

Book Reviews

Serena Parekh, *Hannah Arendt and the Challenge of Modernity. A Phenomenology of Human Rights*, New York & London: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group 2008, pp. 234, ISBN 9780415961080.

It is never easy to review a book that is itself a review of some other book or someone else's output; one always has to cautiously distinguish between the views of the author and of the person whose books are scrutinized by that author. Fortunately, Serena Parekh has made this task much simpler by carefully providing the reader of her insights into Hannah Arendt's phenomenology of human rights with a clear distinction of which views are to be ascribed to whom. For that, as a reviewer of her work, I owe her gratitude.

Serena Parekh, an Assistant Professor in the Department of Philosophy and the Human Rights Institute at the University of Connecticut, deals with Hannah Arendt's concern about the impossibility and, at the same time, the necessity of human rights in the modern era. That is certainly the main and the most profound paradox of human rights as seen through the prism of Hannah Arendt's enormous output: human rights have started to be politically invoked in an era when it is no longer possible to justify them, and at the same time they are more necessary than ever. However, Hannah Arendt did not stop at indicating and proving that tragic impossibility of human rights; she tried to find an adequate justification for human rights within the conditions of modernity.

Modernity meant a radical change in how we understood our selves, our world, and the values that regulated them. In modernity, values lost their foundation—either in God or in nature. It is precisely when this happens that human rights, grounded on the value and dignity of human life, are asserted in their modern political form (p. 1).

According to Parekh, Arendt's awareness of this paradox allowed her to avoid falling into either "reckless optimism" or "reckless despair," the first being a characteristic of people who thought that the late 20th century political practice found a way to avoid the repetition of the horrible atrocities of World War II, the second often being a penchant of people who

had witnessed those atrocities. Arendt knew that the fact that the totalitarianism she had luckily managed to escape from actually collapsed did not mean that the particular conditions that allowed totalitarianism to rise are no longer present in the world. The awareness of this continually existing threat was her reason for writing *The Origins of Totalitarianism* in 1948 (the year the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was proclaimed), the work which is the focus of Parekh's analysis.

The unique feature of modernity according to Arendt's description is the fact of "world alienation." "After the eclipse of transcendence, people were not thrown back into the world as it is often believed, but rather withdrew into themselves." The loss of a "common world" was thus a "fertile ground for the destruction of human dignity entailed in totalitarianism" (p. 3). Defeating totalitarianism did not mean automatically regaining this common world, but Arendt's work was supposed to contribute to the restoration of this lost feature. However, the highest and most dangerous form of alienation occurred during World War II as the state of rightlessness, a necessary condition for which is statelessness, something that Arendt herself experienced (she was granted American citizenship in 1950, so for almost ten years after she fled from occupied France she lived as a stateless person). To become completely rightless means to lose two intrinsic features of the human condition: "the relevance of speech and the ability to act in concert with others." These two characteristics "have since Aristotle's time been thought of as essential to what it means to be human" (p. 29).

Action and speech are essential to the human condition because they determine a human being's place in the political life dominated by *plurality*. Plurality is defined by two other characteristics: equality and distinction. This equality is neither "the abstract political equality of the French Revolution" nor "the moral equality before God," but rather it is based on the ability shared by all humanity to "communicate and understand each other." Only when one understands the meaning of one's words and the significance of one's actions can that person constitute her self. Another characteristic of human beings is the propensity to formulate "opinions"—politics is not the realm of truth, "since truth, in an objective absolute sense, is too coercive." Politics based on truth would not require speech or action. Politics is rather based on opinions, which are the perceptions of truth by particular people (pp. 32-33). Thus there is nothing strange, Arendt believed, in the fact that the Nazis did not just kill Jews without ado. They first took away the meaning of their speech and actions; withdrew their right to formulate opinions and deprived them of the most fundamental of all rights—"the right to have rights." By doing that the Nazis made sure that nobody would claim their rights once the killing started.

The central question of Arendt's reflections is how to guarantee human rights. What is the nature of human rights? Are these rights objective, derived from nature, or subjective? According to Arendt none of these answers is correct. Rights are intersubjective, "created through political commitment." We are not born with human rights but rather these rights come into being by virtue of our decisions. How is it thus possible that they are not subjective? To answer that we have to first answer the basic question about the nature of equality. "Equality is not some objective reality, but it is not a subjective illusion either—it is made real through our intersubjective understanding, solidified in the common realm, and thereby conditions us as human beings." Therefore "human rights have precisely the same status: they are neither created and subjective, nor natural or objective, but rather, made real through us and through our political commitment" (p. 35). Rights are recognized by acknowledging the possibility of speaking and acting by others. Speech and action are meaningful only when done in accordance with others. What's more, rights are not only created by us, but they also *condition* us, they become part of the human condition.

Equality is one of the conditions for political action—we can only act with others who are our equals. In this sense, the conditions for action rest upon human rights, insofar as they guarantee our equality. Since acting is necessary for my own self-disclosure, my full human existence is dependent upon instituting human rights. The motivation to insist on human rights is not merely an abstract belief nor a practical concern to avoid the horrors that we saw in WWII, but an attempt to assure the conditions for my own full humanity as a being who is both the same as others and completely unique (p. 147).

It seems that Arendt thereby gives one of the strongest reasons to uphold human rights ever formulated, and one of the least used by human rights experts at the same time.

To uphold them in modern times is not so simple an undertaking. Comparing modernity to ancient times, the times of the "common world," we can perceive one decisive difference.

For the ancients, equality was a status that had to be achieved through participation in political life where each actor had to distinguish himself. In other words, equality meant an equalization of people who were different. In the modern age, equality means *sameness*, in the sense that biologically, we are all the same. The equality inherent in society is an equality of household members. This equality is achieved, not through political participation and distinguishing yourself in public, but rather through a strictly enforced *conformism*. Equality, [Arendt] argues, means being the same, conforming to a standard of behavior and this is achieved through

following the rules of society. Society's rules »normalize« its members and thus make them equal in this sense (p. 47).

