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Mundus imaginalis. On some liminal adventures of the imagination

Keywords: philosophy of imagination, Islamic philosophy, *mundus imaginalis*, Henry Corbin, Jean-Jacques Wunenburger

Abstract

The aim of the article is to analyze the category of *mundus imaginalis* formulated by Henry Corbin based on Islamic philosophy (*alam al-mithal*). Corbin was inspired by Islamic mystics who recognized the existence of an imaginary sphere mediating between the sensual and the intelligible worlds. For Corbin, who was also influenced by CG. Jung and A. Koyré, *mundus imaginalis* becomes a useful tool for the analysis of imagination (understood as active cognitive power), but also of the modern human condition. A counterpoint expanding reflection on the *mundus imaginalis* is the research of Jean-Jacques Wunenburger, who, using Corbin's analyzes, emphasizes the multi-level and structural nature of both: the power of the imagination and its products. In these interpretations, the following questions seem to be crucial: What does the category of *mundus imaginalis* contribute to the understanding of the essence of imagination and of the human world of imaginations? Which approach to the imagination is associated with the recognition of this category? I will try to answer these questions in the article.

The point of departure for my discussion is the notion of liminality. I will not use it as a category to systematize social or cultural phenomena, as

did, for example, Arnold van Genepp or Victor Turner, or in relation to psychological or existential issues, but in a wider sense: in a metaphysical context. I would like to consider the category of liminality in relation to the power of imagination, understood not as an ability to create fiction, but as an active cognitive power. The notion of mundus imaginalis, deeply rooted in Islamic philosophy and introduced to the West by Henry Corbin, is the key to this discussion.

Limen means 'threshold' in Latin. This etymology leads us to understand liminality both as transitivity, being between, and as stepping beyond what we have come into, a progress towards the new and the yet unknown. It means suspension, limbo. It includes non-being, lack, nonexistence, indispensably inscribed into the process of transformation, but it also connects non-being and being, what happened in the past and what is to happen in the future. It is a still unfulfilled, incomplete coexistence, a merging of moments that belong to two states, two times, two realities, two ways of existing. Victor Turner employed the notion of liminality in cultural anthropology, arguing: "Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial. As such, their ambiguous and indeterminate attributes are expressed by a rich variety of symbols in the many societies that ritualize social and cultural transitions" (Turner, 1969, p. 94). Turner's theses relate to the individual and the communal meanings of rites of passage, but they may also relate to the very widely understood question about the place of humanity in the world. In my paper, I would like to reflect on a liminal experience that becomes embodied in the world of imagination, exploring its significance for modern humans.

When we consider the issue of imagination, we may define a few borderline moments that reveal this threshold status. For instance, we may call borderline or liminal something that exists between the conscious and the unconscious, something that separates the logic of *ratio* from the oneiric order, or something that exists at the point of contact between sensibility and intelligibility. Thinking liminal in the context of imagination may lead us to at least two kinds of analyses. First, epistemological, related, for instance, to questions about the cognitive power of imagination, or about the existence of a logic of imagination, which, in turn, leads us to the problem of its possible structures. Second, ontological, related primarily to the

problem of the ontological status of possible imagination structures and imaginations themselves, which are the product of imagination at work.

These issues are undoubtedly too broad to discuss comprehensively in a short paper. However, I will endeavor to consider their relation to the concept of the Imaginal Realm (Latin: *mundus imaginalis*) originating from Islamic philosophy, interpreted and transferred to Western thought by Henry Corbin. Importantly, Corbin presents Islamic thought to Western readers, but he does not stop there. He also employs it to analyze the situation of modern Western people, which testifies to its universality and timelessness. For Corbin, *mundus imaginalis* becomes an object of interpretation as well as a tool of his own philosophical reflection.

After many years of explorations on Illuminationism (including a six-year stay in Istanbul between 1939 and 1945), Corbin recognized the Imaginal Realm as a central element of Islamic spiritual tradition (cf. Miri, 2013, p. 118). The concept *alam al-mithal* was translated by him as *mundus imaginalis*/the Imaginal Realm. This term is present in the philosophy of Suhravardi[1], a Persian theosophist active in the 12th century, and his followers from the school of Illuminationism, and later on from Shiah gnosis (cf. Piątak, 2012, p. 22).

The orientalist Łukasz Piątak emphasizes that in order to give full justice to the Latin term introduced by Corbin and its roots in Islamic philosophy, it should be translated "as »imaginal world« or »world of imagination«, and not as »imagined world«, which could suggest its ontological irrealism" (Piątak, 2012, p. 22). Corbin himself also pays attention to this problem, stating that the term "imagination" used by him before he settled on the Latin *mundus imaginalis* is insufficient. "Imagination" relates to presenting the unreal, while what we are dealing with here is insight into a non-empirical sphere of real existence (cf. Corbin, 1964).

Islamic thinkers use the term *alam al-mithal* to describe one of the dimensions of being, existing on the border between the material, human world and the divine, heavenly world. As explained by Piątak: "Suhravardi equated *alam al-mithal* with the Quranic *barzakh*, which literally means »barrier«, » strait« or »abyss«. According to the Quran, *barzakh* is a barrier that prevents the dead from entering the spiritual world. Crossing this barrier will become possible on the day of universal resurrection and the

[1] Shahab al-Din Yahya ibn Habash Suhrawardi (1155–1191).

Last Judgement" (Corbin, 1964). What we have here, therefore, is not the sphere of imaginations or oneiric visions, but one of the levels of hierarchically structured reality, a world between two other words, a passage between the sensible and the intelligible. Corbin describes it as follows: "This is the world which is intermediary between the intelligible world of the beings of pure Light and the sensible world; and the perceiving organ proper to it is the active Imagination. It is the world not of Platonic Ideas (*muthul iflātūnīyah*), but of Forms and Images 'in suspensions' (*mutul mu'allaqah*). This term means that such forms are not immanent in a material sub-stratum, as the colour red, for example, is immanent in a red body; they possess 'epiphanic places' (*mazāhir*) where they manifest themselves like the image 'in suspension' in a mirror. This world contains all the richness and variety of the world of sense in a subtle state; it is a world of subsistent and autonomous Forms and Images" (Corbin, 1993, p. 214). Each thing exists in three ways and in three different dimensions – it manifests itself differently in the sensible world, differently in *alam al-mithal,* and differently in the intelligible world (cf. Corbin, 1993, p. 343). *Alam al-mithal* is a third world, endowed with a special ontological status, which is neither exclusively spiritual, nor material. This is a space "in which bodies spiritualize, and the spirit becomes embodied".[2]

This trifold scheme may be considered not only from the ontological, but also from the anthropological and epistemological perspectives. In his famous essay *Mundus Imaginalis or the Imaginary and the Imaginal* published in 1964, Corbin argued: "To these three universes correspond three organs of knowledge: the senses, the imagination, and the intellect, a triad to which corresponds the triad of anthropology: body, soul, spirit – a triad that regulates the triple growth of man, extending from this world to the resurrections in the other worlds" (Corbin, 1964).

Let us focus on the epistemological context. Imagination is supposed to be the cognitive power adequate to the intermediate imaginal world. Imagination is understood here in a particular way as an active and creative source of knowledge. This view of imagination is suggested by Corbin's terms "imaginative consciousness" and "cognitive Imagination" (cf. Corbin, 1964). The imagination that Corbin writes about is not the ability to create fiction and to picture worlds that do not exist, in line with

[2] "où l'esprit se corporalise et où les corps se spiritualisent" (Wunenburger, 1997, p. 96).

the everyday understanding of this concept. It is a special cognitive faculty, equally significant for our knowledge as sensory perception and intellectual intuition[3].

Defining the ontological status of *mundus imaginalis* in more detail, Corbin compares it to reflections suspended in mirrors. A reflection is neither the matter of the mirror, nor the thing that is reflected. A reflection is suspended between these two types of being, it does not exist without them, but is not identical with them (cf. Corbin, 1964). In this metaphor, active imagination would be a mirror, an epiphanic place where images appear. It serves as an intermediary, and therefore has a central role, between sensibility and intellect, completing noesis with what escapes these two powers that bring the reality down to the schemata of binary rationality (cf. Corbin, 1964).

When defining the role of imagination as a cognitive function, Corbin highlights its focus on symbols and their ambiguity. It also enables us to capture the relation between different levels of being: "It is a function that permits all the universes to symbolize with one another (or exist in symbolic relationship with one another) and that leads us to represent to ourselves, experimentally, that the same substantial realities assume forms corresponding respectively to each universe [...]. It is the cognitive function of the Imagination that permits the establishment of a rigorous analogical knowledge, escaping the dilemma of current rationalism, which leaves only a choice between the two terms of banal dualism: either »matter« or »spirit«, a dilemma that the »socialization« of consciousness resolves by substituting a choice that is no less fatal: either »history« or »myth«" (Corbin, 1964). Thinking of the world as something transcending the opposition between matter and form, and of humans as beings able to step beyond the cognitive dualism of perception and thought, leads to broadening the field of reflection, and to noticing the ambiguity that shows through under all the dualisms in which we are accustomed to close reality.

When searching for the sources of Corbin's concept of imagination, Daniel Proulx points to two thinkers in his interesting study: Alexander Koyré and Carl Gustav Jung (Proulx, 2019, pp. 187–195). When Corbin was a student at the École Pratique des Hautes Études, Koyré held lectures on imagination in German speculative mysticism. This course could well have

[3] "[...] a faculty that is a cognitive function, a noetic value, as fully real as the faculties of sensory perception or intellectual intuition" (Corbin, 1964).

been the first contact Corbin had with the philosophy of imagination. Koyré showed his students the influence of the mysticism of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance on German idealism. He presented the way in which mysticism influenced the doctrine of imagination as a flexible strength with creative and magical power present in Fichte's and Schelling's philosophy.[4] Moreover, Koyré employed Paracelsus' division into *phantasia* and *imaginatio*, seen by Proulx as a significant inspiration for Corbin's division into the imagined and the imaginal.

Proulx also highlights the existence of an analogical division, separating the real imagination from the fantastic and stemming from alchemical sources, in the works of Carl Gustav Jung. In his lecture on the treaty *Rosarium philosophorum,* he wrote: "The *imaginatio* is to be understood here as the real and literal power to create images (*Einbildungskraft* = imagination) – the classical use of the word in contrast to *phantasia*, which means a mere "conceit" in the sense of insubstantial thought" (Jung, 1968, p. 219). Fantasy creates fiction, whereas *imaginatio* is an ability endowed with cognitive power. "*Imaginatio* is the active evocation of (inner) images *secundum naturam*, an authentic feat of thought or ideation, which does not spin aimless and groundless fantasies 'into the blue' – does not, that is to say, just play with its objects, but tries to grasp the inner facts and portray them in images true to their nature" (Jung, 1968, p. 219).[5] Corbin, who stayed in the vicinity of the Eranos group, knew Jung's works and referred to them (cf. Proulx, 2019, pp. 192–193). Without doubt, Jung exerted some influence on Corbin, which is reflected both in the concept of imagination as an active cognitive power, and in *mundus imaginalis* as a sphere to which this active imagination has access.[6] However, it does not mean that these

[4] This was the first, but not the last, meeting of Corbin and Koyré, who later cooperated, *inter alia* as the editors of the journal "Recherches Philosophiques" (cf. Proulx, 2019, pp. 187–190).

[5] This understanding of imagination certainly plays a role in Jung's concept of analytical psychology as the work with the unconscious, both individual and collective, that reveals itself, *inter alia*, in dreams. In addition, Jung himself provides an interesting personal example of the work of *imaginatio* in his notes published as *The Red Book* (Jung, 2009).

[6] When considering the relations between Jung and Corbin, it should be emphasized that before Corbin settled on the Latin term *mundus imaginalis*, he used other terms to describe *alam al-mithal,* such as *mundus archetypus* and *mundus imaginalis archetypus*. They constitute a direct reference to the theory of archetypes, the core of Jungian psychology (cf. Proulx, 2019, p. 194).

two concepts are identical: Corbin's understanding of imagination relates to the metaphysical and religious context, whereas Jung remains primarily a psychologist, for whom the encounter with spirituality is a prerequisite for self-development (cf. Proulx, 2019, p. 193).

Let us return to the notion of *mundus imaginalis* and its possible interpretations. Jean-Jacques Wunenburger employs this notion in his philosophy of image. Wunenburger postulates a hierarchy of image and distinguishes three levels shaping the human world of images. The first level is imaging (*imagerie*), which consists of mental and material reproductions of reality. This also includes conscious and unconscious transformations of what is real. At the second level there is imagination (*imaginaire*), which substitutes what is real but absent or non-existent. In contrast to imaging, imagination opens itself to the unreal. The third level is the imaginal (*imaginal*), i.e., *mundus imaginalis*. Wunenburger describes it as follows: "*Imaginal*, a true source of symbols, implements […] epiphanic images of sense that transcends beyond us and that does not let itself to be reduced either to reproductions or to fiction" (Wunenburger, 2002, p. 24).

This highest and at the same time the deepest level of creation of images accounts for "visual images, schemata, geometrical forms (triangle, cross), archetypes (androgyny), parables and myths" (Wunenburger, 2002, p. 24). In the ontological dimension, this level transcends the empirical realm and extends to meta-physis, revealing the presence of the most fundamental and primeval dimension of being. This ability of imagination to embody what is intelligible, making possible everything else, leads us to reflect on its essence and suggests that we should perceive it as a transcendental cognitive function. As such, imagination makes cognition possible, providing it with the necessary conditions (structures).

At the imaginal level, the unambiguity of notions disappears and the complexity of being becomes manifest. Imagination, freed from the reality which it would copy or substitute with its products, opens itself onto what is irrational to humans. Abandoning classical logic, imagination reaches the realm of myth, dream, daydreaming, symbol or archetype, allowing for and even assuming the coexistence of A and non-A. Here we return to the questions that were also asked by Henry Corbin in the context of active imagination and *mundus imaginalis.* Might the reductionism of antonymies and precluding involved in the dualism of the true and the false actually cover the complexity of things that exist? When we think about the world in

accordance with the classical logic, do we close ourselves to its antonymies that are impossible to reduce? Jean-Jacques Wunenburger believes that "the experience of mutual dependence between phenomena, the search for the ultimate truth, and even dreams enable us to experience the insufficiency, inadequacy of this common logic that forces us to think that the nature of the world is simple, that opposite predicates rule each other out, that antithetical claims are absurd" (Wunenburger, 2010, p. 519).

The division of the world of images into the three parts proposed by Wunenburger makes us perceive imagination as a structure. We pass from the images that copy the reality through the imaginations that breed fiction to the sphere of the imaginal as a borderline between the material and the transcendental. At the same time, we dive into the structures of imagination, from the superficial, through those that create fictions, to the rudimental and primeval. Each of them performs different functions and directs the subject towards a different sphere of being. Certainly, this division, like any other conducted on the tissue of life, freezes processes that are in fact interconnected; they coexist and permeate one another, together creating the world of symbolic imagination. The three activities of imagination postulated by Wunenburger, imaging, imagining and imaginalizing, become intertwined in the common experience (cf. Wunenburger, 2010, p. 519).

While Corbin focuses primarily on the category of *mundus imaginalis*, Wunenburger inscribes the imaginal into the whole human iconosphere. Irrespective of those differences, both theories emphasize the active character of imagination understood as a source of knowledge. Such a concept of imagination leads to defining the oneiric as thinkable, and therefore structured. Dreams, daydreams, artistic and religious visions, and artistic creation are understood as symbolic, therefore opening the way to other meanings than those directly given in the content of a work of art, a vision or a dream. Imagination, in turn, as the factor that realizes these meanings, plays a complementary role to thinking and perception, broadening the scope of our cognition with what escapes the dualism of the true and the false.

Recognizing the symbolic dimension of the image leads to the question of the meaning of what this image reveals, both for individuals and for the culture. Proponents of the theory of active, transcendental imagination postulate a vindication of the image in the present-day world, which tends to marginalize it. At first, this endeavor appears to be misguided, as it seems that currently the world is overfilled with images and that we are suffering

from their excess, not their scarcity. This paradoxical lack of actual imagery in the modern world is aptly diagnosed by Henry Corbin: "We are no longer participants in a traditional culture. We are living in a scientific civilization, which is said to have gained mastery even over images. It is quite commonplace to refer to our present-day civilization as the »civilization of the image« (to wit our magazines, motion pictures, and television). But one wonders whether – like all commonplaces – this one does not also harbor a radical misunderstanding, a complete misapprehension. For, instead of the image being raised to the level of the world to which it belongs, instead of being invested with a symbolic function that would lead to inner meaning, the image tends to be reduced simply to the level of sensible perception and thus to be definitely degraded. Might one not have to say then that the greater the success of this reduction, the more people lose their sense of the imaginal and the more they are condemned to producing nothing but fiction?" (Corbin, 1964).

Many thinkers reflect on the loss of the deep – both ontologically and existentially – meaning of images. Jean-Jacques Wunenburger also pleads for a renewal of the actual meaning of the image, whose symbolic, hidden sense has nowadays been forgotten. Both Wunenburger and Corbin highlight the fundamental, primeval dimension of the image perceived as a symbol, as "an instance intermediating between the sensible and the intelligible" (Wunenburger, 2002, p. 25). At the same time, they point out that the positivist, scientistic orientation of Western culture condemns it (including the modern humans who inhabit it) to a disconnection from the immense transcendental sphere. The philosophers of creative imagination leave us with a critical diagnosis of modernity and the following question: Are modern humans, who are drowning in images, but at the same time shying away from exploring their primeval sense and reducing them to superficial aspects, perhaps also reducing their needs, their destination and their calling as spiritual beings?

Seeing imagination as something that opens us to experiences from the borderline between sensibility and ideas presents humans as spiritual beings – creatures whose well-being depends on the recognition of the metaphysical, transcendental dimension of the reality. This recognition is not a goal in itself; it is a challenge, a never-ending beginning, a threshold (*limen*), which stems from the essence of humanity. This intuition is prominently present, *inter alia*, in the works of Jean-Jacques Wunenburger, who notes: "Imagination opens for us the gates to a certain surplus of sense, but it does

not allow us to cross the limits of our finitude; symbols enrich us, but do not allow for an ontological transformation. They enable us to reach other perspectives on things, but they do not absolve us from continuous beginning anew, searching further and further and anew; since symbolic cognition does not equal divine intuition, absolute knowledge".[7]

Translated from the Polish by
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[7] "L'imagination nous ouvre des portes vers un surcroît de sens mais ne nous permet pas de franchir les limites de notre finitude: les symboles nous enrichissent mais ne permettent pas une mutation ontologique. Ils nous font accéder à d'autres regards sur les choses, mais sans nous dispenser d'avoir à recommencer, à chercher plus loin, et à nouveau, car la connaissance symbolique n'équivaut pas à une intuition divine, à un savoir absolu" (Wunenburger, 1997, p. 211).

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ARTICLES

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On Speech as the Political Faculty in the Anthropocene. The Sensualities of Voice and Taste Combined

Keywords: speech, voice, language, judgment, taste, the Anthropocene

Abstract

The paper revises the idea of speech as a fundamental political faculty in response to the challenges of the Anthropocene. First, it is argued that, rather than as a subsystem of language, speech should be conceptualized as the expression of the embodied capacity of voice (in this respect, the paper follows Adriana Cavarero's [2005] argument). Secondly, vocality is linked to the faculty of taste (understood as in Arendt's reading of Kant) to locate politics in the broader order of materiality (*physis*). It is argued that the combination of these two sensualities can help us develop the idea of politics as an activity that is both specifically human and located in the broader order of materiality (the Earth system).

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to shed new light on a fundamental *topos* of Western political philosophy: the idea of speech as a foundational political capacity. We find its lucid formulation in the opening paragraphs of Aristotle's *Politics*, where human beings are presented as political beings to the extent that, unlike other animals (including social animals), they are capable of speaking (*zoon logon echon*), as opposed to merely emitting voice

(Aristotle, ed. 1998b, 1253a7–17). Against this background, the question that this paper addresses is as follows: can this assumption be maintained in the time of the so-called Anthropocene?[1]

Putting aside discussions about the concept of the "Anthropocene" itself, I will take it to convey the following insight: the destructive anthropogenic impact on the Earth system invalidates rigid distinctions between the human and the non-human worlds. This has at least two, apparently paradoxical, consequences for politics: on the one hand, it is no longer possible to define politics in separation from the natural world (which seems to be entailed by the Aristotelian *topos*); on the other, the very term "the Anthropocene" implies acknowledging responsibility for human influence on the non-human world and therefore requires us to defend the possibility of collectively coordinated human action, while also evoking the idea of the agency of nature (to the extent that our actions are interwoven with uncontrollable processes in nature).

Together, these two consequences entail that while politics should not be opposed to *physis*, it still ought to be distinguished from the latter. I would like to argue that this requires us to explain the specificity of human political capacity by locating it in the broader framework of the Earth system. Politics is not so much a privilege that allows humans to transcend nature as it is a form of collective organization characteristic of humans as natural beings. Hence, we should start from something that distinguishes us as natural beings and, at the same time, connects us to *physis*.

This approach has consequences for the politically foundational status of speech. Most immediately, it calls for a revision of the link between speech and language. On the one hand, speech can be defined as "the ability to talk, the activity of talking, *or a piece of spoken language* [italics mine – UL]", or even "the language used when talking" (Cambridge Dictionary Online, accessed: 27 April 2021). On the other hand, language is "a system of conventional spoken, manual (signed), or written symbols" that human beings use to communicate with each other (Encyclopedia Britannica Online, accessed: 27 April 2021). Taken together, these two definitions yield

[1] By focusing on Western political philosophy, I do not mean to undermine the importance of conversations with non-Western traditions. To the contrary, such exchanges are vital, in themselves and in the context of the Anthropocene. However, this paper has the limited purpose of exploring certain internal possibilities of Western philosophy. It is hoped that these could be used in cross-cultural discussions.

a picture of speech as a subsystem of language, in which it is contextualized and to which it is subservient. Yet, if we accept this approach and combine it with the idea of speech as *the* political faculty, we base the idea of politics on something that separates human beings from the non-human world. For, although language can be understood as part of our evolutionary setting and some researchers argue that there is continuity, rather than rupture, between human language and non-human animal forms of communication (cf. Hauser, Chomsky, Fitch, 2002), language does seem to be a distinctively human faculty. Thus, if we define speech primarily as a subsystem of language, we build our idea of politics on something that separates us from the rest of the world and can only try to make our way back to it. [2]

Taking this into consideration, a political philosopher who recognizes the implications of the Anthropocene has two options: either she will reject the idea of speech as the foundational political faculty altogether, or she will refuse to treat it as a mere subsystem of language. In what follows, I will develop this second possibility and argue in the process that it is in fact crucial to defending the political relevance of speech. However, in addition to conceptualizing speech beyond its connection to language, I will also move beyond speech itself and towards the voice. This is because the voice is what human animals have in common with (some) non-human animals and what, therefore, represents the animal component of human speech (Agamben, 1998, pp. 7–8). Hence, if we want to locate human speech, as the political faculty, in the broader context of *physis*, it might be fruitful to explore its link to the voice. My first ally in this venture will be Adriana Cavarero who, in her book *For More than One Voice*, undertakes to reverse the voice-speech-language hierarchy. Her focus on vocality helps her capture the political role of speech in its capacity to create the political realm understood, Arendt-wise, as the space between individuals. Yet vocality itself does not explain how politics features in the broader order of *physis*. To fill

[2] It could also be argued that the search for linguistic – or quasi-linguistic – faculties in non-human animals is driven by the logic of identity, to the extent that the behavior of non-human animals is evaluated in terms of their similarity to humans (cf. Bednarek, 2007, pp. 13–22). Human development provides a teleological horizon for the interpretation of the faculties of non-human animals. The concept of the Anthropocene invalidates such implicit anthropocentrism: while it emphasizes the terrifying potential of human agency, it dispels the illusion that the non-human world can be explained by human standards (or: it captures the dreadful consequences of acting under this illusion).

this gap, I will introduce another sensual register and an Arendtian motif at the same time: the faculty of taste.[3]

Speech as the transcendence of voice

Aristotle's description of the emergence of the *polis* – or, more generally: the political organization of communal life – characteristically navigates between what is construed as natural[4] and its transcendence. The historical account of the human forms of association begins with those that are believed to have been prompted by natural necessities: a household and a village (a group of households). Yet, when several villages morph into a *polis*, the change is not merely quantitative. Rather, human life takes on a new quality, whereby a natural life is transformed into "a good life": "It [the *polis*] comes to be for the sake of living, but it remains in existence for the sake of living well" (Aristotle, ed. 1998b, 1252b28–29). As Giorgio Agamben famously observed, the Aristotelian narrative thus results in a curious knot of *zoe* – the life that human beings have in common with other living organisms – and *bios*, a specific form of life, which in the case of humans is supposed to develop in the *polis* (Agamben, 1998, pp. 1–12). While *zoe* drives *bios politikos*, prompting the very emergence of the *polis*, *bios politikos* 'works on' *zoe* to develop it into a uniquely human life.

