Annals of Ştefan cel Mare University of Suceava

PHILOSOPHY, SOCIAL AND HUMAN DISCIPLINES SERIES

2022

VOLUME II

Co-editors:
Bogdan POPOVENIUC
Marius CUCU

ANNALS
of
Philosophy, Social and Human Disciplines

ANNALS
of
University Ştefan cel Mare of Suceava

Cultural technologies in Crisis

PHILOSOPHY, SOCIAL AND HUMAN DISCIPLINES SERIES

2022
Volume II

Contents

RESEARCH PAPERS

"Name! Déparlez!" – Ars Poetica in Derek Walcott's Another Life

Associate Lecturer Iuliu RAȚIU
Department of Modern Languages and Business Communication
Faculty of Economics and Business Administration
Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca
ratiu.pfa@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper analyzes Derek Walcott's book-length poetic autobiography Another Life *as a long meditation of the adult poet looking back to his apprenticeship as a young poet and painter. The poem chronicles a series of conflicts between two opposing entities, which, I argue, can be subsumed to the two large categories (origin & beginning) that define Walcott's becoming as an artist. As a way of clarifying these terms, I will perform a close reading of the poem and show the clash between the dictating voice of the colonizer, which originates language, and the irredeemable writing of the colonized, which begins language. In doing so, I contend that for the Old World poets, burdened by tradition, the most difficult thing to achieve was finding a "voice", while for the New World poets the most challenging task was finding a "language."*

Keywords: *Derek Walcott, postcolonial literature, nation, landscape, poetic art, language.*

Introduction

While for the Old World poets, burdened by tradition, the most difficult thing to achieve was finding a "voice", for the New World poets the most challenging task was finding a "language". When, all of a sudden, the *anxiety of influence* was traded for the *anxiety of inception*, the question became not how, but where does one begin? Finding that moment, both in space and time, that is, the poetic space and time, from which life, poetic life, originates is one of the issues that Derek Walcott had to deal with when writing *Another Life*. Since approximating that very moment is beyond the purpose of this paper, beyond the conceivable purpose of any paper, in fact, I'll concentrate my efforts in what follows tracing down the inured & inward (290) poetics of Walcott's *Another Life* and the trajectory his writing took as a consequence of reaching a starting point.

(Walcott, 1986)[1] Caught between naming, "*Pour la dernièr fois, nommez! Nommez!*" (288), and un-naming, "Name! *Déparlez!*" (170), Walcott is in constant search for *that* first time, *la premier fois*, when his words were ready to create. *Another Life* is the story of the creation that followed. A story about origins, beginnings, and betrayals.

In a much quoted fragment from an autobiographical piece that he wrote as a preface for *Dream on Monkey Mountain and Other Plays*, Derek Walcott presents the need of New World poets of starting from scratch:

> *In the simple schizophrenic boyhood one could lead two lives: the interior life of poetry, the outward life of action and dialect. Yet the writers of my generation were natural assimilators. We knew the literatures of Empires, Greek, Roman, British, through their essential classics; and both the patois of the street and the language of the classroom hid the elation of discovery. If there was nothing, there was everything to be made. With this prodigious ambition one began.* (Walcott, 1998, p. 4)

Commenting on Walcott's essays, or plays for that matter, is as difficult as commenting his poetry, so, I'll limit my observations to a few aspects, relevant for this paper. It is important to note, first, that the author was working on "What the Twilight Says: An Overture" during the time he was laboring on *Another Life*, but this has almost nothing to do with the distilled versions of the final poem. And, yet, it has everything to do with it, if we were to consider the formidable *mise-en-abyme* Walcott is working with at the end of this quote: "If there was nothing, there was everything to be made. With this prodigious ambition one began." What surfaces from this fragment is a typical postcolonial literary question, best framed in one of Naipaul's novels, *The Mimic Men*. Naipaul, mentioned himself in the poem, like Walcott, is resistant to colonial subjects wholeheartedly embracing the colonizers' perspective. In this respect, Naipaul's mimic men and Walcott's natural assimilators are one and the same, they are not the discoverers "as firm / as conquerors who had discovered home" (195). New World artists are mere re-discoverers, re-lettering the literatures of the Empires: "The candle's yellow leaf next to his bed / re-letters *Tanglewood Tales* and Kingsley's *Heroes.*" (158) Their "elation of discovery" is still hidden in the street and in the classroom, the patois signifying nothing, while the language meaning everything!

In *A Simple Flame*, the third section of *Another Life*, Walcott is literally creating a new world for him and Anna. He pictures them as Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, "And now we were the first guests of the earth / and everything stood still for us to name." (231) But this is not just another creation story. Even

---

[1] All references to Walcott's poems are made, parenthetically, within text.

though the new couple is joined together in their mission of naming and making the world and *everything was to be made*, they do not exactly resemble the Adamic couple. Chapter 14, *Anna awaking*, explains why. In a nutshell, the three parts of this poem represent Walcott's poetic art. The first section is a creation story in which the creator/created is Anna in the seventh, resting, day: "I could be happy, / just because today is Sunday. No, for more." (235) Moreover, like God, on a Sunday, Anna is admiring her work and realizes there's nothing else to do, everything is in place, so she "lie[s] to [her] body with useless chores." (233) The second section, in Sundays to come, it's time to inspect the garden of creation. In a "walking mood," Anna takes her Adam "near the lagoon", where the water's lens frames the pair. The image of the water that reflects the creation speaks volumes about the hold Walcott's poetry has in transforming the world. If, at the beginning of the poem, "the oil green water glows but doesn't catch," now the water has the power of reflection, it doesn't only glow, it also catches: "Stunned by their images they strolled on, content / that the black film of water kept the print / of their locked images when they passed on." (236) The intimation of betrayal is already present here, but it is accentuated in the final section. The morning of the creation, "I shall always be morning to him, / and I must walk and be gentle as morning" (234) is replaced by the evening treachery of poetry and art. Which of the two would be betrayed and would betray is the question the poetry does not ask, but it seems that the power of reflection interferes with the power of creation and of the created. In the end, the poet's hand that writes this story of creation is the one that betrays, that *catches* Anna's description. But this is a mere representation that lets the poet unsatisfied. Therefore, with a masterful twist, he turns creation on its head and replaces the "poetics of twilight" with the "poetics of morning," and this, rather than have the poet resistant to it, places him within tradition. Thus, Old World poets find their equal in the New World poet.

Of Origins & Beginnings – Making & Naming.

When in *The Location of Culture* Homi Bhabha speaks about the social and textual affiliation of nationness, he makes a relevant distinction between the Western nation and the colonial government,

> *If the spirit of the Western nation has been symbolized in epic and anthem, voiced by a "unanimous people assembled in the self-presence of its speech," then the sign of colonial government is cast in a lower key, caught in the irredeemable act of writing.* (Bhabha, 1994, p. 93)

Working through Derrida's deconstruction of speech and writing, Bhabha's statement locates with precision Walcott's position as a colonial subject and as an

emerging artist. The young poet is doubly removed by being both *written* and *spoken for*. Even though his father, whom he does not recall because of his early death, was a small official of the colonial government, Walcott does not belong to the colonial government, not is he a part of a Western nation. Nationless and fatherless, then, he cannot voice any epic history, nor can he document, in writing, his existence.

Surprisingly, though, this initial lack of agency proved salutary. Raised in an orphaned household, Walcott became accustomed, and I should add, resistant to one of the most crucial aspects of colonialism: the colonial hand wrote what the metropolitan voice dictated! But the speech and writing dialectic was broken once Walcott's father, part of the colonial administration, began using his hand at more than writing (King, 2000, p. 5).[2] Thus, painting, arguably a different form of writing, became the first instance of agency. For Walcott's poetics, this originating move is full of meaning. His father's water color paintings foreshadow his national and artistic project. Commenting on "The Schooner *Flight*", another one of Walcott's epic poems, Rowan Ricardo Phillips refers in technical and etymologic detail to the relationship between nation and poetry:

> Both poetry and nation speak to the act of creation. "Poetry," coming from the Greek poiesis, or "making," also implies a relationship to home as well as to the body in its uses of the Italian word for "room," stanza; its invocation of "foot" as the term for the basic metric unit of verse; and dactyl (Latin for "finger") for a particular foot that, like any finger on your left hand, has one long unit and two shorter ones. "Nation," meanwhile, echoes the Latin nasci, "to be born," and its obvious equivalents in modern languages are the Spanish verb nacer, as well as the French naître. Thus, in any examination of the relationship between poetry and the idea of nation, one also is witness to a parthenogenetic event: a simultaneous situation of making and of being born. (Phillips, 2002)

This semantic archeology is telling with regards to the kind of work Walcott sets out to do. The almost Derridean (parthenogentic) event that Phillips invokes refers to the nationless and fatherless poet's efforts of finding / founding a beginning. With no tradition to fall back on, Walcott invents one out of nothing (Walcott, 1974).[3] For him poetry becomes a way of performing the nation (in its

---

[2] In King's biography, Walcott's father, Warwick, is described as a "thoughtful, helpful and socially impeccable person" who started as a "Copyist" at the Education Office and was later appointed to the Registry Department to work for the Attorney-General and Acting Chief Justice. He was also listening to "recordings of opera, loved gardening, and was a gifted amateur in many arts," including painting.

[3] At various points in this essay, Walcott is extremely straightforward, when talking about "a mass art form which came out of nothing" or "culture can only be created out of this knowledge of nothing."

various units, ranging from the individual person and the family to community and humanity as a whole). Poetry as a household and as a redeemable act of writing – this is Walcott's original work.

After the father's paintings, the son's poems constitute a superior form of agency that the poet uses in order to advance original creation. As Edward Baugh notes, "Walcott stand[s] in relation to the development of [his] national literature much as Dante stood in relation to his." (Baugh, 2003) Paul Breslin reinforces this national project by pointing out "Walcott's attempt to imagine a society in which his poems could take place," effort that "would later receive help from an emergent West Indian cultural nationalism that looked forward to federation and independence." (Breslin, 2001, p. 53) It is obvious from the start, even if unconsciously from Walcott's part, that his poetry is to a certain extent a test of citizenship. Walcott not only *makes* and *gives birth* to his poetry, but he also does that and much more with regards to his nation. For instance, as I will try to show in the final part of this paper, the son's hand will not only try to paint the St Lucian landscape, his hand will also try to describe it. But the transition from painting to poetry does not only signify augmented agency; it also contains an inescapable sense of betrayal that fails to reconcile the representation of the art object with the object itself.

Here lies, then, the distinction I am trying to make between origin and beginning. Almost biologically, I read *origin* as an attribute of the *missing father*. The father's absent presence manifests itself through a special kind of painting. The father's paintings, mostly watercolor landscapes that later Walcott tried more or less to replicate, are an incipient way of crafting the nation. Commenting on Bakhtin's analysis of Goethe's *Italian Journey*, Bhabha notes that

> *The recurrent metaphor of landscape as the inscape of national identity emphasizes the quality of light, the question of social visibility, the power of the eye to naturalize the rhetoric of national affiliation and its forms of collective expression. […T]he origin of the nation's visual presence is the effect of a narrative struggle.* (Bhabha, 1994, p. 143)

After the *dictating voice* and the *writing hand* (introduced in the first quote from *The Location of Culture*), the *naturalizing eye* comes as a crucial element in the configuration of Walcott's poetics. The (narrative) struggle that engulfs the young poet, between the epics and the anthems of Homer, Dante, or Eliot (the cultural fathers!) and the "irredeemable act" of painting of his father, is tentatively settled through a special kind of poetry that incorporates equally the voice, the hand, and the eye. Failed both as a painter and as a heraldic poet, Walcott redeems himself by crafting a poetic language capable of creating a nation. And this is

Walcott's *beginning*. As implied before, if the father originates, the son begins; if the father paints, the son writes. Similar in craftsmanship, the two creative processes differ with regards to their final product. I am not referring here to the inherent distinctions between a painting and a poem; rather, under these circumstances, I am referencing a difference in the means of representation.

When Hannah Arendt speaks in *The Human Condition* about art works as being both "thought things" and "things," she favors mostly their *thingness* (Arendt, 1958, p. 169). Even though a work of art, more than anything man-made, is the immediate reflection of a thought process, Arendt argues, the thought that supposedly originated the end product comes second in a creation process in which the human hand comes first,

> *The reification which occurs in writing something down, painting an image, modeling a figure, or composing a melody is of course related to the thought which preceded it, but what actually makes the thought a reality and fabricates things is the same workmanship which, through the primordial instrument of human hands, builds the other durable things of the human artifice*. (Arendt, 1958, p. 169)

Without going in further detail into Arendt's argument, suffice it to say that what the father's hand originated, the son's hand began. As long as the workmanship involved in both painting and writing remains the same, the thought process itself remains the same as well: both father and son have, supposedly, the nation in mind. Both their hands painted and, respectively, described the same landscape.

But, if thought and workmanship are alike, the end products differ significantly. Even though conventional aesthetics clearly distinguishes between a painting and a poem, in Walcott's situation there might be a more subtle explanation. Apart form *ekphrasis*, which I will briefly use in the final part of this paper and which can be seen as a reconciliation of sorts between painting and poetry, there is really no similarity between the father's paintings and the son's poems. If, arguably, they both reify (in Arendt's understanding of the term) the same reality, the same landscape, or the same nation, they do it in a different way. If one uses mimesis, the other uses mimicry!

The problem that Walcott faces is not only a problem of reification. It has also something to do with representation. As an official scribe (working for the colonial government) and amateur painter, Walcott's father made use of mimesis at his best interest. If copying reality is what mimesis entails, then Warwick Walcott was a good copyist. He both copied documents, he might have even been writing them, but he also copied the St Lucian landscape. This move, the move of his hand, in fact, from copying the master's documents to painting the local

landscape, is, as I mentioned before, the first instance of agency. It ushers in the break with the colonial past. It originates a beginning. But it also places the son, the poet, in a difficult situation by placing the father even stronger under the colonial hold. Warwick Walcott does not only copy the master's documents; it turns out he is also copying the master's art. With a cliché in postcolonial criticism, by adopting the master's culture, Walcott's father is also accepting his rule. He could never be a mimetic painter without first being a mimic man. And this is the son's crux!

How can he represent his father's landscape without using his father's master's art? Where should he begin? Walcott finds a possible answer and a possible beginning in the epigraph of "The Divided Child," the first part of "Another Life,"

> *An old story goes that Cimabue was struck with admiration when he saw the shepherd boy, Giotto, sketching sheep. But, according to the true biographies, it is never the sheep that inspire a Giotto with the love of painting: but rather, his first sight of the paintings of such a man as Cimabue. What makes the artist is the circumstance that in his youth he was more deeply moved by the sight of works of art than by that of the things which they portray.* (143)

The tension between the "old story goes" and "according to true biographies" and between a work of art and the reality it represents resembles exactly Walcott's tension. His father's water color landscapes are without a doubt a starting point in his poetic project. Also, the works of Dante, Homer, Eliot or Joyce represent clear landmarks of inspiration in Walcott's poetics. By placing himself as a disciple of the great poets, he begins a practice that will eventually make him more than a mimetic follower. In fact, in this apprenticeship lies the whole constellation of meaning that *Another Life* entails. The work of imagination, the work of art, Walcott suggests, is never original. One necessarily begins in *media res*. A few line into the poem, the young poet / painter, with the fever of the "draughtsman's clerk", is trying to make his hand at capturing the landscape. An easy route to follow would be in the father's trace, yet the son wants to do more. The ambition of creation pushes him even further. Realizing he can never describe the landscape through his painting, he lets the twilight take over. The light fades and the vision dies, but the temptation of poetry is near. What the brush started, the writing hand brings to completion.

Thus, mimicry is part of the process of beginning anew. Caught between the old (story) and the true (biography), Walcott tries to fixate his poetics within language. Language, poetic language becomes the true mediation between *the dictating voice* of European tradition and the *irredeemable writing* of St Lucia. If,

for Derrida quoted by Bhabha, the voice is the attribute of "people assembled in the self-presence of [their] speech," for Wolcott language becomes a self-presence that breaks away any relation between the signifier and the signified. Moreover, while Derrida questions the existence of a universal, original, primordial signifier, without which the signified, any signified cannot exist, Walcott questions the relevance of a signified attached to an original signifier. In other words, if speech, in its self-presence, is capable of bringing and keeping people together as long as they suspend the original signifier, language cannot but start from that original signifier.[4]

This is what Éduoard Glissant describes as a poetics of language-in-itself. In this way, Walcott is the poet who "sought / the paradoxical flash of an instant / in which every facet was caught / in a crystal of ambiguities" (200), by sanctioning

> *the moment when language, as if satisfied with its perfection, ceases to take for its object the recounting of its connection with particular surroundings, to concentrate solely upon its fervor to exceed its limits and reveal thoroughly the elements composing it—solely upon its engineering skill with these.* (Éduoard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing, Ann Arbor: UM Press, 1997, p. 25*, quoted in* Phillips, 2002, pp. 112-132)

It seems, then, that in Walcott's case the signifier is both within and outside language, since he concentrates more on the signified, that is both his father's landscapes and his own poetic landscape, and its powers of signifying the nation. As he points out in his Nobel lecture, poetry is a process of excavating and self-discovering of the "buried language" of the past and of the "individual vocabulary" of the present (Walcott, 1998, pp. 69-70).

And this is what he means by mimicry. Thus, the difference between mimesis and mimicry is rendered by the words that take over and describe both visions of the landscape, the real and the painted one, discovering the buried language of representation and finding a new vocabulary for other representations. Mimicry, more than being a copy, is a repetition. Quoting Rei Terada, Charles Pollard notes that,

> *Mimicry is necessary in the New World because human beings create cultures though imitation. [...] Walcott characterizes this imitation as mimicry rather than mimesis to underscore the absence of origins in the New World. Mimicry connotes a representation of representation in a series of representations, whereas mimesis implies a representation of reality, a representation that assumes an authentic*

---

[4] For instance, Warwick Walcott's landscape signifies the nation, while Derek Walcott's landscape first signifies his father's landscape and only then the nation. That's why the poet needs to find more sophisticated means of expression that would account both for nation and his father's watercolor paintings.

cultural origin. [...] In Walcott's view, there are no core cultural identities only the representation of other representations. (Pollard, 2004, p. 34)

If, as Walcott puts it in *What The Twilight Says*, "imitation is true belief" and, in *The Antilles: Fragments of Epic History*, "What is called mimicry is the painful, new, laborious uttering that comes out of belief, not out of doubt", let me point out, for one last time before analyzing *Anna Awaking*, what I understand to be Walcott's mimicry. In his attempts of naming his nation, Wolcott succeeds in crafting a poetics that allows him to both recover the best parts of Western tradition and initiate a West Indian tradition. He is not completely rejecting the past, nor is he wholeheartedly embracing it. He continues his father's work, but at a superior level. Instead of using mimesis, that is, instead of copying reality and Western art, he gives imitation new meanings. It is my belief that he did in fact imitate the workmanship that original creation entails, but he did not imitate the end product. Whereas, in Arendt's understanding of art, poetry is about remembrance and memory, in Wolcott's poetics, art is about remembrance and amnesia. In other words, he remembered the craft, but he refused to remember (to recover) the original act of creation. In contrast, he preferred to imitate (discover) the act of creation as if creation always happens for the first time, hence instead of witnessing time and time again the Nietzschean eternal return to origins, he becomes the witnesses of an eternal beginning of origins. Even though in his poetics the move seems to be towards a cyclic paradigm, with New World poetry continuing the Old World poetry, and with the twilight symbolizing the fall of the first and the rise of the latter, in *Anna awaking* Walcott seems to be able to break that endless original cycle, and lay emphasis on morning, rather than on twilight.

The reason for which remembrance cannot bring about memory, but amnesia, is because the cord has been cut by the mirror that the colonizers brought over to the colonized, a mirror that can only reflect the Western values and virtues, but somehow passes over the language that, eventually, can and should contain them all.[5] As Arendt points out, the durability of a poem, resides in its capacity to

---

[5] A rather long quote from "The Caribbean: Culture or Mimicry?" explains the function of the mirror as a self-discovery tool, "Once the meridian of European civilization has been crossed, according to the theory, we have entered a mirror where there can only be simulations of self-discovery. The civilized virtues on the other side of this mirror are the virtues of social order, a lineally clear hierarchy, direction, purpose, balance. With these things, so we were taught, some social justice and the exercise of racial memory which is tradition. Somehow, the cord is cut by that meridian. Yet a return is also impossible, for we cannot return to what we have never been. The truth in all this is, of course, the amnesia of the American, particularly of the African. Most of our definitions of American culture are fragmentary, based on the gleam of racial memory which pierces this amnesia. The Old World, whether it is represented by the light of Europe or of Asia or of Africa, is the rhythm by which we remember. What we have carried over, apart from a few

condensate and explain living and the world, therefore life, outside the written page through is living recollection,

The durability of a poem is produced through condensation, so it is as though language spoken in utmost density and concentration were poetic in itself. Here, remembrance, Mnēmosynē, the mother of muses, is directly transformed into memory, and the poet's means to achieve the transformation is rhythm, through which the poem becomes fixed in the recollection almost by itself. It is this closeness to living recollection that enables the poem to remain, to retain its durability, outside of the printed or written page. (Arendt, 1958, p. 169)

For Walcott, though, this living recollection carries over from the workmanship that creates the poem towards the confines of *another life*, the beginning of imagination and representation that eventually will create not only the poem, but also the poet and his nation.

Of Betrayal – The Representation of Representation.

Chapter 14 of *Another Life*, whose epigraph is *Anna awaking*, is typical for the move that Walcott makes with regards to his poetics. As I tried to show before, the poet is using a certain kind of language in his efforts to begin to tell the story of his nation. His work, as a consequence of the workmanship that underlines the creations of the past, reaches in this poem a twist that, I argue, becomes specific to Walcott's poetry. He is not interested in the creation process itself, but rather, he manifests interest in the object of creation. Creator and inventor at the same time, Walcott is not drawn into origins, even though he takes his power from there. Instead, he is totally dedicated to beginnings, to what happens to creation after it has been created. There is where his poetic strain becomes relevant. As discussed before, Walcott's poetic art is at work only when he begins to transform his father's work, that is, when his poetic hand intervenes over the water color landscapes of his father. As Judith Harris points out, it is Walcott's "intent to reverse the perceptual order, to reinterpret the history of the island by painting over (whiting out) received narratives with fresh discursive colors and glaze." (Harris, 1997, pp. 293-309)

---

desultorily performed customs, is language. When language itself is condemned as mimicry, then the condition is hopeless and men are no more than jackdaws, parrots, myna birds, apes." It is obvious and, I guess, extremely simple to understand the function that the mirror has in Walcott's essay. Even though it distorts reality by equating the right side with the left side, a mirror is still a pretty accurate instrument of reflection – it cannot mirror back something that it does not contain. Therefore, even though it mimics reality, a mirror cannot actually describe it, whereas language can.