Modernity has blurred the distinction between the public and the private and replaced action with *behavior*. Action is no longer a way to distinguish oneself in the public arena, which in the ancient times was an extremely competitive place. In public we are all the same. All the distinctions are made in private and disclosed only to the persons closest to us. Modernity, thus, means the loss of commonality and the loss of a sense of public reality. Modern politics resembles administration more than politics in its ancient meaning.

For Arendt, to uphold human rights means to secure the public sphere ("common world"). That is itself contrary to the typical understanding of human rights as a means to protect of private sphere. But both spheres, the private and the public, are *interdependent*. And for Arendt both are important, although in a different manner. The public sphere corresponds to *freedom*. But the private secures the public. That is the source of Arendt's distinction between "public rights" and "private rights." Public rights must be understood as the "right to participate in the common world and share in public activity." However, private rights, somewhat surprisingly as Parekh indicates, are for Arendt more fundamental and must be protected in order to secure public rights (pp. 93-94). And by private rights Arendt means social and economic rights (so-called human rights of the second generation) that many do not perceive as "real" human rights. Returning to the realm of politics, it is solidarity that is the basic principle of politics for Arendt. Solidarity, partly as a moderate alternative to compassion, the modern political passion that made so great and dangerous an impact during the French Revolution, is meant to bring people to a common world without compassion's negative feature of "feeling-with someone" which abolishes plurality, the very ground for politics (pp. 115-119). Solidarity thus makes it possible to retain a common world within modern conditions.

These are only some of Hannah Arendt's thoughts on human rights as revealed by Serena Parekh in her great work. If I had to find some weak points in her book I would indicate that what is really missing is an application to the modern human rights practice. For instance, when pointing out the loss of the distinction between the public and private spheres, it would be useful to consider the contribution of feminist ideology to that state of affairs, especially since feminism is among Parekh's professional concerns.

That of course in no way diminishes the value of Serena Parekh's book which should be read by everyone interested in human rights theory. It gives a profound justification for the existence and the significance of human rights. This does not happen very often in a world where the most popular reason for propagating human rights is "the more rights we have, the better off we are."

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Cornelius Castoriadis, *What Compounds Greece: from Homer to Heraclitus. Seminaires 1982-1983. Human Creation II. [Lo que hace a Grecia, 1: De Homero a Heráclito: Seminarios 1982-1983. La creación humana II—2004]*. Fondo de Cultura Económica 2006, pp. 419, ISBN 950-557-675-7

Readers new to the work of Cornelius Castoriadis will find him a striking and provocative scholar. His works exemplify a critical approach that combines an *autopoietic* view of society rooted in both psychoanalytic theory and Marxism. *Ce Qui Fait la Grèce* collects several insightful studies into Greek thought on democracy, politics, poetry, the arts, philosophy, and the perception of otherness. This review represents only a preliminary examination of these topics from Castoriadis' distinct perspective.

An interesting preface by Pierre Vidal-Naquet introduces readers to the world of Castoriadis, and emphasizes the view that our tradition is based on the convergence of two waves: the Greek tradition on the one hand and Judaism on the other. The Greek tradition emphasizes the search for truth and meaning in a world that was not created exclusively for the use of mankind. Judaism illustrates the ambiguity and uncertainty at work in day-to-day life. Importantly, ancient wisdom has nothing to do with modern wisdom. According to Castoriadis, Judaism and Greece stand for two divergent archetypes that have shaped the modern ethos of capitalism. This is the central thesis of Castoriadis' lectures from 1982-1983 that constitute this book.

Castoriadis maintains that the Greek tradition was born out of a disruption that came about with the advent of Homer's *Chronicles*. From that point onwards, our image of society has experienced a radical shift with respect to the essence of things and their depiction. This can be seen in the process of acculturation; over time some values were adopted from the Greek tradition while others were discarded. This type of selectivity mirrors the manner in which Judaism retains the Astronomy and Mathematics of Babylonia and Syria, while the Romans are more interested in the art, philosophy and laws of the Greeks. Neither was much interested in Greek Geometry. The question of why civilizations embrace some values and exclude others remains unanswered by Castoriadis. Rather, he concentrates on developing the thesis that the spirit of Greece was founded on the significance of democracy and legislation. In this context, respect for the law represents the essence of humanity.

For example, in *The Odyssey*, when Homer describes the land of the Cyclopes, he describes not only their appearance as monstrous (with a large eye in the middle of the head), but also their habits and customs as appalling: they have no laws and no assemblies where issues can be debated

by all members of the community. Within the Greek World, rules and laws are often the very aspect that determines the fine line between humanity and inhumanity. Monstrosity is often ascribed to an Other who does not share the same heritage with respect to the organization of political life. This can be seen in the Greek attitude toward Persia and Egypt. As non-Greek speaking countries, both were barbarian nations, but the term barbarian (*barbaroi*) was not necessarily pejorative. More important is that both countries had systems of laws and long legislative traditions that would have interested the Greeks.

In the lecture of 1 December 1982, Castoriadis further explores this theme of humanity by characterizing Greek tragedy in terms of the certainty of the hero's fate. Unlike drama where suspense opens the doors of destiny, providing the possibility for the hero to avoid death on the basis of the principle of contingency, Greek tragedy is circumscribed by a well-defined end, of which the hero is ignorant, but that is known to the audience or reader. No matter what the decision-making process is, fate has been determined in the tragedy; things cannot happen in any other way. In contrast with the Christian emphasis upon the role played by God in human predestination, Greek mythology understands its gods as unable to change human destiny or even their own. Destiny transcends the will of gods and of human beings alike.