It could be observed that the same ambiguity marks the relationship between the voice and speech (cf. Agamben, 1998, p. 8). As I have mentioned, Aristotle cites the speech-voice distinction to set human political association apart from the types of socialization of which other "gregarious" animals are

[3] Another possibility would be the study of non-linguistic forms of sense-making to explore non-human types of speech. Contemporary biosemiotics takes this route: it starts from the idea of life as the exchange of information and analyzes different ways in which various living organisms interpret their environment, learning to make sense of what goes on around them. Combined with the assumption of the inherently political character of speech, this approach allows us to extend the realm of speaking entities well beyond human beings and conceptualize human language-oriented speech as just one of the many forms of speaking (cf. Bednarek, 2017, pp. 119–135, Wheeler, 2006). Yet this strategy has the disadvantage of completely erasing the difference between human and non-human communication, and therefore between politics and 'the rest'. As such, it addresses only one horn of the dilemma posed by the Anthropocene identified above.

[4] Cf. John Meyer's analysis of the dialectics of nature and politics in Aristotle (Meyer, 2001, pp. 89–118).

also capable or, to put it differently, which are fully determined by *zoe*. Yet in order to speak, human beings have to use their voices; in other words, the faculty of speech presupposes the voice, as Aristotle himself recognized when, in *Poetics*, he defined speech as *phone semantike*, i.e., signifying voice (or sound).[5] Just as *bios politikos* is dependent on and at the same time transforms *zoe*, speech develops human vocal capacities to distinguish them from the animal community of voices (or sounds).

The question is: how should the relationships within these two knots of concepts (*zoe-bios*, voice/sound-speech) and between them be understood? The two clusters meet in the concept of *zoon logon echon*, with *logos* offering a variety of meanings: "speech", "reason" (Cavarero, 2005, pp. 33–35), and even "language" (Cavarero, 2005, p. 9). For example, if we place emphasis on "reason" and "language", we can understand the formula *zoon logon echon* as "an animal capable of rational speech", where rationality refers to the universalizable, codified character of speech as determined by language. While the voice is an embodied, indexical expression of the 'here and now', for example of "what is pleasant or painful", speech conveys general and sharable normative senses contained in the abstract symbols of language, for example, "what is beneficial or harmful (…), just or unjust" (Aristotle, ed. 1998b, 1253a14–15). Language-oriented speech enables human *bioi* to transcend their connections to *zoe* and rise above their particular, embodied attachments.

Regaining voice

However, in her book *For More than One Voice. Towards a Philosophy of Vocal Expression* (originally published in 2003), Adriana Cavarero sets out to question the very hierarchy described above. Drawing on the feminisms of Julia Kristeva and Hélène Cixous and other post-structuralist criticisms of "logocentrism", as well as the philosophy of dialogue and Jewish thought, Cavarero traces the long history of the banishment of the voice (or what she calls "the devocalization of *logos*", Cavarero, 2005, pp. 33–41)

[5] The ancient Greek language did not distinguish between voice and sound. Some translations of *Poetics* render *phone semantike* as "significant sound" (see, e.g., Aristotle, ed. 1998a, 1457a23–24). Cavarero opts, in turn, for "signifying voice" (Cavarero, 2005, p. 34). C.D. Reeve's edition of *Politics* cited here also translates *phone* as "voice" (Aristotle, ed. 1998b, 1253a10–18). I refer to this ambiguity below (cf: footnote 7).

from the philosophical tradition defined by Greek metaphysics. Indeed, she construes her quest as a challenge to the entire metaphysical framework centred upon "an abstract and bodiless universality" (Cavarero, 2005, p. 8) that can be talked about in precise, sharable terms. On this account, the voice is a potentially dangerous phenomenon to the extent that it expresses the uniqueness of human beings: every human being has their own unmistakable voice, expressive of the bodily aspect of their particularity (Cavarero, 2005: 7). Interestingly, the metaphysicians' reservations about the voice translate into a denigration of politics. The Platonic cave, one of the foundational myths of Western metaphysics, is based on the juxtaposition of the realm of metaphysical truths (ideas) that philosophers (or scientists) contemplate in the state of speechless and voiceless admiration, and politics, which is conceived as the area of endless palaver, where ordinary citizens express opinions (*doxai* or "what-appears-to-me", Arendt, 1990, p. 80) about their messy, partisan affairs (Arendt, 1990; cf. Latour, 2004, pp. 10–18). This might suggest that, to the extent that both the voice and politics are linked to particularity, the revindication of the former could aid the latter.

I would like to begin showing how this could be done by recapitulating Cavarero's revision of the voice-speech-language hierarchy. Cavarero connects the ambivalence of the term *logos* to the equivocation of the verb *legein* from which it stems, and which can mean "speaking", but also "joining" ("binding", "gathering") (Cavarero, 2005, pp. 34–35). What Cavarero describes as logocentric metaphysics interprets the "joining" through the prism of language. On this account, *legein* is about connecting symbols, putting nouns and verbs in the right order, and as such it implies "the work of a code and the structure of the sign" (Cavarero, 2005, p. 182). *Legein* as speaking is subservient to the joining defined by language: we speak about the senses and according to the rules provided by language as a system of signs. Consequently, the voice, as the necessary component of speech, is a mere vehicle for expressing the meanings prescribed by language (Cavarero, 2005, p. 9).

From this it follows that logocentric metaphysics privileges objects of speech over speaking subjects: language predefines what can be talked about, thereby blocking the expression of particularity. According to Cavarero, the alternative to this repressive model can be found in what she calls "a vocal ontology of uniqueness" (Cavarero, 2005, p. 173), which construes the voice, rather than language, as the origin of meaning. The voice

is a material, physical quality, emitted by a particular throat and set of vocal cords. It always represents a unique subject (even if two subjects utter the same words, their voices still differ) in their embodiment (Cavarero, 2005, pp. 1–16). Moreover, unlike (logocentrically understood) language, which purports to contain senses irrespective of its users and the occasions of its use, the voice is always produced to be received by a particular pair – or pairs – of ears. As a consequence, the priority of the voice changes the character of speech as its destination. Rather than a subsystem of language, speech mediates between universal signs and idiosyncratic voices: when we speak, we employ recognisable symbols, but we do so to express ourselves as particular subjects and be received by fellow speakers (Cavarero, 2005, p. 198). As a result, the relationality of the voice changes the sense of speech as *legein*. From the perspective of the vocal ontology of uniqueness, "joining" is not so much about arranging signs as about establishing connections between speakers, thereby creating a specific interpersonal environment (Cavarero, 2005, p. 182).

This environment is what Cavarero sees as the site of politics, at this point following in Hannah Arendt's footsteps. Indeed, in the Western politico-philosophical tradition, Arendt perhaps came closest to recognising the intimate connection between speech and voice. Construing the former as the necessary component of political action, Arendt argued that speech expresses a 'who' rather than a 'what' – a unique agent, a source of activity that transcends all possible objective descriptions of them (Cavarero, 2005, p. 189, Arendt, 1998, pp. 9–11, 175–181). Thus, using Cavarero's terms, we could say that, for Arendt, speech channels the voice, rather than serving language. And it is the implicit link to the voice, Cavarero argues, that allows Arendt to convincingly conceptualize speech as the foundational political faculty. When speakers express their voices to each other, rather than articulating the implications of metaphysical truths conveyed by language, they create the in-between realm of appearance where, according to Arendt, politics happens. This "web of relationships" (Arendt, 1998, pp. 181–188) or "the world" "relates and separates" individuals (Arendt, 1998, p. 52), neither erasing their particularity nor being reducible to a mere sum of idiosyncratic points of view. Thus, through speech, human beings collectively engender politics as a realm of their creation (Cavarero, 2005, pp. 189–190).

Yet I have suggested that the Anthropocene should urge us to rethink what it means for politics to be just that: a separate environment,

subject to human co-ordination. The question is, then: what guidance does Caverero's vocal ontology of uniqueness offer for politics in the time of the Anthropocene? It could be immediately replied that Cavarero's emphasis on the voice entails the celebration of embodiment: she explicitly counters "an abstract and bodiless universality" (Cavarero, 2005, p. 8) with a politics founded on the ontology of flesh-and-bone human beings. Still, these bodily individuals are not represented as members of the broader order of *physis*. To the contrary, embodiment functions primarily as the marker of the specifically human form of individualization: such that can be expressed in speech as the type of communication whose primary purpose is to reveal the 'who' of its subject to her fellow 'who-s' (Cavarero, 2005, pp. 177, 209–210). Thus, while Cavarero emphasizes that each human being, as a creature endowed with a voice, has a particular body, she does not seem to appreciate the community in which human beings partake with other material entities[6] by virtue of their very materiality. For Cavarero, human beings as political actors are embodied, but they are not yet "earthbound", to use Bruno Latour's phrase (Latour, 2015, p. 2). Speech, as the exclusive

[6] I have used the term "material entities" to hint at an acoustic phenomenon only briefly mentioned so far, namely sound. Unlike the ancient Greek language, many modern languages distinguish between sound and voice, with sound referring to the physical phenomenon not limited to the animal kingdom (the sound of leaves, of waves, of wind) and voice implying subjectivity and intentionality, even if only very nascent (Cavarero, 2005, p. 177). Thus, it could be argued that, by translating the Greek *phone* as "voice", rather than sound, Cavarero wants to eat a cake and have it too, so to speak. She at once emphasizes human embodiment and separates humans from other bodies. To avoid such a conclusion, I would like to uphold the ambiguity of the Greek *phone*. For, on the one hand, as Cavarero herself observes, "voice is always a sound" (Cavarero, 2005, p. 177), just as speech always requires the voice; sound constitutes the physical core of the voice. More generally, what I am calling *physis*, corresponds to the Earth system, as it is studied by the contemporary interdisciplinary research program under the name of 'Earth system science'. In this paradigm, life – including animal life – is interpreted as part of the system of mutually dependent organic and inorganic factors. Likewise, the voice, as a feature of a subspecies of life, should be contextualized within the broader framework of sound. On the other hand, I will argue below that politics in the time of the Anthropocene should extend the scope of the sounds that can be spoken about. That is: just as the Anthropocene blurs the boundaries between the human and the non-human world, on a more general level it challenges the distinction between the organic and the inorganic, and therefore between sound and voice.

destination of the human voice, not only distinguishes but also separates humans from other earthly creatures.

Yet I have started from the assumption that the Anthropocene requires us to strike a difficult balance between the specificity of human political agency (and speech as its constitutive part) and its connection to the larger order of *physis*. To put it differently: we need to think not only about the relationships between embodied agents within the political realm but also about the relationship between politics, as the association of embodied human beings, and the broader scope of materiality. Despite its anthropocentrism, Caverero's model does offer an insight that points in this direction. Namely, when discussing the exchange between the voice and speech, she describes the former as "an originary excess" of the latter (Cavarero, 2005, pp. 12–13). Speech never fully captures the potential of meaning conveyed by the voice; yet its "excess" is the origin of speech, an inexhaustible source on which it constantly draws. Given that the voice is what humans share with (at least some) non-human animals, the relationship between *zoe* and *bios* could also be described as "an originary excess" of the former over the latter. To elucidate this excess of voice/*zoe* over speech/*bios*, I propose to introduce one more conceptual pair. Namely, I would like to link the *zoe-bios* cluster to the categories of 'what is' and 'what ought to be'. This, in turn, will allow me to move on to the other sensuality mentioned in the introduction, i.e., taste.

Taste – a template for judgment

Inasmuch as *zoe* refers to life in general, common to all organisms and as such belonging to the broader order of *physis*, it represents our idea of 'what is': patterns perceived as spontaneous, obtaining beyond human conventions, with the latter only following such patterns but not controlling them. Contrary to that, *bios* denotes the type of life that we believe to be open to our normativization, thereby corresponding to the aspirational ideal of 'what is as it ought to be'. Speaking in a different context, in his book *The Force of the Example*, Alessandro Ferrara observed that what exists between these two domains is the realm of 'what is as it ought to be', i.e., of particulars that, due to their specific descriptive features, carry a universal prescriptive force. This type of validity is often referred to as exemplariness and has remained, Ferrara says, largely unnoticed in the history of Western philosophy. There was, however, one notable and influential exception, namely, Kant's theory of the

judgment of the beautiful, which Kant described as the judgment of taste (Ferrara, 2008, pp. ix–x, 1–3).

Ferrara argues for the political relevance of the judgments of exemplary validity in contemporary post-foundationalist philosophy. The authors that he discusses include Arendt, who strongly emphasized the political consequences of Kant's account of taste. Indeed, for Arendt the Kantian judgment of the beautiful defines the paradigm for judgment as a political faculty, in which capacity it is, in turn, a foundational factor. When inquiring how examples can establish a separate type of validity (i.e., how particulars can have a universal force *as particulars*), Kant settled upon the idea of representative thinking (or enlarged mentality), which Arendt interprets as "being and thinking in my own identity where actually I am not" (Arendt, 2006, p. 237; cf. Kant, ed. 1987, pp. 159–162). Grafted onto Arendt's political philosophy, this model translates into an account of political judgment that entails a transformation of one's own perspective, which, however, does not undermine its identity. When I formulate a judgment, I 'inflect' my position through other points of view that I think myself into. But I neither renounce my own stance nor fully embrace others; instead, thus transformed, my perspective becomes "worldly", with judgment functioning as a "world-building" faculty (Zerilli, 2016, pp. 262–281).

The "world", in turn, refers to Arendt's phenomenology-inspired understanding of objectivity (cf. Moran, 2013). Something is objective in this worldly sense if, on the one hand, it "stands against", challenges my subjectivity (Arendt, 1998, p. 137), and, on the other, it is perceived by other subjects, who object to my point of view through the perspectives of their own (Arendt, 1998, pp. 57–58). Thus, worldly objectivity is constituted by two types of objections, thereby combining the recalcitrance of something that is 'out there' with intersubjectivity. To say that judgment is a world-building faculty is to say that, by practicing enlarged mentality, it contributes to the creation of the world as the in-between network of individuals and things. And it does so by mediating between the realms of 'what is' and 'what ought to be'. On the one hand, judgment responds to things 'out there' that "stand against" our subjectivities by evaluating these objects from subjective points of view and determining how things that are 'out there' ought to appear. Hence its inherently discriminatory nature. "The activity of taste", says Arendt, "decides how this world (…) is to look and sound, what men [sic] will see and what they will hear in it" (Arendt 2006, p. 219). On the

other hand, the push of objects (and of other subjective perspectives that we take into account) affects our prescriptive responses to them. Not everything is allowed when we meet with the actual recalcitrance of things (and other points of view) 'out there'.

This model of judgment has two interesting consequences. First, on this account, politics as the in-between realm is the network of individuals and things. Political agents appear to each other through, or in connection to, the objects of their judgments. In other words, there is some 'stuff' between individuals, a material medium of their appearances. Secondly, this suggests that our ideals of *bioi* – of how and in what kind of the world we want to live in – develop in response to the stimuli 'out there': to *zoe* or, more generally, *physis*. In this respect, *zoe* can be said to function as the "originary excess" of *bios*. However, to better justify this conclusion, one more step in the interpretation of the judgment of taste needs to be made.

Taste – a sensual register

Namely, I would like to treat taste not merely as a model for judgment but also as its sensual core. That is to say, I suggest that when we engage in judgment as a world-building faculty, we do so as beings endowed with the sensuality of taste. Taste as one of the senses is an ineliminable element of the practice of judgment.[7]

Arendt was aware that the choice of the sensual register of taste for the paradigm of judgment is remarkable, even if she did not fully capture why (Arendt, 1992, pp. 64–66). On the one hand, the discriminatory character of the judgment of taste is encoded in taste as a sensual experience: to have the perception of taste is to evaluate something as tasty or nasty (otherwise, we would say that the thing does not have any taste; cf. Arendt, 2020, p. 679). More fundamentally, it seems that the very exercise of taste is subject to choice in the way that other senses are not. Although, like with other senses, one can be forced to taste something against one's will, one cannot have the experience of taste spontaneously, i.e., irrespective of one's own (or another agent's) intention. On the other hand, taste is, as Arendt said, "a private sense" in that it pertains not so much to an object itself but to

[7] The account of taste as the sensual core of judgment draws on the argument presented in Lisowska, 2022.

how it affects the subject (Arendt, 1992, p. 64). Moreover, it does so through ingress across the perceiver's bodily boundaries. In the act of tasting, we let ourselves be intruded upon by an external item, renouncing a cosy distinction from the object (cf. Arendt, 2020, p. 636).[8]

Thus, as a sensual experience, taste is a peculiar mixture of discrimination (combined with voluntariness) and vulnerability. Taking these two aspects into account, Cecilia Sjöholm, a recent interpreter of Arendt, argues that taste is "a constitutive moment of corporeal subjectivity", through which we "choose what we want to integrate (…) as a part of ourselves, or not" (Sjöholm, 2015, pp. 79–80; cf. Arendt, 2020, p. 636). In other words, taste is the activity through which we position ourselves as bodies among and affected by other bodies (human and non-human). This means that if we treat taste as the sensual core of judgment, the latter can be described as the process of establishing one's own "corporeal subjectivity" by taking in(to account) other bodies. Here the "originary excess" of *zoe* over *bios* becomes relevant. I position myself as an individual *bios* by defining my relationships within the broader order of *zoe* (or, more generally, *physis*): the relationships that are porous and can constantly prompt me to redefine who I am as a particular *bios*.

Let me now combine the two roles of the judgment of taste that I have discussed: as a world-building faculty and as the practice of the self-constitution of embodied subjectivity. If we put these two together, we can argue that politics is the realm that extends between subjects, who take each other's positions into account, and objects judged from these various positions. The agents determine how these things 'out there' ought to "to look and sound". At the same time, they perceive themselves and each other as corporeal, subject to the rhythm of *zoe* (or, more generally, *physis*). *Zoe* is both the topic of their judgments and part of who they are as judging individuals.

Taste and speech

What remains to be shown is how the sensual register of taste fits with the sensuality of the voice from which I started. My suggestion is that speech

[8] This marks the difference between taste and smell. While smell is also a "private sense", it does not involve the incorporation of an external object as such.

as the political faculty should be understood as operating on the basis of and expressing judgments of taste. Let me explain.

A good starting point is provided by Arendt's aforementioned observation that taste "decides how this world (…) is to look and sound, what men will see and what they will hear in it" (Arendt, 2006, p. 219). Admittedly, "looking" and "seeing" imply visuality, as does "appearance". But for Arendt, phenomena appear in the political realm only when they are heard, or: heard about.[9] Thus, taste determines which voices enter politics or, to put it differently, which voices will count as speech, and, once again, which voices will be spoken about (and how they will be spoken about). The passive voice is important: I have argued that judgment contributes to the creation of the world by moving between what is 'out there' and what ought to be, by reacting to objects as given and deciding how they should be. As such, judgment is a response both to the voices that can speak – and decide how the world "is to look and sound" – and to the voices (or more generally: sounds) that can only be spoken about, while maintaining the distinction between the two.

To be more specific: first, the model that I am offering complies with the idea that speech and therefore politics are human affairs. When we make judgments, we speak to each other; and to let somebody's judgment be heard is to respect them as a subject whose voice can develop into speech. We can reconsider the role of language in this context, by arguing that human beings share the capacity for language as the medium of their speech. But the judgments that we utter are about something, potentially including entities that do not speak. To formulate such judgments or to recognize their legitimacy when they are uttered by others is to accept *that* and *how* the voices, sounds or even mute phenomena that they address can be spoken about and in this sense 'make a political appearance'. Secondly, judgment does not erase the difference between the speaker and who is spoken to or what is spoken about. In her development of the Arendtian version of enlarged mentality, Iris Marion Young emphasized that speakers are never capable of fully reversing each other's perspectives (Young, 2001). Caution

[9] "Hearing" means that, as a political faculty, speech is inseparably linked to listening (cf. Dobson, 2010). It has already been argued that politics in the Anthropocene requires reemphasizing the role of listening (Dryzek and Pickering, 2019). Thus, while a study of the relationship between speaking and listening, and between this conceptual pair and taste would require a separate paper, there is reason to believe that the results would provide further support for the argument presented here.

is, then, required even between speakers, who, after all, can challenge each other. We owe even more humility to those that we only speak about: the voices, sounds or mute phenomena that cannot speak back. In this case, we are directly confronted with the excess of *zoe* that cannot develop into the human forms of speaking *bioi*. Therefore, interpreted in this way, the judgment of taste offers good guidance for political agents in the time of the Anthropocene: it allows us to 'invite' non-human factors into the *polis*, while respecting their transcendence over the human world.

Yet to this it could be objected that only fellow speakers are obliged to reciprocity. Since it is difficult to expect a non-human animal (let alone a plant or a sea!) to mind us, humans, the way we can be required to mind each other, it might seem that, rather than increased humility, the distinction between speakers, who speak *to* each other, and those only spoken *about* implies a difference of commitment. However, at this point the idea of taste as the sensual core of judgment is helpful. I have argued that taste is the activity through which we constitute ourselves as bodies affected by other bodies (human and non-human). The phenomenology of taste involves the assimilation of an external body; at the same time, we only taste this foreign element as long as we perceive it as different, and so assimilation does not imply the annihilation of its specificity. Whatever we taste is both part of and something strange to us. At this level, the difference between speakers and non-speakers is not yet decisive. It begins to operate when we use our voice to speak about our position and address our judgment to fellow speakers. As a result, the literal interpretation of 'taste' in the judgment of taste helps us revise the understanding of political agents. While we can still maintain that political actors as speakers are human beings, we can also allow that they understand their humanity as being co-constituted by non-human factors.

Conclusion

If we now see the political faculty of speech as expressing judgment in both of its capacities, as a world-building faculty and the practice of the self-constitution of embodied subjectivity, we can conclude that it addresses *physei*, the natural things 'out there', in two ways. They are spoken *about*, while also being part of who we – the speakers – are. For example, the impeding anthropogenic flooding of small Pacific islands can become a topic of political speech, while being – and perhaps: to the extent that it is

– included into the self-understanding of the inhabitants of those islands. To recognize the voices of such islanders as political speech is to respect their embodied particularity.

These conclusions are facilitated by the refusal to see the political faculty of speech as a mere subsystem of language. Instead, I followed Cavarero in focusing on its link to the voice as an embodied faculty. However, unlike on Cavarero's account, in my interpretation individualized embodiment does not separate human beings from other beings. To the contrary, I combined vocality with the sensuality of taste to present human embodiment as co-constituted by relationships with other bodies, including non-human ones.

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The Libertarian Argumentation Ethics, the Transcendental Pragmatics of Language, and the Conflict-Freedom Principle

Keywords: Hans-Hermann Hoppe, argumentation ethics, transcendental pragmatics of language, consensus theory of truth, conflict-freedom, libertarianism, political philosophy, Karl-Otto Apel, theory of justice

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to showcase the links between Hans-Hermann Hoppe's libertarian argumentation ethics and Karl-Otto Apel's transcendental pragmatics with a special reference to the consensus theory of truth proposed by the latter thinker. More specifically, we contend that Hoppe's theory is logically contingent on Apel's views on truth in that some crucial gaps in Hoppe's grounding of the so-called *a priori* of communication and argumentation are filled by Apel's original arguments. Additionally, the paper provides a case for interpreting Hoppe's ethics as a theory of rational conflict-freedom, which seems to cohere best with the transcendental-pragmatist approach. Finally, we offer a few comments on how the most common objections against Hoppe's theory can be overcome on the basis of transcendental pragmatics and the conflict-freedom principle.

Introduction

One of the most notable endeavors aimed at justifying the principles of libertarianism, as represented by Murray N. Rothbard and his intellectual successors, is Hans-Hermann Hoppe's argumentation ethics. Formulated first

in his book "Eigentum, Anarchie und Staat" (1987), it aroused considerable interest within the ranks of libertarian theorists after its English-language publication one year later ([1988] 2006, pp. 339–346), dividing commentators into ardent followers[1] and sharp critics of Hoppe's approach.[2] In our judgment, however, the existent literature does not exhaust the subject-matter. Above all, during the debate over Hoppe's argument, both advocates and critics tended to focus on its libertarian implications, paying little attention to epistemological underpinnings of the theory and to the doctrines that inspired Hoppe: the thought of Jürgen Habermas (Hoppe's Ph.D. advisor), and to an even greater extent, Karl-Otto Apel's transcendental pragmatics of language.

It is beyond the purview of this article to offer a peremptory defense of Hoppe's argument. Our aim is far more moderate. From the point of view of intellectual history, we highlight Apel's influence on Hoppe. To wit, we claim that Hoppe is to be classified as a proponent of the consensus theory of truth as expounded by Apel. More importantly, the Apelian consensus theory of truth is here identified as a presupposition or a background theory of Hoppe's argumentation ethics. We contend that the latter theory is logically contingent on the former. Thus, the advocates of Hoppe's argumentation ethics must espouse Apel's consensus theory if they want to uphold their stance. Opponents, on the other hand, should take it into account in order to avoid formulating misguided objections and, as they deem appropriate, redirect their criticism. In fact, as will be seen, several objections raised by critics stem from the neglect of the transcendental pragmatics and the concomitant misconstrual of the Hoppean ethics as one describing the factual conditions of possibility for argumentation. In reality, against the background of its transcendental-pragmatist presuppositions, Hoppe's theory ought to be read as a conception that aims to prescribe principled solutions for conflicts over scarce resources.

