizantină, București, 2002, p. 151.

order will be through conscience, and not through communion-participation.”¹¹

Matsoukas understands that the topos of good will recapitulate all in Christ and in this way, the Church will extend to the limits of creation. In this extension, the theologian stresses that Satan and the devils will have no place. Their disappearance in the eschatological dimension of the future is certain. In the end, the one fulfilled in holiness will notice the eschatological absence of Satan. “A special emphasis is placed on love, since even love for demonized creatures is whole. Such love steadfastly longs to extinguish the memory of evil.”¹²

Evdokimov believes that God expects apocatastasis from man, and H. U. von Balthasar believes that if we do not have the right to affirm apocatastasis, we have the right and indeed the duty to hope in the salvation of all.

One of the contemporary proponents of apocatastasis is the American theologian David Bentley Hart. His teaching on human salvation is articulated in the teaching of St. Gregory of Nyssa. According to this teaching, the Savior Christ, considered to be the express image of God the Father, is from eternity in relation to humanity. Christ the Logos is the archetype according to which humanity was created: “All things were made through him (the Son), and without him nothing was made that was made” (John 1; 3), but also man, to be the living body of the Logos. Christ was reborn to restore humanity to its divine purpose. Through the Incarnation, the Savior Christ assumed his fullness, penetrating all that was human. Bentley Hart considers that this union of Christ with man has the consequence of including all humanity in the pattern he establishes. Therefore, the moment of the Ascension of the Savior with his risen body to heaven means the presentation of all humanity by Christ to the Father. Christ’s obedience will be fully accomplished only in the eschatological life when humanity is yielded as one body in the act of the Son’s complete obedience. Then the words of the Apostle Paul will be fulfilled: „God will be all in all” (1 Corinthians 15:28). The resurrection of Christ sets in motion a process by which the power of the new life is transferred to all humanity and will be complete when the last trace of sin has disappeared.

In keeping with this universalism preached by St Gregory of Nyssa, David Bentley Hart argues that in the end, for divine reasons, all men will be justified in being saved, since „humanity could not reach fulfilment in the absence of any member of this body. In the absence of the one lost, humanity as God wills, it could never be complete, nor even exist as a creature made

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 151.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 153.

in the image of God; the loss of even one would leave the body of the Logo incomplete, God's purpose in creation unfulfilled.”¹³

Pavel Florenski's Eschatological Perspective

By far, Florenski's eschatological thought is the deepest and most comprehensive in contemporary theology. In the light of his dogmatic consciousness, undiminished and of rare clarity, with an astonishing vigor and depth of thought, he manages to integrate in a single vision a well-actualized patristic theology, a biblical exegesis of great rigor, as well as significant experiences of pre-Christian religiosity, perfectly assimilated philosophical ideas and artistic intuitions, of any objectivity becomes naked subjectivity, which always preserves its freedom, but only for itself, that is, a rather non-existent freedom. “It is the empty identity of the self with the self that cannot go beyond the limits of the unique, eternal moment of sin, anguish and rage against God, against its powerlessness, the only demented moment prolonged into eternity. “In the self”, after this mysterious fission, becomes pure objectivity, always real, but only “for another”, insofar as it has not manifested itself for the self in the asceticism that loves. “For in loving, in giving oneself totally in love, one receives all of oneself, but grounded, affirmed, deepened in the other. He doubles his existence - his talent, receiving in himself the image of God from others.”¹⁴ But by hating, he also deprives himself of what he has. “But for the sin of a man who has refused, God does not punish the whole creation. The rejected divine face ceases to exist only for the one who rejected it, not absolutely. The righteous who have entered into the joy of their Lord, into the joy of every divine image created by Him, acquire God, assimilating also this rejected gift of God.”¹⁵ At the same time, evil character that does not possess the element of you does not exist at all for God or for the righteous. It is pure illusion, existing only for oneself, and can be symbolized by the serpent that swallows itself, or by the ‘spirit shells’, those masks without substance. Florenski mentions that he is referring to the extreme case of complete Satanisation of the complete fall from the Spirit of life, i.e., in the case of the hullabaloo of the Holy Spirit, of conscious resistance to the truth. In general, “this process of division is partial, it amputates only that part of the asceticism which is affected and infected.”¹⁶ Here, then, are already two meanings of

¹³ David Bentley Hart, *Frumusețea infinitului: estetica adevărului creștin*, Polirom, Iași, 2013, p. 112.

¹⁴ Pavel Florenski, *Stâlpul și Temelia Adevărului: încercare de teodicee ortodoxă în douăsprezece scrisori*, Polirom, Iași, 1999, pp. 140-141.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

apocatastasis. In relation to God and the righteous, all will be saved without exception, even the demons as existences in themselves. And as existences for themselves, those who are completely demonized are excepted.

Florenski supports his theory with numerous scriptural texts, which evoke the idea of divine judgment that divides and separates, but he dwells particularly on the passage from 1 Corinthians 3; 10-15, which culminates with the words: "If anyone's thing is burned, he will be destroyed; but he will be saved, but as by fire" (1 Corinthians 10; 15). I believe that Florenski's interpretation of this text is the best criticism of the Catholic purgatory, which is a poor, bad and vulgar attempt at a psychological and entirely understandable solution of eschatological antinomies.

Love cannot not forgive. From the point of view of eternity, everything is forgiven and forgotten, so that "God will be all in all" (1 Corinthians 15; 28). So, it is from the height of the idea of God: the impossibility of universal salvation is impossible (thesis). But from the point of view of the freedom of the creature, the impossibility of universal salvation is possible (antithesis), for the creature can meet God's love with total refusal. The above thesis and antithesis are clearly antinomical. For as long as God's love is recognized, the thesis is inevitable; and if the freedom of the creature, which is itself the consequence of God's love, is recognized, then the antithesis is inevitable. The antinomic character of the dogma of final destinies is evident not only from a logical point of view, but also from a psychological one. God is no longer reconciled to the creature and does not forgive a hateful, hardened soul, but the soul does not want to be reconciled to God.

In these circumstances, not to consider evil will as evil would mean not to recognize the authenticity of freedom, and to force the creature to love means to frustrate it from freedom, it means that God himself should stop loving. "But being Love, He does not abolish anyone's freedom, because those who willingly reject Him, He removes from Himself, giving them what they have chosen for themselves."¹⁷ Although Florenski concludes that within the limits of reason there is not and cannot be a solution to this antinomy, he nevertheless concludes an original theory in terms of the terminology and concepts used, but well-founded scripturally, which comes somewhat close to the "unique and supralogical idea of eschatology."¹⁸ For this reason, he turns his gaze from the outset not to the plane of moralism but to the ontological. This is his theory.

Since evil character is what hinders a person's salvation, salvation requires the separation of the person and evil character and their individualization. In other words, the ego splits, the evil will of man manifested in lust and pride separates from man himself, acquiring an

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 143-144.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 140-141.

independent and non-substantial situation in existence and, at the same time, being an absolute nothingness “for another”, that is, for other people. In other words, „in the self” of the person, being essentially holy, separates itself from “for the self” of the person since this is evil. Cast into the outer darkness, the evil (which exists for its own sake), private asceticism (which is “itself”, or the authentic self), “will burn before the eyes of the One who embodies the fullness of its ideal. But, says the apostle, despite the destruction of the thing, despite the fire that has enveloped man, he himself will be saved.”¹⁹

Florenski underlined the words “in spite of” to mark the categorical divergence between his view and the doctrine of purgatory, where man is saved not in spite of, but because of, the torment of purification. Another difference is that in the doctrine of purgatory man is saved as a whole, whereas in Florenski’s interpretation man is not saved in his entirety, but only “himself”, “in his self” created by God. The whole content of consciousness will perish insofar as it does not come from faith, hope, and love and only consciousness in a state of pure potentiality will remain.

“And the thing of man, his self-consciousness, separating itself from itself, will become pure illusion, eternally burning, eternally destroyed, will become an infamous dream, burned by the gaze of God, a nightmare without the dreamer, a groaning and gnashing of teeth that no one hears, a kind of uninterrupted hallucination of nothingness that exists for no one.”²⁰ “Such is Gehenna: The only reality in one’s own consciousness and nothing in the consciousness of God and the righteous. Being inaccessible to their perception, the righteous will not regret the evil, eternally burning asceticism.”²¹

Being inaccessible to their perception, the righteous will not regret the evil, eternally burning asceticism. For them - and objectively - everything will be good, everything will be holy, and God will be all in all. Only evil asceticism has stiffened having beforehand a terrible and infamous vision, for it the expulsion from the face of God is an eternal, frozen “now” that never becomes a past. In this expulsion it burns eternally, but neither the expulsion nor the fire exists, only asceticism sees them as in a dream.

“Being an unutterable absolute and complete independence in relation to everything (as asceticism wants) and at the same time having no creative activity, this asceticism is deprived of inner and outer motivations to stop, to put an end to its desire. Left to its own devices, asceticism becomes a slave to itself, and in the naked self-identity of the sinful self, like an eternal whirlpool that has reached the end of its powers and has never been stopped,

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 138-139.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 151-152.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 151-152.

it spins senselessly in the darkness of unlife and torment: it has come to 'you will be like God!' ”²²

Florenski's theory, in his attempt to resolve the antinomy of the Gehenna, although the most profound and daring, remains contradictory and incomplete. In the first place, if Gehenna and the torments of evil asceticism are not at all in the consciousness of God and the righteous, how does Florenski know about them, and what do we do now that we have found out about them? Or perhaps then neither he, nor we, nor God Himself will remember what we now imagine about what will be then?! This contradiction does not diminish the merit of his theory, but once realized, it shows us that one can go further, towards an even wider meaning, which encompasses Florenski's insights. This is also what the second observation leads us to: the incompleteness of his theory. For, if the fate of evil asceticism is so clearly and plastically presented to us, Florenski tells us very little and ambiguously about the remaining "self". For him, "the eternity of torments consists in a moment of their own, absolute in content, when sin comes into contact with the gaze of God, and which can never meet again."²³

"Himself", *autos*, will be saved by fire, but will only be saved naked, as pure divine consciousness, in the state of pure potentiality of self-consciousness. He will not be an existence for himself, conscious, but only for others. At the same time Florenski speaks of the eternal happiness of the "in-self" and of the fact that he will have long forgotten the evil aseity he had and which he threw away like an eye that smeared him. But how is happiness without self-consciousness possible? Will the self-consciousness remaining in a state of potentiality be reactivated? Will "in the self" receive a new self-consciousness in parallel with the bad aseity? Would not this harm the unity of the person and his freedom? What is the meaning of "pure divine consciousness"? Will there be a consciousness of God without self-consciousness? As for the question of the eternal happiness of the "in-self", if we stay within the framework of Florenski's theory and try to be consistent, this happiness is only for others, it is more the happiness of the righteous of the saved "in-self" of the damned.

Or maybe there will be a joy of "in self" of others living his happiness that he doesn't know about?! Will not the righteous notice the absence of the self-consciousness of the restored "in-self"? Or will they themselves be in God's self-consciousness? Is not this "in-self" more degrading without consciousness, formally like that of the uncreated, than evil but self-conscious asceticism? These questions cannot be answered without elaborating a coherent theory of the structure of consciousness, which must not lack an important, decisive element that Florenski omitted: the level of superconsciousness. From this perspective, one could ask the question of the

²² *Ibid.*, p. 157.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

restoration or reactivation of self-consciousness, of the structural reintegration of asceticism. Or at least one could overcome the contradictions and inadequacies of Florenski's theory, thus taking a further step towards the zenithal solution of the antinomy of gehenesis.

Even if it lacks the main synthetic element, the keystone of the system (namely the idea of superconsciousness), Florenski's theory still has strong integrative values. He sees it as the antinomical synthesis of the following groups of views shared by theological thought. "There is neither tempering nor weakening of thesis and antithesis, but on the contrary we have a strengthening and an amplification: both thesis and antithesis are carried to their extreme development."²⁴

The first group of representations begins with the absoluteness of evil: all are doomed, all will perish. K. Leontiev. The next step is the popular image of hell where sinners boil in cauldrons of pitch for eternity, and its reflection cultivated in art, where human imagination has no limits in inventing torments and tortures. "Then the conception is refined to the representation of the inner source of the infernal torments, of the suffering due to repentance too late and to the distance from God. Finally, all torments are reduced to the lash of God's love and repentance, to the humble sense of one's own lack of dignity and the fact that happiness is not meditated upon. But even this slight shadow of summer clouds slips and disappears from the spiritual horizon, as some atonists think."²⁵

The other group of ideas also begins by affirming the insignificance of human things but sees everything not in the black tones of demonism, but in the pink tones of pantheism. What is human is so insignificant that everyone is right, everything is fine in the end. Vulgar Origenism comes from this state of indifference. According to it, the teaching about hell is just a scarecrow designed to make sinners go straight; for God will forgive us all anyway. The next form is that of genuine originism, according to which the torments of the afterlife serve to make a person right but also to punish him. The doctrine of the purifying fire of Gregory the Theologian and Gregory of Nyssa goes one step higher: torments are only a contingent consequence of the purification process.

According to Florenski, both sets of views have the same drawback: they "rationalize the mystical process of punishment and purification, so that, according to the law of identity, sin appears either as the very substance of the soul (in the first Protestant-type series), or in the form of something external to the soul (in the second Catholic-type series). Both are unacceptable. Nothing can compel an ill-willed man to change his evil will; and if he does not change it, then he will not mend it: sin cannot be lifted

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

from man without touching his inner essence (contrary to the second series). On the other hand, it is impossible for us to imagine an absolutely and completely perverse man, for that would mean that the divine creation has failed: the image of God cannot perish (contrary to the first series). From this it follows that the only possible conclusion is the one we reached before, i.e., the antinomy. This opinion claims faith and does not fit the plane of reason,"²⁶ which is the best proof of its religious value. "Therefore, if you ask me: 'So there will be eternal torment?' I will answer: 'Yes'. And if you ask me: 'Will there be a universal restoration to happiness?', again I will answer, 'Yes'."²⁷

Conclusion

In conclusion, universal salvation has begun to become a current theme in the field of Christian eschatology and soon a real issue for the whole Church. Every Christian Church is invited to express its opinion regarding this question.

In this article, we have tried to systematize the information to make it more accessible, so that the reader can find answers to some questions about the value, importance and relevance of the concept for today. We have shown how apocatastasis is viewed in contemporary theological thought. The Russian theologian N. Berdiaev believes that man has a right to hell by virtue of his inalienable freedom, and Olivier Clement states that only Christ, God-Om, can know the mystery of salvation without constraint. Evdokimov believes that God expects apocatastasis from man, and H. U. von Balthasar believes that if we do not have the right to affirm apocatastasis, we have the right, indeed the duty, to hope in the salvation of all. Pavel Florenski has an original theory, well-grounded biblically and patristically, according to which the divine judgment will separate „in the holy self” of the damned (which will be maintained without exception and contemplated with joy by the righteous, but will exist objectively only for them), from their self-consciousness, the completely independent asceticism in relation to God and the righteous, which will eternally torment itself, burning illusory, in its own empty subjectivity. In this view, hell is the only reality in the self-consciousness of the damned and nothing in the consciousness of God and the righteous.

Based on biblical places, historical and logical arguments, we found that the universal salvation postulated by some contemporary theologians is not a sound theory. Even if universalism were doctrinally supported by Holy Scripture, which is not the case, and even if sound theological and philosophical arguments supported it, universalism still could not be the

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

official public teaching of the Church, for it would conflict with the moral, spiritual and missionary foundations of the institution.

Finally, the results we have reached as a result of this scientific approach can be used in other projects and studies. Other contemporary authors who tackle this difficult subject can also be analyzed and sensitive subject, but whatever the approach, most of the arguments converge towards one solution: universal salvation is not possible for all people, given the extent of freedom and human responsibility, which has consequences for eternity. At the same time, however, we can hope that the number of those who will eternally reject God will be very small.

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Echoes and Sounds of Karl Jasper's "Limit Situation"

Abstract: Karl Jaspers' notion of a "limit situation" (*Grenzsituation*) refers to an occurrence in life that existentially displaces, disorients and discomforts subjects by shattering their assumptions of control and certainty. Limit situations create events that are existentially ambiguous, potentially disabling or enabling. Jaspers' engagement with "limit situation" sets the premises for opening up the notion to varying philosophical receptions and implications, existential and ethico-political. Of this variety, it is the ethico-political implications that have been mostly neglected in contemporary philosophy. The present article aims to emphasize the significance of "limit situation" for political thought. To this end, it first engages with theoretical echoes of Jaspers' "limit situation" today and then attempts an expanded reading of Jaspers' concept, in the hope of making audible, in Jaspers' parlance, "the new sound in an old thought."