The lack of contingency in tragedy explains why neither Achilles nor Oedipus can escape their "*moira*" (fortune, fate, doom, destiny). For the ancient Greeks, the concept of *moira* represents the imminence of death for all beings. Even the gods (in their immortality) are not beyond the power of *moira* (fate). Destiny encompasses everything in the Homeric tradition with the mysterious exception of the law.

One characteristic that distinguishes the Greek view from other ancient mythical systems is the lack of revelations and prophecies about the future. Since Greek mythology does not refer to a world created for humans, they understand the body of laws to be the only instrument capable of providing order in the field of politics. Even though a belief in predestination and divination was widespread, especially in practical and business decisions and difficult situations, nobody in Greece would have relied on these techniques to promulgate the law.

From this basic perspective, Castoriadis develops his outline of our Greek heritage. Among the contributions of this civilization we find the agonistic competition for glory and fame, the quest for truth, the tension between essence and presence, and finally, a commitment to democracy. Here a point calls for our attention: what is the relation between fate and competition?

This critique of our image of society is intertwined with what is non-existent. Greek philosophy emerges as a response to the conception of what

we call non-being (nothing). The abyss of what does not exist demands philosophical attention because a world created without a specific purpose does not guarantee human beings the protection they need; it represents a hostile and awful place to be. The only way to confront threats to man that come from the environment is to introduce the institution of a covenant between the members of a community.

Castoriadis appreciates that the exact essence of democracy and politics is problematic. As Y. Oikonomou summarizes,

for Castoriadis politics is the conscious, critical and self-critical, rational, collective activity and inquiry, regarding the institution of society in whole or in part. In this sense, politics emerges when the question of the validity of the institution is posed, i.e., if and why the institutions are just: 'Are our laws just? Is our Constitution just?, Is it good? Good in relation to what? Just in relation to what? On these eternally open questions the object of true politics is constructed, which therefore presupposes the questioning of existing institutions—even if it means their acceptance in whole or in part.' (Oikonomou, 2005, p. 6)

Thus, politics depends on the responsibility people take in the public sphere. Social institutions facilitate the autonomy of citizenship. The assembly constitutes the body where persons can debate and legislate about their problems, about the things which jeopardize their own forms of life or their institutions. Castoriadis here reminds us that magistrates in ancient Greece were randomly chosen. The transfer of power to representatives or politicians was not accomplished through the institution of popular vote. For this reason, Castoriadis maintains that democracies cannot assure efficiency and efficacy in the field of politics. The belief that democracy can assure well-being for all members of the assembly turns out to be false; it seems that this is a modern idea resulting from a distorted view of the *Republic*.

Unlike Judaism, which promises a better life in heaven, Greek mythology offers nothing to the dead that would be an improvement upon this world. Even if Castoriadis is not able to pinpoint exactly why this rupture that defines Greek culture occurs only in Greece, he is able to give an explanatory account of how philosophy and religion changed the sphere of politics, to the extent of shaping both Greek democracy and Greek tragedy. What defines Greece in this context is the absence of an antecedent justification for claiming that what is is better than nothing. Religion, for the Greeks, concentrates its efforts on the laws and the *demos* in order to achieve the necessary steps to transform the environment into a safer place. Thus, for the Greeks, the Gods are entities who help, guide, or injure humans, but do not determine how they can behave.

For Castoriadis, the significance of the world in the Greek tradition is open to a multiplicity of possibilities. *Kosmos* (order) and *Dike* (justice) coexist in mutual dependence. The former represents the creation of beings,

while the latter connotes the destruction of things. Because law is made by and for humans, laws and rights should be created to give sense and order to a world which has no sense or meaning of its own.

Whether or not humans live in a world that must be conquered by reason and power as a condition for survival, the following question remains for Castoriadis: what can a person do in a world that has not been made to answer his or her questions? From Homer's time to that of Anaximander, the traditional Greek answer aimed at outlining the pivotal role played by the *kleos and kydos—fame and glory*—as the values designed to encourage competence in all aspects of daily life. Excellence in this context was rooted in the necessity of conflict. People (from poets to philosophers) struggle discursively to impose their truth, their speech, and their point of view on others. This dialectical competition, dominated by superior argument is—for Castoriadis—a feature that distinguishes ancient Greece from our times. However, an ethnologist will no doubt recognize that this seems to be a characteristic proper to other cultures as well; one might point this out as a criticism of Castoriadis. To a greater or lesser extent, his arguments may sound a bit ethnocentric.

This work (*Ce Qui Fait la Grèce*) brings together the first five volumes of Castoriadis's teaching in 1982-1983 in Paris, all of it dealing with themes related to democracy, philosophy, the place of being and religion. In this review we have briefly examined the main contributions of Castoriadis to the study of ancient Greek heritage in our modern image of society. Castoriadis's account can be counted alongside the work of other greater Latinists such as J. P. Vernant, Vidal-Naquet, P. Grimal, P. Veyne, or M. Dettiene. Readers who decide to explore this volume by Castoriadis will find a valuable and masterful book which explains clearly what existentialism misjudges, the nothing. This review has aimed to put forward some preliminary remarks on a text that is largely unknown in the Anglophone world. Although many of the works by this well-known scholar have been translated from French to English, this is not true of *Ce Qui Fait la Grèce*. If this review is guilty of simplifications, the fault belongs with the author. Nevertheless, I strongly believe that these ideas will be developed further in the future.

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Jan Hartman, *Przez filozofię* [*Through Philosophy*], Kraków: Aureus 2007, pp. 558, ISBN 83-60741-00-X.