The questions of the truth theory and epistemology in general have gone unnoticed by the vast majority of commentators. To our knowledge, the only exception is Ilia Schmelzer, who correctly acknowledges the consensus theory of truth of Habermas and Apel as the epistemological

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[1] Cf. Rothbard (1988), Kinsella (1994, 1996, 2002), Eabrasu (2009), Block (2011), Van Dun (2009).

[2] Cf. Friedman (1988), Murphy and Callahan (2006), Frederick (2013), Van Dun (2009), Eabrasu (2012).

underpinning of Hoppe's argumentation ethics (2013, pp. 4–32). He nonetheless puts stress on the sharp criticism of Hoppe from the standpoint of critical rationalism rather than on the exhaustive illumination of the links between Hoppe's ethics and Apel's and Habermas' views on truth. Furthermore, whereas Schmelzer seems to perceive Hoppe's theory as influenced by Apel and Habermas to by and large the same degree, we emphasize Hoppe's connections to Apel. Another author who paid a little attention to Hoppe's theory of knowledge is Douglas Rasmussen (1988, p. 51), yet he did not elaborate on his insights and confined himself to leveling some doubts concerning the validity of Hoppe's central epistemological tenet, the so-called *a priori* of communication and argumentation.

We shall proceed in the following order. Section 2 provides a concise exposition of the Hoppean argumentation ethics with emphasis on the notion of conflict-freedom. In section 3, we pinpoint key gaps in Hoppe's own presentation of the "*a priori* of communication and argumentation". In section 4, in turn, we demonstrate how those gaps are filled by Apel's transcendental pragmatics. We also offer textual evidence that Hoppe indeed adheres to that philosophy, which is to be found in his works as well as in the interview given to ourselves. Additionally, in section 5, a few comments are made on how the most common objections against Hoppe's theory can be dismantled under the transcendental-pragmatist approach and the conception of conflict-freedom. The last section concludes.

Hoppe's argumentation ethics: an exposition

Hoppe's theory (2006, p. 339) purports to offer "the ultimate justification of the ethics of private property." This means precisely that libertarianism is supposed to be not only true but also undeniably true (Kinsella, 1994, pp. 125–126). And conversely, this means that all non-libertarian ethics are not only false; rather, they are necessarily false. Libertarian principles, thus understood, partake of axioms whose denial would lead to a performative contradiction. For in trying to question them, one has already presupposed their validity. On the other hand, nor could they be vindicated by means of deductive reasoning since any such reasoning would have to always presuppose them already (Hoppe, 2007, p. 18). In this respect, Hoppe's view on the axiomatic nature of libertarian ethics resembles Aristotle's grounding of the

non-contradiction principle or – as Hoppe himself declares – Kant's transcendental deduction (2016a, p. 150, f. 6).[3]

The Hoppean argument commences with the following rationalist *dictum*:

> ... Any truth claim – the claim connected with any proposition that it is true, objective or valid (all terms used synonymously here) – is and must be raised and decided upon in the course of an argumentation. And since it cannot be disputed that this is so (one cannot communicate and argue that one cannot communicate and argue), and it must be assumed that everyone knows what it means to claim something to be true (one cannot deny this statement without claiming its negation to be true), this has been aptly called 'the *a priori* of communication and argumentation' (2016a, pp. 148–149).

According to Hoppe, the above statement does not pertain to the theory of knowledge only. Quite to the contrary, much has been won for moral theory by virtue of "the *a priori* of argumentation and communication". In the first place, "arguing never just consists of free-floating propositions claiming to be true. Rather, argumentation is always an activity, too (2016a, p. 149)." Being an activity, argumentation – as Frank Van Dun (2009, p. 3) puts it – "cannot take place in a normative void"; its condition of possibility is the acceptance of specific norms of conduct. As necessary preconditions of truth-seeking, they are presupposed all alone in every act of argumentation (Hoppe, 2016a, pp. 149–150).

Furthermore, the universalization principle articulated, among others, in the Golden Rule of ethics and the Kantian categorical imperative, which state that ethical judgments, by nature, apply to all moral subjects in the same way, can now be reestablished on a proper foundation. Hoppe writes (2016a, p. 151):

> Indeed, as argumentation implies that everyone who can understand an argument must in principle be able to be convinced of it simply because of its argumentative force, the universalization principle can now be understood and explained as grounded in the wider *a priori* of communication and argumentation.

[3] See also Aristotle, 2005, 106A; Kant, 1929.

Moreover, Hoppe subscribes to a strong version of the universalization principle. Not only must everyone be bound by the same moral law[4] but they must also have identical individual rights (Hoppe, 2016a, pp. 149–150).

In order to arrive at the concrete norms built into the notion of argumentation, Hoppe (2016a, pp. 149–150) employs the conjunction of three premises:

> First, that argumentation is not only a cognitive but also a practical affair. Second, that argumentation, as a form of action, implies the use of the scarce resource of one's body. And third, that argumentation is a conflict-free way of interacting – not in the sense that there is always agreement on the things said, but in the sense that as long as argumentation is in progress it is always possible to agree at least on the fact that there is disagreement about the validity of what has been said.

From these premises, what is supposed to follow is the conclusion:

> (…) A mutual recognition of each person's exclusive control over his own body must be assumed to exist as long as there is argumentation.

Whoever tries to reject this principle, does so on pain of performative contradiction, for by engaging in argumentation, he has already presupposed its validity. Thereby, Hoppe claims to have grounded the first of the principles of the libertarian theory of justice – the right to self-ownership, or, stated more precisely, the right to ownership in one's body.

Before we move on to the Hoppean derivation of the next libertarian principle, i.e., the right to ownership in external objects, let us clarify Hoppe's second and third premises. What does it mean that goods or resources, exemplified by the human body, are scarce? And what does the thinker have in mind when speaking of conflict-freedom? An explanation may be found in the following fictional scenario, repeated time and again in a number of Hoppe's writings:

> In the Garden of Eden only two scarce goods exist: the physical body of a person and its standing room. Crusoe and Friday each have only one body and can stand only at one place at a time. Hence, even in the Garden of Eden conflicts between Crusoe and Friday can arise:

[4] Which does not imply any sort of egalitarianism even in the sense of all subjects having identical individual rights. See: Hare, 1981, p. 108.

> Crusoe and Friday cannot occupy the same standing room simultaneously without coming thereby into physical conflict with each other. Accordingly, even in the Garden of Eden rules of orderly social conduct must exist—rules regarding the proper location and movement of human bodies. And outside the Garden of Eden, in the realm of scarcity, there must be rules that regulate not only the use of personal bodies but also of everything scarce so that all possible conflicts can be ruled out. This is the problem of social order (2021, pp. 9–10).

Generally speaking, scarce goods are those goods the supply of which does not suffice to satisfy all needs that, technically speaking, could be satisfied with their aid (Robbins, 1932, pp. 12–22). There is also a crucial interpersonal dimension to it, typically referred to as "rivalrousness." This phenomenon comes into play whenever two or more agents seek to use one resource for conflicting purposes (Kinsella, 2006). Indeed, in Hoppe's view, interpersonal conflict may arise only in the realm of scarcity. Correspondingly, absent the superabundance of goods and the perfect harmony of human interests, conflict-avoidance consists in the definition of property rights ascribing titles to control over scarce resources to respective individual persons.[5]

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[5] Conversely, absent the superabundance of goods, but under the harmony of interests, conflicts will not arise. Kibbutzism, squats, marriages etc. – all these forms of human cooperation exist on the basis of joint ownership in resources precisely thanks to such harmony. As a matter of pure logic, therefore, it is perfectly conceivable that all mankind would maintain a communist economic order owing to unanimity on all relevant goals. But does this undercut the transcendental status of Hoppe's theory? Not at all. First off, even if interpersonal clashes never existed, a world marked by conflicts would still be imaginable as *a possible world*. A normative response to its challenges would then still represent an *a priori* inquiry, i.e., a logical *application* of transcendental knowledge. And because it is obviously the assumption of the existence of conflicts that proves much more realistic in the real world than the opposite one, Hoppean ethics stands a chance to be not only valid but also of tremendous practical interest.

As regards the question of transcendentalism, an anonymous referee of this journal holds that in order for an argument to be transcendental, it has to apply to disembodied spirits as well. Yet, although transcendentalism has indeed historically originated as a philosophy of the bodiless self, it is not its definitional feature. A theory of bodily *a priori* has been proposed for instance by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, to name only the best-known example (Ponty, 1981, pp. 67–202). Crucially, although there is no room in this article to elaborate on this in detail, Hoppe embraces the *a priori* of the body too as part of the action-axiom, which he took up from Ludwig von Mises (Hoppe, 2006; Mises, 1998, pp. 11–29). Finally, even without the notion of the bodily *a priori*, the application of the

Hence, both political philosophy and ethics can and must be defined in terms of property rights (Hoppe, 2006, pp. 332–333).[6]

This by no means entails that all existent normative systems are equally good provided that one translates them into the conceptual framework of property rights. Quite to the contrary, there is in fact only one set of norms that satisfies the goal of conflict resolution, namely the libertarian ethics of private property. In order to avoid conflicts, rules regulating the distribution of property titles must enable the assignment of rights to exclusive control over resources to individual owners, "the ultimate decision-makers" with respect to any good in question. Then and only then can the specter of physical clash be averted. Hoppe (2006, p. 67) explains:

> Two individuals cannot be the exclusive owner of one and the same thing at the same time." Furthermore, the distribution of property titles cannot be determined on an arbitrary basis. Property-claims must draw their binding force from intersubjectively verifiable criteria. Thus, the general, uniform principle of ownership in scarce goods, be it one's body or external objects, holds that property-claims must be supported "by establishing an objective, intersubjectively controllable link between a particular person and a particular scarce resource (Hoppe, 2016a, p. 155; see also Kinsella, 2006).

Insofar as self-ownership is concerned, the postulate of "objective link" is fulfilled by the direct connection between one's will and his body. What makes X's nature-given body lawfully his is the fact that it is under his direct control, whereas others can exercise control over it only by making use of their bodies. Ownership in one's body has therefore logico-temporal precedence to any indirect control (Hoppe, 1987, pp. 74–75).

How in turn do we come to own external objects? Matters of original acquisition, i.e., the appropriation of previously unowned resources, are governed by the "first-use-first-own" rule (Hoppe 2016a, p. 145). Among libertarian scholars, there is an ongoing debate over what should serve as a touchstone for legitimate acquisition (Epstein, 1979, pp. 1221–1242; Rothbard, 1988, pp. 39–40; Dominiak, 2017, pp. 43–53). In most of his works, Hoppe explicitly adheres to the Lockean labor theory – whoever is

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argumentation ethics to the world of scarcity would still be its logical extension, just as is the analysis developed under the assumption of interest-disharmony.

[6] For human rights as property rights, see also Rothbard, 1998, pp. 113–120.

first to mix his labor with a given resource has a rightful claim to ownership thereof (1987, pp. 76–80). In Hoppe's later articles (2021, pp. 14–15; 2016b), the labor criterion is not mentioned anymore, having been replaced by the competitive concept of first possession (exclusive physical control). In any case, both criteria are meant to constitute objectively ascertainable, visible states of affairs indicating one's ownership in things. Moreover, had others a right to contest the first user's claim to ownership of resources they had never used before, then such a right would have to be based on mere verbal declaration: "a decree." Yet this would clearly run counter to the very purpose of norms, that is, the conflict-avoidance. For if goods were to be appropriated by decree, there would be no chance for the rational resolution of disputes between contrary decrees put forward by interested persons (Hoppe, 2016a, pp. 155–156).

Hoppe and the Consensus Theory of Truth

Tibor Machan (1988, p. 52) entitled his review of the first English-language presentation of the Hoppean argument, "Ethics without philosophy." David Gordon (1988, p. 47) somewhat echoed this opinion, writing: "Hoppe is a Kantian of sorts (…). But his argument about rights does not depend on any controversial positions in the theory of knowledge. It is quite compatible with any of the standard options in epistemology, including direct realism." Rothbard himself (1988, p.45), also believed that Hoppe's argument may well be reconciled with his own natural-law, neo-Aristotelian position. Nothing can be further from the truth. As will be seen, not only does argumentation ethics originate from a distinct philosophical tradition but also its central contentions are logically dependent upon it.

Let us go back to the fundament of Hoppe's philosophy – the *a priori* of communication and argumentation. Hoppe asserts that it cannot be rejected on pain of performative contradiction. As he puts it,

> one cannot communicate and argue that one cannot communicate and argue", and hence "(...) any truth claim – the claim connected with any proposition that it is true, objective or valid (…) – is and must be raised and decided upon in the course of an argumentation.

Yet for this conclusion to follow, one more premise would have to hold true. Namely, it must first be assumed that each cognitive act aimed at the

rejection of the *a priori* of argumentation and communication constitutes an argumentative-communicative act itself.

But why is this supposed to be the case? It is perhaps customary, albeit by no means self-evident or, at least at first glance, indubitably grounded that to deny an argument one must come up with an argument of his own. Cartesians may not concede, holding that the ultimate starting point of knowledge, *cogito ergo sum*, is so clear and distinct that it takes no argumentation whatsoever to prove it right. Husserl would insist that the foundation of knowledge requires intuitive insight into the essence of species. To both existentialists and critical rationalists of Popper's school, the choice of the way of conduct, including adherence to rationality, is nothing but a leap of faith. Would they all be caught up in performative contradiction in making their point? Not necessarily. First, their arguments refer not to the first premises (which are thought to be a matter of rational intuition or faith), but rather to the method by which they are to be validated or chosen. Thus, they operate on another, higher meta-level. Second, why cannot their argumentation be simply classified as a purely accidental fact? To use a different example, why cannot an opponent of libertarianism respond to its claims with a bare, "No, I do not believe in it"? Obviously, the recourse to mere assertions would be self-disqualifying for a philosopher. But is there a moral duty or a transcendental necessity to philosophize?

Hoppe (2016b) counters objections such as the above in the following manner:

> It has been held against the 'argument from argumentation', for instance, that one can always refuse to engage in argumentation. This is certainly true (…). However, this is not an objection to the argument in question. Whenever a person refuses to engage in argumentation, he is also *owed* no argument in return. He simply does not count as a rational person in regard to the question or problem at hand.

Apparently, then, the *a priori* of communication and argumentation consists in some specific concept of knowledge and rationality.

Furthermore, it is not that – as Hoppe's own utterance might suggest – because "one cannot communicate and argue that one cannot communicate and argue", then "... any truth claim ... is and must be raised and decided upon in the course of an argumentation." Indeed, the latter proposition does not follow from the former. One could simply rebut Hoppe's reasoning by

the following reply: "I deny that all truth claims must be raised and decided upon in the course of argumentation. That my own stance is being so raised and defended by no means proves me wrong. In point of fact, there are propositions that need not be so raised and defended. The proposition of mine is just not one of them." This is nothing but an instance of the essential rule of logic that no universal affirmative statement can ever be drawn from a particular affirmative one.

Happily, there is no need to impute to Hoppe's theory such a grave fallacy. In our view, the reasoning behind the *a priori* of argumentation should be conceived of as follows: because "any truth claim (...) is and must be raised and decided upon in the course of an argumentation", or, put differently, one must argue whether he likes it or not inasmuch as he belongs to rational entities, then one cannot contend that one *need not* communicate and argue, or stated more precisely, one cannot even *think* that one *need not* communicate and argue. Hoppe (2006, p. 338) seems to confirm this interpretation by stating that those who reject the libertarian ethics "could not even open their mouths if it were otherwise. The very fact, then, that they do open them proves that what they say is wrong". Let us note that in Hoppe's works, argumentation and communication are always adduced together, like two sides of the same coin.

Even more importantly, in the much later and lesser known (2016b) presentation of the argumentation ethics, Hoppe restates his theory in a manner corresponding precisely to the interpretation suggested above. He writes:

> That: All truth-claims – all claims that a given proposition is true, false, indeterminate or un-decidable or that an argument is valid and complete or not – are raised, justified and decided upon in the course of an argumentation. That: The truth of this proposition cannot be disputed without falling into contradiction, as any attempt to do so would itself have to come in the form of an argument. Hence, the 'Apriori' of argumentation.

This, however, still begs the question: why would any attempt to reject the *a priori* of argumentation have to come in the form of an argument? It seems that in Hoppe's view, the argumentative situation is by no means contingent. However, it cannot be the case either that knowing subjects do argue irrespective of their own will. It goes without saying that many of them hardly ever argue at all. Rather, there must be some sort of obligation on the part of each and every subject of cognition to ground his

judgments in an argumentative fashion. In other words, when Hoppe says that "any truth claim is and must be decided upon in the course of argumentation", the "must" he mentions is of a normative rather than descriptive nature.[7] Accordingly, the performative contradiction involved in the denial of the *a priori* of argumentation consists in the negation of the duty one commits oneself to in the very act of the denial.

Another latent premise underlies Hoppe's statements that "argumentation is not only a cognitive but also a practical affair", that "argumentation, as a form of action, implies the use of the scarce resource of one's body" and that "argumentation is a conflict-free way of interacting." Again, idealists of Cartesian, Kantian, or Husserlian leanings might object that truth-seeking is, in fact, a solitary endeavor pursued by the *ego-cogito* or transcendental self. The very existence of other minds, with which one may exchange arguments, is from this point of view questionable or subject to "bracketing." Hoppe, on the other hand, posits that argumentation cannot be just an inner quasi-dialogue reducible to the process of reasoning that proceeds from premises to conclusions. On the contrary, from the Hoppean perspective, argumentation is always and necessarily a social (public) activity.

Whence do the above tenets come? Although nowhere in his English-language writings does Hoppe deal with the problem of truth systematically, he is, following in the footsteps of Habermas and Apel, an adherent of the consensus theory.

In his early German-language treatises, Hoppe, like a number of critics before him, rejects the correspondence theory of truth on the grounds that it suffers from unsurmountable logical difficulties. First of all, it leads to

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[7] In early presentations of his theory, to reject allegations of deriving "ought" from "is", Hoppe would make the rather odd suggestion that what he proposed represented "an entirely value-free system of ethics" (2006, p. 401) in that it consisted solely of "if", not "ought" statements (1987, p. 62; 2006, p. 401; 2016a, p. 157). Obviously, the very idea of "value-free ethics" strikes one as plain "wooden iron", a blatant contradiction in terms. Not surprisingly, it was explicitly rejected even by some advocates for Hoppe's ethics (cf. Kinsella, 1994, p. 1432), and Hoppe himself would not restate it later. True, Hoppe does not derive norms from facts. Rather, following – as we shall see later – in Apel's footsteps, he asserts that a certain class of facts – that is, facts regarding cognition – presupposes the validity of a specific set of norms, the one just identified being the commitment to argumentative rationality. As Wolfgang Kuhlmann puts it, the first norm of argumentation ethics states: "Argue rationally!" (1985, p. 185, the quotation from: Sierocka, 2003, p. 135).

a vicious circle in that it construes truth as "consistency between the model and the image" (1976, p. 107).[8] And yet, as the model can be known only through the image, there is no way they can be compared with each other. Second of all, the correspondence theory provides no criterion allowing one to distinguish between true and false statements. As Hoppe (1987, p. 12) points out, the correspondence theory – when read as an account of the criterion of truth – indeed poses a circular definition. The notion of truth cannot be understood as "'correspondence between the statement and the reality' since saying that 'the statement and the reality correspond to each other' is but another subjective statement. Persons who believe in flying saucers claim of course that their statements correspond to reality (…). Instead, objectivity should be defined as intersubjectivity; objective statements are intersubjectively verifiable statements."[9] Hoppe (1987, p. 12) further specifies his position in a critically important pronouncement that may well serve as a definition of the consensus theory of truth: "Objectively justified statements are therefore such statements that everyone qua autonomous (i.e., not confronted with a threat of violence) subject can agree upon....".[10] In the English-language "A Theory of Socialism and Capitalism", Hoppe (2016a, p. 158) writes along the same lines: "(…) What is valid or true is to be defined as that upon which everyone according to this principle (the libertarian principle of private property – N.S.) can possibly agree." Years later (2017), when interviewed by us, he reaffirms his commitment to that theory:

> In some elementary sense all theories of truth are consensus theories: argumentation starts with a disagreement concerning the truth-claim of a proposition and aims at agreement.

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[8] In the German original: "Übereinstimmung von Vorbild und Abbild."

[9] See also Hoppe 1983, p. 46. It is worth mentioning that Hoppe restated this critique of the correspondence theory of truth thirty years later in a private conversation with us. Hoppe, Private communication, 2017.

[10] In the German original: "Objektiv begründete Aussagen sind demnach solche Aussagen, denen jedermann qua autonomes (d. i. nicht unter Gewaltandrohung stehendes) Subjekt zustimmen kann ..." Strictly speaking, Hoppe mentions three further conditions of the legitimate consensus that must be met by the arguers: competence, truthfulness, and dedication. Ibidem.

Stated more precisely, and pursuant to the objections directed against the correspondence theory, Hoppe (2016b) espouses the consensus theory of truth as an account of the criterion, or better put, the meta-criterion of truth:[11]

> Certainly, that the earth orbits around the sun, that water runs downward or that 1+1=2 is true, whether we argue about it or not. Argumentation does not make something true. Rather, argumentation is the method for justifying propositions as true or false when brought up for consideration,

he says.

Finally, Hoppe's contention that "any truth-claim (…) is and must be raised and decided upon in the course of an argumentation" and which on its part has normative prerequisites, refers directly to the consensual view on truth as presented by Apel and Habermas. For as aptly pointed out by Schmelzer (2013, pp. 8–9), under a different theory of truth – correspondence, coherence, or semantic – the (collective and public) conduct of truth-seeking (Popper's context of discovery), although technically important, would be secondary to the truth-value of statements and arguments in themselves (context of justification). It is the consensus theory that defines truth as something to be agreed upon.[12]

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[11] See f. 12. below.

[12] At the same time, Hoppe subscribes to the pragmatic theory of truth, which is why we do not name it above. His pragmatist leanings manifest themselves in at least three dimensions. First, Hoppe endorses instrumental success as the decisive criterion of scientific progress in natural sciences (1976, p. 83; 2006, p. 351). Second, his philosophy combines threads taken up from the philosophy of communication by Apel and Habermas with the praxeology of Ludwig von Mises, his famous action-axiom being in Hoppe's view the second pillar of epistemology alongside the *a priori* of argumentation (Hoppe, 2006, pp. 265–294; Mises, 1998, pp. 11–29). Finally, and most importantly, it is no coincidence that the consensus theory of truth was first proposed by Charles Sanders Peirce, the founding father of pragmatism. In Peirce's (1878) own words, "The opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate, is what we mean by the truth, and the object represented in this opinion is the real." Indeed, as Chwedeńczuk (1984, p. 171) explains, this theory is a variant of the pragmatic account of truth. After all, the pragmatic theory associates truth with certain actions and their results, and reaching consensus is itself an action with a specific result. To Apel's mind, it is the consensual approach that reveals the true meaning of pragmatism in that it discovers (by establishing intersubjectivity as the criterion of the criteria of truth) universally binding procedures of truth-seeking undertakings without slipping into relativism, voluntarism,

Hoppe and Apel's transcendental pragmatics

Perhaps due to Hoppe's personal relationship with Habermas as his doctoral advisor, as well as Habermas' prominent position in contemporary philosophy, it is he who is most often taken to be the most significant source of inspiration for Hoppe (cf. Rasmussen, 1998, p. 50). Yet upon closer examination, Hoppe's ethics and theory of knowledge bear more resemblance to Apel's transcendental pragmatics. Most importantly, in contradistinction to Habermas, who refuses to join the camp of transcendental philosophy (1979, pp. 21–25), Apel (cf. 1996b, p. 74), he consistently upholds his commitment to the Kantian idea of *a priori* preconditions of knowledge discovered by critical philosophy, i.e., the approach putting reason before its own tribunal that judges by – as Kant (1929, B25) phrased it – "knowledge which is occupied not so much with objects as with the mode of our knowledge of objects insofar as this mode of knowledge is to be possible *a priori*." To both Apel and Hoppe, the "*a priori* possible mode of knowledge" is of an ethical nature. Secondly, Hoppe (2016b) himself admits to being influenced by Apel more than by Habermas. Finally, it is Apel, not Habermas, who uses arguments by performative contradiction in order to establish "the ultimate grounding" (*Letzbegründung*). Were it not for the Apelian inspiration, Hoppe's claims to the ultimate justification of libertarianism would be rendered void.

It is unnecessary here to present Apel's theoretical project at length. Instead, we shall focus on three fundamental questions: 1) What are the premises of his consensus theory of truth? b) Why, according to Apel, does the search for truth have normative prerequisites? c) How is Hoppe's position rooted in these insights, or in other words, how do they fill the aforementioned gaps in the grounding of the *a priori* of argumentation?