Key words: *Existenz*, comfort zones, justice, poststructuralism, posthumanism

"The truth of present-day philosophy manifests itself less in the formation of new fundamental concepts (e.g. 'limit situation', 'the Encompassing' - *Grenzsituation*, *Umgreifende*) than in the new sound it makes audible for us in old thoughts".¹ We may extrapolate from Karl Jaspers' aphorism that the truth of his own philosophy also manifests itself more in his handling of old philosophical debts than in his forming new

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¹ Karl Jaspers, "On My Philosophy," 1941, p. 4.
<https://mercaba.org/SANLUIS/Filosofia/autores/Contempor%C3%A1nea/Jaspers/O%20my%20Philosophy.pdf> Downloaded: March 2, 2023.

concepts such as “limit situation” (also translated as “boundary situation”).² Jaspers’ aphorism distinguishes the operation of bringing new concepts and terms into an established philosophical idiom from the operation of revitalizing, and recycling, so to speak, older thoughts and voices that acquire new life and new value through our harking to them differently. However, I believe, the separation of coinage and temporal circulation of ideas cannot be neat. Conceptual innovation and acoustic attentiveness often intersect. These two philosophical truth-manifestations, namely, attention to the past and new thought introduced into the world, are occasionally inextricable, and the former generates the latter. For instance, *Grenzsituation* (henceforth: limit situation), indeed, a concept whose specificity was brought to philosophical life by Jaspers, clearly manifests his own, original and unexpected synthesis of older Kierkegaardian, Husserlian and especially Kantian “sounds”. Through Jaspers’ reformulation, Immanuel Kant’s *Grenzbegriff* (limiting concept), antinomies and transcendence³ acquired a different and impassioned tone beyond the rationalist one of their original philosophical setting.

The present article continues an endeavor⁴ to make audible new sounds of Jaspers’ much neglected “limit situation” philosophy. I mention current uses of Jaspers’ concept of “limit situation” and then I provide my reading of it. Thus, in a somewhat unorthodox way, I begin not with the concept but with the concept’s echoes today. Only after this move will I come to my own use, which aims to be both descriptively faithful to Jaspers’ philosophy but simultaneously reflective of the possibility to read it afresh. Thus, instead of aspiring to “update/upgrade” Jaspers’ thought by using new “-isms” as guidelines, the article suggests a revisiting of “limit situation” to make new sounds of it audible for us, philosophers of the 21st century, and simultaneously critical of our own, newly established philosophical comfort zones. Modern philosophical aspirations of “updating/upgrading”⁵ have, in my view, this demerit: the thought that is “updated” is expected to match the new *Zeitgeist*. Its revival is conditioned on its concordance with newly

² I have used Jaspers’ “echo and sound” metaphors again in relation to limit situations but applied to the more specific context of the recent pandemic and its politics. See Marianna Papastephanou, “Pandemic Totalitarianisms, Limit Situations and Forced Vaccinations,” in *Philosophy International Journal*, Vol. 4, Nr. 4, 2021, pp. 1-15.

³ Karl Jaspers, *Kant*, Harcourt Brace, 1962, p. 39.

⁴ See Papastephanou, *op. cit.*, and Marianna Papastephanou, “Loyalty, justice, and limit-situations,” in *Journal of Philosophical Research*, Vol. 46, 2021, pp. 221-242.

⁵ To designate such upgrades, I use the Greek word “*epikairopoiēsis*” (making something up to date, catching up with time *qua kairos*, opportune time, and simultaneously synchronizing it. See Marianna Papastephanou, “Justice and the Conspicuous” in Inga Bostad, Marianna Papastephanou and Torill Strand (Eds.), *Justice, Education, and the World of Today*, Routledge, New York, 2023.

valued tenets. It is recruited to support new orthodoxies in ways that block prospects of philosophy's becoming cautious of its own, contemporary onto-theological tendencies toward arresting time.

With these thoughts as a backdrop, the next section considers echoes of Jaspers' limit situation today. How is "limit situation" positioned (or not) in current philosophical "partages du sensible"? For, distributions of the sensible (Jacques Rancière's well-known term) operate in philosophical discourses, too. Existing orders, vogue and hegemonies affect what becomes visible and heard, and distribute communicative power accordingly.

Echoes

Jaspers' notion of a limit situation is not one of the popular current intellectual choices for interpreting and critiquing the world. Perhaps just as any other scholarly choice, intellectual choices also, and ultimately, chime with existential decisions of the scholars themselves. They are themselves echoes of the scholars' identifications, fixations, and comfort zones, their unwittingly or unconsciously metaphysical commitments to philosophical avatars and their ethico-political, affective and cognitive investments in theoretical camps.⁶ Ultimately, choices of engaging (or not) with a philosopher or a topic echo much rhetoric of broader contextual, socio-political and theoretical settings that affect one's philosophical mindset.

"Limit situation" is still studied (though somewhat limitedly) in existentialist, phenomenological and hermeneutic philosophical contexts. For instance, one theme is how "limit situation" differentiates Jaspers' thought from Edmund Husserl's and Kant's⁷ or how it relates to the question of Being.⁸ A 2022 special-issue of *Studi Jaspersiani* explores limit situation as a key conception in Jaspers' philosophy and contains re-readings, interpretations and transfers of it to literary, psychological, and environmental research. The concept re-emerges as a mobile notion that travels from historical interrogation to social crises and from the frontiers of justice to those of technology. As the special-issue editors argue, limit

⁶ Papastephanou, "Pandemic Totalitarianisms," p. 8. Having said that let me clarify that I do not imply a normativity of engaging with Jaspers. Nor do I imply that lack of interest in Jaspers is reducible to concerns of vogue, popularity and academic visibility.

⁷ Gladys Portuondo, "Jaspers, Husserl, Kant: boundary situations as a 'turning point'," in *Existenz*, Vol. 11, Nr. 1, 2016, pp. 51-56.

⁸ Danijel Tolvajčić, "Man's Limit Situations and the Question of Being," in *Bogoslavska smotra*, Vol. 90, Nr. 5, 2020, pp. 941-948.

situation is a fascinating category whose evocative power is far away from being exhausted.⁹

However, the broader influence of existentialism-related circles has been extensively diminished for various reasons beyond this article's scope. One such reason may be, for example, the old polemics of existential philosophy with philosophers who influenced or even shaped traditions as diverse as (post-)analytic philosophy, the poststructuralist camp and posthumanist thought. Nevertheless, "limit situation" has its own niche in some German psychological and psychotherapeutic circles¹⁰ and has also been introduced to the field of communication studies¹¹ along with Jaspers' conception of "existential communication." Recently, it has been recommended as a conceptual coordinate for critical discussions of technological transformation and escalating global crises.¹² It has even been used for theorizing some of the challenges of one such crisis, the Covid-19 pandemic.¹³ Still, political philosophy has generally bypassed Jaspers' insights (the "limit situation" notwithstanding). Some political philosophers¹⁴ have sought to remedy this and made important contributions;

⁹ Elena Alessiato and Michael Quante, "Introduction to Grenzsituation as a Key-Concept in Karl Jaspers' Philosophy: Re-Readings, Interpretations, and Transfers," in *Studi Jaspersiani*, Vol. 10, 2022, pp. 5-13.

¹⁰ See, for example, Thomas Fuchs, "Existential vulnerability: Toward a psychopathology of limit situations," in *Psychopathology*, Vol. 46, Nr. 5, 2013, pp. 301-308; Christoph Mundt, "Jaspers concept of 'limit situation': Extensions and therapeutic applications," in *Karl Jaspers' Philosophy and Psychopathology*, Springer, New York, 2014, pp. 169-178; Juan Valdes-Stauber, "Man at the frontier of his being: Scope of the concept of 'limit situation' in psychiatry and psychotherapy following Jaspers' existential ontology," in *Fortschritte der Neurologie-psychiatrie*, Vol. 84, Nr. 1, 2016, pp. 19-27; and Lina Vidauskytė, "On the psychopathological origin of Karl Jaspers' concept of limit situations," in *Existenzerhellung, Grenzbewusstsein, Sinn der Geschichte. Dem Andenken an Karl Jaspers (1883–1969)*, 2020, pp. 49-65.

¹¹ See, for instance, Ronald Gordon, "Karl Jaspers: Existential philosopher of dialogical communication," in *Southern Journal of Communication*, Vol. 65, Nr. 2-3, 2000, pp. 105-118.

¹² Amanda Lagerkvist, "Digital Limit Situations: Anticipatory Media Beyond 'The New AI Era'," in *Journal of Digital Social Research (JDSR)*, Vol. 2, Nr. 3, 2020, pp. 16-41.

¹³ See Hossein Mesbahian, "A phenomenological encounter with the Covid 19 crisis focused on boundary situations," in *Journal of Philosophical Investigations*, Vol. 14, Nr. 31, 2020, pp. 305-331; Papastephanou, "Pandemic Totalitarianisms", pp. 1-14; and Jean Grondin, "How a Limit Situation Made Us All More Philosophical" in *Corona Phenomenon: Philosophical and Political Questions*, Brill, 2022, pp. 32-36.

¹⁴ For instance, Giunia Gatta, *Theorizing among ruins: Karl Jaspers and the political theory of boundary situations*, Doctoral dissertation, University of Minnesota, 2008.

yet, even these contributions have not been adequately utilized by political philosophy or other disciplines outside of existentialist circles.

I will return, in a later section, to the issue of the limit situation's limited echoes in political philosophies of poststructuralist or posthumanist leanings but, for the moment, let me provide examples of limited, or missing, engagement with "limit situation". The notion of limit situation is curiously absent from contemporary philosophical discourses that consider states of exception and camps, although, I believe, such spaces are visibly relevant to experiencing limit situations. Theorizing them could constitute new, fertile ground for ethico-political philosophy. "Limit situation" is equally missing in educational philosophy. A major educational thinker, Paulo Freire, attempted a reformulation of Jaspers' "limit situation" that has not been further discussed. Freire wrote: "Professor Alvaro Vieira Pinto analyzes with clarity the problem of 'limit-situations,' using the concept without the pessimistic aspect originally found in Jaspers. For Vieira Pinto, the 'limit-situations' are not 'the impassable boundaries where possibilities end, but the real boundaries where all possibilities begin'; they are not 'the frontier which separates being from nothingness, but the frontier which separates being from being more'".¹⁵ For Freire, limit situations should be thought as existential situations that limit human potentiality and hence be overcome. Though his mention offers fertile ground for opening up a fruitful dialogue on limit situation through varying perspectives, too few educational philosophers¹⁶ have mined it. "Limit situation" is also surprisingly missing in peace education, in studies (educational or other) of "affect" and trauma, and in "conflict-resolution" theories.

Jaspers' Limit Situation Philosophy

Jaspers' "limit situation" can be explained in its difference from what Jaspers¹⁷ theorized as a "basic situation" (*Grundsituation*). A human being's basic situation is the trans-historical, existential condition of experiencing, to antinomian effect, a Sisyphean quest for plenitude, coherence and unity. Death, suffering, struggle, guilt, and finitude (the feeling of being at the mercy of chance) are basic situations that ultimately defy human calculation, foresight and preventive action. Thus, in my interpretation, they signify the universality and inevitability of limits that demarcate existence and its

¹⁵ Freire wrote this in a footnote in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, his acclaimed book that was originally published in 1970. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Continuum, Boston, MA, 2008, p. 99, fn. 15.

¹⁶ See, for instance, Anthony Petrucci, "Between Conventions and Critical Thinking: The Concept of 'Limit-Situations' in Critical Literacy and Pedagogy," in *JAC: A Journal of Composition Theory*, Vol. 18, Nr. 2, 1998, pp. 309-32.

¹⁷ Karl Jaspers, *Von der Wahrheit*. Piper, München, 1947.

(im)potentialities. When basic situations turn from generalities to actualities, they become “limit situations” that challenge and even shatter the situated self’s certainties and solaces.¹⁸ Limit situations differ not only from basic situations but also from those temporary (*vorübergehende*) situational formulas¹⁹ that, having something habitual and ordinary about them, lack existentially vertiginous consequences. Temporary situations do not necessarily shake the subject and may be experienced daily in different guises. Unlike them, limit situations of a kind are eventually experienced, in one way or other, due to situatedness within a world of ultimately inevitable basic situations.

Limit situations lead to antinomies “among general principles” or “between the principles and the concrete actions we must take”, or decisions we must make, “as human beings living at specific times, in specific places, and with others.”²⁰ Limit situations “cannot be approached as general without losing their meaning” as *boundary* ones.²¹ For example, from a Jaspersian prism, death becomes a limit situation “when I confront existentially the dizzying certainty of my death, not simply when I die.” A limit situation is experienced “when I orient myself to the reality that that situation is inescapably mine, that it affects me not only intellectually, but in deeper ways”, importantly delimiting my behavior and choices.²²

In facing the limit situation existentially, persons expose or disclose the particular individuals that they have come to be. Phenomenologically, a major question is: what one is conscious of when one has consciousness of a limit situation?²³ Existing within the confines of basic situations entails that limit situations usually emerge in consciousness as mere possibilities. For, without the distress of an actually lived out limit situation, according to Jaspers, a person experiences the world from a variety of unquestioned shells. A shell (*Gehäuse*) is the kind of existential comfort or buffer zone that shields the self from various realities. I metaphorize this as follows: even if ontologically homeless, we are existentially ostracoeid (shell-carrying beings).²⁴ When the protective shell becomes challenged or, worse, lost, the person, like a shellfish, is confronted with life/or balance-threatening new givens. In Jaspers’ words, „Das Gehäuse besteht nicht mehr, der Mensch kann nicht mehr leben, so wenig wie eine Muschel, der man die Schale

¹⁸ Papastephanou, “Loyalty, justice, and limit-situations,” p. 223.

¹⁹ Karl Jaspers, *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen*, Springer, Berlin, 1925, p. 241.

²⁰ Gatta, *Theorizing among ruins*, p. 16.

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 31.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Alan Olson asks a similar question but for different purposes. Alan Olson, “Metaphysical Guilt,” in *Existenz: An International Journal in Philosophy, Religion, Politics, and the Arts*, Vol. 3, Nr. 1, 2008, pp. 9-19.

²⁴ Papastephanou, “Pandemic Totalitarianisms”, p. 5.

genommen hat.”²⁵ However, unlike shellfish, we bear our home, a home which is not at first sight visible to us and to others, within us and within our *habitus*.

Shells such as “religious faith and ideological convictions, personal styles of living, and protective relationships” put off the experience of limit situation as utterly disruptive.²⁶ I would add to these examples of shells the protective function of common sense, the narratives (official or marginal) that provide facile answers to thorny questions, the hegemonies that lead public opinion to safe harbors of world interpretations, the master discourses and the “-isms” whose social currency pacifies thought. “Dwelling on the boundary is not something we can do all the time,”²⁷ therefore, we need “leaning points” in the face of limit situations because we cannot endure them “in their most shattering and all questioning power continuously”. Without the shells as leaning points, “life would cease and unsustainable despair would prevail.”²⁸ Losing our shell threatens our viability. Shells fix how individuals have chosen “to solve the limit-situations”. Human beings thereby try to escape “the suffering of the limit-situation by creating a shell.”²⁹ In my view, this long-understudied aspect of creativity is open to many politicizations³⁰ and to rethinking how not only religions or older ideologies but also new prospects, and new hegemonic discourses (new and normativized -isms), have a deep connection to our being confronted with limit situations and having learned to cope with them homeostatically by continually renewing the shell.

Limit-situations affect the I as *Existenz*, namely, “they reveal my own potential” and thereby show that “‘myself’ means something more than an empirical I.”³¹ To unpack the potential power of limit situations over the self we need first to unpack what Jaspers means by *Existenz*. *Existenz* “is the possibility, the normative horizon, the freedom of existence.”³² According to Jaspers,³³ philosophy is called to make a basic decision: how to answer

²⁵ Jaspers, *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen*, p. 248.

²⁶ Mundt, “Jaspers concept of ‘limit situation’,” p. 171.

²⁷ Gatta, *Theorizing among ruins*, p. 36.

²⁸ *Ibidem*.

²⁹ Jonna Bornemark, “Limit-situation. Antinomies and Transcendence in Karl Jasper’s Philosophy,” in *SATS: Nordic Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 7, Nr. 2, 2006, pp. 63-85, 76.

³⁰ For instance, we build monuments to our “shells”, arrange eduscapes accordingly and create initiation processes and liminalities (e.g. a PhD thesis may constitute a kind of intellectual date of birth for the student, demarcating her way of viewing the world and dealing with its tensions ever since), rites of passage to cross the threshold of the publicly established *Gehäuse* formally to enter a valued, prospectively protective shell.

³¹ Bornemark, “Limit-situation. Antinomies and Transcendence,” p. 77.

³² Gatta, *Theorizing among ruins*, p. 25.

³³ Karl Jaspers, *Philosophie II, Existenzzerhellung*, Springer, Berlin, 1973, p. 3.

“the question whether mundane being,”³⁴ i.e., existence and subjectivity as studied by the sciences, “is all there is”. Jaspers replies negatively. Apart from the empirical I, there is also “the being which in the phenomenality of existence *is not* but *can be, ought to be.*”³⁵ That being is *Existenz*. In my opinion, Jaspers’ assertion has exceptional political significance against anti-utopian ideologies and determinist treatments of our world as the best possible. *Existenz* as a consciousness state of transcending material, social and other determinations³⁶ invites this clarification: *Existenz* mitigates between the world and what Jaspers theorizes as “transcendence”, of which we have at times a glimpse. In fact, Jaspers’ notion of transcendence “is not so much ‘vertical’ as ‘horizontal,’ not a movement upwards, above it all, but a moving more penetratingly with ‘gliding awareness’ into and through that which is around us as the world of appearances.”³⁷ *Existenz* is the dimension of our being that has the capacity to stand between the world and transcendence through the event of existential communication. The latter, rather than some exclusively introspective quest, opens a view into transcendence.³⁸ Ultimately, Jaspers’ thought is relational and intersubjective rather than monological or defined by a subject-object, modern philosophical shell.