Through Philosophy conceives philosophy as a special *mode* of theoretical thinking (*theorein*), distinct from others *modes* of grasping reality, namely the scientific and the mystical. But this philosophical *mode* of thinking is problematic and is not commonly recognized. Hartman undertook the task of differentiating and theorizing this specifically philosophical *mode* of thinking mainly in his earlier books: *Philosophical Heuristics* [*Heurystyka filozoficzna* (1997)] and *Techniques of Metaphilosophy* [*Techniki metafizologii* (2001)]. *Through Philosophy*, which is a collection of texts on diverse subjects (among others: transcendental philosophy, bioethics, aesthetics, political philosophy, Kant, Descartes and Nietzsche), can be considered, to some extent, a further presentation and realization of the philosophical *programme* which has already been presented in the above-mentioned books. I think that we cannot discuss the particular theses included in the separate articles, because it would be impossible to discuss all the issues raised by Hartman in this book, and thus I will rather focus on outlining Hartman's *programme* and its realization, and trying to show whether and how it works.

Hartman (*After Philosophy?*) states his diagnosis of philosophy: philosophy is not in a good condition. The diagnosis concerns the state of philosophy both in terms of theoretical output and in terms of its institutional organization, which are strictly connected. We have to face the fact that, according to Hartman, in contrast to other arts and sciences, philosophy is not a coherent academic discipline. For example: the content of philosophical dictionaries and encyclopedias is so diverse that it is impossible to find the theoretical criterion which could be considered the basis for the choice of these terms. Additionally, there is no common philosophical tradition for the whole academic world: the word "philosophy" does not have the same meaning for Anglo-Americans, Germans, or the French. Furthermore, there is no such thing as a canon of philosophical books which are really read by all philosophers. The canon, having many variants, is more of a postulated, virtual idea. This institutional weakness of philosophy is not overcome either by hermeneutics or by analytical philosophy. The former closes philosophy within the circle of its history and makes philosophical reflection dependent on analyses of texts, whereas philosophy should be dealing with notions. The latter is not particularly attached to the word "philosophy," and either moves toward the *sciences* or changes its name explicitly to "*cognitive sciences*."

According to Hartman, it is very difficult either to point out a commonly acknowledged *philosophical attitude* or to base the identity of philosophy

as a discipline on the *eternal* philosophical questions that have lost their validity. Therefore, for Hartman, only one possibility remains: to recognize philosophy as a specific way of critical and reflective thinking. In other words, the ground for philosophy as an autonomic discipline is philosophy as such. Thus the ground for philosophy is *metaphilosophy*. That, of course, refers to the *transcendental* and Hegelian conceptions. Hartman outlines a *programme* of professionalization of philosophy. History of philosophy, even with its sophisticated methods of doxography, is not able to preserve theoretical content of philosophy, and neither is hermeneutics. Only a *metaphilosophical* project can fulfill these expectations. Although Hartman's idea is quite ambitious, according to him his proposal is not particularly revolutionary, and, moreover, he does not promise us too much. It is not revolutionary project because philosophy is something that has already been *done* and we probably cannot add anything really new to theoretical philosophical concepts. We can only constantly revive the language of philosophy and constantly internalize its theoretical load. But the point is that we still do not have the theoretical instruments that allow us to pass from one philosophical discourse to another, translate concepts and terms of one system of thought to another; we have not internalized and conceptualized yet all these *metatheoretical techniques*. In other words, we are not critical enough, and in consequence, when we want to cultivate metaphilosophical reflection we stick to the language of a particular system and we become involved in particular problems instead of investigating metatheoretical matters. Hartman introduces here the concept of a *neutrum*. The *neutrum* is an empty conceptual function that allows us to *neutralize* the power of particular concepts that play a central role in a particular discourse. Simplifying, the *neutrum* allows us to say everything that can be said about a given problem. It allows us to investigate all the conditions of possibilities and conceptual assumptions of a discourse. As Hartman says, the philosopher does not have to declare himself in favour or against some particular beliefs, but by remaining in the metaposition he can look at all possible states and opinions.

What does the realization of this idea look like? For example (Hartman applies this method in the articles on *ideas*, *existence* or *transcendentalism*), one has to work with concepts not with texts, one has to follow the internal logic of notions and one should ask oneself what can be said on this subject and what are the conditions of possibility of this discourse. That is the method of faking (from Latin *fingere*) discourses. One fakes a discourse because one does not want to allow the discourse to lead him, but one wants to control the discourse and its conditions. Obviously, this method cannot be used mechanically, but according to Hartman, we are able to acquire and develop it. *Philosophical heuristics* allows us to embrace the entire theoretical scope of a problem and does not force us to accept any particular

stand. Therefore *philosophical heuristics* can be considered as purely theoretical thinking that is cultivated for its own sake and that justifies itself. Hartman proposes such techniques of metaphilosophy that allow us to use the philosophical achievements in self-knowledge that have been scattered throughout the history of philosophy and have never become a common philosophical heritage. The theoretical content of philosophy is—of course—known through the text, but as Hartman claims, even if we presumed that theoretical content is accessible to us only through a complicated process of interpretation, we have to admit that theoretical content is all that really matters in philosophizing. Thus Hartman criticizes hermeneutics. He points out that hermeneutics is about a work (a book, a text), not about notions. Besides that hermeneutics puts text and sense together, and in consequence, we do not think, we just understand. But understanding is something different than thinking.