As Harris suggests, Walcott is painting over and whiting out received narratives, but he is not reinterpreting the island's colonial history. The reversal in the perceptual order the critic is invoking, then, refers to Walcott's reinterpretation of his own artistic history. *Another Life*, in fact, carries the poet's hidden ambition, that of describing for the first time, his island, and, thus, creating his nation. He is indeed painting over history, but he is painting over his own and his father's understanding of history. If the father mimicks the art of the colonizers, the end product, the son succeeds in mimicking creation itself, and not merely the object of creation. *Anna awaking* chronicles this move in which, for the first time, the poet gives up his obsession with the twilight and focuses on the morning. Thus, when Anna wakes, poetry wakes too, and the atmosphere that the poet creates in this poem is a clear manifestation of perceptual reordering. The poet no longer begins anew at twilight; this time he really begins at dawn.

The third section of the poem gives credit to this possible interpretation of the break in Walcott's poetry that accounts for a "poetics of morning" that replaces the "poetics of the twilight." Considered by Walcott himself to be a direct answer to Western poetics, the "poetics of the twilight" comes to represent, with all its possible implications, the betrayal the poet constantly invokes:

> *And which of them in time would be betrayed*
> *was never questioned by that poetry*
> *which breathed within the evening naturally,*
> *but by the noble treachery of art*
> *that looks for fear when it is least afraid,*
> *that coldly takes the pulse-beat of the heart*
> *in happiness; that praised its need to die*
> *to the bright candour of the evening sky,*
> *that preferred love to immortality;*
> *so every step increased that subtlety*
> *which hoped that their two bodies could be made*
> *one body of immortal metaphor.*
> *The hand she held already had betrayed*
> *them by longing for describing her.* (236)

This long stanza in the form of a fourteen-line sonnet defines the battle between what I call the "poetics of the twilight" and the "poetics of morning."[6] In a nutshell, this is the conflict between origins and beginnings. As mentioned before, *Another Life* is a long meditation of the adult poet looking back to his

---

[6] From all possible meanings, obvious within the text and implied by the large body of Walcott criticism, and to stay true to my understanding of the origin / beginning dialectic, I'd like though to suggest that the "poetics of twilight" represent the origin, while the "poetics of morning" embody the beginning.

apprenticeship as a young poet and painter. Moreover, the poem chronicles a series of conflicts between two opposing entities, which, I think, can be subsumed to the two large categories (origin & beginning) that define Walcott's becoming as an artist. As a way of clarifying my terms, before the close reading of the poem that, I hope, will prove my analysis, let me briefly reiterate what I mean by origin and beginning. First of all, even though there's no such thing as *a* first in good deconstructivist practice, there is the voice (the *dictating voice* of the colonizer) that originates language, and the writing (the *irredeemable writing* of the colonized) that begins language. Then, there's the absent father's hand that originates art (by painting the landscape) and the son's hand that begins it (by writing the landscape). Mimesis and mimicry, reality and representation, painting and poetry, past and present, memory and amnesia are also presented and represented.

Therefore, it should come as no surprise, there's the "poetics of the twilight" and the "poetics of morning." In the fourteen lines of the third part of *Anna awaking*, the two poetics are rendered by the *poetry which breathed within the evening* and by, what the poet calls, *the noble treachery of art*, respectively. What is more interesting, though, is the time sequence that the poet uses in rendering them. Whereas for the treachery of art he employs the present tense, for the evening poetry he uses the past. There's also at play a distinction between love and immortality. Let's take them separately and see what the poet means.

As expected, *what the twilight says* is given in more detail. The "poetics of twilight" refers to "the longing of describing" Anna, a need that would eventually betray the reality of the love the poet describes. Even though it seems clear that love is favored to immortality, the poet cannot escape the trap of the immortal metaphor. This means that in the process of transforming reality, poetry would have to give up life and, more importantly, give up the world it describes, therefore the nation. The two lovers' bodies would only become one by way of representation, by dying "to the bright candour of the evening sky." The poet seems to be so taken by the power of poetry that he loses sight of the downfalls of creation: the love he would thus describe would be a mere creation, irrevocably severed from reality. As Gregorias cautions a few lines before Chapter 14, the poet should prefer real intoxication to poetic intoxication,

> *Gregorias would laugh, "Drink, take a next sip.*
> *You are creating this, and it will end.*
> *The world is not like this,*
> *nor is she, my friend."* (232)

In contrast, the poetics offered as alternative disregards from the start the dangers of infatuation and intoxication. The "poetics of morning" "looks for fear when it is least afraid" and "coldly takes the pulse-beat of the heart / in happiness." But what is more important, such a poetics questions the validity of the creation. The poetic process and its end product that are being questioned are presented in the last stanza of the second part,

"Let's go for a little walk," she said, one afternoon,
"I'm in a walking mood." Near the lagoon,
dark water's lens had made the trees one wood
arranged to frame this pair whose pace
unknowingly measured loss,
each face was set towards its character.
Where they now stood, others before had stood,
the same lens held them, the repeated wood,
then they grew on each one
the self-delighting, self-transfiguring stone
stare of the semi-god.
Stunned by their images they strolled on, content
that the black film of water kept the print
of their locked images when they passed on. (236)

This fourteen-line stanza is a clear example of "twilight poetics" under interrogation. In opposition to an element of the "poetics of morning," "the oil green water" with which the poem begins, the dark water here signifies the poet's creed in representation. The dark water's lens creates both the frame and the image of the two lovers. Even more, it also locks their image in a typical exercise of transfiguration. Thus, locked in "the repeated wood", the characters "measured loss", meaning the impossibility of this type of poetry of portraying life. Repetition, which is one of the attributes of creation, does nothing more than to stifle the life of the creation. The black film of water keeps their print, which is a mere representation of a representation, thus making the "poetics of the twilight" an almost useless enterprise that needs to be questioned.

In fact, this questioning is the greatest move that Walcott dares to make. He is not only questioning his father's mimetic rendering of the master's art, he also questions his own use of the same art. The demi-god of poetry visits his own poems, but this is something from which Walcott wants to break away. Instead of being an original copyist, his characters standing where others' characters had stood, he strives for another beginning. And this is literally found at the beginning of the poem,

When the oil green water glows but doesn't catch,
only its burnish, something wakes me early,

draws me out breezily to the pebbly shelf
of shallows where the water chuckles
and the ribbed boats sleep like children,
buoyed on their creases. I have nothing to do,
the burnished kettle is already polished,
to see my own blush burn,
and the last thing the breeze needs is my exhilaration. (233)

These nine lines represent what I would call the "poetics of morning." The poetic self, represented here by Anna, wakes in *media res*. Everything is in place, the poet has nothing to do, poetry is already created. The "burnished kettle of [poetry] is already polished." This means that the poet already places himself within a tradition that seems not to need his poetic attempt. He does not want to see his own "blush burn" and the breeze no longer needs his exhilaration. It seems that everything that he had strived for, with his poetics of the twilight, is all of a sudden useless. The poetic self is already inscribed. He will never be original, therefore he needs to begin and Anna's waking offers itself as a beginning.

Another look at this fragment reveals its ekphrastic quality. This is a narration of a landscape, similar to the landscapes that his father painted. The oil green water, in contrast to the dark water that will later lock the images of the two lovers, "glows but doesn't catch". It is early morning and the son is about to rise, make the water glow and reflect the shore. But that does not happen yet. If and when it does, the poet, like the painter would find himself in the presence of the light, which signifies tradition. That is why, for a long time, until now, Walcott seems to have favored the twilight, the fading light of the sun, and the glowing light of the moon. He knew he could not or should not put up with the light of the West, with the master's tradition, like his father did.

Yet by exercising his poetics at dawn, Walcott implies that the light no longer bothers him. His task is no longer to resist tradition and fight back, at twilight. As if and as it does happen, yesterday's light is about to rise today, as it will do it, again, tomorrow, so, instead of following it into the night in order to set forth his poetry, Walcott decides to compete with it, and start his "poetics of morning." Still waiting for the sun, Walcott makes Anna, his poetic self, awake just before sunrise. The fact that his poetics glows but doesn't catch is, then, a great realization from his part because he comes to understand that there's nothing to catch!

Moreover, as he puts it in the next stanza, "The wind is older than the world. / It is always one thing at a time." He is talking here about the poetic creation that can never be originated again. Then, his only task is to begin it again, to particularize it according to his needs. This does not mean, though, that he

surrenders to tradition; rather, through his poetry, he is contributing to tradition. In fact, this is his way of making and giving birth to poetry, as he suggest at the end of this second stanza,

> *When the sleep-smelling house stirs*
> *to that hoarse first cough, that the child's first cry,*
> *that rumbled, cavernous questioning of my mother,*
> *I come out of the cave*
> *like the wind emerging,*
> *like a bride, to her first morning.* (234)

The invocation of the mother, here for the first time after presenting her as a servant in Chapter 2 suggests, both an unusual birth and a monstrous rape in which the spirit of tradition impregnated Walcott's poetry and produced the "poetics of morning."[7] After consummating the marriage, the bride wakes "like the wind emerging." In these lines, there is implied a crucial element of Walcott's poetics in which the poet equates poetry with morning. In "The Antilles, Fragments of Epic History," his Nobel lecture, Walcott writes,

> *For every poet it is always morning in the world. History a forgotten, insomniac night; History and elemental awe are always our early beginning, because the fate of poetry is to fall in love with the world, in spite of History.*
> *There is a force of exultation, a celebration of luck, when a writer finds himself a witness to the early morning of a culture that is defining itself, branch by branch, leaf by leaf, in that self-defining dawn, which is why, especially at the edge of the sea, it is good to make a ritual of the sunrise.* (Walcott, 1998, p. 79)

In *Anna awaking* this early ritual of the sunrise breaks the ritual of love between the two lovers and, thus, also breaks the ritual of the "poetics of the twilight." If once the poet/lover tried hard to describe his loved one, now it is time for the poet to fall in love with the world and admit the "noble treachery of art,"

> *But even if I love not him but the world,*
> *and the wonder of the world in him, of him in the world,*
> *and the wonder that he makes the world waken to me,*
> *I shall never grow old in him, I shall always be morning to him,*
> *and I must walk and be gentle as morning.* (234-5)

Arguably, this is the ultimate betrayal that the poet can stand, when the loved one that he desperately wants to describe and have her image locked in poetry becomes the one with the world that will inspire his work. The object of desire and its representation become eventually a representation of the world. Waking herself, Anna does nothing more than waking the poet to his world.

---

[7] In Chapter 2, Alix Walcott is portrayed as following the motto of the Prince of Wales, *ICH DIEN, I SERVE*.

In his Nobel lecture Walcott writes that "There's no beginning but no end" when is comes to the role the poetry and art play in the Caribbean. Since there is no beginning, then there must be an origin. As I mentioned before, Walcott's poetry, his process of making poetry, went through three phases. At first, Walcott mimicked the poetry he read. Like his father's watercolor paintings, Walcott's first poems are mere exercises after the great works of the literature of empires he studied in school. As he confesses in *Another Life*, the poet "had entered the house of literature as a houseboy." (219) He then developed what I called to be the "poetics of the twilight," a new sense of poetry that would resist and confront the literature of empires, at large. Finally, he settled for the "poetics of morning," when he realized that the tradition he tried to confront was actually flowing through his veins. There is no contradiction in this. Instead of excessively engaging in an endless constellation of representations, that would sacrifices life, love and world, the poet, cunningly, resorted to a poetic self that would awaken the world to life. His island, as it becomes obvious form *Anna awaking* comes to life and the personal, almost private task, of the poet becomes that of a chronicler that follows the moves of the poetic self's body. A chronicler that is capable of capturing in those moves the sound that wakes Anna and makes her body move "like a walking, waking island." The memory of those moves, or the amnesia for that matter, is what Walcott calls not the making, but the remaking of poetry. In the end, the "walking, waking island" breaks away, both from the confines of his father's landscape and from his own twilight poetics. This could be, then, the beginning of Walcott's attempts at performing the nation!

References:

1. Arendt, H. (1958). *The Human Condition*. Chicago: UC Press.
2. Baugh, E. (2003). Derek Walcott and the Centering of the Caribbean Subject. *Research in African Literatures*, 34(1), 151-159.
3. Bhabha, H. (1994). *The Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge.
4. Breslin, P. (2001). *Nobody's Nation: Reading Derek Walcott*. Chicago: UC Press.
5. Glissant, É. (1997). *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing. Ann Arbor: UM Press.
6. Harris, J. (1997). Giotto's Invisible Sheep: Lacanian Mirroring and Modeling in Walcott's Another Life. *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 96(2), 293-309.
7. King, B. (2000). *Derek Walcott, A Caribbean Life*. Oxford: OU Press.

8. Phillips, R. R. (2002). Derek Walcott: Imagination, Nation and the Poetics of Memory. *Small Axe*, 11, 112-132.

9. Pollard, C. W. (2004). *New World Modernisms*. Charlottesville: UV Press.

10. Walcott, D. (1974). The Caribbean: Culture or Mimicry? *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, 16(1), 3-13.

11. Walcott, D. (1986). *Collected Poems, 1948-1984*. New York: Noonday Press.

12. Walcott, D. (1998). *What The Twilight Says*. New York: FSG.

e-Democracy is increasing political ignorance

PhD Raluca LUŢAI
Department of International Studies and Contemporary History
Faculty of History and Philosophy, Babeş-Bolyai University
raluca.lutai@ubbcluj.ro

PhD Paul POPA
Department of International Studies and Contemporary History
Faculty of History and Philosophy, Babeş-Bolyai University
paul.popa@ubbcluj.ro

Abstract

In the century we live in, the main scene of political display is the virtual space of the internet. It is used by political agents to promote their own agendas and by citizens for demonstrations and political support. Cyber-activism is being strengthened every day, and the general belief is that the new generations, "clean" from any ideological perspective, through the informational exchange facilitated by the internet, will want to promote and consolidate democratic values. One of the main ideologies that started this type of belief is cyber-utopianism. In this paper, we will try to outline, starting from the hypotheses of this ideology, that e-democracy can become the worse of all kinds of democracies, because it's based on instruments capable of building its own censorship. The information overload determines that relevant information can be overlooked and misjudged leading to risky vulnerabilities for the healthy development of democracy. We can accept that e-democracy can be very helpful in promoting democratic values in autocratic regimes around the world, but it's risking a failure at home. Exposure to too much information it's just a new type of mass political communication, that can backslide to other extremes. The lack of information and information overload can mirror the same effect: political ignorance.

Keywords: *cyber-utopianism, e-democracy, e-government, overload information, political ignorance.*

Overview

Dynamics of digital media forces us to constantly reconfigure our daily and professional activity. From economic or financial to artistic behavior, we rely on the online. Political activities are no stranger to this. The tweets, shares and posts of politicians is replacing, most of the time, the long speeches and detailed analyses. The flow of information creates a perspective of standardizing values and political motivation. In the last decades we have seen elections won using

19

exclusively the online environment. Revolts, revolutions like Arab Spring and political demonstrations have been determined by the use of social media. The opinion makers are becoming more and more diverse, leaving the impression of a truly democratic debate.

Since the beginning of the Internet, it has been outlined the crucial role it will play, even in political events. Democracy, as it has been promoted by Western states, should be encouraged and strengthened due to access to information, the exchange of values and debates. Easy access to Internet creates the possibility of greater involvement of the citizens in relation to the political decision. Due to the promotion of good practice models, the need to establish or consolidate the rights and freedoms specific to democratic regimes, more social and political positions have taken place in states without democratic experience.

Even in consolidated democracies, media technology is being used at its maximum to strengthen political debates. Many of the manifestation that we've witnessed, like the assault on USA Capitolium, were due to promotion on social media. We are in the situation where we can spread democracy faster and sooner. But, are we really? Political regimes have always used promotion and consolidation mechanisms of power. Revolutions were made back in times without internet. Wars were won without social media. Are we to expect that online will help increase democracy? Or it's just another platform for political debates, resulting the same effects like the television in last decades. Can it get actually worse? Such a huge platform, with so many opinions, it can easily create confusion. Even in experienced democracies.

In this article we will try to evaluate the perspectives drawn by cyber-utopianism that establishes o strong connection between internet and increased democracy. Definitely we need to evaluate also the vulnerabilities that can be brought to that certain approach, to understand what are the effects of digital media in relations to democracy. Is it helpful or can actually create disadvantages? The article is structured in the following parts: the evaluation of cyber-utopianism perspective and the developing e-democracy and later its vulnerabilities created by overload information. What we are trying to demonstrate is that, in certain cases, there is not a strong link between using digital media and increasing democracy. On the contrary, we believe that democracy must be supported by a strong civic education, having relevant information, where the internet, with all of its information, is failing.

Democracy made online

Dependency on media technology has determined that political positions are more widespread, more updated and more evaluated than ever. Easing communication has determined that ideas and information are quickly spread and models of good practices are taken over and exchanged. Ideologies, social movements, political agendas can be formed much easily. When ICT (Information and Communications Technology) are being used in different stages of democratic process it creates the digital dimension of democracy. Electronic democracy or e-democracy is using information to enhance representativeness, deliberation and decision making. It can have a consultative dimension – where citizens are expressing their opinions to the government and deliberative characteristics – in case which *deliberative forums are integrated in policy discussions* (Chadwick). e-Democracy has developed forums for engaging in knowledge exchange and civic technology in order to develop inclusive engagement and active citizenship in political decision-making.[1]

A good example is the Italian *5 Star Movement* political party (MoVimento 5 Stelle-M5S) founded by an italian blogger and comedian who managed to create and consolidate one of the most important current political parties in Italy. Natale and Ballatore present in their article *The web will kill them all: new media, digital utopia, and political struggle in the Italian 5-Star Movement*, a complex analysis of how a movement promoting a new form of *web-based direct democracy* managed to win 2nd place in the Italian elections of 2013. The article highlights how digital media has become the mandatory platform for political debate and analysis, but also how a movement based on a speech about web-democracy has won so much electorate (Natale & Ballatore, 2014, p. 106).

Such a result, like the Italian elections, on web-based direct democracy discourse, was anticipated since the beginning of the internet. In their essay from 1996: *The Californian Ideology*, Richard Barbrook and Andy Cameron have examined the development of a cyber-utopianism, based on the interconnectivity of technological determinism and individual needs (Barbrook & Cameron, 1996, pp. 44-72) and which will inevitably create a *self-organizing system* (E. Morozov, *To Save Everything, Click Here: The Folly of Technological Solutionism*. New York: Public Affairs, 2013, p. 286 cited by Natale & Ballatore, 2014, p. 112). Many of the positions on libertarian cyber-utopianism were projecting a "market of ideas", lack of bureaucracy, decision making free from state intervention and

---

[1] For more information see http://forums.e-democracy.org/, an online platform for e-forums and deliberative e-democracy promotion.

non-boundary interaction that later has evolved in a symbiosis with the existing daily life political and socio-economic systems. Democracy ended up to be understood through the perspective of the digital citizen where digital media can amplify the individual liberties (Dahlberg, 2008, p. 179). Among the advantages of cyber-democracy, many supporters could highlight the reduced cost of information flow, so that more and more people could have access to information about the political agenda. This aspect inevitably leads to the possibility that many will be involved in the political decision, thanks to the easy access to technology (Barth, & Schlegelmilch, 2014).

Council of Europe is promoting the idea of e-democracy linking it to transparent administration and exploring governance at its best (Council of Europe, 3 September 2009). Also, European Parliament (2020) is suggesting that digital democracy is at the intersection of three trends: demographics, urbanization and technology considering that in many cases protests for democracy in authoritarian countries were due to the access on digital media (The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2019). In this regard, Claassen (2020) in his article *In the Mood for Democracy? Democratic Support as Thermostatic Opinion "democratic mood" of a country* establishing through his analysis that the need for democracy is very strong related to the lack of freedoms and rights thus, spreading the democratic values will eventually trigger the need for political reforms.

A structured analysis is offered by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, in its book released in 2003: *Promise and Problems of E-Democracy: Challenges of Online Citizen Engagement* where it highlighted the positive aspects of using digital media in the process of democracy and democratization. The OECD claims that the policy life-circle: *agenda setting-analysis-policy creation-implementation-monitoring* is much easier through digital media (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2003, pp. 20-34). Moreover, many of the solutions offered by the OECD 20 years ago for the consolidation of e-democracy remain valid even today. We will not list all the positive aspects of e-democracy because it is not mainly the objective of our analysis. Many of the *e-democracy instruments* are clear and their contribution is well recognized. Online debate platforms, access to information, consultation and petitioning are indisputable tools in supporting and strengthening the democratic process.

Moreover, numerous electoral processes that we have witnessed in recent years have demonstrated a clear aspect: the use of social media in the promotion and consolidation of democracy is vital. Although the consolidation of e-democracy is on the political agenda and are intensively promoted in the civic

spirit, some aspects cannot remain ignored. Mainly, the quick access to information and the possibility of a multipolar debate leaves room for numerous confusions, the possibility of massive polarizations, censorship or even disinformation and misinformation. In the following we will try to focus only on how overload information is representing the biggest vulnerability of e-democracy and can trigger the failure of e-participating contrary to what was expected.

Challenging e-democracy

Political regimes have always used mass communication to promote their own agendas and consolidate power. From common rhetoric to media populism, different types of propaganda and lately social media. To influence and persuade peoples mind through digital media has proven to be quite an art itself. Mainly because the ability to juggle truth and information in the online is so decisive, focusing to determine people to reshape what they want to choose. If we are to review the forms of political communication, the way to persuade is always based on emotions, on people's willingness to develop conformism, so that all political periods can apply approximately the same recipe. Only the tools are always newer. The only difference this time is that the flood of information is overwhelming.

When it comes to e-democracy, the possibility of petitioning to the government or to create new platforms for deliberative issues can project a healthy democratic process. Yet, engaging in online communication with the government doesn't make it a strong democratic process. Donald F. Norris, in *E-government... not e-governance... not e-democracy: Not now! Not ever?* (2010) is challenging us to understand the differences between instruments of e-government that can easily be mistaken for e-democracy dynamics. Where e-government is delivering information and services, e-democracy involves a continuous e-participation of the citizens in order to influence directly the political decision-making (Norris, 2010 cited by Freeman & Quirke, 2013). So e-democracy is not just about e-consulting on various initiatives, but an ongoing political dialogue (Freeman & Quirke, 2013). In this sense, probably in many situations, we are mistaking these two concepts. Having online services doesn't mean we are engaging in democratic decision-making. E-democracy was gaining in the 90's popularity because it's facile implications of the new e-public in decision-making process will eventually reduce the democratic deficit encountered in developed societies. Furthermore, consolidating e-voting along every kind of e-participating (e-petitioning, e-deliberative forums, etc.) will encourage more e-citizens to be involved in political elections. And mainly, due to its endless platforms, Internet still encourages

scholars, although not as enthusiast as 20 years ago, to consider that e-democracy is the best way to consolidate political representativeness (Lindner, Aichholzer & Hennen, 2016).

