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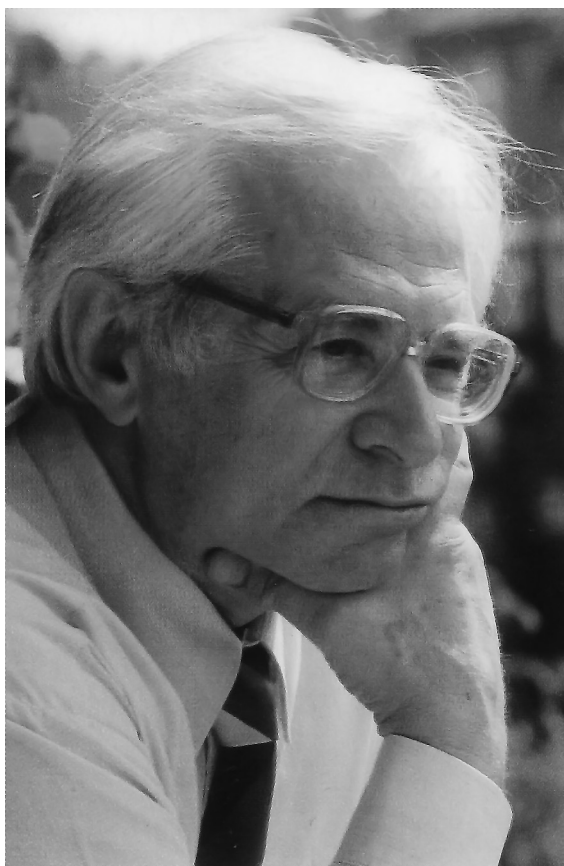
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Prof. dr hab. Karol Bal 1934–2022. RIP

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The Agnological Nature of Modern Epistemology: Grounding Knowledge by Ignorance

Abstract: One of the distinguishing features of modern and contemporary philosophy is the fact that they are consistently grounded by the epistemological outlook. The essence of this outlook is the modern conception of knowledge, which could not exist without a proper evaluation of a systemic success — or, even more importantly, in some sense a successful failure — of modern science. The only way for us to perceive the lack of error as the basis of a reliable knowledge is to recognize our own fallacies. In such a way the ancient cosmocentric worldview and the medieval theocentric epistemology have been changed by the scientific agnological approach, which had its origins in the modern times and includes the primary requirement to treat the fundamental ignorance as a reliable foundation of knowledge. In this article the reader is provided with a detailed exposition of the phenomenon of self-grounding of epistemological modernity. Adopting the terminology used in the metaphilosophical reflexion, we could reveal the dual origin of contemporary philosophical discourse, the basic principles which ground the epistemological claims, and also demonstrate the necessity of constant efforts when seeking to avoid solipsism and the paradoxical nature of modern epistemology.

Keywords: metaphilosophy, modern epistemology, agnology, solipsism, scientism

According to the dominant tradition of philosophical historiography, which is frequently encountered both in the mainstream academic fora and in the introductory handbooks of philosophy, the development of philosophical modernity from its very beginning has been marked with a sign of a fundamental division. This binary division is interpreted in more than one way — some scholars see it as methodological

or problematic,¹ others tend to call it political or cultural,² merely stylistic³ or even currently non-existing.⁴ As the interpretations of the nature of this division vary greatly, so differ the names given to it: it is often described as a controversy between empiricism and rationalism, or, alternatively, between positivism and anti-positivism, analytic and hermeneutical tradition, analytic and continental philosophy,⁵ or even, more generally, as a clash between “the two cultures”⁶ — a clash which in the Soviet period was known as the tension between “poets and physicists.”⁷

The crucial question here is what are the principal convictions that determine the present state of self-perception of contemporary philosophy. Could we say that the answer to this question should be sought in the very core of philosophical modernity — that is, in the assumptions of anthropocentric epistemology? These assumptions, besides constituting this modernity, also provide the grounds for solipsism, which radically denies their pretension to validity. This is revealed during the process of a maximally generalizing reflexion of philosophical discourse — a retrospective metaphilosophical outlook. Here I understand *metaphilosophy* in the literal sense — as a “philosophy of philosophy,” which should be defined as a unique kind of philosophical deliberation, that is, a specific discourse, which includes the contemplation of the potentiality of *sui generis* philosophical outlook, its limits, different ways to validate it and its axiological nature.⁸ A *philosophical discourse* is defined as a way of thinking, speaking, writing, presupposing, etc. according to the rules established in the traditional academic philosophy, all without delving into the details of sociopolitical power intersectionality debates.⁹ By *retrospectivity* I mean the revelation of the development of philosophical discourse according to the way this development is seen in the controversies dominant in the contemporary academic philosophy and through their methodological apparatus.

Reflecting on the Origins of the Binary Opposition between Analytics and Hermeneutics

The binary opposition between analytics and hermeneutics, which can be seen — and in some sense invented — only in a retrospective investigation, is by

¹ J. Chase, J. Reynolds, *Analytic versus Continental: Arguments on the Methods and Value of Philosophy*, Durham 2011.

² P. Simons, “Whose Fault? The Origins and Evitability of the Analytic–Continental Rift,” *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 9 [3] (2001), pp. 295–311.

³ T.J. Donahue, P.O. Espejo, “The Analytical-Continental Divide: Styles of Dealing with Problems,” *European Journal of Political Theory* 15 [2] (2016), pp. 138–154.

⁴ J.A. Bell, A. Cutrofello, P.M. Livingston, *Beyond the Analytic-Continental Divide*, New York 2016.

⁵ I.D. Thomson, “Rethinking the Analytic/Continental Divide,” [in:] *The Cambridge History of Philosophy, 1945–2015*, K. Becker, I.D. Thomson (eds.), Cambridge 2019, pp. 569–589.

⁶ C.P. Snow, *The Two Cultures: And a Second Look*, Cambridge 1964.

⁷ K.A. Bogdanov, “Fiziki vs. liriki: k istorii odnoj ‘pridurkovatoj’ diskussii,” *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie* 111 (2011), pp. 48–66.

⁸ M. Lewin, “Kant’s Metaphilosophy,” *Open Philosophy* 4 [1] (2021), pp. 292–310.

⁹ D. Howarth, *Discourse*, Buckingham 2000.

far the most acknowledged principle which organizes the modern philosophical discourse. From this statement we should by no means deduce the claim that the opposition in question is artificial and does not tell us much about the intrinsic nature of the architectonics of modern philosophy. On the contrary, despite the fact that the radically bifurcated structure of modern philosophy originated only in the 19th century, while in the 17th and 18th centuries there was not even a trace of the division to the two opposing — empiricist and rationalist — schools of thought, such bipolar description of philosophical modernity, even made *a posteriori*, is highly productive. Adopting the metaphilosophical perspective, this description is also adequate since it reveals the core of contemporary methodological controversies inasmuch as it has maintained its nature since the era of Descartes. In this sense it is also possible to consider the retrospection of Descartes as the founder of philosophical modernity to be productive and adequate, and at the same time admit that a scrupulous outlook of philosophical historiography reveals the fragility of this postulate.¹⁰

The anthropocentric model of Cartesian philosophizing, which has replaced the so-called medieval theocentric “authoritarianism,” is grounded by the utmost epistemological and ontological importance of individual self-awareness. The importance of this self-awareness, which is defined as the core of a reflective mind, is both epistemological and ontological and pertains to almost every sphere of theoretical (and even practical) philosophy. The essential premise of modern philosophy and its main concern is the epistemically and practically productive collision of the subject who engages in the cognitive act and the object towards which this act is directed. This collision is enabled by the resources of individual metaphilosophical reflexion, and the aforementioned tendency to put the active subject and the inert, passive object into binary opposition evolved into the unquestionable dominance of a fundamental modern philosopheme — the method of knowledge. The latter, treated as a universal principle, enabling epistemic acts and guaranteeing their productivity, has indubitably determined the boundaries of methodological controversies of modern philosophy. At the same time this method has given much more credibility to the fundamental metaphilosophical claims about the nature of a philosophical outlook and the universality of its competences.

When engaging in a retrospective investigation of modern Western philosophy, it is highly convenient to adopt a tripartite scheme, which depicts a long-time tradition of Occidental philosophy as the development of three methodological-thematic platforms — anthropocentrism, theocentrism and cosmocentrism. In fact, it is quite ordinary and useful to perceive the ancient Greece, the mother of our philosophical culture, engaged in the curious questions about the totality of beings — *ta onta* — and the nature of their existence. Having left the imaginative mythologemes behind, the ancient Greeks, stunned with amazement, felt the need to find out what really exists in the strictest sense of the word and what gives the ground and sustainability to this existence. They saw themselves, amazed and engaged in these questions, as an integral part of what is real — in the cos-

¹⁰ E. Balibar, *Citizen Subject: Foundations for Philosophical Anthropology*, New York 2017.

nocentrical worldview, the microworld, which also includes the human existence, is treated as a natural and constitutive element of the homogeneous macroworld. Even having presupposed that man is the measure of all things, we must admit that from the cosmocentrical point of view the priority is always given to the ontological investigation — therefore, the origins of epistemic acts and the reasons of their productivity lie in the being of macrocosm. This means that the acts of knowledge and ignorance, believing and doubting are not only the phenomena of being, but also valid modes of being itself. If man is the measure of all things, then it is due to the universal structure of being, the global order of what is real, and not due to the epistemic act totally dependent on human discretion. The theocentrical perspective encourages us to move the source of the constitution of fundamental principles and their legitimation from the natural cosmological sphere existing on its own to the transcendental area enabled and constantly sustained by the wilful, deliberate act. However, this shift does not essentially change the status of value of ontologizing the theoretical outlook: both perspectives admit the principal methodological maxim — the things that really exist in the strict sense of the word determine what and how we see, can and cannot know. Only with the rise of anthropocentrism in the Renaissance period the epistemological outlook gained its total dominance — at that moment epistemology, not ontology becomes the last instance which has the privilege to articulate the methodological requirements and to this day determines the major shifts of relevant philosophical problems. Now it is the theory of knowledge, not the axiological or ontological outlook, which must provide the grounds to the problems of academic philosophy in the broadest sense of the word (soteriological philosophy included) — from Descartes' proof given in *Meditatio III. De deo, quod existat*¹¹ to the theistic *reformed epistemology* of Alvin Plantinga.¹²

On the other hand, such tripartite narrative should be treated only as a heuristic model which merely defines the most general features of some methodological orientation and gives a preliminary description of the area of its problems. It should by no means be understood as a rigid historiographical scheme which is able to clearly fix different diachronic stages of philosophical development and the logic of their evolution. In other words, the usage of this heuristic trichotomy should not lead us to the strict division of the history of Western philosophy into the three separate — Ancient, Medieval and Modern — sections and to turn them into three inert blocks — cosmocentrism, theocentrism and anthropocentrism, correspondingly — that all share one methodological and problematic horizon. This heuristic scheme is efficient only as much as it is useful in revealing the contours of methodological and thematic vectors as retrospectively seen — *implicite* and *explicite* — principles of the development of modern Western philosophy.

¹¹ D.B. Manley, C.S. Taylor, *Descartes' Meditations — Trilingual Edition*, <https://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/philosophy/8> (accessed: 21.02.2022).

¹² A. Plantinga, *Knowledge and Christian Belief*, Grand Rapids 2015.

Modern *Subjectum* as Epistemological and Epistemic *Ego Cogito*

Looking through the prism of retrospective metaphilosophy, the main feature of anthropocentric epistemology which separates it from the cosmocentric and theocentric orientation can be defined as a specific mode of organizing philosophical discourse — here the conception of autonomous metaphilosophical subject becomes the central philosopheme of epistemological and ontological analysis.

In Descartes' epistemological metaphysics the philosopheme known as *subjectum* becomes an autarkical category — a self-grounding (independent, necessary and sufficient) principle that conceptualizes epistemic acts. Unique, highly individual and supremely active *subjectum* becomes the stepping stone for the philosophical analysis of every cognitive act. The efficiency of cognitive acts — their veracity, usefulness and reliability — is analyzed and evaluated consistently taking into account the active, that is, self-grounding presence of a subject who understands, feels, gains knowledge and consumes. Since the only principle of evaluation of the constitution of meaning and the characteristics of meaning enabled in it — such as veracity and soundness — is an autonomous *subjectum*, the necessary condition for an adequate analysis is freely flourishing self-awareness and the possibility to adequately fix — that is, authentically reflect — it.

This is the reason why modern epistemology inevitably gains the form of the discovery of regularities that govern the spontaneity of *ego cogito*. In such a way we are granted the premise of a reliable, clear and universally valid epistemological reflexion. A philosopher, contemplating the act of their thinking, reveals both the *sui generis* constitution of rational thinking and the reasons for its reliability and limits. This leads us to the claim that it is not a spontaneous totality of various modes of human self-awareness, capable to encompass different, even incommensurable forms of reflexion, but rather only historically determined and *hic et nunc* enabled specifics of philosophical reflexion that threaten to become the most important and necessary source, stimulus and warrant of every standard and revelation of all kinds of epistemic moves.

It is necessary to stress that the terminology of metaphilosophical retrospective which is adopted in this article requires the consistent separation of the epistemological *ego*, or epistemological subject, from the epistemic *ego*, or epistemic subject, as they represent two distinct philosophemes. Epistemic *ego* is defined as a subject, or, *grosso modo*, rationality, consciousness, intellect or mind, who engages in a cognitive (comprehensive) act and whose cognitive (epistemic) acts include every possible form of cognitive (intellectual, perceptive, comprehensive, understanding etc.) activity. Epistemological *ego*, or the subject who constructs the cognitive theory, should be understood as a reflective self-representation of the epistemic *ego* who articulates the epistemological attitudes — epistemological *ego* names itself in a performative way (or is performatively presupposed) in its own constituted medium of epistemological discourse. In other words, epistemological *ego* is a philosophical process of naming oneself performed by the epistemic *ego* and a self-projection of the epistemic *ego* using the available philosophical resources.

We could put the words of Protagoras in a different way by saying that man becomes the measure not only of all things, but also of themselves, their rationality and their epistemic potentiality. The core of the mind which engages in the cognitive act seemingly divides itself into two separate, although at least partially coinciding principles — the one which, observing all that there is, catalogues its observations to the sections which were previously known to be in need of identification, and the one which is capable not only to observe the very observer, but also to name the principles of its operation and, most importantly, to keep an eye on this observer and guarantee that it consistently adheres to those principles. “The observer of an observer” — epistemological *ego* — is capable to adequately carry out the inventory of cognitive devices and modes that are in the disposition of “the observing subject” (epistemic *ego*) and also, being its constitutive companion and participant, to control or at least evaluate the correctness of its epistemic moves.

Therefore, the epistemological observance of the determinateness of human mind, of the parameters of its limits and imperfections exceeds the sphere of theological contemplation. Having evolved into a fundamental — constitutive and warranting — self-determinateness of human mind, it becomes the main and final concern of epistemological doctrines and every philosophical investigation. The cognitive imperfection of human being and its fundamental insufficiency now start to be considered as the immediate and asserting recognition of human self-awareness — the reflecting epistemological subject: I am what I am, because I see myself exactly what I am during the act of seeing. The act of self-measurement, that is, of philosophical reflexion, is a constitutive operation grounding the status of the mind which engages in the cognitive act, its structure and the regularities that govern it. To see oneself in the horizon of the projection of modern epistemology is to “measure” one’s own epistemic power — to determine its capability, limits and to fix the probable causes of such milestones. In this sense the self-measurement of modern epistemology is also a specific act of its self-creation, that is, a reflective performance which *volens nolens* adheres to the present panchrony of a philosophical discourse — a philosophizing *ego* inevitably takes into account what (and in what manner) has been said earlier. This performance delineates and strengthens the contours of the articulated set of problems and the apparatus of their methodological resolution until the influx of “post-philosophical” flashes of contemporary professional philosophy — the flashes which attempt to overcome the binary opposition between analytics and hermeneutics.

The grounds of transcendental, non-human being are shattered by the dimension of theological or cosmological projections. It is also a task of a merely human epistemology which sets its own limits: the being of macrocosm — the nature — here adheres to the anthropic principle and is seen solely as a functional correspondence of the common being, culture and autoprojection of microcosm. The transcendental premises of philosophizing being and the epistemology constructed by it reveal themselves only in the context of such free and unbounded construction. Those very premises are the result of a philosophical reflexion — that is, an essentially voluntary and externally unrestricted self-determination of epistemological *ego*.

For this reason, the transcendental grip firmly holding human being is merely the artefacts of a freely flourishing philosophical reflexion, and not the external frames that give being to this reflexion. The modern philosophical outlook treats the basic categories of non-human being as ontologized derivations of epistemological attitudes which enable an all-encompassing horizon of the deliberations of epistemological *ego*. This means that beyond the human world, beyond the knowledge and value there exists either something not worthy to know and of very little value, or the things which can be known and gain value — or not — only in a human world of meaning. In both cases non-human being is constituted and supported using the epistemological resources of human mind which define the nature, power and value of epistemic acts. In such a way the omnipotent anthropocentric self-grounding of epistemological *ego cogito* overpowers the cosmocentric and theocentric outlook, which tends to limit the spontaneity of human mind and philosophical self-awareness with an all-encompassing natural and supernatural scale of the transcendent.

Agniology, Scientism and the Need to Avoid Solipsism

However, the joyful anthropocentric emancipation from the apodeictical theocentric or cosmocentric transcendent reminds the Pyrrhic victory. The epistemological subject, liberated from the condescending and invalidating custody of cosmocentricism and theocentricism, finds itself face to face with the ephemerality of its own omnipotence and its own being. This subject encounters an even more powerful — non-divine and non-natural, therefore, exceptionally merciless and apodeictical — restrictor who denies the magnitude of its cognitive potentiality. The epistemological subject is constantly haunted by the artefact that is one of its own epistemological creations — the absurd solipsistic nightmare, which does not follow the standards of modern rationality established by the very subject.

It must be admitted that if the epistemological subject engages in a consistent, non-contradictory reflexion and at the same time is capable to determine the nature, structure and limits of being that it constitutes, then the cognitive aims of every such subject are limited by the characteristics of the horizon of problems postulated by it and lose their universal, intersubjective value. For this reason, when seeking for this value, it is necessary to presuppose that there exists only one and unique epistemological subject who engages in an adequate and infallible reflexion. On the other hand, even if there existed a slightest possibility to make ourselves certain of the truth of the latter claim (it is impossible to avoid every kind of doubt completely as such certainty should be grounded by full induction — as we know, in the best-case scenario it could include all the instances of self-grounding by the epistemological *ego* known up to this point, but there could have been much more of them than it is currently known to us, and even more to come), then we should consider the epistemic aims of the epistemological subject to be limited as long as (and as much as) it is obliged to admit the limits of its transcendental potentiality.

In fact, the epistemological *ego* cannot overcome the fundamental limitedness of its own cognitive being when facing the sideline — the epistemological transcendent understood as a prohibition to err on this side of the veil of the meaningful horizon — postulated by the *ego* itself. Although this veil should be treated as a permission — or even as an obligation — to err beyond the limits of the constituted meanings, it does not by itself invalidate the cognitive aims which fit within the confinement — there is always the possibility to move the veil forwards and include the widened horizon of meaning into the sphere of reliable knowledge. In such a way the unrestricted freedom to doubt on this side of the horizon of the epistemological outlook becomes the prohibition to err freely. The freedom to realize one's own defined epistemic potentialities means the necessity to admit the existence of the boundaries which should by no means be crossed: they could *ad maximum* be pushed slightly forwards, but not completely eliminated. However, the constraints put on a free doubt result in its coercive self-confinement and the denial of freedom. It turns out that the emancipation during which the limits of knowledge were slightly expanded was only a different confinement. Therefore, in the sphere of consistently rational and reflective epistemological *ego* — the avanscena and the backstage of modern philosophy included — we can always find a place both for the absurdity drama and the solipsistic phantasmagoria: here the uncertainty gives more credibility to what is certain, while the truth and knowledge are being supported by deceit and ignorance.

The spontaneous moves of the epistemological *ego* are deprived of their inspiring and supporting source — the veracity of the assumption that adequate human cognition is not only conceivable, but also possible *hic and nunc*. The *moto* of modern epistemologized philosophy is the claim that the only thing we can deem to be undoubtedly certain is the doubt itself — on the other hand, could we say that this doubt is a sufficient ground for things that cannot be doubted — that is, for the very certainty? If the answer is “yes,” in what way does the epistemological *ego* grant itself the certainty of its cognitive aims or, in other words, how does it restrict its own postulated constitutional freedom to build the familiar world and in such manner avoid the absurd solipsistic trap?

Having admitted the unrestricted power of the epistemological *ego*, there remains only one way to overcome this trap — that is, by constructing the barriers which validate the transcendental knowledge. From the perspective of epistemological subject, the intersubjectivity is always the result of its free choice (the agreement to deem something indisputable and true or, according to Descartes, the inability to distrust something), and not the pre-condition for such choice. To put it differently, the solipsism dictated by the epistemological *ego* can be overcome by the very same epistemological *ego*, who freely postulates the limits of its own potentiality. In other words, the only way to conquer the imminent threat of solipsism is by the contrived self-restriction of the unrestrained spontaneity of the epistemological *ego* itself.

This can be achieved in many ways — for instance, by admitting that the epistemological stance should be governed by the dictatorship of “innate ideas” — the dictatorship capable to restrain an absolutely free act of human cognition with the

intersubjective structures of meaning, that is, with the confinements of absolute freedom that establish the absolute restrictiveness. It should be understood as an endeavour to restrain the ferocious solipsistic power of epistemological *ego* using the old-fashioned straightjacket of the transcendent. This situation also gives the rise to the radical Kantian self-limitation as a form of confinement which is even more directed to oneself and should be understood as the final and irrevocable, this time transcendental, self-determination of the epistemological *ego*. There has also been an attempt to achieve the same result by postulating some kind of “collective solipsism” which seems like a *contradictio in adiecto* — that is, a self-defeating concept. In such a way we see the development of a Hegelian historicist outlook which ties the potential of epistemological *ego* to the progression of a panenteistical historical mega-context, brought into being by the dialectical totality of epistemic moves. The result of both “total transcendental solipsism” and “collective historical solipsism” is the transformation of intersubjectivity to an inseparable definition and necessary condition for all kinds of cognitive activity. In other words, we should understand the ontologization of intersubjectivity as bringing it into being beyond the kingdom of always reflective and always subjective epistemological *ego*, sacrificing this kingdom’s autonomy, subjectivity, reflexivity and spontaneity. In such a way the fundamental premise of intersubjectivity essentially takes away the formerly unquestioned monopoly of truth and knowledge that had belonged to the anthropocentric epistemology and thus poses a serious threat to the philosophical competences of the reflective self-awareness grounded by their uniqueness.

Therefore, the very heart of anthropocentric epistemology is put into shape by the reflective self-grounding of human being understood as the task to overcome the ephemerality of solipsistic human world. The stepping stone for a modern philosopher engaging in a reflective deliberation is the rational certainty of knowledge, its trustworthy transparency and evidentness that goes beyond all doubts. However, it becomes less secure when striving for a reliable reconstruction of a non-cosmo-theocentric world of a reliable epistemology — here the epistemological *ego* is capable to overcome a reflective anthropocentric doubt only for a brief moment. The forgetfulness of a reflective philosophical self-awareness to perform its newly acquired duties — to doubt everything that there could possibly be (although not necessarily in fact is) false — can last only that long. This doubt should reach not only what is beyond the limits of reflexion and therefore still lack the legitimacy provided by it, but also the things which should be clear and transparent when staying in the area of “safe knowledge.” This duty requires us to doubt even the success of the project of self-grounding by the modern mind which engages in the cognitive process and the discovery of unique, reflective and constitutive powers of epistemological *ego*.

To doubt the possibility of knowledge and at the same time dread and avoid to gain it, to engage in the never-ending process of reaching it — such, in its essence dual and self-contradictory, strategy is dictated by the aim to avoid the trap of solipsism at any cost. Perhaps for this reason the philosopheme of ignorance is so rarely seen in the vocabulary of academic philosophy.¹³ In fact, this striving

¹³ R. Peels, M. Blaauw (eds.), *The Epistemic Dimensions of Ignorance*, Cambridge 2016.

towards the undesired knowledge leads us to the conclusion that the development of modern theory of knowledge has always been and still is the search and reflexion primarily not of knowledge, but rather of the principal inability to know and of its many faces. Due to this fact it is reasonable to call this theory by the name of modern theory of ignorance — *agnoiology*. The latter term — as well as the philosopheme of epistemology — was coined by the underrated James Frederick Ferrier,¹⁴ according to whom agnoiology is “the true theory of ignorance.”¹⁵ This theory, considered as “the law of ignorance,” is supposed to show us that “we can only be ignorant of what can possibly be known; in other words, there can be an ignorance only of that of which there can be a knowledge.”¹⁶ This means that Ferrier, willingly obedient to the dictatorship of the epistemological *ego*, who contemplates itself and knows only itself in this process, reduces the possibility of ignorance to the potentiality of principal omniscience. According to him, even lacking knowledge of something we are still aware of the fact that this something could become known to us. The obscure ignorance here acquires a definite form of “knowing that we know nothing” and becomes a necessary and essential condition for knowledge. After gaining a particular form and having been ascribed the method of knowledge, this ignorance has laid the foundations for scientism.

This means that the overlook of contemporary epistemology is constructed according to the strict principles of the efficiency of experimental science. At the same time, we face the warning that such effectiveness is in a tension with moral, political, religious, esthetical and other kinds of imperatives, which, due to their practical and theoretical importance, are also in need of the status of epistemic outlook. This gives rise to a variety of differing cognitive outlooks and diverse criteria of truth, lie and fallacy. Today there exist numerous deliberations about the extent and modes of different kinds of knowledge — the ones that we gain by guessing mysterious quantum and gravitational patterns, trusting the evidence of our own intuition and self-awareness or trying to combine all other possible approaches. However, this variety of different methods of knowledge does not eliminate the new epistemological stepping stone — experimental, essentially scientific modern erudition grounded not by heterogeneous situational fundaments of human knowledge, but rather by universal principles of anonymous ignorance. In such a way the reliability of every kind of non-scientific outlook necessarily turns into the paraphrasis of the evaluation of the success and the failure of modern science. This paraphrasis requires us to ground the fundamental scientific outlook — even if we know what beauty, goodness and virtue is, we are capable to do this only because (and as much as) those things cannot be known relying upon the omnipotent experimental power of modern epistemology. Finally, it has to be admitted that knowledge is possible only because of ignorance.

¹⁴ D. McDermid, *The Rise and Fall of Scottish Common Sense Realism*, Oxford 2018.

¹⁵ J.F. Ferrier, *Institutes of Metaphysic: The Theory of Knowing and Being*, Edinburgh-London 1854.

¹⁶ J.F. Ferrier, *Philosophical Works of James Frederick Ferrier*, vol. 1: *Institutes of Metaphysic*, Bristol 2001, p. 412.

The Paradoxicality of Modern Epistemology

Having adopted the distinction between the epistemic and epistemological *ego*, it is obvious that the fundamental premise of anthropocentric epistemology requires us to identify the epistemic subject with the autonomous epistemological subject, and to admit that the content of modern epistemology is primarily the results of the reflexion of epistemological *ego*. To put it differently, the premise and the form of epistemological metanarrative is the decisive assertion of the omnipotence and uniqueness of a peculiar philosophical *ego* (*metanarrative* here is understood in the widest sense of the word — as an all-encompassing theoretical outlook, capable to explain everything that there is and must be and, in such a way, pretending to a special — surpassing the contexts and for this reason absolute — validity of this explanation).

Unlike the cosmocentric and theocentric outlook, the anthropocentric epistemological subject is defined as the only source and guarantee of the normativity of efficient, useful and reliable epistemic activity. Such reflective metaphilosophical subject becomes the only possible “observer” of epistemic activity (this is also true of theocentric and cosmocentric outlook inasmuch as we can talk about the exposition of a philosophical theory of knowledge in them) and, even more importantly, both (a) the autocratic element that governs the cognitive activity and determines the correctness of epistemic process and (b) the performative agent who always, although to a different extent, participates in this process. No one besides the epistemological subject is capable to recognize and (or) to provide the factors that validate the cognitive activity — correctness of the articulation of meanings, argumentative power, verification sources, method etc. The modern epistemological subject, understood as an immanent and principal element of all kinds of rationality, is a fundamental source and guarantee both of regular everyday and of scientific, religious or aesthetic knowledge. Its performative capability to be omnipresent, that is, to present itself in every situation which requires rational experience, guarantees both the fundamental homogeneity of epistemological activity and the philosophical regulation of such activity which gains the form of agnological epistemology.

Therefore, the core of the modern epistemological *ego* who adheres to solipsism and at the same time rejects it is a universal individual *in abstracto*. This individual exists as an unrestricted cognitive act and as its grounding (and at the same time disciplinary) principle: as an epistemic *actus purus* and epistemological *quid juris*, as a spontaneous fact and as a grounding of its facticity subordinate to the irrevocable order. In other words, it exists as an unrestrictedly self-restricting selfdom, as a subservient rebel, constituting the limits of its own (lack of) freedom. For this reason, it inevitably gains the form of aggressive — undeprivably performative — rationality: it becomes a self-contradictory, unstable and mysterious compound of a spontaneous will and disciplined knowledge, since the apodeictical premise of the selfdom of a cognitive act establishes not only the unconditional will to know, but also the performative necessity to restrict it. Here the freedom to know in every possible way is guaranteed by the unified standards of knowing

in only one way. Such an epistemological attitude is the fundamental source and warranty of radical self-contradictions of modernity and has gained (and is still gaining) the names of various dichotomies: of knowledge and will, spirit and body, rationality and intuition, physicists and lyricists, analytics and hermeneutics, modernity and “postmodernity,” etc. The quest to overcome these dichotomies has to this day remained unsolved and, in some sense, reminds the divine philosopher’s stone, hidden by the long-desired and never found Holy Grail.

This leads us to the silent acceptance of solipsism and its persuasive rejection. Such fundamental paradoxality of modern philosophy establishes the agony of a schizophrenic division of the epistemological *ego*. On the one hand, the pathos of the self-grounding of a unique epistemology, sustained by the promise to reveal the constitution of reliable knowledge — *cogito ergo cogito ergo sum*. On the other hand, the non-reductive possibility of the various modes of self-grounding and the desperation which drives it and is caused by the lack of reliable self-grounding — *sum ergo dubio* and also merely *cogito ergo dubio*.

For this reason, the price that must be paid for the agnoiological epistemologization of Western philosophical discourse is final and non-negotiable. The agnostic solipsistic nightmare and the manifestation of the triumph of ignorance (which is no less agnostic) cannot be subjected to philosophical considerations, conceptual discoveries or combinations of methodological principles. It is not an object of modern philosophical negotiations but rather a precondition of every kind of modern philosophical consideration, characteristic both to analytic and hermeneutic tradition. In this sense the methodological binary distinction between analytic and continental philosophy has been and still is futile. Both these schools of thought are based on the fundamental binarism of modern philosophy — the agnoiological tension between the strength of metaphilosophical self-awareness and its incomparable power and duty to err. The same holds true for the 21st-century project of continental philosophy which goes by the name of “speculative realism” and is an attempt to invoke the dual interpretation of “speculation” as a special philosophical outlook¹⁷ and thus gain the potential of metaphilosophical knowledge, consistently adhering to the modern agnoiological principle of epistemological *ego*, according to which we are capable to know only because of ignorance. Therefore, the modern epistemology grounded by ignorance is of a paradoxical nature and forces us to pay a significant price for it: it must be accepted that its constitutive epistemological self-grounding is possible and at the same time this possibility must be denied, since this self-grounding is by no means unique — as long as there exists a terrifying diversity of them, all expectations of its uniqueness are futile.

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“A Necessary Shadow of Being”: Irony, Imagination, and Personal Identity

Abstract: This is the second of the essays on the existential-ontological ground of otherness, in which we see this ground as essentially entwined with our personhood and our personal identities. We analyze irony as both a “mechanism” of constituting these very identities and as an act revealing their self-altering nature. Irony in our view — informed by Kierkegaard, phenomenology, and psychoanalysis — is a subtle existential strategy by means of which *subjectivity* (not “the subject”) not only asserts itself, but also, and much more importantly, initiates an open-ended process of self-actualization and self-formation. Irony, as we present it, is at once a form of defensive response against the “absolute” character of reality and comparably “absolutist” aspirations of an individual. Such responses open up a space of negotiation between and among these forces, in their creative interplay. In doing so the responses can be as constitutive for subjectivity as they can be disruptive. The disruption does not only undermine the (apparently) unshakeable forms of our self-understanding. More radically, the disruption puts on the stage our “alternative identities,” those with which we have to confront ourselves, whether in the negative mode of repression, or in the acts of positive, or even playful, recognition. In this way irony reveals and articulates otherness in the very heart of subjectivity.

Keywords: irony, imagination, subjectivity, personal identity, otherness, possibility, subjunction, Kierkegaard, psychoanalysis

Introduction

The aim of our paper is to provide a preliminary answer to the following question: what role does irony play, and what role can it play, in the constituting of an (at least relatively unified) individual identity? And how, while playing this role, is such an identity related to imagination? May we create it by some imaginative process? Can it be created apart from such? If we may create identity in this way, what is its mode of existing? The leading motive of our investigation is the dubious character of human identity (or to put it in a slightly different idiom, of a unified Selfhood), which is always, it seems, accompanied by and related to some dark, shadowy sphere.¹ It is precisely this highly ambiguous accompaniment which at the same time can play the crucial role in the process of constitution of human self-identity, and can as well disrupt it, leading to its disintegration.