Being not only a creative philosopher but also a historian of ideas, Apel draws on diverse sources of inspiration. The first of these is Kant. Apel's transcendental pragmatics, as the name suggests, is aimed at the transformation of Kantianism in the spirit of the twentieth-century linguistic turn and pragmaticism of Charles Sanders Peirce (Apel, 2006, pp. 509–530). From Apel's perspective, amongst the contemporary theorists of language, a key

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and utilitarianism that are characteristic of William James or Richard Rorty's takes on pragmatism (Apel, 1991, p. 21; 1994, pp. 175–206).

role is played by the so-called ordinary language philosophers (John L. Austin and John Searle) and the later Wittgenstein. Insofar as the latter thinker is concerned, his "Philosophical Investigations" bring about the famous thesis of the non-existence of private language, which, in Apel's opinion, leads to the rejection of solipsism (Apel, 1998, pp. 1–38). Hoppe (2016b) invokes Wittgenstein as well by stating: "we can recognize that argumentation is a speech-act, involving the use of a public language as a means to communicate with other speakers (Wittgenstein)."[13] With the aid of Wittgenstein's tenet, the initially unsupported view on argumentation as a practical affair occurring between real speakers can supposedly be justified.

Also, Apel acknowledges the importance of Austin's and Searle's theory of speech acts, which emphasizes the twofold, performative-propositional nature of language. Together with Habermas, Apel develops their theory, listing four fundamental validity-claims related to speech acts, each of which pertains to another domain of reality, mode of communication, and function of speech: truth, rightness, truthfulness, and comprehensibility (Apel, 1997, p. 85; Habermas 1979, p. 68).

For the purposes of this article, of particular significance are claims for truth and rightness. In short, the point is that whenever one formulates a statement about reality, the propositional aspect – the description of things – does not exhaust the content of a speech act. Since what is true is true not only for one subject but also for everyone regardless of time and place, the performative part embraces a validity-claim addressing all entities capable of understanding it, in Apel's (1998, p. 262) own words: "all rational beings." Similarly, claiming an action to be right involves an appeal to all beings able to judge it. By the same token, any claim for truth or rightness must be expressed in language and mediated by argumentation, which turns it into an intersubjectively valid statement. As can be seen in several quotes cited in this paper, Hoppe's philosophical jargon is heavily influenced by the theory of validity-claims. Speaking of statements, he frequently uses the term "truth-claim" instead of "proposition", "judgment", and the like. This resemblance is not merely verbal. The idea of validity-claims explains the meaning of the *a priori* of argumentation in that it necessitates the argumentative resolution of disputes as well as allows for construing the performative contradiction in which one would be entangled in the attempt to reject that

[13] See also: Hoppe, 2021, pp. 308–309; 1976, p. 42.

necessity as one that occurs between the act of rejection and the truth-claim conveyed by the very same act.

Finally, from Peirce come two vital concepts. The first is pragmatic semiotics, according to which knowledge is always mediated by language that comprises signs, which in turn require interpretation by an acting subject (Apel, 1998, pp. 80–83; Peirce, 1934a, pp. 264–317). This thesis reinforces Apel's (and Hoppe's) general view on cognition as unavoidably anchored in language. The second crucial concept is the very idea of consensual truth as a Kantian regulative idea attainable only for an "indefinite community of investigators" (Apel, 1998, p. 87; Peirce, 1934b, pp. 318–357).

Apel goes beyond Peirce by extending his theory to all truth–claims, and thereby all rational entities. As Apel (1998, p. 277) writes:

> The *a priori* of argumentation contains the claim to justify not only all the 'assertions' of science but also all human claims (…) Anyone who takes part in an argument implicitly acknowledges all the potential claims of all the members of communication community that *can* be justified by rational argument (…). He also commits himself to eventually justifying all his claims upon other people through arguments.

Apel tries to demonstrate the inescapability of argumentation in the polemic with Hans Albert and his Popperian critical rationalism. Following the ancient skeptics and Popper, Albert (1985) sought to refute foundationalism by proposing the famous Münchhausen trilemma. In light of this theorem, one's attempt to justify any statement ultimately winds up falling into one of the following three traps: a) an infinite regress; b) a logical circle in the deduction; c) a dogmatic cessation of the process at a particular point. At any rate, the proof can never be ultimate; it is at best always tentative and vulnerable to future objections. One can fundamentally doubt everything. In his rejoinder, Apel attributes to Albert's reasoning the *abstractive fallacy*, i.e., disregarding the pragmatic (agential) dimension of knowledge. He counters Albert's argument by pointing out another possibility that has been overlooked by his opponent. Namely, Albert unduly posits that sentences can be validated exclusively by other sentences. Meanwhile, reasons Apel, it might also be the case that certain statements are proved or disproved by actions that are to be interpreted in the course of the reflexive procedure, i.e., the procedure reflecting on the subjective preconditions of knowledge. And crucially, argumentation is itself an action. He who questions

the possibility of the ultimate grounding can do so only by raising validity claims in a public language, thus committing himself to argumentation. Yet in so doing, he demonstrates the unavoidability of argumentation and runs into a performative contradiction (Apel, 1996b, p. 81).

It is of paramount importance to note that Apel's "indubitable evidence" of the *a priori* of argumentation should not be conflated with "consciousness-evidence for me" known from the mentalist philosophy of primordial origins from Descartes to Husserl). In fact, the crux of transcendental pragmatics is an attempt to overcome the mentalist paradigm with its unavoidable solipsist consequences. Apel (1996b, p. 84) dissociates himself from that tradition by stressing the subjective-intersubjective distinction. In his view, mentalist philosophers tend to neglect "the mediation-function of language conceived as transcendental condition of the possibility of an *intersubjectively valid* word-*interpretation.*" Even when thinking to oneself, one needs to emulate a language-mediated dialogue with others if he is to distinguish between intersubjectively valid statements and subjective convictions of his own. Says Apel (1998, p. 148): "Knowledge based upon observation at the level of the subject-object relationship always already presupposes knowledge as understanding of meaning at the level of subject-cosubject relationship."

Furthermore, perhaps despite appearances, Apel's epistemology has a considerable realist flavor. Indeed, even though knowledge is always anchored in the linguistic *a priori*, and hence a subject cannot have direct access to objective reality (Kantian *Ding an sich*), the doubt in its existence violates the rules of the "transcendental language-game with the paradigm of the existence of a real world" (Apel, 1998, p. 255). For the very notion of meaningful argumentation presupposes not only the existence of other arguers but also the distinction between what is real and what is unreal. Thus, whoever puts forward Cartesian suspicions that the world might be but a dream or illusion created by some malicious demon, pragmatically contradicts himself as if he was questioning the possibility of argumentation as such (Apel, 1996b, pp. 90–94). Importantly, Hoppe (2021, p. 308) echoes this reasoning as he writes: "...The notion of truth, of objective truth, of truth grounded in some reality outside that of language itself, is indispensable for talk of any sort ... Language presupposes rationality ... It is impossible to rid oneself of the notion of objective truth as long as one is capable of engaging in any language game whatsoever". Hence, says Hoppe (2006, p. 303, f. 7), "there can be no

disputing that it is possible to argue with one another that solipsism cannot be defended, since by wanting to argue in its defense one has already thrown it overboard." However, outside the context of transcendental pragmatics, it would be obscure why one must argue with one another about solipsism or anything else at all. It is therefore by virtue of the transcendental-pragmatic justification of realism as a sort of cognitive commitment that it finally becomes clear why the existence of the world, presupposed by Hoppe's ethics, is not just an arbitrary, commonsensical assumption. Likewise, the existence of other minds is here supposed to be established as a transcendental prerequisite of knowledge.

Apel (1996b, p. 92) concludes that for the cognition itself to be possible, one must posit: "1) that there must have been a real communication-community, and 2) that there might be an unlimited ideal communication-community, both capable in principle of conforming to his certain insight." In accordance with the idea of the linguistic-pragmatic transformation of critical philosophy, Kantian transcendental unity of consciousness is thereby claimed to be superseded by "the intersubjective unity of interpretation" (Apel, 1998, p. 267).

From this formulation of the consensus theory of truth follows the postulate of discourse ethics. Importantly, as correctly noted by Schmelzer (2013, pp. 17–20), if the correspondence theory of truth entails any norms, then they are of a purely technical nature. Needless to say, it is for example favorable to be polite to those who may contribute to our research. Yet, after all, what is true is true regardless of their or anybody else's opinion. It is specifically Apel's transcendental account of the consensual truth that not only equates truth with universal acceptability and thus necessitates the recognition of certain norms that make consent possible but also situates the norms on the transcendental level.

It is unnecessary here to deal with the concrete rules prescribed by Apel's discourse ethics or juxtapose it in detail with Hoppe's approach.[14] Let

[14] Generally speaking, as has been already mentioned, Apel sees argumentation ethics as prescribing the pursuit of rationality and equality amongst arguers, with equality to be guaranteed by some sort of socialism, possibly of the Marxist pedigree (Apel, 1998, pp. 282–283). Additionally, in the age of globalization, argumentation ethics is being transformed into the universal macro-ethics of co-responsibility manifesting itself in the commitment to the conservation of the environment (cf. Apel, 1996a, pp. 275–292). Hoppe challenges Apel's views (as well as Habermas's social-democratic option) by

us go back to Hoppe instead. In private correspondence (2017), he confirms his transcendental-pragmatic affiliations. He admits:

> I agree with Apel on four fundamental insights. A) that speaking, communicating, arguing are purposeful actions (subclasses of action exhibiting the same general categories characteristic of all action); B) his transformation of Kantian transcendental philosophy from the 'solipsistic' starting point of a lone subject to an intersubjective, if you will 'public,' starting point, in recognizing that all philosophizing is, undeniably and inescapably so, done in and with a public language; C) that all contentious truth claims, i.e., claims that some proposition in question or in dispute is true (or not), can be settled only in the course of argumentation and that this cannot be denied on pain of contradiction; and D) that argumentation, demonstrating a commitment to the truth, presupposes and involves the acceptance of an ethic.

He also adds:

> But any actual agreement is no guarantee of truth. Both (or all) agreeing disputants may still be wrong. So, and in this I agree with Apel (and Peirce), a truth-claim is indeed made vis-à-vis an indefinite community of arguers and hence any actual agreement always remains open to future challenges.[15]

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pointing to the fact of scarcity (toward which Apel and Habermas are "blind" as they "suffer ... from complete ignorance of economics" [Hoppe, 2006, 335]). Stated more precisely, whereas Apel maintains that "As potential 'claims' that can be communicated interpersonally, all human 'needs' are relevant" (1998, 277), Hoppe seems to stress the next statement following the cited one: "They [the needs] must be acknowledged if they can be justified interpersonally through arguments" (ibidem). To Hoppe, the existence of various human needs can only be the starting point of ethical inquiry, never the point of arrival. All human needs, however real and urgent (and in this sense justifiable) they may be, cannot be simultaneously acknowledged simply because their fulfillment potentially involves the use of the same scarce resources. Meanwhile, rationally acceptable norms cannot prescribe the use of scarce goods for conflicting purposes as the norms would thereby become conflict-generating instead of conflict-resolving. Thus, they would fall short of the very purpose of argumentation about norms, which is conflict-avoidance (Hoppe, 2016b; more on this in section 5).

[15] Indeed, Hoppe adopted the view on the objective reality as accessible only to an infinite community of investigators as early as in 1976, in his doctoral thesis titled "Handeln und Erkennen" (1976, p. 109, f. 193).

As we have seen, Hoppe's epistemological beliefs that underlie his ethical project become understandable only in light of Apel's transcendental pragmatics. Let us summarize for the sake of clarity. In section 2, we identified the following gaps in Hoppe's own exposition of the *a priori* of argumentation. First, Hoppe does not show why argumentation is not a merely contingent situation, but rather an inescapable framework of cognition. Stated more precisely, he provides no convincing argument for there being *a duty* to argue. Second, in his writings, there is little justification for the understanding of argumentation as a necessarily social (public) activity that occurs in the real outer world between several distinct, self-conscious persons.[16] Although the latter premise is undoubtedly quite commonsensical, it is equally clear that it can be challenged from various philosophical positions. Therefore, inasmuch as it rests upon unsupported premises, Hoppe's ethics would fall short of its goal of providing the ultimate justification for the libertarian principles. As it turns out, though, what Hoppe proposes in his books as the *a priori* of argumentation is in fact just a sketch of the argument which is to be found in full in the works of Apel. Beata Sierocka (2003, p. 86) accurately enumerates four essential elements of the Apelian linguistic *a priori*, each of which is necessary to grasp the meaning of Hoppe's *a priori* of communication and argumentation: "1) linguistic constitution of knowledge; 2) communicative character of linguistic action; 3) twofold, performative-propositional structure of a speech act; 4) indefeasibly argumentative nature of knowledge." Additionally, from Apel comes the idea of the ultimate foundation of knowledge in general and ethics in particular, upon which Hoppe's own project of the ultimate justification of libertarianism heavily relies.

Unwarranted objections and the conflict-freedom principle

The consequences of disregarding the epistemological background of Hoppe's ethics are even more far-reaching. Without it, it is also either impossible or very hard to grasp further crucial steps of his reasoning. Although there is no room in this paper to elaborate on an in-depth critique of misguided objections directed against the libertarian argumentation ethics, let

[16] True enough, as has been shown in this section, remarks on that are interspersed throughout his books and articles. Those are rather hints than a systematic theory, though.

us at least indicate how conclusions of this paper may help put the ongoing debate on the right track.

First and foremost, beyond the context of the Apelian consensus theory of truth, the principle of universalization, recognizing all potential arguers as subjects of rights, appears to be a mere assumption. As a result, it has been raised against Hoppe that his approach at best justifies granting rights to participants of the argument (Murphy, Callahan, 2006, pp. 58–60). This objection, however, overlooks the status of all beings capable of arguing as the members of the indefinite communication community. In other words, every truth-claim, as a performative-propositional speech act, is made not only against the actual interlocutor (if there is any) but rather against all rational creatures, "vis-à-vis an indefinite community of arguers." This is exactly what Hoppe has in mind, asserting that the universalization principle "can now be understood and explained as grounded in the wider '*a priori* of communication and argumentation'." Also, it is precisely the status of a member of that community that bestows upon each arguer identical individual rights.

The same rebuttal applies to another misrepresentation of Hoppe's theory, according to which for the argument to take place it is sufficient to establish rights solely for its duration (Murphy, Callahan, 2006, pp. 56–58). Yet, the notion of consensual truth as the Kantian regulative idea entails that argumentation is ultimately endless. As long as there are knowing subjects, there will be argumentation.

Finally, a number of Hoppe's opponents tend to conceive of argumentation ethics as describing the physical conditions of argumentation and then try to disprove his argument by adducing empirical examples of exchanges of arguments that take place successfully despite blatant violations of property rights all around. After all, even slaves could argue with their masters (c.f. Friedman, 1988, p. 44; Jones, 1988, p. 49; Yeager, 1988, pp. 45–46). In the same vein, Robert Murphy and Gene Callahan (2006, pp. 55–56) hold that Hoppe's argument falters because in order to argue, one does not need to own one's entire body. In reality, they claim, ownership in one's brain would suffice, other body parts such as legs or kidneys being unnecessary for participation in an argument. Likewise, it has been suggested that Hoppe confuses ownership (unnecessary for arguing) with use or possession. According to some critics (Frederick, 2013, pp. 94–101; Murphy, Callahan, 2006, pp. 60–63), argumentation can successfully take

place whenever participants enjoy actual control over their bodies with the question of rightfulness being irrelevant.

Hoppe's case, however, successful or not, is a transcendental one. As such, it is aimed at showcasing the necessary normative preconditions of observational knowledge and cannot be falsified by experience (Hoppe, 2006, p. 404). True enough, one can possibly manage to argue under virtually all conceivable circumstances. It has nothing to do with the problem in dispute, though.[17] The grave error to which Hoppe's critics fall prey consists in misreading his theory as one maintaining that in order to be capable of arguing, the arguer needs to enjoy full control over his entire body (or even a fully functional body with all parts and organs that are characteristic of a healthy human being). Since this is obviously not the case, and since even if it were, it still would not entail ownership rights in the arguer's body, Hoppe's argument – conclude the critics – fails. None of these, however, is what argumentation ethics says. Rather, its desideratum should be construed in a somewhat reversed fashion. To wit, as has been shown in the presentation of Apel's discourse theory, argumentation is supposed to impose certain moral obligations on the arguing person *vis-à-vis his opponent*. For argumentation is, after all, an interpersonal affair. Thus, what the argumentation ethics really says is that because argumentation represents a peaceful form of interaction, the arguer assumes, at least tacitly, the duty to treat *his counterpart* in a peaceful manner. To illustrate this point, let us go back to the "legs and kidneys" counterexample. Of course, successful argumentation does not require that both parties to the argument have two legs and working kidneys. If it nevertheless so happens that they do have them, an assault on these or any other body parts of the interlocutors will put a halt to the peaceable exchange of thought. Though the discourse may somehow still be continued, it will no longer represent *good* argumentation. i.e., one consonant with the normative model of argumentation, which – to use Habermas's (1987, 25) well-known phrase – "excludes all force … except the force of the better argument."[18]

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[17] Unfortunately, aside from the papers by Kinsella (2002, 2009), rejoinders to the critics also tend to concentrate on the empirical soundness of Hoppe's case. Cf. Block's treatment of the "legs and kidneys" argument (2011, p. 633).

[18] *Per analogiam*, consider the institution of marriage. Although many couples make it survive despite mutual infidelity, abuse, or violence, one cannot help but agree that

Likewise, slaves may well argue with their masters, and the argumentation between them, although imperfect due to the inequality in status, may prove conclusive. This, however, will be true only to an extent that the slave owner tries to mimic the ideal argumentative situation by refraining from exercising his property right in the slave, that is, so long as, at a minimum, he does not kill, flog, intimidate, or otherwise abuse his "property". Yet in so doing, he willy-nilly admits that his alleged ownership title has been derived out of thin air. He indeed abstains from using violence against his slave-interlocutor not at whim, but out of the duty to abide by the rules of peaceful interaction for the argument's sake. Now, what does this duty imply? In light of the classical matrix of jural concepts proposed by Wesley N. Hohfeld, duties are logical correlates of rights, meaning that A has a right to X if and only if others are duty-bound to respect that right (and, of course, conversely: B has a duty to do X if and only if there is some A in the universe who has the right to have B do X [Hohfeld, 1919; Kramer, 1998]). The slave's body must then be shielded from his ostensible owner's interference by someone's title in that body. Finally, the titleholder could be no one else but the slave himself, because otherwise the purported owner would be yet another slaver, and the exact same line of refutation would be applicable to his claim as well. It turns out, therefore, that the slaver's duty not to use violence against the slave stems from the latter's right to his own body, which in turn precludes the slave owner having a property title in the very same body. The commitment to the coercion-free trial of arguments and the norms of peaceful interaction is thereby implicitly present even in the argumentative actions of the slaver. Should he then refuse to set his slave free when called to do so, he will fall in a performative contradiction in the very act of saying "no".

Accordingly, as stressed by Kinsella as well as in our brief summary included in section 2, one should interpret Hoppe's ethics as a theory of conflict-freedom, an argumentatively undeniable goal to which every arguer – i.e., every subject of knowledge – is committed.[19] We believe that this special status of conflict-avoidance can be explained in a twofold manner. On the one hand, argumentation regarding norms is aimed precisely at

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the relationship's survival does not by any means speak against the common belief in fidelity, respect, and care as the foundations of a good marriage.

[19] Kinsella (2002).

conflict-resolution. If we want irrationality and struggle instead of rationality and peace, then why argue at all? One cannot propose conflict-generating norms without getting entangled in a performative contradiction since by the very act of arguing he has already demonstrated that what he sought was peace (Hoppe, 2016b; 2018, p. 59). On the other hand, argumentation itself is supposed to be a conflict-free form of interaction between autonomous subjects. But in the absence of conflict-resolving norms, peace can at best be provisional, depending on individuals' goodwill or the harmony of their goals. For as soon as they turn against each other, the stronger party prevails and might is right (Hoppe, 1987, p. 42). Says Hoppe (2016b): "Yet to deny one person the right to self-ownership and prior possessions is to deny his autonomy and his autonomous standing in a trial of arguments. It affirms instead dependency and conflict, i.e., *heteronomy*, rather than conflict-free and autonomously reached agreement and is thus contrary to the very purpose of argumentation."

Yet to fully grasp the meaning of conflict-avoidance as the kernel of Hoppe's theory, we again need Apel and his transcendental pragmatics.[20] For not only is understanding of the latter theory necessary to see why the endorsement of conflict-avoidance is pragmatically unavoidable as part of the implicit moral commitment present in each and every cognitive act. On top of that, recourse to transcendental pragmatics can help rid oneself of the misconception of argumentation ethics as an explanation of aposterioristic preconditions of arguing in yet another way. Let us note that in sharp contrast to such empirical speculations, conflict-freedom does qualify as a matter of transcendental argument in that it partly boils down to the principle of non-contradiction as the necessary condition for conflict-freedom. For as has been clearly explained by Steiner (1994, pp. 90–93) and Dominiak (2017, p. 53), since assertions of rights are deontic propositions, and rights themselves are enforceable claims, i.e., a right is a logical correlate of a corresponding duty on the rest of the agents' part (Hohfeld, 1919;

[20] This is despite the fact that conflict-avoidance as the true purpose of ethics was proclaimed not by Apel, but by another proponent of argumentation ethics often quoted by Hoppe: Paul Lorenzen (1969, pp. 73–89). Nonetheless, it is only Apel's theory that contains all three elements that are crucial for Hoppe (see above): a) the ultimate grounding; b) transcendentalism; c) the strong interpretation of the universalization principle. On the other hand, what Hoppe took up from Lorenzen is just the basic idea, which was then filled with libertarian content.

Kramer, 1998), conflict-generating norms are perforce self-contradictory norms (and *vice versa*). With respect to the use of scarce goods, they proclaim individual rights the exercise of which would be mutually exclusive as it would require harnessing goods for conflicting purposes. Assume for instance that A and B have a right to free health care. Now, they both get sick and need a ventilator. Only one ventilator is available, though. A's and B's alleged right to access to a ventilator generates a contradiction, then: everyone, A included, is under obligation to provide B with the only ventilator available, and *vice versa* – everyone, B included, is under obligation to provide A with the same ventilator. Needless to say, the result of this contradiction is inevitable conflict between A and B over the ventilator.

It is also worth emphasizing that Hoppe's ethics is not an empirical theory of conflict-resolution either. It does not hold, for example, that relying on libertarian principles will always foster the reduction of social tensions (even though libertarians generally tend to think it will). What it maintains is that once people embrace libertarianism, it will always provide them with a rational, principled resolution in every case of dispute over scarce resources. Thus, as long as people stick to libertarian solutions, conflicts will be avoided. By contrast, alternative theories of distributive justice will, claims Hoppe, bring about conflict even when strictly adhered to.

However, it is by virtue of the notion of the infinite community of arguers that conflicts are to be rationally resolved amongst all arguers, with every one of them enjoying identical rights. If not for the concept of such a community, the mere appeal to the non-contradiction principle would not do in this respect since several sets of discriminatory but logically consistent rights would easily pass the test. To put it bluntly, there is no logical contradiction in slavery or Hans-Hermann Hoppe owning the entirety of mankind.

To sum up, the transcendental goal of conflict-freedom, always already anticipated in every communicative-argumentative act, can – claims Hoppe – be fulfilled solely by the libertarian theory of property rights.[21] By contrast,

[21] Alas, we cannot elaborate on this further due to limitations of space. We nevertheless hope that the above remarks, along with our presentation of the epistemological background of Hoppe's theory, will help draw commentators' attention to what argumentation ethics is really about. With regard to the principle of conflict-avoidance, the research should consist in, above all, logical studies in the tradition of analytic jurisprudence. Such inquiries have already been undertaken by Dominiak (e.g., 2017, 2019).

neither assuring the right to own one's mouth and brain while letting others attack one's legs and kidneys (which does not resolve any conflicts except for those over brains and mouths), nor possession, i.e., a merely empirical fact of exercising control over one's body (which is not even a normative proposal), let alone the institution of slavery (clearly not universalizable in Hoppe's sense), could ever contribute to the realization of that goal.

Conclusion

The libertarian argumentation ethics presented by Hoppe hinges upon Apel's transcendental pragmatics of language in general and the consensus theory of truth in particular. This conclusion brings about two consequences for both advocates and critics of Hoppe's approach. For one thing, in order to avoid misconceptions and unwarranted charges, both groups should pay more attention to the epistemological underpinnings of the ethical theory they try to either defend or debunk. For another, scholars who argue for Hoppe's ethics must be aware that in so doing, they also subscribe to a set of very specific philosophical positions. This is certainly not to say that libertarians should eschew argumentation ethics. Rather, our contention is that an awareness of the background theories of an argument can only be a strength of its followers. The reading of Hoppe's conception as a transcendental-pragmatist conflict-avoidance theory, though bereft of the appeal that might stem from the illusory philosophical neutrality, is not only more self-conscious but also invulnerable to the hitherto formulated objections. This makes it a promising way to go for Hoppe's supporters.

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Extending Cognitive Pragmatics: Social Mechanisms of Mind Transformation

Keywords: cognitive pragmatics, cognitive semiotics, mechanism-based explanation, social mechanisms of mind transformation, shared intentionality, higher cognitive abilities, metacognition, dual system framework, transformational conception of the sign.