Many analyses have been written about the benefits of e-democracy, which in the brief arguments above have proven to be indisputable. We can assume that further developing e-voting platforms, e-democracy will eventually become the most common form of democracy. Obviously, e-democracy can also develop vulnerabilities: cyber-attacks, privacy issues, technological challenges, political propaganda etc. But, in our point of view, all of these can be, in a certain degree, manageable, and new instruments can be created in order to protect personal data, building security mechanisms against cyber-attacks, instruments for evaluating fake-news and so on.[2] We can assume that many of the challenges can be easily pass, as long as the pillar of democracy maintains: the will to participate in the democratic process.

The democratic deficit was considered to be minimalized once people were exposed to lots of information through the internet. Having the possibility to evaluate all the political perspectives, without media censorship, it would have been supposed to be the peak of democracy. Instead, from our point of view, a more dangerous side effect appeared: too much information is creating its own censorship mechanisms. We believe a great focus needs to be on the dark side of endless information given by digital media, mainly in how flood of information determines that relevant information can be overlooked and misjudged creating risky vulnerabilities for the healthy development of e-democracy.

Since the beginning of modern democracies, a huge problem was the lack of information, citizens not knowing in many cases *what* or *who* they are voting. Later, news-papers, radio and later, television, became a more useful democratic tool, because there were faster, wider and probably easier to combat and expose politics and politicians. But that doesn't mean that there were not any kind of fallacies in the public political discourse. Misinformation and disinformation are old as politics. There were used and continue to be used in political dynamics. They are, let's say, encrypted in human political nature. Forms of autocracies and democracies have encountered these two instruments as being inevitable, and sometimes necessary for awakening civic implication. Every political regime, even the strongest forms of democracies were victims of these two. And these, completed with too much information can destabilize democracies.

---

[2] For more details see Katsikas and Zorkadis (2017).

Consolidating e-democracy means using ICT at its maximum for sharing and evaluation. The public and political agendas become more complex and detailed. Everyday life is challenged by waves of information. It's becoming harder to trace and monitor politics, mainly because it doesn't respect one of its main obligations: to deliver relevant information. A media article published in 2018 by Washington Post resumed the irrelevant interventions that the president of USA had during a month (Klass, 2018), that can easily shadow the political agenda. The European Research Council published research emphasizing that political agents are also overwhelmed by the information processing (Walgrave & Johan, 2017).

Solutions are few because the internet is wide, everyone is entitled in expressing ideas and presenting news and facts. We cannot censor information just because it is too much, mostly not knowing which is actually true. The solution resides in the citizen and the capability of news curation. But the process is not an easy one. Dealing with enormous quantity of information, not always qualitative, is requiring the necessity to gather and analyze information beyond our cognitive possibilities. This leads to information overload.

The concept is not new. Scholars were focusing for decades on how information received must be controlled (Sweller, 1988, Cognitive load during problem solving: effects on learning, cited by Zhang, Akhter, Nassani & Haffar, 2022) and if it is too much, it will be rejected or will lead to frustration and lack of motivation, productivity and the capability of decision making (Matthes, Karsay, Schmuck & Stevic, 2020, "Too much to handle": impact of mobile social networking sites on information overload, depressive symptoms, and well-being cited by Zhang, Akhter, Nassani & Haffar, 2022). Julia Metag and Gwendolin Gurr in their article *Too Much Information? A Longitudinal Analysis of Information Overload and Avoidance of Referendum Information Prior to Voting Day* analyzed how information loaded leads to higher degree of avoidance. Information overload appears when information exceeds the cognitive capacities of the individual to process it causing distress (Metag & Gurr, 2022).

Moreover, studies revealed news overload is having a significantly impact on the news curation *and the news avoidance only mediated the relationship of news quality and news curation* (Zhang, Akhter, Nassani & Haffar, 2022, pp. 2-3). Having a content producer or curator can easily create biases, and their intentions is to *maximize client engagement,* determining increased information loading that inevitably will lead to general rejection or ideological fragmentation (Abdelzaher et al., 2020). Lewandowsky and Pomerantsev (2022) are proposing a paradox in which internet and social media *erode democracy and they expand democracy. The interaction between fundamental human cognitive attributes and the*

architecture of the information ecology have created a perfect storm for democracy.

Today's online dynamics, where it's hard to make the difference between politics and entertainment[3], e-democracy is becoming a process of apathy and ignorance. Having the citizen's responsibility to evaluate so many public institutions, politicians and public agenda can become a frustrating activity. The increasing development of social media disponible on each smartphone[4], where 24 h news can be issued can endanger the future will to participate in democratic process. We believe that e-democracy is challenged firstly by the information overload, and to this we can easily add others like misinformation, disinformation, propaganda etc. Refugeeing from the politics in necessity of rest and silence will develop a certain ignorance towards democracy. And autocratic leaders will profit from this degeneration of democratic will.

***

It is clear that information overload will destabilize democracy as we know it. Many solutions can be brought to the apathy caused by e-democracy and its flooded information. It can be established new regulations in order to launch certain rules on political communication. So at least we have proper sources with relevant information. We can also focus on partitioning democratic involvement, in order to monitor political decision-making through increased civil societies platforms or NGOs destined to evaluate, analyze and share relevant content regarding a certain topic (rule of law, environment etc.) The present paper wants to be a first step towards an increasing and developed further research on this topic.

References:

1. Abdelzaher, T., Ji, H., Li, J., Chaoqi Yang, C., Dellaverson, J., Zhang, L., Xu, C, & Szymanski, B. K. (2020). *The paradox of information access: growing isolation in the age of sharing*. https://arxiv.org/pdf/2004.01967.pdf.
2. Barbrook, R., & Cameron, A. (1996). The Californian Ideology. *Science as Culture*, 6(1), 44-72.
3. Barth, T. D., & Willi Schlegelmilch, W. (2014). Cyber Democracy: The Future of Democracy? In E. G. Carayannis, D. F. J. Campbell, M. P. Efthymiopoulos (Eds.), *Cyber-Development, Cyber-Democracy and Cyber-Defense, Challenges, Opportunities and Implications for Theory, Policy and Practice*. Springer.

---

[3] For more information see Kellner (2021).
[4] For more details see Tandon, Dhir, Talwar, Kaur and Mantymaki (2022).

4. Chadwick, A. *e-democracy*. Britannica Web. https://www.britannica.com/topic/civic-capacity.

5. Claassen, C. (2020). In the Mood for Democracy? Democratic Support as Thermostatic Opinion "democratic mood" of a country. *American Political Science Review* 114(1), 36-53.

6. Council of Europe. (3 September 2009). *E-democracy: opportunities and risks for local authorities*, The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities Chamber of Local Authorities, 17 th PLENARY SESSION CPL (17)2. Retrieved November 14, 2022, from https://rm.coe.int/e-democracy-opportunities-and-risks-for-local-authorities-committee-on/168071a380.

7. Dahlberg, L. (2008). Libertarian Cyber-Utopianism and Global Digital Networks. In *Globalization and Utopia*. Palgrave Macmillan.

8. E-Democracy.org. http://forums.e-democracy.org/.

9. European Parliament. (2020). Digital democracy Is the future of civic engagement online? (Re-)thinking democracy 2020. Retrived November 14, 2022, from https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2020/646161/EPRS_BRI(2020)646161_EN.pdf.

10. Freeman, J., & Quirke, S. (2013). Understanding e-democracy. *Journal of democracy and open government*, 5(2), 142-145.

11. Katsikas, S. K., & Zorkadis, V. (Eds.). (2017). *E-Democracy – Privacy Preserving, Secure, Intelligent E-Government Services*, 7th International Conference, E-Democracy 2017, Athens, Greece, December 14-15, 2017 Proceedings. Springer International Publishing AG 2017, Switzerland.

12. Kellner, D. (2021). *Technology and Democracy: Toward a Critical Theory of Digital Technologies, Technopolitics, and Technocapitalism*. Springer VS.

13. Klass, B. (2018). *Can democracy survive information overload*? Washington Post. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/democracy-post/wp/2018/04/06/can-democracy-survive-information-overload/.

14. Lewandowsky, S., & Peter Pomerantsev, P. (2022). Technology and democracy: A paradox wrapped in a contradiction inside an irony. In *Memory, Mind and Media*, Vol. 1. https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/memory-mind-and-media/article/technology-and-democracy-a-paradox-wrapped-in-a-contradiction-inside-an-irony/F904B05B7ECCC05A844E8E4EA7F86DC0.

15. Lindner, R., Aichholzer, G., & Hennen, L. (2016). Electronic Democracy in Europe: An Introduction. In R. Lindner et al. (eds.), *Electronic Democracy in Europe* (pp. 2-9). Springer International Publishing Switzerland.

16. Metag, J., & Gurr, G. (2022). Too Much Information? A Longitudinal Analysis of Information Overload and Avoidance of Referendum Information

Prior to Voting Day. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* OnlineFirst. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/epub/10.1177/10776990221127380.

17. Natale, S., & Ballatore, A. (2014). The web will kill them all: new media, digital utopia, and political struggle in the Italian 5-Star Movement. *Media Culture & Society*, 36(1).

18. Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2003). *Promise and Problems of E-Democracy: Challenges of Online Citizen Engagemen*t (pp. 20-34). Retrieved November 21, 2022, from https://www.oecd.org/gov/digital-government/35176328.pdf.

19. Sweller, J. (1988). *Cognitive load during problem solving: effects on learning* (1988), cited by Xiao Zhang, Shamim Akhter, Abdelmohsen A. Nassani and Mohamed Haffar, Impact of news overload on social media news curation: mediating role of news avoidance, *Frontiers of Psychology*, 2022. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9039232/pdf/fpsyg-13-865246.pdf.

20. Tandon, A., Dhir, A., Talwar, S., Kaur, P., & Mantymaki, M. (2022). *Social media induced fear of missing out (FoMO) and phubbing: Behavioural, relational and psychological outcomes*. https://reader.elsevier.com/reader/sd/pii/S0040162521005825?token=71BBE5DBDB241CB00DD949249BDA91D77763F84F731DD390AA821125C81E75FF04EBE9DEA7D46B9E69676C47BE8EF039&originRegion=eu-west-1&originCreation=20221127190554.

21. The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. (2019). *After Protest: Pathways Beyond Mass Mobilization*. Richard Youngs, editor. Retrieved November 14, 2022, from https://carnegieendowment.org/files/Youngs_AfterProtest_final2.pdf.

22. Walgrave, A., & Johan, S. (2017). Information-processing by individual political actors. The determinants of exposure, attention and action in a comparative perspective, University of Antwerp, published as an ERC project INFOPOL (2012-2017). https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/295735.

23. Zhang, X., Akhter, S., Nassani, A. A., & Haffar, M. (2022). Impact of news overload on social media news curation: mediating role of news avoidance. *Frontiers of Psychology*. Retrieved November 15, 2022, from https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9039232/pdf/fpsyg-13-865246.pdf.

The Effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic on the Teachers

PhD student Csilla-Zsuzsánna MÁTÉFY
Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca
Doctoral School of Philosophy
zsumatefy@gmail.com

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic started in Romania in February 2020, a year which brought us many restrictions, as well as a large number of challenges. Everything changed: the educational system, the healthcare system, the whole field of work. Two years we were challenged incessantly, we never knew what was going to come next. In this article I will present the restrictions, the most important changes this period brought about from the perspective of teachers. I will also present and analyze research contexts which included 50 participants, all teachers in Tg-Mures, in order to bring some answers to the questions involving the educational system, the ethical aspects of the decisions made and vaccination.

Keywords: *COVID-19 pandemic, teachers, vaccination, restrictions.*

Introduction

The beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in Romania dates back to February 26, 2020. This was when the first case of illness was identified in our country. Not shortly after, a state of emergency was declared, which came with various restrictions, such as closing the schools, malls, pubs or country borders. In a few months, the state of emergency was changed to a state of alert, which implied some relaxations, maintaining, however, some of the previous restrictions as well. By the end of the year 2020, the first authorized vaccines appeared on the market, which decreased the chances of people contracting the virus and prevented them from the serious effects of the disease.

Taking in consideration the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic was spread all over the world, it can be classified as a catastrophic event, which led to infodemics and misinformation.

Our lives changed radically. Teachers were affected twice as much. Firstly, we had to confront our own anxiety about the situation, but we also had to offer support to the children and their parents. At the same time, we had to learn new techniques by ourselves in order to be able to do our job. Fortunately, we were part

of the first group of people who had access to vaccines. Our decisions weren't the same: some of us accepted vaccines, others did not.

In this research I followed the teachers' level of anxiety, the time spent by them following the news and also the way they chose for their activity. The research data came from a period of time spanning between the years 2020 and 2021. The research is both quantitative and qualitative.

Restrictions in 2020 and 2021

On the 16th of March 2020, it was declared a state of emergency in Romania. Prior to this, on the 10th of March 2020, the first restriction was announced: the closing of the schools from the following day. In a few days, other restrictions came regarding the health system: patients didn't have the right to get out of the hospital building until being discharged, a triage was introduced for everyone who entered the hospital. Afterwards, some of the hospitals' sections that were considered less crucial were suspended and transformed in COVID-support clinics.

At the same time, all the pubs were closed, as well as clubs, restaurants, malls, which affected everyday life, in all of its aspects: social, economic, healthcare, educational.

The most important restrictions were the obligation to wear a face mask (at first, only in closed spaces, then in public spaces too), the regular hand disinfection, social distancing, quarantine, completing a declaration when going out, online education. Later, the vaccines appeared, the green certificate (which gave us the right to enter some shops, restaurants or participate in a few events).

Restrictions in the educational system

The pandemic first impacted the educational system on March 11th 2020. This was the first day on which the physical classes were suspended. Initially, this restriction was introduced only for two weeks, when nobody knew what was going to happen, and nobody knew what exactly we should do. After the first two weeks, we were announced that teaching would continue online. For almost two months we didn't have a platform on which we could work, so everyone was forced to improvise, under their own guidance. By April 2020, every school had chosen a method of work, a platform to use for education, so now everybody had to learn how to use the new platforms.

The next school year, 2020-2021, started with new rules: the disinfection of the hands, wearing the face mask and maintaining the social distance were still

necessary. During this period of time, different 'scenarios' were respected: red, yellow and green – which were correlated with the infection rate of each county. The green scenario meant face-to-face education for everyone, the yellow one meant hybrid education (face-to-face and online, classes were divided in two groups) and the red scenario meant online teaching. The form of education (face-to-face, hybrid, online) also depended on the number of cases in each class and in the school.

In the school year 2021-2022 the scenarios were modified: hybrid teaching disappeared. A few weeks later, everything depended exclusively on the number of infected pupils. Next, the government decided to introduce a 'forced' holiday, until they were able to find a better solution. After this, we were allowed to go back to school face-to-face. However, the infected pupils and teachers participated in online courses. If the number of infected children was high in a same class, the whole class was going to learn online for five days. On the 8th of March 2022, all the restrictions were lifted: the state of alert ended. From that point on, all the earlier obligations disappeared, which meant that at least half of the children and teachers did not have to wear the face mask anymore and social distancing was no longer practiced. After the holiday in April 2022, almost everybody seemed to have forgotten all the restrictions and recommendations. The society appeared to be back to normal.

Anxiety

The origin of the concept 'anxiety' can be identified in the existentialist philosophical current. This is a psychic manifestation firstly studied by philosophers and, later, also by psychologists. Anxiety can become a condition when always present in a person's life, who shows constant excessive care. Anxiety can be triggered by different events or situations (David et al., 2000). So the appearance of anxiety as a characteristic is correlated with COVID-19 pandemic, which changed our everyday lives totally. In those two years we had to deal with all the restrictions, we reduced socialization and, most importantly, we were at all times stressed by the uncertainty of the situation.

Biopolitics, vaccination, fake news

Biopolitics represents the base of our actual political system, which says that we have to focus on conserving our life with the support of medicine (Foucault, 2006). The medical ethics principles are based on biopolitics, utilitarianism and Kant's deontological ethics. Medicine started to develop more and more in the last

few centuries, in order to save as many lives as possible. In order to do so, researchers took technology to a higher level so as to be able to create new medicines, new treatments.

Vaccines are one important contribution of advanced medicine. The first one was used in 1796. In the last decades, doctors created a list of vaccines that every child should get, in order to stop and decrease the rates of some dangerous diseases. The first COVID-19 vaccines appeared in 2021. Vaccinating is not mandatory, but it is firmly recommended. Everybody can decide whether to get vaccinated or not. The affirmative decision can be taken from debt or according to duty (Kant, 1995). If one got vaccinated because he or she was scared of the disease, then that person took the decision according to duty. In the case of the doctors who decided to get vaccinated because this was the only possibility to save others' lives, they took the decision from debt. Therefore, their decision was a moral, ethical one.

Taking in consideration the fact that COVID-19 pandemic affected the whole world, we could see and be certain about the appearance of an infodemic. An infodemic appears when a catastrophic event takes place: it implies an abundance of information all over the media. The problem is that this phenomenon increases the number of 'lay journalists', who are simple people who present their own ideas as if they were verified and reliable information. In this way, especially because of the increasing social media activity, fake news appears, which is read by many people. It is posted on Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, which are the most popular social platforms, and becomes viral, misleading a lot of people who read this information. The same thing happened throughout these past two years, when people were divided in different groups: the ones who believed in the virus, the others who did not; the group of people who trusted the vaccines and the group who did not (Germani & Biller-Andorno, 2021).

Research

The main objective of the present research was to identify, follow and analyze the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on teachers' lives. I collected information from 50 teachers from Targu Mures about their habits of watching the news, their mental state, with a view on the correlation between following the news and their anxiety level. At the same time, I was interested in whether they got used to some of the changes, restrictions, and also in their opinion about the morality of the restrictions. I collected data about the vaccination situation and

analyzed it in order to determine the factors that influenced the teacher's decisions of vaccinating or not.

The research involved 50 teachers from Targu Mures: 58% of them were 41-60 years old, 38 % – 21-40 years old and 4 % – over 60 years old. From the 50 people, 24% were men and 76% women. 80% of the participants were high school teachers and 20% were teaching at a primary and secondary school level.

The instruments I used for the quantitative research were forms, questionnaires formulated by myself, which included questions about the changes that were recently introduced. I structured the questionnaires into five or six periods, in order to follow each and every change, restriction or relaxation, and cover the whole 2020-2021 school year. For the qualitative research, I used a semi-structured interview, which was composed of 17 questions.

For the quantitative research I proposed five hypotheses. Firstly, we can see from the collected data that there is a significant difference between the anxiety level in the year 2020 and that of 2021. In the pre-pandemic period, before March 2020, 26% of the participants identified anxiety as being present in their lives. In the first two months of the pandemic, this percentage increased to 46; during the summer break, it decreased to 42% and after the start of school in September, it increased again to 44%. At the end of the year 2020, after the education was transferred to online, 42% of the teachers identified the presence of anxiety in their lives. In January 2021, after the first vaccines appeared, there was a viewable decrease of the anxiety. In the first three months of the year, only 30-32% of the participants considered that they are anxious, and in April, just 20-22% of them felt anxious. Of course, in September 2021, the percent of anxious teachers increased to 34-36, which (even if it was an increase comparative to the summer period) is a visible decrease next to the percent from September 2020.

Anxiety may have physical effects too, such as headache, stomachache, loss of appetite or higher pulse. In psychology, this is called 'somatization'. The presence of these psychosomatic symptoms was identified among 4% of the participants in the pre-pandemic period. An intense increase is visible in the autumn of 2020 (10%) and also in that of 2021 (6-8%), which indicates that there is a relation between the start of school and the appearance of these symptoms. Therefore, the first hypothesis was confirmed. According to it, there is a relation between the invention of the vaccines and the teachers' anxiety level. Moreover, we can affirm that the second hypothesis was also confirmed: there is a relation between the school start and teachers' anxiety level (Figure 1).

Figure 1. *Anxiety and psychosomatic sympthoms*
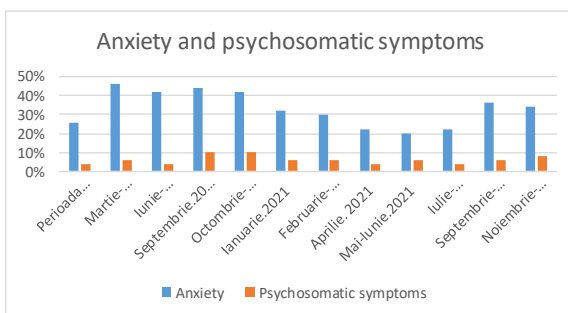
Analyzing the time spent following the news, in the pre-pandemic period, 66% of the participants spent less than three hours/ week and 34% spent more than three hours/ week engaged in this activity. In the period of March–May 2020, this ratio has changed. The percent of the participants who spent more than 3 hours/ week following the news increased. In June–August 2020, the ratio was the same as in the pre-pandemic period – a result of the relaxation of the restrictions. In September – December 2020, the percentage of the teachers who spent more than 3 hours/ week following the news increased again to 68 and the percentage of the ones who were following the news less than 3 hours / week decreased to 32. In January 2021, a major decrease can be observed: 82% of the participants spent less than 3 hours/ week following the news. This ratio remains constant throughout the year 2021: only 14-18% of the participants followed the news for more than 3 hours/ week. So, we can see an explosive decrease of the time spent following the news, which means that in 2021, the participants spent less time with this activity than they ever did (it is an increase even compared to the pre-pandemic period) (Figure 2).

Figure 2. *Time spent with following the news*
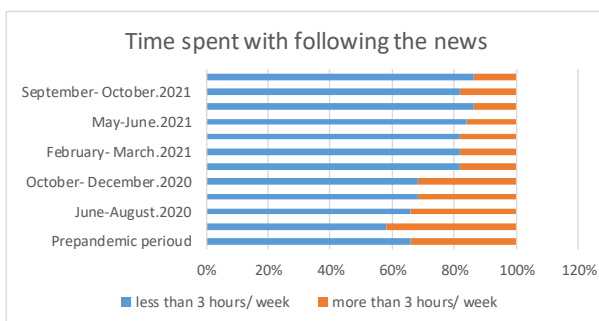
We can see the same tendency in the case of anxiety too. Thus, we can observe that when the time spent following the news increases, anxiety also increases, and when the time spent following the news decreases, the anxiety

decreases as well. At the same time, I consider that the constant decrease, especially from 2021, can be explained also by the appearance of the first vaccines and people simply getting used to the restrictions (Figure 3).

Figure 3. *Longitudinal study: anxiety- following news*
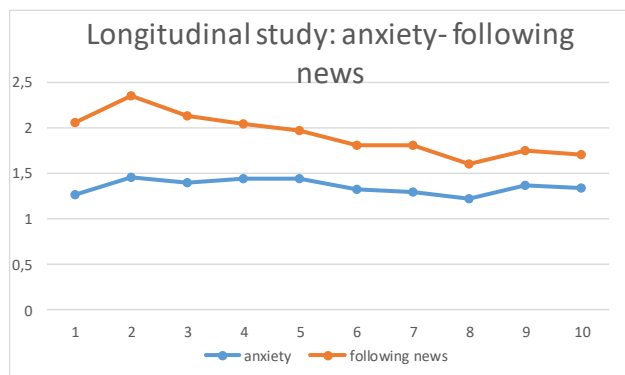
In conclusion, we can affirm that the third hypothesis was also confirmed. According to it, there is a relation between the time spent following the news and the anxiety level of the participants.