Irony and History

As is well known, the term "irony" is derived from the ancient Greek *eirōneia* and *eirōn* which usually are translated as deception, dissembling, dissimulation. It comes into our philosophical thinking from a moment, somewhat incidental to Aristotle's thinking, when he defines irony as an extreme in contrast to the truthful person (*ἀληθευτικός*). In contrasting truthfulness with irony, Aristotle says, "Mock-modest people, who understate things, seem more attractive in character

¹ This idea has, of course, a rich literary history. Many authors, ancient and modern, have posited "the double" (which has the same root as "doubt" and "dubious") or even "the twin." The latter is important and requires a slight elaboration — why this deep-rooted mythology of twinning? The notion reaching into pre-history of the "Age of Gemini" in the Great Year of ancient astrology, the sidereal cycle of the precession of the earth's axes in cycles of 25,800 years, was certainly known and widely written about among the ancient Greeks (Hipparchus documented the phenomenon), but how far back humans understood the precession in some form is widely debated. Many reputable scholars believe that humans had noticed and had begun to create stories about the zenith and decline of Gemini (4500 BC) long before the rise of the bull religions associated with the dawning of the "Age of Taurus" came to near eastern religion. The Epic of Gilgamesh may be read as a story of twins, a theme found in the imaginative creations of human culture from the earliest times. The survival of the twin theme through the Ages of Taurus and Aries (Cain and Abel, Romulus and Remus, Castor and Polux, Jacob and Esau), and into the Age of Pisces, includes stories of Jesus of Nazareth as a twin and even appears in the New Testament in the identification of the disciple Thomas as "the twin." The theme is picked up and elaborated in a number of gnostic Christian writings. There is an entire ancient literature of Jesus as a twin and the same urge toward a development holds in imagination for nearly every intense identity form in imaginative literature of our time, from Poe and Dostoevsky and Robert Louis Stevenson's Jekyll and Hyde, to Thomas Tryon's "other" and up to Umberto Eco, whose Simone Simonini suspects he has a double, and *has* one, which is identical with himself. Intense identity invites doubling. The duplication of the self is a permanent and structural feature of imagining identity, as a matter of history, and perhaps of necessity, as we shall show. The doubling even reaches to the "counter-earth" postulate of Philolaus, the shadow of the spheric self of our "world soul" in ancient cosmology. Our concern is not whether any such beings ever existed or were well-founded empirically, but with a predictable and ineradicable structure of imagination as it encounters self and identity. What comes here almost immediately to one's mind is the Freudian account of "the uncanny" — see our brief remark in note 24.

[than boastful people]; for they are thought to speak not for gain but to avoid parade; and here too it is qualities which bring reputation that they disclaim, as Socrates used to do.”² This quick example was the origin of what we now call “Socratic irony,” and it attests not only that Plato portrayed Socrates as an ironist, but that he really was so (since Aristotle would know by more than just Plato’s depictions).³ Is this irony duplicity? Does it threaten identity?

This is only the beginning of the poor reputation irony suffers at the hands of the philosophical tradition. We might prefer the ironist to the boaster, but Aristotle prefers appropriate self-valuation to such irony. For Aristotle’s writings, the term is usually translated straightforwardly as “irony,” when used in relation to rhetoric. In speaking of which things make an audience angry, he says, for example, “And [the audience is angry] with those who employ irony, when they themselves are in earnest; [25] for irony shows contempt.”⁴ Whether we moderns would be so angered is a fair question, but the fact that ancient audiences were, reportedly, helps us understand Socrates’s ultimate end. Here we have an important qualification, however, since Aristotle leaves open whether one might use irony constructively when earnestness is not *expected* by one’s audience.

The Modern Take on Irony

Some philosophers who have been sympathetic to irony have seized upon this opening and have elevated irony to a constructive role in both ethics and ontology. Such was the view of Vico, who allowed only four constructive tropes at the base of human consciousness (metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony, from which the whole human world is built).⁵ He places metaphor at the basis, and then metonymy and synecdoche are tropes of substitution, something “stands for” something else, *non*-identical. These three, Vico says, may be either consciously or unconsciously employed in our constructive thought and action, especially the problematic metonymy of cause and effect, which leads so many scientists and other rationalists to dogmatism. But *irony*, according to Vico, is the trope that can be employed only with the aid of reflection. As he says, “irony certainly could not have begun until the [historical] period of reflection, because it is fashioned

² Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, transl. W.D. Ross, Book 4, ch. 7 (1127b24–29), <https://www.mikrosapoplous.gr/aristotle/nicom4e.htm> (accessed: 9.07.2018).

³ See also P.W. Gooch, “Socratic Irony and Aristotle’s *Eiron*: Some Puzzles,” *Phoenix* 41 [2] (Summer 1987), pp. 95–104.

⁴ Aristotle, “Rhetoric,” Book 2, ch. 2, [in:] *Aristotle in 23 Volumes*, vol. 22, transl. J.H. Freese, Cambridge-London 1926, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0060:book=2:chapter=2> (accessed: 23.09.2022).

⁵ The term “trope” is derived from the Greek noun *tropos* — “turn, direction, way or shape” and verb *trepein* — “to turn, to direct, to alter, to change.” Northrop Frye in his *Anatomy of Criticism* states that irony is *nothing but* a trope; it is “a pattern of words that turns away from direct statement or its own obvious meaning,” N. Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, Princeton 1957, p. 40. One wonders whether Frye’s idea may imply that irony really could be unconscious.

of falsehood by dint of a reflection which wears the mask of truth."⁶ There is no *unreflective* irony, for Vico, since the *distance* from a commitment to telling the truth is a principle (that is, starting place) of its kind of construction.⁷

Hegel and His Age

This defense of irony (if such it is) really begins the modern discussion in which we are mainly interested. Some philosophers, such as Hegel, vigorously oppose a view like Vico's. Hegel says, "insofar as irony is treated as a form of art, it does not content itself with conferring artistic shape upon the life and particular individuality of the artist. [...] The ironical, as 'genial' individuality, consists in the self-annihilation of what is noble, great, and excellent."⁸ For the noble or elevated imagination, irony is a cheap trick, a duplicity of mind destined to be eliminated and nullified in the journey of self-consciousness to absolute truth. Irony does not merit even the status of a usefully labouring negation. It is a nullity in its form, not a productive antithesis.

This complicated assertion really poses a version of the problem in which we are interested here. *Irony*, in Hegel's sense (which subsumes Vico's idea) has a bad habit of not knowing when enough is enough. If we bring what is genuinely noble under an ironic gaze, we actually reduce both the object *and ourselves* to a less humane condition. We bring to naught *all we have*, in terms of time or meaning. When we are being *merely* ironical, using reflection as a wasteful economy of surplus meaning, we deny to others, as well as those who came before us in history and who will come later, any opportunity of reading our viewpoint as a maturing expression of Objective spirit, as contributors to what is noble and best in us, or so a Hegelian will insist. This view clearly reinforces and deepens the problem Aristotle noticed about contextual expectation of earnestness. Hegel has brought Aristotle's objection into a deep relation with self, others, history, the future, and Objective spirit. There are matters about which we really must be in earnest, Hegel is asserting.

But, as Hegel says, that failure of earnestness is just the problem with irony. It is not *comedy*, which *can* ennoble us. He continues:

The comic must be limited to bringing to naught what is in itself null, a false and self-contradictory phenomenon; for instance, a whim, a perversity, a particular caprice, set over against a mighty passion; or even a supposed reliable principle or rigid maxim may be shown to be null. But it is quite another thing when what is in reality moral and true... exhibits itself as null in an individual and by his means. [...] In this distinction between the ironical and the comic it is therefore an essential question of what import is that which is brought to nothing.⁹

So, anything is *susceptible* to ironic treatment, no matter how solemn, which might even be done artfully, but *not* everything is comic — that is, can really be

⁶ G. Vico, *The New Science*, transl. T.G. Bergin, M. Fisch, Ithaca 1968, para. 408.

⁷ See G. Vico, *The Art of Rhetoric*, transl. G.W. Pinton, A.W. Shippee, Amsterdam 1996, chs. 39–46, pp. 137–150.

⁸ G.W.F. Hegel, *G.W.F. Hegel on Art, Religion, Philosophy*, J.G. Gray (ed.), New York 1970, p. 100.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 101.

made into comedy. Genuine comedy, on this view, aims only at what is already a nullity, even when many people may *think* it is important. Obviously Kierkegaard will have a different view, as we shall see. But for Hegel, this failure of earnestness might be concealed, as well as being a form of bad infinity, that is, it presents itself as comedy but is actually a hidden annihilation of the possibility of truth. It is worth noting that Hegel's account does not require an individual or even collective intention to turn away from truth or to dissemble. Duplicity, conscious doubleness, is not a requirement of irony. Hence, we may be unconsciously ironic, for Hegel, in apparent tension with Vico's insistence that irony must be reflective. So which one of them is right? Perhaps both, in a way, with the Vichian ironist building on figural meaning, while the Hegelian ironist is collapsed into literal opposition to the possibility of truth. Thus do we seek to put a point on our problem.

The Meaning of Irony in General

Irony would be, then, at a minimum, a turning away, a distance, perhaps even a deviation between literal and figural meaning. Such a divergence may also be discerned between our intentions and their articulation.¹⁰ One can also say that the etymology of the word "irony," as well as its meaning, seems to suggest that the essence of irony is concealment and secretiveness, either from others or from ourselves, but can it be both? Either way it is a permanent movement of (self-)transcending, perhaps also of hubris, according to its critics. Vico by contrast regards it as something divine.¹¹ But in any case, it cannot be *explained*. Nor can we easily halt ourselves in the midst of being ironic, becoming suddenly earnest, and explain our "true" meaning and its distance from truth. Nothing is further from genuine irony than the explained irony, and the distance is perhaps the measure of our initial failure of earnestness. Nothing is further from irony itself than talking about or lecturing on irony. The premonition of this difficulty was had by Friedrich Schlegel while stating: "To a person who hasn't got [irony], it will remain a riddle even after it is openly confessed."¹²

We find ourselves neither Hegelian nor Vichian in considering irony. Perhaps our view benefits from the experience of an extra century or two. When irony is understood and explained, at the same moment it ceases to be itself, it opposes itself, nullifies itself. This far (at least) we will travel with Hegel. But irony, literal or figurative, does not articulate *itself*, as we have said. It also does not articulate anything else, in spite of formal intention. (This deficiency will make a phenomenology difficult, but not impossible; we will provide an account of such formal intention later in this essay.) It has no positive content, according to its critics, and

¹⁰ The term "articulation" is not used technically here, but it might be honed in the sense found in, for example, the adaptation of image to meaning through articulation in R. Barthes, *Elements of Semiology*, transl. A. Lavers, C. Smith, New York 1967, pp. 38–39.

¹¹ G. Vico, *The Art of Rhetoric*, p. 145.

¹² F. Schlegel, *Friedrich Schlegel's Lucinde and the Fragments*, transl. and with intro. by P. Firchow, Minneapolis 1971, p. 155.

its form is duplicitous, even to its defenders (for example, Rorty). Yet still, it is, at a minimum, *about* something. Intention remains a formal requirement.

Irony arises as (or in) the fundamental tension: between sense and nonsense, between order and chaos, between rationality and madness. It is the moment of disruption of the flow of understanding, the moment of suspension of any meaning, where the latter appears as no longer transparent and self-justified, no longer reliable. Irony disrupts the course of understanding by confronting subjectivity with the possibility of understanding and experiencing *otherwise*. This "otherwise" does not indicate a simple change of perspective but rather of confrontation, a confrontation with what belongs to the field of experience and what is somehow alien to that field. In the sphere of subjective (or intersubjective) possession, the content of our understanding now appears alien and strange or even chaotic and meaningless. We are not ourselves in the moment of irony, at least not in any simple way.

The Necessary Shadow

As such, the ironic situation is at one and the same time liberating and marked by not just a distanciation, but by an irremediable sort of distance, extending even to a radical alienation or de-familiarization. And as such irony cannot be assimilated or appropriated by means of what is simply at hand, always already available categories — to which it appears either in purely negative form, as nothing representable, as no-thing, or in the form of mere, ephemeral possibilities of which one can obviously make no particular use.¹³ Perhaps this characteristic is what led Vico to believe that such an act as that of being ironic must be reflective, but his suggestion that it is divine might be closer to the sort of radical and uncrossable distance that we have in mind. In other words, a genuine irony is always a disruption of understanding, but being so, it points at the *possibility* of understanding. The form of irony intends something possible but (as yet) non-actual. If that is so, one should not leave irony solely within the field of rhetoric. The real existence of irony in human experience points at some "essential" features of the human being, at the modes of his/her self-understanding, which always already coincides with the understanding of reality.¹⁴ In short, the category or the idea of irony, first and foremost, should be located on the level of existential ontology. Its *form*, intentional possibility, exists, even when there is no *determinate* content.¹⁵ Kant suggested

¹³ We recognize that the term "use" raises problems. We cannot resolve them within our present scope, but we trace the problem from Bergson's extreme emphasis on use as the sole motive of action (in all of his major works) through Georges Bataille's critique of use as the desacralization of life or vital energy. See G. Bataille, *The Accursed Share*, vol. 1, transl. R. Hurley, New York 1988, pp. 34–41.

¹⁴ We also recognize the problem with "essence" in this inquiry. Our position is not far from Heidegger's well-known subversion of Hegel and his alternative in "On the Essence of Truth," but we will also set this aside for this essay. If ours is a Husserlian "essence," it is a chastened one (as we will discuss near the end of this essay).

¹⁵ Our point in this paper will be limited to a phenomenological description of the relation between imagination and possibility. For a detailed discussion of the way we are thinking about possibility in

that the human power of imagination may have an unmediated relation to possibility. Yet, he left the idea undeveloped.¹⁶

The Polish poet Cyprian Kamil Norwid had a profound insight into the nature of irony when he called it “a necessary shadow of being.”¹⁷ In order to understand what this enigmatic phrase means we can refer to a reformulation of the logic of modalities which is phenomenological in character. From this perspective, while “being” indicates the sphere of actuality in its objective (and petrified) form, in its factuality, “irony,” in turn, refers to the broader sphere of possibility. In other words, irony has the power of transcending (or otherwise moving beyond) the reality principle and unfolding the “shadowy” sphere of possibilities, the sphere in which being “non-actual” paradoxically serves as the condition (even if only logically) for every given actuality. This kind of priority may, as we have already strongly suggested, be more than logical. But it certainly includes a logic of some sort.¹⁸ In accordance with the well-known phenomenological statement, we affirm that “higher than actuality stands possibility.”¹⁹ It means that the latter reveals the former, that possibility lets actuality be shaped and re-shaped. In other words, actuality, even when seen as the sphere of the most radical and mechanistic determinations is marked by “essential” indeterminacy or under-determinacy, by its permanent relation to the possible. Necessity, in this perspective, would be nothing else but a *relation* between possibility and actuality.²⁰ And in this sense it would indicate the main characteristic of human experience, its facticity. This idea was described by Husserl as an “essential” mixture of actuality and possibility, of fact and fiction.²¹

terms of the problem of nature and cosmology, see R.E. Auxier, G.L. Herstein, *The Quantum of Explanation: Whitehead's Radical Empiricism*, London 2017, chs. 7–9.

¹⁶ See I. Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, transl. W. Pluhar, Indianapolis 1987, pp. 284–287 (Ak 402–404).

¹⁷ C.K. Norwid, “Ironia,” [in:] C.K. Norwid, *Pisma wszystkie*, vol. 2: *Wiersze*, Warszawa 1971, p. 55.

¹⁸ The claim that imagination has a logic different from and broader than the logic of active thinking and/or of reflection is at least as old as Vico, and the explanation of that logic occupies Book II of Vico's *New Science*. See especially Section II, “Poetic Logic,” pp. 114–151. It is taken up by many others later, of course, including Kant, Schelling, Lotze, Cassirer, and Bachelard.

¹⁹ M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, transl. J. Macquarrie, D. Robinson, Oxford 2001, p. 63.

²⁰ This view has been explained and defended in detail by Auxier and Herstein in *The Quantum of Explanation*, chs. 7–9.

²¹ The idea predated Husserl in the philosophy of Royce. Husserl came to the idea independently (as early as 1907), but “fictional ontology” is an interesting point of connection between Royce and Husserl. Husserl learned about Royce's views early enough to affect his thinking in *Ideas* (all three books — Winthrop Bell, Royce's student, arrived in Goettingen in 1911). See Book 2, especially sections one and three, covering constitution and personalism. The connection of Husserl and Royce to personalism colours their ways of getting at individual identity. Their assumptions on this topic are very far from those that haunt the Lockean and Vartesian backgrounds of the issue. For more, see the translators' introduction to E. Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy: Second Book*, transl. R. Rojcewicz, A. Schuwer, Dordrecht 1989, pp. xi–xiii, where they document the years when these manuscripts were composed and rewritten (1911–1915). See also R.E. Auxier, *Time, Will, and Purpose: Living Ideas from the Philosophy of Royce*, Chicago 2013, ch. 2, on Royce's “fictional ontology.” A number of scholars are working on Husserl's reading of Royce, especially Jason M. Bell and George Lucas. See W.P. Bell, *Eine Kritische Untersuchung der*

Unavoidable Metaphors

The metaphorical description of such necessity, understood in that manner, is described well by Milan Kundera in *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*:

Those who consider the Devil to be a partisan of Evil and angels to be warriors for Good accept the demagoguery of the angels. Things are clearly more complicated. Angels are partisans not of Good, but of divine creation. The Devil, on the other hand, denies all rational meaning to God's world. World domination, as everyone knows, is divided between demons and angels. But the good of the world does not require the latter to gain precedence over the former (as I thought when I was young); all it needs is a certain equilibrium of power. If there is too much uncontested meaning on earth (the reign of the angels), man collapses under the burden; if the world loses all meaning (the reign of the demons), life is every bit as impossible. Things deprived suddenly of their putative meaning, the place assigned to them in the ostensible order of things, make us laugh. Initially, therefore, laughter is the province of the Devil. It has a certain malice to it (things have turned out differently from the way they tried to seem), but a certain beneficent relief as well (things are looser than they seemed, we have a greater latitude in living with them, their gravity does not oppress us).²²

In the light of these quotations, irony appears as a rather ambivalent phenomenon. On the one hand, it provides the basic framework(s) within which any reflective understanding of reality is possible (recalling that irony is the trope of reflection). Moreover, irony can be seen as the basic reflex of subjective autonomy, by means of which subjectivity can keep reality at some distance, can suspend its objective (perhaps even absolute) character. But as Kundera seems to suggest the trope should be employed not in order to escape from being but rather in order to find a resonance in it, the better to mark an anonymous and strange world of brute facts with one's own imprint, to represent it in the light of possible subjective re-configurations. Irony, correctly understood, would be, then, (at least) a kind of existential strategy of controlled fictionalization, of possibilizing, which, far from the ordinary negation of reality, opens up a kind of mediatory space. The latter would be a space of the oscillation between facts and univocal meanings on the one hand and fictions and possibilities of experiencing "otherwise" on the other hand. If that is done, irony can also be seen as a means of creative negotiation with our primal, formative influences. And as such can serve as a medium of genuine self-realization and self-identification (in senses yet to be suggested).

Erkenntnistheorie Josiah Royces, mit Kommentarien und Änderungsvorschlägen von Edmund Husserl, J. Bell, T. Vongehr (eds.), Cham 2018. Husserl's English was not good enough to read Royce, but Winthrop Bell lent Husserl Royce's books with extensive German annotations (some of these books are in the special collections of Mt. Allison University). Husserl was also known to take in vast amounts of information in his generous sessions with his students like Bell. Husserl directed Bell's dissertation (in German obviously), completed in the main by 1914, but Bell was arrested as a (Canadian) spy and held in prison to the end of the war. The dissertation was defended after the war. During this stretch (1911–1922) Husserl would have been thinking along with Royce's phenomenological ideas, which may have provided some reprieve from his disappointments with James's psychologism.

²² M. Kundera, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, transl. M.H. Heim, New York 1980, Part Four. This view of laughter is profitably expanded in Umberto Eco's works, both fictional and non-fictional. See Claudio Paolucci's interesting analysis in *Umberto Eco. Tra ordine e avventura*, Milano 2017.

A Hellish Trope

On the other hand, metaphors used in both of these quotations (Norwid and Kundera) immediately suggest that irony is connected with the powers of the “underworld,” and as such is capable of the complete disruption of any self-understanding, which obviously coincides with the loss (at least to some extent) of our sense of reality. Instead of being a mechanism of subjective self-revelation, irony replaces reality with an imaginative, phantasmatic unreality, the life-world of common meanings with the apparently idiosyncratic, non-transparent and incoherent structures of (quasi)experience. We experience an image of ourselves as an identity that we may (and usually do) take for our very subjectivity, and its experience becomes our experience. Rather than a transcendental ego, we have its evil twin. This is not the “they-self” of a Heideggerian ontic forgetfulness, it is closer to what Jung calls “shadow,” except that in a twisted mockery of health, this necessary shadow is *individuated*.²³ We might also compare this experience to the “uncanny” as theorized by Heidegger or by Freud (admittedly differently).²⁴

From this perspective (although not on our view) irony appears as a power of pure negativity, as the constant movement of deviation, where self-creation essentially coincides with self-destruction.²⁵ In the name of subjective autonomy and authenticity irony constitutes, as Friedrich Schlegel put it, “the strange (*das Sonder-*

²³ For the most extreme exposition of such idea, see H.C. Andersen, “Shadow,” transl. J. Hersholt, http://www.andersen.sdu.dk/vaerk/hersholt/TheShadow_e.html (accessed: 3.03.2019). In the story the shadow not only gradually emancipates itself from its subject and then replaces it. Eventually it leads to the annihilation of his “owner.”

²⁴ Heidegger famously described the “*unheimlich*” feeling — experienced in the fundamental mood of *Angst* — of being ontologically othered by *ec-stasis*, being outside of one’s involvement with the world, or, as we might say, Dasein as being-in-the-world is visible in its estrangement. We watch ourselves as if freed from all obligations, deep emotional involvements or genuine relations — as if beyond or before any deep or serious self-identification. And together with that the world itself loses for us its whole significance. See M. Heidegger, “What Is Metaphysics?,” [in:] M. Heidegger, *Basic Writings: From Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)*, revised and expanded edition, ed. and with intro. by D. Farrell Krell, San Francisco-New York 1993, pp. 100–101; see also M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, §40. For the original interpretation of the Heideggerian understanding of subjectivity as not only experiencing uncanniness, but rather *being* uncanny, see K. Withy, *Heidegger on Being Uncanny*, Cambridge 2015. The Freudian understanding of the “*unheimlich*” shares with the Heideggerian analysis at least one fundamental point: the uncanny or the experience of uncanniness has an essentially disruptive character. But whereas Heidegger stresses some kind of suspension of meaning and significance, Freud seems to underscore the ambivalent surplus of meaning inscribed into this experience. He claims — following Schelling — that even the word itself carries a double contradictory sense — denoting what is unfamiliar and unknown, it refers at the same time to what is “known of old and long familiar.” In his psychoanalytical perspective this ambivalence indicates the process of repression of certain experiential contents (once known and familiar). The experience of the uncanny is the return of those contents but they do not return as our own, familiar, known and friendly. They already take on the form of imaginative, dreadful doubles which no longer come from within but unexpectedly loom up as if from behind, as externality beyond our control, as a “demonic” shadow. See S. Freud, “The Uncanny,” [in:] *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 17, ed. and transl. J.E. Strachey, London 1981, pp. 217–256.

²⁵ See S. Spielrein, “Destruction as the Cause of Coming into Being,” *Journal of Analytical Psychology* 39 (1994), pp. 155–186.

bare), even the absurd (*das Widersinnige*), as well as a childlike yet sophisticated naïveté (*geistreiche naïveté*).” The latter is to be expressed by means of the authentic language, which is the language of “error, madness, and simpleminded stupidity.” Instead of “the laws of rational thought” it offers “a beautiful confusion of fantasy.”²⁶

As such the necessary shadow would be, here, rather an effect of the escape from reality into the peculiar sphere of *as if*, or — as Donald Woods Winnicott would put it — into “the resting place of illusion.” It is a kind of imaginative neutralization of reality, neutralization which always already comprises subjectivity itself. Here by “neutral,” we have in mind an idea stemming from Sartre’s discussion of the neutralization of our positional act that forms an image consciousness the sort of public achievement of “living degree zero,” to adapt Barthes’s phrase.²⁷ There is, in the image system, also a neutralization of oppositions such that life becomes merely there as opposed to not being there (not as opposed to death), and, if not wholly meaningless, an elimination of oppositions that leaves behind a sort of ungroundable “cipher-ex-nihilo,” we move from the privations of modern subjectivity (Vichian reflective irony) to deprivation.²⁸ In this way irony would lead to the fictionalization or derealization of subjectivity and its experiences, to replacement of the reality by arbitrary phantasy-worlds. In the very same way, our everyday commitments are replaced either by free play of phantasy and attraction (in more “joyful” theories: for example, Schlegel, De Man, Rorty), or by a kind of *ataraxia*. The latter is described in the most adequate way by means of the psychoanalytical category of the “as if personality,”²⁹ which is “identical” (in our new sense that it is an ironic identity) with the withdrawal from both external as well as internal reality. Freud described this phenomenon by using the metaphor of “blindness of the seeing eye.”³⁰

²⁶ F. Schlegel, *Rede über die Mythologie*, as cited in: P. de Man, “The Concept of Irony,” in *Aesthetic Ideology*, ed. and with intro. by A. Warminski, Minneapolis-London 1996, pp. 180–181.

²⁷ See R. Barthes, *Elements of Semiology*, pp. 71–80. Beginning with privative oppositions in the meaning of “terms” (images that include meaning generated by language but are not limited to that meaning), such as light and dark, in which light marks the absence of dark, and vice versa, Barthes moves to the problem of the “unmarked term”: “It is called the *zero degree* of the opposition. The zero degree is therefore not a total absence (this is a common mistake), *it is a significant absence*. We have here a pure differential state; the zero degree testifies to the power held by any system of signs, of creating meaning ‘out of nothing’: the language can be content with an opposition of something and nothing” (ibidem, p. 77). Obviously Barthes made much of this insight in a number of books and essays, from *Writing Degree Zero* (1953) to his final lecture courses at the Collège de France (1977–1978), later published in 2002, and translated as *The Neutral*, transl. R. Krauss, D. Hollier, New York.

²⁸ See J.-P. Sartre, *The Imaginary: A Phenomenological Psychology of Imagination*, A. Elkaïm-Sartre (ed.), transl. J. Webber, London 2004 [1940], pp. 8–13. We take Sartre’s idea of “quasi-observation” a step further, to what is quasi-unobserved, not because it cannot be observed, but because it “eclipses” the subject, syzygy of meaning, to use the Jungian language. For an illustration of this in the realm of poetry and music, see R.E. Auxier, “It’s All Dark: The Eclipse of the Damaged Brain,” [in:] R.E. Auxier, *Metaphysical Grafitti*, Chicago 2017, pp. 131–157.

²⁹ Here we use this category in a slightly arbitrary way, underscoring its one main paradoxical aspect, namely a peculiar form of completely detached participation in interpersonal relations. For a full account of the syndrome of “as if personality,” see H. Deutsch, “Some Forms of Emotional Disturbance and Their Relationship to Schizophrenia,” *Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 11 (1942), pp. 301–321.

³⁰ S. Freud, J. Breuer, *Studies on Hysteria*, ed. and transl. J. Strachey, New York 2000, p. 117 n. Freud refers here to “the strange state of mind in which one knows and does not know a thing at the

The Double-Edged Sword

In this sense, irony appears as a double-edged sword, which should be used (since it always will be used anyway) in accordance with a certain proportionality. If it is completely loosed upon the world, whether natural or social, it appears as a solely negative power which *deprives* everything of stability and existence, including subjectivity itself. That is why one of the theoreticians of irony, Wayne Booth, states that the only way to avoid the danger of such deprivation in constitutive irony is to *deprive* such irony of its infinite character. This was Hegel's worry and also his solution, in the setting of the woes of objective spirit, but we do not have here a Hegelian consciousness in a Hegelian world. Booth claims that the genuine knowledge of how to use irony is equivalent with the knowledge of "where to stop,"³¹ where a subjectivity should turn away from constant movement of deviation and in this way return into finiteness. It may sound simple, but as we see, it requires "knowledge." We will explain how this knowledge can be understood.

Ironists: Liberal and Illiberal

We want to offer another, though still disruptive, understanding of how irony appears and to answer *doubts* (coming around to where we began, in posing the problem) as to what it means to use irony in "the proper way." This relieving of doubt is not intended as an ethics or even a meta-ethics. We take the word "proper" in its etymological sense of ownership, and see our suggestion as an alternative to Heideggerian *Ereignis*. And that would coincide with the strong articulation of another dimension of irony, which not only both liberates and alienates, but it can take an essentially normative form. Although the latter is hardly definable, it is this form of irony which seems to be the most important and the most relevant for any reflection on human being. It should be noted that we have preserved an Aristotelian relation of *knowing* and *form* in framing our recommendation. The usage is closer to *erkennen* and *Bildung* than to the ancient Greek candidates, although *παιδεία* and *δύναμις* would be preferred to *νοῦς* or *ἐπιστήμη* and *εἶδος*.

Probably, the best-known theory of irony in the last decades is that set out by Richard Rorty. According to him, the ironist is the individual who is deeply aware of the contingent and thoroughly historical character of her own selfhood and of any theoretical constructs by means of which she tries to render ungraspable, by its very nature, "Reality." In short, the limitation on knowledge is that one cannot learn one's most basic commitments as more than images. Such a subject is fully aware that there is no neutral, objective language which could express universal truths. Here we see the application of the problem we have carefully set out above. But we would say that the liberal ironist of Rorty actually encounters no opposition in testing narratives of herself. The absence of a neutral, objective

same time." The truly paradoxical nature of this experience becomes visible when one realizes that from the phenomenological point of view this kind of experience is — as Freud insists — devoid of any sense of merely logical contradiction which supposed to be its inherent part.

³¹ W.C. Booth, *A Rhetoric of Irony*, Chicago-London 1974.

language is actually the significant absence of opposition. It is living degree zero. But Rorty is almost inescapably correct. Even in a healthier life than the liberal ironist has, a life in community, the life in which it is possible to *learn* about one's subjectivity through the dynamisms of the life-world, we are faced with competing descriptions, and without any *present* ability to decide which of these descriptions is "right," "correct," or "better," with regard to normative or epistemological claims. The slightly healthier communitarian ironist can only "re-describe" the older theories in new languages and offer new, more attractive descriptions. And that is what she does.

The ironist, then, whether liberal or communitarian, is characterized by Rorty as follows: first, "She has radical and continuing doubts about the final vocabulary she currently uses, because she has been impressed by other vocabularies [...] taken as final by people or books she has encountered" — the final vocabulary is a set of words (note, words, not what we call "terms," as in Barthes, or more broadly, images or meanings) which express and justify one's basic hopes, beliefs, and projects. Second, Rorty continues, "she realizes that argument phrased in her present vocabulary can neither underwrite nor dissolve these doubts"; and finally, "insofar as she philosophizes about her situation, she does not think that her vocabulary is closer to reality than others, that it is in touch with a power not herself."³²

Irony, here, is a constant activity of questioning, doubting and self-doubting, or, in our terms, of self-doubling, to infinity if need be. It provokes the drive for never-ending re-description and re-creation of one's self on the basis of a given cultural inventory. It is impossible to see how this could be a "good" situation, but it is easy to see that it satisfies the requirements of a Hegelian *bad* infinity, dialectic going nowhere. It is hard not to notice the weak points of this theory. First, Rorty's theory seems to *identify* irony with doubting, but the two are also different, somehow, even when sometimes hardly distinguishable. Second, irony appears to be exclusively private matter and as such it is nothing else than a means (self-imposed) of withdrawal and alienation. The Rortyan ironist is exclusively interested in the free imaginative reconfigurations of her own selfhood, while avoiding the imposition of her own fantasies on other people. The presence of a community is the occasion but not the reason for all this over-extension of reflection and its norms. The doubt is not existential, it is taken on as a reflective burden, a *faux*-necessary privatization of every social commitment. Third, if irony is based on constant doubts, it provokes questions about the meaning and value of everyday commitment. How can we act on the basis of concepts and values of which the only thing we *know* is that they are doubtful (in virtue of their form, since it doesn't matter in the least what these commitments are, only that their description is part of one's final vocabulary — this is a strange, or estranged formalism)? Can I quasi-observe "myself" (whatever that is) acting on such commitments at all? How would I "know" the meaning of what I was doing, or who was doing them? Eventually, if the basic form of an individual's self-experience is encircled within the never-ending process of re-description, if there is no room for a binding

³² R. Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, Cambridge 1989, p. 73.

normativity, irony cannot be a means of constituting any, relatively stable form of self-identity. It rather undermines the very notion of identity. Something similar may be said of other more persuasive versions of post-Hegelian irony, for example, Kenneth Burke's more grounded account.³³

Communitarian Irony

We should pause over this other “communitarian” account, since we have made bold to say it is “better.” Burke recognizes how the “master trope” of irony undermines identity and reconstructs it around a new account of identity which depends upon “identifying with,” which makes his version a communitarian effort to rescue identity in a world without causes and effects, only metonymic and synecdochal substitutions. Burke shares Rorty's nominalism — formal identification is just naming. But his idea of “intransitive identification,” identifying with, he admits, is a sort of ungrounded and ever-expanding social infinity. Every group is included in some broader group. We do not think this is enough, although we grant it is much to be preferred to Rorty's ironism. But “identifying with,” carried into ever expanding circles, leaves identity as just the cipher we described in the first part of the paper.