Limit situations are one condition of *Existenz* realization³⁹ beyond problem-solving modalities. As Jaspers clarifies,⁴⁰ limit situations are beyond the rational knowledge that we use to solve problems in every-day life. They impel “a radical change in attitude and common way of thinking.”⁴¹ They invite responses, beyond “planning and calculating to overcome them”, that involve our “becoming the *Existenz* we potentially are; we become ourselves by entering with open eyes into the boundary situations.”⁴² Before the outbreak of a limit situation, unshakeable in their knowledge, people dismiss possible limit situations as foreign to them. When a limit situation occurs, it opens the possibility for philosophizing in a way that sheds light on existence. This existential elucidation (or illumination, *Erhellung*) means that we begin to see limit situations as *possibilities* that hit

³⁴ Gatta, *Theorizing among ruins*, p. 25.

³⁵ *Ibidem*.

³⁶ Fuchs, “Existential vulnerability,” p. 301.

³⁷ Gordon, “Karl Jaspers: Existential philosopher,” p. 115.

³⁸ Karl Jaspers, *Reason and Existenz*, trans. W. Earle, Noonday Press, New York, 1957 (original text 1935), p. 108.

³⁹ Kurt Salamun, “Moral Implications of Karl Jaspers’ Existentialism,” in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 49, Nr. 2, 1988, pp. 317-323, p. 318.

⁴⁰ See, for instance, Jaspers, *Philosophie*.

⁴¹ Salamun, “Moral Implications,” p. 318.

⁴² *Ibidem*, p. 319.

the essence of our being.⁴³ Then we move to existential realization: the limit situation becomes not just an objective possibility for others but also an embodiment through our own personal existence. We *are* it: a “*unique translation, a realization in personal existence.*”⁴⁴ While wrestling with limits, we may realize possibilities beyond the immanence of mundane life.

For Jaspers, the “encompassing,” which denotes the unlimited possibilities that an otherwise limited world-structure offers, enables experiences of transcendence. The encompassing is neither object nor subject but combines both.⁴⁵ It is also more than just some particular horizon of meaning. It is ultimately “a deeper, comprehensive whole that engulfs all passing horizons.”⁴⁶ We have a glimpse of this encompassing when limit situations actually occur and heighten our consciousness. A transformed ontology becomes in truth impossible, and the planned regulation of the multiple modalities that surround us (what Jaspers denotes with a Greek term, “*Periechontologie*”) is suspended.⁴⁷ All sorts of paths open up then, one of them leading to *Existenzerhellung* (illuminating *Existenz*). It takes a leap (*Aufschwung*) to reach this path, a leap outside the subject’s constitution. Hence limit situations are central to effecting *Existenz* as authenticity and transcendence. Limit situations have a disclosing operation (*Freilegung*) in revealing modalities of *Dasein*. But, according to Jaspers, there is no guarantee of *Existenz*. A strong possibility is retreat in the *Gehäuse*, despite the limit situation’s striking blows on it (even temporally crashing it) and disrupting the quotidian unfolding of the subject as narrative. With these terms, Jaspers accounts for discontinuity, break, transformation and dislocation without investing limit situations with exclusively positive connotations or eventualities.⁴⁸ That is, he avoids glorifying or normativizing limit situations, as some adherents to poststructuralism do concerning “limit experience”. For, sometimes, such leaps are into an abyss or have paralyzing effects.

Jaspers offers no prescriptions for coping with limit situations. He authorizes a general response to such situations that involves transcendence

⁴³ Jaspers, *Philosophie*; see also Gatta, *Theorizing among ruins*, p. 34.

⁴⁴ Gatta, *Theorizing among ruins*, pp. 34-5.

⁴⁵ Karl Jaspers, *Philosophische Aufsätze*, Fischer Bücherei, Frankfurt am Main und Hamburg, 1967, p. 216. Also on the encompassing, see Jaspers, *Reason and Existenz*.

⁴⁶ David Nichols, “Heidegger and Jaspers on the Tragic,” in *Existenz: An International Journal in Philosophy, Religion, Politics, and the Arts*, Vol. 4, Nr. 2, 2009, pp. 28-35, p. 31.

⁴⁷ „Eine neue Lehre vom Sein (eine verwandelte Ontologie) ist in Wahrheit unmöglich geworden, ein Entwurf der Weisen des Umgreifenden, worin wir uns finden (eine Periechontologie), muß selber in der Schweben bleiben” Jaspers, *Philosophische Aufsätze*, p. 83.

⁴⁸ Papastephanou, “Pandemic Totalitarianisms,” p. 6.

(rather than overcoming).⁴⁹ He also authorizes a kind of subjectification: the “meaningful way for us to react to limit situations” is not “by planning and calculating to overcome them but by the very different activity of *becoming the Existenz we potentially are*.”⁵⁰ Yet, subjectification does not entail, for Jaspers, subject-object relationality to the world: becoming *Existenz* means a heightened relationality in existential communication and in “loving struggle” (*liebender Kampf*). Jaspers uses “loving struggle” to signify “a wrestling with the other to press other and self further than either has been able to go alone.”⁵¹ As “a non-violent, non-coercive and non-egoistic form of struggle with another person,”⁵² ultimately in solidarity than competitiveness, the loving struggle is an ethical attitude that, as I claim elsewhere,⁵³ may be politicized as an alternative to power relations and power politics.

To sum up: limit situations evoke excess in illuminating the exhaustibility of human power and of one’s ability to cope, mundanely and habitually, with the abysmal force of challenges within our inescapably spatiotemporal situatedness, in our being singular existences, though entangled with one another.⁵⁴ We are compelled to endure them. Limit situations are fundamental for the self. They are inexorably ours. Being tragic and defining, they disclose the persons that we have become, while simultaneously reshaping us and reshuffling our fabrics.⁵⁵ The question, writes Jaspers,⁵⁶ about who or what I would be without them is hollow because I am myself in them. Transcending any comprehensible thought, I find myself in the limit situation “shaken, first, and then *as one with chance*, which I take to be *mine*.”⁵⁷ Limit situations make us aware of an existential (rather than rationalist) universality since everybody will be hit by a traumatic limit situation and everybody is destined to experience limit situations at some point. Instead of embracing abstract and objectivist rationalism, Jaspers’ universalism treats reason as “the vehicle by which human beings shuttle” between general principles and concrete, particular situations “where they become aware of (and disturbed by) all the antinomies that remain hidden when principles are simply enunciated in general.”⁵⁸ In

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁰ Karl Jaspers, *Philosophy, Vol. II*, trans. E. B. Ashton, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1970, p. 179.

⁵¹ Gordon, “Karl Jaspers: Existential philosopher,” p. 113.

⁵² Salamun, “Moral Implications,” p. 320.

⁵³ Papastephanou, “Pandemic Totalitarianisms,” p. 6.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 7.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*.

⁵⁶ Jaspers, *Philosophy*, p. 191.

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁸ Gatta, *Theorizing among ruins*, p. 28.

its difference and tension with the intellect, reason is, for Jaspers, a movement “constantly defying the fixity and abstraction of intellectual categories” and “a more promising path for knowing human beings beyond their objectivity.”⁵⁹ I consider this a major, possible contribution to political-philosophical debates on universalism. A conventional wisdom of postmodern times has it that universalism is an inherently negative concept and a politically pernicious idea. I think that such certainties can be challenged from a perspective that, though critical of some of Jaspers’ ideas, pays nevertheless attention to those of his insights that redirect discourses on universalism and enable perception of its ambiguities. Jaspers’ universalism also constitutes an alternative to current elaborations on a possibly non-toxic universalism that nevertheless overlook existential, contextual and affective dimensions of human entanglement.

Different Sounds

Before I engage with new “sounds” of Jaspers’ limit situation and suggestions for expanding its relevance to ethico-political and educational philosophy, I briefly return to the notion’s limited echoes in various postisms. In poststructuralism, the theoretical attachment to “limit experience”, especially the Foucauldian popularization of this notion in educational philosophy,⁶⁰ seems to me to have sidelined or even excluded “limit situation” as a possible theoretical ground for exploring issues of subjectification. Ironically, despite the fact that the notion of “limit experience” has been associated with “dramatic” and subversive philosophies such as Georges Bataille’s, it becomes, when used in educational philosophy, a much “safer” and tension-free concept,⁶¹ far more monologically fascinated with the epiphanic than Jaspers’ “limit situation”.

In posthumanism, there is a noticeable tendency to ignore all older theories that are guilty, or suspect, of human exceptionalism. Against possible, posthumanist objections to Jasper’s philosophy, I argue that theories are complex bodies of ideas, often containing philosophical-anthropological material that avails itself to different interpretations. Jaspers depicts humans also in terms that might today count as non-exceptionalist. For instance, he claims that human beings are not different from other living creatures.⁶² Their basic situation is the same, since “they devour one another, defend themselves, and escape.” Like other creatures, humans cannot avoid

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁰ Marianna Papastephanou, “Michel Foucault’s limit-experience limited,” in *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, Vol. 50, Nr. 4, 2018, pp. 390-403.

⁶¹ Papastephanou, “Michel Foucault’s limit-experience”.

⁶² Karl Jaspers, *The Future of Mankind*, trans. E.B. Ashton, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1961, p. 31.

force. Humans are, for Jaspers, less defined in their difference from animals than in their difference from angels: force “would be absent only from a kingdom of angels.”⁶³ Another possible posthumanist objection might be this: at first sight, limit situation is by definition (at least Jaspers’ definition) an exclusively humanist term. Personally, I do not endorse this “first sight” assumption. Though non-human otherness may not experience a limit situation as humans do or, if the non-human otherness belongs to non-biota it may not experience it at all, limit situation nevertheless remains relevant because as such, and as I theorize it in some critical distance from Jaspers, it is not reducible to consciousness. It has aspects of an objective category, regardless of how or whether it is lived out. For instance, humans create limit situations of death for other biota and destruction of non-biota as objective states/realities rather than as subjective experiences.

Postmodernist critiques of metaphysics, authenticity, humanism, eurocentrism,⁶⁴ etc., and posthumanist critiques of human exceptionalism have often chimed with tendencies to lump all older philosophies into such categories and thus to dismiss them effortlessly and sweepingly. These tendencies block not only the interest in Jaspers but also any insight into affinities of post-isms with Jaspers’ rejection of closure and plenitude and his attention to finitude, situatedness, contingency, and shattering. Limit situations explode consensus, security, prudentialism and other such things whose critique is so valued in the post-ist context when uttered by respective gurus. Through Jaspers it can be shown that “any clearly stated theory of the whole, whether religious or not, becomes a shell protecting human beings of the original experience” of limit situations.⁶⁵ Granted this, it is unsurprising that Jaspers’ own notion of limit situation has not attracted post-ist interest: his ideas are considered part of the whole that these post-isms reject; *and* these post-isms, despite their attacks on meta-narratives, have themselves become meta-narrative shells. As a theory of the whole, as meta-narratives, post-isms tend to ignore what may come from a different or older tradition and cause cracks or upset new orthodoxies. Jaspers’ philosophy may cause cracks in these new meta-narratives in at least two ways. (a) It may do so through the notion of the shell that can be employed critically to theorize operations (inter alia political) of which the new master-discourses are also guilty. The risk that Jaspers saw in nihilism and rationalism, namely their becoming a shell when they lose their vital force of tearing down ideological

⁶³ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁴ Eurocentrism is often detected in some of Jaspers’ statements regarding the Axial Age (*Achsenzeit*). See, for instance, Dafydd Rees, “Decolonizing Philosophy? Habermas and the Axial Age,” in *Constellations*, Vol. 24, Nr. 2, 2017, pp. 219-231.

⁶⁵ Gatta, *Theorizing among ruins*, p. 39.

shells,⁶⁶ equally threatens all “-isms”. (b) Jaspers causes cracks in current –isms also through the notion of limit situation when this is concretized as the situation of a vulnerable other and made to show how abstract and generic these master-discourses remain. They remain so even when they pay continuous lip service to diversity and the suffering other, and then capitalize on their paying such lip service. The rest of this article indicates *inter alia* the potential of Jaspersian philosophy.

This brief detour to limited echoes of limit situations in current post-isms aimed to show that an interest in “new sounds” of Jaspers’ voice could be philosophically invigorating and upsetting of new master-discourses, instead of being an updating of Jaspers’ conceptual tools along new hegemonies. In this section, then, I indicate some conjectures of neglected, or yet non-theorized, interpretive possibilities in Jaspers’ conception of limit situations. The upshot of these conjectures could be rendered thus: the current hegemony of power and biopolitics as tools explanatory of operations that are productive of subjectivities could be critiqued through awareness of limit situations as simultaneously produced by, and productive of, subjects, thoughts, power and worlds. In other words, I recommend that we use limit situations as ethico-political explanatory tools, and not only as tools of existential analytics of lived experiences. As ethico-political tools, they offer us insight into elements of human existence that are irreducible to power relations and to their role in limit situations politics.

For Jaspers, limit situations, along with wonder and doubt, are also sources of philosophy operative through communication among people.⁶⁷ From my perspective, this so overlooked point is highly significant for a meta-philosophy that explores what lies between problem-solving and question-raising. Problem-solving is sometimes attributed to philosophy, for instance by (neo)pragmatism, but it strikes me as impoverishing of philosophy. Problem-solving domesticates philosophy by orienting it to issues that have already cropped up in the lifeworld and require solutions. Against it, and following ancient theorizations of philosophy, we may emphasize question-raising and *aporia*. Philosophy raises questions precisely there where people are immersed in “shell” certainties. It problematizes precisely what is un-problematic in a lifeworld, i.e., all those things that escape solution *logi(ist)cs*.

However, in-between problem-solving and question-raising, there is also the operation of philosophy as response to limit situations. Limit situations do not invite problem-solving, in fact, they are outside the register of problem-solving. As sources of philosophy, limit situations are, I posit,

⁶⁶ Jaspers, *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen*, pp. 300-309.

⁶⁷ Karl Jaspers, *Way to Wisdom*, trans. R. Mannheim, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1973, pp. 24-25. For an informative account on this topic, see Gordon, “Karl Jaspers: Existential philosopher,” p. 113.

concretizations of *existential* aporia and thus corrective even of *epistemically* aporetic perspectives on philosophy. Especially relevant to epistemic aporias are some limit situations, namely, those whose consequences are intellectual and shatter one's commonsensical certainties. Instead of being just thought experiments and theoretical exercises, such limit situations correct, so to speak, one's detached experiences of aporetic thought by shaking the ground of one's standardized epistemic attitudes. Other limit situations, of "material" rather than purely intellectual consequences, are those of actual suffering of unbearable, distressing, even harrowing, change in one's conditions of life. Encountered as experienced by others, this kind of limit situations could mobilize empathy and philosophical wonder, or an affirmative sense of curiosity, and set on course truth-seeking philosophical interrogations of the politics that produce such limit situations. The others' limit situation is not experienced as mine; witnessing it, however, may lead me to truth-disclosure.⁶⁸

We must be cautious, though, concerning one possible implication of Jaspers' connection of philosophy and limit situation. Confronted with limit situations (one's own or another's) a subject may resort to philosophy for solace rather than for truth.⁶⁹ Yet, this possibility (which, in Jaspers, seems to be fed – to the point of becoming a certainty – by essentialist remarks such as the one below) obfuscates another relationship between philosophy, truth and limit situation: that of the other's limit situation setting in motion philosophy's truth-seeking operations. I unpack this complex point thus. Jaspers writes that we tend toward stability and quiet; "we cannot bear the infinite vortex of the relativization of all concepts."⁷⁰ His is a psychological-essentialist objection to relativization, whereas mine would be ethico-political and non-essentialist. It is sometimes the other's limit situation (and the demands it makes on us) that resists relativization. For instance, reactions

⁶⁸ Existentially, however, what I have just claimed requires nuance: the other's limit situation is not experienced as mine, especially if this other is remote and "generalized," so to speak. In that case, the other's limit situation dislocates me if it is met with empathy and if it heightens my awareness of the ethico-political demands it may be making on me, which also vary extensively up to exposing me to the limit situation of guilt. If the other is very close to me, e.g., a "concrete" and "significant" other who plays a fundamental part in my life, that other's limit situation is transferred to me and translates into another limit situation, one fitting into my existential positioning in relation to that other. For example, the dizzying certainty of physical death that one person faces as a limit situation may turn into a dizzying certainty of "death" of meaningful existence that I, as entangled person, may experience. In other words, limit situations are mobile and transferrable even when they erupt as situations that a singular self may be in.

⁶⁹ Still, I do not mean this distinction between solace and philosophy as another dichotomy.