The fourth hypothesis, according to which the teachers considered that most of the restrictions were moral, acceptable, ethical, was also confirmed. (Table 1)

Table 1

The acceptability of the restrictions

The acceptability of the restrictions	
closing the school (March 2020)	74%
wearing face masks indoor	88%
social distancing	88%
completing a statement when leaving the house	54%
closing the pubs and restaurants	86%
wearing the face masks outside in crowded places	94%
restrictions in schools (September 2020)	90%
closing the schools (October 2020)	88%
wearing the face masks in- and outside	84%
finishing the first semester online (January 2021)	84%

reopening the schools for the final years (February 2021)	84%
changing the structure of the school year (March 2021)	64%
reopening the schools (May 2021)	88%
introducing the green certificate in order to have access to different events	80%
uncoupling the scenarios for schools from the infection rate in a county (October 2021)	62%
changing the structure of the school year (October 2021)	32%
introducing the green certificate in order to have access to unessential shops (October 2021)	76%

The fifth hypothesis, according to which the level of discomfort caused by the restrictions and the whole pandemic situation increases if the restriction measures are repeated for a long period of time, was confirmed as well. As we can see on Figure no. 3, both the levels of anxiety and the time spent following the news increased in time, which shows us that people got used to the measures, and once they were no longer considered to be new parts of their lives, they got used to them. The fact that there was a month and a half after the state of alert had already ceased and people still respected the habits of wearing a face mask and keeping the social distance, even though it wasn't mandatory anymore, points to the same conclusion.

In the next paragraphs, I will present the qualitative research, where I used the semi-structured interview in order to find out why the participants gave some of the above-mentioned answers in the questionnaires. I conducted six interviews, including three vaccinated and three unvaccinated participants.

From the questionnaires, I found out that the most popular source of news was television, social websites and, on the third place, web sites. The participants in the interview said that these are the most accessible and practical sources where one can follow the news. Only one person followed the news on the official sites, since a relatively recent period of time. The reason for this change was simple for her: she realized that on television, social media and news web sites appeared a lot of fake news and misinformation.

Four out of six persons considered that the restrictions in 2020 were absolutely necessary, because the whole situation was unprecedented, so "it was the only solution in order to protect ourselves and the others". Three of these participants were vaccinated and one person was unvaccinated. The other two

participants in the interview considered the restrictions as being unnecessary or partially necessary. One person said that they were partially necessary because back then, it was difficult to obtain face masks, so until the face mask crisis was solved, we needed something to be protected from. The other person considered the restrictions totally unnecessary: she had a lack of trust in authorities, as she confessed: "I felt bad when I was listening to the news, it was like they were happy because we have a problem. I felt that something was wrong with this story of the pandemic. Thanks to this behavior of the authorities, I lost all my trust in them".

If we analyze the acceptability of the measures introduced in the spring of 2020, three persons said that, from their perspectives, the restrictions were acceptable, moral. The only restriction that was not really accepted was the mandatory completing of the statement when leaving the house. This statement represented a source of stress and it was also a bureaucratic procedure that mostly did not ensure its supposed effects. Only one person out of six considered the closing of the schools in March 2020 acceptable. At the same time, she considered that the rest of the measures taken were excessive: "they were some aberrations without any logic". Another participant considered that closing the schools was unacceptable, because it has negative effects in the long term. One participant considered that the situation was exaggerated: "We did not get any explanations, it was like in communism". This led to uncertainty and a lack of trust in authorities.

The relaxation in the summer months of 2020 was welcomed after two months of severe restrictions. All the participants considered that this relaxation was necessary for everyone. At the same time, two participants considered that these decisions were taken in hurry and that they mostly had economical and political reasons.

Reopening the schools in September 2020 caused divergent discussions. Two out of six participants considered that this was a huge risk, taking in consideration the fact that it implied a lot of people being in the same room (it was most certain that the number of infected people would increase). One person considered that this reopening of the schools represented a medium risk, the only problem with it was the lack of possibilities for testing. The other three persons did not consider that to be a risk, saying that the children and teenagers can be better controlled in school, then in other places. To their minds, the relaxation in summer entailed a higher risk, once the pubs and restaurants were open for everyone. One of the participants said:

The teenagers did not care, they were eating and drinking after each other. So it was the same with or without face-to-face teaching. Somehow they felt that they

would be closed again. We also started to feel the same way: we knew that we would be closed after the elections. It was like a theatrical piece.

This reopening came with some rules too, such as keeping the social distance in the classes, disinfecting the hands, wearing the face masks. Two participants (unvaccinated) considered that these rules were unacceptable, it was simply too much for once, and, at the same time, the rules were not respected outside of the school. Three participants considered that these restrictions were absolutely necessary, the situation being severe at that time. One other participant considered that the restrictions were somehow acceptable, taking in consideration that she works in special education, with children with disabilities, and there are some cases in which the children are not capable of wearing the face masks.

In October 2020, the red scenario was implemented, which meant education should be done exclusively online. Three out of six participants considered this totally necessary and acceptable: the situation in the hospitals was catastrophic. Other two participants considered that school was not a risk or a source of infection. This was only a political decision:

When it was known a month ago what would happen, it did not seem something normal to me, not even the numbers of the infections. They had known one month ago that the number of infected people would increase, it was like a scenery that was written for the theater. I couldn't believe that the authorities thought that we were such idiots. Of course there were problems and ill people, but the numbers didn't reflect the truth. The manipulation on mass-media was a total disaster, many people believed them.

One participant initially did not agree with this measure. Her opinion was influenced by the fact she had to have an inspection in the class in special education, in order to achieve a higher degree. For her it was an infernal job to help the children and their parents learn how to use the educational platform of the school.

In March 2021, the Minister of Education decided to modify the structure of the school year. All the participants considered that closing the schools was necessary. Five out of six teachers considered that it would have been better if the teaching had continued online for everyone, not only for those in their final years. This holiday was detrimental to teachers in regards to their salaries, but some of them also had to work in these two weeks with the final years and two more weeks with everyone else in summer, which meant that it was double work for less money. Only for special education this was a good decision. There, it is much more difficult to work online.

In May 2021 all the schools were reopened. Everyone came back to school, teaching was face-to-face. All the participants considered this to be a good decision: they said that if the online education was longer, it would have had negative effects. Only one participant considered that this decision was beneficial on a social and mental plan, but from the point of view of education, it was nonsensical to bring back the pupils for five or six more weeks.

The use of the green certificate (initially, only to have access to events such as concerts, later, mandatory in order to access everything unessential, plus restaurants) divided the participants in two distinct groups: the three vaccinated participants were pro green certificate: they considered it as being the only possibility to fight the pandemic and also the only solution not to destroy the economy. The other three participants, who were not vaccinated, considered that the green certificate is total nonsense, having no utility, but giving more rights to vaccinated people. They thought that there was even a risk that vaccinated people would infect the ones who were not vaccinated, on purpose or not. One of the participants said:

> *The unvaccinated people had the right to participate in different events by showing a negative test, which meant that they knew for sure that they were healthy and not infected. The vaccinated people did not need to do a test: they could enter anyway. In this way, many unvaccinated people entered public spaces healthy and then came out ill.*

In October 2021, the functioning of schools ceased to be correlated with the incidence ratio of the locality. Instead, it was correlated with the percentage of vaccinated teachers. All the six participants had the same opinion about this decision, but the reason for their opinion differed. The three unvaccinated participants considered that this was a method of the authorities to impose vaccination of the teachers. Once exhortation and vaccination is included as a criteria, there has to be a political reason. The other three participants, vaccinated, considered that the most important thing at that moment was to correlate the incident ratio of the county to the specific situation of each school, without differentiating between schools from the rural and urban zones. "There were many schools in rural zones where teaching was done online even if they had only one ill person, and in urban zones there were schools full of infected people, but not enough to close the school and continue online. This also had a reversed effect", said one of the participants.

At the end October 2021, the Minister of Education decided to change the structure of the school year by introducing a two week forced holiday and shortening it by one week in the winter holiday. All the participants considered

that introducing the forced holiday was totally unacceptable and useless. They considered it would have been better and more efficient if the process of teaching would have continued online.

Four out of six participants considered the hybrid teaching system was more efficient than the online system. They considered that they could teach more to all the students by being face to face every second week, especially in the case of practical applications. It is important to mention that these participants are teaching the next disciplines: Technology of Information and Communication (they usually work in a laboratory), Music (in an arts high school), Mathematics and one participant is teaching at a special school. The other two participants considered that it is more tiring to focus in two directions: wearing the face mask and being in a large room makes it more difficult to be heard by everyone from school and home as well. One of these participants is an English teacher and the other one a Physics and Chemistry teacher.

Regarding the time spent following the news, two out of six participants significantly decreased the time spent on this activity: both of them took this decision in order to maintain their mental health, considering that the situation was not going to change anyway, it was useless to spend a lot of time following the news.

Finally, the participants were asked about what influenced them in taking the decision of vaccinating or not. The three vaccinated participants took the decision to get vaccinated at the beginning of the year 2021, two of them in January and one of them in February. They took the decision in order to protect themselves and their family members too. In their opinion, vaccination is the only solution that can save us from the pandemic. The other three participants, who were unvaccinated, gave longer answers to explain their decision. One of them decided against vaccinating because, the way she saw it, this whole story was about exhortation, which meant that it was purely political. The other unvaccinated participant said that she was following many discussions, presentations of the doctors from all over the world, who considered that this vaccine was not necessary. On the other hand, she considered that the vaccine was an aberration since they offered beer and food if you get vaccinated. She totally opposed the vaccination, saying that she would rather give up her job if vaccination would become obligatory. The third participant considered that this disease is not that dangerous, so the vaccine is not something that we need. She considered that many ill people were not treated in the hospitals in the correct manner, taking in consideration the fact that medicine doesn't work the same way for everyone. On the other hand, she considered that once something is imposed, it means that it is harmful:

If we analyze history, not even one thing that was imposed by authorities and was good for the people. Vaccination is based on politics, the people who try to convince us are not even doctors, and they do not even have any specialized studies in medicine.

Thus, through this analysis, I presented the reasons at the base of the participants' judgments. At the same time, we can affirm that the sixth hypothesis of this research was also confirmed: the decision to get or not the COVID-19 vaccine is influenced by the way of interpreting information. From the interviews, we can see that all the participants got the same information, but the interpretation and the sources were different. The three unvaccinated participants were watching the news on the television, social media and sites dedicated for news. The source or the time spent following the news did not change in time. The three vaccinated participants initially had the same sources, but two of them significantly reduced the time spent with this activity and one of them also changed the source from television and social media to the official sites of the authorities. So, I consider that the source they chose to follow the news, the time spent with it and also the way of interpreting the information also influenced their decision to get vaccinated. Another common reason for the unvaccinated participants was the lack of trust in the authorities. The vaccinated participants observed that there were some difficulties in the communication between the authorities and people: they did not give it such an importance as the unvaccinated participants did. The unvaccinated participants considered that all the restrictions and the insistences on vaccination were very similar to the means of manipulation in communism, period in which they once lived (the vaccinated participants were in the 21-40-year-old age category, while the unvaccinated participants were in the 41-60-year-old one.

Conclusions

The main reason for this research was to follow and analyze the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on teachers' lives, from an ethical and psychological perspective.

Firstly, we can say that most of the restrictions were being considered as ethical, moral and necessary. The least appreciated restrictions were the completion of a statement on our own responsibility, declaring where we would go when we left our houses and the changing of the structure of the school year in October 2021. All the other restrictions were accepted, considered a necessity.

The presence of anxiety in 2020 was very visible, especially after the beginning of the pandemic. Then we could see a decrease in the levels of anxiety in the summer months, when the restrictions were relaxed, which was followed by

another increase after the start of the school year once again. Once the vaccine appeared, but also after a longer period of time, we could see another decrease in the levels of anxiety. In the summer of 2021, this level decreases even under the pre-pandemic level, which means that with the passing of time and repeating the actions (wearing a face mask, disinfecting) people got used to the changes. This way, the situation transforms into a new normality. A little increase can also be observed after reopening the schools in September 2021.

The time spent following the news has changed from the beginning of the pandemic: it had maintained at a medium level in 2020. In 2021, the teachers significantly reduced the time spent following news, which contributed to the decrease of anxiety.

The year of 2021 brought some changes in the lives of the teachers: they reduced the time spent following the news, the presence of anxiety in their lives decreased and in January started the campaign of vaccination, where teachers were prioritized. Although initially it was difficult to make an appointment for the vaccination, there were teachers who figured on the list in January and got vaccinated only in March or April. I consider that this opportunity had a positive effect on their health, physically and mentally too.

The teachers' preferences in following the news did not change much, most of them did not change their old habits and sources. Most of the teachers follow the news on television, social media and websites dedicated to news; just a few persons changed their source in time, following the news on the official sites of the authorities. The least popular sources are the newspaper and the radio.

References:

1. David D., Holdevici I., Szamoskozi Ş., & Băban A. (2000). *Psihoterapie şi hipnoterapie cognitiv-comportamentală*. Cluj-Napoca: Risoprint.
2. Foucault, M. (2006). *Puterea psihiatrică*. Cluj-Napoca: Idea.
3. Germani, F., & Biller-Andorno, N. (2021). The anti-vaccination infodemic on social media: A behavioral analysis. *PLoS ONE 16*(3).
4. Kant, I. (1995). *Întemeierea metafizicii moravurilor*. Bucureşti: IRI.
5. Editorial Group: Medichub Media. (2018). *O scurtă istorie a vaccinului*. https://www.medichub.ro/reviste/farmacist-ro/o-scurta-istorie-a-vaccinului-id-1567-cmsid-62.
6. https://stirioficiale.ro/hotarari.

Students' performance evaluation in higher education using data visualization techniques

PhD student Olta LLAHA
SEE University, Tetovo, North Macedonia
ol29064@seeu.edu.mk

Professor PhD Azir ALIU
SEE University, Tetovo, North Macedonia
azir.aliu@seeu.edu.mk

Abstract

Assessment is a process that produces information for educators that they may use to make decisions regarding students' learning. Nowadays one of the great difficulties that educational institutions face, is the increasing growth of educational data and the use of it to improve the quality of making decisions in regard to education. Data visualization methods help to create useful and valid analyses from higher education databases. They also ensure students maximize their academic output. Here we present the evaluation of students for different subjects, graduation levels, student enrollment and by the use of data visualization techniques we make an analysis of the study results. We show the importance of data visualization in data analysis which has a significant impact on the accuracy of the predicted results.

Keywords: *Data Visualization, Higher Education, Knowledge Discovery.*

Introduction

Nowadays by increasing the importance of information in all sectors, illustrating data in an interactive way helps those who make decisions understand and analyze effectively and big amounts of information in no much time. Students are the main assets of higher education Institutions. Student outcomes play an important role in producing the best quality graduates and post-graduates. They will become the leaders and workers of their countries, and thus they will be the source of their country's economic growth and social development. Academic results are one of the main factors that employers use to recruit workers, especially in the case of recent graduates. Thus, students must place great effort in their studies to obtain good academic results to fulfill employer demands. Information coming out of visualization, as a way of presenting different data types in a form that is easier to take in, is growing increasingly in various areas (Zentner et al.,

2019) and one of them is higher education. Some visualization techniques involve plots or graphs, tables, diagrams, or multidimensional renderings. Data is always increasing in quantity and becoming integrated into our daily lives that makes visualizations more and more necessary. For higher education institutions whose purpose is to contribute to quality improvement, the success of human capital creation is the subject of ongoing analysis (Zentner et al., 2019). The purpose of this study is to use data visualization for student assessment, enrollment and graduation. Also to see how this visualization affects the decision making by professors, administrators or leaders of the educational institution. In order to do this we do the visualization of student data regarding their assessments in various subjects, their graduation in years and their registration in years. From year to year there are changes and thanks to the visualization pedagogues, management, etc. take action to improve the situation. Pedagogues in order to increase the students' performance intervene in the curriculum and also administrators improve marketing campaigns, based on legislation or guidelines of the relevant ministry. This paper has the following sections: Section 2 describes the relationship that exists between data visualization and higher education. Section 3 contains the description of the dataset and the methodology. Section 4 contains the results of the application of methods of data visualization. In section 5 the conclusions are discussed.

Data visualization and how it is used in higher education

The primary purpose for data visualization is to assist people with processing large amounts of information. Data volumes are large and human cognitive capacities to remember and understand data are limited (Mohd et al., 2010). Data visualization should be made to simplify visualization as much as possible to help people make more effective decisions. Put simply, data visualization is a method of producing an output so that all problems and solutions can be clearly seen by domain expert (Donohoe et al., 2020). In general, visualization techniques are great tools that can assist people to understand information. Visualizations can help make difficult relationships more easily understood and can stimulate visual thinking (Shabdin et al., 2020). Clearly defining academic success is important for predicting academic success in higher education. Klein et al. (2019) have carried out a case study. This included research done at a public university in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States to examine undergraduate use of learning analytics dashboard (LAD) interventions. The results show that student understanding is connected with data relevance, accuracy and context. One

conclusion of our study is that the material after the interventions that have been made in the curriculum has affected the result of students understanding, a result that is realized through visualization. The study of Akanmu and Jamaludin (2016) included findings regarding the meaning of HEI current data management practices as well as the elicitation of domain policy-makers' explicit knowledge preferences. The data dimensions also assist with making the choice of visualization, interaction and analytic techniques. Starting from the latter in relation to the dimensions of the data we were focused on data related to student assessments, graduation and their enrollment in different academic years, which are numerical data. Information visualization techniques that give the benefits of visual perception are considered as tools for presenting data through the conversion of tracks into visual information (Zotov et al., 2021). One of the visualization techniques used in our study as in (Zotov et al., 2021) is a chart which graphically presents information about students. Information related to their evaluation in various subjects. By using data visualization we can make a better analysis of student assessments. We can also make decisions to improve their performance, to inform students more effectively of their performance on a subject or different subjects of an academic year using visualizations of up to date assessments, comparisons with the average results of the class as a whole, and projections of potential future outcomes. In turn, this might make students change their behavior for the better, based on their observations of the graphs.

Data and Methodology

This study presents the visualization of the evaluation data of the students of the Informatics Applied study program at Logos University College. Microsoft Power BI was used to visualize the data. Microsoft Power BI is a Data Visualization platform that has a focus on the creation of a data-driven business intelligence culture in all modern organizations. In order to carry out this role, it provides self-service analytics' tools, which can be employed to analyze, aggregate and share the data in a useful manner (Ferrari & Russo, 2016).

The data are extracted from the Edu Page system. It is traditionally presented in a tabular format showing the student's score on each subject. There are some benefits of visualizing numerical data in a graphical format and one of them is a more efficient and clearer interpretation of the data (Eberhard, 2021). Based on the extracted data, data sets in excel format are created and through visualization a detailed analysis is made. This analysis aims to make decisions regarding the quality of teaching or interaction in the curriculum. The data that will be visualized

are data that represent the evaluations of students of Applied Informatics. The evaluations are for each subject of this study program.

In this paper are used some data visualization techniques such as charts, graphs and maps.

CHARTS

What is the easiest method to display how one or more data sets develop? It is a chart, of course. Charts have a variety of forms, such as bar and line charts, which may show relationships between items over time. Pie charts can show how the elements or portions relate together within a whole.

A line chart is created by connecting data points within a data series using line segments. Line charts are frequently employed for showing trends in data that vary continuously over a period of time or range (Gandhi & Pruthi, 2020).

MAPS

Maps are another popular technique. They are used for data visualization in a variety of business fields. They help locate elements of relevant objects and areas on geographical maps, building plans, website layouts, etc. Some of the most popular forms of maps are heat maps, dot distribution maps and cartograms (Besançon et al., 2020). Maps are types of visualization used to show what differences are in data through variations in color, size, position, space etc. These charts use color to show values in a way that makes it easier for the viewer to quickly identify trends. Maps are often used for representing topographical and geographical information but they have been used in such way that can exhibit very useful data (Balla et al., 2020).

GRAPHS

The use of graphs provides a general means to transform the data and their relationships into an abstract view for showing complex relationships and improving data comprehension. Meanwhile, graphs can also be adjusted flexibly to answer specific questions based on the distinctive characteristics of the data (Fisher et al., 2021). We demonstrate the effectiveness of graph-based representations by applying them to our data.

Data visualization can improve the use of data in higher education. A variety of different types of stakeholders in the higher education community routinely use data to make decisions. Pedagogues look at student performance data to identify knowledge, gaps, and then adjust syllabi according to instructions. Administrators look at registrations to determine courses and create schedules. Some of the scenarios used in this paper are exam results, graduation levels and student enrolment.

Data visualization- experimental results

Logos University College is a non-profit private academic institution. Logos University College is accredited as an institution and through its organizational structure offers accredited study programs in the first and second cycle. Its study programs are in line with the needs of society and inspire knowledge, innovation, research, practice, employment in the labor market, promotion of human values and culture. Currently Logos University College consists of three faculties: Faculty of Applied Sciences, which has three departments: Department of Medical Sciences; Department of Applied Informatics and Statistics; Department of Health Sciences and Social Welfare; Faculty of Economics with three departments: Department of Finance and Accounting; Department of Management; Department of Agribusiness; and the Faculty of Humanities and Linguistic Communication with three departments: Department of Languages and Literature; Department of Theology and Culture; Department of Pedagogy and Psychology. The institution has about 100 employees, of which 75 are academic staff, including management staff such as rector, deans, heads of departments, etc., and 25 are part of the administration such as learning/teaching secretary, finance sector, human resources sector, etc. Logos University College is dedicated to equip students with individual and professional perspective, extracurricular activities, internships, international nobilities, and career mentoring, as it was based on the Foundation's vision and the Decision of the Senate and the Board of Administration.

In this paper, as we have pointed out in section 3, we are focused on the Department of Applied Informatics and Statistics and on the programming of this department, that of Applied Informatics. To conduct this study we used Power BI software based on the approach and familiarity with its use.