Burke knows very well he has not answered the questions we have been stressing. Hence, he ends his masterwork with a discussion of “ultimate” identity in mystical experience, drawing on William James, which Burke insists we must seek to “naturalize.” He says:

Nature, society, language, and the division of labor — out of all or any of these the hierarchic motive inevitably develops. Anagogically, if you will, but at least “socio-anagogically,” in hierarchy reside the conditions of the “divine,” the goadings of “mystery.” But since, for better or worse, the mystery of the hierarchic is forever with us, let us, as students of rhetoric, scrutinize its range of entrancements, both with dismay and delight. And finally let us observe, all about us, forever goading us, though it be in fragments, the motive that attains ultimate identification in the thought, not of the universal holocaust, but of the universal order — as with the rhetorical and dialectical symmetry of the Aristotelian metaphysics, whereby all classes of beings are hierarchically arranged in a chain or ladder or pyramid of mounting worth, each kind striving towards the *perfection* of its kind, and so towards the next kind above it, while the strivings of the entire series head in God as the beloved cynosure and sinecure, the end of all desire.³⁴

So much, one must say, for naturalizing, or for overcoming Western metaphysics, or indeed, for saying anything new at all. Here is only the more honest version of the pragmatic wish for identity without commitment, with all due reverence to Aristotle, Hegel, teleology, and God. We should be dismayed and delighted so far as we are students of rhetoric, but as philosophers we seem to be set adrift by our admirable rhetorical colleagues. Endless narration and a shrug of their collective shoulders are what we are given. Yes, it looked like philosophy for a while, but

³³ See K. Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, Berkeley-Los Angeles 1969 [1950], pp. 19–59 for the initial discussion and defense of such “identification.”

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 333.

then, when pressed hard, for Rorty and Burke it was either God or nothing, and they took nothing. And yet, there is a necessary shadow of being.

The Individual

The impulse for more developed and more creative reflection on the problems in which we are interested, one can find in the work of Søren Kierkegaard.³⁵ His starting point is the strong claim that there is no genuinely human life without irony. Irony itself is the *act* of self-revelation of subjectivity — “as the subjectivity asserts itself, irony emerges.”³⁶ That means, irony *indicates* the very beginning of subjective life, and perhaps it is more than a simple indication — perhaps its mood is “subjunction,” if we may give a new meaning to such a term. Irony indeed works as a kind of reduction, one which suspends “the natural attitude” — the unreflective conviction that we live in the world which is to be based on the objective and absolute laws, on the basis of which one is able to provide a set of ultimate determinations to human being. So far, Rorty, Burke, even Hegel, Vico, and Aristotle will agree. But for Kierkegaard, and from our view, what follows determines to-and-for every “individual” a concrete position within a given social-cultural reality. This is in contrast to what “defines” in-and-for every subject an abstract location within a given social reality.³⁷ In other words, subjectivity constitutes itself in, or rather *as* the movement of deviation from the reality in which it can no longer find its justification. To put it in the metaphorical manner, such movement of subjective immediacy makes it a stranger in its homeland. In this sense irony reveals a subjectivity which escapes the intra-worldly, objectifying determinations without sacrificing, as a condition, *the promise* of subjective unity, however deferred (not the unity but) the promise may be. As such, subjectivity is a fragile, ephemeral, indeterminate structure. The individual³⁸ does not have independent actuality. It

³⁵ For one of the best interpretations of Kierkegaard’s accounts of subjectivity and irony, showing their relevance for our contemporary culture, see J. Stewart, *Søren Kierkegaard: Subjectivity, Irony, & the Crisis of Modernity*, Oxford 2015. For interesting comparative analysis of Rorty’s and Kierkegaard’s accounts of irony, see B. Frazier, *Rorty and Kierkegaard on Irony and Moral Commitment: Philosophical and Theological Connections*, New York 2006 — where the author claims that even though Rorty’s irony is much more defensible than we suggest, Kierkegaard’s theory still has clear existential and ethical advantages over it. See also R.E. Auxier, “Ironic Wrong-Doing and the Arc of the Universe,” [in:] *Rorty and Beyond*, R.E. Auxier, E. Kramer, Ch. Skowronski (eds.), Lanham 2020, pp. 271–283.

³⁶ S. Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony with Continual Reference to Socrates together with Notes of Schelling’s Berlin Lectures*, ed. and transl. H.V. Hong, E.H. Hong, Princeton 1989, p. 263.

³⁷ The shift in language here is not a simple rhetorical move, it is a move to a relational ontology of the act. For a detailed working out of this language, see Auxier and Herstein, *The Quantum of Explanation*, where each of these distinctions, for example, determination and definition, abstract and concrete, individual and subject, etc., receives a full treatment and re-situation in an ontology of the act. We take the meaning of “act” in this work to be fully in keeping with our interpretation of Kierkegaard here.

³⁸ Kierkegaard’s understanding of the individual as well as the problem with which we are concerned here, namely that of individual/personal identity, are by no means univocal. It seems that the elaboration of their meaning(s) was one of his life-long, relentless tasks. The more or less developed investigations (along with more sketchy remarks) are spread in his whole *oeuvre* starting from *The Concept of Irony* and *The Concept of Anxiety* through *Fear and Trembling* and *Sickness unto Death*

has to become in the acts of confrontation with every “given actuality.” “Its actuality is only possibility.”³⁹ In this sense subjectivity is the dynamic, open structure based on the constant effort of negotiation between its own negative freedom and influences which bind it to a given reality, and as such can never be fully negated. Reality might be denied, but as manifest possibility (everything actual is possible), it cannot be deleted or erased, metaphysically annihilated without a trace. And indeed, even possibility negated is still possibility, even where actuality makes it a “might-have-been.”⁴⁰

Kierkegaard is fully aware of the dangers inscribed into irony — the danger of falling into the illusion of omnipotence, of being lost in pure phantasy, of becoming a victim of the power of negativity. Because of that he writes that absolute “irony is the beginning, and yet no more than the beginning; it is and it is not [...]”⁴¹ There is no positive content in the ironic experience. But there is much more than a “significant absence,” we would add. This is not a nominalism of consciousness, language, or image. That is because, on a view like Kierkegaard’s, irony in its pure form is first and foremost a power of “infinite absolute negativity.”⁴² Its trajectory (not its *telos*) is not to posit some experiential objectivity, but rather to reveal the complex field of subjective experience and the pure possibility of the latter, indifferent to any prospect of actualization. As such it is “the lightest and weakest indication of subjectivity.”⁴³

Subjectivity

Here we want to understand “indication” as a “symptom,” something revealed and revealing, which is quite different from “interpreting a sign,” whether that latter process depends on a neutralized image consciousness, a general semiosis, mysterious hierarchy, or an intentional self-doubt. Obviously, such a symptom is no creature of Aristotelian or Hegelian metaphysics. By means of such Kierkegaardian irony not only can subjectivity reflectively respond to itself, since this is purely formal structure — subjectivity-existing-to/for-itself. We must have this and more.

to *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments* — just to point out a few most important works. For the secondary sources, see, for example, G. Connell, *To Be One Thing: Personal Unity in Kierkegaard’s Thought*, Macon 1985; P. Bursztyka, “Spelniona subiektywność. Powtórzenie jako doświadczenie egzystencjalne w ujęciu Sørensa Kierkegaarda,” *Sztuka i Filozofia* 24 (2004), pp. 69–87; P. Bursztyka, “Rozważania o grzechu, lęku i samotności. Fenomenologia świadomości w ujęciu Sørensa Kierkegaarda,” [in:] *Miłość i samotność. Wokół myśli Sørensa Kierkegaarda*, P. Bursztyka, M. Kaczyński, M. Sosnowski, G. Uzdański (eds.), Warszawa 2007, pp. 180–193. More recently an excellent analysis of the problem of personal identity in Kierkegaard’s thought, confronting the classical puzzles and concerning the problem (and their possible solutions), was proposed by Patrick Stokes in his book *The Naked Self: Kierkegaard and Personal Identity*, Oxford 2015.

³⁹ S. Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony*, p. 273.

⁴⁰ See R.E. Auxier, G.L. Herstein, *The Quantum of Explanation*, ch. 8: “The Problem of Possibility,” pp. 143–174.

⁴¹ S. Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony*, p. 214.

⁴² *Ibidem*, p. 312.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, p. 6.

Our "form" is a *dynamis* (act not actuality; that is, dynamic self-alteration, not full attainment of a *telos*) and the promise of an "education," if we may render *Bildung* that way. In other words, irony unfolds such a promise as pure possibility, as that available nothingness. The ironic subjectivity desperately tends to *find* itself, and surprised to have *made* itself, in ignorance and in the bliss of it, but the only means which is at its disposal cannot constitute any positive content. "[S]trictly speaking, irony actually is never able to advance a thesis, because irony is a qualification of the being-for-itself subject, who in incessant agility allows nothing to remain established and on account of this agility cannot focus on the total point of view that it allows nothing to remain established."⁴⁴

Thus, subjectivity as perpetually perishing "act" is in a state of permanent contradiction between its own possible project and its prospects for actualization, between its infinitely open character and the ruthless reality principle which makes everything finite, and, as such, establishes limits to/for subjective freedom. It is because of this self-contradiction intrinsic to irony that its truth, something we can know, a combination of form as *dynamis* and outcome as *paideia*, lies behind it. We never really know how we have learned what we know, since it keeps requiring a re-assessment in retrospect, but in no way does this undermine the act by which we once knew what we once knew. Rather, this process ironizes the individual who knew that truth, without disjoining subjectivity and individual. It is what we earlier called "subjunction." The knowledge isn't satisfactory, but it definitely isn't the hypothetical possession or modification of a shadow, a deferred or doubted "as if."

Some Consequences of Subjunction

Granting this is our extrapolation of Kierkegaard, but we take ourselves to remain close to his idea. In order to clarify this kind of claim, Kierkegaard elaborates the concept of the so-called "controlled" irony (and here it is a "concept," but the sublation of Kant's and Hegel's "*Begriffe*" must be noted). It is a much subtler strategy. The individual no longer tries simply to negate or escape from the reality into which he/she is thrown, but rather tries to mark it by *its own* imprint, to find in it an immediate resonance, an echo, with audible overtones, of the possible, trailing *and* pursuing the actual as it perishes. The ironic individual neither tries to avoid the absolutization of the finite circumstances within which he/she is situated, since it will cast a shadow, nor does he/she constantly try to get something new and different from them, since that act empowers the shadow. Setting aside "new and different," the subjoined individual settles for the novelty of its situation, as a perspective that may develop into a standpoint, not insisting these means and meanings be providential, but also not failing to learn from the possibility that it might have been.

Such controlled or mastered irony should be and should bring, and here we draw on our delicate sense of norm explained above, a double power of resistance — against both ruthless factuality and the risk of melting into pure phanta-

⁴⁴ Ibidem, p. 269.

sy. *Human* life is thus impossible without irony, but the latter has to be a kind of self-limiting action, which is to be able to deprive the real of its cogent force and at the same moment to limit without *self*-limiting the apodictic free will of the individual. This is not a teleology of autonomy, nor is it an economy of idiosyncratic self-creation. It is a strategy for coping with a necessary shadow: “[...] no genuinely human life is possible without irony [...] Irony limits, finitizes, and circumscribes and thereby yields truth, actuality, content; it disciplines and punishes and thereby yields balance and consistency.”⁴⁵

The controlled irony (and here we mean control, as we have said, in the sense of “mastery” as the outcome of “education,” in the sense we have been explaining) reveals subjectivity which imprints the given reality with ideality, and limits the latter by the concrete content of its own factual existence, or process of existing. It is still the power of negativity but now it appears to be *deprived* of its absolute character, but not by a self seeking autonomy or by an empowered shadow/image/phantasy. Rather, one should say: it is negativity whose aim underwent a profound modification, becoming a subjoined trajectory. Each act of distance from that concrete actuality — realized through irony — is the *form* of acknowledgement of this actuality. Hence, knowledge is acknowledgement.⁴⁶

Each act of modification of the influence which springs from the world is, in fact, the confirmation of its reality. It is directed toward this very facticity in the constant and paradoxical twofold attempt of recognition and subjective reconfiguration, but without making the life-world an absurdity or a plague. The paradox is very real in our experience, and it gives rise to more superficial ironism in practice and in theory. The subtler situation of echo and overtone, of subjunction, means the individual takes on the cultural forms of self-understanding, norms and values, at the same time posing the constant question: how am I to understand my individuality on their basis? Are they able to provide the frameworks within which the forms of my existing, those that promise learning (*Bildung*), can be filled out? But could I escape from them if I am to fulfill this task, this “work”? How should they, themselves, be *properly* met? Furthermore, and above all: as they are always finite, are they able to express the ideal which seems to shine through them? That is why Kierkegaard claims that the controlled (mastered) irony “manifests itself in its truth precisely by teaching how to actualize actuality, by placing the appropriate emphasis on actuality.”⁴⁷ It still casts a shadow, but only as necessary.

Obviously, this way of existing does not mean that irony loses its disruptive character — that would coincide with its complete disappearance. Rather, we are faced here with the radical change of its aim into a trajectory, which is no longer the simple act of self-revelation of subjectivity in its purely negative freedom, the act culminating in self-reflective, and therefore distanced, form of subjectivity. The controlled (mastered) irony implies a peculiar dialectics of distance and en-

⁴⁵ Ibidem, p. 326.

⁴⁶ A full epistemology of “acknowledgement” is worked out with reference to Royce’s thought in R.E. Auxier, *Time, Will, and Purpose*, chs. 4–6, including an account of the relation between the “world of truth” and interpretation.

⁴⁷ S. Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony*, p. 328.

gagement, of flight from the reality and serious commitment. The Rortyan ironist could not die for anything, the Burkean ironist might die for he-knows-not-what, but the Kierkegaardian ironist dies in every moment, and expects nothing else. And because of that outcome, there is surely some kind of uneasiness in the above-mentioned questions. They are admittedly as far as possible from the joyful Rorty-like manner of doubting, both in the formulation of the questions and in their educational results.

The Ironic Subject as Individual: Controlled Irony

There is also another fundamental dimension of this ironic recognition-reconfiguration of actuality. Subjectivity — Kierkegaard claims — is marked by an essential contradiction and split (for example, ideality and reality, necessity and possibility, bodily desires/wishes/impulses and rational spirit, and the list goes on). Irony unfolds the possibility of "synthesis," not Kantian or Hegelian, of becoming one thing, a unified and unifying subject that will never have a complete form (*dynamis*) simply because human existence has inevitably an open character. Thus, the *concept* of the controlled (mastered) irony, while it is a philosophy rather than a rhetoric, is based on the conviction that subjectivity comes down to the end-less (in the sense of having no determinate *telos*) process of finding itself within reality. In other words, there is no point of arrival in the process initiated and sustained by subjunction, by the irony. It rather reveals a way whose destination is hidden. Simply speaking, there is no stage at which subjectivity would reach its final, absolutely fulfilled form. Irony gives the beginning and, by transformation, trajectory to the individual and that means that even if such an individual is not able to give a final answer to the question about its complete form and identity, it is still able to shape *properly* these projects of identity and form by not allowing either to take always-already available solutions or to escape from this work. Kierkegaard expresses it by the claim that irony is the way but it is not the way which guarantees the result. We hope we have cast some light on this otherwise difficult passage:

Irony [...] is the way; it is not the truth but the way. Anyone who has a result as such does not possess it, since he does not have the way. When irony now lends a hand, it brings the way, but not the way whereby someone fancying himself to have the achievement comes to possess it, but the way along which the achievement deserts him.⁴⁸

We would like to conclude by making a few points in a slightly unorthodox manner, however with constant reference to Kierkegaard. Two features of "controlled" (mastered) irony seem to us of particular importance — its "punitive" aspect (which has arisen explicitly only late in our account) and its dynamic, open-ended character. The former indicates — in our opinion — the mode of *manifestation* of irony. In this sense it is not about "punitive" function of a certain mental type which would remind us of the Freudian super-ego. Rather, it is about the power, inherent to iro-

⁴⁸ Ibidem, pp. 327–328.

ny, of undermining the set of always-already accessible *concepts* by means of which humans come to understand themselves, their role and place in the cultural reality.

If we are beaten up by our concepts (and we are — philosophers see to it), then those concepts deserve to be chastised. Such chastening points at their non-evident, limited, and because of that *still possible* character, but not in order to announce happily the contingency of subjectivity and of the whole cultural-historical reality. There is nothing further from the genuine irony than simpleminded joyfulness, and nothing morose about learning these limits in the shadows they cast. And there is nothing closer to it than the deepest existential seriousness, neither joyful nor morose.

Again, the way in which irony appears, the “how” of its manifestation (to recur to our initial barrage of questions), is disruptive and that would be the closest to the experience of tearing away from what is known and culturally accessible, of losing the sense of significance of the conceptual frameworks within which the existential project of the individual was to be realized, of standing in the void of ignorance, but without the bliss we have mentioned before. Above all it would be the experience of losing the *sense* of one’s own identity (not to be confused with the reality of that loss) or at least of losing the deepest sense of confidence in and familiarity with one’s own identity (which is closer to our idea about knowing and learning).

This experience can have (and in fact does have) a traumatizing and painful effect. One finds oneself in the state of vertigo, on the verge of madness. There is no primrose path to the unbidden revelation. But as we follow the Kierkegaardian way, it has nothing in common either with nihilism or with any kind of relativism or skepticism. This path recognizes, names, and tames the usual demons without calling them forth. Or so we believe. They are there, necessary and shadowed, but when properly recognized they seem to be unempowered by anything we have done in our education, or by anything we have intimately known.

Indeed, what is at stake here is, to repeat the Kierkegaardian phrase, “the appropriate emphasis on actuality.” If that is so, it seems that the ironic disruption is not at all the simple negation of the finite circumstances into which the individual is thrown and by means of which he/she is to be determined. Irony rather points at the very possibility of the ideal which always eludes worldly determinations, and which, in turn, is available to our proper work, to enlighten the finite character of such determinations and their meaning, including their practical meaning. This irony is, then, a peculiar directedness toward the unknown which does not lead the individual to the contemplative form of escapism, but rather expresses the *desire* for ethical perfection, minus the ethical perfection itself.

The latter term we take in the broadest sense comprising not only moral obligations but first and foremost the efforts to be good at/within concrete ways of life, to be seriously committed to the *activity* of constituting one’s own identity, but not as a possession or telos or demand. It is to be courageously engaged in searching for the answer to the question “What does it mean to be human?” and be consistently to/for the opportunities of realizing this life-long work. Irony would be, then, the always possible disruption of such efforts as culturally available apprehensions of the ideal which governs teleologically or mechanically these

efforts until they appear no longer self-evident, no longer sufficient as a means of one's own self-understanding. Perhaps the point of attending school is neither to obtain a diploma or even some course of learning, but rather to come to know what it *might mean to learn in just that way*. Or even more radically, what it *might mean to learn at all*.

Irony would imply a kind of imagination understood as a radical openness to the dimension of the very same ideal as possible, but not with the strings and attachments that make it *possibly actual*. This imagination, in turn, would be articulated in the intention aimed at this ideal, but as transformed into a trajectory that engages possibility because they have meaning.⁴⁹ The work appears to be infinitely demanding but at the same time hardly conceivable, unknown. But the burden is surprisingly light, much lighter than nurturing a *telos* or serving a machine. The paradox of irony (as well as subjectivity itself) lies in the contradiction or a constantly repeatable movement between already constituted identity and those moments of disruption, realized as transformed to/for such individual work.

A Confession

And here we must confess something. The question remains and has been in the shadows of our inquiry: how is all of this related to the category of the unconscious? We do not wish to prejudice the context of the question by using the word "category," but after all, we have been labouring with and against Aristotle all along (granting that the unconscious is hardly *his* category). And now it becomes apparent: how can the analysis inspired by Kierkegaard refer to this category at all?

To those questions we would answer in the following manner. It is trivial to state that every philosophy inspired by the thought of Kierkegaard simply cannot turn away from the problem of the complexity of human *being*. It seems that every ironic disruption of identity opens up the sphere of some more authentic, genuine understanding of one's self, which would comprise also its hidden and still unrecognized parts. We do not seek to deny that there are banalities in our guiding assumptions. Surely Kierkegaard does not deny them. What is at stake in the ironic experience (and actually that holds true for every theory concerned with the category of irony) is not so much the destiny of some fully unified, autonomous, self-transparent subject based on the paradigm of transcendental self-reflective structure. It is rather about leaving room for other voices, (and not necessarily human ones) for what appears as strange and alien but at the same time belonging to the subjectivity. Irony makes possible conceiving, that is, philosophizing, subjectivity in terms of singular-plural *being*.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ We have discussed this in greater detail in the first article in this series; see "Strangers in the Hands of an Angry 'I': On the Immediacy of Other Persons," *Studia Philosophica Wratislaviensia* 17 [1] (2022), pp. 7–27.

⁵⁰ To use the well-known phrase coined by Jean-Luc Nancy. See J.-L. Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, transl. R. Richardson, A. O'Byrne, Stanford 2000. Again, please see our essay "Strangers in the Hands of an Angry 'I,'" cited above.

We said earlier that irony is to be based on the re-configurative recognition of the facticity into which every individual is thrown. We further narrated this as a kind of actualizing the actual. Obviously one of the most vivid parts of that facticity, although operating as if from behind consciousness, is unconscious motivations, desires, passions, phantasies. The shadow doesn't disappear, even if the light sources are multiplied, from every direction, past, present, and future. It merely gets neutralized in any of its specific forms.⁵¹ We think that "neutralization" in the sense we have in mind is closely comparable with "integrative recognition," in a sense we will fill out. The characteristic of being unconscious should not be understood in terms of the repressed contents — they always appear within the field of consciousness as something strange and alien, something disrupting the natural course of our experience, as a kind of negation or repression of consciousness. In fact, what they carry is not simply nonsensical, petrified content of previous experiences which can no longer be incorporated into the stream of our conscious life. Such contents are rather a projection of vague, distorted, and partial alternative self-understanding, or more broadly self-identities that are vulnerable to less promising ironies than our favored path and work. Furthermore, these partial systems can — and in fact often do — refer to the more complex unities we have called "proper." These latter have at least one basic advantage over the conscious *sense* (and a sense is all it can be) of self-identity: a more *intimate and intense* relation with the primal and formative powers, with a dynamic *paideia*, with a *Bildungskraft der Erkenntnis*, with a well-formed self-familiarity.

Yet, we affirm that sometimes (indeed, the most notable among our experiences) we will be obliged to include the sudden and unbidden arrival of a fully formed other, no longer a mere shadow, who seems possessed of a destiny, and therefore a will, contrary to our projections. Is this really the other? Is it really ours? We have difficulty accepting that we have produced this destiny and its concrete ideas within ourselves, and yet, there it is and there they are. It is not mirroring, it is self-encounter, we claim. And as such it is a moment of ironic disruption. This was not anticipatable, yet it is actual. The being before us, that is, the being we are, most intimately, is a stranger. The shadow becomes the stranger.⁵²

It seems that irony can operate here, in two distinct ways. In the case of the resistance against those formations, it can follow a path of disintegrating of one's own identity. But there is also another possibility based on the act of recognition and creative confrontation, of the manifestation of a chastened self, where those unconscious formations can serve as supportive, alternative, or competing sources of the sense of identity. We do more than identify with Burkean others, we become what we are, to use Nietzsche's apt phrase. Obviously this scenario would require the previous creating of some "potential space" — to use the phrase from Donald Woods Winnicott⁵³ — where this confrontation could be carried out. It seems to us

⁵¹ As we mentioned earlier, the sense of "neutral" we draw on here is that descending from Sartre's "Psychology of Imagination," and through Barthes's creative appropriation of that idea.

⁵² See R.E. Auxier, P. Bursztyka, "Strangers in the Hands of an Angry 'I.'"

⁵³ See D.W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, New York-London 2005, especially chs. 3–4 and 7.

that irony, when properly understood, at the same time indicates and constitutes this kind of space, the possibly creative interplay of the opposite factors of human *being*. The advantage of such a position would be the possibility of the more complex and plural, so to speak, identity which would avoid the risk of disintegration. Or at least an occurrence of disintegration would be much less likely, and should it come, it might be worth the sacrifice. There is far more to be said about this "sacrifice," but for now we must move on.

What we say here is consistent — we believe — with the spirit of Kierkegaardian thought, if not quite going the whole way to Kierkegaard's work of love. In a sense, we try to show that human identity and its integrity, its integration, is an open-ended process which has to comprise all the aspects of human *being*. Many of these ironic paths stand in radical opposition to each other, but to opt just for one of them is always a kind of exclusion and repression of the others. Irony, in our account, appears as a constant possibility of disruptive questioning of: who am I? And how can I live through this constant possibility of disruption while having in mind a guiding idea of personal integrity? For irony is not simply a disruption, but *as* disruption it is expressive of the main ethical impulse of subjectivity to be courageously confronted with its own complex, fragile, never fully actualized nature, without losing sight of the life-long task of becoming one thing.

Concluding Postscript: Being Leary

We should note here that while we were polishing this essay, our colleague Marcin Rychter (from the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Warsaw) drew our attention to the excellent work by Jonathan Lear, *A Case for Irony*.⁵⁴ Surprisingly for us the main points of what is presented in the concluding parts of our essay can be seen as similar to Lear's account of irony. For Lear irony is first and foremost always the possible disruption of our practical identities and, more generally, a breakdown of practical intelligibility. It is the experience in which the concepts, values, practical possibilities by means of which we come to understand ourselves lose their self-evident and self-sufficient character and leave us in the midst of ignorance, with regard to who we actually are, while living out these practical identities. He connects the ironic experience with a peculiar kind of uncanniness, which is not a simple (though dreadful) disruption of the ordinary course of our life (when something familiar is suddenly experienced as unfamiliar), but is marked by certain pre-ethical passion, by a certain kind of being passionately directed toward we know-not-what (that's why Lear calls it "erotic uncanniness"), toward the unknown ideal, relative to which culturally elaborated concepts and principles often fall short. As such, irony is by no means a form of simple, or joyful detachment, but rather the most serious commitment to the life-long task of living a genuinely human life; the commitment finds its expression in transcending (in the moments of ironic outburst) all worldly determinations by means of which we orient ourselves in the socio-cultural reality.

⁵⁴ J. Lear, *A Case for Irony*, Cambridge 2011.

Furthermore, Lear — as a distinguished Freudian and practicing psychotherapist — analyzes in great detail the always possible ironic disruption of our conscious identities by unconscious formations, which for him are (precisely as we claim) alternative forms of self-understanding. If one of the aims of human life is to achieve a psychic unity (otherwise we are prone to suffering), then we should — Lear claims — be aware that the only unity “genuinely available to us is [...] marked by disruption and division [...]” Lear explains that it is not equal to the already trivial point that our unity is vulnerable to disruption and he radicalizes his point — this unity “*partially consists* in certain forms of disruption. The aim of the unity should not be to overcome these disruptions, but to find ways to live well with them.”⁵⁵

Irony is identical here with these moments of disruption putting on the stage the formations which call into question all points of reference for our conscious identity. And yet, our task is “to live well with them.” We obviously admit that Lear’s analyses are much more detailed than those we present in this short paper. While seeing evident similarities as to many points (and maybe even to the type of sensitivity), we also see clear, though a bit nuanced, differences between our perspectives. Putting aside a formal difference — our insistence (in opposition to Lear who refers mainly to Kierkegaard’s later works) that this account of irony can be built almost exclusively on the basis of *The Concept of Irony*, the main point of divergence would be the way we understand individual identity/unity.

While Lear stresses the need for living well with disruptions as an essential part of psychic unity (in the aforementioned sense), our perspective is rather based on an “integrative recognition.” The latter should not be understood as, guided by a fully rational subject, a kind of reflective synthesis — which, in fact, would be a form of suspension of the importance, value and meaning of these disruptive elements or formations. Rather, this is the never-ending effort of finding room and a proper place for them within the field of our self-experience. In this sense they not only broaden and enrich that field, but without losing their disruptive, shadowy character, they are to be recognized as necessary moments of our becoming who *we* really are. In this sense, they are to be located on the plane — that is, confronted with and recognized within — of what we already know and who we already became. This open-ended process, as we have mentioned, is not teleological in nature. And yet it is guided by the idea of personal integrity, by a never completely fulfilled desire to become one thing. Also, and as a consequence, our understanding of the unconscious differs from that presented by Lear. Lear relies on a Freudian perspective (interpreted in his own original way). For the purposes of this essay, we were more implicit about how we use this category — as a somehow unavoidable consequence of understanding human being from a perspective inspired mainly by Kierkegaard’s thought. If we were to point more directly at the, still implicit, source of inspiration — it would be rather the Jungian concept of an individual’s shadow as the site of the unconscious. Of course, the question how (or whether at all) these two (Freudian unconscious, and Jungian individual shadow) differ is open to interpretation.

⁵⁵ Ibidem, p. 43.

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Rzeczywistość odzwierciedlona czy zinterpretowana? Studium z filozofii fotografii

Mirrored or Interpreted Reality? A Study of Philosophy of Photography

Abstract: Issues connected to the pair of notions of image and reality have been present in philosophy at least since Plato's times. The main question that accompanies the mentioned notions concerns the relation between image and reality. Does image present reality adequately, or is it perhaps a sort of falsification? However, this question may have no sense, because, as it is claimed for example by Richard Rorty, there is no possibility to differentiate between image and reality. An interesting exemplification of the mentioned issue is the philosophy of photography, where the question about representation takes the following form: does a photograph (as an image) adequately mirror given reality? The aim of this paper is to present the problem of representationalism and antirepresentationalism, first in the broad philosophical context (based on the example of Rorty's considerations), and then in the field of the philosophy of photography (based on the example of Barthes's and Flusser's reflections).

Keywords: philosophy of photography, representationalism, antirepresentationalism, Rorty, Flusser, Barthes

Jednym z podstawowych problemów obecnych w filozofii niemalże od samego początku jej istnienia — a z całą pewnością od Platona i stworzonej przez niego alegorii jaskini — jest kwestia obrazu¹. Pojawiające się zaś w związku z nią pytania nie dotyczą nie jedynie tego, w jaki sposób obraz powstaje albo czym

¹ Susan Sontag w ciekawy sposób odnosi kwestię fotografii do metafory jaskini, pisząc o roli reprezentacji i prawdy w fotografii, por. *eadem, O fotografii*, tłum. S. Magala, Warszawa 1986, s. 4, 138. Fotografie określa ona jako deplatonizację.

w istocie jest, ale również tego, jaka jest relacja między nim a rzeczywistością (o ile uznajemy, że coś poza samymi obrazami istnieje). Można również podjąć refleksję nad tym, czy poznawać możemy jedynie obraz czy też rzeczywistość samą. W pojęciu obrazu zawiera się wiele fundamentalnych i klasycznych filozoficznych pytań — przede wszystkim tych związanych z ontologią oraz epistemologią. Jak można zauważyć, dyskusja między Platonem i Arystotelesem — która była bodaj najwcześniejszym tak fundamentalnym rozłamem w refleksji filozoficznej — jest w istocie sporem właśnie o obraz. Wedle Richarda Rorty'ego kwestia przedstawienia² jest wręcz najważniejsza dla filozofii jako takiej: „w centrum zainteresowania filozofii leży ogólna teoria przedstawień, teoria, która podzieli kulturę na obszary dobrych przedstawień rzeczywistości, mniej dobrych jej przedstawień i obszary w ogóle wyzute (mimo ich pretensji do niepustości) z takich przedstawień”³. O ile można było uznać, że kwestia obrazu w pewnych momentach w historii filozofii zanikała, o tyle z całą pewnością dziś przeżywamy swoisty renesans tej problematyki. Związane jest to z takimi, wciąż zyskującymi zwolenników, zjawiskami w filozofii, jak hermeneutyka, postmodernizm, postmetafizyka oraz pragmatyzm.

Wraz z pojawianiem się takich dzieł jak *Prawda i metoda*⁴, *Filozofia a zwierciadło natury*⁵ czy *Spółeczeństwo przejrzyste*⁶, problem obrazu zyskał nowy wymiar. Dotychczas dyskusja skupiona była bowiem raczej wokół kwestii adekwatności przedstawienia, jego prawdziwości czy sposobu istnienia. Natomiast w refleksjach umieszczonych w wymienionych tu publikacjach obraz staje się już nie tyle przedstawieniem rzeczywistości, ile niejako rzeczywistością samą. Innymi słowy przestajemy pytać o korespondencję obrazu z rzeczywistością, kwestionując samą możliwość zadawania takiego pytania. Tylko bowiem obraz jest tym, do czego mamy dostęp. „Obrazy świata docierające do nas za pośrednictwem mediów i nauk humanistycznych stanowią — choć na bardzo różniących się płaszczyznach — nie tylko różne interpretacje »rzeczywistości«, która jest z góry »dana«, lecz samą obiektywność świata”⁷ — twierdzi Gianni Vattimo. Natomiast rzeczywistość sama, jeśli w ogóle istnieje, jest poza naszym poznawczym zasięgiem. W związku z tym można dziś mówić o dyskusji między reprezentacjonistami i antyreprezentacjonistami.

Jednym z pól toczenia się owej debaty jest obszar filozofii fotografii. Jakkolwiek prozaicznie to nie zabrzmie — zdjęcie to nic innego niż właśnie obraz. W związku z tym powstaje pytanie o to, czy jawiąca się nam na fotografii rzeczywistość jest wiernie odzwierciedlona czy (tylko) zinterpretowana.

Niniejszy tekst nie pretenduje do udzielenia jednoznacznej odpowiedzi na owo pytanie. Jest to raczej próba ukazania różnych stanowisk wobec problemu reprezentacji i obrazu. Najpierw odwołamy się do refleksji Richarda Rorty'ego, który wielokrotnie podejmował problem reprezentacjonizmu i antyreprezentacjonizmu, samemu występując z pozycji antyreprezentacjonistycznej. Analizy argumenta-

² Pojęcie przedstawienia utożsamiamy w niniejszym tekście z pojęciem obrazu czy reprezentacji.