Hartman *heuristically* goes through the concepts of transcendental philosophy, Cartesian *cogito*, philosophy of *reflection* and arrives at an outline of a theory of competence (among others: *The General Idea of Transcendentalism* [Ogólna idea transcendentalizmu], *Heuristic Analysis of Transcendental Discourse* [Heurystyczna analiza dyskursu transcendentalnego], *Heuristics of Reflection* [Heurystyka refleksji]). These analyses show how much Hartman's *philosophical heuristics* is immersed in the tradition of philosophy of reflection. But they also show that Hartman conceives philosophy as, let me use the term, *bios theoretikos*. It means that philosophizing is a certain practice that causes inconvenience to the philosopher and requires from him a lot of effort. On the one hand, for example, the philosopher cannot equate truth with an advantage in discussion, but at the same time he cannot neglect arguments in favor of his stance (*Difficulties in a Philosopher's Work* [Trudności w pracy filozofa]). Moreover, the philosopher has to balance between respect for philosophical tradition (it means that in his investigations he has to consider what has already been written on the subject) and his own independent theoretical work. On the other hand, any theoretical thought is immersed in and dependent on psychological processes, and that is the reason why mistakes and simplifications slip into philosophical thought. Thus Hartman admits that a philosophical text is a necessary prosthesis for thinking. Outside of the text our thoughts are just thinking that is contingent and foggy. Text gives thinking form and carves it into the proper shape of thought, where contingency and vagueness are (or should be) replaced by necessity and evidence. Our memory is fallible and limited, we cannot rely on certitude of our psychological processes of thinking. In short, we seem to be permanently incompetent in philosophy. In *Prolegomena to a Theory of Competence* [Prolegomena do teorii komeptencji] Hartman defines competence as an acquired skill, virtue, and ability that can be modified in

the process of its application. Hartman claims that due to some objective conditions we can be competent only in narrow and very specialized topics, even though we consider ourselves to be competent academic teachers, researchers, politicians and agents. The huge amount of knowledge that is required to make a competent decision or to give a competent lecture exceeds the psychological abilities of an average human mind. For this reason Hartman postulates a method of managing of incompetence. But, according to Hartman, before we develop such a method, we have to investigate the very issue of competence: we have to consider the conditions of possibility of being competent and to research the dialectics between incompetence and competence.

Summing up, Hartman's main idea is to construct theoretical and methodological instruments that improve our thinking, enhance it to a higher level. Hartman's point of departure is the immanence of thinking and he does not go beyond it, and thus his project inherits all the objections that can be raised against *transcendental* and *reflective* philosophy. The first objection is *political* in character: this kind of discourse leads to totalitarianism. Hartman is conscious of this objection, but he claims that rationalism leads us rather to liberalism than to totalitarianism. If one is rational, one knows one's limitations and takes into account one's fallibility. Moreover, Hartman states that the reflectivity that is involved in *philosophical heuristics* does not aim to dominate the entire discourse, in order to control all rationality and to justify and legitimize a political order. *Philosophical heuristics* only reflects rationality and does not involve taking any particular position; it is rather a perpetual motion of thoughts. The second objection is that we cannot have any objections at all. In other words, all objections are pre-critical (*pre-heuristic*). On the other hand, critical discourse (*heuristics*) is dependent on the pre-critical: *philosophical heuristics* is a permanent introduction to philosophy that explains to us the conditions of possibility of rational discourse, but does not develop the discourse as such. Furthermore, *philosophical heuristics* shuts the philosophizing mind in its immanence and thus one cannot expect any results from thinking.

Hartman seems to be afraid of this confinement of philosophy, as can be seen in his bioethical and political texts (*What is Bioethics Today?* [Czym jest dzisiaj bioetyka?], *The Cloning of Human Beings as a Challenge* [Klonowanie człowieka jako wyzwanie], *Morality and Politics* [Moralność i polityka], *Not-Modern Liberalism* [Nie-nowoczesny liberalizm]). Bioethics and political philosophy can be considered as an attempt to build a connection between theory and praxis. And here Hartman seems to be inconsistent. In another passage he claims that the gap between theory and praxis cannot be overcome by speculation (*Essential Formalism of Practical Philosophy* [Istotowy formalizm filozofii praktycznej]). But we

could consider both bioethics and political philosophy as different types of practice that have their own immanent goal (*telos*): to improve medical procedures and political institutions. Here rational discourse is a part of these practices and it serves to help achieve a concrete goal. This goal, obviously, as Hartman says, is immanent to the practice, but transcendent to the thinking. Hartman does admit that philosophical speculation is futile to some extent. Philosophy does not give us anything that does not belong to thinking. Philosophy is thinking for the sake of thinking. Therefore, it seems that we can disregard the above-mentioned objections: pre-critical approaches expect from philosophy a certain result or a certain final resolution. This kind of demand cannot be fulfilled by thinking.

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Richard Dien Winfield, *From Concept to Objectivity. Thinking Through Hegel's Subjective Logic*, Aldershot: Ashgate 2006, pp. 150, ISBN 0-7546-5536-9.

Books on Hegel are usually of two kinds. Some of them are detailed and extensive historical commentaries focused on his works, while others are short systematic introductions which aim to provide a key to his philosophy and often simply scratch the surface of Hegel's texts. Richard Winfield's *From Concept to Objectivity* belongs to neither of these categories. This book might be called a "systematic commentary" to Hegel's *Science of Logic*. It is systematic since it seeks to solve philosophical problems considered in their own right. Yet the book is also a commentary, since it closely follows the text and explains Hegel's way of thinking.

The book is implicitly divided into two main parts. The first three chapters present the principles of Hegel's logic and might be roughly considered a commentary on the introduction and the first chapter of the *Science of Logic*. The second part of the book, consisting of the remaining five chapters, concerns the more detailed problems of logic and focuses on the beginning of Book Three of the *Science of Logic*. I will examine each of the chapters in the order in which they appear, paying special attention to the two central problems presented by Winfield, namely the issue of logic in general and the problem of concrete universality. Afterwards I shall attempt to formulate some critical remarks.

The book begins as a highly systematic study. Philosophy, to legitimate its own aspirations to truth, must somehow justify the authority of reason. Reason however falls into a fatal dilemma: if it starts with some given presuppositions it becomes dogmatic, but if it begins with no assumptions,

it remains futile. Winfield, following Hegel, finds the only solution in thinking about thinking, i.e., the development of a system of logic. The great insight here is that thinking about thinking cannot appeal to any given content, and must develop without any external methodological principles, since unlike any other discipline, in the case of logic the method of proceeding, namely thinking, does not differ from the very object of inquiry. Therefore, if there were a science which could avoid making any assumptions at all and establish the authority of reason, it would be logic.