Figure 1. *Student Performance Report 2017-2020*
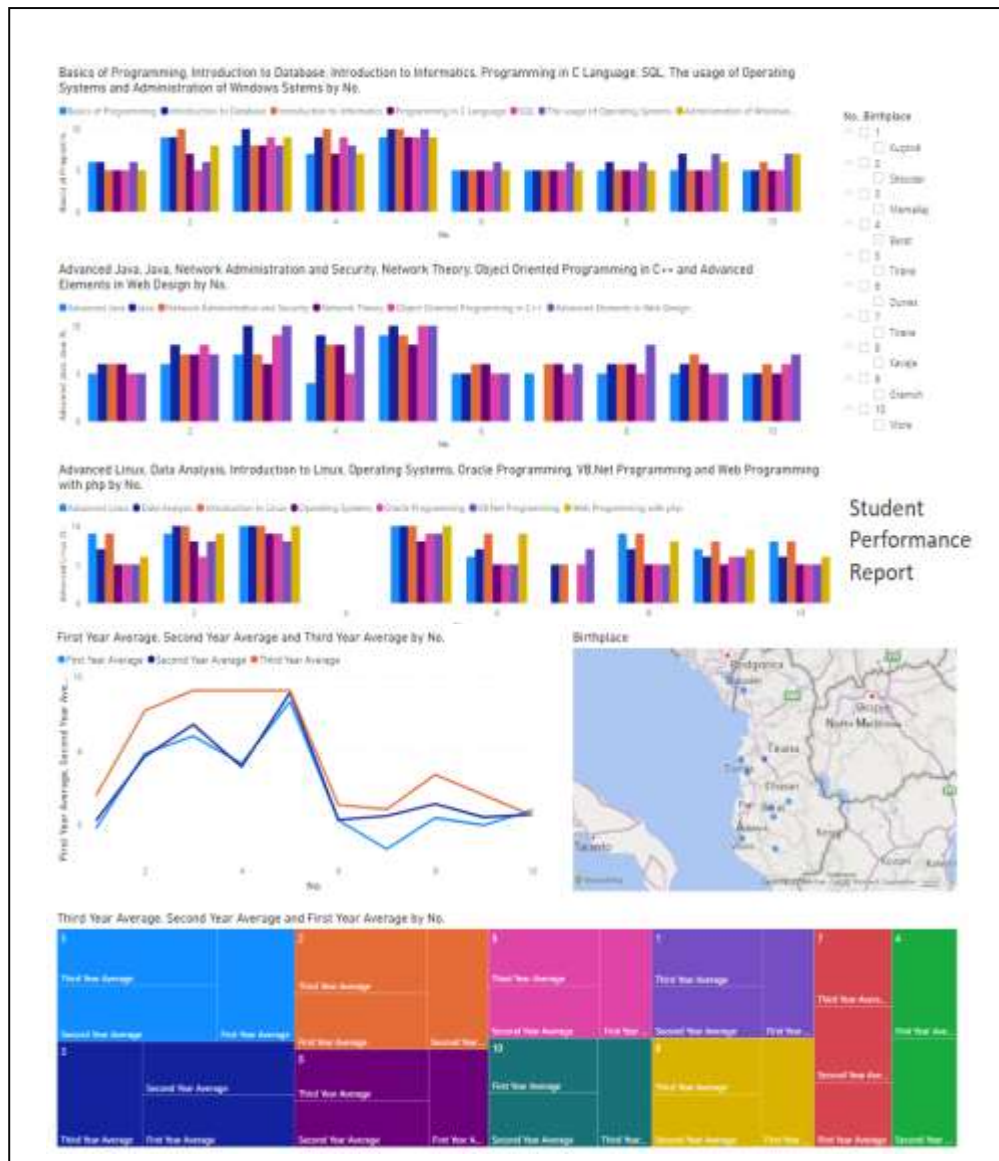
Figure 1 presents the evaluation report for students who have attended studies in the period 2017-2020. The report presents the evaluation for the special subjects that the students have attended in the first, second and third year of studies. The average of each of them in the three academic years is also presented. As can be seen in the figure, the evaluations for the student with code 4 in the third year of studies are missing, because this student did not participate in any exam of that academic year. The map also shows the birthplace of each student.

Figure 2. *Evaluation report for the student with code 9 (2018-2021)*
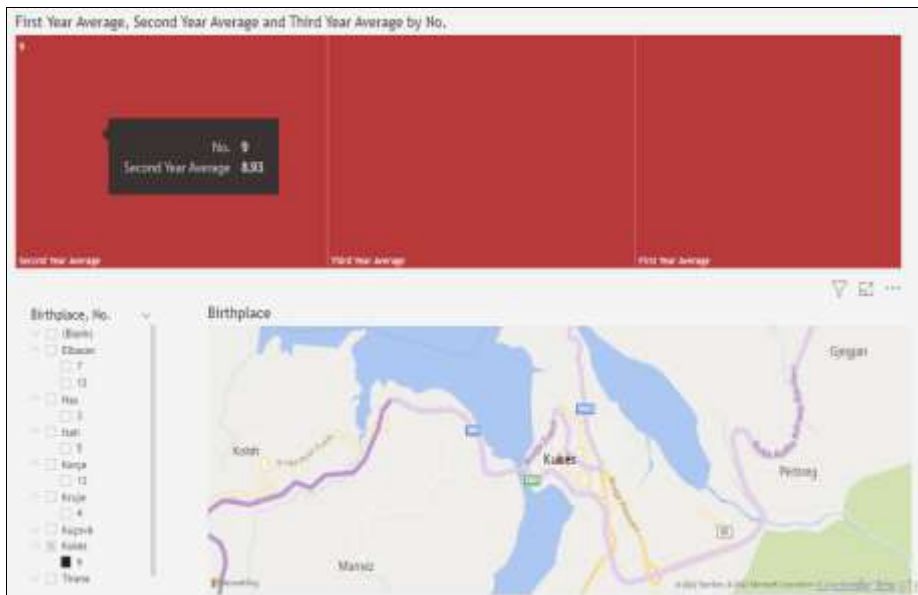
Figure 2 presents the evaluation report for the student with code 9, who is from Kukës and has an average of the second year of studies 8.93. His birthplace is visualized through the mapping technique.

Figure 3. *Evaluation report for the student with code 5 (2017-2020)*

Figure 3 presents the report for the student with code 6, who is from Durres and in the course Introduction to Linux, the course developed in the third year of studies is evaluated with a grade of 9.

Based on the visualization of student evaluations for the periods 2017-2020 and 2018-2021 we make an analysis of these visualizations and data regarding

students' evaluation. In the period 2018-2021 the results of students for special subjects and in general are higher because the lecturers of the subjects have made improvements to the syllabi in the following year and these improvements reflect the higher results of students in these years, compared to previous years.

At all levels of education system "dashboards showing student grade histories and status classification points can be useful visualizations for identifying students who appear to be doing well or to be at-risk in particular or general course content areas. Student progress in the past and during the current school year can provide teachers, advisors, and academic coaches with empirical information for action-oriented decision making and timely educational intervention at the individual level." (Lacefield & Applegate, 2018, p. 5)

Figure 4. *Report of enrolled students*

Figure 5. *Report of students enrolled in the academic year 2016-2017*
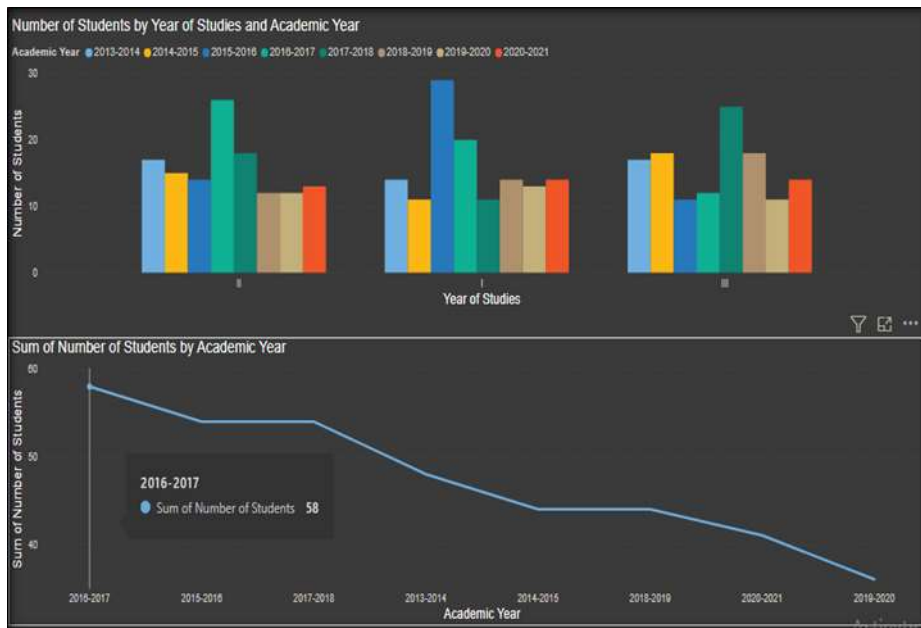
Figure 4 and Figure 5 present the report of student enrollments in the Informatics study program applied in different academic years starting from the academic year 2013-2014 until 2020-2021. Figure 4 presents a detailed enrollment report while figure 5 specifies the number of enrollments for the 2016-2017 academic year which is 58 students divided by years, first year 20 students, 26 students in the second year and 12 students in the third year. It is noticed that over the years the number of enrolled students is declining. There are several reasons for this and an analysis is done for this. One of the reasons is the establishment of the average in high school where graduates who finish with an average greater than 6.5 have the right to continue higher education. This is set for the academic year 2017-2018 and onwards. Another reason is the smaller total number of graduates who compete for higher studies and a part of whom continue their higher studies abroad. This is an analysis of the change in student enrollment in different academic years.

Figure 6. *Graduate student report*
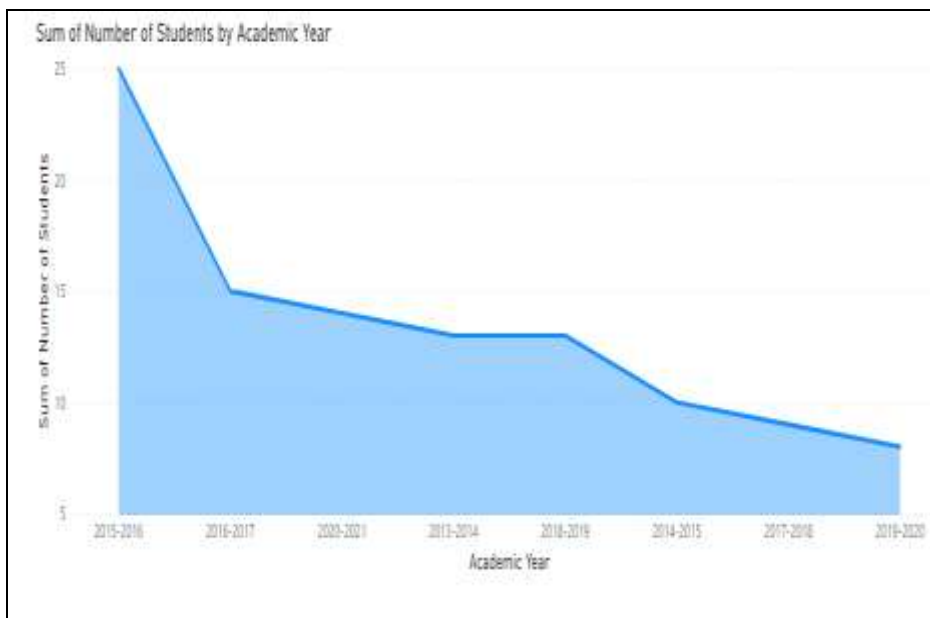
Figure 6 presents the ratio of graduate students in the Informatics study program implemented in different academic years, starting from the academic year 2013-2014 to 2020-2021. It is noticed that the number of graduates depends on their evaluation during the three academic years, as there are students who as a result of poor results have not managed to close the 3-year cycle and graduate at the end of this cycle. This is more clearly evidenced in Figure 7.

Figure 7. *Enrolled and graduate students in the 2018-2019 academic year*
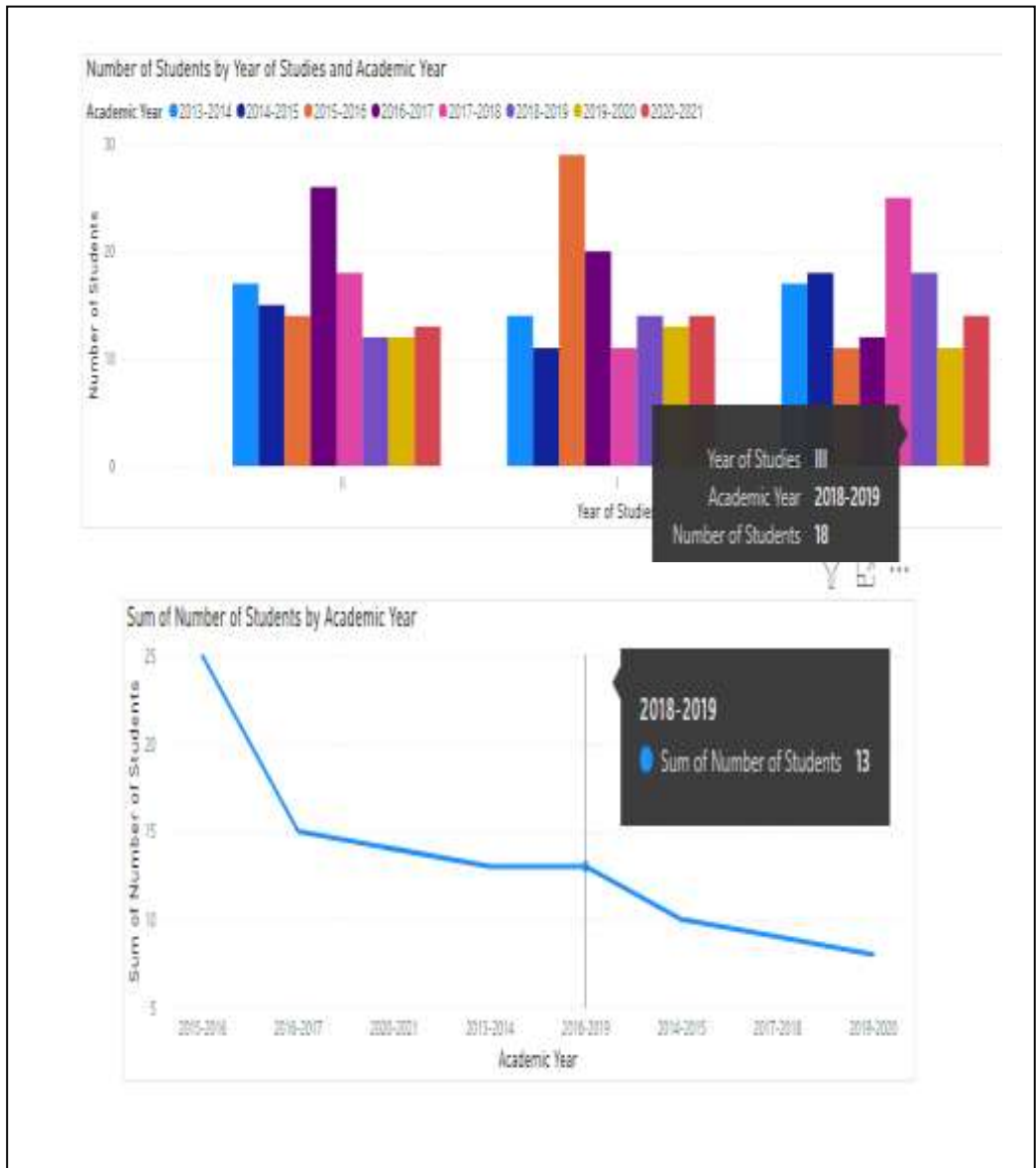
Figure 7 presents a more detailed report for graduate students versus those enrolled in that academic year. In the academic year 2018-2019 in the third year are enrolled 18 students of which only 13 of them have graduated.

Conclusion

This study presents a contribution in the field of data visualization, with a focus on higher education data. This involves designing and creating a data set,

which will be used in data visualization using various visualization techniques. This is about doing data visualization for those who want to have knowledge of the data, interpret it and make decisions from the data. Data visualization can improve the use of data in higher education. A variety of different types of stakeholders in the higher education community routinely use data to make decisions. Pedagogues look at student performance data to identify knowledge, gaps, and then adjust syllabi according to instructions. Administrators look at registrations to determine courses and create schedules.

Decision making is timely as in different academic years the pedagogue improves the syllabus of the course by influencing the performance of students. This is noticed in this study where in the years 2018-2021 the performance of students is higher compared to the years 2017-2020. On the other hand, the management through the improvement of the marketing campaigns has made the number of students in the same years as above to be constant. This is because in the academic year 17-18 in the program of implemented Informatics study in the first year are registered 10 students, in the academic year 18-19 in the first year are registered 14 students, in the academic year 19-20 are registered 15 students and in the academic year 20-21, 16 students are enrolled in the first year. As we can see, there is not much difference, but as we have pointed out in section 4, according to an instruction of the Ministry of Education, the right to higher studies have students who finish high school with an average above 6.5, added here the number of graduates who every year is declining according to the institute of statistics and a good part of them apply to study abroad, factors that have influenced the number of enrollments each academic year.

Through the visualization of data in our study we make an analysis of student results, their enrollment and graduation. The analysis performed leads us to make decisions, both by professors and university administrators. Data visualization in data analysis has a significant impact on the accuracy of the predicted results.

References:

1. Akanmu, S., & Jamaludin, Z. (2016). Designing Information Visualization for Higher Education Institutions: A pre-design study. *Journal of Information and Communication Technology* 15, 145-163. 10.32890/jict2016.15.1.7.
2. Balla, D., Zichar, M., Tóth, R., Kiss, E., Karancsi, G., & Mester, T. (2020). Geovisualization Techniques of Spatial Environmental Data Using Different Visualization Tools. *Applied Sci*ences 10, 6701. https://doi.org/10.3390/app10196701.

3. Besançon, L., Cooper, M., Ynnerman, A., & Vernier, F. (2020). *An Evaluation of Visualization Methods for Population Statistics Based on Choropleth Maps.*

4. Donohoe, D., & Costello, E. (2020). Data Visualisation Literacy in Higher Education: An Exploratory Study of Understanding of a Learning Dashboard Tool. *International Journal of Emerging Technologies in Learning* (iJET). 15. 115. 10.3991/ijet.v15i17.15041.

5. Eberhard, K. (2021). The effects of visualization on judgment and decision-making: a systematic literature review. *Management Review Quarterly.* https://doi.org/10.1007/s11301-021-00235-8.

6. Ferrari, A., & Russo, M. (2016). *Introducing Microsoft Power BI*. Pearson Education.

7. Fisher, C., Andersen, F., & Darbyshire, C. (2021). *Overview of Data Visualization.*

8. Gandhi, P., & Pruthi, J. (2020). *Data Visualization Techniques: Traditional Data to Big Data*. Springer, Singapore. 10.1007/978-981-15-2282-6_4.

9. Klein, C., Lester, J., Nguyen, T., Justen, A., Rangwala, H., & Johri, A. (2019). Student Sensemaking of Learning Analytics Dashboard Interventions in Higher Education. *Journal of Educational Technology Systems*, 48(1), 130-154. https://doi.org/10.1177/0047239519859854.

10. Lacefield, W. E., & Applegate, E. B. (2018). Data Visualization in Public Education: Longitudinal Student-, Intervention-, School-, and District-Level Performance Modeling. *2018 Annual Meeting of the American Education Research Association*. New York.

11. Mohd, W. M., Abdullah, E., & Zain, J. M. (2010). A Framework of Dashboard System for Higher Education Using Graph-Based Visualization Technique. Part of the *Communications in Computer and Information Science book series* (CCIS), 87, 55-69. 10.1007/978-3-642-14292-5_7.

12. Shabdin, N., Yaacob, S., & Sjarif, N. N. A. (2020). Relationship Types in Visual Analytics. *2020 6th International Conference on Computer and Technology Applications*, 1-6. 10.1145/3397125.3397127.

13. Zentner, A., Covit, R., & Guevarra, D. (2019. Exploring Effective Data Visualization Strategies in Higher Education. SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=3322856 or http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3322856.

14. Zotov, V., Ibrahim, I., Petunina, I. & Lazareva, Y. (2021). Engagement of Students in Data Visualization for the Purpose of E-Learning Improvement. *International Journal of Emerging Technologies in Learning* (iJET). 16. 46. 10.3991/ijet.v16i02.18745.

The Ethics of Virtues

Lecturer PhD Daniela CIMPEAN
Faculty of Business, Babeş-Bolyai University
dana.cimpean@ubbcluj.ro

Abstract

Starting from Robert Solomon's interpretation of business ethics as an ethic of virtue, we analyze in the following paper the main Aristotelian moral virtues from the Nicomachean Ethics. *We start from the premises that the aspiration for happiness (*eudaimonia*) is the characteristic of humanity and that "virtue is a kind of midpoint" between two extremes that must be avoided. The most important Aristotelian moral virtues (also relevant to business ethics) are courage (*andreía*), generosity (*eleutheriotēs*), greatness of soul (*megalopsychía*), gentleness (*praótēs*), to which we can add compassion. Because "man is a social being", he also needs friends "to do them good"; these Aristotelian sentences are the key and purpose of the ethics of virtue.*

Keywords: *virtue ethics, eudaimonia, friendship, greatness of the soul, otherness.*

Introduction

In ancient Greek, the term ethics comes from ethos, which means character, way of being, set of habits. A virtue-based approach is a "social" perspective to understand how ethical values are produced (Jones, Parker & Bos, 2005, p. 56). According to Robert Solomon (1992, p. 325), corporations "are real communities, neither ideal nor idealizable," and they can be analyzed "to begin to understand the nature of the virtues." The American philosopher emphasizes corporate *reality* (or *realism*) and considers that the business environment is conducive to a "cold" analysis / interpretation of how to build virtue. He offers a true genealogy of virtues, starting with Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (350 BC). Elsewhere, Solomon (1999, p. 37) argues in support of his perspective: "We could say that the bottom line of the approach to business virtues is that we need to go beyond the *bottom line thinking*, and to conceive business as an essential part of the society in which living well, concord with others and possessing a sense of self-respect are central, making a profit being only a means". Thus, we can conceive business ethics as the ethics of virtues, going beyond the command of profit, which seems to illustrate it essentially. The reason why we favor such a perspective is based on the membership of the business community in the *polis*.

Next, we will follow the text of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, focusing especially on the moral virtues. Aristotle distinguishes between intellectual and moral virtues. The intellectual ones are knowledge (*epistéme*), wisdom (*sophía*) and prudence or practical wisdom (*phrónesis*). The Greek philosopher shows that only the prudent person can possess all the moral virtues (see also Byars & Stanberry, 2018, p. 30).

The Purpose of Ethics

In *Book I* of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle bases the field of ethics at the junction of related disciplines such as political science, sociology, psychology, and anthropology. The starting point is the following common sense observation: "... good is what all aspire to" (1094a3). Thus, "... good is the object of science with the highest authority and the highest organization, and this is shown to be politics" (1094a27-28). We can only agree with the remark of Aristotle's editor, according to which the following reasoning becomes imperative: "thus commanding politics, ethics is, in a sense, superior politics" (Aristotle, 1988, 270 n.). Ethics understood as higher politics is a kind of idealization of politics, as a high point of view that coordinates, supervises and validates the activity of politics. "Good" ("good life", "right activity", "smooth running of things", "good order") is both the goal of politics and ethics (or the supra-political *telos* of ethics).

But what is the highest good from a general-human point of view? What do all our efforts converge on?