Abstract

In this article we propose an extended approach in terms of Cognitive Pragmatics (CP) to the explanation of the development of the higher cognitive processes. Therefore, we explain in terms of CP how linguistic and pre-linguistic social practices shape the mind. CP, as we understand it here, presents a broader transdisciplinary position covering developmental psychology, primatology, comparative psychology, cultural psychology, anthropology

and philosophy. We present an argumentation for the thesis that CP provides an explanation to the origins and developmental mechanisms of some of the higher mental functions unique to humans. Thus, we want to extend the notion of CP beyond its standard definition by emphasizing the transformative component of communicative acts. In our approach, CP first and foremost examines the cognitive mechanisms underlying social pre-linguistic and linguistic communication. Secondly, it explores how this communication reorganizes and transforms cognitive abilities and processes. We would like to extend the tasks of CP as well, because its goal is not only to describe cognitive processes that enable communication, but also to explain the social mechanisms of the transformation of mind and cognition. We provide an example of the said mechanisms of the development of higher cognitive functions through the account of metacognition.

Introduction

Cognitive Pragmatics (CP) is an answer to the question regarding the cognitive basis for the pragmatic relation of the user-language-world (Horn, 2004; Noveck & Sperber, 2004; Turnbull, 2003). What is mostly emphasized in the definition of CP is that "it is the study of the mental states of people who are engaged in communication" (Bara, 2010, p. 1). One of its main features is "basing the analysis of communicative interactions on mental states", which means "first and foremost, examining individual motivations, beliefs, goals, desires, and intentions" (Bara, 2010, p. 1). This approach to CP, despite being an endeavor fruitful in scientific findings, shows only one side of the proverbial coin, that is, descriptions of the mental processes engaged in communication. The other side of the coin is that engagement in acts of communication transforms and reorganizes the structure of a given mind. The emphasis on this second aspect is important because it does not only answer the question of what cognitive abilities facilitate in the case of pre-lingual and lingual communication, but also how engagement in social interaction and the acquisition of sign use affects the formation – or as we call it – *transformation* of a given human mind (Tomasello, 2014; Kern & Moll, 2017; Żuromski, 2020, 2020a).

In our perspective, language is treated as more than a tool (Sperber et al., 1995) to express mental states. It is a complex *socio-cultural artefact,* that came to be partly because of cumulative cultural evolution (Tomasello,

1999, 2014; Sterelny, 2016; Christiansen & Chater, 2016). In order to acquire it, one needs specific cognitive abilities (i.e., joint attention: Racine & Carpendale, 2007a, 2007b; Carpendale et al., 2007), social experience (common ground: Clark, 1992, 1996) and it also requires taking part in social practices such as joint attentional frames (Tomasello, 1999). This view on language and social practice can be traced to Lev Vygotsky (1999), who differentiated elementary mental functions such as perception or memory, and higher cognitive abilities such as "voluntary attention".[1,2] He postulated about the latter that they are a result of the transformation of elementary mental functions, which is possible due to the internalization of social interactions mediated by language.[3] The final result of such advancements is the mediation of cognitive processes and therefore the self-regulation of the subject.

With its emphasis on such elements as the *cognitive* role of a sign, language and *social interactions* (language and pre-language), their *transformative* character for cognitive processes, and its influence on achieving higher cognitive functions, CP is distinguished from cognitive semiotics

[1] For an extended discussion see Toomela (2016). See also Table 2 below and the discussion in the context of Dual-Process Theory.

[2] Returning to Vygotsky's ideas does not mean regressing to the psychology of the 1930s. We are currently experiencing a renaissance of his ideas, especially among researchers who want to explain uniquely cognitive human abilities in a social context (Tomasello, 2019; Heyes, 2019). For example, Tomasello describes his Shared Intentionality Theory as A Neo-Vygotskian Theory (this is the title of the entire 11th chapter: Tomasello, 2019) and shows that it is a theory that overcomes some of the weaknesses of alternative positions such as Individualistic Theories and Sociocultural Theories. As Tomasello points out: "Shared intentionality theory is a Vygotskian theory because it is focused not on all of human psychology but only on uniquely human psychology, and it explains uniquely human psychology mainly in terms of the unique forms of sociocultural activity in which individuals engage over the life course. But we have attempted to fashion a modernized *neo*-Vygotskian theory by invoking an evolutionary approach to human ontogeny in which individuals are biologically adapted in specific ways for engaging in their species-unique forms of sociocultural activity" (Tomasello, 2019, p. 304).

[3] In his research on higher mental functions, he focused his attention on signs (as the broader category of "psychological tools") and, in particular, on speech. However, both can be understood as the "Vygotskian cognitive conception of language" (Fernyhough, 2008, 2009). For more details on the idea of "language as a psychological tool that can augment pre-existing cognitive capacities" or more generally, "the language that 'gets into the head' to transform our prelinguistic thought processes [...]" see: Fernyhough (2008, p. 230; 2009, p. 42).

understood as "transdisciplinary […], field focused on the multifaceted phenomenon of meaning" (Zlatev, 2015, p. 1043).[4]

Cognitive semiotics accentuates the question of which cognitive processes participate in meaning-making, whereas for CP, most relevant remains the role of the sign and social interactions (language and pre-language) in the context of the creation of cognitive abilities. This way of thinking, while not obvious, is gaining more and more traction. One of the reasons for its lack of obviousness is the separation of natural language from cognition. In cognitive science, lately the following view has been dominant:

> Cognition consists in the manipulation of language-like structures according to formal rules. Since cognition is 'linguistic' in itself, according to this view language is just a complex communication system and does not influence cognitive processes in any substantial way (Mirolli & Parisi, 2009, p. 517).

In this place, voice is given to approaches that focus on *social interactions* (linguistic and pre-linguistic) as a source of the mechanisms for creating cognitive abilities, and especially higher mental functions, such as *mindreading* (Garfield, Peterson & Perry, 2001; Carpendale & Lewis, 2004, 2006; Heyes & Frith, 2014; Heyes, 2018; Tomasello, 2002, 2018, 2019, 2020; O'Madagain & Tomasello, 2019; Moore, 2020). Researchers that were ahead of their time, such as Vygotsky, and contemporary ones, such as Tomasello or Heyes, asked questions about sources of distinctively human cognitive abilities, they conducted empirical studies on complex mechanisms of their creation and development and set the category of cognitive processes that arise in such ways. And so, for Vygotsky, it was higher cognitive functions, for Tomasello processes and actions structured by social interactions based on shared intentionality, and finally, for Heyes, "cognitive gadgets":

> New cognitive mechanisms […] have emerged, not by genetic mutation, but by innovations in cognitive development. These novelties have been passed on to subsequent generations, not via genes, but through social learning; people with a new cognitive mechanism passed it on to others through social interaction […] They are "gadgets" rather than

[4] See Zlatev (2011, 2012, 2015), Konderak (2018).

> "instincts" (Pinker, 1994), because, like many physical devices, they are products of cultural rather than genetic evolution (Heyes, 2018, p. 2).

In the light of these definitions of pragmatics and their reference to social cognitions, we formulate the aim of this paper, which is to present an argumentation for the thesis that CP provides an explanation for the origins and developmental mechanisms of the higher mental functions unique to humans. Thus, we want to extend the notion of CP beyond its standard definition by emphasizing the transformative component of communicative acts. In our approach, CP first and foremost examines the cognitive mechanisms underlying social pre-linguistic and linguistic communication, which generalizes the aforementioned Bara's account. Secondly, it explores how this communication reorganizes and transforms cognitive abilities and processes. We would like to extend the tasks of CP as well, because its goal is to not only describe cognitive processes that enable communication, but also to explain the social mechanisms of the transformation of the mind and cognition (Żuromski, 2020, 2020a). We would like to provide an example of the social mechanisms of the development of higher cognitive functions through the account of metacognition: "Metacognition is tuned for social interaction by social interaction" (Heyes et al., 2020, p. 359).

Extended understanding of Cognitive Pragmatics

Researchers who study the sign in the context of cognitive sciences see the need to distinguish "traditional semiotics" as a research field dealing with the general theory of the sign (Nöth, 1990, p. 14) from cognitive semiotics as a research field dealing with the sign/meaning in the context of cognitive processes and influence on behavior:

> It is not a coincidence that cognitive semioticians indicate Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, Merlin Donald and Michael Tomasello as "intellectual fathers" of cognitive semiotics (Konderak, 2018, p. 26).

Just as there are reasons to distinguish between "traditional semiotics" and "cognitive semiotics" (Zlatev, 2011, 2015; Konderak, 2018), in a similar way, one can distinguish between "traditional pragmatics" and "cognitive pragmatics" (Bara, 2010). In this article, we put CP above cognitive semiotics because we want to emphasize the research on the relationship of sign/

meaning, and cognitive processes/behavior in the context of dynamic social interactions. This understanding of CP can be found in the writings of Vygotsky, where he stresses that

> Verbal stimuli directed toward the child himself, being transformed in the process of evolution from a means of stimulating another person to stimulating one's own behavior, radically reconstruct his whole behavior (Vygotsky, 1999, p. 25).

In pragmatics studies we can distinguish two classical approaches and a third, more avant-garde, which, however, would not be possible without the previous conventional accounts (Huang, 2017). The first, Anglo-American approach, is represented by the classical (Austin, 1962; Grice, 1989) and neo-Gricean pragmatics theory (Levinson, 2000; Huang, 2017), and relevance theory (Sperber & Wilson, 1995). In this approach, pragmatics is understood as the "systematic study of meaning by virtue of, or dependent on the use of language" (Huang, 2017, p. 2). The second is the European Continental approach, which refers to an interdisciplinary approach to language use (Verschueren, 2017). In this sense, linguistic pragmatics can be described as a new way of viewing the particular phenomena from different linguistic disciplines, rather than separating itself from them (Verschueren, 2017; Haberland & Mey, 1977). The combination of both Anglo-American and European Continental approaches has resulted in the newest look at pragmatics, sometimes called simply macro-pragmatics, due to its wide scope of research on language in all aspects, including social and cultural. Studies conducted by P. Brown and N.J. Enfield could be an example of such research (Stivers et. al., 2009).

In our approach, CP is to be understood as a relatively autonomic and interdisciplinary research field which studies *inter alia* the crucial issue of how linguistic social interactions generate and reorganize the cognitive processes of a subject. Thus, the aim of CP is not a pure description of linguistic behavior but an explanation in mechanism-based terms of the linguistic mediated transformation of cognitive processes. In our account of CP, we focus on what we consider to be two aspects of the same process: how language serves in inter-individual communication, and how it internalizes and then generates and reorganizes intra-individual cognitive processes. Conversely, separating the communicative role of the sign and its cognitive role as a medium of representation makes it difficult to understand the transformational

role of the sign in the cognitive system. Meanwhile, these two are closely connected, as Astington and Baird show:

> Many species represent and communicate, but only humans use one and the same system for both representing and communicating. Human language is used both as an intra-individual representational system, on the one hand, and as an inter-individual communication system, on the other (Astington & Baird, 2005, p. 6).

Contemporary conceptions treat the "inter-individual communication system" as a result of the expressive function of the "intra-individual representational system" or as irrelevant in explaining its cognitive basis. In our take, this order of explanation is one-sided. Vygotsky emphasized this element by saying that speech should not be limited to expressive functions (communication of internal states) because then "the whole individual-psychological aspect and the whole transforming internal activity of the word simply remain apart" (Vygotsky, 1999, p. 67). That is why we would like to propose the reversal of this order of explanation according to the *first between*, *then within* principle. This principle is an abstraction of Vygotsky's *general genetic law of cultural development*:

> Every function in the cultural development of the child appears on the stage twice, in two planes, first, the social, then the psychological, first between people as an intermental category, then within the child as a intramental category […]. Genetically, social relations, real relations of people, stand behind all the higher functions and their relations (Vygotsky, 1997, p. 106).

The origin of higher psychological functions lies in language-based social interactions. A sign incorporated into the natural developmental process and adopted by the child (within the cultural developmental line) reorganizes i.e., transforms the cognitive system and its elementary mental functions, such as attention, memory, perception, and thinking, into higher functions. We call this the transformational conception of the sign. The best known example of research on this law was Vygotsky's work (Vygotsky, 1987, Wertsch, 1985) on verbal thinking (inner speech) and describing it as a gradual process of internalization stemming from social speech, through private speech (or egocentric speech, in terms of Piaget) and finally, arriving at inner speech. In case of the process of internalization, as

Vygotsky emphasized, the function of language changes as well. In the very beginning, it serves as a function meant for the behavior control of others (social speech), and then as an executive and self-regulation function for cognitive processes and behavior (private and inner speech). More in line with contemporary thought, Fernyhough (2008, 2009) suggests that both the order of explanations and Vygotsky's research on verbal thinking give us an insight into the processes of dialogical thinking, which have their source in external (social) dialogue.

Today, this idea has been developed by Tomasello; however, it emphasizes social pre-linguistic interactions structured by the skills and motivations of *shared intentionality* (Tomasello, 2015, 2016, 2019). The aforementioned array of abilities has a uniquely human character and enables cooperation, language acquisition, and the creation of culture. It also serves a transformative role: "participation in interactions involving shared intentionality transforms human cognition in fundamental ways" (Moll & Tomasello, 2007, p. 7; Kern & Moll, 2017). The crucial element in Tomasello's Shared Intentionality Theory is the description of how social interactions structured by shared intentionality create new type of representations, inferences and self-control (Tomasello, 2015). In particular, Tomasello explains the transformational concept of the sign where, on one hand, social interactions in tandem with the sign change the child's representations towards the world (child → world). On the other hand, the very same elements change the dispositions of the child towards its own behavior and self (child → mind). A child, while acquiring language skills, can participate in a specific type of discourse – what Tomasello calls "Perspective-Shifting Discourse" (Tomasello & Rakoczy, 2003; Tomasello, 2018, 2020; O'Madagain & Tomasello, 2019) – to exemplify: disagreements, clarification sequences, didactic interactions, and reflective discourse. In order for a child to understand the communicative intention of the interlocutor, "she is led to examine her own thinking from the perspective of the other" (Tomasello, 1999, p. 172). Whereas "[i]nternalizing the view of the other on her own view then leads the child to […] the ability to self-monitor her own cognitive processes" (Tomasello, 1999, p. 172).

Thus, CP should also explain the formation of cognitive abilities – primarily uniquely and specifically human, and not only the description of cognitive abilities underlying communication. The demonstration that the scope of CP research objects should also include those phenomena

that have not been considered in it so far, is not arbitrary or only postulated, but is a consequence of this broadening of the understanding of the concept of CP. That is, the fact that CP deals with phenomena that have not been considered in it so far, is a consequence of broadening the understanding of the concept of CP, because it takes into account not only the research on cognitive abilities that lay in the foundation of social language interactions. As Vygotsky (1997), Fernyhough (2008) and Tomasello (2014; 2019) show, if said interactions are formed by abilities such as shared intentionality, then that might lead to the transformation and reorganization of a single mind and therefore, of its capacities – a transformation from elementary to higher mental functions. In our approach, shared intentionality is a mechanism of the transformation of the mind (Kern & Moll, 2017; Żuromski, 2020), and one of the main goals of CP is to provide the explanation of the nature, taxonomy, and structure of such mechanisms.[5] The term "transformation" encompasses not only ontogenetic domains and mechanisms, but also evolutionary and socio-cultural ones (Tomasello, 2014, 1999; Wertsch, 1985). As an example, in the case of the ontogenetic domain, one can refer to the theory of Tomasello and his colleagues:

> We argue for the importance of processes of shared intentionality in children's early cognitive development. We look briefly at four important social-cognitive skills and how they are transformed by shared intentionality. In each case, we look first at a kind of individualistic version of the skill – as exemplified most clearly in the behavior of chimpanzees – and then at a version based on shared intentionality – as exemplified most clearly in the behavior of human 1- and 2-year-olds. We thus see the following transformations: gaze following into joint attention, social manipulation into cooperative communication, group activity into collaboration, and social learning into instructed learning (Tomasello & Carpenter, 2007, p. 124).

[5] Kern and Moll (2017) make an important distinction between the additive account of collective intentionality / shared intentionality (SI / CI) and the transformative account of SI / CI and argue that the contemporary debate on SI / CI – in particular the "Big Four" of the canonical representatives of the debate on SI / CI: John Searle (1990, 1995, 2010), Margaret Gilbert (1989, 2013), Michael Bratman (1999, 2014), and Raimo Tuomela (2007, 2013) – assumes an additive account of SI / CI, mainly due to a different assumption, i.e., methodological individualism. A polemic with this argument is contained in (Żuromski, 2020).

In Tomasello's theory, "transformation" means that there are some basic capacities that we share with great apes, such as individual intentionality. Additionally, humans have developed the specific skills and motivations of shared intentionality, which are unique for their species. The collision of those two paths of evolutionary development creates unique and specifically human cognitive abilities i.e., social cognition, communication, cultural learning, collaboration, and prosociality, as the result of constructive process of at least three components:

a) the "maturation component" (the nine-month revolution) – children gain cognitive abilities that are uniquely human and take part in shared intentionality;
b) social experience – through their social interaction structures by shared intentionality, children form new abilities such as cognitive representations, inferences, and self-control;
c) executive self-regulation (the individual, social self-regulation, and normative self-governance) – capacities and experiences lead to active regulation and the control of cognitive processes i.e., coordinating conflicting perspectives.

And so, one of the tasks of CP is the formulation of hypotheses concerning the mechanisms that generate higher psychological functions. In the following sections of this paper, we would like to extend the tasks of CP with an explanatory component. Moreover, we would like to take a closer look at the capacities of metacognition (e.g., self-knowledge, self-regulation, reflection) as something that is developed as the result of social interaction, namely "the ability to take others' perspectives on the self" (Tomasello, 1999, 2019; Carpendale et al., 2007).

Mechanistic explanations in CP

The goal of extended CP is a mechanism-based explanation of phenomena rather than just their description. According to the mechanistic conception, explaining a given phenomenon consists in formulating a hypothesis regarding the mechanisms underlying this phenomenon (Bechtel & Richardson, 1993; Bechtel, 2008; Craver, 2009). The mechanism here "consists of entities and activities organized in such a way that they are responsible for this phenomenon" (Illari & Williamson, 2011, p. 120). Therefore, we treat the previously mentioned approaches to the higher psychological

functions of Vygotsky, Fernyhough and Tomasello as a description of the socio-linguistic transformative mechanisms underlying cognitive processes. CP understood this way requires the adoption of interactive explanation relying on social interaction playing an enabling or constitutive role (De Jaegher et al., 2010; Rochat, 2009).

However, postulating a certain order of explanation based on Vygotsky's idea can generate disputes characteristic of the social sciences, in particular regarding the proper methodology of social sciences or methods for explaining social facts. One of the main views in this argument is methodological individualism, which considers that "social phenomena […] should be explained solely in terms of individual intentional states and the relations between those individuals" (Tollefsen, 2017, p. 392). This can stand in opposition with the aforementioned Vygotsky's rule (*first between, then within*) which posits a certain primacy to *inter*psychological relations over *intra*psychological states. Responding to this objection, it is worth noting that mechanistic explanation and multilevel analysis allows for a new interpretation of the dispute over methodological individualism or micro-macro relationships in the social sciences. Within the social sciences, an approach has also been developed, since at least the 1970s, for mechanism-based explanation (Hedström & Ylikoski, 2010). However, as Ylikoski (2012, 2018) shows convincingly, applying the concept of explanation currently formulated by biology philosophers to the social sciences ends up shedding new light on old disputes, in particular between methodological holism and individualism or the dispute over micro-macro relations in the social sciences. From the point of view of mechanistic explanation, these arguments in the social sciences are based on assumptions that lose their suggestiveness in this explanatory scheme. In particular, the very position of methodological individualism takes the form of the thesis of intentional fundamentalism, stating that the intended intentional explanations are at a privileged explanatory level in the social sciences (Ylikoski, 2012, 2018). And as Thagard (2008, 2013) shows convincingly, in explaining cognitive processes, when referring to mechanism-based explanation, there are no privileged levels of explanation. An explanation of cognitive processes requires a simultaneous integration of various levels of explanation, such as molecular, neural, psychological, and social. In this context, CP would be situated at the social or interpersonal level of explanation, whose main object of study

are the mechanisms of the transformation of the mind (Żuromski, 2020; Żuromski, 2020a).

An example of theory – from beyond Vygotsky's tradition and at the same time strongly rooted in contemporary cognitive science – that postulates an interpersonal or supra-personal level of explanation (and also specific (for this level) mechanisms such as cultural learning) for explaining specifically human cognitive abilities is the idea of "cognitive gadgets" by Cecilia Heyes. Heyes (2018) posits the argument that in order to explain "distinctively human cognitive mechanisms" we have to refer to not only a personal and sub-personal, but also supra-personal level of explanation (Cf. Shea, N. et al., 2014; Heyes et al., 2020; Heyes, 2018). Moreover, Heyes introduces a distinction that emphasizes her stance in an interesting manner, that is, the differentiation between the grist vs. the mills of the human mind. Her argumentation can be expressed in the following manner: We refer here to a supra-personal level of evolutionary explanation for specific creations and artefacts of mankind (the grist of the human mind) such as tools, behaviors, social practice (e.g., honey-gathering). At this level of explanation, we do not refer to processes connected with genetic evolution, but rather with cultural evolution, that is, processes such as cumulative cultural evolution, which enables the accumulation of innovation and its modification over generations. This way we can explain that humans not only create tools, but also advanced technology used for the creation of tools; that human can not only communicate with each other, but create complex symbolic systems such as mathematics; that human not only live in a society, but also through convention, social norms and language create institutions such as marriage, governments or countries (Tomasello, 2002, 2016). Such processes require specific forms of cooperation, communication and processes of learning to which many units are employed and on many levels. However, these specific forms of human activity – those that have been the subject of the intense empirical and theoretical research of the last decades, such as cognitive psychology, primatology, developmental psychology, and neuroscience – are based on distinctively human cognitive mechanisms (the mills of the human mind), including imitation, theory of mind, cultural learning, language, causal reasoning, episodic memory. Cultural evolution changes not only the grist but also the mills of the human mind (Heyes, 2019, p. 1).

What are the evolutionary sources of these distinctively human cognitive mechanisms? Heyes claims, in this part of explanatory progression, that the

cultural and social aspect dissipates. There is a trend in research revolving around cognitive abilities, which means to explain the said abilities by positing "natural, innate modules" or "cognitive instincts" – adaptations to the environment that are genetically inherited. Heyes renounces this view and provides an argument that this standard view "doesn't align with cognitive science evidence" (2018). As an example, she gives the ability to read and write (Heyes, 2018, 2019). For instance, the ability to read text is associated with specialized neurocognitive mechanisms. However, language came to prominence barely 5,000 to 6,000 years ago and in the scale of evolutionary processes it is far too little time for genetic evolution to have been the creation of such neurocognitive mechanisms. And so, another biological mechanism that can formulate such abilities is social or cultural transmission – cultural evolution (Lewens, 2015; Henrich, 2015). The ability to read and write are not "cognitive instincts", but rather cognitive gadgets:

> Cognitive gadgets are distinctively human cognitive mechanisms – such as imitation, mind reading, and language – that have been shaped by cultural rather than genetic evolution. New gadgets emerge, not by genetic mutation, but by innovations in cognitive development; they are specialized cognitive mechanisms built by general cognitive mechanisms using information from the sociocultural environment. Innovations are passed on to subsequent generations, not by DNA replication, but through social learning: People with new cognitive mechanisms pass them on to others through social interaction (Heyes, 2019, p. 1).

This quote gives a new innovative look at the mechanisms of the generation of cognitive abilities.

Metacognition explained in terms of CP

We have already formulated the thesis that CP reveals mechanisms of transformation of the mind, especially in the case of social and language mechanisms of developing higher forms of cognition. Currently, we would like to consider metacognition as an exemplification of such a transformation. We understand metacognition as "cognition about cognition" (Shea et al., 2014), i.e., "representation or evaluation of a cognitive state or process" (Heyes et al., 2020, p. 350). In other words: "Metacognition applies to all processes that control and monitor cognitive functions. That also includes reflexive epistemic states" (Proust et al., 2013). One such ability is self-knowledge

(SK) understood as a subject's knowledge about his or her own mental states (Cf. Gertler, 2017; Peacocke, 1999; Schooler et.al., 2011; Neisser, 1988). Characteristic for this kind of metacognition is introspection, consisting in direct insight into the contents of consciousness as a method of acquiring knowledge about oneself. This method gives the subject the authority over his or her own metal states guaranteed by the privileged access to these states. Mistakenly, introspection can lead to the assumption that metacognitive states in SK are only internally constituted. Namely, typical of internalist models of self-knowledge is passing over the significance of the element external to the subject for the shaping of his or her knowledge about himself or herself. This crucial external element is the subject's social environment. The application of CP to SK is an attempt to overcome the internalist point of view in the formation of higher cognitive abilities.

Although SK arises owing to the subject's privileged access to his or her own mental states, and therefore has an individual dimension, it must be socially constituted to function properly (Pacholik-Żuromska, 2019). With the acquisition of language in the dyadic reciprocal interaction, a child acquires the ability to metacognition whilst developing metarepresentations (Cf. Brinck, 2013; Clark, 2005; Carruthers, 2009). In particular, metarepresentations create knowledge about the mental states of other people, albeit language practices function not only as an intersubjective tool to understand others, but also to understand oneself (Cf. Brinck, 2013). The commonly recognized non-social mechanisms of the formation of SK are perceptual and proprioceptive information processing. Both provide "implicit self-related information" (Musholt, 2012); however, SK requires also "explicit self-representation" (Musholt, 2012), which is formed due to participation in social language practices.