In the first chapter Winfield shows that the two most influential views of reason, Aristotelian and Kantian, fail to provide a proper science of thinking. Formal logic openly admits that the first premises must be given from the outside, whereas transcendental logic tacitly accepts some external principles governing transcendental activity. Only “systematic logic,” identified here with Hegel’s construction, accepts the challenge of developing a foundation-free philosophy.

Logic is the only discipline apt for the role of the first philosophy. Only thinking on thinking can begin without first assuming some content and develop without appealing to any external content or principle. In contrast to the other sciences, logic may start with nothing and make an absolute beginning, thus avoiding dependence upon a given method and given content. To be free of any external factors, logic must determine itself. This makes it possible to move from indeterminacy to determinacy without appealing to any given determinacy. Hegel was the first and perhaps the only thinker who decided to follow the movement of self-generated thought and the *Science of Logic* remains “a work that still is the only comprehensive attempt to present the presuppositionless, self-grounding development of self-determined determinacy in which systematic logic consists” (pp. 14-15).

The second chapter is devoted to the problem of method and focuses on two preliminary parts of the *Science of Logic*: “Notion of Logic in General” and “With What Must the Science Begin?” Winfield distinguishes six general features of the method of logic: unity of method and content, immanent unfolding of the subject matter, proceeding by means of determinate negation, circularity of the movement of categories, the dual characteristics of determinations as both synthetic and analytic, and the emergence of a method as the final result. Not only must the science of logic follow these principles, but philosophy must as well.

The next chapter deals with the famous beginning of the *Science of Logic*. The character of the beginning of logic follows from all the previous considerations. If logic is to be presuppositionless, it must start from nothing, or from mere indeterminacy. Only in this way will it manage to avoid taking determinacy for granted and begging the question. More precisely, it makes no difference whether this first category is being or nothing, since

both are completely indeterminate. This chapter provides an interesting analysis of the category of something. To be something is to have a quality, to be determinate. Usually philosophers take this category to be primitive and instead seek the source of determinations either in an underlying substance or in a privileged determiner, such as a transcendental subject, language, or cultural *praxis*. Winfield, following Hegel, argues that the category of something is complex, and criticizes the traditional substantial and modern transcendental accounts for lacking an account of the origins of determinacy. In conclusion, determinacy ought not to be taken as something given and irreducible. Hegel escaped the primacy of determinacy via the self-determination of an indeterminate beginning.

The second half of the book, two thirds of the whole, focuses on “subjective logic,” which covers the logic of concept, judgment, and syllogism. This is undoubtedly a very fortunate decision, since these interesting topics are often neglected, not only by ordinary philosophers, but also by Hegel scholars. However, the character of these chapters is not uniform. The second part is less systematic and more textual than the first part. Here Winfield follows Hegel more closely and his own commentaries are often quite terse.

Winfield starts Chapter Four with a criticism of the received view on concepts as abstract and changeless general representations. Since concepts are held to be a vehicle for truth, such a view of concepts implies either a radical two-world realism, or extreme nominalism. In the first case knowledge concerns another world, in the second case there is no knowledge at all. Hegel supplants these views with a theory of concrete universals. In his view, universals are not empty abstractions excluding particularity and individuality, but include in themselves the content of particularity and individuality. If a universal is to be something one over many, it must be an encompassing unity of its exemplifications, it must sustain its own differentiations, up to the level of individuality. This concrete and universal content enables the concept to supplant the dilemmas of formal universality.

Winfield offers the self as a helpful model of the process of self-determination. The self is something one over many, but not as an abstract property common to many substances, but rather as one substance, common to many properties (cf. pp. 58, 72). Moreover, free will determines itself and its determinations belong to the self not as something external, but as its own proper element. This shows again that determinacy need not to be something already given. The same process of self-determination takes place in the case of concepts and objectivity. For Hegel, self-determination is the common structure of concepts and objectivity. This enables Winfield to conclude that “the concept can be a privileged vehicle of philosophical

method because the autonomy of conceptual determination is the anatomy of truth” (p. 65).

In Chapter Five Winfield thinks through the first chapter of Hegel’s “Subjective Logic.” Hegel’s main concerns here are the interconnections between universality, particularity and individuality, which are made explicit in judgments. These categories presuppose and imply each other, which is another example of self-determination. The very nature of logic excludes any representational function of concepts, since in that case concepts would rely on some external determinacy (p. 73).

The analysis of the types of universality in Chapter Six seems to be one of the most important aspects of the book. Winfield argues that Hegel’s analysis of the different types of judgments presupposes the corresponding distinction of four kinds of universals. Hegel divides judgments into those of quality, reflection, necessity, and concept. The first type of judgments involves the relations of inherence and the category of *abstract universals*. The second type consists in subsumption and presupposes the existence of *class*. Judgments of necessity involve the relation between *genus and species* and the appropriate form of universality. The last type of judgments is based on modal relations and requires a special *concrete universal*, which is also called “the universal of normativity.”

Abstract universals are simply universal qualities which “inhere in individuals whose other determinations are entirely indifferent to the universal they share” (p. 92). It is worth noticing that neither Hegel nor Winfield fully answer the question of how an abstract universal is shared by individuals. It seems that they both accept the realistic interpretation of common properties. Winfield writes that the abstract universal “must be susceptible of inhering in other given individuals” (p. 95) and “remains self-identical in the individual without being reducible to what the individual contains” (p. 94-95).

Things which share a common property might be considered as a class. In this case, they form a universal of class membership which “relates its members to one another through ascription of some quality to one, some, or all members of class” (p. 93). Knowledge of abstract quality or class membership gives no further knowledge of the individuals.