⁷⁰ Jaspers, *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen*, p. 304.

to the Holocaust denialist argument that relativizes all concepts presuppose concepts (truth included) as leaning points. Therefore, we sometimes rely on concepts not because, supposedly, we cannot bear relativization psychologically, but because we find relativization ethico-politically amiss and morally repugnant. Contrary to Jaspers' assertion that conceptual stability shields us from limit situations (also contrary to post-isms' concurring with that), I argue that conceptual stability, even if provisional, precisely enables a glimpse of a limit situation, and more, it enables our acknowledging the limit situation that the other is in. In so doing, it shatters the shell (even if temporarily) that blocks our view of the other's limit situation, a shell which is especially strong in cases where the other's limit situation remains unperceived even if, ironically, we (individually or collectively) have created it for that other. The deportation of the Chagossians from their land, and their being forced to dwell in the limit situation of exile by successive U.S. and U.K. governments, is a case in point, one that I have discussed elsewhere.⁷¹

Nevertheless, to emphasize the aforementioned other-oriented and political dimensions of limit situations we must highlight the possibility, inherent in Jaspers' theorization of a limit situation being also collectively experienced. As Gatta pertinently puts it, Jaspers understands "suffering as both something befalling dramatically and idiosyncratically single individuals, but also as a plural phenomenon, something almost always entangling multiple individuals, situated differently, and reacting differently to it according to their situation."⁷² I take this point further by suggesting that different existential and political positions make limit situations not only collective but also occasionally group-differentiated. Situatedness exposes specific groups, especially the most vulnerable or powerless ones, to limit situations (e.g., forceful deportation and exile) that are only theoretical possibilities for more powerful groups. In my opinion, part of one's existential elucidation (*Existenzerhellung*) should concern not just one's defining oneself within and against the situation one is thrown into (at birth or later) but also the consideration of the situatedness of others. This requires one to experience the encounter with others through heightened political consciousness of how suffering is affected by one's (or people's) being located in space, time and political entanglements of power.

Furthermore, it would be wrong to assume that, for Jaspers, all limit situations make, or should make, the self swing into *Existenz* (*Aufschwung*). Such an assumption is particularly wrong, leading even to gruesome implications, when establishing a callous expectation that the other in a limit situation should respond to it with what we consider constructive *Existenz*. The *Aufschwung* is just one possibility. Many limit situations are merely

⁷¹ Papastephanou, "Loyalty, justice, and limit-situations," pp. 228-229 and 236-237.

⁷² Gatta, *Theorizing among ruins*, p. 41.

shattering or unbearable. It is important to keep this in mind, then, I suggest, when we ethicize and politicize limit situations.⁷³ We should not burden others, especially when our collectivity has created their limit situation, with yet another limit situation, that of guilt for being unable to make something good out of what they experience. What for psychotherapy⁷⁴ might be a perfectly sound approach of helping the self accept, endure or even overcome limit situations through cultivating virtues such as perseverance, courage and reflective capacity, that same thing would be gruesome in ethico-politics if it was turned into an expectation that suffering others should have developed “limit situation skills” and be blamed if they had not, especially when I or we (our collectivity) may be responsible for the limit situation in which others dwell. The others’ limit situations should constitute a challenge *for us* to swing into the *Existenz* that allows us transcendence of our own, temporarily protected and safe positioning. Thus I reach from another route Gatta’s conclusion that limit situations play a “role in awakening responsibility to others, orienting us to imagine political possibilities with them, and compelling us to political action.”⁷⁵

In critical dialogue with Jaspers’ philosophy we may also rethink our grasp of (and failures to grasp) concrete human positioning. For, Jaspers exhorted us to enter our limit situation with open eyes, but, in my view, both modern and postmodern philosophy overlooked that we close our eyes to the other’s limit situation, especially there where we seem to be at our most attentive, that is, when we aestheticize (and also abstract, romanticize, or ontologize) the other as “the migrant,” “the refugee,” “the exilic” or “the dissident.” Therefore, I suggest caution concerning such aestheticizations of limit situations. “Limit situation” could resonate with a sweeping, *Lebensphilosophie* incrimination of un-dramatic and (supposedly) “petty virtues”. It may evoke a concomitant glorification of a modernist aesthetic of shock. In my opinion, a fascination with limit situations as “unique moments of existential peril that become a proving ground for individual ‘authenticity’ ”⁷⁶ diverts attention from the ethico-political claims that the inexorable specificity of the other’s limit situation makes on us. The “aesthetics of horror” (*Asthetik des Schreckens*) sets the lifeworld on one

⁷³ This is especially important to keep in view if the concept of limit situation will ever be introduced into peace education and conflict resolution initiatives, especially in those that callously overlook the situation of the conflicting parties, depoliticize reconciliation and disconnect it from political justice by reducing it to individual psychology.

⁷⁴ See, for instance, Fuchs, “Existential vulnerability,” p. 308.

⁷⁵ Gatta, *Theorizing among ruins*, p. 2.

⁷⁶ Richard Wolin, “Carl Schmitt: The conservative revolutionary habitus and the aesthetics of horror,” in *Political Theory*, Vol. 20, Nr. 3, 1992, pp. 424-447, p. 432. Wolin also, and most helpfully, critiques such aestheticizations.

side, and “suddenness” (*Plötzlichkeit*),⁷⁷ rupture and discontinuity on another side. The one pole is incriminated; the other is invested with redemptive force. The “society of ‘normalization’ (Foucault)” must be subjected to “aesthetics of rupture,” where “the exception enters the scene, for the exception alone, *qua* borderline concept (*Grenzbegriff*) allows the power of real life.”⁷⁸ Here I invite the reader to consider, for instance, the tasks assigned to limit experience by Foucauldians;⁷⁹ in my view, such tasks constitute what is known as “soft” limit situations⁸⁰ valued by the broader Western intellectual glorification of travelling and movement. Instead, I recommend ethico-political theorizations of the production/creation of limit situations that are less blithe and less centripetal than those singled out in some discourses of limit experience and displacement. I agree with Wolin regarding the dangers in embracing thus-conceived limit situations, but I see these dangers as more traceable in conceptions of limit experience than in Jaspers’ notion of limit situations. Therefore, I clarify that my next paragraphs should be read against thanatoptic and thanatourist,⁸¹ deep-down apolitical, outlooks on others’ limit situations that Wolin convincingly criticizes. The aestheticization of horror becomes indeed a self-exculpating and complacent, new hegemony that makes common cause with its supposed opposite, the moralist, philanthropic and charitable stances toward the suffering other.

True, limit situations befall the subject (or a collectivity); but it is also true that some do not fall from the sky. And some have an unavoidably and crucially collective dimension. They are the limit situation of a specific “we.” Thus, alongside the centrality of the limit situation for the subject and its processual course toward (in)authentic being, I see a potential centrality of approaching ethico-political situations that we, this “we” be of western localities, powerful public fora, academics, groups of experts, etc., create for others (or that others are confronted with). We overlook this in the generality of our talk about others, while, stuck in a war zone, immigrants, refugees, and rooted subjects experience a limit situation in complex variety, group-specific uniqueness or subjective irreducibility. Western subjects perceive or overlook such otherness through their own theoretical and political “shells.”

⁷⁷ Wolin, “Carl Schmitt,” p. 433. Wolin takes the term “Aesthetik des Schreckens” from Karl Heinz Bohrer.

⁷⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁷⁹ See, for instance, Jan Masschelein, “Experience and the Limits of Governmentality,” in *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, Vol. 38, Nr. 4, 2006, pp. 561–576; and Christiane Thompson, “Education and/or Displacement? A Pedagogical Inquiry into Foucault’s ‘Limit-Experience’,” in *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, Vol. 42, Nr. 3, 2010, pp. 361–377.

⁸⁰ Mundt, “Jaspers concept of ‘limit situation’,” pp. 175ff.

⁸¹ Marianna Papastephanou, “On ugliness in words, in politics, in tour-ism,” in *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, Vol. 47, Nr. 13-14, 2015, pp. 1493–1515.

Even if facing their own private limit situations, most Western subjects do not experience the political limit situation that “war zone” subjects do. Western subjects are even unaware of a possibly appropriate limit situation of guilt⁸² due to their countries’ role in such situations. They may feel guilty for how their countries deal with the immigrant when ashore, but not for the fact that the uprooting and the others’ suffering may be related to such countries’ politics in some ways. If they are politically involved enough to feel guilty for their countries’ treatment of the *arrivant* ashore, then, on what grounds are they absolved from awareness of any responsibility concerning those who did not manage to come ashore? Guilt seems to be limited to how a subject acts or fails to act, or guilt may be associated with the unintended or unforeseeable consequences of one’s actions. When guilt is understood as collective, it is typically confined to issues within territory or, recently, to global issues of climate change and natural destruction. It misses the middle ground of international relations (middle because it is in-between the self and the globe) and the failure to act, in political rather than philanthropic ways, for alleviating the suffering that others experience in limit situations abroad. Unlike such current tendencies, Jaspers singled out political guilt as the type of guilt that is especially relevant to collective politics. *Politische Schuld* concerns “the culpability of a group or a people for crimes committed by the state to which one belongs as a citizen—even though one may not have actively supported the leaders and agents of the state responsible for these crimes.”⁸³ Jaspers distinguishes political culpability from “collective guilt” because the latter concerns “the consciousness of individuals” rather than of groups.⁸⁴ If we suppose that one’s own collectivity or state is not involved in the limit situation that others were made to inhabit, still, failure to show solidarity to these others could be theorized in Jasper’s terms through his notion of metaphysical guilt that denotes one’s guilt for one’s failing to act there where action was needed.⁸⁵ We stand with eyes closed in front of the others’ limit situation when our knowledge of the extent of human entanglement and its concatenated effects on collectivities is limited. By this I do not mean the well-rehearsed argument of some poststructuralist and activist circles, with which I strongly disagree, that supposedly, if we are not in the position and culture of another person we are not entitled to speak. I rather mean that the tendency within discourses of empathy to focus on the

⁸² On the issue of guilt, see Karl Jaspers, *The Question of German Guilt*, trans. E. B. Ashton, Capricorn Books, New York, 1947.

⁸³ Olson, “Metaphysical Guilt,” p. 12.

⁸⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 13.

⁸⁵ Jaspers, *The Question of German Guilt*; and Karl Jaspers, *Tragedy is Not Enough*, trans. Harald A. T., Reiche, Harry T. Moore, and Karl W. Deutsch, Archon Books, Boston, 1969.

subject and her emotions grasps the situation of the other only indirectly (to the extent that the situation may have emotive effects observable or imaginable from the point of view of the sympathizer), thus failing to grasp the multidimensionality of the situation as such.

Conclusion

As Gatta has argued, “exclusive reliance on the intellect is possibly what stunts the political promise of modernity to turn suffering into a central problem”; in fact, “modernity’s interest for suffering remains generic”. To change this we could turn to how Jaspers’ limit situation philosophy neither intellectualizes nor abstracts suffering “out of political relevance.”⁸⁶ In line with this view, I have emphasized that it holds also for postmodernity. Moreover, though limit situations are constitutive of existence, specific limit situations may be caused by human handlings. I have suggested that such limit situations have special ethico-political, rather than just intellectual or experiential, significance. A further, related yet neglected, ethico-political issue is that generalities of existential vulnerability turn through action (or lack of action) into concrete, distressing experiences for specifically and unevenly positioned, situated people or for nature. Jaspers’ nuances then help us define cruelty – in its opposition to misfortune (or catastrophe) – as a human-made transformation of a basic situation into a limit situation for specific human or non-human others. My ethico-political perspective has associated limit situations not only with what humans as subjects encounter, or merrily seek for the sake of dislocation and flight from routine (soft limit situations and tamed limit experiences), but also with what they create for themselves, others and nature. Thus, I rethink Jaspers’ emphasis on what the limit situation does to the self and how the self copes with it (even if intersubjectively): what about that which limit situations reveal about the entanglement of beings and collectivities? The emphasis on the effects of limit situations on the individual may continue to relegate the topic to psychology and remove it from ethico-political sight.

With a limit situation “a truth about one’s *Existenz* enters suddenly into consciousness”, one that may be “unbearable for those affected.”⁸⁷ Such truths of limit situations comprise “the unavoidable of guilt, the inexorability of being free, the frailty of one’s body, or the finitude of one’s *Dasein*.”⁸⁸ However, beyond truth and moments of realization for the affected self, I have noted more multiple challenges than those which a monological (self-oriented) frame allows us to perceive. Limit situations also effect a tension of action, an impasse, impossible choices, tragic ethical

⁸⁶ Gatta, *Theorizing among ruins*, p. 29.

⁸⁷ Fuchs, “Existential vulnerability”, p. 302.

⁸⁸ *Ibidem*.

dilemmas.⁸⁹ In my view, Jaspers' limit situation could be thought through beyond his own association of it with fundamental conditions of *Dasein*. In other words, I see a surplus of possible significations of the term and possible instantiations beyond those of struggle, guilt, chance and suffering, though inclusive of them. The term may also be conceptually demarcated by a void and a necessity, an absence and a presence: a limit situation is one where we have to make a choice and decision in the absence of guidelines, of a traveler's guide, of scientific authority and in the presence of urgency, in need of non-deferrable action.⁹⁰ In some cases, this action may be monological – in the sense of being just the creation of a new world orientation for the self. The protective shell is missing and a new home is to be searched within the confines of a by then illuminated existence, one of awareness and reconciliation with human finitude and vulnerability. But, in some limit situations, another kind of action is urgent, a relational one toward justice that directly affects the lives of others. A limit situation (one's own or another's) involves an extra-ordinary spatiotemporality because it is both: a new land (*terra nova*), *hic abundant leones*,⁹¹ and a *tempus terribilis*. Limit situations may be deterritorializing, not in the celebratory, self-congratulatory sense that this term takes when associated with the valorized mobility of the Western nomadic subject but in the self-critical sense that it may have when denoting reflection on our own "shells", namely, on our internal "boundaries" that we carry around even when we cross external borders. As such heterochronies and deterritorializations, limit situations invite *extra territorium jus*, a law, justice and ethico-politics out of the ordinary.

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⁸⁹ Papastephanou, "Loyalty, justice, and limit-situations".

⁹⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁹¹ "Here lions abound": a phrase written on uncharted territories of old maps.

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HEINZ-UWE HAUS

How to “come in between” - Today’s mind-scape and the “self-other integration” in Euripides’ theatre

Abstract: Indeed, how to *come- in-between* teaches us that human reason is constantly vulnerable to disruption by passion and prejudice. The *self-other integration* in Euripides’ plays projects both the claims of autonomy and the claims of duty and community, but, as Berkowitz once pointed out, „for the inevitable clash between these goods is not a reason for rejecting either but an occasion for more refined thinking”.

Keywords: Euripides, self-determination, theatre, civil ideology, performance, ancient texts.

1. Fear of Diversity

Saxonhouse touches in her 1992 analysis *Fear of Diversity* in ancient Greek thought on the very practical challenge between the intended and the actually performed process or event, between socio-historical possibilities and the real performance, between consciously portrayed partiality and ideological conditionality.¹ One has to remember, that up to around 1990, “diversity” was defined as “varied” or “of different kind”. Only then it started to be used as a synonym for multicultural. Today “diversity” associates additional images such as “enrich”, “vibrant” or “dynamic”, which focus more on politically correct ideology than social conflicts. The scholar is aware that theatre texts by nature reject such linguistic subterfuge.

Beginning with a meditation on Aristophanes’ *Ecclesiazusae*, Saxonhouse shows that this comedy of reversal - in which difference

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¹ Arlene W. Saxonhouse, *Fear of Diversity: The Birth of Political Science in Ancient Greek Thought*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1992.

between the sexes, the old and the young, the city and the family, the good and the bad, the beautiful and the ugly are effaced - winds up introducing chaos precisely because that is where a "drive for unity" inevitably takes us.²

Saxonhouse comes to the conclusion, that within the play, a unity that ignores all differences will not work. In losing all that is distinctive and separate, authentic sharing (to hold in common) is itself foresworn. Her analysis reminds us that the Greek city of adult males, drawn to a unified vision of the city grounded in the myth of autochthony, or birth from the earth by contrast to birth from the body of woman, were nevertheless compelled to confront powerful portrayals of women in the tragedies - women whose lives and words show the tragic consequences of attempts to transcend the female, hence to ignore her as a "constant reminder of the diversity out of which the world was made and as a constant warning against the attempt to see the world as a uniform whole and, therefore, subject to simple answers and rational control".³

Her approach underlines the possibilities of an intense study of theme, subject, persons, structure of plot, language, level, story, etc. As most theatre makers know, that all this will necessitate, especially in an ancient play, the acquisition of knowledge as the premise for all attempts at approaches to directing. At the same time the point of departure should always consider the available text. Research of performance texts must prompt dramaturgical questions: What happens in the play? What constitutes "reality" in the play? Can we assume that the events are real but that it is still possible to discover situations which are hidden in the society's un-outspoken challenges?⁴ *Fear of Diversity* searches for contradictory ideologies in the mindset of the Ancient Athenian citizens and offers the „use value" as defined by Brecht.⁵

Nowhere is the quest for unity more powerfully argued than in Socrates' Callipolis, his "city in speech," in which all women of the guardian class are equal to men, and living together in private as Saxonhouse reminds us, for no one. "Here we see the true destruction of the female and her elimination from Callipolis as she dissolves into the male and the family dissolves into the city."⁶ Saxonhouse concludes that this heroic city has a "rather deathlike quality" - there is no creativity, no particular identities, male and female are obliterated, and a "masculine model of rational omnipotence has reigned to create a vision of monistic simplicity..."⁷

² *Ibidem*, p. 1.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

⁴ Heinz-Uwe Haus, *Re-Reading Ancient Greek Theater Texts*, Cyclos, Nicosia, 2005.