> *Given that any form of knowledge and any option tends towards a certain good, let us show which is the good that politics aims at and which is the highest good of all in the field of practical life. / On the name, of course, almost all agree, for the crowd and the elevated spirits, call it happiness, and I think that living well and enjoying success is the same as being happy.* (1095a15-20)

The aspiration for happiness (*eudaimonia*) is this general-human constant. To rephrase, happiness is the good that politics and ethics aim at: moreover, it is the highest "good" from a practical point of view.

Moreover, it is interesting to note that even the most intelligent individuals, and the masses possess this common teleology; more roughly speaking, *we all want to be happy*, investing in this aspiration substantial efforts, orienting ourselves existentially according to this desire. Next, the philosopher operates with a distinction between a goal pursued for himself and one pursued for something else (an example of common sense for the latter would be money, which is never desired for himself, but as a means to achieve other benefits). The goal pursued for oneself is always perfect, par excellence desirable: "... absolutely perfect is the goal always pursued for oneself and never for anything else. Such a goal seems to

be happiness: we always want it for ourselves and never for anything else" (1097a33-1097b1). To recap briefly, the object of ethics is good, and the highest good from a practical point of view can only be happiness.

"Fair measure"

In Book II, Aristotle, in order to open the discussion on the virtues, operates with an important distinction between affects, faculties and habitual moods. Affects result in pleasure and pain: "I call affects desire, anger, fear, boldness, envy, joy, friendship, hatred, regret, emulation, mercy, and, in general, all that is followed by pleasure and pain." In the secondary stage, the faculties give us the possibility to (re)feel the affects: "They call faculties what gives us the possibility to feel all this, for example what makes us able to feel anger, or pain, or pity." And in the tertiary stage, the habitual moods determine our behavioral way, more precisely our way of reacting (*good* or *bad*) to the challenge of the affects: "Habitual moods name what determines us to behave good or bad regarding our affections; for example, in connection with anger, if we react violently or weakly, we do wrong, but if we keep up, we do well" (1105b20-28).

Such habitual moods (learned and repeated behaviors) are the virtues (1106a11-12). Here we find the definition of virtue as a means of gold (*aurea mediocritas*), as the just management and balancing of extremes: "Virtue is a kind of midpoint, its target being the right measure between two extremes" (1106b28). But we must be careful that this midpoint is not always arithmetic; we do not always proceed correctly if we avoid mathematically the extreme A or the extreme B, sometimes the Aristotelian midpoint is closer to one of the two extremes, to the excess or insufficiency of virtue. "Every expert avoids both excess and inadequacy, seeking and choosing the right measure, but the right measure not in relation to the work itself, but in relation to us" (1106b5-7). From a psychological point of view, we need to have a lot of common sense, a lot of insight and a lot of work with ourselves to appreciate and cultivate the "fair measure". Indeed, "ethical virtue represents a middle line, namely a middle line between two vices, one generated by excess, the other by insufficiency" (1109a20-21). But, "one of the extremes makes us mistake more, the other less" (1109a32-33).

But how do we cultivate virtue? How do we make as little mistakes as possible, given that there is an unstable balance between extreme A and extreme B? Anticipating contemporary psychoanalysis, the Greek philosopher believes that we must be guided by a (an) hedonic compass, some sort of moral compass in which pleasure and pain guide us and make us ethical subjects.

And it will be easier for us to know these inclinations based on the pleasure or pain we feel. And we must lead ourselves to what is contrary to our tendencies, because, moving as far away from error as possible, we reach the middle path, as do those who straighten crooked woods. (1109b3-6)

Aristotelian ethics presumes a harsh pedagogy, using the pain of learning as a process for correcting errors, for correction and moral improvement. It can be compared to the psychology of the twentieth-century hero of Joseph Campbell, who advocates for heroism understood as a discipline through suffering. Moreover, this theory is totally foreign to Epicureanism, despising – in a counterintuitive way – the subsequent hedonistic theories. "In everything we must guard ourselves most from pleasure and all that is pleasant, for in the appreciation of pleasure we are far from being incorruptible. In relation to the pleasure we must treat ourselves as the elders of the council treated Helen" (1109b8-11). In short, by distancing ourselves from pleasure (orientation after pleasure would be a kind of indulgence, a sybaritic self-satisfaction) and the use of the (an) hedonic compass we constitute, organize and chisel ourselves as ethical subjects. Aristotle seems to anticipate Plotinus, whose existential aphorism was: "Always sculpt your own statue!" The mentioned compass allows us to self-organize our own ethical discipline, as long as we say *no* to pleasure (and this contempt for drive and willpower seems to anticipate an ascetic ethic that has similarities with Christianity). Next we will deal with some of the Aristotelian moral virtues that are related to the contemporaneity of business ethics.

Courage

We start from the Aristotelian inducement (which combines philosophy with psychology), according to which "one must ... be born ... with a kind of spiritual eye, through which he will judge correctly and choose the good according to the truth" (114b7-8). That "spiritual eye" can guide us through the maze of business, in which immoral blindness often predominates (what we called earlier the command of profit). A discussion about courage (*andreía*) must start from the most common everyday point. Or, according to Heidegger's existential analysis, immersion in the impersonal "se" makes us sensitive to the experience of fear (*phóbos*) and anxiety. "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself", one of Churchill's phrases, which is especially fit for the diagnosis of our actual moment, has its origin in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. "We are obviously afraid of what causes fear, and what causes it is, generally speaking, an evil; therefore, fear is defined as the expectation of evil" (1115a8-10).

Aristotle anticipates the Kierkegaardian theory of anxiety, according to which anxiety is an anticipatory affect, which is correlated with expectations about the future. Simply put, we cannot be anxious about the past (we can only regret it), fear (and by extension anxiety) is correlated with "expecting evil". Moreover, as Blaga and Cioran will argue in the twentieth century, the structure of anxiety includes the anticipation of finitude; simply put, any fear is correlated with the fear of death. "But the most frightening thing is death; it represents the extreme limit, beyond which there seems to be nothing left, neither good nor bad" (1115a26-27). But fear is a mechanism of evolutionary biology (those who are not afraid of anything have a high chance of being early eliminated from the genetic pool). Rephrasing, a dose of fear / anxiety is not futile: "Among those who exceed the measure, the one who does it through the total absence of fear does not have an appellation..., but someone must be crazy or insensitive to pain not to be afraid at all, neither of earthquakes, nor of the waves of the sea, as they say about the Celts."

Excess of courage is not, however, a good thing, as it can be assimilated with narcissistic-histrionic behavior in contemporary psychology. The daredevil plays a role, exaggerating his own importance, "affecting" courage. In the face of real dangers, he loses. "As for the one who boldly exaggerates in the face of dangers, he is called reckless. But it seems that the daredevil is also boastful and that it only affects courage; because, while the brave man really shows courage in danger, the daring one, pretending to look the same, imitates him as many times as he can, Therefore, most of the daredevils are in fact cowards who do the brave; for, though they boast that they have courage, they are not able to withstand the dangers" (1115b24-33). In order to react bravely to dangerous circumstances, a "science", an "art" of dosing courage is needed: a kind of selection of appropriate battles and appropriate behavior. The daredevil is vain, being a coward disguised as a brave man, unable to assume and manage this proportional art of courage. The daredevil is also out of sync; he does not choose the right moment for attack or defense. "... the daredevils are impetuous and determined before dangers, but, in their midst, they back out; but brave men are prompt in action, after they have previously shown composure". (1116a7-8). If the excess of the "brave" is constituted by the "daring", its insufficiency is given by the "coward". "He who fears excessively is cowardly, because he fears both why he should not, and in an inappropriate way, and all sorts of such traits characterize him. He also lacks confidence, but because in fear he commits excess, here his nature is revealed more. So, the coward is a man who is easily discouraged, because he is afraid of everything. While the brave man is his opposite, trust characterizing those who hope" (1115b33-1116a4). From

a psychological point of view, the "coward" is probably over-traumatized, if he lacks judgment (that spiritual eye) and "is afraid of what he should not be". The Greek mentality, sensitive to *hybris* (overcoming the measure), penalizes the coward more drastically than the reckless and thus we can appreciate that the moderation of courage is closer to "reckless" than "coward". Moreover, the coward is, according to Aristotle, the one who commits the "sin" of fearing excessively.

Courage is "a middle line between trust and fear" (1116a 10-11). Moreover, let us not believe that the brave do not feel fear at all; they are able, however, to manage it. Overcome it and take on the art of the right battles. Cognitive psychology considers that resilience (recovery from trauma, acceptance and management of anxious situations and their repeated overcoming to self-efficacy) is the only "cure for fear" (anxiety). So, the cowardice-courage dynamic is less schematic than in *Nicomachean Ethics*. However, the Greek philosopher has interesting intuitions, for example the association between courage and anger (we also take into account the fact that in anxiety management it is recommended to move the subject on the fear-anger axis). "And anger can be taken as courage, for brave seem those who, being its impulse, seem brave like beasts that throw themselves onto those who have hurt them. In fact, brave people are also irascible; for anger is the most vivid impulse in the face of dangers, whence Homer's words: "by anger he breathed vigor," or "aroused his ardor and anger," or "his nostrils trembled with fierce anger," or "his blood boiled." "All this seems... to signify the stimulation and awakening of anger. / Courageous people act, of course, for the sake of good morals, and anger only comes to their aid" (1116b24-32). Aristotle observes that anger gives tone (while fear and anxiety paralyze, block, "freeze") and "comes to the rescue" of courage. We also find in the text new clues of that an(hedonic) compass, recalling the ethics of the hero or of the ascetic: "courage is associated with pain and rightly receives praise; for it is more difficult to bear something painful than to abstain from something pleasant" (1117a33-35).

According to Robert Solomon (1999, pp. 82-3), the context of courage in business ethics refers to situations of tension and danger (threat of dismissal or non-promotion) and the real test of courage is, for example, a situation in which the boss is unwavering, however, he is not right at all. No one dares to say anything, but the results of the boss's decision would be disastrous. Starting with Aristotle, Solomon speaks of moral courage: "the courage to make the difficult decision to do the right thing even in the context of serious threats or dangers." Even if there are no more vital threats (as in the military), the threat to financial security or one's own career is extremely annoying (in fact, Adorno considered

existentialist anxiety to be the "fear of unemployment"). Without moral courage, "many of the other virtues are only good intentions."

Generosity

A second important virtue is generosity (*eleutheriotēs*). "It is, of course, easier to receive than to give." Generous "are called the men who offer..." (1120a17-19). Pedagogical psychoanalysis teaches us that the everyday situation, the starting point in the matter of generosity, is the boundless egocentrism of the subject (just as the field of cultivating courage was that of anxiety), egocentrism whose corollary is pettiness and greed. In other words, in our primary situation we are inclined to receive, to "collect". But, in order to advance towards otherness and a kind of intersubjective responsibility (towards ethics, if we want), we must give without counting how much (or how little) we receive. According to the Dune philosophy, "*the gift is the blessing of the giver*". The extremes of the medium term which is generosity are *waste and greed*: "waste is an excess in giving and not receiving, ... greed is an insufficiency in giving and an excess in receiving..." (1121a13-15).

The avaricious suffer from a spiritual disease, which affects their ability to give. From an evolutionary point of view, this is a mistake, because generosity is really a blessing with a societal impact: self-help can save lives, including one's own.

> *Those designated by their names as cheese-scratches, pinchpenny, stingy, all are too unwilling to give, but do not covet the goods of others, and do not want to take from them... among them is the griper and all like him, they are so named because they go so far as to exaggerate that they give nothing to anyone...* (1121b22-28).

It is noteworthy that stinginess (with its extreme form of *niggardliness*) is quite widespread in the corporate environment, where it is disguised as *efficiency*. I am referring to those companies with huge turnovers and profits, which are not able to invest small sums in improving the working conditions of employees. There is also this Protestant mentality, which favors stinginess, according to which "*a buck saved is a buck earned*". This *myth of the stingy* is legitimate for saving resources, but it is easier for us to believe that great fortunes were built by bold and original ideas, by courageous *coups*, not by perpetuating this philosophy of "giving nothing" to anyone in no circumstance. Rather, the epigraph and anxiety of those "mingy" seems to be: "ask and it will be taken from you."

Returning to the problem of the median, "righteously avarice is considered the opposite of generosity; it is a greater evil than waste, and people often make mistakes out of greed than out of waste..." (1122a13-16). However, the

coordinates of generosity are closer to waste than to avarice; the insufficiency to give is more annoying (more immoral) than the excess of giving. From the point of view of business ethics (Solomon, 1999, 87-8), the context of generosity is simple: you have, others do not. Generosity is a useful virtue for the self in that it gives a sense of positive impact on others and useful for others because it meets their needs, exceeding their expectations. The absolute test of generosity would be: "are you willing to give your valuable time, not only money, to those who really need it?" According to Robert Solomon, generosity is all the more authentic as it is more spontaneous, more "unintentional."

Grandeur of the Soul

The greatness of the soul (*megalopsychía*) is related to what Emerson called *over-soul* or Nietzsche *Übermenschlichkeit,* thus being a virtue that helps us to overcome the ordinary limits of the human. "The greatness of the soul... Is connected with high things" (1123a34-35). The extremes of the median which is the grandeur of the soul will be vanity and humility: "He who considers himself worthy of great things without being so, is conceited ... He who considers himself worthy of things inferior to those he is capable of betrays a humble soul ..." (1123b8-11). To show *megalopsychia* you must not only consider yourself worthy of greater things (then you are only conceited), but to be truly worthy of them (the grandeur of the soul is not only imaginary, but ontic, existential): "It seems that the man of soul grandeur is the one who, considering himself worthy of great things, is truly worthy of them. Whoever considers himself so without actually being shows a limitation." (1123b1-3)

Like magnanimity (*megaloprépeia*), which is a bridge between humanity and divinity - hence the reference to Übermenschlichkeit, to what goes beyond the narrow anthropic sphere – "the generous man spends not for himself but for the community, and his gifts have something similar with offerings to the gods ..." (1123a5-7) – , *megalopsychía* can be understood as a kind of aspiration of the human to the divine (a kind of immanent divinity): "if the man of soul grandeur considers himself worthy of great things being truly worthy of them, and especially of the greatest, then he shows himself to be so especially in connection with a certain thing. Value is seen as relating to external goods. *But the highest of these goods is the one we grant to the divinity* (s.n.), to which the notable people aspire and which constitute the reward for the most beautiful deeds. Such a thing is the honor ..." (1123b16-21). But these honors must really correspond to the value, otherwise we have only a Caragialian masquerade: "If the man with soul grandeur

is worthy of the greatest honors, then he must also be the most valuable man; for the more valuable someone is, the more worthy of honors...” (1123b27-28).

For Aristotle, *megalopsychia* is the crowning of virtues, the key virtue to which all others tend: “the grandeur of the soul seems a kind of adornment of the other virtues, which it elevates and outside which it could not exist. Therefore, it is difficult for someone to truly show grandeur of soul, such a thing not being possible without having reached perfection” (1124a1-4). Extreme A is *humility*, which we could associate today with a kind of depressive mentality of one who considers himself unworthy of great things, being above the existential-human capacity: “The man with a humble soul although he is worthy of some goods, deprives himself of them; thus, his defect seems to lie in the fact that, not knowing himself, he considers himself superior to the goods he is worthy of” (1125a20-23).

Extreme B is the *vanity* of the one who amazes, who wants to impress without any foundation. Viewed from the point of view of greatness, vanity is pure stupidity (*stultitia* in Erasmus’s terms):

> As for the vain, they are foolish and do not know themselves, and this visibly (they perform things with glorious perspectives as if they were worthy of them, and then only their inability emerges). And they flaunt their clothes and their appearance... they like to display their well-being... (1125a27-32).

However, the median of greatness is closer to the needle of vanity than to the depressive *no man’s land* of humility: “But to the grandeur of the soul opposes more the humble spirit than vanity; for the humble spirit appears more frequently and is more annoying ...” (1125a33-34).

From the perspective of business ethics, grandeur is difficult to manage, because, according to Jungian psychology, great personalities also have shadows of proportional densities. Moreover, at the psychic-ontological limit, *megalopsychía* borders on the complex of God (omnipotence, aseity, exceptionalism). The “great ones” might think that they are playing by their own rules, that human regulations do not apply to them. And if they are dishonest, they could apply a double measure, annoying, even “vicious” for their teammates and inferiors. From the point of view of existential philosophy, however, grandeur can be linked to the Nietzschean concept of *Selbstüberwindung* (self-transcendence): it is desirable to aspire to transcend one's own limits; at the same time, we must not forget that when we rise, we must have a strong foundation. Also, from a Jungian point of view, assuming one's own inferiority (for example, the courage to acknowledge your cowardice) can sometimes be more fertile than grandeur.

Gentleness

Gentleness (*praótēs*) is the last important moral virtue analyzed by Aristotle.

Gentleness is the middle line when it comes to outbreaks of anger. But as this middle line does not have a proper name, nor do the extremes, we will use for it the term gentleness, which leans more towards the absence of anger, which in turn lacks a specific appellation. As for excess, we might call it irascibility. (1125b26-31)

Gentleness is the middle ground between irascibility and the unnamed absence of anger. According to Aristotle, anger is not necessarily a vice. As we have seen, it invigorates and comes to the aid of courage. Moreover, there is a justification for anger, a just *anger*. And the one who is not angry about what is right (in situations when anger is justified) has a slave mentality.

"He who is justifiably angry and against whom he must, in the circumstances and for the proper length of time, deserves to be praised...

Those who are not angry for what they should look like fools... endure to be insulted without your reaction and overlook the insults brought to those close to you denote a servile nature" (1125b32-1126a8).

Also interesting is the portrait of the *man of resentment* that Aristotle makes, which anticipates both the Nietzschean genealogy and the phenomenology of Max Scheler's affects. From the perspective of corporate ethics, rancor (pure venom) can affect working relationships. The only remedy may be proper communication, as well as the honest assumption of errors and defects (errors and defects behind which rancor presupposes paranoid intentions): the rancorous are difficult to accommodate and keep anger for a long time, not finding peace until they take revenge. Only revenge puts an end to their resentment, replacing anger with joy; but until then, they keep to themselves the pressure of this state of mind. And this is because, without externalizing themselves, no one can persuade them to give in, *so that anger boils in them for a long time* (s.n.). Such people are, both for themselves and for their best friends, very hard to bear" (1126a20-27).

Along with gentleness, I would place compassion in the context of business ethics. Etymologically, *com-passio (Mit-Leid)* implies "suffering-with". The context of compassion is the suffering of others, and its primary intention is to alleviate this suffering. The Chinese philosopher Mencius considered that "no man is devoid of a heart sensitive to the suffering of others... He who is devoid of the heart of compassion is not human" (Solomon, 1999, p. 79). According to Schopenhauer, the essence of compassion is recognition in the suffering of the other. And according to Rousseau, if there was no compassion, we would probably be extinct as a species. Of course, compassion "can be expensive. Granting leave,

paying medical or psychological counseling, taking time off from work to express our concerns..." But compassion, like care, is essential "if we are to conceive of the existence of the corporation as a human community." (Solomon, 1999, p. 79)

Conclusion. Friendship

According to Robert Solomon, the modern commentator of Aristotle, the ethics of virtue can be the model of business ethics. And the corporate environment (which is part of the *polis*, is a microcosm of the *polis*), if it is to be thought of as virtuous, it must include friendship in its internal structure: "... the same people who are capable of virtue are also those capable of friendship..." (1155a31-32); "...nothing characterizes friendship more than life together..." (1157b19-20). It is very interesting that authentic friendship is a real Buberian I - You relationship, in which otherness has even preeminence over ipseity: "The friendly feelings we have towards our fellow men, and which serve to define friendship, seem to derive from those on which we feel towards ourselves" (1166a1-3); "...the highest level of friendship resembles how we feel about ourselves..." (1166b1-2).

We could say not only that the friend becomes a true alter ego, but that the Buberian ego becomes an internal You (an inner otherness) that allows the dialogue with the authentic otherness. The human being needs inter- and trans-subjectivity, which is the same as recognizing that there are fundamental needs that can only be met by recourse to the other: "man is a social being, destined by nature to live conjointly" (1169b17); "The virtuous man will need friends to do good to" (1169b13). And if the usual dispositions must always be practiced and assumed, "permanent contact with virtuous people means a kind of training of virtue" (1170a12-13).

References:

1. Aristotel. (1988). *The Nicomachean Ethics*. Bucharest: Scientific and Encyclopedic Publishing House.
2. Byars, S. M., & Stanberry, K. (2018). *Business Ethics*. Houston: OpenStax.
3. Jones, C., Parker, M, & Bos, R. ten (2005). *For Business Ethics*. London, New York: Routledge.
4. Solomon, R. (1992). Corporate Roles, Personal Virtues: An Aristotelian Approach to Business Ethics. *Business Ethics Quarterly* 2, 317-339.
5. Solomon, R. (1999). *A Better Way to Think about Business*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Style and Principles of *The Young Guard* Novel[1]

Asist. univ. PhD. Olga GRĂDINARU
Department of Foreign Languages and Business Communication
Faculty of Economics and Business Administration
Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca
olga.gradinaru@econ.ubbcluj.ro

Abstract

The article aims at presenting "The Young Guard"'s place within Alexander Fadeyev's work and Socialist Realism canon. While his previous novels had a realistic tone and were influenced by psychologism, the analyzed novel is representative for the heroic-romantic perspective on World War II. Moreover, its lyrical overtones set it apart from other novels and determined the writer to re-evaluate his writing conceptions. In addition, we highlight the way in which author's style and writing principles changed after (re)writing "The Young Guard." His sober realistic writing manner and lyrical tones were considered as multi-stylistic in a larger discussion of the Socialist Realist principles.

Keywords: *The Young Guard, Fadeyev's style and principles, Socialist Realism, ideological fictionalization, heroic-romantic perspective*

Alexander Fadeyev occupies a prominent place within the Socialist Realism canon due to his realistic novels and revolutionary themes. But *The Young Guard* gained a special status due to its complicated destiny. First of all, it was a political command and, as a result of research and interviews, Fadeyev was impressed by the young inhabitants' tenacity and patriotism in the Nazi occupied Ukraine during World War II. Secondly, the author had to rewrite the novel, following harsh criticism concerning the party's lack of involvement in the underground fight against the Germans. These aspects shaped the specificity of the novel that became one significant example of ideological fictionalization in Soviet literature.

The Young Guard in Fadeyev's work

Alexander Fadeyev had a heroic-romantic approach on World War II events (see more details on literary perspectives on war in Grădinaru, 2018), continuing thus the heroic style embedded in his previous literary works. In addition, he introduced lyrical-romantic ingredients when depicting the prewar atmosphere in Krasnodon area and portraying the young fighters against the German rule established in Soviet Ukraine.