By contrast, genus does to some degree determine its own species and makes possible some necessary and *a priori* judgments. Belonging to a genus implies having some other particular features that distinguish the species. The genus determines its species but leaves unspecified what individuates the members of the same species.

Concrete universality reaches the level of individuals, since it “determines the individual in its entirety through the particular and universal” (p. 93) and provides its “complete conceptual determination” (p. 102). There is nothing in the individual which is not included in the

universal, so there is nothing external to it for its concept. This makes possible a complete agreement between individuals and their universals, in which truth, right, and beauty consist. This is why concrete universals are the “universals of normativity.”

It might be observed that these types of universality correspond to positions in the debate between realism and nominalism. Abstract universals are accepted in a full-blooded realism, classes are crucial in class-nominalism, and kinds are adopted in some types of contemporary realism. The only type which does not yet have a counterpart in contemporary analytic philosophy is the concrete universal. For this reason, Winfield’s discussion of the concrete universal is a valuable contribution to contemporary philosophy.

The logic of syllogisms is rather obscure both in Hegel and in Winfield’s expositions in Chapter Seven. Here the author follows the master as closely as possible and provides no other language to speak on this topic. Winfield argues that Hegel is correct in omitting the fourth kind of syllogism parallel to the judgment of the concept. The terms of the disjunctive syllogism are the unity of universal, particular, and individual, and for this reason their difference is eliminated. Such a syllogism is a totality of the self-mediated determinations of the concept. For that reason the syllogism is something objective, and logic in general might transform to objectivity.

In the last chapter Winfield stresses that the Hegelian distinction between objectivity and subjectivity must not be confused with the opposition between knowing and its object. The subjectivity of concepts, judgments, and syllogisms has a logical character and does not consist in their being thought by empirical subjects. Subjectivity consists in self-determination, and as such is also entailed by the objectivity in which the distinction between the determiner and the determined disappears.

Now I would like to pass to some critical remarks. First of all, the very status of Winfield’s book seems to be questionable. It is not clear whether it is a book about Hegel’s thought or about the object of Hegel’s thought. In some cases Winfield slightly marks his own distance to Hegel’s claims (cf. pp. 64, 70), but he never criticizes the master. However, if it were a systematic study, it should definitely be more critical. For example, when discussing “the fatal enigma of substance” Winfield simply accepts Hegel’s view and ignores some recent discussion in metaphysics. As a result, he seems to confuse substrates with substances, carefully distinguished in analytical philosophy (p. 34-36), yet bare particulars and universals might be the searched for indeterminate factors, whose combination yield determinacy (cf. p. 40). This certainly would not be a sound criticism if the book were only a commentary on Hegel. Textual commentaries should contain at least some quotations, yet Winfield does not cite any passages of the *Science of Logic*. Moreover, Winfield’s text seems to be too hermetic to

be an enlightening commentary. This ambiguity of the status of the book might cause systematic philosophers to be annoyed by its uncritical use of Hegelian language, and Hegel scholars might be disappointed by its lack of textual clarification.

Secondly, Winfield rarely refers directly to other authors, hardly ever mentions Hegel commentaries, and never discusses them. This way of proceeding facilitates a straight course of argumentation, but makes it difficult for the reader to understand the difference between the proposed interpretation and others. Many of the references, including Kant, Quine, or Derrida, are highly interesting and it is a pity that Winfield so quickly cuts the topic short.

Thirdly, although in many cases Winfield is successful in translating Hegel into a more accessible language, in many others he simply repeats notorious Hegelian phrases. In some places one might even wonder what is clearer, the commentary or the text being commented. Since the book becomes accessible only after a previous reading of Hegel, it can hardly serve as a guide for perplexed novice readers. Nevertheless, all attempts to expound Hegel's philosophy are much needed, and Winfield's book, making explicit the neglected subjective logic, is without a doubt one of the most important books on this topic.

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Taylor Carman, *Merleau-Ponty*, London, New York: Routledge 2008, pp. 261, ISBN 9780415339810.

Taylor Carman's book is an introduction to Merleau-Ponty's philosophy. The author presents Merleau-Ponty's philosophy as a new kind of ontology. He claims that the French thinker's philosophy "is thus neither psychology nor epistemology, but *ontology*" (p. 74). Moreover Carman argues very clearly that each of Merleau-Ponty's works contains largely the same idea of "the bodily nature of perception" (p. 93).

The book begins with presenting Merleau-Ponty's life and his work, and then goes on to elaborate on his specific concept of the intentionality of experience, and the problem of perception, which is defined not as "an inner subjective phenomenon, but a mode of existence, a manifestation of our being in the world" (p. 42). Next, the author presents Merleau-Ponty's concept of the world, in which we "must return to our pretheoretical understanding of the body not as an object or a machine, but as our embeddedness in and direction toward the world" (p. 93). Later he focuses on the idea of *flesh* and chiasm—and I want to underline that his

description of *flesh* is really clear-sighted, but, as will be shown, needs to be more thoroughly examined. He characterizes *flesh* as:

the *identity* of perception and perceptibility, even below the threshold of conscious awareness. As bodily perceivers, we are necessarily part of the perceptible world we perceive; we are not just *in* the world, but *of* it. (p. 133)

In the sections of the book that follow the author successively presents the “precognitive experience of others” (p. 135), Merleau-Ponty’s papers on politics, works reflecting on esthetics (*Cézanne’s Doubt, Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence* and *Eye and Mind*), and finally the influence his thinking had on a number theories, especially structuralism, Charles Taylor’s critique of behaviorism, and cognitivism.