⁵ Brecht, Bertolt, *Brecht on Theatre. The Development of an Aesthetic*, Ed. and Trans. John Willet, Methuen, London, UK, 1964.

⁶ Saxonhouse, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 157.

This example shows that the question for finding the “hidden events” is to determine how things go wrong. How do ideas derived from the polis’ citizen, then extrapolated into ideological systems, turn into forces of dehumanization?

My own experiences with the texts of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides are saying that the abstract truth or magnificence of an idea can not be taken as a measure of its social utility.⁸ If the idea is not internalized in terms of meaning by the people, if it is not “clearly thought out on sound evidence,” it cannot operate in their lives as either good or true. Its abstract appeal will not convey meaning but only confusion.

2. *Self-determination and civic ideology*

In any case, memory (and its evidence) is “ideologized” per se; thus the reconstruction of a performance involves - most of all - a hermeneutic of transcendence in a sense that it invalidates the sources and tests them by determining new meanings. Characters - such as Oedipus, unknowingly - initiate all of the events that lead to catastrophe. “How can we free ourselves from the tyranny of fate?” “Is fate something that locks us into a certain cell from which we are unable to break free?”

“Is humankind not hindered by fate but asked to rise above its dictates to an exalted state of being?” These are questions that *Oedipus Rex* raises.⁹ They are lofty and timeless. What is so alien and provocative to us is an unwillingness to let other characters or circumstances shape his individual destiny. They are determined, even at the cost of their own lives, and sometimes the lives of others, to find a course of action that is true to their own natures and true to a value system as they understand it.¹⁰

Some of them, such as Hecuba, Creon, and Medea, make enormous errors of judgment. Others, such as Oedipus, are caught in such a tangled web that extrication is impossible. Some, such as Haemon and Antigone, give their lives to restore justice. For all of these tragic characters, there is great suffering in the actions that they choose, and through that suffering comes not only wisdom but also self determination. They have defined themselves.¹¹

Another example how a performance may have re-materialized the emotional memory of the polis members observing theatrical events is Euripides’ character of Heracles. One can imagine that the audience is

⁸ Heinz-Uwe Haus, *Re-Reading Ancient Greek ...* .

⁹ Heinz-Uwe Haus, *Notes on Directing*, Cyclos, Nicosia, 2007.

¹⁰ Helmetag, C., „Heinz-Uwe Haus’ Oedipus at Villanova,” in *Lo Straniero*, Naples, Italy, No. 32, 1999.

¹¹ Heinz-Uwe Haus, *Re-Reading Ancient Greek...* .

confronted with a changing perception of identity and diversity. The single male heroic figure of Heracles is quite unusual among the characters of the extant Euripidean corpus and Euripides' tragic treatment in the play of the heroic male identity marks a turning point in the literary tradition of the Heracles myth. In dramatizing the darkest and most difficult episode of the myth, namely Heracles' madness and murder of his wife and children, Euripides charts Heracles' progression from the conventional and inadequate heroic impulse to a new and morally more demanding response to human suffering. He also explores the tension between the expectations and conditioning of the heroic culture and those of civilian life, the gap between *oikos* and *polis* by giving equal emphasis in the plays first half to Heracles' role as *alexikakos* and savior to Hellas and to his love for, and sense of duty to, his family.

3. *Re-readings of Children of Heracles and Suppliant Women*

How a contemporary mindset can help to use its alienating potential for unexpected dramaturgical hints, is demonstrated by Daniel Mendelsohn in his 2002 study about gender and the city in Euripides' political plays.¹²

In the municipal *Dyonisia* it was the community itself which was the public and had assembled for the performance of a collective ritual act. The citizens of Athens were the witnesses of the history of their culture and, at the same time, the witnesses of those collapses in relation to post-ritual practice which we call theatre.¹³

A director's starting point is always to develop its own performance-conscious approach to the play to be able to narrate the story of the play. The extreme situations of his persons, the development of their characters by the grown self-responsibility vis-a-vis their fate provides abundant material to get out of the traditional intellectual mode of view with all its classical density and vulgar materialist superficiality. For this reason, the finding of a subject (the story-telling) and the methodical exercises to build up situations are part and aim of all dramaturgical analysis and stage rehearsals. Mendelsohn's focus on the "exit from the myth" encompasses the intellectual and social problems of Euripides' time. He argues that the women characters in tragic space transgress gender boundaries, their

¹² Daniel Mendelsohn, *Gender and the City in Euripides' Political Plays*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2002.

¹³ See Heinz-Uwe Haus, „Necessity versus Progress: Classical Greek Theatre and Equal Rights,” *The European Legacy*, June 2008, 13.3, pp. 317-324.

presence implicitly critiques or calls into question masculine political ideology, particularly when they appropriate male heroic identity.¹⁴

Pairings of contrasting females, such as the sacrificial virgin and the vengeful mother in *Children of Heracles*, provide “a coherent structural device with particular implications for political theorizing”.¹⁵ Mendelsohn envisions the same narrative movement from containment to disruption in both plays, which is embodied in contrasting feminine pairs: in the first part, males successfully control the intrusive female; in the second, feminine disorder schools the male to “play the other” and thereby achieve a fuller understanding of his world. Such negotiations dramatize the ways in which the other may threaten civic unity while at the same time showing the importance - indeed, the necessity - of diversity to the city.

Whereas Euripides’ political theorizing may be viewed as complicit in a patriarchal agenda, it is simultaneously inflected with a feminine dimension to suggest that democratic ideology “imposes itself at a considerable price.”¹⁶

Mendelsohn reads *Children of Heracles* as a drama of dislocation.¹⁷

His line of description is as following: The wandering Heraclides under the guidance of the aged Iolaus flee Argos and the tyranny of Eurystheus to seek asylum at Marathon. Deprived of heroic identity by old age and of civic identity by exile, Iolaus in his flight creates a political crisis resolved only by the sacrifice of an unnamed *parthenos*. This death heroizes the girl while at the same time feminizing the male (by now a familiar trope in Euripidean studies, as exemplified by Medea and Jason, Alcestis and Admetus). And yet her speech and her selfless gesture serve to “soften and redefine key terms of masculine heroism.”¹⁸ The maiden’s unseemly intrusion into the world of men becomes a model of “correct and appropriate civic ‘boldness’.”¹⁹ Since her sacrifice on behalf of her family ultimately contributes to the political stability of Athens, she may rightly be compared to the ephebe as she “stands beside” her death like a hoplite in formation (*paristasthai sphagei*, v. 502).

Like the maiden in *Children of Heracles*, Aethra must exploit masculine traits, in this case speech rather than valor, to ensure that feminine or cooperative values are upheld.

¹⁴ N. S. Rabinowitz, *Anxiety Veiled: Euripides and the Traffic in Women*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, N.Y., 1993.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 46.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

¹⁷ Laura McClure, “Daniel Mendelsohn, Gender and the City in Euripides’ Political Plays (Oxford, 2002)”, book review in *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 2003.09.10, pp. 20-41.

¹⁸ Daniel Mendelsohn, *Gender and the City ...*, p. 92

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 93.

In leaving the palace and confronting Theseus, she must also challenge male authority, and an aristocratic viewpoint, to effect change on behalf of a vulnerable group.²⁰

With Mendelsohn's dramaturgical approach the theatrical visibility of the play's political implications is obvious. It is about *gestus* and attitudes. Mendelsohn is right to underline, how Aethra successfully modulates her son's heroic and epic value system, convincing him to fight not only for his own good name, but for his city, and even all of Hellas. Thus, Aethra's plea for intervention effects a moral transformation in the male: she "softens...her son's outlook; he literally broadens his horizons."²¹

Like the maiden, she endorses only that heroic ethos that puts the group first. The religious context of Aethra's intrusion into male space and the appropriateness of her intervention as a mother and older woman makes her speak with authority.

Indeed, she states that it is her religious duty to remind Theseus to do what is *hosion* (40). She claims to represent the will of the gods (*ta ton theon*, 301) and to preserve the universal *nomos* of burial (310-11), a religious imperative not unlike that claimed by Sophocles' Antigone. The feminine transgression contained foreshadows the disruptive, and inexplicable, entrance of Evadne in the play's conclusion.

In Mendelsohn's view, her gesture - the only on-stage suicide in extant tragedy - implicitly critiques the notion of *euandria* embodied by her husband's death. Evadne's public proclamation of conjugal love as well as her refusal to submit to paternal control illustrate the dangers of the female incontinence. Like the maiden in *Children of Heracles*, she claims to die for the sake of *arete*, but she has redefined it in erotic terms. Her excellence as a wife consists of dying along with her husband rather than on behalf of her family, like that of the girl. Her heroic death mingles categories of living and dead, male and female, husband and wife; in so doing, it recalls the dangerous *symmeixis* of Oedipus that lurks in the play's mythic background.

The final feminine action enacts yet another gender reversal, forcing Iphis, her mourning father, to "play" Demeter (215-18). Only Athena-*ex-machina* can right this all-too-feminine world. Mendelsohn's overarching argument that the feminine modulates the state's "archaic, masculine and monolithically unitary modes (230-31)," ultimately persuades, his ability to bring to the surface some of "demonstrates" the profound similarities between the two plays. His analysis is truly compelling. McClure underlines in her review of Mendelsohn's study how both texts are suppliant dramas

²⁰ H. Foley, "The Politics of Tragic Lamentation," in A. Sommerstein et al. (eds.), *Tragedy, Comedy, and the Polis*, LevanteEditori, Bari, 1993, pp. 101-143.

²¹ Daniel Mendelsohn, *Gender and the City* ..., p. 170.

structured by reduplications “usage” using gender reversals. But as Mendelsohn is aware the gender reversal is only temporary: the sacrifice of the girl to Persephone unexpectedly rejuvenates the aged Iolaus. Taking the hoplite’s armor from the feminine interior of the temple, he reclaims his status as warrior. And yet this is not simply a recuperation of aristocratic heroism, but rather, the girl’s sacrifice effects a moral change in the old man.

Whereas in the play’s opening Iolaus voices a pre-democratic world view, rejecting the claims of the polis in favor of the *genos*, the death of the maiden instructs him in the ultimate democratic lesson, the importance of the ephebe’s sacrifice for the city. The final feminine intrusion of the wrathful Alcmene realizes and inverts the positive *thrasos* of the maiden; instead of teaching citizenship, she provides a lesson in how the unbridled female may endanger the well regulated polis.

Mendelsohn concludes, that the virgin sacrifice depicted in the *Children of Heracles* does not support patriarchal aims but rather validates the place of the feminine within the polis. The representation of conflicts between opposing feminine types, the pure virgin and the vengeful mother, combined with the reduplicative blurring of boundaries between masculine and feminine, dramatize the need for a balanced political and civic identity.²²

In the end, the goddess Hebe - youthful, virginal, but significantly not a mother - appears as a mediating force, an Argive who winds up as a protector of Athens. *Suppliant Women* “elucidates subtle unities within the play through analysis of another pair of contrasting feminine figures the mourning mother and the suicidal wife.”²³

When I directed the play in 1980 in Berlin it were exactly these “‘hidden’ suggestions for staging”²⁴ which seemed to be a precondition for an effective realization.

The Demetrian context especially suggests the symbolic significance of marriage and motherhood for the play.

At Eleusis, the suppliant band of Argive mothers seeking to recover the bodies of their slain sons confront Aethra, the mother of Theseus, while Evadne through suicide seeks to join her dead husband in the realm of Persephone. Whereas *Children of Heracles* emphasizes the daughter, Kore, to whom the maiden must be sacrificed, and with whom she was identified, *Suppliant Women* focuses on the importance of marriage and motherhood for the well-governed state. Aethra’s marriage to Aegeus provides a positive model for the integration of women into the city, in contrast to the careless exogamy of the Argive Adrastus.

²² See E. Hall, “The Sociology of Athenian Tragedy,” in P. E. Easterling (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997, pp. 93-126.

²³ McClure, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

²⁴ Heinz-Uwe Haus, „Griechisches Tagebuch”, unpublished.

Moreover, marriage as a joining of masculine and feminine may be effectively marshaled as a potent symbol for other forms of political integration (161). *Suppliant Women* dramatizes the perils of two different models of marriage, endogamy and exogamy, both with political ramifications. Adrastus' haste in selecting his daughter's suitors compromises the integrity of his city by involving Argos in the affairs of other states; indeed, it has led to the death of the Seven and their mothers' sad plight. His uncivilized and dangerously bestial (*thersin hos*, 145) form of exogamy betokens a feminine lack of self-control. In contrast, Theseus' principle of marriage within the clan, informed by the rhetoric of autochthony, expresses a hyper-masculine need for self-sufficiency. Both positions are shown to be untenable; Athens and Argos have failed to master self-other integration both domestically and politically.

4. *Scalpel of Dialectic*

Studying the effects of "binding observance" in human societies is just about all there is to the content of today's sociology. It is very like Socrates' "double ignorance", against which the scalpel of the dialectic was directed. Socratic dialogue is chiefly a process of liberation of the mind, more un-instruction than instruction, at least at first. For a society of "people", as in ancient Athens, while filled with the wonder of human qualities, also displays all the ugly symptoms of what Plato called "the involuntary lie in the soul" - the pride taken in popular forms of self-deception.²⁵

Knowing this problem of reception, the following five methodological objectives, developed with Brecht's instrumentation and as a demarcation to familiar errors, served for our rehearsals of *The Suppliant Women* as analytical and artistic guidelines at the same time: The events shall not pass with the inevitability of natural events; the performance shall not seek to mythologize the audience by offering itself to the spectators as gospel truth; attitudes shall be organized on the side of the spectators and shall not be left to "intuition"; the "outrage of the play" shall be expressed in present-day gestural references; the performance shall not blot out what is most amazing in the events: the contradiction between the statements of text and the behavior of characters.

We had to ask ourselves: to what end and what is reached with the self-representation of the community? How does the audience with its own experience can "come in-between"? We did not want to update ancient

²⁵ R. A. Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, 1989, 397 pp.

history by superimposing more suggestive and thus more comprehensible events of history. In the apparently unusual conflicts on a remote “royal level” it was expected to discover the common contradictions of tangible man with imaginable interests and class connections.²⁶

The remoteness of state action appears to be advantageous in order to objectively portray the events. What is worth seeing is the concrete contradictoriness in the behavior of the “history-making persons”, the process of decision-making for Theseus, e.g., questions of strategy and tactics in political processes, the revaluation of conventions, correlations between ideology and politics.

The self-representation of the polity of Athens involves topical experience: Faultiness self-portrayal does not lead to democratization. Euripides’ ability to perceive the contradictions, the inconsistencies in ancient society was, as evidenced by the likes of Mendelsohn the overarching social experience gained in the state of Athens at that time.

5. *Surprising attitudes*

What does the research of Saxonhouse and Mendelsohn, the critical comments of McClure and the reference to other scholars deliver for theatre making today? They all agree, although they do not say it explicitly, that the use of alienation effects by Euripides to make contradictions capable of experiencing is not confined to the chorus, but appears also in the construction of the characters and in the view of the proceedings. After the 1980 production of *The Suppliant Women* I asked myself “about the practical problem of an updated „dramaturging” of an ancient text. *Pathos* and *logos* - how do we bring these concepts together? This is the original question of bringing to mind the chorus and the tragedy. In *kommos*, the antiphony between chorus and individual actors, we have always been seeking for direct action. Only in this way was it possible to motivate the immediate and powerful emotions and to place them besides the reflections calling for utmost attention: those that go into the depth of human existence, penetrate politics and theology, and philosophy and interpretation of the law. Therefore, our concept for the beginning of the play appeared decisive. We noted before the rehearsals: “The beginning shall not be taken as a ritual (rhetoric) execution (convention). The entry into action has to show the activity of the chorus - the preconceived decision to make use of the Eleusis-festivity for a different purpose. (Every religious framework would be acceptable to them because all attempts have failed.)” From this came the proposal: Visibly exhausted the women returned from the temple their unsuccessful protest and action in Thebes. It appears to be of little use - at

²⁶ See Daniel Mendelsohn, „Arms and the Man,” *The New Yorker*, April 28, 2008, p. 74.

least insofar as rehearsals go - to arrange the opening ceremony, as evidenced by theatre history.

Here I touched upon the question of stylization and realism. Who is not reminded of Reinhardt's famous performances of tragedies in the 1920s, the photos of which show the eruptive suggestiveness of the mass direction, or the spoken choruses of the prolet cult, the choruses ranging from crescendo to the fortissimo, expressing the fanatic and trance like feelings in the movements as patterns for up-to-date productions. As an acting student I saw how Rondiris' work in 1962 still followed this tradition when he gave his guest performances with Aspasia Papathanassiou at the Deutsches Theater in Berlin. On the other hand, Brecht's *Antigone* tried to get along with any "passionateness". Were such different traditions of the chorus helpful or inhibiting for us in dealing with this classical work?