Implicit self-related information is present in infants under nine months of age. The formation of explicit self-representation begins around nine months of age. At that time, the ability to pay attention develops, allowing the child to follow the attention of others. Communication starts in a prelinguistic form parallel to the development of shared intentionality (one- to two-year-old children) allowing them to understand others as intentional agents. More developed communication skills accompany collective intentionality (four-year-old children), which in turn allows them to understand others as mental agents and to take others' perspectives on the self (Tomasello, 1999, 2019; Carpendale et al., 2007). This ongoing

process of natural cognitive development is accompanied by the development of language practices and leads to the highest level of cognition, namely SK as a socially constituted ability.

In the light of CP understood as a mechanism-based explanation, language practices are a tool for the acquisition of SK because they enable the confrontation of one's own perception with the perception of others. Thanks to this confrontation, a child starts to understand that others also have mental states, and their states can be different from the child's, because other people can literally have a different perspective. The experience of selfhood arises at the moment when the distinction my perception (my experience) vs. the perceptions (the experiences) of others is understood. The mechanism of CP underlying SK allows the distinction me-others to be made explicit, by using a sign as a tool for the semiotic mediation of mental states.

The coupling of the biologically and socially embedded development of metacognition is crucial for the theory of metacognition as a kind of cognitive gadget, presented by Heyes (2016, 2020). Heyes, on the one hand, does not ignore the biological (internal) factors influencing the formation of SK in its initial stadium, but on the other hand she also considers non-neural elements coming from the social environment of the subject to be crucial factors. The biological basis of the formation of SK is the connection between stimulus and motoric formed in the observation by children of their own movement. So a pathway between the motor representation of one's own movements and the sensory representation of this movement is built during self-observation in associative system learning (Heyes, 2016). Developing such a pathway enables the child to imitate the behavior of others. And imitation, also considered by Heyes as a cultural artefact (or cognitive gadget), is highly important in the child's early communication with its mother. Studies on the development of intersubjectivity in prelinguistic communication have shown that six-month-old children have a whole repertoire of behaviors in establishing contact with their parents, from smiles, through chatting and pointing, to gradual dissatisfaction and finally crying (Cohn & Tronick 1983; Moore et al., 2001). This early stage in communication makes it possible to build the first interpersonal relation and to recognize the me-other distinction. At the later stage of communication, when a child already possesses language, dialogue with others becomes a part of the child's own beliefs, i.e., it starts to be internalized (Cf. Vygotsky, 1987; Fernyhough, 2008).

SK thus develops with language acquisition and first social interactions such as playing, which is consistent with the thesis that metacognition evolved culturally (Heyes, 2016; Heyes et al., 2020). Such cultural evolution can be understood as a process of adaptation and selection adjusted to the social environment. Metacognition would then be a result of interaction by the use of language. CP assumes thus that the development of communication skills goes hand in hand with the development of cognitive abilities. In every act of communication, the self-others coupling is reinforced. The me-other tension is a natural factor influencing the creation of the autonomous self-knowing subject.

Until this point, we have formulated our thesis about CP in Vygotsky's terms, that is, by distinguishing elementary and higher psychological functions. This requires a commentary. First of all, our goal is not a return to Vygotsky's psychology nor to express in his theory the modern interdisciplinary approach to cognition. Rather, it is to go beyond his theory that is rooted in the psychology of the 1930s, in the sense of capturing his main ideas within the framework of current cognitive science. That way, the main emphasis is put on the mechanisms of creation and the transformation of cognitive abilities.

We distinguish three models of such mechanisms: 1. pre-linguistic; 2. linguistic and 3. cultural evolutionary:

1. The pre-linguistic model refers to Tomasello's Model, where the starting point is within pre-sign social mechanisms (the skills and motivations of shared intentionality) that also create and transform cognitive abilities.
2. The linguistic model refers to Vygotsky's Model, where focusing on different social and communication mechanisms of creation and the transformation of cognitive abilities reveals in particular how socio-sign mechanisms create and transform cognitive abilities.
3. The cultural evolutionary model refers to Heyes' Model, expressed in the language of the cognitive science idea of cultural evolutionary psychology, that unveils the mechanisms of "cognitive gadgets" – "distinctively human cognitive mechanisms" (Heyes, 2018).

What they have in common is that they are:

a) models for the formation of cognitive abilities,
b) intended to be models for the formation of specifically and uniquely human cognitive abilities,

c) consistent with the order of explanation *first between, then within* postulated here,

d) framed in terms of the social mechanisms of mind transformation.

Secondly, although the division between elementary and higher cognitive abilities is not popular in today's cognitive psychology, the divisions that are proposed have similar intuitions to this fundamental distinction (Evans, 2008). One of these theories, through which one can explain our thesis that CP reveals mechanisms of the transformation of the mind, especially in the case of social and language mechanisms of developing higher forms of cognition, is the "Dual-Process Theory", where the intricacies of underlying mechanisms of cognition remain a debated subject in contemporary discourse. Currently, cognitive systems explained by "Dual-Process Theory" are composed of two subsystems that work in tandem to facilitate metacognitive functions (Evans, 2008; Evans & Stanovich, 2013; Kahneman, 2011).

Table 1. Clusters of attributes associated with dual systems of thinking (Table from: Evans, 2008, p. 257).

System 1	System 2
Cluster 1 (Consciousness)	
Unconscious (preconscious)	Conscious
Implicit	Explicit
Automatic	Controlled
Low effort	High effort
Rapid	Slow
High capacity	Low capacity
Default process	Inhibitory
Holistic, perceptual	Analytic, reflective
Cluster 2 (Evolution)	
Evolutionarily old	Evolutionarily recent
Evolutionary rationality	Individual rationality
Shared with animals	Uniquely human
Nonverbal	Linked to language
Modular cognition	Fluid intelligence
Cluster 3 (Functional characteristics)	
Associative	Rule based
Domain specific	Domain general
Contextualized	Abstract
Pragmatic	Logical
Parallel	Sequential
Stereotypical	Egalitarian

Cluster 4 (Individual differences)	
Universal	Heritable
Independent of general intelligence	Linked to general intelligence
Independent of working memory	Limited by working memory capacity

System 1 uses fast, involuntary, unconscious responses and simple heuristics to achieve output, while System 2 employs mostly conscious processes which are analytical, employ reasoning and most importantly, allow us to override the output of the first system. Still, the case remains open if such so-called stepping in utilizes mindreading or not. Our thesis considers features that characterize elementary and higher psychological functions as corresponding to the specifics of System 1 and System 2 respectively (see Table 2).[6,7]

Table 2. The distinction between Vygotsky's conception of cognitive capacities (left column (Wertsch,1985)) and dual process theory (right column) approach that underlies the functional resemblance of these two viewpoints.

Elementary Psychological Functions	System 1
Governed by external stimuli	First-order signals are encapsulated within the perception-action loop
Lack of conscious realization of mental processes	Operates autonomously and does not require working memory
Individual origin of components of cognition	Operates implicitly and is for the control of processes within one agent

[6] In this case we do not rely on the details of dual systems theory; rather, we would like to postulate that such an approach is in line with our position and translates well to such a model. Furthermore, we want to emphasize the crucial role of social interactions in the creation of – the processes of social co-construction (Tomasello, 2019; Carpendale et al., 2016) – psychological functions, and in turn, metacognition.

[7] They differ in the assortment of traits that distinguish one class of processes from others. For instance, Kahneman (2011) characterizes S1 in a spirit similar to Vygotsky: "System 1 operates automatically and quickly, with little or no effort and no sense of voluntary control" (Kahneman, 2011, p. 22). As an example of the functioning of S1, he gives different types of lingual utterances as automatic activities: i.e., The answer to "2 + 2 = ?". The defining trait of Vygotsky's higher psychological functions is "the assumption that mental activity is mediated by culturally derived sign systems" (Fernyhough, 2008, p. 227). Despite that, researchers would agree that higher psychological functions and System 2 are "in charge of self-control" (Kahneman, 2011, p. 28).

Higher Psychological Functions	System 2
Availability of self-regulation due to volitional control	(Explicit metacognition) used by processes of cognitive control
Social and cultural origins	Cultural selection as part of the origin
Conscious realization of mental processes	Involves conscious states like feeling or fluency

Then, Shea et al. (2014) and Heyes et al. (2020) concentrate on the structure and functioning of this two-system array. Shea et al. (2014) take into account the "Dual System Framework" in order to explain metacognition and claim System 2 functions for suprapersonal cognitive control. Heyes et al. (2020) provide argumentation for the cultural origins of at least some aspects of metacognition, pointing to cultural learning as a factor in the development of metacognition.

In our opinion, the transformative impact of social interactions is a crucial cause of the refinement and development of System 2 functionality and overarching metacognitive capacities. On one hand, there are some abilities (particularly these specifically human, such as SK), which would not develop without linguistic interactions (System 2), but on the other hand, not all manifestations or types of metacognition originate from social linguistic practices (namely those from System 1).

Summary

In this paper we proposed an extended understanding of CP, while characterizing both its content and tasks. In the case of content, we introduced the notion of transformation as a class of pre-linguistic (including shared intentionality) and linguistic cognitive abilities and processes. If they take part in the structuration of social interaction, then they also lead to the transformation of basic mental functions into higher psychological functions. The extension of the task of CP required adding an explanatory function, and so we proposed a mechanism-based explanation as an execution of the said function. On the basis of Vygotsky's, Tomasello's and Heyes' conception we proposed to "turn over" of the order of explanations (*first between, then within* principle) of higher psychological functions, which takes social interactions formed through transformative abilities as a starting point. By combining these two extensions we arrive at an account of CP that is meant

to be a description of a domain where empirical and theoretical hypotheses concerning the mechanisms of transformation are formulated, and how cognitive capacities turn into higher psychological functions. We made an attempt to show how this transformation works on the example of self-knowledge as this kind of metacognition, which is based on social interaction. This can be understood as a proposal of an interdisciplinary research paradigm concerning inquiry on the social mechanisms of transformation of mind and cognition.

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DIDACTICS OF PHILOSOPHY

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Build What You Think. Philosophical Education Using The LEGO-LOGOS Method

Keywords: philosophy, education, LEGO bricks, teaching methods, ethical education, pedagogical innovations

Abstract

LEGO bricks have enormous educational potential. The article analyzes the possibility for using the bricks in teaching philosophy. As a case in point, it describes the LEGO-LOGOS project, a method where the bricks have been successfully used in opening students to philosophical ideas. The project makes use of play (in this case with the LEGO bricks) to introduce students to philosophy and philosophizing. It tackles one of the biggest obstacles in teaching this subject, that is, the resistance of students to formulating and expressing their thoughts, as the method allows for a free and creative expression of ideas and interpretations. The article describes the structure of the classes where the method is to be used and provides an analysis of educational and philosophical assumptions of LEGO-LOGOS, also touching on the possibility for using the method as a tool in the school setting and beyond.

Introduction

It is fair to say that LEGO blocks, or bricks – the humble beginnings of which can be traced back to a workshop in Denmark more than eighty years ago – have come to dominate the global toy market. They are cherished across generations: it is true of those now in their thirties or forties, for whom

the blocks were often a dreamed-of present growing up, as much as it is true of the children of today, for whom a LEGO box became a fixture in their bedrooms. The secret to the popularity of LEGO lies equally in the simplicity of the design and in the multitude of ways in which the pieces can be put together to form new combinations. The basic modules consist of small-sized bricks which interlock with each other in a characteristic way. It is this innovative way of connecting the pieces that makes the blocks a material that can be used to build nearly any object imaginable. Also, one can but marvel at the spectrum of available sets, designed for the user, by following instructions, to put together pre-defined constructions. It is for this reason, as Allan Bedford puts it, "for millions of people around the world LEGO bricks have a common meaning: creativity" (Bedford, 2013, p. 1).

The combination of pure fun and creative challenges hints at LEGO's potential to be used as educational tools. This has been noticed by the company itself, which began emphasizing it in its marketing campaigns. The company finances research related to the notion of learning through play and its influence on the development of students (see Parker & Thomsen, 2019). It also established The LEGO Learning Institute – the goal of which is to conduct research on the use of LEGO pieces as educational aids. A similar rationale was behind the creation of a line of products called LEGO Education, designed to be used in the school setting.

It might be argued that emphasizing the educational aspects of the products was one of the main aims of the company from the very beginning. Kjeld Kirk Kristiansen (a grandson of the company founder) dreamed of creating the International School in Billund, which would provide education where LEGO products play a significant role. In August 2013, this vision became a reality. The school educates children between 4 and 14 years of age, at preschool, primary and secondary levels, with the school itself run by specialists from more than 40 countries. The program is compatible with the International Baccalaureate (IB) system. It is emphasized, however, that elements of fun and creativity in the classrooms are some of the top priorities. Experimenting, taking risks, and asking questions form the basis of the learning process and skill acquisition that are to be used later on in adult life (Russell, 2013).

It is no surprise, therefore, that teachers at all levels appreciate the educational potential of LEGO and can make good use of the element of play brought by the bricks into the classroom setting (Hicks, 2015; Zimmerman,

2016). Mark Warner describes attempts at using LEGO to teach reading and writing (e.g., letter-building, word-building, counting syllables), literacy (e.g., storytelling, story starters, character creation, writing instructions), mathematics (number-building, calculations, multiplication tables, sorting), as well as computer science topics: animations, programming, computer coding (Warner, 2016). Sarah Marsh (2015) describes ways in which the bricks can aid in reading practice and in analyzing works of fiction.

In terms of using LEGO to teach philosophy, one should point to those methods that emphasize the free expression of ideas and use the blocks to facilitate discussion and dialogue. It should be mentioned that there is already a multitude of ways in which LEGO has been used to foster reflection and discussion in the classroom setting: as a multi-sensory approach to reflecting on learning (James, 2013), to explore identity and prompt self-reflection (Gauntlett & Holzwarth, 2006), to enhance participatory development communication (Hinthorne & Schneider, 2012), or to support reflection in learning and teaching practice (Nerantzi & Despard, 2014).

The aim of this article is to describe the LEGO-LOGOS method, which is an example of the successful use of the blocks in education. This method is used to teach philosophy using LEGO as an educational tool. However, the author envisioned the method to be conducive to more than teaching selected topics in philosophy but also to provide a setting where students can experience the joys of thinking and philosophizing.

"LEGO" in Danish means "play well", "well" meaning "wise", i.e., play and learn by doing so. In Greek, the word means "to read" but also "to think" or "to speak". The word "LOGOS" comes from Ancient Greek and has been widely used in philosophy from its very beginnings. In a more general setting, it expresses everything that is thought of, said or written by a person; whereas in a narrower sense it is used to describe scientific endeavors. Therefore, the name of the project should be understood as an encouragement to play, to enjoy learning. By viewing it through its Greek origins, the name can also express the idea that only those who are able to read, think and speak can become involved in scientific endeavors and gain knowledge (Kubat, 2011, p. 196).

The story behind LEGO-LOGOS

Jarosław M. Spychała, a Polish artist and philosopher, is the author of the LEGO-LOGOS method. In 2004, he started work as a lecturer in Ancient Philosophy at the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Torun (Poland). A young and enthusiastic lecturer, he was eager to see the students engaged in what he taught. Unfortunately, he was met with resistance and a lack of interest on their part. He could not understand how his students could be bored with and unresponsive towards the texts that fascinated him so much. He wondered what could be done to make philosophy as interesting and exciting for students as it was for him.

It could be said, therefore, that the first impulse for Spychała to search for a new method of teaching philosophy was the urge to make his classes more attractive and engaging.

However, there was another reason why he was looking for new solutions in that respect. The ability to read and comprehend a given text and analyze what is being read are some of the most fundamental skills required at university level, especially in the context of the history of philosophy. Spychała noticed, however, that a number of students were lacking these crucial skills. And it was not because these students were not gifted enough or that this was something especially hard to acquire; Spychała believed that the problem starts in primary school, where pupils are taught an unnatural way of arguing and arriving at foregone conclusions. And even if pupils are indeed encouraged to give their own opinions and to support them with arguments, the silent assumption behind this practice is nevertheless that such young individuals are still unable to think independently and do not yet have the right to present their own views.

As a result, university students have internalized a mechanism of reading and interpreting texts which aims to arrive at the preconceived notions that they sense the lecturer is pushing them toward, saying and writing what they believe they ought to and not what they really think. Finally, through repetition of this practice, students lose the connection with their own opinions and get into the habit of only using this artificial approach.

Having established that, Spychała began thinking about the ways to free the students from these habits of superficial reading and superficial understanding. He searched for a way to rekindle independent thinking, the kind of thinking that is not aimed at meeting anyone's expectations.

During one of his classes, he told the students that since they did not want to talk or write about what they had read, they should perhaps try drawing it. He asked them to present their interpretations of the allegory of the cave described in Book VII of Plato's *Republic*. The outcome was to be presented as an artwork of any kind e.g., a drawing, a painting or a paper collage. The text was to be considered as a how-to manual. As a result, the classes were not spent discussing the texts as such, but instead on the artwork of the students, with the text being merely a reference point when talking about their creations. When discussing the artworks, one of the students pointed out that a certain picture had been drawn without a careful study of the topic, as the prisoners should be represented with chains preventing them from turning their heads, since Plato writes that they cannot move their bodies at all. However, the picture at hand had them tied with long chains akin to leashes, which would allow them to walk freely, and would clearly be inconsistent with Plato's description. Initially, the students did not even notice that they were indeed discussing the text, for which the artwork was merely an excuse. This meant that they succeeded in achieving the original goal, which had proved so elusive at the beginning. It turned out that such a way of expressing themselves was easier and more attractive for the students as it allowed them to freely express themselves. Moreover, it sparked their creativity, both in terms of envisaging the artwork as well as its subsequent interpretation. The students enjoyed engaging in such activities, which gave an excuse for discussing the contents of what was to be expressed artistically.

However, Spychała noticed that this form of expression also had its limitations. Some students, especially those who considered themselves less artistically gifted, did not feel enthusiastic about expressing themselves in such a way. It turned out that those convinced of their lack of artistic talent (often without any justification) found this a major obstacle to engaging in creating the artworks. Therefore, Spychała began looking for a type of material that would allow similar creative interpretations and at the same time minimize differences in the perceived distribution of artistic abilities among the students. LEGO blocks turned out to be the material that would allow just that. When Spychała introduced the blocks, he was astounded by the change in the students' attitudes. They not only engaged with and enjoyed the process, but also started reading classical philosophy with attention and interest.

The second important factor that further shaped the method was a didactic experiment Spychała conducted with history students. He wanted to help the students understand the problems of interpreting historical sources, and issues related to the research methods used within history. The exercise consisted in one person building a construction and then describing it in writing. The next step involved giving this description to ten other students who had not seen the construction before. Their task was to recreate it on the basis of the description. The students were to use the very same blocks that had been used in the original creation. Yet, as it turned out, despite having as a reference the same description and using the same materials, the output creations differed in many respects. This task was designed to make students appreciate the difficulties related to interpreting sources and to encourage a discussion of the emerging issue. Spychała realized that he would have been able to achieve similar goals had he used a more traditional approach (Kubat, 2011, pp. 195–196).

In 2006, during a science and arts fair in Torun, Spychała also presented his method. He organized his workshop at the Philosophical Maze, an event designed to promote philosophy. This workshop, heavily relying on the use of LEGO, caught the attention of teachers from local schools, who became interested in using the method. The workshop also featured an exhibition of Spychała's photographs entitled LEGO *Star Wars – the Bricks that Philosophize*. The aim of the exhibition was to emphasize the ubiquitous character of philosophical ideas in popular culture and to show that philosophy is present in films such as Star Wars and that philosophical ideas can emerge out of a simple game such as putting blocks together. As a result, Spychała began collaborating with a school in Torun. He was asked to prepare a series of classes using the bricks at the primary and secondary levels. This experience allowed him to fine-tune the method so that it could be applied at any level of education and was attractive for children, high-school and university students alike (Kubat, 2011, pp. 195–196).

The experiment was a success and attracted interest from local and national news outlets. Pieces describing the philosophical workshop involving LEGO appeared both in print and on television. A crucial moment was the publication of an article in the *Polityka* weekly magazine, describing the inventive philosopher and his innovative program. With this positive media coverage, Spychała became popular and was soon swamped with inquiries about potential workshops from schools as well as local governments. He

also contacted representatives of the LEGO company, which resulted in him obtaining new building materials to be used during his classes. His ideas also became a hot topic in academia. Supported by the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Spychała began implementing his method, The LEGO-LOGOS Project of Philosophical Education, in various schools in Warsaw (Kubat, 2011, pp. 195–196).

Spychała used the momentum generated and, capitalizing on the resulting support for his ideas among politicians at various levels and business people alike, organized an event called Creatio Ex Legendo (Latin for "creating though reading"), which took place in 2007 in Warsaw. The event aimed to promote philosophy viewed from the European perspective, to help in developing cognitive skills and the ability to think critically in children and teenagers and to inspire and motivate teachers and parents to make use of non-standard educational methods. Hundreds of people from more than 30 countries took part in the events, using around 24 thousand liters of LEGO blocks in total. Each day, the participants engaged in philosophizing using the method, created their interpretations of the assigned texts and then got involved in analyzing the constructions made by others. Later on, the works created were put on display to be seen by those not actively involved in the workshops.

Since that time Spychała has been working on the development of his method, training teachers, and trying to extend the method to be applicable not only in an educational setting, but also in business and government.

Typical class structure

Typical LEGO-LOGOS classes last 90 minutes and comprise two equal parts: during the first, the participants read a text and then try to show their interpretation of it as a spatial construction using plastic materials; during the second, the participants take turns presenting their works and by discussing them attempt to learn arguments for individual interpretations.

PART ONE: READING AND BUILDING

The classes usually number 10 people (groups can be between 8 and 12 people; however, in practice, groups of 10 are optimal). Each person takes up a single place, next to the materials selected by the teacher which are

needed to construct the structure. Each participant receives a workshop questionnaire, which contains a copy of the text under discussion. The participants are then asked to read the text to themselves, and later to present it in the form of a construction using the suggested material, thus expressing their own understanding of the document.

To give a specific example, let us focus on the anecdote regarding Thales as passed on by Diogenes Laertios (*Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*, I 34), which was used during one of the classes:

> They say that when he went outside the house, led by an old servant lady, to watch the stars, he fell into a pit and started to complain about what had happened, then the old lady said: you, Tales, would like to learn about things which are high in the sky but you cannot even perceive things which are right in front of you!

The students are tasked with illustrating the text, using a structure made of the materials provided, according to their own comprehension. The participants are not limited in any way, but neither do they receive instructions on the construction. They do not know how or what they should be building. It takes about 45 minutes to complete the construction, or longer if the participants require it. Naturally, a shorter time limit may also be provided. The teacher should match the length of the first part of the class to the speed with which the group works, which is often influenced by the age of the participants, their maturity and previous creative experiences.

PART TWO: ANALYSIS AND DIALOGUE

When the constructions are ready, the students gather to inspect all the works one by one. The aim here is to identify the respective elements of the construction and try to guess the intentions of the constructor, who at this stage remains silent, providing no clues. In this particular case, the students were to locate Thales and the old lady and map out the scenery of the story. After everyone has commented, the constructor reveals their own story and compares what had been said with their own intentions. At this point, a discussion emerges regarding the accuracy of the construction as compared with the textual source. This discursive phase becomes more and more interesting as the number of constructions already visited increases, and students can identify and compare the differences among the various interpretations. One

notices that at this stage the students become more involved not only with the classes themselves but also with the discussion, and more actively try to find out what the story is really about. This sense of involvement is fueled by the students' puzzlement at the fact that the very same textual source, the understanding of which had not seemed controversial to them, appears to be open to a plethora of other possible interpretations. The students were faced with the fact that the others do have different, equally justifiable and no less attractive ways of viewing the story. The fact that the story itself was quite short in this case seemed to magnify this impression.

In scientific research, the anecdote about Thales, and indeed many similar stories, remains of great interest (although it remains outside the mainstream interest of researchers). This is because they were commonly accepted as an element of Hellenistic biographies, whose representatives excelled at putting together different interesting, often funny and unusual stories, and using them to embellish the lives of their famous contemporaries. These three stories, though originating in different times and varying in their details, appear to contain a similar message and have a common narrative structure. One could indeed say that they only needed to change the name, and then the whole story could be "pasted" into the biography of a different person. These similarities led historians to believe that the stories had literary value only and contained nothing of interest – they offered no philosophical message and were useless as a historical source for research on the life of Thales and other characters depicted in them.

It turns out, however, that students do not view the Thales story as a meaningless tale but as a story full of lessons applicable in real life. It provides advice, guidance, and warning, showing the reader how to live and philosophize.