In Carman’s book Merleau-Ponty’s way of thinking is shown as developing as a polemic with E. Husserl, M. Heidegger and with the modern philosophical trends of “empiricism” and “intellectualism.” We read: “In *Phenomenology of Perception* Merleau-Ponty launches a two-pronged attack on *empiricism* and *intellectualism*. Empiricism regards perception as grounded in *sensation*; intellectualism sees it as a function of *judgment*” (p. 75). Merleau-Ponty attempts to avoid the “reduction” of the *body* to the “subject of thinking” and that is the reason he at the same time criticizes “pure and abstractive consciousness,” “the dualism of Descartes,” the Sartrean distinction between the “in-itself” (*en soi*) and the “for-itself” (*pour soi*), and utilizes a specific terminology taken from this kind of tradition, which could be called “rationalism.” Moreover, although Merleau-Ponty borrows the terminology from “rationalism,” he wants to overcome and reject this tradition. Namely, he aims to uncover “bodily intelligence” and the style of “body thinking.” Carman remarks: “The body is in the first instance not an object of knowledge, but part of the normative structure of intentionality” (p. 109).

My first objection concerns Carman’s presentation of the central point of Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy, namely the problem of perception and the conception of the *body* and *flesh*. In *Phenomenology of Perception* the phenomenon of perception is presented, according to Carman, as a ground for the world and, at the same time, as the essentially specific character of the body itself (*le corps propre*). In my opinion, the concept of the *body* is much more complicated. First of all, we cannot exactly say that perception is the ground for our experience of the world; it is rather *the incarnate subject* or *the perceiving subject* (*le sujet incarné*) that constitutes the transcendental form of perception of the world. The *body schema* opens the “transcendental field” of the *body*, and it is understood as the transcendental structure of the subject. This motif is treated marginally in Taylor Carman’s book. The author writes: “Merleau-Ponty’s central original idea about perception is that it is not just contingently but essentially a *bodily phenomenon*” (p. 78). But Carman does not explain how the intentionality

of the body as *the incarnate subject* is actually possible. I believe this is a very difficult issue for Merleau-Ponty himself and that is the reason he takes a new direction in *The Visible and the Invisible*: “The problems posed in *Ph.P.* are insoluble because I start there from the ‘consciousness’-‘object’ distinction” (after T. Carman, p. 121).

In addition, according to Carman, the last work of Merleau-Ponty contains the same idea of perception as that which was explained in *Phenomenology of Perception*. Therefore it should be emphasized that Carman presents this problem without a confrontation with the interpretations of renowned scholars and so he does not show the controversiality of this crucial issue. On pages 79-81 we read that:

For by the late 1950s he was apparently dissatisfied with what he had come to regard as the still too dualistic framework of *Phenomenology of Perception*. In its place he now insisted more emphatically that body and world must be seen as overlapping sinews in a common «flesh» (*chair*) (...) as a kind of «chiasm», an «interweaving» or «interlacing» (*entrelacs*) of threads in a single fabric. Merleau-Ponty scholars often write as if these new metaphors amount to a radical break with his earlier work, but I think this is a only half right. For although Merleau-Ponty’s concept of flesh does mark an abandonment of the primacy of *consciousness* in his account of being in the world, the images of chiasm and interlacing are elaborations on an idea he had already been expounding in his early work, decades before.

Thus my question is: Is the idea of *flesh* (*la chair*) only a new metaphor of the *body* (*le corps propre*)? It seems to me that after reading *The Visible and the Invisible* we cannot know this for sure. The idea of *flesh*, according to Merleau-Ponty, must be understood as the concept of *the incarnate subject*. The language and the terminology utilized in this work confirm that we are not yet within the transcendental project of the perceptual vision of the world. This means that we are still within the project of the ontology of *flesh*, which has not been finished, but which opens up new dimensions within the discourse of the philosophy of perception. Moreover, this point of view is shared by Claude Lefort, a friend of Merleau-Ponty’s, and by other researchers.

What is more, Carman does not really examine this very problematic issue. Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy is permanently researching the nature of the *body/ flesh* and for this reason we have more than one option when it comes to thinking about *being in the world*. Renaud Barbaras, a French researcher, in the article *L’ambiguïté de la chair. Merleau-Ponty entre philosophie transcendantale et ontologie de la vie* (*The Ambiguity of the Flesh: Merleau-Ponty: Between Transcendental Philosophy and An Ontology of Life*) and in other papers, shows that the idea of *flesh* still continues the hesitation between the transcendental conception of the mode

of perception of the world and the ontological experience as the original, universal sense of the existence.

Finally, Merleau-Ponty's theoretical proposition reduced to ontology is inconsistent and incomplete. His last work, *The Visible and the Invisible* continues the way of thinking of *Phenomenology of Perception*, but, contrary to T. Carman, who says that the body, at the beginning, "is the *ground* of both the subjectivity and the objectivity of experience" (80), I am convinced that there the body is the "subject" for reflection. Moreover the body is the *ground* neither of the subjectivity nor the objectivity of experience. According to renowned scholars, Merleau-Ponty's conception of the *body* or of *flesh* is rather essentially *non-grounded*, non-stabilized, impossible to describe. The nature of the *body* is obscure, changing, escaping clear presentation, although pervaded by a dualism. The sense of *flesh* continues the essential hesitation between the reflection and the permanently changing nature of the world, that world which is at the same time the essence of the *body* or *flesh*.

Taylor Carman's *Merleau-Ponty*, in spite of a few inexactitudes, is a book that allows one to sufficiently familiarize oneself with Merleau-Ponty's philosophy. The book could be useful for students, especially if we consider its clear and intelligible prose. Carman's work also includes a glossary and a summary after each chapter. Furthermore, this volume could be very important for researchers of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy—it can be regarded as an inspiration for rethinking the concepts of the world, *body*, *flesh*, perception and so on. Even if one does not agree with the presented interpretation of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy, one can get plenty of satisfaction from reading this book, which is truly refreshing thanks to the author's passion for the subject and his persuasive style of argumentation. This book definitely provides food for thought, directing our reflections towards the significance of the *bodily point of view* (p. 132) and towards the possibilities of the essence of our existence.

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