After years of directing Ancient Greek dramas regularly I can confirm that choral speaking can best be made reasonable and artistic by adopting a certain measure of irregularity in the flow of speech by making the sense conspicuous in a, more or less, syncopal manner.

Today the thesis is common good: speech is not rhetoric, but process. The rhythmic speaking of the chorus is part of the play's extant reality. It does not contradict the content (thus it won't give a thing for alienations by opposing effects, such as the classical form for Brecht's *Ungangster*), its regular form is directly related to the gestural material. Presumably, many words and phrases have been fixed, are often used in comparative situations, or used for different purposes. The chorus's rhythmic speaking is rendered habitually. Therefore, beware of spontaneous utterances! What has been said, was selected from a magnitude of possible phrases: it is a result. Therefore the gestural aspect has to be sought in the rehearsal process and in no other formulation. Only then can we find the (spontaneous) breaks. We should proceed in a way that line after line we get astonished at each word in order to obtain that mixture of real and elevated speaking that is demanded by the chorus aspect.

Story telling is to make people wonder. The researchers quoted make us think anew about the beginnings ascribed to women's surprising virtues and indispensable roles.

The patterns of treatment of the chorus have to be seen in their social and aesthetic context. Let us take Brecht. Undoubtedly, it was Wedekind's style of speech in acting that after Jessner had revolutionized dramatic art in Germany, and it was Steinrück's *Wozzeck* which had an extremely strong impression on young Brecht, while shaping his emotionless approach to the chorus. And the tendency suggested itself to attach the sonorous pathos and the festive way of performance of the cultic theatre even to other kinds of realistic theatre. The Brecht model provided sensible works rather than solutions. His stylization seeks for alienations in an artistic way which

should show the mode of the performance as the “very easiest”. And in a prologue to his *Antigone* on the occasion of the performance in Greiz that appeared only in 1951 he formulated the following on realistic art: “We ask you / to seek in your minds for similar deeds / of the immediate part or the absence / of similar deeds. And now / you will see us and the other actors / one and the other around the small arena / to enter in play, where once underneath the / animal skulls of barbaric cults / in far-away times humanity / rose to full height.”²⁷

No doubt it is continually difficult to bring *logos* and *pathos* into a relationship of tension, making possible the choreographic and musical transfer without eliminating dialectics that live on demarcation. The sense – “the social point”, as Brecht calls the quintessence of a story - can only be obtained by a textual interpretation of the old story which will find the interest here and today. Reading Saxonhouse and Mendelsohn has the “use value” of applicable knowledge and is needed for theatre making. The study of the texts, the peculiarity of writing of Euripides and the identified circumstances at the time of origin have shown graphically their close connection with the social development of the Athenian polis. Thus Euripides excluded virtually the ritual origin of his story, though he obliquely referred to it in their alienations, especially in the use of the chorus, when the play is noted for the “narrative development” of the conflicts, as it was described by Bernhard Reich, the expert on Brecht, in his Moscow 1928 lectures on the antiquities.²⁸

The events appear manifestly as historically grown events: projected against a “tragic epitaphios” (Zuntz) the action reveals at the same time the memorizing return connection with the ancient myths and the controversial emergence of a new historical consciousness which is evidenced in its process of development.

Indeed, how to *come- in-between* teaches us that human reason is constantly vulnerable to disruption by passion and prejudice. The *self-other integration* in Euripides’ plays projects both the claims of autonomy and the claims of duty and community, but, as Berkowitz once pointed out, „for the inevitable clash between these goods is not a reason for rejecting either but an occasion for more refined thinking”.²⁹

²⁷ Bertolt Brecht, *op. cit.*

²⁸ Haus, Heinz-Uwe, *Re-Reading Ancient Greek ...*

²⁹ Peter Berkowitz, “Feminism vs. Multiculturalism?; The Liberal Project at Odds with Itself,” in *The Weekly Standard*, November 1, 1999, p. 41.

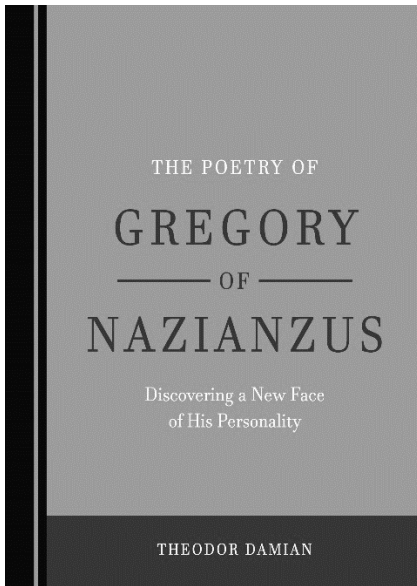
PERFORMANCES

1. *The Suppliant Women* by Euripides, Institut für Schauspielregie Berlin/Deutsch-Sorbisches Volkstheater Bautzen, premieres Bautzen, May 15, 1980, Berlin, May 25, 1980 (German)
2. *Antigone* by Euripides, International Workshop of Ancient Greek Drama, directed by Heinz-Uwe Haus / Nicos Shiafkalis, for the re-opening of the ancient Greek-Roman Theater of Oiniades / Messolongiou (Greece), premiere July 15, 1987 (multilingual: Greek, English, Japanese, German)
3. *Hecuba* by Euripides, DESMI Athens, directed by Heinz-Uwe Haus, on the occasion of the Athens Festival / First Cultural Capital of Europe, premiere Lycabettus Open Air Theater Athens, August 16, 1983 (Greek)
4. *King Oedipus* by Sophocles, University of Villanova, PA, USA directed by Heinz-Uwe Haus, premiere at Vasey Theatre, December 4, 1994 (English)
5. *Medea / Medea Material* by Euripides / Müller, American Shakespeare Theatre, New York / International Classical Theater, Berlin, directed by H.-U. Haus, premiere August 6, 2002, Anglican Church Naples, Italy (English)
6. *Iphigenia in Aulis* by Euripides, International Summer Institute of Ancient Greek Drama and Theatre, Cyprus, workshop-production, directed by Heinz-Uwe Haus / Nicos Shiafkalis, premiere at Ancient Roman Odeon, Paphos, August 3, 2005 (English)
7. *The Persians* by Aeschylus, International Summer Institute of Ancient Greek Drama and Theatre, Cyprus, workshop-production, directed by Heinz-Uwe Haus, premiere at Ancient Roman Odeon, Paphos, August 5, 2007 (English)
8. *The Persians* by Aeschylus, piccolo teatro Haventheater Bremerhaven, Germany, November 12, 2017 (German)

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Gregory of Nazianzus was a personality of first rank in the complex world of the 4th Christian century. Famous for his theological orations and for his role in the development of the Second Ecumenical Council in 381 in Constantinople, where he was the Patriarch of the Orthodox Church, he was one of the most celebrated poets of his time, even though today he is known in particular for his major contributions to the establishment of the Orthodox theology that was confronted with the heresies of the time.

This book will allow the reader to discover not the theologian, but the poet in Gregory, as his poetry is the place where one can see the all-too-human aspects of his personality. As such, it represents a significant contribution to scholarship on Gregory, bringing to light new and defining characteristics of his life, thought and practice.

“Theodor Damian does us a great service in this book by reminding us what a fine poet Gregory was. A well-known and successful poet himself, Prof. Damian is able to enter into the heart as well as the mindset of Gregory’s World” (John McGuckin)

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MAXIM (IULIU-MARIUS) MORARIU

The „society of machines” according to Virgil Gheorghiu (1916-1992)

Abstract. Important, and in the same time controversial personality of the Romanian exile from France, Virgil Gheorghiu (1916-1992) has offered a complex perspective on the understanding the social realities. The critics offered by him both to the Communism and the National-Socialism are followed by the ones to the Capitalist society, that he also sees as being perfectible. We have tried there to emphasized the way how he understands the Capitalist society in works like *The American Eye* and to speak about the way how his ideas can be prophetic. Aspects like: the trash society, the machine people, the substitution of the religion with a secular ethics are presented there in an attempt to summarize his complex vision of such a relevant topic.

Keywords: trash society, satellites, robots, censorship, clash of civilizations.

Important writer of the Romanian exile from France, and in the same time a controversial thinker, Virgil Gheorghiu (1916-1992) left a rich work consisting in more than 40 titles with a rich thematic diversity (some of them were published posthumously). Together with the critical analysis of Communism and National-Socialism¹ he will also have an original lecture of the Capitalism and its consequences. Books like *The Sacrifices of the Danube*,² *The Spy*,³ *God in Paris*,⁴ *The American Eye*,⁵ but also other like these ones come not only to speak about the way how the Communism have

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¹ For more information about this topic, see also: Iuliu-Marius Morariu, *Virgil Gheorghiu on Communism, National-Socialism and Capitalism*, Peter Lang Press, Berlin, 2022.

² Virgil Gheorghiu, *Sacrificaii Dunării*, Editura Sophia, București, 2020.

³ *Idem*, *L’Espionne – Roman*, Librairie Plon, Paris, 1971.

⁴ *Idem*, *Dumnezeu la Paris*, Editura Sophia, București, 2016.

⁵ *Idem*, *Ochiul American*, Editura Sens, Arad, 2019.

destroyed the countries from the Eastern part of Europe, making them to become „penitentiary republics,”⁶ but also to emphasizes the defects of the Capitalism.

Like many other of his contemporary thinkers, Gheorghiu does not believe in the existence of the ideal society. He even insists in his books on the fact that any way of political organization of the society makes it perfectible. Moreover, his vision develops in time and even changes. As a writer who took actively part in Antonescu's campaign entitled: “soldiers, I commend you to cross the Prut river!,” he will come in contact with Communism that he will hate for his entire life. As a diplomat in Zagreb in times of War, he will also have to see with his own eyes the National-Socialism, that critics will constitute an important part of his masterpiece, *The 25th Hour*⁷ and of his later books. Like many other Europeans, in the first following years after the war, he will share the hope that the Americans will help countries like Romania and will not let it to become a Communist satellite, a colony of the Russians. Somewhere in the 6th decade of the 20th century, when he will realize the fact that Yalta offered his country to the Soviets, he will be disappointed and, as expected, his works will contain critical passages not only in relationships with the Western democracy, but also with the American Capitalism. His reaction will be expressed through the attitudes like the one of Joseph Martin, the character representing an American scholar arrived in Bulgaria that will decide to stay there:

Martin read the label again. His hometown, one of the most civilized metropolises in the world, the city that over the centuries has spread so much light on earth, his city, now makes this new light: projectors to illuminate the emaciated bodies of prisoners, to illuminate the concentration camps of the Russians. The light made by the homeland of Joseph Martin, in 1956, the last form of light that his great civilized homeland from the West was still sending on earth...⁸

⁶ Cf. *Idem, Marele Exterminator și Marele Sinod Ortodox*, Editura Agaton, Făgăraș, 2008, pp. 11-12.

⁷ *Idem, La vingt-cinquième heure*, Les Editions du Plon, Paris, 1948. “In *25th Hour* there are no good and bad, the Americans are only apparently more civilized than their allies, the ‘liberating’ Red Army. To win a war, both sides resort to all possible strategies. The myth of international justice, of pacts of all kinds is deconstructed with each new bolgia that an innocent man crosses,” see Loredana Cuzmici, “Ora 25 – Destinul Internațional al unei cărți Românești ca Metaforă a Istoriei,” in *Conference Proceedings of the Annual International Symposium Organized by „A. Philippide” Institute of Romanian Philology*, Editura Academiei Române, București, 2015, p. 292.

⁸ *Idem, Sacrificații Dunării*, p. 42.

Later, in a book with autobiographical accents, he will use the voice of one of the main characters, representing the Communist regime, to define the Americans like a nation of merchants,⁹ while in another book he will even condemn the regime from the American camps where he had to stay for a while in Germany at the end of the war.¹⁰ Still, the book containing the most detailed critics of the American capitalism remains *The American Eye*.¹¹ Novel written in the second part of his life as a writer (published in 1972), it comes to provide details about the elements that he considers to be the weak points of the capitalism. While in books like *Dracula in Carpathian Mountains*, there will be also ironically placed references to the American understanding of the world,¹² in *The American Eye*, Gheorghiu will provide to the reader his own reflection on the capitalism developed by this society. Some of his older ideas related with the general approach of the capitalism, like the one of the “trash man¹³” will be there emphasized in a different and, under certain aspects, a convergent way. As the scholar who forwarded the first edition of the book emphasizes it:

In *The American Eye*, also published in Paris in 1972, the author, now twenty-three years older (than when he wrote *25th Hour*), denounces with even greater acuity and force the mechanisms and dangers of our artificial universe in full development and confronts two different and opposing worlds.¹⁴

The book has not only prophetic accents, but it is also remarkable for the deepness of the ideas expressed there and for its stylistical skills.¹⁵

⁹ “It is a nation of merchants. of financiers. Wealth, fame, power, are things that go to your head, that make you lose your mind more than alcohol. And the Americans because of their power and their glory lost their minds. They pushing back, a drunken man” (*Idem, L’Espionne*, p. 114).

¹⁰ “The original title of the book *Second Chance* was *Second Hand Life*. Why an English title? Simply because all the words - such as: suffering, imprisonment, torture, dispute, war, captivity - are in my normal language, common English and German words. We have experienced such suffering in Germans and Americans, and it was logical that the words that designate them should also be taken from their vocabulary” (*Idem, A doua șansă*, Editura Sophia, București, 2012, p. 5).

¹¹ For more information about its content, see: Iuliu-Marius Morariu, “Capitalismul ca pandemie sufletească – ‘Ochiul american’ și viziunea Părintelui Virgil Gheorghiu”, in Teofil Tia, Adrian Podaru (coord.), *Pastorația și filantropia creștină în vreme de pandemie? Șansă, povară sau normalitate identitară*, Editura Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca, 2021, pp. 411-419.

¹² Cf. Virgil Gheorghiu, *Dracula în Carpați*, Editura Sophia, București, 2020.

¹³ *Idem, L’Espionne*, p. 120.

¹⁴ ***, “Prefață. Omul cu al șaselea simț,” in Virgil Gheorghiu, *Ochiul American*, Editura Sens, Arad, 2019, p. 10.

¹⁵ “*The American Eye* is a novel at times subtle, when it takes the form of a theological idyll, and at times steep, when it intends to sound the alarm and denounce

The accent falls on the way how the technology can be used in the process of monitoring the society. In a society with deep archaic rhythms, an American navy comes to destroy everything, in an attempt to correct the so-called errors of the creation. The hidden purpose is the attempt to impose their style of life in that society. This one is defined by Gheorghiu as being the one of the “cybernetized mound”:

America created the civilization of the twentieth century on the model of Ford and General Motors. All civilized people, all citizens of this civilization are social parts, social screws, washers, nuts, which can be replaced. With such citizens-screws and citizens-nuts, the social machine spins at full speed. But here, in its planetary expansion, America encounters people who are not civilized, meets human beings who have remained personal, has not been part of an aggregate or another whole. Each of these persons is itself a whole. These uncivilized airs remained as they were when you came out of God’s hands. Each person is unique and irreplaceable, endangering the social machinery, washers and gears, which only accept standardized, standardized screws, according to international technical standards. To please America, human beings must become standardized units, human-looking STAS screws, nuts and washers, parts that can be changed at any time, that can be replaced and discarded after use, so that the Machine-Society works following the model of the cybernetized mound. Without any risk of interruption.¹⁶

Using this complex image, the Romanian writer attracts the attention on the fact that such a way of understanding the society, its role and its organization brings to the des-humanization. To the creation of a society of robots. This concept will, in fact, represent the keyword of his entire demarche. As he underlines, this idea of society is based on the total control, the disappearance of freedom and privacy, and it is, despite of its clothes, nothing else than another form of a dictatorship. In order to ensure the functionality of such a society, the Americans use satellites.¹⁷

the consequences of ignorance and unbelief. The author aims to guide the reader to the meditations and mysteries that technical and technological discoveries increasingly overshadow” (*Ibidem*, p. 12).

¹⁶ *Idem*, *Ochiul American*, p. 30.