Below we provide a number of interpretations of the story given by students, as quoted by Spychała (2017, pp. 72–73), which will be helpful in understanding the essence of the classes:

> [1] Humans succumb to the might of the sky, crushed with its magnificence and beauty; we look at it, but see nothing. This happens because humans are not able to concentrate. Everything is interesting to us, everything is awesome and captivating, but at the same time we cannot stop and take a closer look. The only way to know the secrets of the cosmos is to restrict ourselves to looking at a fragment, so as not to be distracted by the magnitude of the phenomena. This way, by concentrating on

a part, step by step, we can learn it all. Thales therefore does not fall into the pit by accident, but actually enters into it on purpose, in order to limit his perspective and allow himself to experience it. The old lady, however, is a personification of common mentality, ridiculing the philosopher's actions. For people are much like the old woman, who keeps on speaking, not understanding the intentions of the philosopher, showing only ignorance.

[2] Thales appears in the story in the form of a young man taking his first steps into the realm of philosophy. Full of youthful enthusiasm and ambition, he reaches immediately for the skies themselves, for knowledge. However, without experience, he faces defeat. The old lady, a mentor with years of experience, an old philosopher, speaks to the young adept, saying that if he wishes to reach the peak, he must start with the basics. Learning the principles requires a knowledge of *elementarium*. Thales, therefore, being a young philosopher, should have started his philosophical education by learning of things that surrounds him, the *physis*, to be able to reach what is above it, the *metaphysis*.

[3] Thales symbolizes a man brash and eager, certain of his abilities, who claims that he can freely reach towards any secret. His attempt to understand the sky is his attempt to learn celestial secrets. The sky, in turn, is home to the gods, therefore learning celestial secrets is nothing more than learning secrets of the gods. However, they guard their secrets closely and punish greatly those who are too eager to know them. Thales turned his vain curiosity towards the sky and paid for it by falling into the pit. The old lady here is a messenger, sent by the gods to issue a warning, and let him know that everyone who attempts to learn the secrets of the gods will be punished and sent to hell.

[4] Thales, a man in awe of scientific discoveries and obsessed with the idea of knowing all and becoming all-powerful, wants more and more. He believes he has the right to be able to achieve everything he wants. His attempt to understand the sky is an attempt to cross the earthly horizon, to bypass the human condition, to be more than just a man, someone even greater than Icarus, who wanted to be nothing more than a bird. Thales dreams about the stars, which can only be seen by the gods, so in reality he dreams of becoming a god. He is not a god, however, and every time he tries to "play god" he faces defeat, and falls.

[5] Thales is an example of a man cheated by fate. He reaches for the stars as did Adam, who let Eve seduce him and took the apple. He did

something he should not have. And so Thales let the old woman, representing philosophy, lead him astray. She pushed him to the verge of pride and arrogance, where he fell into the pit. Philosophy and science are the new incarnations of the devil, who again tests Man's ambitions. Knowledge can help, but it can also lead astray.

[6] It is impossible to include here all the interpretations and it is equally difficult to select the most interesting ones. However, I would like to mention one more interpretation, which is not only an interesting proposition in itself, but also reveals an important aspect of the students' works – the form. When the participants were trying to interpret the anecdote, they used blocks to show the figure of Thales and the old lady, the pit, the stars etc. But one girl surprised everyone with her work – the participants could not find any of the elements mentioned. It appeared that the work was reflecting the inside of Thales' mind. The girl explained that the anecdote about Thales is an illustration of a thinker who is lost in his own thoughts. Thales falling down into a pit is an example of a man plunging or even locked away in the darkroom of his own mind, where he dreams impossible dreams, symbolized in the anecdote by stars. The old lady is the voice of the thinker's conscience, calling him to abandon those ideals and exit the dark pit, towards the light, to find joy in simple, everyday things. For the most important thing in life is not to dream about life, but to live one's life.

Considering the descriptions above, one can observe that young people read the anecdote of Thales in two ways: first, as a methodological message on dealing with philosophy and science (to move away from what is easy towards that which is more complex), and second, as an ethical message, showing the moral boundaries for human learning (a lust for knowledge cannot justify all actions). It would therefore seem that young people find rich deposits of substance and precious sources of creative inspirations in places where many scientists have found nothing of interest (Spychała, 2014, p. 318).

THE END OF THE CLASS

When the participants have analyzed all the works, their task is to briefly describe their own interpretations one more time. Unlike typical school lessons, the goal of the summary is not to point out the only correct way to understand the anecdote. It is more important to awaken curiosity and

provoke students to think on their own about the problem outside the classroom setting. This approach was inspired by Plato's principles of forming so-called Socratic dialogues. Two characters discuss the meaning of a term, quoting different interpretations. However, they end up disagreeing on how the term is to be understood. The reader (or listener, as contemporaries would often read texts aloud) invested a lot of time and energy in the text and would thus feel dissatisfied, irritated even, because the effort did not result in a definitive answer. Contemporary scholars of ancient philosophy believe that this was Plato's way of arousing interest and encouraging readers to find their own answer. And indeed, this is the goal of collecting the interpretations, without saying which one should be regarded as correct.

Philosophical and Pedagogical Background

The foundations of the LEGO-LOGOS method are related to the philosophical ideas of Socrates and Plato. Spychała often quotes Plato when explaining his approach (2014). According to Spychała, the LEGO-LOGOS classes can be considered a practical realization of Plato's epistemological views (as expressed in Book VI of the *Republic*) regarding ideas:

> And, along with me, take these four affections arising in the soul in relation to the four segments: intellection in relation to the highest one, and thought in relation to the second; to the third assign trust, and to the last imagination. Arrange them in a proportion, and believe that as the segments to which they correspond participate in truth, so they participate in clarity. (Plato, Republic, 511e, trans. Allan Bloom)

According to the above, the human mind moves from the realm of the sensual and tangible to the realm of the abstract, immaterial, or spiritual. This is the necessary path to the Truth. It can be said that those participating in Spychała's classes go on a similar journey. They start from making their thoughts tangible using blocks, and move – via an analysis of what is being constructed – to the most general notions, i.e., ideas. Using Plato's terminology: initially they "use visible forms", that is, they attempt to reshape their immaterial thoughts in physical form in order for them to be "seen" or to become "visible". Spychała seems to share with Socrates and Plato a sense of disbelief in the ability of a textual form to truly convey knowledge. In order to obtain knowledge, one requires a moment of direct seeing,

personal experience that is expressed in Plato's "seeing". To see means to experience directly: no one can see something for me, since seeing is a personal act. Hence, the importance of personal engagement and experience that accompanies play (Spychała, 2014, p. 352). Books are mute to humans until they experience the stories enclosed in them. Thus, philosophy cannot be taught; it can only be experienced. If it is understood thus, it can be then used to analyze and reshape one's life. The mission of philosophy in schools is to encourage students to go on a journey, rather than to point out the exact route they should take. We must all choose our own path. For philosophy to be helpful in this process, its form has to respond to the natural way children philosophize – by harnessing their curiosity.

Every mother admonishes her child to not to play with fire, yet we all know that unfortunately children do not always heed this advice. Why is it that they put their hands into fire anyway, even if they are told not to do so as it can be harmful? According to Socrates, to know something means not only to hear that something is bad, but also to experience it. In other words, knowledge is born as the result of a merging of the intellectual, common information and emotional, personal experience. Knowledge is a state, in which the emotional explains that which is intellectual and only then can one speak of having knowledge. Positive emotions are easily awakened in people, and especially in children, through play. The idea of using games in the teaching process has been known for a long time and is practiced in many schools. But playing in school is more often not fun enough, because the games are in fact simulated – no children play at school the way they play at home. It is therefore important to recreate, in schools, the playful environment the children have at home, and, at the same time, to use the emotions accompanying this process in teaching them. Only natural, spontaneous and fun games and situations can awaken natural reflection. Hence the need for a toy which would be associated by children with their own games they play at home. On the other hand, the toy has to meet certain criteria in order to be used as an educational tool. It has to be easy to use, be able to take different forms, be applied as an element of a stable construction; it has to have a clear association with fun, a high aesthetic quality; it has to offer the ability to be reused and meet with the same amount of interest among boys and girls (Spychała, 2017).

The references to Socrates and Plato are also visible in the way the reading assignments are chosen for the LEGO-LOGOS classes. The reading

list includes Plato, Cicero, Marcus Aurelius, Leonardo Da Vinci, Descartes and others. All the reading choices are made using well-defined criteria with a strong ethical core, built around the myth of Hercules at the crossroads (Spychała, 2017). Importantly, the message behind the myth is still culturally valid and can be applied to many facets of human life. Therefore, during his workshops Spychała often refers to various individuals, the lives of whom exhibit the same Herculean problem, for example Jesus Christ or Lord Vader.

The myth describes the dilemma of young Hercules, standing at the crossroads and having to choose a way. On one of the roads appears a beautiful girl called Kakia (Greek for "evil"). She lures Hercules her way, promising an easy, effortless, pleasurable life, as this is how she views happiness. On the other road appears a modest, less attractive woman called Areté (Greek for "the most perfect one"). She encourages Hercules to choose her road. It is not an easy one, and the person taking it is certain to embark on a difficult journey, requiring a lot of effort. In the end, however, those who are brave will obtain true happiness.A hero was often used to convince mortals that everyone can obtain happiness, owing neither to chance nor to the will of the gods, but to their own hard work and effort. Moreover, true happiness begins at the moment the right choice is made, here and now, in this world, during our lifetimes.

The modest Areté, the narrow gate that Jesus encouraged his disciples to choose, or the light side of the Force (in *Star Wars*) are in essence different names for the same, tough road of toil and effort, the path that leads to true happiness. On the other hand, Kakia, the flung-open gate and the dark side of the Force are names for an easy choice that inevitably leads to a defeat. In other words, the situations of Hercules, Jesus Christ and Lord Vader are universal and each of them makes a similar choice, despite justifying it in a different way. When analyzing their stories, one becomes aware that humans choose their moral stance by means of taking certain actions. A person is not born good or evil but becomes it. Accordingly, Spychała chose appropriate reading assignments that reflect this message and during the classes, their truth is revealed by means of direct experience.

Conclusions

The LEGO-LOGOS method was met with enthusiasm by teachers and is becoming popular in schools across Poland. However, its status is still

that of an educational innovation and the method itself is more often used during extra-curricular classes as it viewed as complementing more traditional methods. Yet, there is a growing number of teachers that use modified versions of the method not only when teaching philosophy but also during other classes. Jarosław Spychała is constantly being invited to schools, where he runs workshops for teachers willing to make use of the method in their classes. Recently, he has been invited to give such workshops in Germany and Italy, showing that the method is growing in popularity outside Poland.

One of the biggest advantages of the method is that it is highly engaging for the students and allows them to develop their creative skills.

Combining elements of play and reflection creates a space for the free expression of thoughts in a creative dialogue. Such a space is usually lacking in schools. This is emphasized by the authors of *Opening Up a Space for Children's Thinking and Dialogue* (Murris & Haynes, 2009). According to the article, questioning and creative thinking are often stifled by the institutionalized structures of power and control. Teachers not only teach but also control the behavior of students. This does not mean that it is impossible to foster a questioning approach and creative thinking in schools; however, it requires effort to reshape the standard educational space into a place where students can be the creators of knowledge.

There are three levels that combine into fostering an atmosphere conducive to freethinking: the creation of an intellectual and emotional space for students' questions and contributions in the classroom; the need for teachers to become highly skilled in listening to and observing students' dialogues, and in asking questions that enable students to build on each other's ideas; and recognition of every student's voice, in terms of expressing their thoughts and in terms of strengthening their participation in everyday learning and life (Murris & Haynes, 2009, p. 176).

Murris and Haynes believe that literature can be so effective in creating space for an open-ended enquiry and for students to develop confidence in voicing their opinions. Their article demonstrates the benefits of using picture books as parts of creative dialogues in the classroom at early stages of education. The authors show that pictures and picture books can be funny and imaginative and give children a rich and varied source of ideas to think and feel with. Short stories with illustrations drawn by children help them begin using their own imagination in the process of creative interpretation. The child-friendly esthetics and style of picture books makes them feel more

self-confident, which is conducive to the atmosphere of freedom necessary for creative thinking.

A similar mechanism is at play during the LEGO-LOGOS classes. The use of blocks as creative material means that the participants feel more at ease and gain self-confidence in expressing their thoughts, which is especially true in the case of children. Self-confidence in thinking is a very important element of shaping the habits of creative thinking and questioning what is being given.

Yet another advantage of the LEGO-LOGOS method is that it is flexible and adaptable. It has proved to be the perfect tool for working with children, teenagers and adults alike. The underlying principles and framework can be reshaped, taking into account the specificity of the students and other circumstances.

It can be easily adapted to work both in small and larger groups of students. Also, the time of the classes can be adjusted to anywhere between around 90 minutes to even a couple of hours, depending on the chosen scenario. In addition, the way the classes are structured is flexible: one can focus on individual presentations of the interpretations or work in groups and negotiate a common vision. Equally, one can start with individual approach during one class and then move to a group setting in order to work on a mutually-agreed-on version of the whole. Obviously, the teacher can select the reading assignments as he or she sees fit.

In the end, even the bricks themselves can be replaced with other materials, as they are not essential for the method as such. LEGO can be replaced with paints, crayons, cut-outs, playdough, clay etc. However, as mentioned, the blocks are the tried-and-tested building material, as they seem to be the most conducive to creating a sense of enjoyment and fun for all the participants. The most important thing is that the material used and the mode of expression chosen allow them to freely present their ideas. The method of artistic expression should be selected so that it does not emphasize the need for specific skills or talents. For that reason, building with bricks is best replaced with creating collages, the materials for which are readily accessible and the activity itself does not require any special skills.

The LEGO-LOGOS method makes use of the natural environment where children's play takes place (in this case, it is the use of LEGO) in order to teach philosophy and encourage philosophizing. It begins with reading classical philosophical texts, which are then interpreted by the participants

in the form of LEGO creations. A careful study of these constructions and their comparison with the texts themselves makes students appreciate and understand the texts better and allows them to present their own creative and original philosophical interpretations. The main goal of the project is to foster the natural abilities of young people to philosophize, think creatively and express themselves artistically. It also develops linguistic skills, logical thinking, emphasizes reading comprehension skills and encourages engagement in a dialogue. The project also showed potential in equalizing the educational chances of disadvantaged groups in society, including students from rural areas. Importantly, the LEGO-LOGOS project enables students from various countries and with differing cultural backgrounds to meet and allows them to find points in common by analyzing classical philosophical texts. The classes encourage openness and tolerance towards others in terms of their opinions, allowing people from various cultural backgrounds to come closer and act together. All this makes the method an attractive and interesting educational tool.

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DIDACTICS OF PHILOSOPHY

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The Academia Electronica – Vision, Experiment, Future

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> …in order to promote and improve teaching and learning within higher education, higher education institutions have adopted learning management platforms hereinafter referred to as Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs).
>
> P. Alves, L. Miranda, C. Morais, *The Influence of Virtual Learning Environments in Students' Performance*

Abstract

This paper describes the history of the Academia Electronica, which has operated since 2007 in the Second Life 3D graphic environment. I focused on the transformation it underwent and problems which have been being addressed for the last 15 years. There are three aspects to the analysis: the first concerning the philosophy of virtuality, the second teaching in the 3D graphic environment, and the third revealing the social importance of an open university. This text is autobiographic, meaning that it includes short accounts of a number of events related to the development of the Academia Electronica as a university alongside my own personal reflections based on my long stay in the Second Life world.

The Academia Electronica was founded in the virtual world of Second Life as a non-institutionalized virtual section of The Jagiellonian

University of Krakow and affiliated with the Department of Philosophy in 2007. At that time, the problems of virtuality were often analyzed in the contexts of simulation practices (Lister et al., 2008, pp. 105–127). Therefore, such concepts as e.g., immersion, telepresence, and/or telemacity were only familiar to those "initiated" adepts who had taken the decision to cross the boundary between the physical and virtual worlds to undergo the VR experience. The very origins of the Academia Electronica were influenced by the type of background which the users could find in the Second Life environment, and thus could perceive the phenomena mentioned above. Such an involvement may cause changes in the manner of a given person's reactions to the behaviors of other people present in the virtual world and/or the different reception of semantic content in comparison with its equivalent in the physical world (Heim, 1993, pp. 109–128; Lan, 2020, pp. 5–6). Direct contact with the virtual environment may be interpreted as the basis for and the source of the analysis of the difference between the physical reality and virtual reality, which, specifically, in recent times, has become a venue to which many human activities earlier occurring in the physical world have moved. This transfer is visible as a process developing over the three last decades at least (Bell, 2001, pp. 6–15).

When the virtual world of Second Life emerged (Wilkes, 2016, pp. 48–50), it was commonly referred to as the next 3D game, though it aroused slightly different interest in the wider public. There were no tasks to complete nor any kind of competition; therefore, what was its purpose? This question was seemingly answered by a woman from the Netherlands whom I met in this virtual world. She told me how she had split up with her partner in Second Life. She started by telling me how they had lived together in a beautiful house, then had had a child-bot who had obtained a birth certificate and she had then had a marvelous wedding. She shared photos from the ceremony with me and, just to compare events, she showed me photos from her wedding in the physical world. After more than two hours of conversation, we departed and have never met again. So, I became aware then that the experience the woman had told me about was not a simulation, because her feelings and emotional commitment were undoubtedly real, and she was deeply affected by them. It became clear for me that we were dealing with a situation affecting humans in a similar way to that in the physical world, but due to its eukaryotic nature, it is hardly noticeable (Ventrella, 1995, p. 301). The virtual world is considered as a source of human experience

which, with the development of technology, is gradually manifesting as an alternative to the physical world. In those times it was Second Life, which was an electronic world where you could do a range of activities differently and often independently of the processes occurring in the physical world; however, this does not mean that they were not real (Chalmers and Zányi, 2009, p. 4). It was evident for me that I would pursue further philosophical analyses of the phenomenon of the virtual world alongside education and the establishment of a VR university.

At the beginning, only a few people from the academic and business milieus were involved in the initial work to establish the Academia Electronica. Our interest and enthusiasm for learning brought about the establishment of the first academic lecture hall in a building located in the virtual main market square of Second Krakow which was a part of the Second Poland project. In 2008 I delivered the first official open course, *The Electronic Environment as Human Reality*, which was attended by few students and listeners. The impression I received from those academic classes strengthened my view that it may be a long-term and fruitful path for education. Those lectures were only a part of the Academy's activity, but others were related to the emerging academic network community which was committed to the creation of educational projects and sharing time in a common venue which was intended for anyone interested in this type of activity. The Academy was considered to be a university although it included a virtual garden and a pool, alongside virtual animals and a virtual owl examining students, and changing lecture rooms with the passing of time. From the outset the Academy was supported by the Department of Philosophy at the Jagiellonian University, which played a crucial role with regard to formal academic procedures. In turn, the registration and archiving of academic events were important due to the chance to maintain the continuation of the project and, therefore, the realization of the project of the Academy as a virtual venue for meetings. Most of the academic activities were published on the website www.academia-electronica.net and on a Facebook fanpage, as well as on YouTube. These actions were possible owing to a key moment in 2010, when a page was designed which allowed for recording and archiving the events. Then, Neutrinka Lisle (SL nick), who has an IT background, contributed to the implementation of these breakthrough developments. She suggested substantial improvements to the page design, which continues to be administered by her, and assumed administrative work in the Academia

in Second Life. Another person who has been engaged in the Academia Electronica's activities is Dex Euromat (SL nick), an engineer who has been responsible for the technological and logistic supply network for the academic projects.

While the Academia was in operation, it prompted me to ponder a number of research questions. Today, I am inclined to claim that the impact of the VR background and the theory of media alongside philosophical analysis became a solid foundation for later projects both in the Academia and in the research milieu. In my case, they involved a study on the phenomenon of the Network, which allowed me to discuss and re-evaluate a number of claims referring to the Web. I examined a range of views which, for example, were based on theory and on comparisons with other views showing only VR experiences (LaValle, 2017, pp. 8–22). Soon, it was clear that my commitment in Second Life referred to at least three areas of research: 1. Philosophical questions, which were for me essential for media study, 2. E-learning research, which has been and still is unique in Poland and has also resonated internationally, and 3. Social relations problems, which involve the co-existence of people coming to this venue from various social backgrounds and who have encountered the values and manners of performing activities by educational and research institutions on the Web.

The first area of research proved to be very extensive and profound, which resulted in the theory of ontoelectronics, that is, an ontological analysis based on judgment on the existence of electronic reality. This claim became the foundation for understanding other Web phenomena which became apparent in a number of analyses on communication and Web identity (Figueroa Sarriera, 2006, p. 100). Taking a look from a wider perspective, such a methodological approach to virtuality initiated by an ontological analysis which means *the interpretation of its existence as an alternative reality to the physical world* is essential for preserving the reference to reality, in this case the electronic (virtual) reality, because otherwise any actions taken in VR may be understood as non-real or simulated. As time passed, it was clear to me that academic discourse is inadequate for the spectrum of ideas which the Academia triggered. This made me think about extending the range of influence by sharing research outcomes and observations with the wider public. The philosophical assumptions, and specifically ontological views, were and still are of fundamental importance, but due to the multichannel communication from the academic to the more popular worlds

those views were formed and expressed in a variety of ways, although the philosophical message was the same. Then, my principal stance was that the evolving Web should be understood as reality, but that its different nature with regard to the reality of the physical world should be taken into account and that it should be defined as a non-physical dimension in the meaning of its electronic origin. After many years it was evident for me that not all the concepts which I had applied earlier were sufficiently developed. For instance, immateriality may be such a notion (Cubitt and Thomas, 2015, pp. 20, 29), which was used by many researchers for more or less three decades. Only the ideas developed in the context of New Materialism (Dolphijn & Tuin, 2012) allowed us to understand that the concept of immatter is ontologically weak and is irrelevant for the analysis of any being. The concept of immatter was intuitively clear at that time, but its later explanation led me to claim that we could not understand what the electronic being is, if it could not be comprehended as a form of materiality. Therefore, I stopped using this notion, and just at the beginning of the Academia applied the concept of electronic matter, although I did not reject the concept of immatter. I dismissed those concepts which "weaken" the existence of the electronic sphere of being alike, e.g., simulation and even the concept of virtuality, which seems to be excessively formed in opposition to the notion of the physical world. Recently, a rebirth of the concept of virtual reality has been observed, though it has evolved due to the development of VR technology (Mann et al., 2018), e.g., interfaces such as Oculus Quest and/or apps such as Mozilla Hubs, and the improvement in the quality of video games and/or the emergence of interactive VR 360 degree films which are shot with the use of 3D cameras (360 degrees). The experience with immersive interfaces such as the head-mounted display (HMD) may lead to a better understanding of the concept of virtual reality not in a strictly defined manner, but as a form of reality, though (Au, 2008, p. viii). Additionally, it was questionable whether the concept of the real world could be used as a notion depicting the exceptional existence of the physical world and often used in discourse on virtual reality, which caused doubts as to whether or not the actions taking place in VR may be interpreted as real. On the contrary, some concepts such as the concept of the electronic environment, which is widespread in philosophical literature, and the notion of virtual or electronic *realis* used by me, and the idea of electronic reality were helpful and meaningful due to the question of the ontology of virtuality.

One of the fundamental research questions arising from the analysis of virtual reality refers to the stance on the paradigmatic change in the development of technology (Drucker, 2009, p. 5), i.e., the emergence of an increasingly engaging sphere of *being* differently, which allows the human to act effectively, though in certain aspects differently with regard to the physical world (Turkle, 1997, pp. 47, 73). In the Academia debates, there were increasingly frequent discussions of claims supporting the view that it is a fundamental and unavoidable direction of human development (Heim, 1999, pp. 44–45). Such judgments were not understood by many people, and in some cases, they triggered non-acceptance and even open hostility in the participants. The bone of contention was that those judgments were the outcomes of research on the Web, and they were uttered with a strong conviction about their veracity of future evolution alongside their materialization. In my view, research in the humanities needs to address such issues in this way, and not only concentrate on the depiction of the *hic* and *nunc,* neglecting observations valid in the future, and drawing on the consequences referring to the state of reality originating in the state of the presence. In addition, in the course of time and in relation to a growing interest in *inter alia* artificial intelligence and the development of cybernetic organisms, some researchers have shared similar views and have started to interpret the phenomenon of technology in this manner.

Philosophical views on the existence of an electronic (virtual) reality understood as an alternative sphere of being to the physical world are currently increasingly justified. Unfortunately, this process is taking place while humanity is suffering from the coronavirus pandemic, which is, however, a catalyst speeding up the process of transferring a variety of human activities to the Web. It is a tragedy that this is the cause of the transformation, but nevertheless we do need to stress the exceptional role of network technology, without which almost no human activities could survive, never mind academic ones. Technology plays a fundamental role in the widespread continuation of human activities which exceed the area of every-day communication by filling the Web with a large amount of human-related content. My view is that this Web integration could take effect, but that it will happen later and could last longer.

Social media apps such as Facebook (and most similar web applications) which display 2D content are the result of the development of programming languages and hardware technology at a given moment in time. In my view,

in the future, a form of a standardized VR Internet will arise which will use 3D graphic environment software. Humans living in the physical world may adapt easily to the three-dimensional world; therefore, Web technology will develop to the moment when the electronic environment becomes in common use. Nowadays, only the insufficient pace of the development of technology, including its present limitations, are obstacles to the process of technological evolution. However, the importance of the developmental process of VR may not be fully comprehended by the wider public, which may not be aware that the changes are leading to the creation of a human electronic world that could often overcome the limitations of the physical world.