³ R. Rorty, *Filozofia a zwierciadło natury*, tłum. M. Szczubiałka, Warszawa 1994, s. 9.

⁴ Por. H.-G. Gadamer, *Prawda i metoda*, tłum. B. Baran, Warszawa 1993.

⁵ Por. R. Rorty, *Filozofia a zwierciadło natury*.

⁶ Por. G. Vattimo, *Spółeczeństwo przejrzyste*, tłum. M. Kamińska, Wrocław 2006.

⁷ *Ibidem*, s. 37.

cji, które przeprowadza Rorty, są niezwykle instruktywne i ukazują wiele założeń tkwiących u podstaw dwóch powyższych pozycji. Zobaczywszy, jak tytułowy problem sytuuje się w kontekście debaty *stricte* filozoficznej, będziemy mogli zastanowić się nad jedną z egzemplifikacji kwestii obrazowania rzeczywistości w postaci fotografii. Omówimy związane z reprezentacjonizmem stanowisko Rolanda Barthes'a oraz antyreprezentacjonistyczne ujęcie fotografii Viléma Flussera. Problem reprezentacjonizmu i antyreprezentacjonizmu podejmiemy zatem w następujących częściach: 1. reprezentacjonizm i antyreprezentacjonizm w ujęciu Richarda Rorty'ego; 2. reprezentacjonizm i antyreprezentacjonizm w kontekście filozofii fotografii; 3. podsumowanie.

Reprezentacjonizm i antyreprezentacjonizm w ujęciu Richarda Rorty'ego

Wiele prac Rorty'ego — zgodnie zresztą z treścią przytoczonego we wstępie fragmentu — poświęconych jest w mniejszym lub większym stopniu kwestii obrazu czy przedstawienia. Amerykański filozof czyni z tego zagadnienia pewnego rodzaju klucz interpretacyjny, przez który rozważa całą historię filozofii. Widoczne jest to szczególnie w *Filozofii a zwierciadle natury*, gdzie Rorty ukazuje tradycję filozoficzną jako „epistemologię”⁸, to znaczy dążenie do znalezienia kryteriów odróżniania obrazów trafnych od nietrafnych. „Epistemologia” zakłada przy tym korespondencyjną teorię prawdy, dualizm przedstawienia i rzeczywistości samej, fundacjonalizm, esencjalizm czy koncepcję wiedzy jako zbioru trafnych reprezentacji. Czyniąc tak wiele założeń (i to tak fundamentalnych), Rorty podejmuje krytykę tradycji filozoficznej jako epistemologii, krytykę metafory filozofii jako „zwierciadła natury” i całej klasycznej problematyki filozoficznej. W niniejszym tekście jednak postaramy się skupić bardziej na późniejszych dziełach amerykańskiego myśliciela — szczególnie tych powstałych w latach osiemdziesiątych — w których jego stanowisko staje się bardziej przemyślane i uporządkowane⁹. To właśnie przez pryzmat tych tekstów ukażemy Rorty'ego refleksje dotyczące reprezentacjonizmu (w części a) oraz antyreprezentacjonizmu (w części b).

a) Reprezentacjonizm jest stanowiskiem związanym ze wspomnianą już „epistemologią”, to znaczy z tradycją filozoficzną sięgającą początkami Platona i trwa-

⁸ Słowo to piszemy w cudzysłowie ze względu na to, że Rorty'ego rozumienie epistemologii odbiega od tradycyjnego, to jest od utożsamienia epistemologii z teorią poznania. Amerykanin przez „epistemologię” wyraża wieloletnią tradycję filozoficzną powiązaną z przyjmowaniem konkretnej definicji prawdy, ze zgodą na konkretną problematykę itp.

⁹ Jak pisze we wprowadzeniu do *Obiektywności, relatywizmu i prawdy*: „Zalecając tutaj [w książce] antyreprezentacjonizm, odwołuję się do mojej wcześniejszej pracy *Filozofia a zwierciadło natury*. Chociaż w tle tamtej książki majaczyły postacie Wittgensteina, Heideggera i Deweya, to w trakcie jej pisania największe intelektualne długi zaciągnąłem u Wilfrida Sellarsa i Ormana Quine'a. Po kolejnych dziesięciu latach doszedłem jednak do wniosku, że wątki myślowe nakreślone przez Sellarsa i Quine'a zostają pogłębione i rozwinięte w pracach Donalda Davidsona”, R. Rorty, *Obiektywność, relatywizm i prawda*, tłum. J. Margański, Warszawa 1999, s. 9.

jącą (gdzieniegdzie) do dziś, tradycją, którą Heidegger nazywał „onto-teo-logią”¹⁰. Rorty, nawiązując do Papineau i Lewisa jako przedstawicieli stanowiska reprezentacjonistycznego, w następujący sposób określa reprezentacjonizm:

Papineau i Lewis podzielają przekonanie, że istnieją ‘obiektywne’, niezależne od teorii i języka, realne związki faktualne, możliwe do wykrycia przez nauki przyrodnicze, a zachodzące bądź nie zachodzące pomiędzy pojedynczymi cząstkami języka a pojedynczymi cząstkami tego, co językiem nie jest. Kiedy owe relacje [...] zachodzą, efekt jest taki, że „dokonujemy trafnej reprezentacji” [...]”¹¹.

W innym miejscu stanowisko reprezentacjonistyczne określane jest w kontekście filozofii języka jako takie, w którym

jest sens stawiać pytania w rodzaju „Czy język, którym się obecnie posługujemy, jest językiem ‘właściwym’ — czy dobrze spełnia swe zadanie środka wyrazu bądź przedstawiania?”, „Czy nasz język jest przezroczystym, czy też nieprzezroczystym medium?”. Pytania takie zakładają, że pomiędzy językiem a rzeczywistością pozajęzykową mogą zachodzić relacje takie jak „pasowanie do świata” lub „odzwierciedlanie prawdziwej natury jaźni”. Założeniu temu towarzyszy inne, stwierdzające, że „nasz język” — język, którym obecnie mówimy, słownik, jaki mają do dyspozycji wykształceni ludzie żyjący w dwudziestym wieku — jest w jakiś sposób jednością, czymś trzecim, co pozostaje w pewnym określonym stosunku do dwu innych jedności — jaźni i rzeczywistości¹².

Reprezentacjonizm zatem zakłada, że rzeczywistość istnieje jako coś oddzielnego od naszych środków wyrazu (między innymi języka) i że owe środki mogą w sposób trafny bądź nietrafny rzeczywistość odzwierciedlać¹³. Poprawność zaś bądź błędność reprezentacji (obrazu) rzeczywistości określa się, opierając się na korespondencyjnej teorii prawdy, zakładającej zgodność rzeczy z intelektem albo — mówiąc nieco inaczej — zgodność między rzeczywistością a jej (językowym bądź nie) obrazem. Należy również wspomnieć o jeszcze innym założeniu towarzyszącym reprezentacjonizmowi. Mianowicie, w ramach tego stanowiska uznaje się, że możliwe jest stwierdzenie wspomnianej zgodności bądź niezgodności reprezentacji, a zatem uznaje się również, że w jakiś sposób mamy epistemiczny dostęp do rzeczywistości (jeszcze) nieprzedstawionej i że to właśnie sprawia, iż możemy określić prawdziwość obrazu.

Rorty jednak stwierdza, że „zdania nie są prawdziwe za sprawą rzeczy istniejących w świecie”¹⁴. Uważa on wyłożone założenia zarówno za nieuprawomocnione, jak i niepożyteczne społecznie. To głównie na tym drugim aspekcie skupia się jego krytyka reprezentacjonizmu. Proponuje on bowiem zamiast na epistemologii i metafizyce skupić się na etyce, zamiast na obiektywności — na solidarności. Pisząc na przykład o *Folwarku zwierzęcym*, Rorty stwierdza, że „jego siłą nie było odniesienie

¹⁰ Por. M. Heidegger, *Onto-teo-logiczny charakter metafizyki*, tłum. J. Mizera, „Principia” 20 (1998), s. 165–186.

¹¹ R. Rorty, *Obiektywność, relatywizm i prawda*, s. 24.

¹² R. Rorty, *Przygodność, ironia, solidarność*, tłum. W.J. Popowski, Warszawa 1996, s. 31.

¹³ Definicję reprezentacjonizmu podaje także np. E. Kałuszyńska: „reprezentacjonizm czy realizm metafizyczny to stanowisko filozoficzne, zgodnie z którym relacja taka [reprezentowania — A.T.] zachodzić ma między poznaniem a (obiektywną) rzeczywistością samą w sobie. Jeśli zachodzi, to poznanie jest prawdziwe, wiernie reprezentuje rzeczywistość, dostarcza literalnego i prawdziwego jej opisu”, *eadem*, *Co rozumiem przez reprezentacjonizm i dlaczego go odrzucam?*, „Filozofia Nauki” 3 [3] (1995), s. 65.

¹⁴ R. Rorty, *Obiektywność, relatywizm i prawda*, s. 175.

do rzeczywistości, lecz odniesienie do najpopularniejszych alternatywnych opisów niedawnej przeszłości. Nie był on lustrem, lecz dźwignią wsuniętą w kluczowe miejsce¹⁵. To właśnie dlatego, że porzucone zostały roszczenia do adekwatności opisu, a punkt oparcia przeniósł się na etykę i społeczeństwo, dzieło Orwella miało tak silny wpływ na liberalną kulturę. Chodzi zatem o to, aby w pewien sposób „upraktycznie” filozofię — zwrócić ją od teorii (epistemologii i metafizyki) ku praktyce (etyce, polityce czy filozofii społecznej). Trzeba przy tym zauważyć, że motywacją tego zwrotu nie są względy czysto teoretyczne (na przykład takie, że nie mamy dostępu do rzeczywistości, ale tylko do przedstawień, więc nie ma sensu mówić o czymkolwiek innym prócz samych przedstawień), lecz także praktyczne, wyrażające się w przekonaniu — eksplikowanym przez wielu współczesnych filozofów — że tradycja filozoficzna (zwana przez Rorty’ego „epistemologią”, przez Heideggera zaś „onto-teo-logią”, a przez Vattima „metafizyką”) powiązana jest nieuchronnie z przemocą. Zwrot ku etyce i ku przygodności jest zatem sposobem uniknięcia przemocy. „Tak więc staram się pokazać, w jaki sposób kultura wyzbyta tej ambicji [względem transcendencji — A.T.] — kultura w rozumieniu Deweya — mogłaby być lepsza od kultury — jak to nazwał Heidegger — od »tradycji onto-teologicznej«. Staram się pokazać, w jaki sposób moglibyśmy odrzucić system drabinek, które, choć ongiś niezbędne, stają się obecnie przeszkodami”¹⁶, pisze Rorty.

W podobny sposób przeciw reprezentacjonizmowi argumentuje Gianni Vattimo. On również zwraca uwagę przede wszystkim na ugruntowane w etyce powody, dla których winniśmy odrzucić — w jego nomenklaturze — metafizykę. W niniejszym tekście nie będziemy ich jednak przywoływać, lecz skupimy się raczej na kwestiach teoretycznych¹⁷. Otóż Vattimo, w nawiązaniu do między innymi Heideggera, z jednej strony (negatywnie) podejmuje krytykę klasycznej koncepcji prawdy, z drugiej zaś (pozytywnie), pisząc o otwarciu się na „niemetafizyczną koncepcję prawdy”¹⁸, proponuje teorię prawdy jako wydarzenia¹⁹ i zmiany perspektywy²⁰. Argumentacja Vattima sprowadza się w istocie do następujących twierdzeń: 1. prawda nie jest stała, ale wydarza się; 2. prawda to nie jedność, ale pluralizm; 3. nie mamy dostępu do rzeczywistości samej, ale jedynie do naszych jej przedstawień nazywanych interpretacjami.

Twierdzenie pierwsze włoski filozof zaczerpnął wprost z refleksji Heideggera, o którym mówi, że „idzie drogą hermeneutyki, odrzucając korespondencyjną teorię prawdy; twierdzenie może być sprawdzone jedynie wewnątrz otwarcia, umożliwiającego jego weryfikację bądź falsyfikację; otwarcie jest właśnie czymś, do czego *Dasein* przynależy, lecz czym nie dysponuje, projekt jest projektem wrzuconym”²¹.

¹⁵ R. Rorty, *Przygodność, ironia, solidarność*, s. 236.

¹⁶ R. Rorty, *Obiektywność, relatywizm i prawda*, s. 26.

¹⁷ Zainteresowanych etyczną argumentacją Vattima przeciw metafizyce odsyłamy do artykułu *Możliwość religii w obliczu współczesnego pluralizmu*. Por. A. Torzewski, *Możliwość religii w obliczu współczesnego pluralizmu*, „Humaniora” 34 (2021), s. 31–45.

¹⁸ G. Vattimo, *Koniec nowoczesności*, tłum. M. Surma-Gawłowska, Kraków 2006, s. 13.

¹⁹ Por. *ibidem*, s. 68, 78; G. Vattimo, *Poza interpretacją*, tłum. K. Kasia, Kraków 2011, s. 27.

²⁰ Por. G. Vattimo, *Koniec nowoczesności*, s. 114.

²¹ G. Vattimo, *Poza interpretacją*, s. 115.

Prawda zatem jest czymś, co się wydarza, nie jest zaś — jak chciałaby tradycja metafizyczna — czymś obecnym i stałym. W innym miejscu Vattimo stwierdza: „prawda jako otwarcie horyzontów, w obrębie których jawi się to, co prawdziwe i fałszywe w sensie propozycji, wydarzała się zawsze, skoro stanowi warunek możliwości wszelkiego naszego świadomego działania i myślenia; nie będąc jednakowoż strukturą transcendentálną [...] ani ahistoryczną, jest czymś, co się wydarza [...]”²².

Twierdzenie drugie wynika poniekąd z pierwszego. Skoro bowiem prawda to otwarcie, jest ona inkluzywna, to znaczy — dopuszcza wiele możliwości interpretacyjnych. Vattimo porównuje prawdę do Borgesowskiej biblioteki Babel pełnej wielu głosów: „głosy te [...] mówią jak niemożliwa do zredukowania wielość, rezygnując z wszelkich prób doprowadzenia ich do jedności”²³. Prawda nie jawi się więc już jako unifikacja, ale raczej pluralizacja²⁴. Tak samo historia przestaje być postrzegana jako jedna wszechobejmująca i prawdziwa i zamiast tego zaczyna być rozumiana jako wiele przygodnych i lokalnych opowieści²⁵. Wiąże się z tym, wielokrotnie już podejmowana przez różnych autorów, teza o niewspółmierności brzmiąca, że opisy świata są niewspółmierne i nie można stwierdzić, że któryś z nich bardziej „odpowiada” rzeczywistości²⁶. Wszystkie bowiem są równie uprawnocnione. Oczywiście takiego rodzaju teza prowadzi nas wprost do relatywizmu. U Vattimo jednak — podobnie zresztą u Rorty’ego — niewspółmierność ta ma swoje granice i w istocie istnieją pewne kryteria, dzięki którym możemy uznać pewne opisy za lepsze od innych. Nie dokonujemy tego jednak na podstawie „przystawiania” opisu do rzeczywistości, ale dzięki kryteriom etycznym, to znaczy, stwierdzając, który opis nie będzie powodował przemocy²⁷.

Wreszcie twierdzenie trzecie — wydaje się, że najważniejsze i najbardziej oryginalne spośród trzech wspomnianych tez — zakłada, że nie mamy dostępu do rzeczywistości samej (o ile w ogóle istnieje), ale jedynie do tworzonych przez nas obrazów (czy interpretacji w nomenklaturze Vattimo). Jak powiada włoski filozof:

²² *Ibidem*, s. 27.

²³ *Ibidem*, s. 106.

²⁴ Na marginesie warto wspomnieć, że w pluralizacji Vattimo widzi „lek” na przemoc powodowaną przez Jedność i wszelkiego rodzaju unifikujące filozofie czy (mówiąc językiem Lyotarda) metanarracje, co można odnieść również do kwestii (unifikującej) religii. Otóż dla włoskiego filozofa przykazanie miłości dane przez Jezusa wymaga niejako właśnie porzucenia dążeń unifikujących i roszczenia do prawdy, jakie zawiera w sobie chrześcijaństwo. Zamiast tego religia ta powinna dążyć do wewnętrznej pluralizacji. Por. A. Torzewski, *Sekularyzacja jako droga do pełni chrześcijaństwa*, „Edukacja Filozoficzna” 69 (2020), s. 99–119.

²⁵ Por. G. Vattimo, *Spółczesność przejrzyste*, s. 17, 77; G. Vattimo, *Postnowoczesność i kres historii*, tłum. B. Stelmaszczyk, [w:] *Postmodernizm. Antologia przekładów*, R. Nycz (red.), Kraków 1998, s. 129; Taką tezę formułuje również np. Hans Blumenberg, pisząc, że „Historia okazuje się tylko jedną z relacji”, *idem*, *Rzeczywistości, w których żyjemy*, tłum. W. Lipnik, Warszawa 1997, s. 157.

²⁶ Bińczyk nazywa to stanowisko zakładające brak pozahistorycznego uprawnocnienia antyesencjalistycznym sceptycyzmem, por. *eadem*, *Ostatnie już ustępstwo Richarda Rorty’ego na rzecz reprezentacjonizmu*, „ER(R)GO. Teoria. Literatura. Kultura” 11 (2005), s. 140.

²⁷ Oczywiście można zapytać, na jakiej podstawie stwierdzamy, że akurat takiego rodzaju etyczne kryterium jest tym właściwym. Innymi słowy, możemy pytać o jego uprawnocnienie. Wypada stwierdzić, że takiego uprawnocnienia nie ma. Kryterium etyczne jest przyjmowane arbitralnie. W innym bowiem wypadku znów popadalibyśmy w klasyczne myślenie o „wglądzie” w rzeczywistość itp.

„dotąd filozofowie wierzyli, że opisują świat, teraz trzeba go interpretować”²⁸. Nie mając dostępu do świata jako takiego, nie można go opisywać (przez opis rozumie my trafne i adekwatne odzwierciedlenie świata), lecz jedynie interpretować, czyli wygłaszać pewne, nieroszczące sobie prawa do prawdziwości, hipotezy²⁹. Vattimo przytacza także słowa Nietzschego, że „świat prawdziwy w końcu stał się bajką”³⁰, co oznacza, że mit (jako teoria nieweryfikowalna) zostaje dowartościowany jako to, do czego jedynie mamy dostęp³¹. Mówienie zatem o reprezentacjonizmie nie ma — wedle filozofii Vattimo — żadnego sensu, bo niemożliwe jest porównanie naszej reprezentacji z rzeczywistością, a zatem nie ma również kryterium oceny trafności obrazów. Rolą interpretacji nie jest adekwatne odzwierciedlenie rzeczywistości, ale dostarczenie pewnej nieweryfikowalnej hipotezy, o której następnie można dyskutować i która może zmienić coś w postrzeganiu innych ludzi albo dać im podstawę do refleksji. Podobną rolę opisu (czy słownika) uznaje Rorty, mówiąc „odpowiedzią na nowy opis może być tylko nowy opis nowego opisu. Skoro poza słownikami nie istnieje nic, co służyłoby za kryterium wyboru pomiędzy nimi, krytyka polega na przyglądaniu się to temu, to tamtemu wizerunkowi, a nie na porównywaniu obydwu wizerunków z oryginałem”³². Amerykański filozof nazywa to przejście od „adekwatnego” opisu do „przygodnego” słownika zwrotem od teorii ku narracji.

Stanowiłyby on widomą oznakę porzucenia przez nas prób ujęcia w jednej wizji wszystkich aspektów naszego życia, prób opisania ich za pomocą jednego słownika. [...] nie sposób wyjść poza różnorodne słowniki, z jakich już korzystamy, i odnaleźć metasłownik, który w jakiś sposób uwzględniłby wszelkie możliwe słowniki, wszelkie możliwe sposoby sążenia i odczuwania³³.

Pozostaje nam więc tworzenie nowych słowników i dyskusja nad już zastanymi³⁴.

b) Mówiąc o antyreprezentacjonizmie, można by powiedzieć właściwie tyle, że jest to pogląd przeciwny wobec reprezentacjonizmu. Jednakże antyreprezentacjonizm nie jest tylko stanowiskiem krytycznym, ale również afirmatywnym. Nie tylko występuje przeciw adekwatnemu obrazowi, ale dowartościowuje przygodne narracje. Rorty definiuje antyreprezentacjonizm jako pogląd, wedle którego „nijak nie da się sformułować niezależnego kryterium trafności reprezentacji

²⁸ G. Vattimo, *Poza interpretacją*, s. 24.

²⁹ Podobnie twierdzi Ankersmith, mówiąc, że należy porównywać reprezentacje (interpretacje) między sobą a nie z rzeczywistością, por. *idem*, *Pochwała subiektywności*, tłum. T. Sikora, „ER(R)GO. Teoria. Literatura. Kultura” 2 [3], 2001, s. 30.

³⁰ Za G. Vattimo, *Spółczesność przejrzyste*, s. 37.

³¹ Por. *ibidem*, s. 40.

³² R. Rorty, *Przygodność, ironia, solidarność*, s. 116. W innym miejscu zaś pisze, że nigdy „żaden z tych opisów nie jest trafny przedstawieniem świata takim, jakim jest on sam w sobie”, *ibidem*, s. 20.

³³ *Ibidem*, s. 15.

³⁴ Warto także w marginesie wspomnieć o krytyce konsensualnego celu dialogu w refleksji Odo Marquarda, który argumentuje, że dyskusja nie ma kończyć się ujednoceniem (w postaci konsensusu), ale raczej zmianą w uczestnikach rozmowy. Odnosząc to do przywołanych teorii Vattimo i Rorty’ego, można stwierdzić, że marquardowskie ujednoczenie byłoby właśnie znalezieniem w toku dyskusji takiego opisu, który jest odpowiedni. Chodzi natomiast o to, aby poszukiwania takie odrzucić i zgodzić się na to, że takiego opisu nie znajdziemy, a dyskutując być może wprowadzimy pewne modyfikacje do słowników, z jakich już korzystamy bądź sformułujemy nowy słownik, który jednak nie będzie bardziej adekwatny, lecz zwyczajnie inny. Por. O. Marquard, *Apologia przypadkowości*, tłum. K. Krzemieniowa, Warszawa 1994, s. 76.

— odpowiedniości bądź odniesienia do »uprzednio określonej« rzeczywistości — kryterium innego niż sukces, który jest rzekomo przez tę trafność wyjaśniany»³⁵. W innym zaś miejscu pisze:

wyobrażenie „niezależnych od teorii i języka faktualnych relacji” przesądza wszystkie wchodzące w grę kwestie. To wyobrażenie bowiem przywraca na wskroś reprezentacjonistyczny obraz, od którego musimy uciec. Obaj filozofowie [Putnam i Davidson — A.T.], za Williamem Jamesem, wzbraniają się przed przeciwstawianiem świata temu, co jest za świat uznawane, jako że tego rodzaju przeciwstawienie sugeruje, że jakimś cudem udało nam się — jak to nazywa Nagel — „wydostać z naszych umysłów”. Nie akceptują kartezjańsko-kantowskiego obrazu presuponowanego przez ideę „naszego umysłu” bądź „naszego języka” jako „wnętrza”, które daje się przeciwstawić czemuś (być może czemuś zupełnie innemu) „zewnątrznemu”³⁶.

Antyreprezentacjonizm zatem proponuje, aby od — jak to nazywa Rorty — pragnienia obiektywności (które przynależy reprezentacjonizmowi i właściwie całej tradycji filozoficznej od Greków do Oświecenia) odwrócić się ku pragnieniu solidarności³⁷. Nie chodzi więc już o prawdę, ale o dobro społeczne. Ci, którzy kierują się pragnieniem solidarności, to ironicznie i sceptycznie nastawieni antyreprezentacjoniści, do których zalicza się sam Rorty³⁸. Jak widzimy, w stanowisku antyreprezentacjonistycznym zawiera się wspomniane wcześniej dążenie do upraktycznienia filozofii i rezygnacji z tradycyjnych problemów.

Podsumowując dotychczasowe rozważania, należy stwierdzić, że w refleksji Rorty’ego zawarte jest wyraziste stanowisko dotyczące problemu obrazu i że stanowisko to wiąże się z wieloma innymi poglądami prezentowanymi przez amerykańskiego filozofa, takimi jak pragmatyzm, upraktycznienie filozofii, przygodność języka i tworzonych przez nas słowników czy pragnienie solidarności. Rorty stara się jednak z dystansem spojrzeć na omawiany tu problem i wskazać możliwe drogi argumentacyjne zarówno dotyczące reprezentacjonizmu, jak i antyreprezentacjonizmu. Ostatecznie jednak opowiada się jednoznacznie za antyreprezentacjonizmem. Jego argumentację wspiera i zarazem dopełnia przywołana wyżej refleksja Vattima, który podejmuje krytykę reprezentacjonizmu z pozycji etycznej oraz teoretycznej. Mimo że ta pierwsza wydaje się istotniejsza, skupiliśmy się na drugiej, aby wskazać właśnie teoretyczne powody, dla których reprezentacjonizm powinien zostać odrzucony³⁹.

³⁵ R. Rorty, *Obiektywność, relatywizm i prawda*, s. 16.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, s. 25.

³⁷ Por. *ibidem*, s. 35.

³⁸ Odnosnie do nazywania Rorty’ego antyreprezentacjonistą należy stwierdzić, że (jak trafnie wskazuje Ewa Bińczyk): „Amerykańskiemu neopragmatyście nie zależy jednak na tym, aby dowieść filozoficznie, iż wiedza nie stanowi zwierciadlanego odbicia rzeczywistości. Myśliciel ten wolałby raczej w ogóle porzucić tematykę epistemologiczną. Rorty nie chce zajmować stanowiska w sporze i proponuje rezygnację z myślenia w kategoriach reprezentowania. Termin »antyreprezentacjonizm« może wobec tego okazać się nieco mylący i lepiej będzie nazwać omawiane tu podejście »areprezentacjonizmem«”, *eadem*, *Ostatnie już ustępstwo Richarda Rorty’ego na rzecz reprezentacjonizmu*, s. 139.

³⁹ Warto wspomnieć, że problem reprezentacjonizmu (w kontekście nauk historycznych) podejmuje także Topolski. Poznański historyk dochodzi do podobnych co Vattimo i Rorty wniosków dotyczących tego, czy nasze reprezentacje (w tym kontekście narracje historyczne) korespondują z rzeczywistością. Podejmuje się on również, podobnie do Rorty’ego, krytyki metafory zwierciadła, por. J. Topolski, *Wprowadzenie do historii*, Poznań 1998, s. 24, 34.

Reprezentacjonizm i antyrepresentacjonizm w kontekście fotografii

Po omówieniu reprezentacjonizmu i antyrepresentacjonizmu na gruncie czysto filozoficznym możemy skupić się na pewnej egzemplifikacji tych dwóch stanowisk w postaci filozofii fotografii. Jak powiedzieliśmy we wstępie, przywołamy (reprezentacjonistyczną) koncepcję Rolanda Barthes'a oraz (antyrepresentacjonistyczną) teorię fotografii Viléma Flussera. Towarzyszące zaś nam w tej części pytanie dotyczy tego, czy produkowane przez Fotografie (jako dziedzinę sztuki) fotografie (jako obrazy) są prawdziwe, to znaczy, czy korespondują z rzeczywistością? Być może jednak takiego rodzaju pytanie w ogóle nie ma sensu, ponieważ — przyjmując założenia Rorty'ego czy Vattima — nie mając dostępu rzeczywistości jako takiej (o ile w ogóle istnieje), nie możemy porównywać obrazu i tego, co on „w istocie” przedstawia. Nasza refleksja zaś winna podążać raczej za dostępnym nam obrazem (jako tym, co dane) niż za wątpliwą rzeczywistością. Innymi słowy, przeciwstawianie sobie reprezentacji i rzeczywistości jest w ogóle bezsensowne i należy uznać, że rzeczywistość to właśnie owe reprezentacje. Niniejsza część tekstu być może skłoni nas ku któremuś z rozwiązań tych kwestii.

a) Roland Barthes w eseju *Światło obrazu* stara się w filozoficzny sposób podjąć zagadnienia z jednej strony Fotografii pisanej przez wielkie „F” — aby podkreślić, że chodzi o dziedzinę sztuki — z drugiej zaś fotografii przez małe „f” jako wytworu owej sztuki. Francuski myśliciel zainteresowany jest przede wszystkim ontologią oraz fenomenologią Fotografii⁴⁰, czyli pytaniem o jej istotę. Czym jest Fotografia i co wyróżnia ją na tle innych dziedzin sztuki i obszarów kultury? „W odniesieniu do Fotografii miałem pragnienia »ontologiczne«: chciałem za wszelką cenę dowiedzieć się, czym ona jest »sama w sobie«, jaka zasadnicza cecha odróżnia ją od całej wspólnoty obrazów. Podobna chęć znaczyła jednak, że gdzieś w głębi [...] nie byłem pewny, czy Fotografia istnieje, czy posiada własną odrębność”⁴¹ — pisze Barthes. Jak wynika z kolejnych stron wspomnianego dzieła, Fotografia nieustannie wymyka się próbom klasyfikacji i dokładnego wyodrębnienia oraz określenia. Również podobieństwo do innych dziedzin sztuki, takich jak malarstwo, kinematografia czy teatr⁴², nie ułatwia przeprowadzenia skrupulatnej analizy Fotografii. Mimo to Barthes stara się wskazać na kilka istotnych elementów związanych z Fotografią.

⁴⁰ Por. R. Barthes, *Światło obrazu*, tłum. J. Trznadel, Warszawa 2008, s. 41.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, s. 11.

⁴² Co ciekawe, Barthes twierdzi, że Fotografia wcale nie jest związana z malarstwem czy kinematografią, ale z teatrem poprzez zagadnienie śmierci: „Ale jeśli Zdjęcie zdaje mi się bliższe Teatru, to ze względu na szczególnego pośrednika (być może tylko ja to zauważyłem): Śmierć. Znamy pierwotny związek teatru i kultu Zmarłych: pierwsi aktorzy odróżniali się od zbiorowości, grając role Zmarłych. Ucharakteryzować się, pomalować, znaczyło określić się jako ciało jednocześnie żywe i martwe. [...] Ten sam związek odnajduję w Zdjęciu. Zdjęcie, tak podobne, że usiłuje się je ożywić (zaciekłość, aby »uczynić żywym«, może być tylko zaprzeczeniem mitycznym przerażenia śmiercią) — jest jak teatr pierwotny, jak Żywy Obraz, uosobieniem nieruchomej i pomalowanej twarzy, pod jaką kryją się dla nas umarli”, *ibidem*, s. 60. To powiązanie Fotografii z teatrem jest wyjątkowe. Na przykład Susan Sontag wciąż stara się odnosić fotografię do malarstwa (przeważnie surrealistycznego), por. S. Sontag, *O fotografii*, s. 48. Flusser natomiast wiąże fotografię z kwestią techniki, por. *idem*, *Ku filozofii fotografii*,

Po pierwsze, Fotografia ma specyficzny przedmiot, albowiem niemalże wszystko może nim się stać⁴³. Prawie wszystko można sfotografować. Po drugie, Fotografia, jak twierdzi Barthes, zajmuje się bądź „ożywianiem”, bądź „uśmiercaniem” swoich przedmiotów⁴⁴. Po trzecie wreszcie, Fotografia posiada swoje funkcje, takie jak: informowanie, przedstawianie, zaskakiwanie, nadawanie znaczenia czy budzenie pożądania⁴⁵. To jednak wciąż nie mówi nam nic o „istocie” Fotografii jako takiej. W obliczu tego Barthes stwierdza, że „tym, co tworzy naturę Fotografii, jest czas naświetlania, pozowania”⁴⁶.

W tym miejscu dochodzimy do interesującej nas w niniejszym tekście kwestii, czyli do problemu reprezentacjonizmu i antyreprezentacjonizmu. Otóż czas naświetlania jest konstytutywnym elementem Fotografii, ponieważ to właśnie fizyczny proces naświetlania kliszy jest tym, co zarówno odróżnia fotografię od innych sposobów obrazowania, jak i sprawia, że Fotografia (jako jedyna) adekwatnie reprezentuje rzeczywistość. Kwestia ta wymaga rozwinięcia. Otóż Barthes w przywołanym wyżej dziele poświęca bardzo wiele miejsca analizie jednej fotografii, fotografii przedstawiającej jego matkę. Na tej podstawie stara się opowiedzieć za reprezentacjonizmem w Fotografii.

Kwestia modelu bądź modelki jest istotna dla Fotografii. Jak pisze Barthes:

Bez wątplenia, moje istnienie zależy od fotografa tylko metaforycznie. Ale choć zależność jest tylko wyobrażona [...], przeżywam ją niespokojny niepewny przyszłego podobieństwa: narodzi się obraz — obraz mnie. Czy zrodzą mnie jako antypatycznego typu, czy kogoś „na poziomie”? Gdybym tak mógł pojawić się na papierze jak na klasycznym płótnie, obdarzony szlachetnym wyrazem twarzy, myślący, inteligentny itp.! Krótko mówiąc, gdybym mógł być „namalowany” (przez Tycjana) lub „narysowany” (przez Cloueta)⁴⁷.