Fadeyev considered that "Socialist Realism was not a dogma of creativity" (Rybak, 1977, p. 650), but a "profound conception of life, the result of Soviet artists' work with various individualities and distinctive creativity." (Rybak, 1977, p. 651) This "profound conception of life" implied the rewriting of the novel *The Young Guard* in order to convey more accurately the party involvement in the underground activities. It is significant that A. Zhdanov oversaw this process, along with the (re)making of some scenes of S. Gerasimov's film adaptation (1948, edited in 1964).

The first edition of *The Young Guard* was published in *Komsomol`skaya Pravda* and *Znamya* in 1945, and a year later the book followed. After the huge success, however, critical reactions appeared in an article in *Pravda* – "the main flaw of the novel is the incomplete and even representation of the party ruling involved in the heroic fight of komsomolists in Krasnodon." (*Pravda*, December 3, 1947) That, in turn, resulted in the "wrong presentation of the role of the party in represented events and the real leaders of this fight." (*Ibidem*) Another flaw of the novel resided in the fact that "Fadeyev didn't create typical characters of communist-educators." (Bushmin, 1983, p. 183) Fadeyev spent the next three years rewriting the novel, incorporating in the novel new documents on the party activity in the Voroshilovgrad/ Lugansk region. The additional eleven chapters of the second edition were focused on depicting the bravery and thorough involvement of party leaders in anti-fascist activities.

The motif of the "party man's capacity to act under life-threatening circumstances" is introduced masterfully in the novel *The Young Guard*. Nevertheless, the lyrical-patriotic notes prevail more than in the novel *The Rout* (1927). Depicting the Bolshevik partisans' fighting spirit in the novel *The Rout* helped Fadeyev in describing the courageous young inhabitants of Krasnodon. The same manner of representation is specific to both novels. Nevertheless, while *The Rout* depicts the changes of the era through the revolutionaries' interior universe, *The Young Guard* renders the interior changes of the Soviet youth from a lyrical-romantic perspective.

The characters of *The Rout* – Levinson and Morozka – retained aspects of the positive hero: self-education and overcoming personal weaknesses. The same aspects were employed in the construction of *The Young Guard* anti-fascist fighters: Ulyana Gromova, Oleg Koshevoy, Sergey Tyulenin, Lyuba Shevtsova. Soviet critics pointed out that "Fadeyev's style of creation, the profoundness of psychological characterization of literary heroes, the attention to the interior universe are the proof of creative inheritance of L. Tolstoy's realistic writing." (Fadeyev, 1977, p. 668)

Unlike *The Rout*, Fadeyev's *The Last of the Udege* (1930-1941) is focused on one representative of the Soviet intelligentsia; it presents the dynamics of the process of reeducation in the socialist-communist spirit in all its stages. This unfinished novel reveals the social changes in remote spaces of the Soviet Union in the period of the Civil War, handling an impressive gallery of characters. That novel represents an important step toward writing *The Young Guard* with a lot of literary heroes. On the other hand, *The Last of the Udege* marks a relevant period in Fadeyev's creation, as it overcomes the sphere of artistic psychologism and attracts him closer to precepts of Socialist Realism. In A. Bushmin's opinion, with that novel "Fadeyev proved his realistic principles in a more complicated context." (Bushmin, 1983, p. 176)

The Young Guard continues thus Alexander Fadeyev's preoccupations to unveil the triumph of socialist convictions and communist morals in various circumstances. Starting the work on the novel in 1943, the author was writing under the impulse of the first impressions. He was inspired by the new possibility of describing the exceptional character of Soviet fighters facing the enemy. Fadeyev acknowledged the fact that he owed writing the novel to the Central Bureau of the Leninist-Communist Union of Youth of USSR (Preobrazhensky, 1981, pp. 6-7). Both the fact that the writer visited Krasnodon to conduct interviews and his experience as a war correspondent shaped the specificity of the novel's style.

Lyricism is intrinsic to the first edition of the novel, remaining pervasive enough in the second one. That was due to writer's enthusiastic impression to the heroic deeds of Krasnodon youth under the Nazi occupation. These lyrical-romantic tones were poured into the documentary-journalistic style, retaining realistic features and contributing thus to the multi-stylistic nature of the novel.

According to the ideological necessities of the Stalinist era, Fadeyev's novel was considered a "heroic poem about the heroic greatness of the people" and a "heroic epic about the people's struggle for freedom" (Bushmin, 1983, pp. 188-189), as well as a "poem of the great deed of the Soviet young generation."

(Șoptereanu, 1987, p. 141) The mass heroism of the new generation during World War II is the result of their education according to the socialist principles, inspired by the example of their parents who fought for the revolutionary victory. Consequently, the novel was included in the Soviet curriculum and it was the second most published literary work in the category of literature for children and teenagers in the Soviet Union during the period 1917-1987.

Style, Principles, Tendencies and Theories

The fact that *The Young Guard* belongs to Socialist Realism is beyond any doubt, given the fact that Soviet critics considered that directions of development of the Soviet literature were represented in this novel. Nevertheless, there are some other matters that are worth discussing – the style and the nature of the novel's realism. The difficulty in writing the novel-document resided in maintaining the balance between the historical truth and the creative freedom, the synthesis between the historic content and the adequate artistic form.

At the end of the '40s there was a hypothesis that the style of *The Young Guard* imposed the revision of principles and auctorial tendencies. More specifically, the introduction of "exalted-pathetic romantic" (Metchenko & Petrov, 1983, p. 86) was requisite, taking into account that the most important principle of Fadeyev's realism resided in representing characters under dramatic circumstances, inspired by real events. Thus, the genesis of his heroes and heroines may be considered the most powerful aspect of the novel's historism, while the artistic historism highlighted the problem of the historic essay and historically documented story. According to Stalinist standards, the prerequisites of the Soviet heroic prose consisted in the representation of events with the accuracy of a historian. Thus, the author revealed in a sensitive manner the "great deed of the masses, of the united collective from the moral and ideational perspective." (Metchenko & Petrov, 1983, p. 173) A. Fadeyev's primary artistic aim was presenting the Soviet man at war while using the most appropriate means in order to express accurately the truth of life and to present the features of that generation. The aesthetic principles of the novel could be resumed as giving up the naturalistic elements, getting closer to the romantic construction of characters, and idealizing the main heroes and heroines.

Fadeyev's writing was described as a "stylistic dependence on Leo Tolstoy's work and in his ideological subjugation to political forces" (Rzhevsky, 1969, p. 419), especially in *The Rout*. But grains of Tolstoy's realism may still be found in *The Young Guard*, although distilled in the lyrical-romantic pathos. Therefore, we

may state that *The Young Guard* is a step closer to the Socialist Realism's canon due to the realistic-romantic blend and the method of artistic expression (influenced by Tolstoy) serving the party ideology. While Tolstoy's work channeled efforts to unveil real principles of life, Fadeyev's writings attempted to reveal party principles of society, the individuals integrated in the collective. The psychological approach to characterization is another common trait of both Tolstoy and Fadeyev (Rzhevsky, 1969, p. 425) so much so that the tone of heroes' thoughts bears a striking resemblance (Pierre Bezukhov's, Metelitsa's and Oleg Koshevoy's thoughts on life and death). In terms of psychological dynamics, the same spontaneity is to be seen both in Tolstoy's and in Fadeyev's heroes (evident in Koshevoy's case, chapter 11). However, Fadeyev masters the art of transformation from spontaneity to consciousness, from abruptness to discipline (*stikhijnost`* to *soznatel`nost`*), specific to Socialist Realism (Clark, 2000, pp. 15-16, pp. 21-22).

The same device used by Tolstoy characterizing the heroes and heroines based on a specific element of character's physique is utilized successfully by Fadeyev. That is why any reader would be able to describe Ulyana Gromova as a beautiful girl with big dark eyes and long dark hair, Sergey Tyulenin as a barefoot negligent teenager and so on. Consequently, these details would stand for an interior trait: Ulyana's profundity and capacity to look deep into one's soul (see Stakhovich's incapacity to betray her at the simple thought of her big dark eyes), Tyulenin's simplicity and hooliganish nature. And this is in line with Fadeyev's earlier expressed considerations on the necessity of endowing characters with specific features (Fadeyev, 1929, p. 7). We could even extend N. Rzhevsky's comparison on the "proper" death concept, seen in L. Tolstoy's story *Three Deaths* and recognizable in A. Fadeyev's chapter in *The Rout* (Rzhevsky, 1969, p. 426), to the case of *The Young Guard*, when facing torture and death, Evgeny Stakhovich breaks and betrays the members of the organization. Moreover, his imminent death isn't described in martyrish terms like in Oleg Koshevoy's or Filip Lyutikov's cases (see Grădinaru, 2014, pp. 451-461).

As for the historical collision between the two worlds involved in the Second World War, it is represented through artistic forms used later by other writers: the general unveiled through singular, the people through personalities. The beginning of the novel placed the entire plot in a symbolic reading, while extrapolating the two camps – the Soviet and the German – to mythical-symbolical dimensions. Consequently, we have the idyllic peaceful and bright image of the builders of the golden future opposed to the dark cruel image of the attackers. The principle of the tragic contrast is visible in the composition of *The Young Guard* in the

organization of scenes, events, conflicts and in the construction of characters. The Soviet world is in antithesis with the fascist one: the genuineness of the idyllic life of the Krasnodon steppe is interrupted by the malefic intrusion of the German army. A subtle consolidation of this dichotomy comes from the symbolic load of a scene from the beginning of the novel: the girls contemplating the water-lily marked the symbolic passing from careless childhood to maturity, becoming responsible to defend the motherland.

The first part of the novel focuses on characters' reactions to war and Nazi occupation. While some characters display a superficial autonomy, others are actively searching how to get involved in the anti-fascist underground movement. For example, Ulyana Gromova and Lyuba Shevtsova have different approaches to their role within the Soviet resistance, but they are able to combine their skills and abilities fighting against the Nazi. The second part of the novel dwells on the fighting methods and the cooperation between the young and elder generations. Whereas the first part is preoccupied with the heroes' inner world and the so-called awakening of the patriotic conscience and responsibility, the second part is characterized by a faster rhythm and patriotic tones.

Although *The Young Guard* is a war novel, we consider applicable Katerina Clark's structural perspective on novels of the Stalinist period, based on Vladimir Propp's narrative functions for Russian popular fairytales (Propp, 2001). The six large floating divisions are the following: prologue or separation (the heroes reach a new microcosm or the native land after an initiative journey); setting up the task (the anti-fascist fight, reaching out to Bolshevik leaders, choosing the young leaders); transition or trials (of heroic-dramatic or prosaic nature); climax (with possible obstacles); initiation (the mentor and the apprentice – Lyutikov and Oleg Koshevoy) and the finale, usually a complex one. The finale is represented by the martyrdom of the young Soviet fighters (see also Grădinaru, 2021, p. 233).

The finale of the novel is a tribute to all members of "The Young Guard" organization – a list of full names. Therewith, that memorial finale is less patriotic-pathetic and lyrical-dramatic for the Socialist Realism canon.

The realistic tone of the narration is sometimes interrupted by lyrical fragments and by subjective reflections of the narrative voice. The latter manifested especially in the case of expressing sympathy or antipathy towards characters or towards the documentary reflections on events (Metchenko & Petrov, 1983, p. 176). The characters are depicted in the hustle and bustle of the war events, involved in multiple tasks to undermine the authority of the Nazi occupation in the region. Secret meetings and difficult missions are carried out by

mere children and teenagers, enlivened by their love for motherland, in a seamless collective unity.

As a consequence of the mentioned aspects, the oath scene of the core members is the only one to give direction in interpreting the hectic activity of the resistance movement. In the same manner, raising the red flags on the important buildings of Krasnodon on the day of the 25th celebration of October Revolution and receiving in Komsomol the young Radik Yurkin are part of the patriotic-Soviet activity. Moreover, the description of the glorious Red Army that retakes the lost territories is also transmitted in romantic-lyrical colours.

The patriotic motivation of young fighters may be questioned, as it appears discontinuously in dialogues of the young inhabitants of Krasnodon, giving them strength and determination in various heroic activities. The limited pages that describe the torture of the arrested young guardians fail to point out the heroism so eagerly exalted by critics. In addition, the narration is interrupted by Ekaterina Protsenko's detailed adventures in her attempt to get through to the Red Army commanders with information from Lugansk area.

On the other hand, the concise report of burying the young fighters alive in the mine pit, along with the brief mention of the death of Oleg, Lyuba and Lyutikov may be interpreted as narrative mechanisms to confer the events a dramatic aura (as part of the realist strategy). In fact, Alexander Fadeyev admitted that he could have written a "pathetic or lyrical finale that would have made a more profound impression", but he chose to list all those who were allegedly part of the Krasnodon resistance movement "out of respect for their memory." (Fadeyev, 1960, pp. 397-398)

Some critics appreciated Fadeyev's option for subtle heroizations. For example, Bushmin considered that "Fadeyev proved the greatness of the Soviet people's morale and the beauty of its manifestation in heroic acts." (Bushmin, 1983, p. 179) This unveiling of the special character of the young Soviet citizens is accomplished in a new manner when compared to Fadeyev's other writings. The usage of realist and romantic elements determined him to revert on his previous considerations concerning romanticism (Cockrell, 1986, p. 345). The author researched and theorized the importance of romantic elements and the double lineage of the Socialist Realism: "The authentic realism must necessarily include the dream, desire, namely romanticism. The antithesis between the realist and romantic methods is annulled by the Socialist Realism." (Fadeyev, 1960 (4), p. 254)

If we are to explore the aspects of Soviet romanticism, then M. Gorky must be mentioned, as he understood by "natural romanticism" the romanticism of real

people, generated by life itself (Bushmin, 1983, p. 121). Therefore, for both Gorky and Fadeyev the romantic component was indispensable for the new literature of the Soviet Union and, according to these arguments. This position justifies the romantic ingredients of *The Young Guard* found both in the structure and in the narration: comparisons, metaphors, the tragic contrast between the wonderful picture of peace and the destructive explosions of the war. The same tension marks the characters' main decisions under exceptional circumstances of occupation, at the intersection of the personal and collective interest. The debut of the second part of the novel with the oath of "The Young Guard" members imprints a change of tone so that the unity becomes deeper and the ties between the partisans and Soviet leaders closer.

However, Fadeyev's sometimes contradictory attitude toward romanticism, romantic elements and idealization may be seen in his earlier theoretical attempts to delineate the specificity of the proletarian writer's relation to reality (Cockrell, 1986, pp. 348-349). A. Fadeyev's suggestion before the Socialist Realism's establishment was for the Soviet writers to offer a synthesis of realism and romanticism, avoiding thus the status of "naïve realists" or "false romantics" and focused on the depiction of incipient golden future in the context of present reality. Despite all confusing theoretical searches, A. Fadeyev remained a reconciler between contrasting visions on reality, attempting to offer a multifaceted world-view (*tselostnoye mirovozzrenie*).

The reflections on the interrelation between romantic and realistic elements were noted in the period of rewriting the novel *The Young Guard*. Romantic elements were thus organic elements of the Socialist Realism and the romantic form was prone to expressing the truth of life. Starting with these considerations, the heroes' attitudes and actions of Fadeyev's previous novels – Levinson, Metelitsa, Baklanov, Kostenetsky, Surkov and Churkin – are inspired and fueled by the romanticism of the heroic revolutionary deed. Consequently, the young guardians have a romantic vision upon Revolution, war and life in general.

To sum up, the specificity of *The Young Guard* consists in realistic elements and romantic-idealizing accents, doubled by psychologizing elements typical to Fadeyev's prose. A. Bushmin identified the idealization in the analyzed novel, specifying that "idealization is strongly rooted in the realistic tendencies of representation and it is differentiated from typification more qualitatively than quantitatively." (Bushmin, 1983, p. 203)

All these reflections justify the conceptual disjunction applied to Fadeyev's writing: while the period of writing this novel was named by Bushmin "figurative realism" (*krylatyi realism*), the era of *The Last of Udege* was entitled "monumental

realism" (*monumental`nyi realizm*). *Figurative realism* is characterized by lyricism, pathetical expressions and romantic accents in tragic episodes and in complicated situations of moral nature. On the other hand, *monumental realism* is preoccupied with the amplitude of revolutionary events. Both the emotional tone of the report and the pathetic-lyrical notes are part of the mentioned stage and part of the Socialist Realism, characterized by stylistic and formal diversity, as Fadeyev noted (Fadeyev, 1960 (5), p. 236). In this way, the dogmatic attempts to standardize the method of Socialist Realism were qualified by the author as "mockery over socialism and realism altogether." (*Ibidem*)

The attempt to establish the dominant style of the novel *The Young Guard* was among the Soviet critics' preoccupations: it was considered mostly romantic or mostly realistic, or combining both elements so that the phrase "multi-stylistic" (*mnogostil`nyi*) (Barsuk, 1956, p. 471-498) emerged. We share Bushmin's position concerning the realistic style of the novel with romantic elements (see also Şoptereanu, 1987, p. 142, p. 144); we have to add, however, that these romantic elements are sometimes invasive, as a result of an incomplete creative synthesis (partly due to the ideological intrusion in the rewriting process). However, Bushmin's considerations highlight that "romanticism of life is expressed in the novel in a realistic form; it is not added to the realism, but it became an inner, organic element, transforming it into an exalted realism of a higher tone, significant due to its emotional nuance." (Bushmin, 1983, p. 203) We may notice the desire of Soviet criticism to minimize the weight of romantic elements in favor of the dogmatic realism as a mandatory component of the Socialist Realism. Whatever the case, we may adhere to the voice of some Soviet critics that supported the idea of a "romantic form of expressing the truth of life" (Metchenko & Petrov, 1983, p. 178), difficult to obtain in prose, but with forerunners in the Russian literature like A. Pushkin, N. Gogol, M. Lermontov and M. Gorky (Fadeyev, 1960(5), p. 525).

The synthetic and complex novel *The Young Guard* is part of author's poetics and stylistics development and it became an important part of the Socialist Realism canon. The synthetic intermission of the stylistic plans differentiates *The Young Guard* from other novels, together with the coexistence of objectivity and subjectivity of the narrative voice, emotional and lyrical notes, and documentary reports. The interweaving of heroic-tragic aspects and idealizing ones in the character construction determined the author to revise his ideas regarding the Socialist Realism so that he became an ardent supporter of the stylistic diversity.

References:

1. Barsuk, A. I. (1956). Iz nabliudenii nad stilem «Molodoi gvardii» A. Fadeeva. In *Voprosy sovetskoi literatury*. 3rd ed., Moskva-Leningrad.

2. Bushmin, A. (1983). Aleksandr Fadeyev. Cherty tvorcheskoi individual`nosti, Izdanie vtoroe, dopolnennoe. Leningrad: Khudozhestvennaia literature.

3. Clark, K. (2000). *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual* (Third edition). Bloomington and Indianopolis: Indiana University Press.

4. Cockrell, R. (July 1986). Aleksandr Fadeyev as Literary Theorist (1927-1932). *Slavic East European Review*, 64(3).

5. Fadeyev, A. (1929). *Stolbovaya doroga proletarskoy literatury*. Leningrad.

6. Fadeyev, A. (1960). Sobranie sochinenii v 5-ti t. Rabota nad romanom „Molodaya gvardia", t. 4 i 5. Moskva: Goslitizdat.

7. Grădinaru, O. (2014). Death Representation in the Soviet Novel of World War 2. *Romanian Journal of Literary Studies*, 4, 451-461

8. Grădinaru, O. (2018). *Războiul sovietic – între idealizare și demitizare*. Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărții de Știință.

9. Grădinaru, O. (2021). World War II in Soviet Prose – An Overview. *Philobiblon. Transylvanian Journal of Multidisciplinary Research in Humanities*, 2, 227-242.

10. Metchenko, A. I., & Petrov, S. M. (eds.) (1983). *Istoria russkoi sovetskoi literatury 40-80 gody* (2nd revised edition). Moskva: Prosveshchenie.

11. Nemirovski, E. L., & Platova, M. L. (1987). Knigoizdanie SSSR. Tsifry i fakty. 1917-1987. Moskva: Kniga.

12. Pravda (December 3, 1947). Molodaya gvardia v romane i na stsene.

13. Preobrazhensky, S. (1981). Poema o sovetskoi molodezhi. In A. Fadeyev, *Molodaya gvardia*. Moskva, Detskaia literatura.

14. Propp, V. (2001). Morfologia volshebnoy skazki. Nauchnaia redaktsia, tekstologicheckii kommentarii I. V. Peshkova, Moskva: Labirint.

15. Rybak, S. (1977). Pisatel-boets. In A. Fadeyev, *Molodaya gvardia*. Chişinău: Literatura artistică.

16. Rzhevsky, N. (1969). Idea and Heritage in Soviet Literature. *Comparative Literature Studies*, 6(4).

17. Şoptereanu, V. (1987). *Istoria literaturii sovietice ruse: receptarea ei în România*. Bucharest: Editura Universității din București.

ESSAYS

PRESENTATIONS

REVIEWS

On a Possible Crisis of the Current Scientific Ideal

PhD candidate Florin George POPOVICI
University Ştefan cel Mare of Suceava
popovicifloringeorge@yahoo.com

Abstract

The assumption that triggers the following research paper is that, despite the legitimate claims, the scientific approach of the actuality can be ideologically diverted from its natural purpose, that of joining the trajectory of getting closer to the truth. Such an ideological drift of science manifests its risky presence, especially in an era abundant in events of global impact, a period in which the coordinates of the scientific agenda tend to be enslaved to those who build the complex architecture of the political agenda.