¹⁷ “To avoid any risk of social breakdown, as good technicians, the Americans filled the sky with satellites. These satellites revolve around the sky like hunting dogs around game. Their hunt or prey is the entire planet, humanity. The mission of these celestial deer and hunters is to awaken individuals, nations, peoples, tribes. Awakening of the whole world. Get up, you sleepers of life, get up, underdeveloped, illiterate, get up, get out of the tropics, from the equator to the poles, get up, blacks, get up, blue-eyed, get up, locked up, get up, prisoners and clumsy and so on Raising

The purpose of such a society is to increase two important aspects: the consume and the production. In order to achieve both of them, they realize, as the Communist have done it before, a social levelling. In words that may look tough, the Romanian scholars emphasizes this aspect as it follows:

The Factory Society does not accept individuals, personalities. The paradise of technology, the paradise of computer science can only survive as long as the people of the earth become uniform, standardized, absolutely identical to each other, like the teeth of gears and the parallelism of the railways, like the parts of any car. People need to have uniform desires, uniform tastes, uniform needs, uniform breathing, uniform speed, uniform faith and so on. To standardize humanity, satellites spit messages day and night.¹⁸

Similarities with books that will later have an impact on the society, like Orwell's 1984 can be surely found there. Still, Gheorghiu's approach aim is not a sociological one, but rather a socio-religious. For this reason, when speaking about the robotics society he also insists on the behind aspects that can be found in its understanding. He therefore puts the accent on the way how the secularized society tries to provide also an eschatological perspective on life and society. Therefore, the utopic society created is understood as a paradise.¹⁹ Moreover, like in the Communist regime, for example, there is a form of censorship for the ones who disagree with the generally imposed principles,²⁰ fact that determines the reaction from the ones who come in contact with.²¹

everyone. Planetary social erection. Satellites awaken people as God will awaken the dead and the living - when the heavenly token sounds. Through their satellites, Americans spit messages from the sky. He spits them separately, for each continent, each race, giving everyone the chance to be swallowed by the Factory Society, by the multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and fantastically racial Heaven." *Ibidem*, p. 31. Cf. Iuliu-Marius Morariu, „Capitalismul ca pandemie sufletească – ‘Ochiul american’ și viziunea Părintelui Virgil Gheorghiu”, p. 416.

¹⁸ Virgil Gheorghiu, *Ochiul American*, p. 31-32.

¹⁹ "Ethnic paradise, electronic paradise, American paradise is gorgeous, irresistible, as beautiful as the Muslim paradise, with rivers of milk and honey, everyone is in a hurry to get there" (*Ibidem*, p. 34).

²⁰ "The reality is known only by the defeated, by the humiliated, by those "blocked in rank". They have no right to proclaim, to tell the truth. They have no right to speak. In the twentieth century, as an American poet Ezra Pound says, "Free speech without ree radio is as zero." The losers, the only ones who know the truth, do not have the right to speak on the radio. Only those who make the laws, the rich, the powerful, the victors, the owners of wars and peace speak on radio or television. But they never want to see the reality. Absolutely never" (*Ibidem*, p. 43).

²¹ Thus, the main character of the book criticises this aspect, insisting on the fact that they try to substitute God: "God is my Father and my Creator. He can look at me, I

The attempt to substitute God is clearly expressed by one of the characters of God in a discussion from the novel. Here, he insists on the fact that:

But I have an explanation, Captain. The Americans have taken the place of God. The stars twinkled, tinkered with, twisted and spun by them are so beautiful that we cannot distinguish them from the divine ones. They fly through the sky, on the moon, like angels ... Here they are able to stay on Mythos for twenty-five years, without feeding, without aging. They abrogated old age. Tomorrow or the day after tomorrow they will discover the elixir against death and they will be immortal.²²

The vision provided by Virgil Gheorghiu is a complex one and related with areas like spirituality. It is obviously that a writer who was, at the time of the release of the book priest for almost a decade, would see realities in a Christian key. But what it is more important is the prophetic vision that he has it in books like the *American Eye*. For sure, it is not only the American society the one that experiences what he presented there. And the entire society is not guilty for what happens. But, it seems that many of the aspects emphasized there in the 8th decade of the 20th century have been accomplished. For this reason, reading and understanding his book may surely offer also a solution in the overcoming of the crisis generated by the misunderstanding of the contemporary realities and the way how they influence our life. Although the generalization used by him can be criticized and his vision may be debatable, at least some of the ideas expressed by the priest and writer Virgil Gheorghiu, the most translated Romanian writer of literature from all the times (his books have been translated in more than 40 languages), can be used and speak also to the contemporary people.

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am not ashamed of Him, who looks at me as a parent. But Americans are not my father. Not even my creator. Neither does my God. They have no right to look at me. Looking at me, their eye soils me, stains me, violates my nudity ... I feel as if I were locked naked in a cell and constantly observed by the guards. The American eye is the eye of Judah" (*Ibidem*, p. 56).

²² *Ibidem*, p. 77.

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Heinz-Uwe Haus
and Theatre Making in
Cyprus and Greece



Edited by
Heinz-Uwe Haus
Daniel Meyer-Dinkgräfe

This book presents to the reader a selection of the considerable amount of material written and published in relation to Heinz-Uwe Haus's productions of Brecht's plays and Brechtian productions by other dramatists, especially ancient Greek drama, in Cyprus and Greece since his production of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* marked the launch of the Cyprus National Theatre in 1975 after the country's political turmoil that had culminated in the Turkish invasion. This includes material written by Haus at the time for his cast, announcements of the productions in the media, newspaper reviews and academic articles about the productions, conference contributions, and reflections by cast members (both professional actors and university faculty) and designers (set, costume, light, music). His work in Cyprus and Greece led to further collaborations on productions of ancient Greek plays across the world.

GABRIELE ECKART

Haunted by the Past: Wolfgang Hilbig's Affinity for William Faulkner's Texts

Abstract: Both Faulkner and Hilbig tell a story about a society that they knew well and that does not exist anymore. By doing so, they examine the atmosphere of a specific place in that society (Sutpen's Hundred and Germania II) as they remember it – with its smells, its sounds, its ghosts, and the absurd aspects in the lives of the communities around. Since Hilbig started to read Faulkner and praise him in interviews and letters shortly after the Fall of the Wall and since the similarity in the aesthetics is so strong, we can assume that Hilbig's late novels and narratives, including *Alte Abdeckerei*, are inspired by Faulkner's novels.

Keywords: William Faulkner, Wolfgang Hilbig, The German Democratic Republic, Berlin, storytelling.

William Faulkner wrote *As I Lay Dying* while working night shifts in the power house at the University of Mississippi, shoveling coal and writing in the breaks in between (see Hamblin). The late GDR writer Wolfgang Hilbig, now recognized as the most important literary voice of this country that came to an end with the Fall of the Wall in 1989, wrote *Abwesenheit* and other significant literary texts while working shifts as a stoker in factories in the industrial landscape south of Leipzig. Asked about literary influences, Hilbig always pointed to the German romanticists, especially E.T.A. Hoffmann, and to William Faulkner. While much scholarly work has been published on Hilbig's affinity and references to German Romanticism, there is almost nothing about his affinity to Faulkner. However, that Hilbig's aesthetics can be compared to Faulkner's is not hard to see. Both writers' texts have in common the radical exposure of the absurd aspects of the community they live in, seemingly endless sentences, and (in all of Hilbig's and some of Faulkner's novels) a modernist destruction of the omniscient narrator. My study focuses on the first aspect and examines the ways in

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which both writers explore and expose the geographical and cultural space they live in. On closer scrutiny, it appears that there is a gothic dimension to this space; gothic elements intrude into an otherwise realist narrative. The communities that Faulkner and Hilbig describe are haunted by the past — specters of American racism (in Faulkner’s case) and the Nazi past as well as the GDR’s communist experiments (in Hilbig’s). In both cases this past is depicted as a dimension that hints at the arbitrary powers of the collective unconscious in people’s lives.

I will choose Hilbig’s narrative *Alte Abdeckerei (Old Rendering Plant)* (1991) and Faulkner’s novel *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936) for my comparison. In Hilbig’s text, using the technique of stream-of-consciousness, a nameless first-person narrator reflects on his walks in his hometown during late afternoons in the month of November. Most of the time, he followed a brook that led into a dead landscape sprinkled with rotting buildings in a former industrial area called Germania II. One of the decaying buildings is the shaft of a mine in which soft coal had been extracted from the earth. Since the narrator knows this area well from exploring it during his childhood, his walks evoke memories of his own life as well as events of German history during the 20th century. On his last walk in November 1989, a mine cave-in happens in front of his eyes that tears down the area of Germania II; it disappears into the ground. No doubt, since in November 1989 the Wall came down, the disappearance of Germania II (“Germany II”) represents the collapse of the GDR. In the end of the text, Hilbig’s narrator destroys the words “Alte Abdeckerei” so that the reader can experience the destruction also linguistically: “alte Abdeckerei... Altdeckerei... Alteckerei... Alteckerei... Alterei...”¹ In the English translation of Hilbig’s text by Isabel Fargo Cole - some of Hilbig’s alliterations getting lost - it reads: “old rendering plant... old rendery... olrendery... dendery... endery...”²

The story in Faulkner’s novel about three families of the American South before, during, and after the Civil War is also told entirely in flashbacks, narrated mostly by Quentin Compson to his roommate at Harvard University, Shreve. At its center, there is the story of the rise and fall of Thomas Sutpen. Born into poverty in West Virginia, he comes to Mississippi with the aim of gaining wealth and starting a dynasty. He succeeds in creating a large plantation called Sutpen’s Hundred. However, as you know from reading the novel, it all ends in disaster mainly due to

¹ Wolfgang Hilbig, *Alte Abdeckerei*, S. Fischer, Frankfurt am Main, 1991, pp. 116-117.

² Wolfgang Hilbig, *Old Rendering Plant*, Transl. Isabel Fargo Cole, Two Lines Press, San Francisco, 2017, p. 108.

racial bias and the aftermath of the American Civil War. One son kills the other who has partially African blood; the mansion falls into decay.

Reading both texts parallel, I noticed first that they are filled with signs of a recent war, for example, in Faulkner's novel the skeleton of Rosa's father who had nailed himself into the attic in order not be drafted into the Confederate Army. Hilbig's text is full of ruins of former factories where ammunition and other war material were produced; and there is the disturbing site of a ramp from which people were transported to the place of their extermination during the war, as the narrator was told by his grandfather. I also noticed a strong similarity between the atmosphere of the Sutpen family's doomed, decaying mansion with missing or rotten floor planks and a cracked ceiling and the atmosphere in and around Hilbig's old rendering plant. Sutpen's house with its sagging portico, scaling walls, shattered windows, and half-toppled chimneys, surrounded by rotting fences and a jungle of shrubs, seems haunted. A murderer is hiding in it; people can feel his presence. Although nobody ever met or reported any ghost, a wagon with people from Arkansas tried to stop and spend the night in the house and then, suddenly, fled for a reason that they did not tell. In Hilbig's narrative, besides the eerie old rendering plant where dead and sick animals have been made into soft soap, also the description of the site of the ramp makes you shudder - a crumbling, half overgrown old structure of concrete. There, one day, in a hallucination, the narrator sees something that he calls more than shadows: "wirkliche Gestalten waren plötzlich über das Geröll auf die Rampe zugewankt... wirkliche Stimmen grollten, in fremden rollenden Dialekten, und wurden immer lauter, ich wußte nicht mehr, ob der Schrei, den ich gehört hatte, wirklich aus meiner Kehle gekommen war."³ ("real figures suddenly staggered across the debris and onto the ramp... real voices grumbled in strange rolling dialects, and grew louder and louder, and I wondered whether the cry I'd heard had really emerged from my throat").⁴ (p. 13). These "real figures" are the ghosts of Jews and Eastern European foreign workers or prisoners of war who were loaded on trains at this ramp during the Third Reich. When the narrator was told in his childhood that Jews were killed and made into soap in German concentration camps he could not but envision the corpses of animals that were dragged into the old rendering plant as the corpses of Jewish people. As in Faulkner's novel, Hilbig's text undercuts any clear demarcation between empirical and imaginary topography. And the place (Sutpen's mansion and the old rendering plant) functions in both texts as a hinge that links the temporal realms of present and past narrative sequences.

Importantly, both texts with their central motifs of ruins, decay, and ghosts have been interpreted as allegories, Faulkner's as an allegory of the

³ Hilbig, *Alte Abdeckerei*, pp. 17-18.

⁴ Hilbig, *Old Rendering Plant*, p. 13.

Old South; Hilbig's as an allegory of the rise and fall of the GDR. Both writers created their texts under similar circumstances – at a time when the past is still present and constantly in a state of revision by the people who tell and retell the story. According to myth, mainly the “carpetbaggers” were responsible for the misery people are living in now (the time in which the events are narrated) — in Faulkner's case the Yankee capitalists from America's North, in Hilbig's case the capitalists from West Germany who came to the East after the Fall of the Wall and grabbed what was left intact of its broken-down economy. Contradicting this myth, Faulkner and Hilbig claim that the collapse of both systems in 1865 and in 1989 necessarily reflected their weaknesses; they are to blame themselves for their downfall. As Hans Löfgren states about *Absalom, Absalom!*, “the Old South comes to an end, not through its defeat by the Union, but through its own self-destructive process.”⁵ The same must be said regarding Hilbig's *Old Rendering Plant* about the end of the GDR. In Faulkner's Old South, this self-destructive process has to do with the fact that black people were slaves — that means regarded as nothing “but pieces of property” (Markowitz 108). Therefore, to give just one example, when Thomas Sutpen proves unwilling to honor his marriage to a part-black woman, not a human being according to this ideology, he sets in motion his own destruction. When the East German state continues to make undesired people “disappear” after World War II as the Nazis had done before with dissidents (according to rumors, the much-feared East German State Police had a secret center of operation in the industrial area of Germania II) it loses the trust of its citizens, also that of the working class in the name of which it claims to rule. In other words, when the East German State proves unwilling to practice democracy, it sets in motion its own destruction.

As was said before, in both writers' texts uncanny aspects of the past are not erased but acknowledged through the act of storytelling. However, Faulkner's and Hilbig's ghosts and other uncanny phenomena have roots in the reality of both worlds, as for instance, the murderer Henry hiding in the attic of Sutpen's mansion – unknown to people in town who think that there are ghosts. In Hilbig's novel, the ground underneath the old rendering plant is hollow as the result of decades-long excavation of coal in now-abandoned mines. After the war, the deep holes were filled with the rubble of houses that had been destroyed by aerial bombing; therefore, you could not fall in easily. However, the ground was also not stable; every moment, somebody or something could disappear. In addition, who-knows-what people might be hiding there. There are rumors about Sprungfedermänner (men on

⁵ Hans Löfgren, “Race and narration in *Absalom, Absalom!*” in Gunilla Florby, Karin Aijmer (eds.), *Lines and Traces: Papers presented to Lennart Björk on the occasion of his 70th birthday*, Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis, Göteborg, p. 84.

springs) and other ghosts hiding at Germania II. As Quentin in Faulkner's text was told as a child not to go to the Sutpen family's haunted house, Hilbig's narrator was told not to go to Germania II because the ruins offered the ideal hiding place for those "die das Licht der Öffentlichkeit zu scheuen hatten" ("who had to hide from the law").⁶ Such prohibitions created what Freud calls "das Unheimliche" (the uncanny) in the child's imagination that, since it happened to many, led to a collective unconscious ridden by anxiety. As Bärbel Heising points out regarding Hilbig's text, "durch die Zerstörung des gesellschaftspolitischen Systems verlieren die Verdrängungsmechanismen ihre Basis, auf der sie wirksam werden konnten" ("through the destruction of the political system, the mechanisms of repression lose the basis on which they could become effective")⁷ – those mechanisms loosened, what was suppressed breaks free, streaming into Hilbig's narrator's sentences. The same process took place after the American Civil War; the collective unconscious of the Old South set free, it streamed into Rosa Coldfield's and the other narrators' discourse.

In both texts, also the descriptions of smell strongly indicate how traumas of the past are written into a geographical space. One of Faulkner's narrators, for instance, while describing what is left of Sutpen's mansion, remembers the smell of desolation and decay as if it was built not of wood, but of flesh. While the smells of the old house in *Absalom, Absalom!* are mainly unpleasant, in Hilbig's description of the old rendering plant and the weed-choked area around it (poisoned by industrial sewage and smut) it stinks pestilentially. The stench comes mainly from the scent of corpses of animals that was penetrating the air around the plant and even the town because the scent had drenched the clothes of the men who were working in the plant and after work came home into their poor neighborhoods without the luxury of showers. However, there is one important difference: while the smell of decay in Faulkner's text alternates with the pleasant smells of blooming wisteria and cigars, Hilbig's narrator remembers only stench. In a recent study of Hilbig's novel it has been mentioned that his aesthetics are shaped by the fact that by remembering the past, the narrator becomes overpowered by the sensual impressions he remembers that are "aus dem Zusammenhang der Naturphänomene gelöst" ("taken out of the context of natural phenomena").⁸ The same must be said about Faulkner's novel. In chapter five, Rosa Coldfield thinks: "That is the substance of remembering – sense, sight, smell: the muscles with which we see and hear and feel – not

⁶ Hilbig, *Alte Abdeckerei*, pp. 61-62.

⁷ Bärbel Heising, "Briefe voller Zitate aus dem Vergessen": *Intertextualität im Werk Wolfgang Hilbigs*, Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main, 1996, p. 145.

⁸ Maximilian Nahrgang, "Romantischer Malstrom und Entgrenzung: Dimensionen klanglicher Mittel in *Alte Abdeckerei*," in Norman Kasper, Gert Theile (eds.), *Asozialität und Aura: Wolfgang Hilbig und die Romantik*, Wilhelm Fink, Leiden, 2017, p. 114.

mind, not thought: there is no such thing as memory: the brain recalls just what the muscles grope for [...]"⁹ Surely, Hilbig who read Faulkner before he wrote *Old Rendering Plant* took to heart this thought that Faulkner put into Rosa's mouth. Besides smell, Faulkner and Hilbig like to describe sounds; consider, for instance, Rosa's memory of "the slow, maddening rasp. rasp. rasp. of the saw"¹⁰ when the men on the plantation hastily made the coffin for Charles Bon, who was just murdered by his half brother. Important sounds described in Hilbig's text are the creaking, crunching, squeaking, clinking, clashing, and clattering sounds of the train wagons when the dead and half-dead (still screaming) animals are unloaded at the ramp next to the rendering plant; it is the sound of hell.