Fotografia jednak, w przeciwieństwie do rysunku i malarstwa, nie pokaże wyidealizowanej wersji swojego przedmiotu, ale przedmiot taki, jakim się on faktycznie jawi. Mimo że Barthes zwraca uwagę, że „moje »ja« nigdy nie zgadza się z obrazem”⁴⁸ i że Fotografia nie jest w stanie oddać neutralnie ciała⁴⁹ — ponieważ ciało to znajduje się zawsze w jakiejś pozie, twarz zdradza konkretną mimikę itp. — to i tak uchwytuje ona rzeczywiście to, co jej się jawi. Oczywiście jest, że moje ciało w pewnym wycinku sekundy nie będzie prezentowało tego, jakie moje ciało jest zawsze, lecz nie sposób twierdzić, że ciało na fotografii nie jest moim ciałem⁵⁰. Tak samo moje „ja” wydaje się czymś nieuchwytnym, jednak nie można powiedzieć, że to nie ja jestem na fotografii. Malarstwo nie jest tak zdeterminowane. Za pomocą pędzla malarz może pokazać malowanym przedmiot, jak tylko chce. Na

tłum. J. Maniecki, Warszawa 2015, s. 50. O połączeniu fotografii ze śmiercią pisze również T. Ferenc, *Fotografia i śmierć — uwikłanie i realna styczność*, „Dyskurs” 24 (2018), s. 106–122.

⁴³ Por. R. Barthes, *Światło obrazu*, s. 16.

⁴⁴ Por. *ibidem*, s. 23, 30, 40.

⁴⁵ Por. *ibidem*, s. 54.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, s. 139.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, s. 24.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, s. 26.

⁴⁹ Por. *ibidem*, s. 27.

⁵⁰ Por. *ibidem*, s. 119.

fotografii jednak zawsze przedmiot będzie wyglądał tak, jak wyglądał faktycznie w rzeczywistości⁵¹. Innymi słowy (namalowany) obraz konkretnego człowieka może różnić się od tego, jak ten człowiek wyglądał pozując malarzowi. W przypadku fotografii jednak, model/ka zawsze będzie wyglądał/a tak, jak wyglądał/a, pozując.

Pierwszy element mający świadczyć o reprezentacjonizmie w Fotografii prowadzi nas do drugiego, do tego, co Barthes nazywa „realnym i koniecznym Odniesieniem Fotografii”.

Nazywam „odniesieniem fotograficznym” nie rzecz względnie realną, do której odsyłają obraz czy znak, ale rzecz koniecznie realną, którą umieszczono przed obiektywem, a bez której nie byłoby zdjęcia. Malarstwo może udawać realność, nie widząc jej. [...] W przeciwieństwie do tych imitacji, w wypadku Fotografii nigdy nie mogą zanegować faktu, że ta rzecz tam była⁵².

Innymi słowy: „w Fotografii obecność rzeczy nigdy nie jest metaforyczna”⁵³. Fotografia zatem reprezentuje realnie i koniecznie istniejący przedmiot, niejako „zaświadcza” o jego istnieniu⁵⁴. Czy jednak reprezentuje go adekwatnie? To znaczy, czy odzwierciedla ów przedmiot w sposób „zgodny z rzeczywistością”? Jak pisze Barthes:

w gruncie rzeczy zdjęcie przypomina każdego, tylko nie tego, kogo rzeczywiście przedstawia. Podobieństwo bowiem odsyła do tożsamości podmiotu, rzecz śmieszna, czysto urzędowa, nawet sądowa. Zdjęcie daje obraz kogoś „takim, jakim on jest”, podczas gdy ja bym chciał, żeby był „tym, kim jest naprawdę, wewnętrznie”⁵⁵.

Mamy tu więc do czynienia z pewną dwuznacznością. Przedmiot, któremu robione jest zdjęcie ma bowiem pewnego rodzaju „podwójną tożsamość”, to znaczy z jednej strony jest kimś zewnętrznym, z drugiej zaś jest kimś wewnętrznym. Fotografia zawsze dochodzi do owej tożsamości wewnętrznej, do wewnętrznej zaś jedynie czasami — jak twierdzi francuski myśliciel. Mówienie o reprezentacjonizmie w Fotografii ma zatem sens przede wszystkim w odniesieniu do odzwierciedlenia zewnętrznej tożsamości. Pytanie, w jakim stopniu to rozróżnienie dwóch tożsamości jest prawomocne? Rozstrzygnięcie tego pytania nie jest jednak przedmiotem niniejszego tekstu, dlatego odpowiedź pozostawiamy w gestii czytelnika.

Wracając jednak do powyższych uwag o realnej i koniecznej obecności rzeczy na fotografii, należy dopowiedzieć, o jaką „realność” chodzi. Otóż obecność rzeczy na zdjęciu jest w tym sensie realna, że jest w istocie obecnością wprost namacalną. Dzieje się tak dzięki światłu. Odbija się ono od rzeczy fotografowanej i pozostawia swój ślad na kliszy⁵⁶. Dlatego właśnie Barthes może stwierdzić, że fotografia nie

⁵¹ Podobnego rodzaju argumentację stosuje Walton, mówiąc, że fotografia opiera się na procesie mechanicznym, który niejako „omija” osobiste przekonania fotografa. Przez to fotografia jest medium „przezroczystym” — ukazuje świat w dokładnie taki sposób, w jaki on istnieje realnie, por. K.L. Walton, *Transparent Pictures: On the Nature of Photographic Realism*, [w:] *Photography and Philosophy. Essays on the Pencil of Nature*, S. Walden (ed.), Hoboken 2008, s. 20, 48.

⁵² R. Barthes, *Światło obrazu*, s. 137.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, s. 140.

⁵⁴ Takiego rodzaju podejście omawia również Susan Sontag, *O fotografii*, s. 6.

⁵⁵ R. Barthes, *Światło obrazu*, s. 180.

⁵⁶ Por. *ibidem*, s. 144.

jest kopią, ale „żywą” emanacją przeszłej rzeczywistości. Stąd też, polemicznie wobec antyrealistów (antyreprezentacjonistów), twierdzi:

panuje dzisiaj moda wśród komentatorów Fotografii (socjologów i semiologów) na relatywność semantyczną: a więc nie ma tu „realności” (pogarda dla „realistów” niedostrzegających jakoby, że zdjęcie jest zawsze kodowane), istnieje tylko sztuczność: *Thesis*, a nie *Physis*. Fotografia, powiadają, to nie analogon świata. To, co przedstawia, zostało jakoby sfabrykowane, gdyż optyka fotograficzna jest podporządkowana perspektywie albertyńskiej (całkowicie historycznej), zaś wpisanie na kliszę przemienia przedmiot trójwymiarowy w wizerunek dwuwymiarowy. A jednak cała ta dyskusja jest próżna: nic nie może się przeciwstawić analogiczności Fotografii [...] Realisci, do których należę i do których należałem już w chwili, gdy twierdziłem, że Fotografia jest obrazem bez kodu (choć oczywiście kody wpływają na odczytanie) — nie uważają wcale Fotografii za „kopię” rzeczywistości, ale za emanację rzeczywistości minionej, za magię, nie sztukę⁵⁷.

Fotografia zatem realnie odzwierciedla to, co zastaje jako swój przedmiot. Można powiedzieć nawet więcej — fotografia (jako wytwór) staje się niejako reprezentowanym przedmiotem przez odbite na kliszy światło naprawdę padające z fotografowanego przedmiotu. To prowadzi Barthes’a do ponownego sformułowania istoty fotografii: „istotą Fotografii jest potwierdzenie tego, co przedstawia”⁵⁸. Dodajmy — potwierdzenie obecności.

Fotografii wedle Barthes’a towarzyszy nieustająca pewność dotycząca realności przedmiotu. Pewność ta zaś sprawia, że Fotografia nabiera nieinterpretacyjnego charakteru⁵⁹. „Muszę poprzestać ciągle na tej samej konstatacji, że to było”⁶⁰ i nic więcej powiedzieć właściwie nie mogę. Realna obecność przedmiotu fotografii narzuca się i zawłaszcza nasze odczytanie zdjęcia. Jednak samo przekonanie o obecności nie wystarczy, aby mówić o reprezentacjonizmie. Obecność ta musi być jeszcze adekwatnie odzwierciedlona. W tej kwestii można dostrzec u Barthes’a pewne napięcie. Jak pisze: „fotografia dokonuje jednocześnie niezwykłego pomieszania rzeczywistości (»to było«) i prawdy (»to jest właśnie to!«). Staje się jednocześnie konstatacją i wykrzyknikowa”⁶¹ i dalej: „w Fotografii, jak zakładam, nie chodzi tylko o nieobecność przedmiotu; to także za jednym zamachem, na równi, fakt, że ten przedmiot naprawdę istniał i że znajdował się tam, gdzie go widzę. To w tym tkwi szaleństwo”⁶². Barthes zatem z jednej strony uznaje, że fotografia przedstawia przedmiot (realnie i koniecznie obecny) takim, jakim on jest (zewnątrznie), lecz z drugiej nie zawsze (a wręcz bardzo rzadko) dotyka „istoty” owego przedmiotu. Można zatem stwierdzić, że o ile przyjmujemy, że reprezentacjonistą jest ten, który uznaje, iż obraz może w sposób adekwatny odzwierciedlać rzeczywistość i że takiego rodzaju adekwatne przedstawienia istnieją i można o nich orzec, że są adekwatne, to Barthes jawi się w pełni jako właśnie reprezentacjonista.

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, s. 157.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, s. 152.

⁵⁹ Sontag zauważa pewną tautologiczność fotografii, mówiąc: „Gdy Cartier-Bresson jedzie do Chin, pokazuje, że w Chinach są ludzie, i że to Chińczycy”, *eadem*, *O fotografii*, s. 104. Fotografia przedstawia w pewien sposób tylko to, co oczywiste i w tym sensie ma nieinterpretacyjny charakter.

⁶⁰ R. Barthes, *Światło obrazu*, s. 189.

⁶¹ *Ibidem*, s. 203.

⁶² *Ibidem*, s. 204.

b) Zupełnie inny pogląd prezentuje Vilém Flusser⁶³. Umieszcza on refleksję nad fotografią w ramach swojej filozofii historii, którą krótko omówimy, aby lepiej zrozumieć wagę jego filozofii fotografii.

Autor *Ku filozofii fotografii* wyróżnia dwa główne przełomy w historii cywilizacji. Pierwszym było wynalezienie pisma linearnego, drugim zaś wynalezienie obrazów technicznych (fotografii)⁶⁴. Struktura dziejów przedstawia się zatem wedle Flussera następująco: początkowo wśród ludzi dominowały — związane z myśleniem magicznym — obrazy. Następnie, wraz z wynalezieniem pisma, obraz ustąpił na rzecz — związanego z myśleniem historycznym (świadomością historyczną) — tekstu. Obecnie zaś, za sprawą obrazu technicznego (fotografii), następuje swoisty „powrót” do obrazu i świadomości magicznej⁶⁵. Wyrażenie „powrót” umieściliśmy w cudzysłowie, ponieważ istnieje zasadnicza różnica między opisywaną przez nas świadomością magiczną związaną z tradycyjnymi obrazami a świadomością magiczną związaną z obrazami technicznymi. Jak pisze Flusser:

Telewizja i kino znajdują się na innym poziomie bytu niż jaskinie i Etruskowie. Dawna magia jest prehistoryczna, starsza niż świadomość historyczna, zaś nowa magia jest „pohistoryczna”, następuje po historycznej świadomości. Nowe czary nie zamierzają zmieniać świata „na zewnątrz”, lecz nasze pojęcia dotyczące świata. Jest to magia drugiego stopnia: abstrakcyjne kuglarstwo. Różnicę między starą a nową magią można ująć w następujący sposób: prehistoryczna magia jest rytualizacją modeli zwanych „mitami”, a teraźniejsza — modeli zwanych „programami”. Mity są modelami przekazywanymi ustnie, a ich autor — „bóg” — znajduje się poza procesem komunikacji. Programy natomiast są modelami przekazywanymi pisemnie, a ich autorzy — „funkcjonariusze” — znajdują się wewnątrz procesu komunikacyjnego⁶⁶.

Prócz świadomości magicznej jednak, jak powiedzieliśmy, występuje jeszcze skonfliktowana z nią świadomość historyczna związana z tekstem. Jak twierdzi Flusser, między tekstem i obrazem istnieje nieustanna „walka”⁶⁷. Podstawową funkcją tekstu jest bowiem objaśnianie obrazów, ich demitologizacja poprzez pojęcia. Proces ten jednak w istocie nie zachodzi, to znaczy opisanie obrazów nie prowadzi do jakiejś „prawdy” czy właściwej istoty owych obrazów, ale raczej do stworzenia kolejnego kodu czy mitu. „Teksty są więc metakodem obrazów”⁶⁸. Flusser wskazuje, że świadomość historyczna oraz „epoka tekstu” popadają w końcu w kryzys, co prowadzi do tak zwanego końca historii. Pojawienie się fotografii kryzys ów przypieczętowało i sprawia, że świadomość historyczna zanika. Wszystko bowiem można sfotografować, uwiecznić oraz wszystko wydarza się „teraz”⁶⁹. Wraz z fotografią następuje także kres myślenia pojęciowego i literowego na rzecz myślenia

⁶³ O koncepcji Flussera w szerszym zakresie przeczytać można u Przemysława Wiadra — najbardziej wydaje się zaangażowanego popularyzatora myśli Flussera w Polsce. Por. P. Wiadr, *W cieniu posthistorii*, Toruń 2018.

⁶⁴ Por. W. Flusser, *Ku filozofii fotografii*, s. 37.

⁶⁵ Por. W. Flusser, *Writings*, Minneapolis 2002, s. 126.

⁶⁶ W. Flusser, *Ku filozofii fotografii*, s. 53.

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, s. 54.

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*, s. 45.

⁶⁹ Podobnie o końcu historii pisze Vattimo, mówiąc, że w dobie telewizji i przekazów „na żywo” historyczne myślenie traci swój sens, bowiem wszystkie istotne wydarzenia całego globu dzieją się simultanicznie na ekranach telewizorów. Włoski filozof nazywa to „dehistoryzacją doświadczenia”, por.

liczbowego. Fotografia sprawia, że „świat” matematyzuje się — wedle Flussera istotnym dla tego fenomenu czynnikiem jest aparat posługujący się matematycznym programem. Już to niezwykle krótkie streszczenie filozofii historii Flussera pokazuje nam, jak istotną rolę w dziejach przypisuje on fotografii. Możemy zatem przejść do właściwego tematu, jakim jest refleksja nad reprezentacjonizmem i antyrepresentacjonizmem w fotografii.

Pogląd reprezentacjonistyczny jest dla Flussera pewną szkodliwą iluzją, w jaką często popada społeczeństwo, myśląc, że obrazy faktycznie reprezentują rzeczywistość. „Ten pozornie niesymboliczny, obiektywny charakter obrazów technicznych skłania widza do uznania ich nie za obrazy, lecz okna. Ufa im tak samo jak własnym oczom”⁷⁰.

Obrazy są mediacjami między światem a człowiekiem. Człowiek „ek-sistuje”, tj. świat nie jest mu bezpośrednio dostępny, a obrazy mają czynić świat przedstawialnym człowiekowi. Ledwie jednak zaczął to robić, ustawiają się między światem a człowiekiem. Miały być mapami, a stają się ekranami: zamiast świat przedstawiać, zastawiają go, aż w końcu człowiek zaczyna żyć jako funkcja stworzonych przez siebie obrazów. Przestaje je odszyfrowywać, a w zamian rzutuje je nierozszyfrowane w świat „na zewnątrz”, przez co i sam świat staje się dla niego obrazowy [...]”⁷¹.

Proces opisywany przez Flussera wpisuje się bardzo trafnie w przedstawione tu refleksje na temat filozofii Barthes’a, który właśnie ów „nierozszyfrowujący” sposób myślenia prezentuje, mówiąc o nieinterpretacyjnym charakterze fotografii, narzucającej się oczywistością realnie obecnego na niej bytu⁷². Czeski filozof przeciwnie — twierdzi, że „obrazy nie są »denotacyjnymi« (jednoznaczными) zespołami symboli (jak choćby liczby), lecz »konotacyjnymi« (wieloznacznymi): oferują wolną przestrzeń dla interpretacji”⁷³. Barthes — uwzględniając teorię Flussera — jawi się więc jako „produkt” popadnięcia w iluzję reprezentacjonizmu.

Flusser wielokrotnie stara się demaskować owo złudzenie, zwracając uwagę na abstrakcyjny charakter obrazów (technicznych⁷⁴). Wracając do przytoczonej już filozofii historii, należy stwierdzić, że fotografia odwołuje się nie do świata (tak jak obrazy tradycyjne), ale do tekstu, na podstawie którego powstał aparat i jego program. Innymi słowy fotografia (pojawiająca się wraz z kryzysem historii i pisma) wypływa z tekstu, jest możliwa dzięki tekstowi i właśnie do niego się odnosi.

„Obiektywność” technicznych obrazów jest złudzeniem, gdyż są one nie tylko — jak wszystkie obrazy — symboliczne, ale przedstawiają także o wiele bardziej abstrakcyjne zespoły symboli aniżeli obrazy tradycyjne. Są metodami tekstów, które [...] nie oznaczają świata „na zewnątrz”, lecz teksty⁷⁵.

G. Vattimo, *Koniec nowoczesności*, s. 11; por. także A. Torzewski, *O idei końca historii w myśli postmetafizycznej*, „Roczniki Filozoficzne” 2 (2022), s. 231–249.

⁷⁰ W. Flusser, *Ku filozofii fotografii*, s. 50.

⁷¹ *Ibidem*, s. 43.

⁷² O potrzebie odszyfrowywania fotografii pisze Flusser także w innym miejscu, por. *idem*, *Writings*, s. 70.

⁷³ W. Flusser, *Ku filozofii fotografii*, s. 42.

⁷⁴ Wyrażenie „obraz techniczny” w nomenklaturze Flussera ma jasno wskazywać, że chodzi o fotografię, a nie o obrazy tradycyjne — jak je nazywa — czyli obrazy niewytworzone za pomocą aparatu.

⁷⁵ *Ibidem*, s. 51.

Fotografie zatem nie podlegają ocenie adekwatności reprezentacji świata, bo w ogóle go nie przedstawiają. Można by jedynie oceniać, czy fotografia trafnie odzwierciedla tekst, na podstawie którego powstała, lecz w takim przypadku ocena zawsze musiałaby być pozytywna, ponieważ fotografia nie jest w stanie wymknąć się aparatowi i swojemu programowi — jako produkt programu i aparatu fotografia zawsze będzie taka, jak „przewidują” program i aparat. Powtórzmy zatem: obrazy „oznaczają pojęcia pewnego programu [...]”⁷⁶. Natomiast „dla osoby naiwnie oglądającej fotografię oznaczają coś zupełnie innego, a mianowicie stany rzeczy; stany te, przychodząc ze świata, odciskały się na powierzchniach. Dla tej osoby fotografie przedstawiają świat sam w sobie”⁷⁷.

Rozważania te prowadzą Flussera do sformułowania następującej definicji fotografii: fotografia „jest to w konieczny sposób automatycznie wytworzony i dystrybuowany przez programowane aparaty w trakcie gry opartej na przypadku obraz magicznego stanu rzeczy, którego symbole powodują nieprawdopodobne zachowania jego odbiorców”⁷⁸. Jeśli jednak zadaniem fotografii nie jest wytwarzanie adekwatnych wobec rzeczywistości reprezentacji, to co w takim razie możemy uznać za cel fotografii? Otóż Flusser wskazuje na antytotalitarne i zarazem pluralistyczne zadanie fotografii, które określić można jako nieprzemocowa walka z jednością poprzez pokazywanie różnych punktów widzenia⁷⁹. „Praktyka fotografa wroga jest ideologii. Ideologia to obstawanie przy jednym. Uznawanym za najwłaściwsze stanowisku. Fotograf działa postideologicznie nawet wtedy, gdy wierzy, że służy jakiejś ideologii”⁸⁰. Innymi słowy:

ilekroć fotograf potknie się o płotek, odkrywa, że przyjęty przez niego punkt widzenia skupia się na „obiekcie” i że aparat pozwala mu na zajęcie niezliczonej ilości innych stanowisk, punktów widzenia. Odkrywa wielość i równorzędność punktów widzenia wobec swego „obiekту”, odkrywa, że nie chodzi o to, aby zająć jak najdogodniejsze stanowisko, lecz o to, aby zrealizować możliwie najwięcej stanowisk⁸¹.

Nie chodzi zatem o to, aby podporządkować się „jednej”, „właściwej” idei, ale żeby znaleźć, jak najwięcej owych idei, pozostając przy tym w nieustannym wątpleniu. Takie jest właśnie zadanie fotografii.

Broniąc stanowiska antyrepresentacjonistycznego w kontekście filozofii fotografii, można by argumentować, że nie tylko — jak chce Flusser — fotografia ma charakter interpretacyjny jako obraz, ale że sama jest już pewnego rodzaju interpretacją. Ponadto można również podjąć krytykę argumentów — podawanych na przykład przez Barthes’a — na rzecz representacjonizmu.

⁷⁶ *Ibidem*, s. 85.

⁷⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁷⁸ *Ibidem*, s. 137.

⁷⁹ Marianna Michałowska pisze, że „Fotograf nieustannie testuje granice wyznaczone przez ‘program aparatu’, to człowiek jednak ostatecznie dokonuje wyboru, chociaż zawsze jest to wybór jeden z wielu oferowanych przez serię fotografii”, *eadem*, *Samotność spojrzenia — o czułej pracy dokumentalisty*, „Zeszyty Naukowe Centrum Badań im. Edyty Stein” 12 (2014), s. 186.

⁸⁰ W. Flusser, *Ku filozofii fotografii*, s. 81.

⁸¹ *Ibidem*.

Za przyjęciem pierwszej tezy — że fotografia jest interpretacją — przemawiają następujące racje: 1. fotografia może przyjąć wiele form wyrazu⁸², takich jak długi czas naświetlania (którego zastosowanie umożliwia na przykład „malowanie światłem”), selektywna ostrość (dzięki której można skupić uwagę na konkretnym fragmencie zdjęcia, podczas gdy reszta pozostaje nieostra), podwójna ekspozycja (umożliwiająca stworzenie iluzji polegającej na przykład na umieszczeniu w twarzy fotografowanej osoby elementów martwej natury), konkretna kolorystyka (dzięki zastosowaniu wielorakich filtrów fotograficznych), zdjęcia w podczerwieni (sprawiające między innymi, że wszelkie zielone elementy na zdjęciu stają się różowe bądź czerwone), zdjęcia w wysokim bądź niskim kluczu, zdjęcia czarno-białe, poruszone, wykonane z różnej perspektywy, z zastosowaniem różnych pól⁸³, z wykorzystaniem różnego rodzaju klisz, technik, formatów itp. Dzięki takiej mnogości środków wyrazu fotograf może w intencjonalny sposób interpretować przedmiot fotografowany i pokazać go na wiele różnych sposobów⁸⁴. 2. Fotografia może obrać za swój przedmiot niemalże wszystko, a więc wybór tego, co jest przedstawiane (treści fotografii — można by rzec) również niesie za sobą konsekwencje. W tym kontekście można wspomnieć o Diane Arbus, która szczególnie chętnie fotografowała ludzi, których ogólnie określić można jako dziwnych — ludzi z defektami, ludzi ubogich i chorych, takich, których większość uznałaby za brzydkich itp. Zwrócenie uwagi akurat na taki przedmiot jest już pewnego rodzaju interpretacją. Forma i treść fotografii świadczą zatem o jej interpretacyjnym charakterze, przy czym interpretować należy nie tylko fotografię: można także interpretować za pomocą fotografii⁸⁵.

Jeśli natomiast chodzi o krytykę argumentów podawanych przez Barthes’a, należy stwierdzić, że jego przekonanie o fotografii jako gwarancie realnej obecności przedmiotu może być łatwo podważone. Po pierwsze bowiem nie na każdej fotografii przedmiot realnie był obecny — techniki fotomontażu i fotomanipulacji znane są niemalże od początków fotografii⁸⁶, a uzyskanie takich efektów jak dodanie czy usunięcie kogoś bądź czegoś ze zdjęcia jest stosunkowo proste i znane większości

⁸² Podobny argument sformułował również Davis jako odpowiedź na zarzuty Scrutona, że fotografia nie jest sztuką, ponieważ jej twórca nie może świadomie kontrolować szczegółów na obrazie, por. R. Scruton, *Photography and Representation*, „Critical Inquiry” 7, [3] (1981), s. 577–603; D. Davis, *How Photographs “Signify”: Cartier-Bresson’s “Reply” to Scruton*, [w:] *Photography and Philosophy*, s. 167–186.

⁸³ Na myśl od razu przychodzi słynne zdjęcie Eugena Smitha przedstawiające matkę towarzyszącą choremu synowi upozowanych tak, aby zdjęcie kojarzyło się z piętą.

⁸⁴ Susan Sontag twierdzi, że najczęściej wartość fotografii oceniano właśnie ze względu na to, czy została ona przemyślana — fotografie wykonane przez przypadek z założenia miały niższą wartość niż te, przy których wykonaniu funkcjonował cały proces interpretacyjny; por. *eadem*, *O fotografii*, s. 96.

⁸⁵ Interpretowanie za pomocą fotografii widoczne jest szczególnie w fotografii inscenizowanej, gdzie zadaniem fotografa jest wykreowanie pewnej rzeczywistości, ustawienie modeli/modelek, odpowiednie oświetlenie itp. Dobrym przykładem takiego rodzaju fotografii jest twórczość Gregory’ego Crewdsona, którego zdjęcia są bardzo szczegółowo zaplanowane, a w ich powstaniu uczestniczy nawet 40 osób — i nie chodzi tu o modeli czy modelki, ale o asystentów i personel techniczny.

⁸⁶ Por. *ibidem*, s. 80.

fotografom⁸⁷. A zatem można na przykład dorobić komuś kawałek ubrania lub „włożyć” w ręce konkretny przedmiot itp. Przy czym przedmioty te czy ubrania mogą być stworzone całkowicie komputerowo, a więc realnie nigdy ich nie było, mimo że występują na zdjęciu⁸⁸. Przeciw argumentowi Barthes’a świadczą także coraz bardziej rozwijane techniki rozszerzonej rzeczywistości, dzięki którym możemy na przykład zrobić zdjęcie naszemu salonowi, gdzie na komodzie widoczny będzie telewizor, którego faktycznie w pokoju tym nie ma. Również coraz bardziej zaawansowana fotografia cyfrowa stwarza możliwości takiej ingerencji w zdjęcie, która przeczy realnej obecności fotografowanego przedmiotu.

Podsumowanie

Problem reprezentacjonizmu i antyreprezentacjonizmu jest niezwykle istotny i dotyka centrum filozoficznej refleksji. Możemy wręcz — za Rortym — uznać ową kwestię za konstytutywną dla większej części tradycji filozoficznej. Przeciwnie do refleksji prowadzonej od Platona do Hegla, we współczesnej filozofii przeważa raczej nastawienie antyreprezentacjonistyczne, wedle którego nie sposób stwierdzić nie tylko, czy obraz odzwierciedla rzeczywistość, ale wręcz czy owa rzeczywistość w ogóle istnieje. Ciekawą egzemplifikacją reprezentacji (obrazu) jest fotografia. Jak wskazaliśmy, odróżnia się ona od malarstwa, rysunku i innych obrazów (tradycyjnych). Jej wyjątkowość polega z jednej strony (wedle Barthes’a) na realnym istnieniu rzeczy na zdjęciu, z drugiej strony (wedle Flussera) na zwracaniu nas z powrotem ku myśleniu magicznemu (jednak już przeformułowanego poprzez epokę tekstów). W kontekście fotografii znów pojawia się zadane przez nas na początku pytanie, czy zdjęcie adekwatnie reprezentuje rzeczywistość, czy może jest tej rzeczywistości wątpliwą interpretacją. Barthes zdecydowanie opowiada się za tą pierwszą możliwością, stając się adwokatem reprezentacjonizmu. Flusser natomiast wyraża ducha filozofii współczesnej i twierdzi, że fotografia ma interpretacyjny charakter, a uznawanie jej za okno na świat jest iluzją⁸⁹. Przywołane w pierwszej części niniejszego tekstu stanowisko Rorty’ego wydaje się korespondować z poglądem Flussera — także na płaszczyźnie etyki. Otóż tak jak Rorty oraz Vattimo zwracają się przeciw tradycji filozoficznej jako tradycji związanej z przemocą, tak Flusser w podobny sposób pisze o fotografii — jak powiedzieliśmy, jej zadaniem jest pluralizacja. W ten sam sposób zadaniem filozofii — dla Rorty’ego i Vattima

⁸⁷ Techniki manipulacyjne, dostępne za sprawą choćby Photoshopa, są niekiedy doprowadzane do skrajności. Jeden z użytkowników portalu YouTube pokazał np., jak za pomocą narzędzi wspomnianego programu zamienić pizzę w modelkę. Por. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9j656_Ri00k (dostęp: 13.05.2022).

⁸⁸ W obliczu tej „wszechobecności Photoshopa” niektórzy autorzy z góry niejako przyjmują, że fotografia jest pewnym przekłamaniem, por. M. Wojewoda, *Prawda a wiarygodność fotografii — epistemologiczne i etyczne aspekty rozumienia obrazów*, „ER(R)GO. Teoria. Literatura. Kultura” 41 (2020), s. 146.

⁸⁹ Niektórzy starają się rozdzielić kwestię prawdy i kwestię obiektywności, przez co niejako łączą reprezentacjonizm z antyreprezentacjonizmem, bądź wypracowują stanowisko znajdujące się między tymi dwoma, por. S. Walden, *Truth in Photography*, [w:] *Photography and Philosophy*, s. 91–110.

— jest pluralizacja (słowników czy interpretacji). Wszystko to ma służyć zapobieżeniu przemocy związanej z jednością i prawdą rozumianą jako korespondencja.

Chcąc podjąć próbę odpowiedzi na główne pytanie niniejszego tekstu, dotyczącej kwestii reprezentacji i statusu obrazu (fotografii), możemy stwierdzić, że reprezentacjonizm wydaje się stanowiskiem dziś już nie do utrzymania. Antyreprezentacjonizm natomiast — szczególnie w kontekście fotografii — ma swoje uzasadnienie i nie bez przyczyny większość myślicieli współczesnych utożsamia się właśnie z nim. Sformułowane przez nas argumenty za antyreprezentacjonizmem i przeciw reprezentacjonizmowi w fotografii w oczywisty sposób nie ukazują całego bogactwa dyskusji na interesujący nas temat. Mimo to tworzą pewien trop, dzięki któremu można prowadzić głębszą refleksję.

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Dilemmas of Political Anthropology: Historical-Philosophical Approximations and Current Contexts

Abstract: The article is devoted to certain fundamental and discussed threads defined as dilemmas of political anthropology. Starting from specific rudimentary descriptions of human nature, the natural state or natural man, initiated by thinkers described by Barnard as “precursors of anthropology,” as well as referring to the problems of contemporary political philosophy, the papers aims to bring closer the issues concerning the fall of human and his “regeneration,” the “mask regime,” tensions between a human being and society, conflict and cooperation; dialogue and antagonism. The proposed interpretations of the thoughts of Hobbes, Machiavelli, or Rousseau have the character of “retroactive reading.” It means that the references made to historical-philosophical examples activate the contexts of contemporary thought, or even give them new meanings, and at the same time trigger a thought that leans towards the future.

Keywords: political anthropology, nature, human nature, natural man, natural state, human being, dilemmas of political anthropology

Preliminary Characteristic of the Issue

Carl Schmitt, in his reflections on the political, notes: “One could test all theories of state and political ideas according to their anthropology and thereby classify these as to whether they consciously or unconsciously presuppose man to be by nature evil or by nature good.”¹ Bad human nature can be described as corrupt,

¹ C. Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, transl. G. Schwab, Chicago-London 2007, p. 58.

weak, cowardly, even stupid, but also brutal, passionate, vital, irrational. In turn, opposing recognitions identify human nature with rationality, perfection, obedience, and a peaceful attitude. Interestingly, the above approaches to human nature find their expression in narratives referring to animal metaphors and symbolism of the natural world. Schmitt refers, for example, to La Fontaine's fairy tale about the wolf and the sheep and Churchill's statement from 1928, in which, criticizing supporters of disarmament, he argued that even in the animal world, "fangs, claws and sharp horns" are a guarantee of peace and security.

For Schmitt, images of human nature and human life in the state of nature are inextricably linked to the domain of politics. References to the contexts outlined by Schmitt regarding the good or bad nature of a human being correspond to what may be defined as the issue of two "metaphysical" and "mutually exclusive visions of the social world."² The first is the vision of society as a unified and harmonious community. It is grounded on the conviction that society has a harmonious nature at its core and that this harmony can be regained by overcoming contingent and irrational obstacles. "This leads to the search for the foundations of future unity in the real features of human nature that unite us all and on which it will be possible to build a future safe, peaceful society."³ We are dealing here with a mythical image of the "original innocence of man," as well as a reflection on the (im)possibility of its recovery (a perfect example of which is Rousseau's philosophy). The second vision is the image of society as a battlefield, antagonisms and disharmony. In this case, the foundations of social unity are seen "in taming antisocial and antagonistic instincts and uniting them together on foundations that man can build on his own."⁴ This constructive, as well as — one is tempted to say — disciplining force, is supposed to be a human reason. The "image-idea"⁵ of transcending the antisocial, egoistic nature of a human being is Hobbes's Leviathan as a symbol of the rationally motivated necessity of universal agreement. In the first vision of social existence, what is universal, common to the nature of a human being, usually identifies with human rationality and it is thanks to it that a new form of social life may be created (although it can also be a common tradition, culture, language, world of values). An example of the desire to constitute a new human being living in a perfect and harmonious society is Condorcet's liberal and rationally oriented utopia, which contains optimistic predictions about the future stages of humanity's development. The French author, as Schmitt points out, "no longer considers man to be radically evil and wolflike but good and educable."⁶ By the way, the myth of the new human associated with the image of a harmonious society was one of the favourite threads of Enlightenment thought which considered the chances of

² A. Chmielewski, *Spółczesność otwarte czy wspólnota? Filozoficzne i moralne podstawy nowoczesnego liberalizmu oraz jego krytyka we współczesnej filozofii politycznej*, Wrocław 2001, p. 6.