In 2007, Second Life was one of the few 3D graphic environment apps in existence but, due to its promotion of social values and the use of advanced technological solutions, it is still the best. When I decided to choose Second Life, I was fully aware of my aims in finding a virtual place to spend time and do research on VR, and I was also keen on obtaining a homogenous and uninterrupted experience, and coping with the uncontrolled behaviors in the open Web, including incoming people who were mostly anonymous. All of this contributed to an infinite source of inspiration and it prompted me to formulate new philosophical judgments on Web phenomena. This experience allowed me to look for inspiration in futurology, which led me to gain a wider perspective related to the development of technology (Ihde, 1990, p. 31), but with a clear focus on views on the development of the Web, that is, the emergence of the standardized 3D VR Internet. In the Academia Electronica there was and still is a need to implement theory into practice, which was, to a certain extent, visible in e.g., the Art of New Media (Branden, 2004, quoted after Quaranta, 2013, p. 54; Zielinski, 2011, p. 128) and in cyberculture (Bell, 2001, pp. 48–49). In the case of the Academia Electronica, we intended to incorporate the university into the VR environment. Those procedures were joined with wider debates on the functions of the devices which need not be treated instrumentally, but as a medium allowing for a variety of users' activities on the Web, as a result of which they may obtain a range of sometimes unexpected and meaningful feedback. From this perspective, e.g., the reduction in functions of a modern smartphone to useful communication device is unjustified. The potential which may be released in this type of medium exceeds the communication process, and smartphones may become a medium triggering various forms of the user's experience. Therefore, users may need to have an uninterrupted connection to the Web and use the

smartphone as a hybrid of their corporeality. Today, we use devices whose extensive possibilities and functions result in the necessity to use them in everyday life.

With the passing of time and the accumulation of registered and archived lectures and other presentations which had taken place in the Academia Electronica, we felt increasing responsibility for our open university. It was of high importance with regard to contacts with people unidentified in the physical world who visited the Academia. Our fundamental idea was to join the functions of the university and the community of the VR world. Thus, our objective was to make ourselves better known and encourage users to reflect on the phenomenon of the Web and its everyday use, on the philosophical debates on the reality of the content, and also the questions of sincerity of their intentions and actions, which are easy to simulate. For our study, the value of the remote contacts was maintained by avatars which were seemingly not physical, but requiring determination and consistency in their continual creation, which was caused by the identification with the avatars by the users. Users' relationships initiated by the use of avatars may still arouse academic interest in the person functioning in the virtual world. At least in the beginning, users wish to preserve anonymity, so they get to know other people using avatars, which may be due to a need for compensation and/or their interest in such an unusual contact, or the possibility to play a different role. Then, new forms of expression become visible which sometimes may symbolically refer to the person behind their avatar.

The second area, as mentioned above, i.e., the VR university, was like putting a cat amongst the pigeons, due to the unusual practice of e-learning in the 3D graphic environment, organizing and participating in conferences alongside lectures by invited guests. Without the support of the Jagiellonian University, and, specifically the Department of Philosophy, it would have been impossible to run academic courses and teaching experiments in the Academia. The main issue was the authorization of activities which were independent from the university administration, but under the auspices of the Jagiellonian University. It was and still is a test for the realization of our ideas to carry out projects on the borderline between the structures and customs of the university and the everyday practices of the virtual world. This relation put to the test the university closed behind physical walls and the external world in the form of the open virtual environment. In fact, the ideals of the university had to be tried in order to show their necessity due

to the imponderables of an institute of higher education. Currently, nearly thirty courses have been reported (including those archived), which are run by several lecturers from various academic centers in Poland. Since 2013, it has been possible to enroll on a selected course on the Academia's website by any interested person, which mainly involves regular students who have received permission by their home institutions to formally obtain credits for completing a course. All lectures are open; therefore, anyone can be in the audience. Similarly, academic educators may register a course on the Academia's website (which is not necessary, because they may come to the Academia with a group of students and lead classes in a free lecture hall). The possibility to enroll on a course by a student and the submission of an open academic course by any university educator are exceptional opportunities in public HEIs in Poland. Such projects presumably anticipate future developments which may involve e.g., the exchange of courses between universities, and even the profiling of such individualized and organized courses of study.

Currently, apart from official open courses there are lectures in the series *From the Student to the Professor*, which have engaged several dozen academic educators from various university centers in Poland. Additional events include the lectures *Science Beyond Borders – The Global Academia Electronica* for our overseas guests, conference speeches and large conferences, and also popular science lectures alongside the activities of The Philosophy of Technology Student Scientific Club of The Jagiellonian University. In 2012 and 2015, the Academia was the first Polish university venue on the Internet where Bachelor's degree (2015), Master's degree and PhD degree examinations (2012) took place. We have also hosted three series of conferences, the *Philosophy of Technology* and two *Humanity in the World of Technology*, attracting speakers both from Poland and abroad. We have organized several exhibitions of art. In February 2020, for the first time, we used Oculus for giving speeches at our academic conference.

For years, researchers used to come to the Academia, and despite our openness to the variety of themes for debates, it became clear that such subjects as Web themes, New Media Art, cyberculture, transhumanism, artificial intelligence and cyborgization, alongside similar topics which were related to the general claims on the importance of the technology development were in our profile. There were also criticisms of those commitments, but, admittedly, they had no major influence, because they coincided with the

content underscoring the values of technology rather than its drawbacks. We encountered a number of issues relating to access to the courses in Poland. They involved different days off in various universities, summer and winter holidays, alongside the application of the ECTS (European Credit Transfer System). We agreed that the suggested number of credits should not be obligatory, and that each university was free to grant the number of credits listed in the curriculum information on the website. Regarding the academic calendar, we adopted the Jagiellonian University's for a given academic year.

Delivering a speech in the presence of a variety of avatars is an unforgettable experience, particularly due to the nicks used by the audience; therefore, it becomes intriguing because, sometimes, they tend to show the character of the person (Varela et al., 1993, p. 62). However, it was always essential to adhere to the most important obligation in such situations and be faithful to academic values. The form of such education works well, perhaps due to its naturalness and the sense of freedom and adherence to the community. These may be revealed in other types of activities and ways of transferring content to the Web, but in the case of 3D virtual worlds, they are more comprehensive because of the 3D space, which is similar to the physical world.

The classes in the Academia have some interesting features which are also characteristic nowadays for other educational systems used in remote education (Westbrook, 2006, p. 471). For example, there is the joint chat, when students may send messages without interrupting the lecture (Michailidou and Economides, 2003, p. 133). The lecturer may address them, although it is not compulsory, but if such messages appear, they always contribute to the creation of another dimension to the lecture. Many a time it has happened that those messages contained comments which were later expanded in term papers and/or conference speeches. This mechanism is impossible in traditional classrooms. Some people have participated in classes for years, and later in the lecture framework *From Student to Professor*, and one student prepared their PhD thesis inspired by their experience in the Academia. Similarly, some tutorials presented in open classes also stimulate engaging debates. So far, there have been 40 meetings of the Philosophy of Technology Group, during which students have presented papers, reviewed current philosophical literature and/or shared information on the latest technological developments. The Academia Electronica is not only a system of remote learning, but a Web university with real academic

life which may combine scientific debates and casual conversations in the Academia's garden.

The third area under discussion is social relations, the establishment of which in the virtual university proved to be possible and necessary from the very outset. This social dimension means building friendly contacts based on shared academic values and the enthusiastic involvement of even anonymous people, which have all contributed to the Academia's development. The Academia has steadily become a joint venue for the Polish community in Second Life. At the beginning unusual situations occurred, such as the interruptions of lectures, but in 15 years there have only been 2 or 3 such cases. The classes were open, and they were announced in Second Life and on Facebook; therefore, we had to take into account that besides students, the classes could be anonymously attended by specialists in the domain or laypeople, which in turn could lead to slight problems. Those exceptional cases were interpreted as a part of the cyber-culture experience, and we tried to deal with them by talking to such people and persuade them that we were on university territory. Over time, lectures and other events became common procedure and they took place without interruptions. It turned out that relationships and private contacts arising in the Academia with its ideas, and specifically involving some people, became permanent and with the passing of time, once they had become rooted in the Academia, the responsibility for them increased.

Regarding philosophical questions, the most important thesis that emerged in the Academia was the recognition of the electronic environment as an area of being. From the present point of view it is clear that due to the pandemic, sadly, we have been "moved" to the electronic reality to a broad extent, but also it became evident that our activities performed there are real. The existence of the Academia Electronica is a timely experience which provides support for claims on the importance of technology and suggestions concerning the structure of the VR university, whose future existence, surely, cannot be denied.

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REVIEW

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On Leszek Koczanowicz (2020): Anxiety and Lucidity. Reflections on Culture in Times of Unrest

Keywords: community, time of unrest, philosophy, politics

In his book *Anxiety and Lucidity. Reflections on Culture in Times of Unrest*, Routledge 2020 Leszek Koczanowicz explores and depicts the phenomenon of anxiety from an interdisciplinary perspective, drawing on philosophy, psychology, cultural research, and even literature. Anxiety, he claims, is so deeply inherent in the contemporary world that it is becoming imperceptible. In order to notice it, one has to purposefully look for gaps or openings where it reveals itself, which requires scrutinizing multiple sources. This approach undoubtedly makes for a demanding read. At times, the author's erudition is indeed challenging to follow; however, it is more than worth the effort, as readers are offered an in-depth glimpse into fields that they did not know existed.

Throughout history, times of pandemic, including the current Covid-19 outbreak, have sparked fear and 'defamiliarized' everyday reality. The coronavirus-enforced lockdown has led not only to a global economic crunch, but also, perhaps even more importantly, to an individual and collective mental/emotional crisis. These experiences encourage reflection on the fragility of the social and cultural order of everyday life. The pandemic has prompted the discovery of layers of anxiety which are endemically embedded

in the very essence of modernity. Modern anxiety, with a particular emphasis on its emblems, is the main theme of Leszek Koczanowicz's recent book. Although written back in what we now consider as peaceful, pre-pandemic times, the central thesis of the book is that fear actually permeates the whole of modern culture, and that it is becoming normalized and eludes reflection as a result of its ubiquity.

When reading Koczanowicz's book, it is worth asking oneself the following questions: Is it possible to return to the pre-pandemic world? Is a world without fear possible at all? What will the world emerging from the crisis look like? Are we able to imagine it? What will humans be after the pandemic?

In the first essay, *Angor Animi. Or, On the Culture of Anxiety*, Koczanowicz problematizes the perception of anxiety in the face of illness or death. He resorts to some medical representations of the anxiety experience. Recontextualized by Koczanowicz, *angor animi* is manifest in and entangled with daily routines, as well as the (in)authenticity of one's existence or reality and interpersonal relations. One of the questions stirred by Kocznowicz's work is: "Where does the culture of fear lead to?" In his analyses of this phenomenon, the author refers both to Agamben's catastrophic vision and to Beck's and Giddens's optimism regarding human emancipatory potential. Koczanowicz wonders whether living in constant fear, in invariable anxiety, in the "normality" of a state of emergency or catastrophe may still create conditions for "pure relationships" based on affections. At this point, his pertinent question is: Does living in permanent tension, in a continually altering context, in fear of what may happen or in a crisis, lead to authenticity or rather to its denial?

Hamartia as alienation or *hamartia* as a virtue? The next essay, *Identity as a Nuisance. Two Genealogies of Modern Hamartia*, revolves around Koczanowicz's considerations of the feeling of being out of place. To ponder this phenomenon, Koczanowicz relies on the notion of the "tragic flaw" derived from Aristotle's Poetics, which depicts a situation in which one fails because of finding oneself in the wrong place and being unable to appropriately recognize one's own circumstances. Koczanowicz concludes that modern *hamartia* has become democratized, and that the experience of feeling misplaced is now shared by millions of people. *Hamartia* as alienation and *hamartia* as a virtue are the two genealogies of modern *hamartia*. Is it altogether possible for an individual to be in their proper place? Arguably,

autonomy, self-efficacy, and freedom are essential features of an individual today. However, does one truly possess them? Can human beings genuinely create their own lives? Joining Koczanowicz in exploring examples from the works of Hobbes, Machiavelli, Hegel, Marx, Nietsche, Durkheim or Rousseau, we discover that the individual, instead of living their own lives, lives the lives of others. By living others' views and judgements, they remain alien to themselves.

Taking the role of the Other and being an external observer may be interpreted as a virtue, as Koczanowicz insists, by drawing on Kant, Smith, James, Mead, and Rorty. The possibility to adopt the Other's role, viewpoint, and/or position is a precondition of humanity. Seeing oneself through the eyes of the Other, taking the perspective of the Other, and being an external observer represent the ability to decenter, which proves crucial for the development of democracy. According to Rorty, feeling out of place underlies the lack of a specific view of the world, and prevents the exclusion of those who have a different vision of the world. Private life is the site where Rorty's ironist operates: her world is her very own intimate world, and she does not impose her reality and principles on others, who possess their own realities and worlds. However, is the existence of a society of ironists possible?

Koczanowicz creates a unique narrative of communication by analyzing the content of a postcard in his subsequent essay, *A Gladioli Postcard: Memory and Communication*. As his starting point is a glance at a postcard he received from his mother in 1982, the essay has a personal ring to it, with intimate memories combining with an analysis to produce a unique narrative, underpinned by the views of Derrida, for whom the postcard exemplifies the paradoxes of language and communication. The elusiveness of a postcard message is compared here to equally elusive philosophical concepts. However, it can also trigger an avalanche of recollections, summoning seemingly unrelated events from the darkness of memory, and thus becoming an external memory trace.

The Memories of Childhood in a Spectral World is an essay in which the theme of taking another person's place or being out of place reappears in The Memories of Childhood in a Spectral World, yet in this chapter, it is addressed from an autobiographical perspective. With this essay, Koczanowicz joins the philosophical discourse on otherness and alienation. The concepts of otherness, alienation, and diversity are prevalent today, forming the object of study in several social and humanistic disciplines.

The meanings of these concepts are broad: Is the Other Alien or Different? Is dialogue with the Other possible? Is dialogue with a Stranger possible?

Koczanowicz draws attention to the state of uncertainty that was the common, albeit enforced, experience of settlers arriving in the world of ghosts, as he characterizes Legnica, the city of his childhood. In our times, this state of uncertainty accompanies all 'others' and 'strangers': migrants, the elderly, the disabled, ethnic minorities, people of color, and those who choose to define themselves as LGBTQIA. A game is being played in politics with the crises of migrant, economic, social, and/or demographic natures. Politics controls the layers of fear concealed beneath the surface of the social order, taking advantage of the insecurities and fears of social groups. This approach has resulted in the exclusion of Others from many communities. Do pedagogy or sociology have an answer to this state of affairs? Do we find an answer in the book? Sadly, no. We all, in fact, contribute to perpetuating the culture of fear.

Post-Communism and Culture Wars is the next essay, in which the author asks what culture wars are and who is waging them. Today, the crossing of cultures, multiculturalism within one state, and the coexistence of culturally different communities are widespread, fraught issues in social discourse. In the wake of the democratic transition in Poland, divisions resulting from cultural differences became visible and translated into political divisions. In this context, Koczanowicz talks not so much of the opposition of two cultures within one nation, as rather of the coexistence of two nations with different values and goals in one state. Which of them is authentic? The authenticity of the nation is pitted against the inauthenticity of its existence, and this contrast is framed in the dichotomies of native vs. foreign, normal vs. unique, and the authentic existence of the nation vs. a nation stripped of its character.

Wolff (1994) does not render Poland as in any sense unique. In his account, Poland is a country that is neither particularly persecuted nor elect, a country that, in fact, does not stand out among other Eastern European countries in any way. Janowski concedes: "The fortunes of Poland are fairly typical of a normal peripheral country, with an average, primitive economy, and a normal, unexceptional imitative culture, adopting foreign ideas rather than producing its own" (Janowski, 2008, p. 234). Are Poles capable of abandoning the vision of the uniqueness of the Polish nation and joining an honest discussion on our country's standing in both European

and global cultures? Are we able to capitalize on the emancipatory dimension of postcolonial theory for Polish history, free ourselves from the myths imposed by the colonizers and our own national myths, overcome cultural limitations, and shake off the fears of domination and the loss of identity? Following the discursive concept of politics proposed by Laclau and Mouffe, will applying the concept of the nation as an "empty signifier" to Polish history and uniqueness not provide a "hegemonic advantage" in the political struggle? At the end of this essay, Koczanowicz points out the doubtfulness of the unauthorized assumption that culture continues unchanged beyond economic, political, and social transformations. One can assume that there will be many critics of this view. The essay concludes with the statement that the liberal arts must be confronted with the illusion of the continuity of culture.

To what extent do social media transform relationships with Others? Is there a shared virtual reality? Does the world of social media create a different reality for each user? These are the questions that Koczanowicz asks the reader. In the next essay, *The Anxiety of Intimacy: Or, On Telling the Truth in the Age of the Internet*, Koczanowicz examines the role of intimacy, understood as *parrhesia*, and juxtaposes traditional expositions of this issue with contemporary developments precipitated by social media. He compares the famous *Confessions* by Rousseau to the content shared on Facebook. From this perspective, Rousseau appears as a proto-blogger who is keen to share as much as possible about himself. Both Rousseau and contemporary social media users are faced with the dilemma of what information, events, or news to disclose and what experiences to omit. Of course, meaningful differences ensue from the very notions and forms of identity as created by Rousseau, social identity as perceived by Goffman, and the identity assumed on Facebook. There is also a significant difference between real and virtual identity management. This essay is particularly recommended for contemporary readers, as prominent critics of culture do not often direct their attention towards this area of cultural studies, at least in a historical and cultural context.

Koczanowicz points out the ambiguity of the term *politics* in his essay *The Anxiety of Politics*. However, he does not specify it himself either. Is it impossible because of that ambiguity? Koczanowicz evokes political concepts and the understandings of politics proposed by Wittgenstein, Fondane, Habermas, Kant, Agamben, Laclau and Mouffe, Boltanski, Levinas, and

Ricoeur. Among this wealth of references, I find Laclau and Mouffe's concept of hegemony particularly compelling and illuminating. Laclau describes hegemony in terms of the social production of empty signifiers, as hegemonic actions consist in presenting the particularity of a certain group as an incarnation of an empty signifier, which refers to the community order as the absence, or unfulfilled reality (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). The political consequences of hegemony include the idea of the arbitrary construction of the subject of politics and the makeshift nature of the social order. In this model, politics is a fight among political groups that vie to impose their own interpretation of "empty signifiers". With politics defying any straightforward conceptualization, the absence of a clear-cut definition of politics, combined with its randomness and the unpredictability of social life, breeds fear. As Koczanowicz emphasizes, "what we cannot name is particularly disturbing and, even, terrifying to us. Unable to give politics 'a local habitation and a name,' we must yet talk about it, because politics is impossible to ignore as one of the fundamental properties of human existence" (p. 93).

In his reflections on modernity in the essay *Anxieties of Community*, Koczanowicz traces the phenomenon of fear in this area of human activity. He analyzes a range of crucial contemporary issues, such as the relationship between the individual and the community, freedom and lack thereof, me vs. us, uniqueness and typicality, all of which reflect the conflict between liberalism and communitarianism. In doing so, he seeks to answer the question he posed in his earlier work, *Community and Emancipation* (2005), specifically: What is community and what can it be? He lists examples from the works of Kant, Burke, and Herder, as well as from Nietzsche's understanding of human being and community. However, particularly noteworthy is the variety of perceptions of community in contemporary philosophy. Therein, Koczanowicz mainly attends to the visions of community set out by Taylor and Nancy. Community, according to Taylor, is based on values and goals, but without threatening the individuality of a person. Individuals' identities are shaped in relation to their community. As Taylor emphasizes, these are not necessarily national communities. People can build their identities in relation to various communities, e.g., those based on dialogue, on the experience of crisis, or a state of emergency (bound up with gender, language, and/or disability), or communities that define "horizons of meanings" or "conceptual frames" for the narrative of an individual (Taylor, 1992). As far as Nancy's understanding of a community is concerned, its main tenet is

about being-together, being-with, which provides a fragile connection. An individual human being exhibits a certain commonality with other beings. It is a kind of a separated community because this being-together must tie in with a certain division that prevents homogenization or totalization. This community is the foundation of human existence, the experience of a world in which death is a shared phenomenon (Nancy, 1991). Koczanowicz examines many contradictions and fears which both the individual and the community inevitably confront.

The questions of whether happiness is possible and what it actually means in the culture of anxiety is the pivot the following essay, *Please Don't Be Angry, Happiness, That I Take You as My Due: Happiness in the Age of Democratization*. Koczanowicz tackles the problem of how the concept of happiness can be related to psychology, which describes the uniqueness of human existential situation in everyday reality. Happiness as a product or happiness as harmony? This is a dilemma that Koczanowicz leaves the reader with.

The fear of old age is yet another area explored by Koczanowicz in the essay *Mortal Generations: On Two Phenomenologies of Aging – Cicero and Améry*. Koczanowicz's reflections on old age open with Yeats's poem *Sailing to Byzantium, Body and Eternity*, which encapsulates transience and eternity, fear and certainty as the antinomies of the modern world. Contemporary humans lack reflection, and in particular, reflection on passing and dying. Old age in modernity is not only a state accompanying human existence; it is also a certain stage of life, a stage for which individuals should prepare. While in pedagogy the twentieth century was defined as the age of the child, the twenty-first century may be the age of the elderly. Hence the importance of contemporary trends in pedagogy, such as the pedagogy of old age or education for old age (Lejzerowicz, 2019, 2020). Koczanowicz does not relate reflections on age with aging studies. In aging studies, similarly to gender studies or disability studies, age, gender, or disability are not only biological factors, but most importantly an interwoven set of cultural, social, and psychological factors. Just as people assume gender- and/or disability-related roles, they take on roles associated with their age.

Since the aging process is a social phenomenon and an existential experience, an interdisciplinary approach offered by aging studies is both exigent and expedient. Describing the existential experience of aging requires objectifying the individual experience by appointing a narrator. The "impartial"

observer, the Other, is a crucial figure in Cicero, as well as in Amery and Koczanowicz. Exploring his own age-related experiences and reflections, Koczanowicz relies on the figure of K., who asks the following questions: Can philosophy offer consolation, especially at the last stage of one's life? Is despair without hope the only thing left to people? Whose perspective should one adopt, Cicero's or Amery's? Which of them is more grounded? K. ends his narrative in *Mortal Generations: On Two Phenomenologies of Aging – Cicero and Améry* with a quotation from Szymborska: "I prefer not to ask how much longer and when" (1998, p. 215).

Predicting the future is another area of anxiety analyzed in the essay *The Anxiety of Clairvoyance: Terminal Lucidity and the End of Culture*. Koczanowicz introduces the notion of *terminal lucidity,* adopted from medicine, to describe the state of affairs in culture. Individual terminal lucidity may be understood as a moment of enlightenment before death. Transposed onto culture, it refers to an enlightenment before a crisis or the end of existence. Will culture be revived? Will the world re-emerge after the crisis, and, if so, what kind of world will it be? Terminal lucidity offers neither the possibility of change nor an escape from the impending end of the world. It leaves people terrified and helpless.

Building on Hegel's philosophy of history, Koczanowicz identifies characteristic features of retrospective clairvoyance, and to describe the crises of culture/examples of the end of culture, he evokes a panorama of works by historians and philosophers, including Gibbon, Hegel, Marx, Gramsci, Fukuyama, and Laclau and Mouffe. The concept of terminal lucidity corresponds to Hegel's statement on clairvoyance: "A further word on the subject of issuing instructions on how the world ought to be: philosophy, at any rate, always comes too late to perform this function. As the thought of the world, it appears only at a time when actuality has gone through its formative process and attained its complete state. (…) The owl of Minerva begins its flight only with the onset of dusk" (Hegel, 2008, p. 23).

Anxiety is the narrative leitmotif in Koczanowicz's book, which takes readers on a journey across the manifestation of fear in various areas: politics, community, old age, intimacy, the future, etc. What will the world that is emerging from technological change, from social media, and from the crisis be like? Can we possibly imagine it? Is a return to the pre-catastrophe world – or to the pre-pandemic world – at all feasible? The pandemic has become a magnifying glass for contemporary struggles, and as such it has made

people more aware of what global challenges are. In his analyzes of anxiety, Koczanowicz refers to the problems raised in his earlier works, including *Community and Emancipation. A Dispute over a Post-conventional Society* (2005); *Politics of Time: Dynamics of Identity in Post-Communist Poland* (2008); *Modern Anxiety. Essays on Democracy and Its Adversaries* (2011); *Politics of Dialogue: Non-Consensual Democracy and Critical Community* (2015).

The book *Anxiety and Lucidity* brings together reflective essays in which Koczanowicz revisits and reappraises the most significant problems of modernity. It is recommended, especially today in times of the ubiquitous fear of the multitude of catastrophes that accompany humans, existing in a shaky reality in which they seek rules yet end up with randomness or exceptions. It is an interesting springboard for a discussion on the future of democracy.

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