During my second parallel reading of Faulkner's and Hilbig's texts, while swinging through their long, winding sentences of a powerful music, I noticed a striking similarity between some of the main protagonists regarding their ethnic identity. Charles Bon in Faulkner's novel has some African blood; Hilbig's first-person narrator feels insecure in his town because his family has Polish roots; he worries that people consider him and members of his family as not real German. In fact, due to their "mixed blood," both protagonists are to some degree outsiders in the cultural space they live in, and mainly with the help of this view from outside, both writers enable their narrators to perceive and describe the absurd aspects of the communities they live in. In 2002, Hilbig pointed out in a letter to Claudia Rusch how important it is to grapple in a literary form with the disappeared GDR.¹¹ He writes:

Ist es nun nicht vorstellbar, dass wir uns in einer ähnlichen Lage befinden, wie Faulkner: auch wir blicken doch auf ein verlorenes Land zurück, in dem wir aufgewachsen sind, an das wir uns aber nur noch erinnern können. Wird dieses verlorene Land nicht eigentlich zu einem poetischen Land?

Is it not possible to imagine that we are in a similar situation as Faulkner was? We also look back at a lost land in which we had grown up and which now only exists in our memories. Does this lost land not become a poetic land?)¹²

⁹ William Faulkner, William, *Absalom, Absalom! The corrected text*, Vintage, New York, 1990, p. 115.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 121.

¹¹ Birgit Dahlke, *Wolfgang Hilbig*, Wehrhahn, Erlangen, 2011, p. 117.

¹² Quoted in Dahlke, *op. cit.*, pp. 117-118.

In other words, Hilbig told East German writers after the German reunification: Remember as much as you can and put it on paper before everything goes down the drain! As Birgit Dahlke puts it,

Auf Faulkner war Hilbig schon 1994 im Zusammenhang mit dem Schreiben über 'ein untergehendes oder unsichtbar gewordenes Land wie die DDR' zu sprechen gekommen. Er sieht geradezu eine literarische Pflicht darin, die Atmosphäre in dem Land, das nur noch in der Erinnerung bestehe, vor dem Vergessen zu bewahren.

(Already in 1994, Hilbig talked about Faulkner when he reflected on writing about a collapsing country that is becoming invisible like the GDR. He considers it downright as a duty of a writer to preserve the atmosphere in this country that only exists in memory from being forgotten.)¹³

The critic points out that, according to Hilbig, also the feelings of helplessness and fury were part of this atmosphere that must be remembered. While reading Faulkner's and Hilbig's texts for the second time, it became clear to me that the narrators' memories of the feelings of helplessness and fury to a high degree relate to the prejudices of many people towards those who do not have "pure blood" (be that pure blood considered as white as in Faulkner's Old South or German as in Hilbig's East Germany). According to the points of view of several narrators in both texts, these prejudices towards others strongly contributed to the downfall of both the Old South and the GDR.

During my second reading, it also occurred to me that there is another important similarity in their aesthetics. Besides Faulkner's and Hilbig's critical examination of the two – now disappearing – societies they had grown up in, there is the "Zugriff auf etwas Darunterliegendes, etwas Archaisches, was sich oftmals nur in Trauer, Absurdität und Verzweiflung äußert" ("grasp at something that lies underneath, something archaic that is often expressed only in grief, absurdity, and despair") as Peter Geist¹⁴ calls it regarding Hilbig. The same attempt to grasp that archaic something (perhaps, we could interpret it as a kind of Nemesis like in Greek tragedies) that lies underneath the failed lives of the inhabitants of Hilbig's community can be seen in Faulkner's novel. An example of the absurd is Colonel Sutpen's ordering the two marble tombstones from Italy in the middle of the Civil War after word has reached him that his wife died. Mules and soldiers must go out of their way to drag the heavy blocks of marble across the battlefields, even at Gettysburg, until finally there is a chance to send them home to Sutpen's Hundred in Mississippi. While one of Faulkner's narrators

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 118.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

calls it “Fate,”¹⁵ Hilbig’s first-person narrator avoids giving this condition of absurdity a name. Probably, Hilbig also was attracted so strongly to Faulkner because he sees him as a great apocalyptic visionary of the kind he is himself.

To sum up, both Faulkner and Hilbig tell a story about a society that they knew well and that does not exist anymore. By doing so, they examine the atmosphere of a specific place in that society (Sutpen’s Hundred and Germania II) as they remember it – with its smells, its sounds, its ghosts, and the absurd aspects in the lives of the communities around. Since Hilbig started to read Faulkner and praise him in interviews and letters shortly after the Fall of the Wall and since the similarity in the aesthetics is so strong, as we have seen, we can assume that Hilbig’s late novels and narratives, including *Alte Abdeckerei*, are inspired by Faulkner’s novels.

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¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

BOOK REVIEWS

ODILE POPESCU

European Identity and Western Freedom – Notes on a book to strengthen the spiritual defense of the country

Eds. Johann Frank and Johannes Berchtold, *Fundamente von Freiheit und Sicherheit in Europa [Philosophical Foundations of Freedom and Security in Europe]*, Duncker & Humblot, Berlin, 2023, 384 pp. (German)

The latest publication of the Austrian National Defense Academy / Institute for Peacekeeping and Conflict Management, Vienna, *Fundamente von Freiheit und Sicherheit in Europa [Philosophical Foundations of Freedom and Security in Europe]* (Duncker & Humblot, Berlin, 2023, 384 pp.), is the work of 10 prominent Austrian, German, Swiss and Greek military scientists, philosophical scholars, and experts of European affairs, which analyze in 13 essays how the political culture and the cohesion of the European Union are being challenged by history. Its subjects are highly topical in view of the recent developments in the EU and on the continent. Let me quote a recent statement by the NATO Foreign Ministers from their meeting in Romania, November 29-30, 2022, focusing on the urgent challenges of today: “We are gathered in Bucharest, close to the shores of the Black Sea, at a time when Russia’s ongoing invasion of Ukraine threatens Euro-Atlantic peace, security, and prosperity. Russia bears full responsibility for this war, a blatant violation of international law and the principles of the UN Charter. Russia’s aggression, including its persistent and unconscionable attacks on Ukrainian civilian and energy infrastructure is depriving millions of Ukrainians of basic human services. It has affected global food supplies, and endangered the world’s most vulnerable countries and peoples. Russia’s unacceptable actions, including hybrid activities, energy blackmail, and reckless nuclear rhetoric, undermine the rules-based international order.” Without a doubt from Bucharest to Tallin, in Oslo, Athens, Madrid or Warsaw the people of the free European nations never cared more since 1945 - the end of the 2nd World War - and 1989/90 - the Peaceful Revolution in Eastern and Central Europe - about the stability of the foundations of freedom and security on the continent. Up to now the world experiences how the NATO and the European Union have, to a large extent, responded effectively in the first months of the war, balancing increasingly strong support to Ukraine with a justified reluctance to avoid open conflict with Russia, has been more or less vindicated. The majority of European countries

turned to the tried and tested protective security umbrella of NATO, backed by American military capabilities. The G7 and EU have proven agile in tightening sanctions. But, as the aggression continues, with Russia concentrating its efforts on gaining control of eastern and southern Ukraine via a war of attrition, Western unity is being tested. Divergent interpretations over dimensions and times of sanctions against Russia for example illustrate this problem. The editors of this publication, Johann Frank and Johannes Berchtold, point out that it is high time to re-affirm and to deepen and strengthen the pan-European unity through advancing the causes of peace, reconciliation, democracy and human rights in every member state as well as in the actions on EU level. The wide range of this book's topics – from the definition of individual freedom, law, morality, order, education, sovereignty, and war to the role of social media in totalitarian mindsets for example – emphasizes their indubitable “functional value”. Each proves that changing circumstances ask for investigating familiar positions and correcting possibly opinions of yesterday. The striking diverse intellectual attitudes of the essays encourage the reader to use his own knowledge and experience to discover, how the current crisis also highlights other core questions that the EU has, so far, dodged or not discussed with the necessary rigor (often driven by a hybrid of nationalist and/or traditional pro-Russian and/or anti-American positions). All contributors – Johann Frank, Johannes Berchtold, Max Gottschlich, Allan Guggenbühl, Heinz-Uwe Haus, Klaus Honrath, Herfried Münkler, Theodoros Penolidis, Peter Sloterdijk, Daniel Wurm – search for the broadest possible political unanimity and agree in the strengthening of the spiritual national defense. But the texts of Peter Sloterdijk, Herfried Münster, Theodoros Penolidis and Heinz-Uwe Haus are the backbone of the projects goal thanks to their unique basic attitude: enabling “thinking capable of intervention” (Brecht).

The book, published a year after the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, documents how the key to NATO's as well as the European unifications's success over more than six decades were their ability to adapt to changed circumstances. Russia violently changing the borders in Europe is one such change, “which hopefully brings back to reality,” as Heinz-Uwe Haus remarks in an interview for this article, “even conservative Austrian isolationists or other ‘Brussels haters’ in Italy or Germany or elsewhere”.

Haus, internationally known as theatre director of Brecht, Shakespeare and Ancient Greek plays, who was politically active involved in the 1989/90 Peaceful Revolution in Germany, participates since then as a cultural scientist in the discourse on the European integration process, the European Union, its institutions, and policies (for example in his books *Awakening 89*, BoD, Norderstedt, 1992; and *Heinz-Uwe Haus on Culture and Politics*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018.) It is obvious, that he is the only author of this group of ten who has lived under communist rule and

fought to achieve the “return to Europe” (as Vaclav Havel qualified the resistance against the Soviet occupation in his famous speech in Strasburg 1992). This may explain his positive view on the need and fruits of “Americanisation” and “Westernisation” before and after the fall of the Wall. For this publication he co-authored with Johannes Berchtold the chapter “The EU between a confederation of states and a federal state”, and wrote together with Berchtold and Allan Guggenbühl the subsection “Cultural initiative instead of defensive”. His chapter “Culture and identity in the context of security policy” investigates the steady rise in the number of dramatic events which threaten the security of many states that have established their security systems on the basis of their traditions and in harmony with their culture, above all law. “Self-reflection is in order: What constitutes the intellectual groundwork of Europe? What are we obliged to defend? That is the most urgent question to build unity and resistance against the Russian imperialism.” (Haus in an interview with *Ukrainian News*, February 16, 2023). Haus’ research and presentation methods are like sand in the gears of usual thinking, in other words: thought provoking. He enjoys to historicize the impact of the liberated nations on the dynamics of the enlarged EU and insists in their recognition as part of their identity, a fact some of the other authors may not have on their radar. He, on the other hand, emphasizes their importance as driving forces for the future. His descriptions of the role of Jazz music in Poland, East Germany and all over the Eastern block during the division of the continent as a weapon against Socialist realism reminds the reader of (too often neglected) revolutionary cultural roots of the after 1989-EU. His dialectical appreciation of the Greek composer’s Mikis Theodorakis work and its impact on modern nation-building is another example of an unused potential of experiences for creating and stabilizing re-newed EU family relations. He also explains Estonian, Czech and Romanian ventures to which the pre-1989-EU has to live up to secure its successful existence. Haus warns, how the democratic decline in the U.S. and Europe is weakening the transatlantic relationship and undermining its influence around the world. He enforces a dialogue with some of his fellow contributors in the presence of the readers. That way the reader never gets tired to join the communication. Peter Sloterdijk, the controversial philosopher, once a follower of leftwing doctrines and skeptic of the German unification, too, invites with his chapter “Security structures in the shadow of a great power” to experience history’s power of persuasion and its positive effects. From Heraklit to Jihadism he spans the arc. He strongly believes in the changeability of the given. Theodoros Penolidis succeeds in making a most theoretical theme accessible: “The State: Moral Community or Contractual Construct”. He takes as starting point Hegel’s legal philosophy and makes it understandable how the state can only function as self organization of the will to freedom. His hobbyhorse seems to be the interconnectedness of development and reason. Herfried Münkler’s

“Security Policy Models for a Europe of the Future” concludes with “real-political perspectives in the service of national defense” (p. 10), as the editors underline. Despite differing views on the topics, there is agreement on the requirements. What makes this book so special is that despite even differing views on the issues one is united in the need to move with the times. The fact that Europe’s origin from Athens, Jerusalem and Rome is also known again and again, is the unifying indispensable bond.

In summary: The volume offers an academic survey of the challenges of cultural identity. It develops the philosophical foundations of European freedom, whose recognition is essential to the strengthening of Europe’s agency and resilience. In light of the Russian invasion, the gravest threat to Euro-Atlantic security in decades, and in line with NATO’s Strategic Concept, the analyzes and descriptions urge all EU-member states to implement in solidarity a new baseline for their deterrence and defense posture by significantly strengthening it and further developing the full range of robust, combat-ready forces and capabilities. This publication is an important basic work on the security perspective after the end of the post-cold war international legal order in Europe. It determines the European conception of freedom with its essential concretizations as the basis of Western defense readiness. Each essay is intended as a contribution to this goal.

One can only hope that the book will find many readers and contribute to securing peace, freedom and solidarity on the old continent.

MAXIM (IULIU-MARIUS) MORARIU

Volker E. Menze, *Patriarch Dioscorus of Alexandria - the Last Pharaoh and Ecclesiastical Politics in the Later Roman Empire*, col. „Oxford Early Christian Studies”, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2023, 240 pp.

Published in the notorious Oxford University Press Collection “Oxford Early Christian Studies” coordinated by Gillian Clarck and Andrew Louth, Volker E Menze’s monograph dedicated to the Patriarch Dioscorus of Alexandria is not only an useful tool in the field of the history of the church, both has also an inter-disciplinary value. Therefore, it can be read both by a theologian, a philosopher, a scholar specialized in areas like geopolitics, political theology, or other categories of literature.

The author himself, who is associate professor for Late Antique History at Central European University in Budapest, has a rich background in the field and it is recognized by the scientific environment by his previously works.

Segmented in four big thematic unities and accompanied by a rich bibliography, a list of abbreviations, an index, and a conclusion meant to valorize the posthumously heritage of the presented one, the book comes to provide a valuable contribution in the field of the scholarship dedicated to this temporal area. As Volker underlines, the aim of his demarch is nor to accuse or to defend Dioscorus, but rather to offer a distant evaluation of his work, life and message based on the previously published research. From the beginning, he insist on the fact that his demarch aim is to analyze critically the literature published before him and in the same time to bring light on certain aspects that were still having historiographical lacks or shadows. Thus, as he says:

Most studies therefore fail to address historical questions of how to understand the Council of Chalcedon, including the motives and strategies of the different protagonists and so forth. The present book attempts to reconstruct the historical Dioscorus as a preeminent ecclesiastical politician of the fifth century based on the surviving evidence and his conflicting commemorations. While sources are not abundant enough to write a full biography, sufficient textual evidence survive to allow for reconstructing parts of his career and endeavors as patriarch and place him within the ecclesiastical history of Alexandria, the influence of which peaked under his leadership in 449–450 (p. 9).

After the presentation of the way how Dioscorus was understood in the history of the Christianity (pp. 11-38), he brings into attention the way how he became the successor of St. Mark as Patriarch of Alexandria (pp. 39-88). Later, in the 3rd part of the demarch, he brings into debate his role in the organization and the conclusions of what it is known in history as the ‘Robber-Council’, namely the council that took place in Ephesus in 449 (pp. 89-150). The last part of the monograph insists on Dioscorus’ Deposition (pp. 151-185), while in the conclusion the posthumous reception is brought into attention. Therefore, the author insists there on aspects like the “three chapters controversy” and the way how this moment had something to say about the image of the former Patriarch. He therefore emphasizes the fact that:

During the Three Chapters Controversy in the 540s, Dioscorus became a prominent protagonist attacked by Chalcedonians. In his letter To Alexandrian Monks (written sometime between 539 and 542), Emperor Justinian (527–565) condemned Dioscorus even more vigorously than Marcian did by establishing a heresiology from the third-century Mani via Apollinarius straight to Dioscorus and his successor, Timothy Aelurus. Justinian’s intention was the same as Marcian’s: by setting up the Mani-Apollinarius-Dioscorus-heresy in opposition to Athanasius and Cyril, the emperor claimed Alexandrian orthodoxy for Chalcedon and the imperial Church. In the context of the Three Chapters Controversy also the acts the Council of Chalcedon were translated into Latin for the first time. (p. 191).

By offering a complex perspective on the life, activity and the heritage left by the controversial Patriarch Dioscorus of Alexandria, by providing a critical evaluation of the previous sources that were published and by trying to follow the way how his posthumously image changed, Volker E. Menze manages in *Patriarch Dioscorus of Alexandria - the Last Pharaoh and Ecclesiastical Politics in the Later Roman Empire*, col. “Oxford Early Christian Studies” (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2023), not only to write a monograph that will surely be used by the scholars, but also to invite to discussion, and debate and to open no bridges in the area of historical and inter-disciplinary research.

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