³ Ibidem, p. 7.

⁴ Ibidem, p. 8.

⁵ B. Baczeko, *Wyobrażenia społeczne. Szkice z nadziei i zbiorowej pamięci*, transl. M. Kowalska, Warszawa 1994, p. 14.

⁶ C. Schmitt, *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes: Meaning and Failure of a Political Symbol*, transl. G. Schwab, Westport-London 1996, p. 97.

social and anthropological regeneration — a return to the true nature of a human being, the restoration of its original innocence. As Jan Baszkiewicz writes, North America was considered to be the land of new people, a country liberating itself from the yoke of tyranny; white Americans appeared to be “hardworking, physically robust, and morally pure children of Nature.”⁷

All of the above approaches adopt a certain political anthropology. This text follows Helmuth Plessner in understanding political anthropology as, “the genealogy of political life from the basic constitution of man” and “a historically oriented reflection on the mutual dependence in which each time they remain, on the one hand, the understanding of human nature, and, on the other hand, the approach of the state and the community.”⁸ In Plessner’s view, one can see a critique of all approaches showing human nature in a substantiated, supra-historical way, as something endowed with universal, permanent and unchanging content. Inspired by Dilthey’s hermeneutics he proposes a notion of “anthropology of the historical worldview.” In other words, a human being does not have nature, but history — a human being is always in a certain historical situation. Man, in his historicity, appears above all as “a being responsible for the world in which he lives” and as “the creator and productive ‘place’ of origin of culture.”⁹ Plessner’s critique of substantial and essentialist approaches to human nature — and such concepts seem to have been meant by Schmitt when he wrote about the simplifying anthropological visions also present in political and social contexts — is a particularly strong valorisation of “human openness” (as well as contingency, historicity, individuality), which “manifests itself in *going beyond*.”¹⁰ It is evident in the contexts of Sartre’s existentialism (“existence precedes essence”¹¹) or in Nussbaum’s reflections (“at birth, every child is a human being”¹²). In addition, it is necessary to take into account the structuralist and post-structuralist questioning of the idea of ready-made, pure human nature, primordial in relation to the process of socialization, discursive construction, and structures that constitute the social wholes in which the human subject functions. The influence of the ideas of Derrida, Lacan and Althusser in anthropological contexts was marked primarily in feminist and Marxist theories.

It is also worth mentioning that the concept of human nature is a concept that is, so to speak, highly dangerous from a political point of view, as Michel Foucault points out in his debate with Chomsky.¹³ Wolfgang Welsch explains the dangers of anthropological discourses about human nature as follows: “The path from structural terror to actual terror is short, or rather none. The difference applies only

⁷ J. Baszkiewicz, *Państwo. Rewolucja. Kultura polityczna*, Poznań 2009, p. 779.

⁸ H. Plessner, *Władza a natura ludzka. Esej o antropologii światopoglądu historycznego*, transl. E. Paczkowska-Łagowska, Warszawa 1994, p. 5.

⁹ Ibidem, pp. 15–16.

¹⁰ N. Rapport, “Natura ludzka. Założenie i nadzieja antropologii,” transl. O. Kaczmarek, P. Stan-kiewicz, *Teksty Drugie* 1 (2018), p. 211.

¹¹ J.-P. Sartre, “Existentialism Is a Humanism,” [in:] *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*, W. Kaufmann (ed.), New York 1956, p. 290.

¹² N. Rapport, “Natura ludzka,” p. 211.

¹³ N. Chomsky, M. Foucault, *The Chomsky–Foucault Debate on Human Nature*, New York–London 2006.

to the forms of the phenomenon. Terror appears already at the level of discourse, not only in the concentration camp."¹⁴ A dangerous dimension of the various theories of human nature is their hierarchical and exclusionary character: "a definite vision of human nature has contributed to the maintenance of the power of man over woman, adult over a child, developed over primitive, Western over Eastern, rational over emotional, conscious over spontaneous."¹⁵ At the same time, in contemporary debates, it can be seen that the rejection of the idea of universal human nature is associated with the "rhetoric of closure" and the discourses of exclusionary communality. According to Rapport, multiculturalist identity politics takes on a character similar to the anti-Enlightenment rhetoric cultivating the order of estate society. Thus, in his opinion, the restoration of the anthropological approach to human nature as an open nature — both in the phylogenetic and ontogenetic sense — which would reflect the human ability to "create worlds of life around us with the utmost invention"¹⁶ is of considerable importance. In this perspective, directed against multiculturalist essentialism, culture (tradition, belonging and cultural practice) as a product of human is something unstable and contingent.

For now, the above considerations are only a preliminary recognition of the problem field, which will be discussed further in the article. This work will reflect on some contemporary concepts in which questions concerning human nature are — for the above mentioned philosophical and practical-political reasons — absent or sharply criticized, but which may appear as more or less explicit continuations, polemics or references to certain fundamental and discussed threads defined in this text as dilemmas of political anthropology. Starting from specific rudimentary descriptions of human nature, the natural state or natural man, initiated by thinkers described by Barnard as "precursors of anthropology" (Hugo Grotius, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau)¹⁷ as well as referring to the problems of contemporary political philosophy, this work aims to bring closer the issues concerning the fall of a human being and his (or her) "regeneration"; the "mask regime," tensions between a human being and society, conflict and cooperation; dialogue and antagonism. As Barnard notes, views on the concept of the social contract, human nature, society, or culture, going beyond the often highly phantasmatic ethnographic approaches shaped since the Renaissance travellers, played a significant role in the process of creating anthropological discourse. In thus oriented considerations, "politics, religion and philosophical discourse, which later gave rise to anthropology, were closely linked."¹⁸ It is worth mentioning on this occasion — apart from the above-mentioned philosophers — the thought of Pufendorf, referring to Grotius' inquiry about the social nature of a human being. The term *socialitas* which he uses — translated by English interpreters as "socialization" — is a very important category used in contemporary philosophical, sociological or anthropological con-

¹⁴ W. Welsch, "Unsere postmodern Moderne," [in:] A. Zeidler-Janiszewska, *Między melancholią a żałobą. Estetyka wobec przemian w kulturze współczesnej*, Warszawa 1996, p. 17.

¹⁵ N. Rapport, "Natura ludzka," p. 202.

¹⁶ Ibidem, p. 219.

¹⁷ A. Barnard, *Antropologia. Zarys teorii i historii*, transl. S. Szymański, Warszawa 2021, p. 46.

¹⁸ Ibidem, p. 48.

texts. The author emphasized what in Greek reflection appeared as a tension between *physis* and *nomos*, strongly valorizing the socialized state of man.¹⁹

In the presented considerations the reference to the category of social and political imaginarium is not without significance.²⁰ It seems that imagination is not a domain peripheral to philosophical and political discourses, but quite contrary — these discourses, both historical and contemporary, depend on the power of human imagination and the images it creates. An assumption is made here, which can be called the “anthropology of the image” in reference to Belting’s proposal:²¹ it is impossible to define a human being without taking into account his (or her) imaginal (and pictorial) activity (which, in the social and political domain, can bring about various effects). María Noel Lapoujade, the author of *Homo Imaginans*, writes: “The human species is an imaginary species. There is a power of imagination in it. It is the force that determines individual, social, natural life; a force pushing both to creation (art, science, technology) and destruction (gallows, guillotine, crematorium furnaces, wars, the Holocaust).”²²

Discrepancies with Nature

In the interpretation of the author of *Tristes Tropiques*, Rousseau never made the same mistake as Denis Diderot, who idealized a natural man. For Diderot, according to Claude Lévi-Strauss, the history of humankind looks like this: “Once there was natural Man. Within that natural Man, an artificial Man was later introduced. Between the two, war broke out, and will go on raging till life comes to an end.”²³ According to Lévi-Strauss, the concept of constant antagonism between “natural man” and “artificial man” is *de facto* an absurd approach. “Whoever says ‘Man,’ says ‘Language,’ and whoever says ‘Language,’ says ‘Society.’”²⁴ Such key identifications for structuralism could be expressed as follows: the concept of the natural man is highly problematic because it implies the possibility of assigning the name of a human to a being who has formed outside any social environment, which is a symbolic-linguistic universe. Undoubtedly, we find such a perspective already in the thought of Aristotle, who defined a human being as a *zoon politikon* and emphasized his linguistic character.²⁵

However, the question of the relationship between “natural man” and “artificial man” in the light of the contexts discussed by Diderot and Rousseau is not entirely

¹⁹ S. Pufendorf, *On the Duty of Man and Citizen According to Natural Law*, transl. M. Silverthorne, Cambridge 1991.

²⁰ Ch. Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, Durham 2004; J.J. Wunenburger, *Filozofia obrazów*, transl. T. Stróżyński, Gdańsk 2011.

²¹ H. Belting, *An Anthropology of Images: Picture, Medium, Body*, transl. T. Dunlap, Princeton-Oxford 2014.

²² M.N. Lapoujade, *Homo Imaginans II*, Mexico 2017, p. 17.

²³ C. Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, transl. J. Russell, New York 1961, pp. 338–339.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 339.

²⁵ Aristotle, *The Politics and The Constitution of Athens*, S. Everson (ed.), transl. J. Barnes, J.M. Moore, Cambridge-New York 1996, p. 13.

unambiguous. Bougainville's Polynesians, Diderot writes, live in a society that seems to be much more perfect than European societies. Bougainville appears in the assessment of the old man representing the people of Tahiti as a "criminal," a "leader of robbers," a "poisoner of nations" who tried to erase in their souls the voice of nature to which they obey.²⁶ It is a vision of a state of nature in which everyone lives in harmony in a community that includes natural goods and women, performs moderate work together to meet biological needs, has no property, no laws, and no government. As Diderot states, a Tahitian is a "newborn child" compared to a European who is already a "decrepit old man." However, in addition to such elements of the quasi-communist social utopia built on the images of travel literature, we find in Diderot a different approach to the state of nature. It is a state of "the primordial inequality of forces and talents, the struggle of the strong with the weak, when man lived in a herd, close to the animal and struggled to satisfy the elementary necessities of life."²⁷ Diderot, according to Skrzypek, advocated an intermediate state, that is, a concept between the conception of the state of nature as "primordial innocence" (which he quite rightly did not attribute to Rousseau's thought) and the capture of this state in the Hobbesian categories of struggle and antagonism. A human being is a social being — the establishment of social organization is necessary to oppose nature in the struggle to satisfy material needs — but not everything good comes from society (just as not everything bad should be identified with the state of nature). Existence in society brings certain "misdeeds," but it is also a source of "improvements and virtues."

Rousseau, as Lévi-Strauss and Bronisław Baczko note, uses a certain theoretical model, that is, an image of the state of nature, in the light of which it becomes possible to critically judge the existing society and the relations prevailing in it, as well as to correct them. This model, as he notes in *Emile*, determines the "scale" to which "measurements" are to be referred, that is, empirical data (for example, laws, historical facts, customs, social relations, etc.). The confrontation of the existing state with this model makes it possible to understand why the "artificial man" (historical and socialized) makes everything good "degenerate." Rousseau writes:

everything degenerates in the hands of man. He forces one soil to nourish the products of another, one tree to bear the fruit of another. He mixes and confuses the climates, the elements, the seasons. He mutilates his dog, his horse, his slave. He turns everything upside down; he disfigures everything; he loves deformity, monsters. He wants nothing as nature made it, not even man; for him, man must be trained like a school horse; man must be fashioned in keeping with his fancy like a tree in his garden.²⁸

"Were he not to do this, however, everything would go even worse, and our species does not admit of being formed halfway"²⁹ — the process of socialization and denaturing is a *de facto* inevitable process. Socialization lies, as Rousseau emphasizes, in our nature, and the activation of this process primarily disturbs the bal-

²⁶ D. Diderot, *Supplément au voyage de Bougainville ou Dialogue entre A. et B. sur l'inconvénient d'attacher des idées morales à certaines actions physiques qui n'en comportent pas*, 1772, p. 14, <https://archive.org/details/supplementauvoya0000dide> (accessed: 23.06.2022).

²⁷ M. Skrzypek, *Diderot*, Warszawa 1982, p. 225.

²⁸ J.J. Rousseau, *Emile, or, On Education*, transl. A. Bloom, New York 1979, p. 37.

²⁹ *Ibidem*.

ance between human beings and the natural world. The growing dominance over the natural world is inextricably connected to the invention of tools, the division of labour, changes in the ways of production, private property, and social inequality. Returning to the state of nature is impossible (because a human being has gone far in the process of socialization) and, more importantly, undesirable. For only in society can a human being be virtuous — the concept of virtue, like the concept of misdeed, are social constructs. Moreover, in the last passages of his *A Dissertation on the Origin and Foundation of the Inequality of Mankind*, Rousseau compares the “last stage of inequality” of existing society to the “initial state of nature,” in which the “law of the strongest” prevails.³⁰

The state of nature is not only a theoretical model, but can also be recreated in individual experience, and especially through emotional contact with the natural world (this longing for the state of nature, as Baczkowski points out, fits in with the thesis about the impossibility of returning). It seems that in both the first and the second case we are dealing with an imaginary state of nature. The image of nature appears as a “nihilation” (*la néantisation*) of existing relations. It should be added that “an image is not purely and simply *the world denied*, but always *the world denied from a certain point of view*, precisely that which allows the positing of absence or the nonexistence of the object presentified as ‘imaged.’”³¹ In addition, the image in both cases triggers a political and social search for new ways of development and harmonious integration of a human being with society (as a transition from individual rebellion to collective utopia). As Baczkowski emphasizes, “the worldview of Jean-Jacques is programmatically limited to anthropology,” but it is strictly political.³² The inconsistencies between the imagined state of nature and the existing order are politically corrected. The political heirs will interpret Rousseau in a revolutionary way: revolutionary regeneration during the French Revolution — both moral and physical as well as spontaneous and state-administered, treated once as a “miracle,” once as a “task” — shapes a new human being. The drama of humankind most often appears as a “secularized anthropology of the fall,” and the vision of the new human being (manifested in the revolutionary imaginarium) means a return to the mythical state of “original innocence.” At the time of the Bolshevik Revolution, both the ideological philistine depicted by Mayakovsky and *homo sovieticus* produced by the totalitarian regime become a grotesque caricature of the new human being. This new human will appear today on the horizon of transhumanist utopias or dystopias.

At this point, it would be necessary to touch on a few threads related to the state of nature, in which human lives in harmony with the natural world. As has been said, according to Rousseau, the domination over the natural world, inextricably linked to the process of socialization, produced undesirable effects from the anthropological and social point of view. Discourses on the domination

³⁰ B. Baczkowski, *Rousseau. Samotność i wspólnota*, Gdańsk 2009, p. 139.

³¹ J.-P. Sartre, *The Imaginary: A Phenomenological Psychology of the Imagination*, transl. J. Webber, London-New York 2004, pp. 184–185.

³² B. Baczkowski, *Rousseau*, p. 278.

over nature were associated with its instrumental constitution, which from the 18th century meant primarily its mass and organized transformation (for example, modernized agriculture and industry) for the benefit of human beings. At the same time, “wild” fragments of nature began to be identified with the margins of industrial society.³³ This can be seen, among others, in the 19th-century myths about the virgin nature of America as the Garden of the World, the primordial Wilderness, Paradise, Nature seen through the eyes of God.³⁴ Both of these constructs of the natural world transform nature into an object for consumption. It is either an area of capitalist exploitation or a “scenery, landscape, image, fresh air” — a site of “visual consumption.”³⁵ In this sense, it would be necessary to ask about a possible future of nature and a human being in the globalisation era, as well as the real meaning of the idea of the “return to nature” appearing in ecological argumentation. “Whether such intense global processes will facilitate or impede a reasonable environment for ‘in-humans’ (such as cyborgs) and ‘in-animals’ (such as carnivorous cows) in the next century is a question of inestimable significance and awesome indeterminacy.”³⁶

Human Masks

The meaning of the mask in anthropological approaches has a specifically human character. As Manfred Lurker notes, wearing masks should be considered as “an attempt to transcend from the subjective world into the objective world or to use its forces. In this way, masks end up in religious beliefs and cultural customs, but also in superstitions.”³⁷ Certainly, it is a truism to say that the domain of contemporary politics is an area of permanent stylization, delusion, creation of deceptive images. Here, the mask — understood as a media-image artefact designed to protect against exposing the face — is the most important of the political accessories. As is well known, Niccolò Machiavelli as a supporter of the “mask regime”³⁸ claimed that success in the political domain consists of a constant effort to “hide and pretend of a certain nature.” The ruler “should imitate both the fox and the lion, for the lion is liable to be trapped, whereas the fox cannot ward off wolves. One needs, then, to be a fox to recognise traps, and the lion to frighten away wolves.”³⁹ In the case of political praxis, praxis cannot be otherwise, for it is always necessary to admit the possibility that the defects of human nature — implying destructive tendencies — will be revealed. Of course, this mask can be a mask that

³³ P. Macnaghten, J. Urry, *Contested Natures*, London 1998.

³⁴ B. Novak, *American Painting of the Nineteenth Century: Realism, Idealism, and the American Experience*, New York 1969.

³⁵ P. Macnaghten, J. Urry, *Contested Natures*, p. 111.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 276.

³⁷ M. Lurker, *Przesłanie symboli w mitach, kulturach i religiach*, transl. R. Wojnakowski, Warszawa 2011, p. 319.

³⁸ S. Filipowicz, *Twarz i maska*, Kraków 1998.

³⁹ N. Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Q. Skinner, R. Price (eds.), Cambridge-New York 1988, p. 61.

is exceedingly “human.” At least from the time of Machiavelli and Prince Valentino politics has a problem with the mask and face of a human being.

In the unfinished poem *Golden Ass*, referring to the text of Apuleius’ *Metamorphosis or The Golden Ass*, Machiavelli describes the transformation of natures — it is nothing more than the donning of a mask, the strategy of the “chameleon”: “the hero of the *Golden Ass* throws off human nature in order to reveal himself in the counter-nature of the animal, but this turns out to be the same disguise, the same mask of being as the original nature.”⁴⁰ In this case, the nature loses its permanent ontological anchorage — everything seems to transform, flow and change, arise and disappear. The nature becomes a mask, a disguise — or even an artefact. On this foundation, Machiavelli creates an ontology of political action, “opposing all concepts that allow us to treat the world as a given, existing order.”⁴¹ After Machiavelli, in the 17th century, “concepts begin to take shape, which we will find in various incarnations and in the age of the Enlightenment, and later — in the twentieth century [...] it is a question of replacing metaphysics, which refers to unwavering foundations, with inquiries showing human actions as a field of interaction, which is at the same time a kind of evocation of reality.”⁴² Although Rousseau postulates a critical distance from the artificial world of appearances (“external” culture and “external” self) through individual experience recreating the state of nature, transformations of the public sphere strengthen the spectacular character of social life and politics. The 18th century, as well as the period of the French Revolution, present the social space of mutual contacts as a stage on which a human (or a revolutionary people) is both an actor and a spectator. In this case, the function of the mask and the spectacle as tools shaping opinion and establishing identity plays a very important role. It can be seen, for example, in the *procession générale* as a symbolic representation of the social hierarchy,⁴³ or during revolutionary celebrations, in which the people were the actor, the spectator and the “greatest ornament.” Last but not least, the decapitation was also a revolutionary spectacle.

Joseph Addison’s *The Spectator* was one of the most important media of the Enlightenment audience. Addison, “worked toward the spread of tolerance, the emancipation of civil morality from moral theology and of practical wisdom from the philosophy of the scholars. The public that read and debated this sort of things read and debated about itself.”⁴⁴ “Enlightenment anthropology — as S. Filipowicz writes — exposes the motif of the spectator.”⁴⁵ In the anthropological perspective, a human being as a spectator and observer constitutes his (or her) social figure by looking at himself (or herself) through the eyes of a companion-mentor.

⁴⁰ S. Wróbel, *Lektury retroaktywne. Rodowody współczesnej myśli filozoficznej*, Kraków 2014, p. 216.

⁴¹ S. Filipowicz, *Twarz i maska*, p. 24.

⁴² Ibidem, p. 31.

⁴³ R. Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre: And Other Episodes in French Cultural History*, London 1984.

⁴⁴ J. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, transl. T. Burger, Cambridge 1989, p. 43.

⁴⁵ S. Filipowicz, *Twarz i maska*, p. 59.

A human being is therefore a project, the creator of his (or her) identity, which is carried out not so much according to a religious model or is given through tradition, but is a rationally oriented performance of a specific role under the evaluative gaze of the Other. In this sense, referring to the sociological concept of a social actor, one could say:

The self, then, as a performed character, is not an organic thing that has a specific location, whose fundamental fate is to be born, to mature, and to die; it is a dramatic effect arising diffusely from a scene that is presented, and the characteristic issue, the crucial concern, is whether it will be credited or discredited.⁴⁶

The Enlightenment anthropology, which defines a human being as a subject who shapes life according to the rules of reason, is criticized in the 20th century. The perspective of public participation of rational actors (and viewers) is based on the traditional concept of the subject: the rational ego recognizes its position in the world, in the orders of objects, which — according to the dictates of autonomous reason — it shapes. The “death of the subject” proclaimed by the structuralists questioned the vision of a human being as a subject who is an autonomous source of meaning:⁴⁷ The subject turns out to be one of the elements within the structured symbolic and linguistic universe. A human being, as Foucault writes, always discovers themselves in connection with the existing (and discursively structured) world:

when he tries to define himself as a living being, he can uncover his own beginning only against the background of a life which itself began long before him; when he attempts to re-apprehend himself as a labouring being, he cannot bring even the most rudimentary forms of such a being to light except within a human time and space which have been previously institutionalized, and previously subjugated by society; and when he attempts to define his essence as a speaking subject, prior to any effectively constituted language, and not the stumbling sound, the first word upon the basis of which all languages or even language itself become possible.⁴⁸

As we know, Foucault’s attention is directed towards various discourses that create a human “being in the world,” which closely overlaps with his thesis about the productive nature of power. Thus, it turns out that society produces anthropological imperatives strictly regulating models of being. The Enlightenment belief in reason shows its dark, totalitarian side: “the supremacy of reason means the multiplication of the power of plan, rigour, the procedure.”⁴⁹ The masks of our social being (*de facto* the only signs of our social identity) are constellations of rules and modes of action imposed by power-knowledge. Paul Veyne, writing about Foucault’s thought, emphasized that it is necessary to “put an end to the idea that the subject, the Ego, would exist before its roles, because there is no subject ‘in the state of nature’ (*à l’état sauvage*), prior to the process of subjectivization:

⁴⁶ E. Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, New York 1959, pp. 252–253.

⁴⁷ E. Laclau, “Discourse,” [in:] *A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy*, vol. 1, R.E. Goodin, P. Pettit, T. Pogge (eds.), Oxford 2007, pp. 541–547.

⁴⁸ M. Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, New York 1970, p. 330.

⁴⁹ S. Filipowicz, *Twarz i maska*, p. 65.

such a subject would not be primary, but empty. Nowhere in history will we find a universal form of the pure subject.”⁵⁰

At the same time, the evaluative view of the Other is transposed and hyperbolized in Foucault’s thought — the individual or group primacy is transformed into a panoptic machine of permanent control. Society is no longer only a society of the spectacle, but, first of all, a society of surveillance.

Is it possible to speak here of the emancipation of such a subject? If we assume, as Laclau did,⁵¹ that emancipation presupposes the pre-existence of what is to be emancipated (emancipation as such is therefore not an act of creation, but rather the liberation of what ontologically precedes the act of liberation itself), then in the perspective outlined by Foucault such a form of emancipation cannot take place. As has been said, Foucault does not accept an optic that assumes the existence of a human subjectivity that precedes the process of socialization. It seems therefore that, in this perspective, the way to escape from the mask regime is not through emancipatory self-styling. Could it be “madness”? After all, even if it is a form of escape from the socially enforced convention, shape and rules of the mask, it is recognized, ordered and organized by the prevailing order of discourse.

A Restrained Catastrophe?

“Stories about the beginnings — as Rüdiger Safranski writes — are myths, while in more recent epochs they are theoretical explanations of very suggestive cognitive value.”⁵² One of such mythical stories is the ancient Egyptian story about the god of the atmosphere Shu propping the vault of the heaven with his own body. “The god of the air, Shu, separates heaven (Nut) and earth (Geb), a symbolic act denoting a consciousness of up and down, light and darkness, good and evil.”⁵³ In this way, the world order is a fragile balance between heaven and earth — or, as one might say, “a restrained catastrophe.” Therefore, “Shu should be handled with care, otherwise, the god can make everything break down.”⁵⁴ Interestingly, this god, as a force establishing and sustaining the world as a (relatively) stable whole, was at the same time considered to be the personification of the state. A few centuries later, thanks to Hesiod’s theogony, the Greeks gained insight into the chaos of the primaeval beginning — a time of violence, murder, and incest — that might again show its destructive face if the gods invade the human world after the fall of heaven.

Myths speak variously about the history of the world, a human being and the human condition, but the motives of the fall (for example, Hesiod and the history of humankind, Plato and the murder of the “divine shepherd”), death and suffering (old age, illness, birth pains, insanity, vices and passions) are constant. Moreover,

⁵⁰ P. Veyne, *Foucault. Sa pensée, sa personne*, Paris 2008, p. 134.

⁵¹ E. Laclau, “Beyond Emancipation,” *Development and Change* 23 (1992), pp. 121–137.

⁵² R. Safranski, *Zło. Dramat wolności*, transl I. Kania, Warszawa 1999, p. 9.

⁵³ M. Lurker, *The Gods and Symbols of Ancient Egypt: An Illustrated Dictionary*, New York 1980, p. 9.

⁵⁴ R. Safranski, *Zło*, p. 9.

a human being, fleeing from his or her bloody and cruel beginnings, constantly carries them within himself or herself, even when he or she is a socialized human being. A mythical example of a pre-social nature, wild and untamed, not respecting laws and not recognizing supreme moral values — in fact, it is a human being pursuing his or her own selfish interests that are dangerous to others — was Polyphemus, who, contrary to the accepted principles of hospitality, imprisoned and then devoured several of Odysseus' companions. "A very significant point in the myth of the Cyclops is that he does not belong to any community, because he inhabits his cave *alone*."⁵⁵ It would seem that the "socialized" and rational Odysseus will not go so far as to commit the cruelty of irrational affect — and yet the returning of Odysseus, who himself suffered so much, arranges a bloodbath for suitors, which could trigger off a further continuation of murders (here Zeus had to erase the memory of the dead to stop further violence). As we see, in "Greek mythology, people break away from their origins, just as man escapes from a catastrophe. But they break away from them in yet another sense: they carry them with them and cause them themselves."⁵⁶ Returning to the story of Polyphemus: the mutual care and cooperation of Odysseus and his companions have their dark side in the form of brutal violence (the burning off Polyphemus' eye), thanks to which they escape from the threat.

In the context of the two mutually exclusive social visions indicated at the beginning of the text, it can be said that even if each of the political theories (as well as specific, particular political practices) seek to regain or constitute social existence as a harmonious and non-antagonistic whole, such aspirations are ultimately always doomed to failure due to the "leaven of perdition" inherent in human (identified, for example, with evil human nature, or — to put it a bit cautiously — its egoistic and conflictual side). In this perspective, order, law, state, or culture are permanently threatened because they are constantly accompanied by their potentially active opposite: regression to an anarchic state of nature. Perhaps the state-legal order is nothing more than a civil war "which can only be prevented by the overarching might of the state, or the leviathan."⁵⁷ It is worth adding that the category of "order" in political life takes the form of an "empty signifier."⁵⁸ Laclau brings closer the situation of radical disorder, which is not far from the Hobbesian state of nature. Then people need "some order," and its actual content becomes a secondary matter (various political forces will seek to present their particular goals as the fulfilment of missing order). For Hobbes, however, the political universe must be filled once and for all with the will of the sovereign, Leviathan, the "mortal god," and there is no room for a democratic confrontation between the various particularisms offering their vision of the social order. Leviathan masters the chaos located in the fighting individuals and social groups. As Schmitt writes, "one

⁵⁵ A. Chmielewski, *Spółczesność otwarte czy wspólnota?*, p. 61.

⁵⁶ R. Safranski, *Złoto*, p. 13.

⁵⁷ C. Schmitt, *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes*, p. 21.

⁵⁸ E. Laclau, "Why Do Empty Signifiers Matter to Politics?," [in:] E. Laclau, *Emancipation(s)*, London-New York 1996, pp. 37–46.

of the monsters, the leviathan ‘state,’ continuously holds down the other monster, the behemoth ‘revolutionary people.’”⁵⁹

It seems that, contrary to the efforts of the Hobbesian Leviathan, the desire for “difference” — identified by Plato as *thymos* — is a permanent threat to the social contract (Hobbes speaks of pride and self-conceit, Rousseau of *amour-propre*, G.W.F. Hegel of the recognition, and Friedrich Nietzsche of the human as animal with “red cheeks”). In this struggle for recognition, human can strive for domination and violence, but he also puts his life at risk. Hegel, as we know, will interpret this struggle for recognition in terms of the energy and dynamics of the historical process. In fact, a state of a fully reconciled and non-antagonistic society would be the end of the struggle for recognition and a state of “comfortable nihilism.” In this sense, Francis Fukuyama writes about the “last man” and asks a rather important question that casts a shadow over the alleged lack of alternatives to the idea and axiology of the liberal state. “Will man be forever content to be recognized simply as equal of all other men, or will he not demand more in time? And if megalothymia has been so totally sublimated or channeled by modern politics, should we agree with Nietzsche that this is not a cause for celebration, but an unparalleled disaster?”⁶⁰ Anti-liberal (and anti-rationalist) discourses — represented, for example, by past and present “occidentalism”⁶¹ — undoubtedly constitute a strong critique of “comfortable nihilism” and spiritual-ideological emptiness. “Neither capitalism nor liberal democracy ever pretended to be a heroic creed. Enemies of the liberal society even think that liberalism celebrates mediocrity. Liberal societies, according to the pre-war German nationalist Arthur Moeller van den Bruck, give everyone the freedom to be a mediocre man.”⁶²

Hobbes’s Leviathan, which is a (relatively) effective barrier against the destructive tendencies of human nature is becoming, according to Schmitt’s anti-liberal interpretation, more and more indolent. Leviathan is destroyed from within as a result of the growing dominance of liberal rights and freedoms, individualistic freedom of thought and conscience. And although it remains the machine of modern state organization, it also becomes only a formal, technical and neutral space of competition of heterogeneous political forces. But what about Behemoth? It seems that in the context of the post-political *Zeitgeist* outlined by Slavoj Žižek or Chantal Mouffe one of its significant faces are outbreaks of “excess” violence (in Bauman’s interpretation, they are *de facto* a form of struggle for recognition in conditions of economic and social exclusion). It is about cruelty, which manifests itself in various forms: “from ‘fundamentalist’ racist and/or religious slaughter to the ‘senseless’ outbursts of violence by adolescents and the homeless in our megalopolises.”⁶³

It is also worth noting that in the anthropological and political space, Schmitt (like Sigmund Freud) was a supporter of Hobbesian thought. Schmitt, as has al-

⁵⁹ C. Schmitt, *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes*, p. 21.

⁶⁰ F. Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, New York 1993, p. 207.

⁶¹ I. Buruma, A. Margalit, *Occidentalism: The West in the Eyes of Its Enemies*, New York 2004.

⁶² *Ibidem*, p. 71.

⁶³ S. Žižek, “Carl Schmitt in the Age of Post-Politics,” [in:] *The Challenge of Carl Schmitt*, Ch. Mouffe (ed.), London 1999, p. 31.

ready been said, relates every political theory to the perspective of anthropological recognition: “all genuine political theories presuppose man to be [...] a dangerous and dynamic being.”⁶⁴ The German author writes in the spirit of Hobbesian anthropology about the eternally permanent relationship between enemy and friend. It may change its forms and scope, but there will always be concrete groups of people who fight with other groups of people in the name of justice, humanity, order and peace.

Dialogue or Antagonism?

A completely different response to the tradition of the Enlightenment than that proposed by Foucault is the thought of Jürgen Habermas. There is no pessimistic view of the totalitarian legacy of the Enlightenment project; a view that, in addition to Foucault’s thought, also appears in contexts that emphasize the total disgrace of Enlightenment ideas and humanistic values after the Holocaust. Habermas, therefore, believes that there is a close connection between the democratic ideas of the Enlightenment and its inherent universalist and rationalist perspective. In other words, to challenge this perspective would be a threat to the democratic project.⁶⁵ The “postmodern” critique of the Enlightenment ideas of universal human nature, universal reason, or the rational autonomous subject is therefore politically dangerous. Habermas, as is well known, opts for the introduction of a dialogical perspective into liberalism as a necessary supplement — dialogue is not something contingent for liberal society, because it is situated at the very heart of all social bonds.

Before discussing the problem of dialogue and antagonism as two competing political and social perspectives, it is worth emphasizing that they are rooted in certain “beliefs about the nature of human being, the nature of power or possible interpersonal relations.”⁶⁶ Leszek Koczanowicz mentions the formation of these competing options in reference to the emergence of the “modern moral order” described by Charles Taylor. It is primarily about the tension between liberal individualism and non-liberal forms of community. As Adam Chmielewski writes, liberal politics can be defined as “striving to tame the antinomicity of social life, based on awareness and recognition of differences and social identities,” as well as “prudent negotiation of acceptable ways of coexistence of distinct individual and group identities.” On the other hand, a “communitarian” politics would therefore be a politics of “*picking up and emphasizing the differences* between one, ‘our’ community, and ‘others,’ ‘the enemies,’ of the community, which at the same time is *accompanied by the desire to eliminate differences within one’s community*.”⁶⁷

⁶⁴ J.W. Bendersky, “Hobbesian Anthropology, the Interminable Enemy, and State Theory: Intellectual Convergences in Carl Schmitt and Sigmund Freud,” *Studia Philosophica Wratislaviensia* Supplementary Volume, English Edition (2012), p. 145.