Keywords: *science, technology, ideology, modernity, post-modernity.*

Why should a philosopher go to the cinema? Despite the apparent frivolity of such a question, it represents one of the main reasons that made the following pages possible. *Don't look up!* (2021, Adam McKay, NETFLIX) is, at first glance, just another controversial production about climate change and the dramatic impact of humanity on the environment. But if we choose to look down, that means to look deeper, the film can also be assumed as a pretext for a series of relevant philosophical inquiries. Among the problems that the film brings before viewers endowed with a minimum of philosophical culture is that of the relationship between science and popularization culture, as well as the relationship between science, technology and politics. Regarding this, if we want to point out the main reasons why a philosopher should go to the cinema, then these reasons are multiple. For example, for Paisley Livingston, movies can be adequately used as pretexts to illustrate philosophical themes and perspectives. Despite the abstract language and the many difficulties of understanding, philosophy can be translated, through the efforts of talented screenwriters and directors, into an inspired and memorable cinematic language, because "(...) films can be appropiately used to illustrate philosophical topics and positions." (Livingston, 2009, p. 39) Another author who tries to convince us of the philosophical importance of cinematographic productions is Nathan Andersen who claims that the film is capable of provoking existential questions into the minds of the viewers, through

the links they establish between what it shows and everyday life. "Even popular art forms, such as cinema, have the potential to provoke philosophical inquiry. It is in their likeness to life that they encourage us to reflect on it. It is in their difference from life that they create a distance, allowing us to confront directly and examine the prejudices and assumptions regarding everyday life and experience that we ordinarily take for granted." (Anderson, 2014, p. 118) As changeable as the events in our lives, films can not only offer us the opportunity for valuable reflections on controversial themes and topics, but they can help us discover new approaches, new types of reporting on these issues. "Cinema, like art and like life, is dynamic; it grows, always giving birth to new approaches, new forms, new ways of communicating, new ways of getting us closer to or creatively complicating the realities that depicts." (Anderson, 2014, p. 128) A more systematic perspective on the film as a philosophical tool is offered by the author Jerry Goodenough, in his book *Film as Philosophy. Essays on Cinema After Wittgenstein and Cavell*. In this book, the author lists four main reasons why philosophy must focus on film. First of all, philsophers are interested in technology, in the way a film is produced, in the social and cultural meanings of this artistic form. Philosophy is invited to deal with the study of social or psychological aspects and problems, such as for example human perception, social conventions involved in cinematic experience. The second reason why philosophy must be interested in film is that it facilitates the teaching or transfer of philosophical ideas from one generation to another. In other words, the film has certain pedagogical virtues. For Example, *The Matrix* (1999, The Wachowskis, Warner Bros.) illustrates skepticism towards the surrounding world, the difference between reality and appearance or illusion, the problem of solipsisim, the nature of dreams and another relevant philosophical themes. Or, *Total Recall* (1990, Paul Verhoeven, Carolco Pictures) presents in an accesible manner the complicated problem of personal identity. The third reason why a philosopher should go to the cinema is that, sometimes, the subjects and themes are presented in a serious manner, and in this case we are talking about the *film about philosophy*, or film as philosophy. For example, we can think about not so many but enough documentaries that describe the life and activity of recognized thinkers. In the end, the film can be conceived as a philosophical artifact in itself, to the extent that it contributes to the intellectual debates of a specific era. A cultural product like this is also the movie *Don't look up!* that gave us a proper incentive and context for our article.

In his book *The Uninhabitable Earth. Life after Warming*, David Wallace-Wells admits that the culture of popularization, or *pop culture*, has no other objective than to distract the audience from all the relevant issues. In other words,

even if a situation or a problem is a matter of life and death, this could become, through the complicity of pop culture instruments, nothing but a fairy tale. Major crises of humanity are transformed into Hollywood scenarios and mesmerizing plot devices, bringing the false impression of a unreal, insignificant and hilarious events. This aspect is more visible when it comes to movies that refer to a possible Armageddon. On the other hand, if we take the message seriously, we must face the truth of our potential extinction through a series of psychological mechanisms, in order to maintain our mental balance. "What does it mean to be entertained by a fictional apocalypse as we stare down the possibility of a real one? One job of pop culture is always to serve stories that distract even as they appear to engage – to deliver sublimation and diversion." (Wallace-Wells, 2019, p. 138) Thus establishing a problematic relationship between the culture of popularization and the exclusivist language of science, between the mission of science to engage socially and the ideal of objectivity. Even if we are not willing to subscribe to the author's main idea, according to which cinematography is nothing more than a sedative, a kind of a new *soma*, or opium for the masses, we should still admit some valuable assumptions. The first of these assumptions is that popular culture dispaces our anxieties about serious problems, and is placing them in the dangerous vicinity of derisory scenarios. The second aspect is the one related to the value of entertainemnt as cultural prophylaxis or as social therapy, in other words, the skepticism regarding the cathartic function of visual arts (especially cinematography). The third valuable element in this context can be understood by the fact that popularization culture cannot replace legal actions or public policies, at most it can be a means of sanctioning the possible abuses or ineffective actions of political actors. We consider that things must be seen and understood in a less radical way, in their nuances. As for popularization culture, it offers the academic discourse the chance to be translated and understood by the masses. The real danger comes from another area, because science can manipulate pop culture, and through it, can take real advantage from it, reinforcing the public *illusion of knowledge*. Science can be ideologically directed and reconfigured, especially when we admit that ignorance is deeply rooted in our nature, in our peculiar way of being. And even scientists are vulnerable to biases, if we think of a series of moments in history when they made uninspired and even catastrophic decisions. A conclusive example in this regard is the experiment on March 1, 1954, carried out by the United States Army, in the Pacific Ocean, when a nuclear bomb was detonated near Bikini Atoll. The event was a disastrous one due to the fact that scientists underestimated the power of nuclear energy: "the blast force was much larger than expected" (Sloman & Fernbach, 2017, p. 9). Evoking this major

incident, Steven Sloman and Philip Fernbach believe that it was caused by two "scientific errors": (i). The scientists behind this major project expected the force of the explosion to be lower that it was in reality; (ii). The circulation of air masses at high altitude was incorectly estimated, the radioactive dust being carried in completely different directions (Sloman & Fernbach, 2017). Such an incident illustrates not only the fallibility of scientific approach, but the paradoxical character of human mind. "The human mind is both genius and pathetic, brilliant and idiotic. People are capable of the most remarkable feats, achievements that defy the gods. We went from discovering the atomic nucleus in 1911 to megaton nuclear weapons in just over forty years. We have mastered fire, created democratic institutions, stood on the moon, and developed genetically modified tomatoes. And yet we are equally capable of the most remarkable demonstrations of hubris and foolhardiness." (Sloman & Fernbach, 2017, p. 9)

Considering that common sense is vulnerable to irrational slippages, science claims to take control, being itself a tool in the hands of those who hold political and economic power. Turning back to the movie, *Don't look up!* Can be assumed as an emblematic exhortation translated in at least two ways. On the one hand, the film makes us pay attention to the skeptical attitude towards the boundless veneration of science and technology. We should abandon blind faith in technoscience and strive to look up, that is, to scrutinize reality as it is, in the absence of ideologically imposed directions. On the other hand, we should stop believing in the supposed epistemological neutrality of science, possibly trying to identify its ideological roots. The current scientific approach rather resembles a confrontation, a war in which control is at stake. If the scientific approach of modernity was focused on notions such truth, objectivity, reason, autonomy of the knowing subject, today, the scientific realm tends to be characterized by relativism, ideological enslavement, political reconstruction of society. In *Science Wars. The Battle over Knowledge and Reality*, Steven Goldmann considers that wars of science take place on at least four front lines: the front line of social studies translates into an attack on the objectivity; the cultural front line means the conflict between Enlightment's rationalism and also postmodern perspectivism; the political front line is equivalent to the corruption of the scientific agenda by the architects of the political agenda; the religious front line pits the Darwinist left against the creationist right (Goldmann, 2021, pp. 273-290).

The legitimacy of the science, technology and their supposed ideological neutrality can be discussed in a historical and, possibly, in a polemic manner. For example, if we return to the well-known perspective assumed by Martin Heidegger, in his 1953 lecture "The Question Concerning Technology", then we

must accept that science and technology have a special relation with human way of being, or *Da-sein*. The author of *Sein und Zeit* (1927) understands the technological civilization "as a threat to the very essence of humanity" (Clark, 2001, p. 30). Even if we understand his hate for technology as a sentimental "anti-technological agrarian conservatorism" (Tallis, 2002, p. 183), it is a fact that science underpins technology and Heidegger' warning that technology risks getting out of human control is still relevant today. Both science and technology are not neutral or autonomous from the concerns of power and ideology: between truth and correctness a rupture can occur. Such a rupture occurs especially when "technology and its twin, modern science" (Aronowitz, 1988, p. 6), become institutionalized, which means that they can be enslaved to political domination. Ideologically associated with science, technology can encourage the natural ignorance of individuals. It succeeds in this by promoting the "illusion of knowledge": *the illusion of explanatory depth*, [false] privilege of *deliberative-rational mind* in relation to *intuition*, equating the mind with the sequence of calculations operated by a computer or *computational mind*, limiting or closing mental processes and activities: *the mind* is strictly *in the brain* (Sloman & Fernbach, 2017). If the scientific approach imagined by modernity was based on the belief in truth and objectivity, on the other hand, the current perspectives are rather tributary to postmodernity. Instead of truth, rationality, the cognitive autonomy of the subject, we discover relativism, ideological enslavement, science as socio-cultural construct.

Scientific concepts such as *quantum gravitation*, *dark matter* or *dark energy* could be understood, in a postmodern way, as socio-cultural constructs. Such a way of conceiving scientific terminology seriously affects its core, and its credibility. The autonomy of research, the competence of scientists, the integrity of the scientific approach, all of these are vulnerable to what we may call *ideological contamination*. "If scientists are funded to produce specific results by government or business, the integrity and thus utility of their results will be diminished." (Steel & Wolters, 2018, p. 171) The assumption of a possible decline of the scientific ideal could be also translated into the fact that values and ideology influence the public perception of science. The public outside the area of competence begins to see differently how the scientists participate in the decision-making process of the political bill, how they interact with political agenda. Even the scientific community faces controversies regarding the main elements of their own agenda: climate change, global warming, genetically modified organisms, research on Stem cells, vaccination etc. The controversies are related to the way scientists embrace one political doctrine or another, and this this political partisanship of

science leads to what David Wallace-Wells calls "scientific reticence" of the public (Wallace-Wells, 2019, p. 149).

The ideological vulnerability of science and its possible "political contamination" through and with the help of technology represents an extremely risky scenario: in addition to a virtual decline of trust in the rationality of science, it opens the way to major dangers. And if we still don't want to be suspected of technophobia or unfounded skepticism towards the ideological neutrality of science, we can, at least, admit that today, more than ever, scientific knowledge has a pronounced contingent character. At the same time, we can lucidly analyze the idea that the theoretical architecture of science, beyond its practical, immediate needs, could be related to technology and can easily be incorporated into the strategies that make up the political agenda. We questioned the thesis of modernity according to which science is able to offer an objective image of reality and a corpus of knowledge that are *value-free*, obtained exclusively through empirical methods and successive testing of hypotheses. The conviction about truth and objectivity weakens in the ebsence of evidence regarding the transparency and autonomy of the scientific approach.

The scientific theories that gives power and influence to political statements are not at all immune to controversy and criticism. Some of these theories and practices tend to abandon the Enlightenment ideal of objectivity, sacrificing ethics and integrity on the altar of mercantilism. It is hard to deny that both research programs and theoretical constructions are funded by and through political decisions. Research objectives and themes could be discreetly aligned with policies dictated by pecuniary interests which are less or not at all visible to the public eye. As Karl Raimund Popper warned us, even scientists are vulnerable to errors and pseudo-truths, trying to establish their own dogmas or tenets. Scientifical conjectures could also involve hidden prejudices and/or biases, also political engagement that casts doubt on the ethical character of the intellectual endeavor. Confiscated by ideology, science tends to depreciate its own value, becoming at most a story or a modern myth of a stirred socio-cultural context.

References:

1. Anderson, N. (2014). *Shadow Philosophy. Plato' Cave and Cinema*. London & New York: Routledge.
2. Aronowitz, S. (1988). *Science as Power. Discourse and Ideology in Modern Society*. London & New York: Palgrave-Macmillan.
3. Clark, T. (2001). *Martin Heidegger*. London & New York: Routledge.

4. Goldmann, S. (2021). *Science Wars. The Battle Over Knowledge and Reality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
5. Livingston, P. (2009). *Cinema, Philosophy, Bergman. On Film as Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
6. Sloman, S., & Fernbach, P. (2017). *The Knowledge Illusion. Why We Never Think Alone*. New York: Riverhead Books.
7. Steel, B. S., & Allen Wolters, E. (2018). *When Ideology Trumps Science. Why We Question the Experts on Everything from Clime Change to Vaccinations*. Santa Barbara & Denver: Praeger.
8. Tallis, R. (2002). *A Conversation with Martin Heidegger*. New York: Palgrave-Macmillan.
9. Wallace-Wells, D. (2019). *The Uninhabitable Earth. Life After Warming*. New York: Tim Duggan Books.

History and Hermeneutics

PhD Decebal COPILEȚ
dcopilet@yahoo.com

Abstract

The classic science was founded, been known, on accuracy and rigour. The demonstration was the only modus probandi, for formal sciences, by which a fact was admitted as being scientific. History, leaving the narrative seduction, partially gave up what used to define it in discrete, its essence becoming the own duration of a continuous present. This continuity discovered in traditions, mentalities, symbols, rituals, myths, wants to show us that the historical distortion is no longer possible, because the same historical present reaches, by profound and constant seems the future generations as well. Only a discrete history can be counterfeited, because the discontinuity can favour certain historical data, by making convenient contexts, as well as by taking the historical even from a continuous context. The new history tries, through hermeneutics, to found something that cannot be proved in a classical way and this because the interpretation increases the truth, because it brings new meanings but it does not render the truth. It relates but it does not counterfeit, meaning through hermeneutics, we build a truth, we do not produce it.

Keywords: *history, hermeneutics, understanding.*

The will and tendencies for renewal or renovation of any field of knowledge are very old, in some this struggle being active and positive. Therefore, the school of insight (the new novel-1957), the new critics-1960, the new philosophy-1970, the new lirism-1987 etc. are tendencies to refuse the past in its made-up form and then surprised by time and to open a field of knowledge to other areas unrevealed (Virmaux & Virmaux, 1970, pp. 135-149). We can seize pretty easily that "the new critics", "the new philosophy", but especially "the new history" are attempts to reconsider the position of man related to the mentality, to the world of traditions, of rituals, of miracles or symbols which structures a new universe of imaginary and prefigures new styles of history, of thinking or critics. There is a profound, continuous history, not in the positive or Procust way, but in a hermeneutic, interpretative and constructive way. Any science is entitled to consider, since the time of Einstein, a space-time continuum, so in history only events are interrupted, its deep shiver is continuous, meaning "The outspoken

proclaimed breaks are delusional… and… spectacular" (Irina Mavrodin), and the historical fact can no longer be absolute, because it provokes "study" and this because it comes out of eternity and fades over time. "…the impossibility of re-signification equating the exit from the truth" (Gh. Vlăduțescu).

The surface history of voivodes, of battles, of wars, of fights or sieges – events which seem to stop for a moment the historical time – is "abandoned". It is now trying to free itself from the burden of historicism, of the narrative seduction, as well as of the fault of ideologic subordination committed with other subjects. The new orientation in history has also an educational reasoning, we think, because depicting only wars, fights, battles, confrontations, massacres, murders (infanticides, homicides, patricides, matricides, regicides etc.), the history risks to educate the aggressivity, violence, hate or vendetta. The danger can easily come from other part as well, tells us a well-respected historian "…since mankind seems to admire more the ones who destroy it than its benefactors, the thirst for military glory represents the defect of the most noble characters".

The discrete history is changed for a continuous one, which no longer cultivates the exclusivism, because in the new history we no longer speak about the truth, but about its interpretation, meaning truths. The classical narration (narro, -are, -avi, -atum) is replaced by the art of interpretation which retrieves the rituals and rhythms of life, renouncing the traditional chronology and anticipation of a duration plurality. This chronological sequence can have different significances, based on aspirations, ideas, cultural horizon, all making up certain mentalities of the temporal understood as natural time, plural time, senior time, religious time, the time evasion, the time fall etc. (Le Goff, 1970) Marc Bloch, Lucien Febvre and others initiated a movement in France in the 30's, called the School of Annals (L' École des Annales), by which history used to open to the other social-humanistic sciences: sociology, psychology, ethnology, linguistic etc., which guides again its researches and the discourse, without affecting its prestige. The orientation of "the new history" are shortly the following: 1. Opening the history to social sciences. 2. Renouncing to ideologic hypotheses in history research. 3. Critical analysis of all history fields. 4. Opening history to mentality (Virmaux & Virmaux, 1970, pp. 14-15).

The phenomenon of opening becomes relevant and promising, since in 1945 Karl Popper wrote the book called *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, and then in 1962 Umberto Eco publishes the work *Opera Aperta*, and in 2000 George Soros publishes the volume *Open Society: Reforming Global Capitalism.* Young people identify themselves in such an approach, because the new orientation no longer means reciting the old lessons of history but signifies a reconstruction

(*deconstruction* from Jacques Derrida), by which each generation discovers its own values and participates to the cultural act by a creative effort, not mimetic. In history there is no longer one and only truth but truths…, because in history we no longer demonstrate – as in the old positive history – but we interpret, meaning "The history is written ain for every new present" (Hans-Georg Gadamer). The new history gives up to a certain extent the fatigue of traditional sciences, auxiliary to history (epigraphy, palaeography), in order to approach the freshness of modern sciences (psychology, sociology, ethnology, anthropology), which show us how to discover the other one in history. In fact, it's no longer about the history of wars, first of all, but "the recovery of mankind by the historical research" (Karpov, 1986, p. 22), aspect neglected by the traditional history.

Jaques Le Golf is another representative of the new orientation in history who "dreams" about a new middle age, in fact about another history of the middle age, but not an illustrious one, not a famous or festive one but one of celebrities, a profound, deep and peaceful, continuous, infinite one, and then about another history of humanity.

The problem of history continuity is in fact, for the historian, the problem of owning the past and not a belief in evolutionism (Le Goff, 1970, p. 42). The past is no longer kept as a data volume, inevitably discrete, because history is no longer accountancy – which records the discontinuities, meaning the events proposed – but a science that understands this time the past in its continuity. We discover in this way, the long duration (*la longue durée*) in history, which is more prolific than the event time, because it means understanding and not recording. Such a history must replace the surface history of the middle age, which can catch only the phenomenological agitation of events and when these are not raging, we have the false "impression" that the historical time stopped. That is why Jacques Le Golf wants another middle age, a *total* one, a *long middle age or a profound middle age* the paradigm of which is discovered – with the help of ethnologic means – in people's beliefs, behaviours and mentalities (Le Goff, 1970, p. 41).

The new conception about the historical document or about chronology – these, the document and the chronology used to unify in order to make the historic fact positive – they regulate the interpretation of historical facts, based on rigueur and imagination (Jacques Le Golf). In fact, what does the historian aim to prove? He tries to found something which cannot be demonstrated in a classical way. Of course, the hermeneutics does not refer to factuality, because it is not an experimental science, but an interpretative one and therefore it is a science of the spirit, which makes the historical fact comprehensible. It connects, in fact history to the way people talk and, in this way, the historical document becomes a literary

text and can be interpreted with the linguistics and semiotics methods (the syntax, the semantics, the pragmatics). Words rise together with the age and slowly they reach the image of the age and express it. "Abandoning" the historical document and discovering the literary text in the same text, the historian gets closer to the language and implicitly to the mentality it expresses. Hermeneutics helps us dissociate wisely between the *natural sciences*, where the *scientific explanation* is dominated and the sciences of spirit, within which understanding is fundamental. The vicious and fallacious circle in the field of sciences is replaced by the hermeneutical circle – which means a concentric development of meanings – which shows that

> in the field of understanding, there is by no means a successive derivation claimed, so that the logical argumentation error of circularity is not a fault of demarch here, but it represents the appropriate derivation of the structure of understanding. (Gadamer, 2001, pp. 596-597)

The interpretation increases the truth because it brings new meanings but it does not render the truth. It relates, but not counterfeits it, meaning that by hermeneutics we build a truth, we do not produce it.

Hermeneutics does not absolutize, because it is not chronology and its inevitable subjectivity does not make it non-scientific and it does not compromise it either, because only through "subjectivity" hermeneutics promises. This way, we can hardly understand the ones who no longer live, the ones from yesterday or the ones who are to be, meaning the ones of tomorrow.

Hermeneutics starts from text, but the meaning is reached from context with the help of intuition, which, "although it has a non-cognitive character, because it expresses the emotion of truth and not the truth itself", generates nevertheless an authentic understanding and knowledge.

In hermeneutics we interpret the mankind not as a universal man, but as a man of a certain age, because there being not only the ability to comment, hermeneutics requires not an intelligent comment, but an appropriate comment. But an intelligent comment must be also appropriate. It requires a distance from the text and recovering the meaning from context, because the truth in the sciences of spirit, according to Wilhelm Dilthey, means interpretation.

Although hermeneutics was once an auxiliary subject of theology, philosophy and jurisprudence (Hufnagel, 1981, p. 7), and today it became an auxiliary subject of history, however it continues to offer the methodologic instrument of confrontation of subjectivity to the intersubjectivity (Hufnagel, 1981, p. 7), meaning of the individual not with another individual, but with the relationship between other individuals.

We will not find the essence of history in discrete, but "in what proves to be a proper duration of a continuous present" (Gadamer, 2001, p. 394). We find this continuation in traditions, mentalities, symbols, rituals, myths and wants to mean that if present is continuous, then the historical denaturation is no longer possible, because the same historical present reaches, by profound and constant seams, the future generations. Only a discrete history can be false, because the discontinuity can bias certain historical data, by making convenient contexts, as well as by taking the historical event from a continuous context.

The last in the order of debate, the myths, "*are not masks of historical reality, which the mind could snatch from things in order to consummate as a historical reasoning. They reveal more a real force of history*" (Gadamer, 2001, p. 394). We could have the impression about them that they counterfeit history, when in fact they highlight its continuity, because the reasoning enlightened by finite would be nothing but, according to Gadamer, *the horizon of our own historical conscience, the empty desert of myths, the never-ending enlightened consciousness. This state of enlightenment is more conditioned and limited historically, it is a stage in the realization of our destiny* (Gadamer, 2001, p. 394).

History is a science that has a meaning and man is a human being that has a purpose and man can be understood only with his destiny. The connotation of the above-mentioned word "stage" is here, we think, "moment" in destiny, purpose in meaning but only the meaning decodes the purpose, which is nothing but an infinite freedom without meaning, in the absence of destiny.

That is why freedom is not made up in history, because there is no freedom without destiny or according to Gadamer's more profound words:

It (the enlightened conscience n.n.) can understand itself in a wrongful way when it considers itself as being the freedom that lacks destiny of the historical conscience. But this fact means: history is what we were and always are. It is the compulsory fact of our destiny. (Gadamer, 2001, p. 394)

References:

1. Le Goff, J. (1970). Space and time structures the 10th - 13th centuries. In J. Le Goff, *Civilizaţia Occidentului medieval* (pp. 198-271) (The civilization of the Medieval West). Bucharest: Scientific Publishing House.
2. Karpov, M. (1986). Jacques le Goff şi faţa neştiută a evului mediu (Jacques Le Goff and the unknown face of the middle age). In *Jacques Le Goff pentru un alt Ev Mediu. Valori umaniste în cultura şi civilizaţia evului mediu* (Jacques Le Goff's, For another middle age. Humanist values in the culture and civilization of the middle age), vol. I. Bucharest: Meridiane.

3. Gadamer, H.-G. (2001). Problema istoriei în filozofia germană mai recentă (1943), in *Adevăr şi metodă* (pp. 388-394) (Truth and method). Bucharest: Teora.

4. Gadamer, H.-G. (2001). Text și interpretare (1983), in *Adevăr şi metodă* (pp. 596-618) (Text and interpretation (1983), in Truth and method). Bucharest: Teora.

5. Hufnagel, E. (1981). *Introducere în hermeneutică* (Introduction to Hermeneutics). Bucharest: Univers.

6. Virmaux, A., & Virmaux, O. (1970). *Dicționar al mișcărilor literare şi artistice contemporane* (Dictionary of contemporary literary and artistic movements). Bucharest: Nemira.