⁶⁵ Ch. Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox*, London-New York 2000, p. 17.

⁶⁶ L. Koczanowicz, “Dialog i antagonizm,” [in:] *Filozofa polityki współczesnie*, J. Zdybel, L. Zdybel (eds.), Kraków 2013, p. 117.

⁶⁷ A. Chmielewski, *Spółczesność otwarte czy wspólnota?*, p. 27.

Taylor shows, in reference to the concepts of Grotius and Locke, that certain decisions about human nature imply ideas about the nature of social coexistence. It is worth to dwell upon this thought for a moment. In Grotius, the law of nature, which is above all concern for the preservation of society, is connected with the immutable features of human nature (which can be deduced from the *a priori* cognition made by *ratio recta*). The nature is equipped with the social drive, that is, the drive for peaceful and organized coexistence with others. As Taylor argues, starting from the 17th century, the ideas initiated by Grotius gradually began to prevail in our theoretical thinking about the normative foundations of social life and how we imagine social life and interpersonal relations (the so-called modern social imaginaries). Idealization of the benefits of the mutual provision of services (by providing security, exchanging goods and providing prosperity to meet the needs of “ordinary life”); defending the rights of individuals, including the most important right to freedom; the conviction that freedoms and rights must be vested in all members of the community — these are the most important features of the modern idea of the moral order derived from the paradigm coined by Grotius and then by Locke. The author of *Two Treatises on Civil Government* believes that a rational and hardworking man, acting in an orderly, peaceful and productive way, carries out the will of God in the world. “He gave it to use of the industrious and rational (and the labour was to be his title to it) not to the fancy or covetousness of quarrelsome and contentious” — Locke argues.⁶⁸ Taylor notes that the modern social imaginary privileges the individualistic perspective and calls into question the traditional, communal forms of social complementarity. Therefore, it will emphasize the need to create a new social order as a substitute for the lost sense of community. At the same time, he shows that in the context of social poverty and insecurity, the rules and regulations of the communal forms of social life were the only guarantees of survival — in this sense, modern individualism seemed to be simply a luxury or a dangerous weakness.

The liberal tradition — which identifies a human being primarily in an individualistic and rationalist perspective — is formed today, as Mouffe shows, within the framework of the “economic” or “ethical” paradigm. In the former, sometimes called “aggregative” paradigm, politics is conceived as the “establishment of compromise between competing forces of society. Individuals are portrayed as rational beings, driven by the maximization of their own interests and as acting in the political world in a basically instrumental way.” The second paradigm, the “deliberative” one, is a dialogical perspective: “aims at creating a link between morality and politics. It advocates want to replace instrumental rationality by communicative rationality.”⁶⁹ In other words, according to the proponents of this model, and the most recognizable of them is Habermas, the political debate as a particular area of application of morality makes it possible to achieve a rational and moral consensus thanks to a dialogue without exclusions. This means that political disputes that determine important issues of social life can be resolved in a way that would satisfy

⁶⁸ J. Locke, *Two Treatises on Civil Government*, London 1884, p. 207.

⁶⁹ Ch. Mouffe, *On the Political*, London-New York 2005, pp. 12–13.

all parties involved in the dialogue. Liberal politics formed according to the above model is a universalist-rationalist vision of how the social coexistence of people should be shaped. Dialogue is what — in the normative sense — should be chosen by all rational individuals in the political disputes they engage in.

The thought of the already mentioned Schmitt, as well as its contemporary reinterpretations, challenge the dialogical proposal related to the ideas of liberalism. Schmitt's vision, as we know, was far from “deliberative” approaches to the political. The idea of a democratic community proposed by the German author excluded all liberal pluralism and individualism. According to Schmitt, the moment of establishing antagonistic boundaries between “us” (that is, those who belong to the common substance of *demos*) and “them” (that is, those who, for one reason or another, cannot belong to it) is constitutive of the democratic order. The political configuration of the *demos* vis-a-vis the external enemy implies the elimination of differences within the democratic community. This dialectic of the enemy as a “negative otherness” and at the same time a “constitutive otherness” for our identity is visible both in Freud's anthropological approaches and in (post)structuralist approaches. Plessner, writing about the friend–enemy relationship, also stressed that it simply belongs to the “constitution of man” understood as “an open question or as a power.”⁷⁰ In Schmitt's view, the political space is therefore not a space of conversation or dialogue, but an extremely antagonistic confrontation of collective identities, which may ultimately lead to the physical elimination of one of the parties to the conflict. Referring to Schmitt and at the same time arguing with him, Mouffe will push for the project of agonistic democracy as a practice sublimating the antagonism that is the source of every political order. Apart from direct references to specific decisions in the room of political anthropology, many contemporary concepts question the dialogical model. As Michael Walzer and Mouffe show, for example, the basis for the political legitimacy of one or another decision and action in the political and social domain is not founded on dialogue, openness and the pursuit of understanding, but on active identifications, collective imaginations and passions.

Dialogue or antagonism? Is it possible to resolve disputes in a way that is satisfactory for everyone?; or are we doomed to impose our position on the rest of the society, and thus to a constant conflict and struggle that shatters the social community? Regardless of whether we choose an inclusive or exclusivist perspective, we are confronted here with “the most persistent thread of political reflection of human kind.” The desire for politics to take place in a dialogical and moral register — that is, the desire to regulate social life to make it predictable, safe and — one can say — “friendly” — is as old as the desire to the contrary. It is the desire to control others in order to realize “one's own, selfish and in this sense ‘antisocial’ interests.”⁷¹

⁷⁰ H. Plessner, *Władza a natura ludzka*, p. 68.

⁷¹ A. Chmielewski, *Spółczeństwo otwarte czy wspólnota?*, p. 60.

Further Research Perspectives

It can be said that people have always been a question for themselves. The position of the humans to themselves, to nature and to the principles of being together, is reflected in myths, art, religions, science and philosophy. According to Immanuel Kant, anthropological reflection is crucial. Kant speaks of anthropology as a discipline that is ontological, epistemological, and moral-political. In other words, anthropological reflection is an attempt at a theoretical (and practical) attitude of the people to themselves and the world — the natural reality and the one created. Thus, there is a close connection between anthropological decisions and the sphere of politics and various ideas, principles or visions of the arrangement of the social world. The proposed interpretations of the thoughts of Hobbes, Machiavelli, or Rousseau had the character of “retroactive reading.”⁷² It means that the references made to historical-philosophical examples were to activate the contexts of contemporary thought, or even give them new meanings, and at the same time trigger a thought that leans towards the future.

Therefore, at this point, it is worth at least signalling some possible paths of further reflection, which would be complementary to them. If we recognize that the sphere of politics is closely rooted in our being and the human constitution (“politics is our destiny,” Plessner writes⁷³), then, above all, the question arises about the nature of our current and future political practices, as well as future proposals for social being together. This is important for many reasons. The climate crisis, progressive instrumentalization of nature, migration crises, problems of liberal eugenics, transhumanist ideas — these are certainly problems that call into question the very “future of human nature,” as Habermas says. Another possible clue, largely related to the above issues, points to the question of our being in harmony with nature (understood as *physis*). The normative way of understanding nature is, as Lothar Schäfer writes, the idea of “always captivating.”⁷⁴ One could mention various theories and practices of healthy eating, lifestyle, concepts of natural social and political orders, or natural laws and natural morality. *De facto* normative implications were already functioning in Greek contexts in various fields (for example, medicine; concepts of living within the socio-political community; ways of living outside of social conventions and culture). Various efflorescences of naturalism — understood as a justification of the prevailing or desirable relations of power, the organization of social life — can be found in political ideas and practices referring to the relations prevailing in nature (which this work has signalled). Currently, “return to nature” and “compatibility with nature” seems to be one of the main slogans of ecological argumentation. One can ask about the nature of this compatibility, as well as about the paths leading to it in the societies of late capitalism, in which the relationship between human being and nature has

⁷² S. Wróbel, *Lektury retroaktywne*.

⁷³ H. Plessner, *Władza a natura ludzka*, p. 69.

⁷⁴ L. Schäfer, “Przyroda,” [in:] *Filozofia. Podstawowe pytania*, E. Martens, M. Schmedelbach (eds.), transl. K. Krzemieniowa, Warszawa 1995, p. 518.

been commercialized. In this context doesn't a "return to nature" simply mean its consumerist assimilation in the form of discursively organized "leisure spaces"? is it not the consumption of "natural phenomena such as sun, sea, snow?"⁷⁵

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⁷⁵ P. Macnaghten, J. Urry, *Contested Natures*, p. 105.

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The Symbolic Language of the Unconscious: Erich Fromm's Studies on the Human Being

Abstract: This text aims at a multi-dimensional reflection on Erich Fromm's conception of the human being. Starting from Marxist-Freudian sources of the philosopher's thought, the authors show the fundamental ideas underlying his version of psychoanalysis. Next, Fromm's view of the human being as a social being is discussed, referring to the concepts of unproductive and productive orientations. Another important dimension of Fromm's thought that is discussed is the reflection on the nature and functions of the symbolic language of the unconscious, which reveals to the human being both the best and the worst aspects of his or her personality. One of the most famous concepts of the American philosopher is also discussed — the distinction between the being mode and the having mode. The authors draw attention to the value Fromm placed on a life oriented towards the being mode. Finally, they remind us, following Fromm, that a human being turns towards himself in his or her dreams, going beyond all the schemes and concepts that bind his mind when he or she is awake. The understanding of oneself that comes from a deep reflection on the content and character of a dream can awaken in a person the recognition of previously unknown dimensions of his or her mind; from now on, he is not merely someone immersed in the reality of everyday life. Crossing the horizon of oneiric imagination, he or she becomes free, in the dream, and she experiences the freedom of being on waking.

Keywords: Fromm, Freud, Marx, symbol, unconscious, symbolic language

Psychoanalysis emerged at the turn of the 19th century as a medical science and as a response to the ineffectiveness of the medicine of that time in relation to problems connected with the aetiology and the treatment of neuroses. With time, however, as research in the field of neuropharmacology progressed, its therapeutic dimension gradually lost its significance; and Sigmund Freud himself, as Francis Fukuyama¹ notes, began to be perceived more as a philosopher than a scientist. The founder of psychoanalysis, by formulating general laws concerning the psychological development of an individual, based on his or her biological needs and influenced by social relations, revived the dispute concerning the nature of humanity. Many schools of thought have emerged whose representatives have directly referred to Freud's views, revising or rejecting them. In this paper we interpret Erich Fromm as Freud's intellectual heir rather than his adversary. Despite breaking with some of the postulates of classical psychoanalysis, he filled in some important gaps in Freud's perception of humans. Following especially Karl Marx's early views, he emphasized the social dimension of the human being and created a synthesis of the views of both thinkers, giving rise to a new concept of humankind.

Predecessors: Freud and Marx

Fromm described his philosophy as a synthesis of the views of two great predecessors: Marx and Freud.² It was in the works of both thinkers that he found satisfactory answers to the questions bothering him about human being, perceived in both the individual and the social dimensions.³ He valued Marx more, mainly for his innovative reinterpretation of German idealism, which, combined with the reality of empirical facts, initiated a new science of human being and society, ultimately leading to a deep and comprehensive approach to socio-economic phenomena.

Marx and Freud are characterized by a materialistic attitude. For the first of them, the primary reality is the empirical one, which consists of concrete people, their activities, and the material conditions in which they live.⁴ On this ground, all kinds of ideologies that define social consciousness arise. They can reflect the actual state of affairs, or, as is common, be some form of its distortion. According to Marx, it is the ideology prevailing in a given society that largely determines the way of thinking of its representatives. He called the distorted image of reality behind the veil of illusions and ideology "false consciousness."

Although such an attitude often helps to endure the hardships of broadly understood existence, it ultimately causes the degradation of human being, leading to his or her alienation. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel had already written about this phenomenon, but the Marxist theory of alienation is an extension of the

¹ F. Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution*, New York 2002, p. 41.

² E. Fromm, *Beyond the Chains of Illusion: My Encounter with Marx and Freud*, New York 2009, p. 5.

³ Ibidem.

⁴ K. Marx, F. Engels, "The German Ideology," transl. W. Lough, [in:] K. Marx, F. Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 5, Moscow 1976, p. 31.

concept found in Ludwig Andreas Feuerbach. Alienation occurs when a human individual takes some of his or her innate dispositions beyond himself, assigning them to external objects or abstract concepts. For this reason, the human becomes poorer as an individual and at the same time becomes dependent on those objects or concepts. Feuerbach sees Christianity in this way — as the disuniting of humankind from itself.⁵ Religion strips the human being of positive qualities such as good and then identifies them with God. In this way, human nature is deprived of noble motives; it becomes evil. In turn, God, being the depository of all that is good, gains autonomy, and as an idea, begins to dominate over humankind. Another form of alienation to which Marx devotes much attention, especially in his early writings, is alienated work. The activity of transforming nature in order to gradually liberate oneself from dependence on environmental conditions, leading to an improvement in the quality of life — is an innate feature of the human species. However, today's social system has led to estranged labour.⁶ Work no longer serves man, but man serves work. It has become an abstract concept, detached from the individual — the fetish for which individuals are striving. Thus, one can see a close relationship between the mental condition and the ideology prevailing in society. Only ideas based on an undistorted reflection of real social conditions can again lead to the internal integration of the individual and the further development of society.

The Marxist conception of a human being sees two dimensions in them. First, they are biological creatures that must survive.⁷ For this, they need food, clothing, and shelter. Second, humans are social beings in the sense that, to quote Adam Schaff, “he [sic!] is born in a specific society, in certain conditions and social relations, which he does not choose, but which are given as a result of the activities of previous generations.”⁸ In this way, his or her awareness is shaped by the social awareness of the group. On the other hand, society is made up of specific people who enter into specific relationships with each other. Thus, also individuals — through their activities' shaping material conditions — indirectly influence social consciousness. On the other hand, society is made up of specific people who enter into specific relationships with each other. Thus, also individuals, through their activities' shaping material conditions, indirectly influence social consciousness. Humankind does not have an ahistoric, unchanging nature; living in a specific place and time, human beings are shaped by the society to which they belong. Marx's concept of social development is dialectical; it is based mainly on the struggle of contradictory forces representing the dynamism of social groups. The main driving force behind the development of the current society is the antagonism between the contradictory aspirations of a small, wealthy group with power and the subordinate majority. Such an approach to history — called by Marx “the his-

⁵ L. Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, transl. G. Eliot, San Antonio 2008, p. 1.

⁶ K. Marx, “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844,” transl. M. Milligan, D. Struik, [in:] K. Marx, F. Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 3, Moscow 1975, p. 270.

⁷ K. Marx, F. Engels, “The German Ideology,” pp. 41–42.

⁸ A. Schaff, *Marksizm a jednostka ludzka*, Warszawa 1965, p. 39 (transl. A.K., M.S.).

tory of class struggles⁹ — makes it possible to understand the past, and to some extent, on the basis of the present socio-economic situation, to predict the further development of society.

While Marx sees humankind primarily as beings shaped by society, for Freud they are primarily biological beings guided by drives. These are stimuli that reach the mental apparatus and represent the needs of the body.¹⁰ They are characterized by energy, which is a measure of their intensity, and images of objects with which they can be satisfied. Freud called the infantile drives “this” in general, and the activity seeking to satisfy them “the pleasure principle.” However, the outside world has its own rules. In order to survive, an individual must coexist with other people and be able to find himself in the environment in which he or she lives; this is the “principle of reality.” In addition, humankind also has moral principles that arose mainly as a result of a positive solution to the Oedipus complex and under the influence of authorities. In this way, the individual formed the image of the “ideal self,” which Freud called “over-me.” Thus, human existence is entangled in antagonisms. Humans, as social beings, must find a compromise between satisfying the drives, the demands of the external world, and ingrained moral principles. An important novelty in Freudian thought is the introduction of the concept of the unconscious, in which all ideas related to drives arise. However, due to censorship, some of them do not reach the conscious part of the mental apparatus. The drive does not cease until its energy is discharged through satisfaction — therefore, in place of the repressed images, so-called substitute images appear. As a result, the individual directs his or her own action towards activities perceived as pathological — for example, compulsive handwashing, or towards a more noble activity, approved by society, such as artistic creation or charity. This view undermines the basic idea of the Cartesian postulate of self-knowledge, which is based on the assumption that the knowing subject’s self-awareness is unquestionable in terms of its truthfulness. According to this assumption, one can doubt the judgments concerning the outside world — but not the truthfulness of one’s own thoughts — directly experienced, constituting the self. By introducing the concept of the unconscious into clinical practice, Freud showed that there are antagonisms between the “conscious self” and the “real self.” However, it is not only images that have been repressed or distorted under the influence of censorship that contribute to a false self-perception. Research on hypnosis — which Freud learned during his stay in Paris — shows that, under the right conditions, it is possible to incorporate psychic contents from the outside, which a person undergoing hypnosis may mistake for personal experience or the effects of his or her own thoughts. The concept of the unconscious is also associated with the concept of character, which is an individual disposition of each person. It results from early childhood experiences, mainly from the course and resolution of the Oedipus complex. As a result,

⁹ K. Marx, F. Engels, “Manifesto of the Communist Party,” transl. N.N., [in:] K. Marx, F. Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 6, Moscow 1976, p. 482.

¹⁰ S. Freud, “Instincts and Their Vicissitudes,” transl. J. Strachey, [in:] *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, J. Strachey (ed.), vol. 14, London 1981, pp. 121–122.

mostly unconscious imagery structures are formed. Freud calls them figuratively “stereotype plate”¹¹ because they constitute a certain pattern according to which an individual enters into relationships with other people and also determines the area of his or her own interests. Fromm rightly notices that according to Freud, a human individual is mainly a being with autonomy;¹² guided by the principle of pleasure, he or she establishes relations with the opposite sex, which also benefits from it. In order to survive in the outside world, following the principle of reality, he or she is forced to suppress some of his urges from an early age. It is the fear of the father that drives out incestuous fantasies about the mother.¹³ Later, other authorities appear — by instilling a specific value system — they positively influence the social adaptation of an individual, but at the cost of its authenticity — often at the expense of mental health. In Freud’s thought, there is a clear conflict between the individual and society.

The creator of psychoanalysis formulated his own concept of mind. Taking from Wilhelm Maximilian Wundt his theory of the organization of lived experiences, combined with each other into complex structures of imaginations, he was able to formulate a theory of complexes that determine the human perception of the world and constituted the measure of undertaken activities.

There are three areas in the psyche:¹⁴ conscious, preconscious, and unconscious. Conscious is the term for the most immediate and unquestionable perception. The preconscious consists of images that can be brought to conscious without any major problems. On the other hand, all repressed experiences, especially concerning sexual development in early childhood, constitute the unconscious area. They can be discovered by using the so-called method of free associations, that is, the method based on associative jumps between related ideas that are close to the repressed content. However, the analysis of dreams, in which the unconscious is represented mainly by images that are its analogy (shift) or the summary and structure of fragments (compensation), is the basic cognitive method that Freud himself called “the royal road to the unconscious.”

The unconscious, however, is more than just a set of repressed images. It is also a source of innate knowledge, common to all people, which Freud calls outright: “unconscious pieces of knowledge.”¹⁵ It is a permanent relationship, independent of individual experience and cultural differences, between latent elements and the

¹¹ S. Freud, “The Dynamics of Transference,” transl. J. Strachey, [in:] *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, J. Strachey (ed.), vol. 12, London 1981, p. 100.

¹² E. Fromm, *Sigmund Freud’s Mission: An Analysis of His Personality and Influence*, New York 2013, p. 102.

¹³ S. Freud, “The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex,” transl. J. Strachey, [in:] *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, J. Strachey (ed.), vol. 19, London 1986, p. 176.

¹⁴ S. Freud, “The Ego and the Id,” transl. J. Strachey, [in:] *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, J. Strachey (ed.), vol. 19, London 1986, pp. 14–15.

¹⁵ S. Freud, “Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis,” transl. J. Strachey, [in:] *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, J. Strachey (ed.), vol. 15, London 1981, p. 165.

symbols that represent them. They mainly relate to the most primal relationships,¹⁶ mainly related to the body, parents, children, and nudity, as well as birth and death. For example, the house is the universal symbol of the body as a whole.

It is worth emphasizing the difference between the symbol generally understood and the concept used by Freud. Usually, a symbol is an object or image that relates to another object, often by convention. However, for the creator of psychoanalysis, the symbol is universal and unchanging; and it refers only to specific elements. On the other hand, representations of repressed content, resulting from individual experiences and distorted under the influence of censorship, Freud calls “substitute images,” or simply, “distortions.”

Based on these observations, we can attempt to define the concept of memory in Freud by distinguishing two aspects. One of them is discursive memory, related to pre-consciousness, shaped only under the influence of personal experiences and reflections. The second, on the other hand, is symbolic memory, unconscious, shaped by content repressed, resulting from individual experiences, related to universal knowledge — innate and proper to every human being.

Despite some significant differences, there are also many similarities in the views of Marx and Freud. They both went beyond pure materialism, adopting attitudes that could be described as psychologism. Although for Marx the basis is the perceived sensual world, social consciousness — although it grew out of the world of *physis* — constitutes a new quality that cannot be described in the natural sciences. Similarly, with Freud, the human body and its biological needs indeed constitute the basis and principle of all activity. However, Freud found all attempts to describe the psyche in the language of neurology unsuccessful¹⁷ — clearly breaking away from physicalism. Another common feature of both thinkers is the dynamic and dialectical description of reality. The development of both society and humankind is guided by various, often conflicting forces. After all, Marx and Freud were critical. Both saw the discrepancy between the real and the prevailing ideological images of humankind and society. They criticized the prevailing opinions, reaching the truth — understood as a distortion-free image of reality — because it is truth that conditions a healthy human existence.

Fromm’s Concept of Humankind

Fromm, like his intellectual predecessors, breaks with the naturalistic attitude. In his opinion, human existence cannot be reduced only to activities aimed at satisfying the needs related to the body. A human being also needs a system of views that constitute a frame of reference; are a touchstone of the activities undertaken by him or her; and above all, give meaning to life.¹⁸ Fromm alludes to the Book of Genesis, in which he sees a metaphorical image of the real human condition. The acquisition of cognitive autonomy was paid for by severing the original bond with

¹⁶ Ibidem, p. 153.

¹⁷ Z. Rosińska, *Freud*, Warszawa 2002, p. 39.

¹⁸ E. Fromm, *The Pathology of Normalcy*, New York 2010, p. 25.

nature, which symbolizes exile from Paradise. Humans have not only distanced themselves from God but have also come into conflict with nature and other representatives of their own species. According to Fromm, God symbolizes the ideal of a fully realized human being: the Bible says that the human being was created in His image and likeness.¹⁹ The individual, perceived to the full extent of his or her humanity, should actively work; live in relative harmony with society; and above all, fulfil himself in an individual dimension, in accordance with his or her innate dispositions. Being condemned to freedom, a person has to make his or her own decisions, choose the right ones from a potentially infinite number of objects and activities. For this he or she needs a specific “frame of orientation and devotion,”²⁰ which is one form of theistic or non-theistic religious attitude. Fromm has a clearly defined view of religiosity, so it is worth quoting his words: “any system of thought and action shared by a group which gives the individual a frame of orientation and an object of devotion.”²¹ Religion understood in this way is not only a characteristic of human nature, a response to individual needs related to broadly understood existence. It is also an expression of a person’s mental condition; it defines people’s attitude towards themselves and the outside world. Thus, all mental disorders can be equated with a private form of religiosity. According to Fromm, many cases of neuroses can be described with the use of language borrowed from religious studies, as they are a manifestation of the primary forms of religiosity.²² For example, the cult of a strong individual who heads a state or a particular social group is a special kind of totemism and idolatry. Obsessive-compulsive activities can also be perceived as a kind of private rituals related to the cult of purity. Of course not all religious attitudes are expressions of pathological personality; some of these holistic systems are signs of creativity and health.

A person’s uniqueness is evidenced by his or her personality; it consists of temperament and character. Temperament is unchanging, while character develops with the experience of the individual. It is constituted mainly during early childhood; however, due to self-analysis and new experiences, it may change.²³ Fromm agrees with Freud that character traits underlie human behaviour and are created by powerful forces that are often unconscious. However, unlike the creator of psychoanalysis, who associates character with a libidinal organization, Fromm focuses on the relationships that a person enters with the world through obtaining and assimilating things (assimilation) and bonding with people (socialization). Character is a substitute for instinct; it allows for spontaneous action without the need for constant reflection, and it also performs a selective function for ideas and values.²⁴ Fromm distinguishes four types of characters with non-productive orientations and

¹⁹ E. Fromm, *Psychoanalysis and Religion*, New Haven 1955, p. 49.

²⁰ E. Fromm, *Man for Himself: An Inquiry into the Psychology of Ethics*, Eastbourne 2006, pp. 47–48.

²¹ E. Fromm, *Psychoanalysis and Religion*, p. 21.

²² *Ibidem*, p. 29.

²³ E. Fromm, *Man for Himself*, p. 52.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 59.

one with productive orientation. They are components of the overall character of an individual, usually dominated by one type.²⁵

The receptive orientation. Persons belonging to this orientation see all good beyond themselves²⁶ — material objects, feelings, love, knowledge, and pleasure should be taken from an external source. They are focused on being loved; their love is a form of giving back for what they get. They are afraid of being left on their own — then they feel helpless. They are characterized by exaggerated conformism and trust towards others.

The exploitative orientation. As in the case of receptive people, these people look for all goods outside. However, they do not expect them from others in the form of gifts but win them by force or trickery.²⁷ They are jealous; cynical; and above all, manipulative. They have a relationship with the people they can exploit. They only fall in love with people related to someone — because, like an object, they can take it from someone else. Their views are also not original: they are plagiarized, are always ideas stolen from others.

The hoarding orientation. These people's sense of security is based on collecting and saving.²⁸ They withdraw from the outside world; they are characterized by distrust of everything that comes from outside. They are not taking anything, but they are also not willing to give anything. This also applies to feelings: they find intimacy threatening. In their world, they like order and control; so if they show interest in another person, they try to take her over.

The marketing orientation. People with this orientation perceive themselves as a commodity — on the labour or matrimonial market — and reduce their value to exchange value.²⁹ According to them, success depends mainly on the ability to “sell yourself” at the highest possible price; qualifications and personality do not matter much. They are characterized by shaky self-esteem, and they do not show interest in authentic life and happiness — they want only to be a “selling commodity.” They have no inner depth — under the mask of appearances — they are interested only in the current market trends in order to be able to adapt to them and increase their value. They see other people similarly: as a commodity valued by the market.

The productive orientation. It describes the type of a healthy person fully realized in the sense of developing inborn dispositions. This person perceives the world in its full dimension, without distortions and falsifications. At the same time, he or she actively participates in it, transforming and enriching it by using human mental and emotional abilities.³⁰ Such an individual's attitude towards other people is based on the principle of equality and a sense of siblinghood. On the one hand, he or she is a social being; and on the other, having a sense of self-worth, he or she maintains separateness and individuality.

²⁵ Ibidem, p. 61.

²⁶ Ibidem, p. 62.

²⁷ Ibidem, p. 64.

²⁸ Ibidem, p. 65.

²⁹ Ibidem, p. 69.

³⁰ Ibidem, p. 84.

Personality, and an individual's character in particular, is determined by his or her system of orientation and devotion. Human beings always belong to a society that has a specific value system, instilled in them from an early age by their parents and then various institutions, for example, schools and churches. Public opinion is also of great importance in shaping the consciousness of the human individual. If universally prevailing ideas do not reflect the character of a particular person, then that individual's self-awareness is distorted. Public opinion is also of great importance in shaping the consciousness of the human individual. If universally prevailing ideas do not reflect the character of an individual, then that person's self-awareness is distorted: firstly, by incorporating certain ideas that do not have an emotional basis — they are empty phrases, mistakenly considered part of one's own worldview and having no influence on the undertaken activity — and secondly, some behavioural forces are suppressed or rationalized in the form of socially acceptable attitudes. As an example, from the first group, Fromm gives the universally accepted idea of equality of all people;³¹ based on the results of the conducted research, it was found that for the majority of society this view is only a common opinion, not rooted in the emotional matrix of that individual's personality. On the other hand, a case of rationalization may be a passionate concern for another human being, which in fact masks the sadistic attitude of domination. In the process of discovering the actual attitude resulting from the character of a particular person, his or her worldview is examined in terms of inconsistencies and contradictions.³² If pathological impulses are identified, an individual, through productive work on himself or herself, can transform them and permanently change his or her character.³³ Fromm distinguishes three attitudes that are the source of pathological behaviour:³⁴ narcissism, alienation, and necrophilia. Narcissism places the reality of what is subjectively experienced over the objective outside world. In the extreme case — when the ability to correct one's beliefs under the influence of the outside world — is lost, it is a form of psychosis. In a moderate version, a narcissistic person is capable of getting to know the outside world, but only in an intellectual dimension. He or she is unable to show empathy as it requires the ability to go beyond the subjective self. Isolation is a different form of alienation. Schaff distinguished two types:³⁵ objective and subjective. Objective alienation refers to a human's creations, all kinds of material institutions and objects that were originally intended to serve that person but over time acquired autonomy and power, leading to bureaucracy and excessive consumption. Subjective alienation, on the other hand, concerns typically human features, detached from humans and objectified. In addition to the examples given by Feuerbach and Marx, Fromm addresses the problem of the alienation of language, which, from a natural disposition serving the purpose of learning about reality, became the creator of sterile worldviews limiting humankind. Necrophilia is a permanent disposition against

³¹ E. Fromm, *Psychoanalysis and Religion*, p. 61.

³² *Ibidem*, p. 85.

³³ E. Fromm, *Man for Himself*, p. 229.

³⁴ E. Fromm, *The Pathology of Normalcy*, pp. 91–106.

³⁵ A. Schaff, *Alienacja jako zjawisko społeczne*, Warszawa 1999.

life; it manifests itself in the form of destructive behaviours towards oneself and the outside world.

By overcoming alienation, narcissism, and necrophilia, human beings will become integrated, active, and creative individuals. Only in this way can they realize their humanity, experience life to its fullest, and achieve true happiness.

A human being, living in a specific place and time, by establishing relationships with the outside world, in particular with other people, realizes only a small part of his or her potential. However, mainly during dreams, when the psychic apparatus is cut off from the outside world and the influence of cultural conditions imposing certain cognitive schemas is weakened, then the individual can discover hidden knowledge about himself or herself, inaccessible to discursive thought while awake.³⁶ This hidden knowledge, peculiar to all people, is expressed in a universal way, mainly during sleep or in an influx of artistic inspiration — in symbolic language.

The Symbolic Language of the Unconscious

Erich Fromm, trying to penetrate the enigmatic matrix of the unconscious element of the human psyche, drew attention to the language through which what exists in the shadow of our being communicates with the sphere of the conscious “I.” The American psychoanalyst understood the conscious-unconscious dichotomy in what he said was functional, that is, one that referred to “the subjective state within the individual.”³⁷ He believed that the terms “conscious” and “unconscious” reflected his intuition regarding the content to which these terms referred. He understood both “conscious” and “unconscious” as kinds of states of the psyche, which he characterized in the following way:

Saying that the person is conscious of certain affects, etc., means *he is conscious* as far as these affects are concerned; saying that certain affects are unconscious means that he *is unconscious* as far as these contents are concerned. We must remember that “unconscious” does not refer to the absence of any impulse, feeling, desire, fear, etc., but only to the absence of *awareness* of these impulses.³⁸

Starting from the point of view outlined above, Fromm rejected the metaphor defining the human psyche as a spatial structure consisting of specifically understood levels. Such a structure can be represented by the image of the house (consciousness) and the basement (unconscious) beneath it; then the “unconscious” itself will be easily replaced, through its spatial reference, by the term “subconscious,” which is not approved by Fromm.³⁹

People who want to explore what, in their current experience, remains beyond the conscious sphere need to broaden the scope of their consciousness so as to see the contents hidden at the bottom of their minds, existing so far at a distance from their everyday experience (which does not prevent them from expressing them-

³⁶ E. Fromm, *The Revolution of Hope: Toward Humanized Technology*, New York 1968, p. 74.

³⁷ E. Fromm, *Psychoanalysis and Zen Buddhism*, New York 2013, p. 15.

³⁸ Ibidem.

³⁹ See ibidem, pp. 15–16.

selves in various human behaviour). The journey towards the unconscious begins with insight into the unconscious contents of mental processes such as thinking, feeling, or sensory experience; they all signal to the person interested in broadening awareness that something is alive and moving within that needs to be revealed and understood. Consciousness, following their signals, goes on a path towards self-knowledge.⁴⁰

Experiencing the unconscious contents of the mind, people are faced with a fundamental choice; they can see before them the chaos of images, words, feelings, instincts, and memories without inner meaning, or perceive in the abyss of the psychic world the meaning expressed by the psyche with, as noted by Fromm, the oldest, universal language of humankind: a symbolic language.

Symbolic language is a language in which inner experiences, feelings and thoughts are expressed as if they were sensory experiences, events in the outer world. It is a language which has a different logic from the conventional one we speak in the daytime, a logic in which not time and space are the ruling categories but intensity and association. It is the one universal language the human race has ever developed, the same for all cultures and throughout history. It is a language with its own grammar and syntax, as it were, a language one must understand if one is to understand the meaning of myths, fairy tales and dreams.⁴¹

An individual gains insight into symbolic life through systems of reference through which the unconscious is revealed. A dream, a myth, a fairy tale, and even a novel can speak symbolically to someone who dares to understand it, thus embarking on the path of self-knowledge, offering the truth about an individual as well as the wisdom hidden within myths and fairy tales — the cultural works of humanity.

Introducing the specificity of the language of the unconscious, Fromm focused on formulating a definition and creating a basic classification of symbols — figuratively speaking of the “atoms” that make up the communication system of the unconscious mind sphere. So what, according to the American psychoanalyst, is a symbol? Fromm answers this question as follows:

A symbol is often defined as “something that stands for something else.” This definition seems rather disappointing. It becomes more interesting, however, if we concern ourselves with those symbols which are sensory expressions of seeing, hearing, smelling, touching, standing for a “something else” which is an inner experience, a feeling or thought. A symbol of this kind is something outside ourselves; that which it symbolizes is something inside ourselves. Symbolic language is language in which we express inner experience as if it were a sensory experience, as if it were something we were doing or something that was done to us in the world of things. Symbolic language is language in which the world outside is a symbol of the world inside, a symbol for our souls and our minds.⁴²

⁴⁰ See an interesting technique of self-analysis, referring to Freud’s method of free associations, based on an open observation of the flow of various thoughts, sensations, and emotions, without controlling their flow, in order to reveal points of resistance (at which thought often automatically stops) and discovering hidden relationships between the elements of the process of becoming consciousness (E. Fromm, *The Art of Being*, New York 2013, p. 58).

⁴¹ E. Fromm, *The Forgotten Language*, New York 2013, p. 8; see also Immanuel Kant’s concept of *a priori* forms of time and space in M. Kuziak, *Słownik myśli filozoficznej*, Warszawa-Bielsko-Biała 2011, p. 216.

⁴² E. Fromm, *The Forgotten Language*, p. 12.

The symbol understood in this way was diversified by Fromm, bringing to life three categories of symbols:

a) conventional (usually these are words or other signs referring a person who understands their meaning to a conventionally — usually culturally — established complex of meanings);

b) accidental (related to the personal experiences of a given person, the relationship between the symbol and the symbolized one comes down to an accidental coincidence — a specific symbol acquires meaning for a person on the basis of an individual experience's creating a subjective sense of the symbol);

c) universal (common to all humankind, refer to the links between the symbol and what is symbolized deeply rooted in the human mind — fire, water, air, and earth are good examples of these symbols, as they express the internal relationship between the general human experience of these elements and the correspondence of the world of thoughts, moods, or feelings adequate to this experience).⁴³

What is cognitively interesting for the psychoanalyst is to understand the personal meaning of the last two groups of symbols displayed by the patient's unconscious. Discovering the meaning of symbols hidden inside the human mind is the fundamental goal of humanistic psychoanalysis, understood in the context of this chapter as a way of remembering the symbolic language of the unconscious that has been forgotten by humanity.⁴⁴

Dreams became the main area of research on the nature of symbolic language for Fromm. Leading his thoughts, he started with Freud's concept of dream:

[T]hey are psychical phenomena of complete validity — fulfilments of wishes; they can be inserted into the chain of intelligible waking mental acts; they are constructed by a highly complicated activity of the mind.⁴⁵

The above understanding of a dream focuses on perceiving it as the fulfilment of the dreamer's wish, which is the basis of Freud's interpretation of dreams; significantly, contrary to Fromm's thought that our dreams could express the irrational and vague as well as the rational and transparent aspects of man, Freud believed that a dream was essentially the fulfilment of an irrational wish.

Freud's theory [...] states [...] that we may have feelings and aspirations that drive our actions, but which we are not at all aware of. In Freudian terms, these are "unconscious aspirations," not because we are not aware of them, but because the strong action of "censorship" limits our ability to become aware of them. However, dreaming is another kind of behavioural element that Freud sees as the expression of unconscious pursuits. He claims that dreams reveal our unconscious aspirations, which are suppressed inside while awake. It also shows a similarity with the state of neurosis and mistakes, so it can be assumed that these ideas and feelings are found and come to life during sleep. They are called dreams by us.⁴⁶

The idea of censorship internalized in the psyche (having its source in culture), which affects the unconscious sphere of the human mind, prompted Freud to the

⁴³ Ibidem, pp. 12–16.

⁴⁴ Ibidem, pp. 8–9.

⁴⁵ S. Freud, "The Interpretation of Dreams," transl. I. Smith, [in:] *Complete Works*, https://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf (accessed: 10.04.2022), p. 622.

⁴⁶ M. Kowalska, *Koncepcje języka symbolicznego Ericha Fromma. Zapomniany język*, unpublished Bachelor's thesis, Wrocław 2003, p. 27.

concept of a dream as masked and distorted by this “censorship” product of the unconscious. Dreams understood in this way could use symbolic language to convey only “encrypted” messages in the form of images relating in a veiled manner to the unconscious and irrational desires of an individual symbolized by them.⁴⁷

The most significant difference between the concepts of symbolic language by Freud and Fromm is based on their understanding of the function of symbolic language itself; for the former it comes down to “encrypting” the message of irrational aspirations of the unconscious while for the latter it is to express both the irrational and rational aspect of the unconscious. The understanding of the function of symbolic language, opposing Freud’s concept and slightly different from Fromm’s approach, was introduced by Carl Gustav Jung, who identified symbolic language with its ability to reveal, by meaningful images, wisdom hidden in the field of the unconscious which transcends the psyche of an individual. Thus, Jung’s concept of the function of symbolic language, apart from its difference in the scope of the psychic contents conveyed by this language (in Fromm’s case, the scope of these contents includes, to put it simply, the Freudian unconscious strivings of the individual and the Jungian wisdom of the psyche hidden in the unconscious), differs from Fromm’s concept in that it refers to the Swiss psychiatrist’s belief that the symbols of the unconscious present reality that transcends the individual, become the same voice “from there.” Fromm, on the other hand, believed that the symbolic language of the unconscious expresses only the creations of our own mind, in a dream subjected to a dangerous but also inspiring freedom:⁴⁸

When we are asleep, we awake to another form of existence. We dream. We invent stories which never happened and sometimes for which there is not even any precedent in reality. Sometimes we are the hero, sometimes the villain; sometimes we see the most beautiful scenes and are happy; often we are thrown into extreme terror. But whatever the role we play in the dream we are the author, it is our dream, we have invented the plot.⁴⁹

Referring to the phrase from the quotation, we would like to ask at the end of this chapter an intriguing question: isn’t it sometimes so, that in order to wake up from a hazy reality often experienced while awake, one does not have to fall asleep to wake up again?

Towards Existence — To Have or to Be? That Is the Question!

In considering the question “Who is man?” Erich Fromm tried to answer it by distinguishing two primary human references to humanity, existence, and the world. He called the first of them the having mode, and the second the being mode.

[H]aving and being are two fundamental modes of experience, the respective strengths of which determine the differences between the characters of individuals and various types of social character.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ E. Fromm, *The Forgotten Language*, pp. 41–42.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 53–54.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 6.

⁵⁰ E. Fromm, *To Have or to Be?*, London-New York 1997, p. 14.

Orientation towards having determines the living of people and the dominant plane of their identification, because they identify their value and the meaning of life primarily with the value of things they own (including themselves), making themselves and everything outside of them a potential object to acquire and consume, being thrown out. Fromm analyzes the having mode as follows:

The sentence “I have something” expresses the relation between the subject, *I* (or he, we, you, they), and the object, *O*. It implies that the subject is permanent and the object is permanent. But is there permanence in the subject? Or in the object? I shall die; I may lose the social position that guarantees my having something. The object is similarly not permanent: it can be destroyed, or it can be lost, or it can lose its value. Speaking of having something permanently rests upon the illusion of a permanent and indestructible substance. If I seem to have everything, I have — in reality — nothing, since my having, possessing, controlling an object is only a transitory moment in the process of living.⁵¹

The experience of having carries with it an easily overlooked illusion of the immutability of the possessing subject and the possessed; in fact, as Fromm notices, this invariability boils down to a certain perception rigidly focused on “freezing” the flow of life, which in itself escapes the consciousness of the owner, trying to comprehend, enslave, and make it — against its nature — unchanging.

The nature of life for Fromm is linked to his processual character; humans, depending on the approach presented, on the level of possession try to convince themselves that both they and their things are of unchanging character; but what would happen if people ceased to constantly indoctrinate themselves? Perhaps then “being” would mean more to them than “having?” Perhaps then they would discover what exists beyond the words of a conventional symbolic language? Fromm was reluctant to describe the being mode he had distinguished because he remained faithful to the conviction that being cannot be contained even in the subtlest sense.⁵² But when he wrote about being, he put it in these words:

The mode of being has as its prerequisites independence, freedom, and the presence of critical reason. Its fundamental characteristic is that of being active, not in the sense of outward activity, of busyness, but of inner activity, the productive use of our human powers. To be active means to give expression to one’s faculties, talents, to the wealth of human gifts with which — though in varying degrees — every human being is endowed. It means to renew oneself, to grow, to flow out, to love, to transcend the prison of one’s isolated ego, to be interested, to “list,” to give.⁵³

Being is fulfilled in the same way in love, giving and realizing the talents innate to humankind, which help humans to express in life the fullness of their nature — the potential of the minds of individual and unique persons, revealing themselves to themselves, thus opening the lid of the box in which closed was the living presence of existence, hidden under the “mask” of the colourless existence of a human being of everyday life. So let us ask an important, thought-provoking question: how are we to cultivate the art of existence?

It seems that the ability to concentrate is the basis for practicing the art of existence. Fromm encourages a modern Westerner to exercise concentration, even for

⁵¹ Ibidem, p. 63.

⁵² Ibidem, pp. 71–72.

⁵³ Ibidem, p. 72.

a few or several minutes a day, which, in his opinion, can help an individual living in chronic distraction.⁵⁴ With reference to the above, it should be noted that cultivating the art of existence does not require a person to act in relation to the constant mastery of the world of things and people. The old Chinese sage Lao Tzu once expressed words containing the spirit of Fromm's concept of the art of existence:

To conquer the world, one must renounce the effort.
When there is effort
The world is slipping through your hands.⁵⁵

This is the case with the practice of existence, which — paradoxically — cannot be “practiced” in the conventional sense; existence can only be — become more of it, the less you are focused on having and “freezing” the process of living in the mind of a man trained by contemporary culture, wishing to comprehend the world.

We can now return to the question posed in the title of this chapter — “To Have or to Be?” — which leads us to the resolution of one of the most significant issues of philosophical anthropology — the question “Who is humanity?”

In the above-mentioned question, as Fromm notices, the word “who” plays a fundamental role because the question itself assumes that we are asking about a person, not a thing. This is a fundamental difference. If we were to ask “What is humanity?,” then there would be a possibility that we would objectify him in the very question, and thus also ourselves; thus to the question “What am I?” we would have to answer “I am something;” “I am a thing.”⁵⁶ Fromm, trying to think about the question “Who is man?” at one point in his speech, he unexpectedly replies:

Man is not something that can in some way be described from the outside, it can only be defined through one's own experience of being human. The question “Who is man?” leads to the question: “Who am I?” If we do not want to make the mistake of describing a man as a thing, then the answer to the question “who am I?” cannot be any different than: human.⁵⁷

Of all the possible answers, the simplest one hits the heart of the question that has been troubling the minds of the greatest thinkers of Western civilization for nearly 2,500 years. Perhaps accepting the simplicity of the answer, with the fact that from behind the philosophical horizon of thoughts his own reflection looks at human being, it is not easy at all because to accept this answer, one must, at least for a moment, find a distance from the constant activity of human memory, which suggests various answers and allows us to refer back to the word “human” into a sphere that, poetically speaking, resembles the flight of a bird soaring above the horizon of history.

This text has led to a point at which a perverse question should be asked: how can one understand the value of memory against the background of Fromm's conception of humanity examined above? Much depends on how you approach the seat of memories; by focusing on an attitude oriented to the having mode, we consider

⁵⁴ E. Fromm, *The Art of Being*, pp. 39–40.

⁵⁵ R.L. Wing, *Tao Mocy*, transl. M. Lipa, Gliwice 2010, p. 121.

⁵⁶ E. Fromm, *O miłości do życia*, transl. J. Dudek, E. Kiersztura-Wojciechowska, Kraków 2018, p. 171.

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 172 (transl. A.K., M.S.).

memory as our property, a collection of memories that define, like material objects, who we consider ourselves to be, thus shifting our sense of identity from being rooted to memories — things reifying “human” — one of the memories from the collection.

A person in a very simple, though not easy way, can exceed the collector’s orientation discussed earlier (*the hoarding orientation*). It is enough to open your mind to the life “here and now.” In the element of writing, the above statement sounds as intelligent as it is banal. But the whole point is that this “here and now life,” before we make it a concept that we can understand, compare, question, or hermeneutically or analytically manipulate, is happening now; thus it creates a constantly returning moment of the directness of being, and the one experienced time and time again by a human being gives cyclically repeated possibility of becoming aware of it and thus the possibility of creative involvement in the currently lived experience. Sensitivity to the present moment helps people observing the movement of their memory not to lose themselves in the not so much overcrowded as claustrophobic storehouse of their memories. Thanks to it, a thinker discovering the inside of the psyche can experience a memory as a flash of the old present, which during introspection comes to life “again” like an image representing a more or less precise representation of a past situation.

The symbolic language that, according to Fromm, is “used” by the unconscious side of the human mind creates what we want to call *a symbolic expression*. It is a sequence of dream images experienced in a dream state. On the borderline between the absolute silence of a deeply dormant consciousness and an extroverted, fully conscious mind, a person can experience perhaps the most natural and spontaneous *a symbolic expression* of self that he or she would never have imagined.

According to Fromm, humans appear as beings seeking understanding. Understanding is honouring the inner truth.⁵⁸ Honouring the inner truth, we consent to ourselves as well as to who we are (this consent does not mean supporting ourselves in unethical actions). Sometimes it is a difficult task, sometimes easier than it seems; it is certain, however, that the path of self-understanding leads *to*, and paradoxically, *from* the point where the philosophical wanderer honours himself, even for a moment regaining the breath that people escaping freedom lack.

Thus, failure to escape from inner truth makes one free. Freedom of action turns one towards being. And *the freedom of being*, such a concept we propose, allows one to achieve the peace of the observer seated comfortably inside the not very comfortable space of the psyche, full of roughness and potholes, but still his own, the one he honoured.

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⁵⁸ This thought comes from an overheard statement, the author of which cannot be identified.

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RECENZJE

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Odrzucona tradycja, czyli o domniemanym sprzeciwie Kościoła katolickiego wobec kary śmierci

Tomasz Snarski, *Kościół katolicki wobec kary śmierci. Między prawem a filozofią i teologią*, Więź, Warszawa 2021, ss. 190.

Dopuszczalność kary śmierci stanowi jedno z najbardziej fundamentalnych zagadnień z dziedziny filozofii, prawa oraz teologii. Tomasz Snarski, dostrzegając powagę tej kwestii, rozważa ją w kontekście zmiany, jaka dokonana została w nauce moralnej Kościoła katolickiego w 2018 roku (zamiana treści punktu 2267 Katechizmu Kościoła Katolickiego¹). Jak stwierdza autor, modyfikacja wprowadzona przez papieża Franciszka „jednoznacznie formułuje stanowisko wykluczające przypadki usprawiedliwionego moralnie stosowania kary śmierci” (s. 16). Na kolejnych stronach swej książki Tomasz Snarski chce przedstawić szerszy teoretyczny kontekst zagadnienia kary śmierci, osadzić ją w historii Kościoła, a także przedstawić, w jaki sposób kwestia moralna — dopuszczalność kary śmierci — wiąże się z zagadnieniami prawnymi i teologicznymi. Przedstawia trzy tezy, których chce bronić w swym studium. Po pierwsze, iż nauka moralna Kościoła katolickiego na temat kary śmierci nie czerpie jedynie z Objawienia, ale bierze także pod uwagę to, co jest wynikiem rozważań filozoficznych i prawnych. Po wtóre, autor chce dowieść, iż Kościół katolicki, chociaż potocznie kojarzony z akceptacją kary śmierci, przez wiele wieków swojego istnienia prezentował „sceptyczne” stanowisko w tej kwestii, nie akceptując jej jako coś oczywistego. Po trzecie, T. Snarski twierdzi, iż zmiana nauczania w kwestii kary śmierci wynika z uwypuklenia i podkreślenia we współ-

¹ Zob. Katechizm Kościoła Katolickiego, pkt 2267, <http://www.katechizm.opoka.org.pl/rkkkIII-2-2.htm> (dostęp: 20.12.2021). Wersja internetowa jest opracowywana na podstawie wydania Katechizmu z 1994 r.; zob. *Katechizm Kościoła Katolickiego*, Poznań 1994. W recenzji w formie skróconej: KKK.

czesnym namyśle etycznym i teologicznym takich idei jak świętość życia ludzkiego, sprawiedliwość naprawcza oraz miłosierdzie.

Książka składa się z trzech rozdziałów. W pierwszym Snarski przedstawia podstawowe pojęcia filozoficzne i prawne związane z karą śmierci. Wymienia występujące w literaturze prawnofilozoficznej teorie kary kryminalnej, stwierdzając, iż przyjęcie danej teorii kary wpływa w pewnej mierze na to, jakie zostanie przyjęte stanowisko w kwestii dopuszczalności kary śmierci. Dostrzegając niewystarczalność samej koncepcji kary, Snarski wskazuje, że przyjmowana koncepcja sprawiedliwości karnej także ma znaczenie przy określaniu stanowiska względem kary śmierci. Wymienia dwie koncepcje, które nazywa „tradycyjnie dominującymi” (s. 33) — koncepcję sprawiedliwości retrybucyjnej oraz koncepcję sprawiedliwości utylitarnej; przywołuje także współcześnie rozwijające się stanowisko sprawiedliwości naprawczej. W sposób niebezpośredni, ale jednak wyraźny, autor daje do zrozumienia, iż jego zdaniem ujęcie zgodne z wymogami sprawiedliwości naprawczej jest słuszne, zaś model zgodny ze sprawiedliwością retrybucyjną uznaje za Wojciechem Zalewskim za „oparty na filozofii cierpienia”² (s. 33). Na kolejnych stronach rozdziału pierwszego T. Snarski prezentuje genezę abolicjonizmu w kwestii kary śmierci, a także przedstawia historyczny przebieg odchodzenia od wykonywania kary śmierci w systemach prawa międzynarodowego oraz praw krajowych. Następnie, autor prezentuje możliwe do przyjęcia w dyskusji na ten temat stanowiska, między innymi abolicjonizm i retencjonizm. Przedstawia także najczęściej spotykane w literaturze przedmiotu i publicystyce argumenty za dopuszczalnością kary śmierci i przeciw niej (s. 62–65). Autor kończy rozdział pierwszy, przeciwstawiając sobie dwa stanowiska z łona Kościoła katolickiego — retencjonistyczne stanowisko o. Tadeusza Ślipki SJ oraz abolicjonistyczne stanowisko św. Jana Pawła II (i innych).

W rozdziale drugim autor stara się pokazać przemianę, jaka w ciągu wielu wieków dokonała się nauczaniu Kościoła katolickiego w kwestii kary śmierci — od „warunkowej aprobaty” do „zdecydowanego odrzucenia”. Odwołując się do fragmentów biblijnych — przypowieści o Kainie i Ablu oraz Kazania na Górze — autor chce wskazać różnicę, jaka występuje między Starym a Nowym Testamentem w kontekście moralnej nauki Kościoła katolickiego dotyczącej karania przestępców. O ile Stary Testament ma zawierać w sobie naukę o charakterze retrybucyjnym (sprawiedliwości odwetowej), o tyle Nowy Testament ma prezentować naukę „radikalnego miłosierdzia”, „miłosierdzia jako najwyższej formy sprawiedliwości” (s. 95). Następnie Snarski przywołuje stanowiska myślicieli chrześcijańskich, takich jak św. Klemens Aleksandryjski, Lanktancjusz, Tertulian, Orygenes, św. Augustyn, św. Tomasz z Akwinu, bł. Jan Duns Szkot czy św. Tomasz Morus, chcąc pokazać, iż nie akceptowali oni stosowania kary śmierci bez ograniczeń. Przywołuje zasadę niesprzeciwiania się złu św. Augustyna, jednocześnie wskazując, iż biskup Hippony dopuszczał stosowanie kary śmierci wobec heretyków, schizmatyków czy najcięższych zbrodniarzy. Przywołuje odwołujące się do dobra wspólnego uzasadnienie kary śmierci, które sformułował św. Tomasz z Akwinu, a także woluntarystyczne

² Zob. W. Zalewski, *Sprawiedliwość naprawcza. Początek ewolucji polskiego prawa karnego?*, Gdańsk 2006, s. 328.

uzasadnienie jej wykonywania Jana Dunsza Szkota. Jako głos odrębny przywołuje między innymi uwagi św. Tomasza Morusa. W ostatniej części rozdziału rzedstawia zmianę, jaka zaszła w KKK w kontekście punktu 2267. Wyraża przekonanie, iż kolejne modyfikacje tego punktu (wraz z punktami 2266 oraz 2270) doprowadziły ostatecznie do tego, że Kościół katolicki w swym oficjalnym nauczaniu stoi na stanowisku „abolicjonizmu radykalnego”. Zmiany były, zdaniem autora, wynikiem rozwoju personalizmu katolickiego, a także otwarcia się Kościoła katolickiego po Soborze Watykańskim II na różnorodne niekatolickie nurty filozoficzne.

Rozdział trzeci służy autorowi do wskazania, że przeciwko wykonywaniu kary śmierci przemawiają idee świętości życia ludzkiego oraz godności osoby. Ze względu na indywidualność i wyjątkowość każdej osoby oraz jej nienaruszalną godność niedopuszczalne jest zdaniem Snarskiego wykonywanie kary śmierci. Kwestię sprawiedliwości autor przedstawia w kontekście miłosierdzia, które od przyjścia Chrystusa ma konstytuować chrześcijańską naukę na temat kary śmierci. Restytucyjny charakter kary śmierci, obecny w Starym Testamencie, miał zostać podważony, zaś odpłata osiągnana przez ukaranie przestępcy, zastąpiona dążeniem do tego, aby przez karę przestępca mógł się poprawić. Innymi słowy według Snarskiego, wymogi sprawiedliwości stały się inne, gdy dopełniło je miłosierdzie Chrystusowe. Miłosierdzie to ma dotyczyć zarówno sfery prywatnej, jak i sfery publicznej, stąd niedopuszczalnym ma być zabicie zbrodniarza, gdyż byłaby to publiczna zbrodnia naruszająca świętość jego życia. Retencjonizm ma być niezgodny z nauką Kościoła katolickiego i w ogóle z nauką Chrystusową, która ponad sprawiedliwość retributywną wyniosła miłosierdzie.

Kończąc swe rozważania, autor na nowo wskazuje najważniejsze czynniki, które legły u podstaw zmiany nauki Kościoła katolickiego: (i) wyniesienie na pierwszy plan świętości życia ludzkiego, (ii) wpływ współczesnych nauk prawnych i filozoficznych (idea sprawiedliwości naprawczej, personalizm), (iii) prymat idei miłosierdzia.

Zaletą studium Tomasza Snarskiego są jasno przeprowadzone rozważania wstępne dotyczące głównych pojęć, koncepcji i teorii związanych z problematyką kary śmierci. Wyrażna jest biegłość autora w rekonstruowaniu zagadnień prawnych, co wskazuje na jego interdyscyplinarne przygotowanie.

Jednakże praca Snarskiego nie jest wolna od błędów, które w znacznym stopniu ograniczają jej wartość merytoryczną. Uderzająca jest skrótowość przeprowadzanych analiz, a także niewielki nacisk na badanie argumentów przemawiających za przedstawianymi hipotezami. Wada ta dotyczy analiz poświęconych zarówno stanowisku abolicjonistycznemu, jak i stanowisku retencjonistycznemu.

Już we wprowadzeniu, gdy przywoływany jest pogląd o. Woronieckiego, autor nie odnosi się do różnicy, jaka występuje między odwetem wykonywanym przez osoby prywatne a państwową karą śmierci, a zamiast tego wskazuje dość ogólnie, że kara śmierci jest niemożliwa do pogodzenia z przymiotami Boga i przebaczeniem (s. 22).

Autor w sposób niezadowalający odnosi się do jednego z najważniejszych elementów koncepcji retencjonistycznej, jakim jest wina skazanego. Formułuje następujący argument: „Zresztą może dopowiedzieć przeciwnik kary śmierci, w rzeczywistości żaden człowiek nie jest pozbawiony winy moralnej na skutek swojego postępowania, a więc przystanie na postulowane przez retencjonistów wyjątki mo-

głoby doprowadzić następnie do niebezpiecznych relatywizacji i w rezultacie zdecydowanie osłabiłoby ochronę życia ludzkiego” (s. 76). Wbrew temu, co twierdzi autor, relatywizacji dokonują nie ci, którzy przypisują przestępcy winę za popełnienie pewnej ciężkiej zbrodni, ale ci, którzy rozmywiają pojęcie winy moralnej za określony czyn, zamieniając ją na koncepcję bycia winnym w ogóle. Wydaje się, że takie odniesienie się do tego elementu koncepcji retencjonistycznej jest raczej próbą zignorowania tego zagadnienia niż jakimkolwiek rzeczowym rozważaniem go. Jest to znaczący błąd, gdyż kategoria winy jest zasadnicza nie tylko dla zagadnienia kary śmierci, ale całego prawa karnego.

Zasadniczą wadą rozdziału drugiego studium jest prezentowanie tezy o niemożliwości pogodzenia wykonywania kary śmierci oraz Chrystusowego miłosierdzia, przy jednoczesnym ograniczeniu znaczenia pojęcia miłosierdzia zarówno co do treści, jak i osób, których ona dotyczy. Co do ograniczenia treści, miłosierdzie zostaje w studium sprowadzone do aktów przebaczenia winy. Ograniczenie osobowe zaś polega na prawie całkowitym pomijaniu ofiary i skupianiu się jedynie na przestępcy, któremu wszyscy są winni akty miłości. Snarski w ogóle nie rozważa możliwości wykonywania kary śmierci z miłości do osób, których ona dotyczy, zarówno ofiary, jak i przestępcy (dla którego lepsze jest zostać ukaranym niż pozostać bez kary). Poza tym posługuje się dychotomią o charakterze bardziej publicystycznym niż teologicznym, między surową i odwetową sprawiedliwością Starego Testamentu a miłosierdziem Nowego Testamentu. Jest to oczywiście pozorna różnica, gdyż Stary Testament i Nowy Testament stanowią jedność, o czym Kościół katolicki naucza w KKK³. Na jedność nauki wskazuje także sam Chrystus, gdy mówi: „Nie sądzicie, że przyszedłem znieść Prawo albo Proroków. Nie przyszedłem znieść, ale wypełnić” (Mt 5, 17). Trzeba zauważyć, że autor pisze swoją książkę tak, jakby w ogóle nie uświadamiał sobie problematyczności swojej interpretacji relacji między Starym Testamentem a Nowym Testamentem, uznając ją całkowicie oczywistą.

Omawiając stanowiska ważnych myślicieli katolickich, autor popełnia kilka znaczących błędów interpretacyjnych. Prezentując stanowisko św. Tomasza, stara się wskazać, że Akwinata nie był radykalnym represjonistą. Jednak na poparcie tej tezy przedstawia fragment dzieła Etienne’a Gilsona, w którym francuski tomista odnosi się nie tyle do wykonywania kary śmierci przez państwo (jednostki działające w imieniu państwa), ile do przypadków pozbawienia kogoś życia w ramach obrony koniecznej⁴ (s. 102). Podobnie ma się sprawa z interpretacją fragmentu *Utopii* Tomasza Morusa (s. 104–105), w której autor nie zauważa, że w cytowanym fragmencie Morus wskazuje, iż niesprawiedliwe i przeciwnie jest stosowanie kary śmierci za przestępstwa inne niż morderstwo, a także, iż niewystarczające są legalistyczne uzasadnienia kary śmierci, czyli takie, które odnoszą się jedynie do prawnego statusu popełnionego czynu (przy czym prawo rozumiane jest jako prawo pozytywne)⁵. Nie rozpoznając tych zagadnień, autor traci na wiarygodności, cała zaś praca na wartości merytorycznej.

³ Zob. Katechizm Kościoła Katolickiego pkt 112 oraz 128–130.

⁴ Zob. E. Gilson, *Tomizm. Wprowadzenie do filozofii św. Tomasza*, tłum. J. Rybałt, Warszawa 1998, s. 358–359.

⁵ Zob. T. Morus, *Utopia*, tłum. K. Abgarowicz, Warszawa 1954, s. 91–93.

T. Snarski wykazuje niestety całkowite niezrozumienie stanowiska retencjonistycznego, wskazując, że zwolennicy kary śmierci ekstrapolują na poziom państwa zasady i reguły właściwe w odniesieniu do jednostek (s. 141–142). Takie stanowiska się zdarzają, zwłaszcza w kręgach myślicieli libertariańskich, jednakże nie jest to bliskie myśli społecznej Kościoła katolickiego. Wbrew opinii autora, a zgodnie z nauką Kościoła katolickiego należy stwierdzić, iż w sferze działań, których przedmiotem jest życie jednostek państwo posiada znacznie większe uprawnienia niż jednostki. Są to uprawnienia istotowo różne, stąd nie można po prostu przenosić na poziom państwowy wniosków rozważań nad obroną konieczną jednostek. W taki sposób o uprawnieniach państwa do wykonywania kary śmierci piszą, przywoływani przez Tomasza Snarskiego, o. Jacek Woroniecki czy o. Tadeusz Ślipko, stąd dziwi, że autor w ogóle tego nie zauważa.

Jedną z większych wad omawianej książki jest ponadto niedokonanie szczegółowej analizy nowego brzmienia punktu 2267 KKK. Tym bardziej że zmiana ta ma przecież stanowić przełom w dotychczasowym nauczaniu Kościoła katolickiego na temat (dopuszczalności) kary śmierci. Gdyby autor przeprowadził taką analizę, to zauważyłby, że pierwsza część punktu 2267 jest akceptowana przez większość zwolenników kary śmierci, którzy nie uznają skazanego na karę śmierci za pozbawionego godności ludzkiej⁶. Niezgoda powstaje dopiero wtedy, gdy wykonywanie kary śmierci ma w jakiś sposób niweczyć ową godność, co jednak nie zostaje wyrażone w samym punkcie 2267 KKK⁷. Zwolennicy kary śmierci uznają, że kara śmierci nie tylko nie jest działaniem przeciwko godności danej osoby, ale w rzeczywistości jest wykonywana z uwagi na ową godność⁸. Człowiek, jako obdarzony wolną wolą, jest skazywany właśnie dlatego, że jest zdolny ponosić odpowiedzialność za dokonane przez siebie czyny; to właśnie przeciwnicy kary śmierci odbierają człowiekowi jego godność, gdy uznają go za niezdolnego do odpowiadania za siebie i twierdzą, że jego przestępstwo jest jedynie skutkiem okoliczności, w których przyszło mu żyć. Co więcej, autor w ogóle nie odnotował tego, że obecnym brzmieniu punkt 2267 KKK odwołuje się do systemów społecznych — takich jak zakłady karne czy inne ośrodki izolacji — które mają zapewniać bezpieczeństwo obywatelom i dawać przestępcy możliwość poprawienia się. Powstaje jednak pytanie: czy wraz z rozpadem tych instytucji społecznych nie zniknie także zakaz wykonywania kary śmierci? Można zatem stwierdzić, że Kościół katolicki sprzeciwia się wykonywaniu kary śmierci dopóty, dopóki istnieją rozbudowane systemy penitencjarne, dające możliwość odbycia przez przestępców kar wieloletniego, a nawet dożywotniego pozbawienia wolności.

Konkludując niniejszą recenzję, należy stwierdzić, że od samego początku lektury omawianej książki uderza jednostronność prowadzonych rozważań, w których

⁶ Katechizm Kościoła Katolickiego pkt 2267: „Dziś coraz bardziej umacnia się świadomość, że osoba nie traci swej godności nawet po popełnieniu najcięższych przestępstw”.

⁷ Papież Franciszek wyraził takie przekonanie, jednakże jego wypowiedzi na ten temat nie mają statusu nauki całego Kościoła katolickiego; zob. Franciszek, *Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to Participants in the Meeting Promoted by the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization*, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2017/october/documents/papa-francesco_20171011_convegno-nuova-evangelizzazione.html (dostęp: 20.12.2021).

⁸ Zob. J.A. Świdziński, *Kara śmierci. W obronie życia ludzkiego*, Kraków 2009, s. 54–58.

autor chce raczej wyrazić własną opinię na omawiany temat, niż rzeczowo omówić stanowisko Kościoła katolickiego w tej sprawie⁹. Wielka skrótowość analiz oraz pojawiające się dosyć często merytoryczne błędy sprawiają, że teza, iż Kościół katolicki stoi na stanowisku „radikalnie abolicjonistycznym”, nie zostaje potwierdzona, całe zaś studium wydaje się nieprzekonujące, mając znacznie ograniczoną wartość naukową.

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⁹ Zgodzić się należy z Piotrem Chrzanowskim, który książkę Snarskiego nazywa manifestem, a nie rzeczową analizą; zob. P. Chrzanowski, *Abolicjonizm: opium dla przewrażliwionych inteligentów*, „Christianitas” 5.07.2021, <http://christianitas.org/news/abolicjonizm-nie-do-konca-konsekwentny/> (dostęp: 22.12.2021).

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