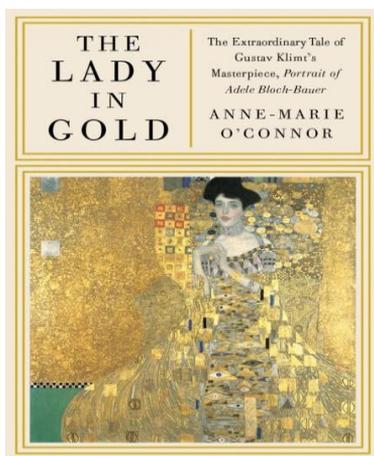


Antonela CORBAN<sup>1</sup>

## Gustav Klimt's Lady in Gold<sup>2</sup>

(Anne- Marie O'Connor, *The Lady in Gold: The Extraordinary Tale of Gustav Klimt's Masterpiece, Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012)



**Abstract** In 2012, 150 years from the birth of the Austrian painter Gustav Klimt were celebrated. It is the year when several volumes dedicated to the painter were published, some of them providing a general view of his life and work, others presenting certain periods in his life or his less known creations. The volume *The Lady in Gold: The Extraordinary Tale of Gustav Klimt's Masterpiece, Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer*, falls under the latter category: the book, written by Anne-Marie O'Connor, presents the history of the appearance of the famous portrait and the complex events it has gone through up to the present.

**Keywords:** Golden style, nazism, degenerated art, "Austrian Mona Lisa"

In 1903, Klimt visited Ravenna, where he was deeply impressed by the mosaics in the Christian churches of the city. Back in Austria, he started

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combining his own methods of representation with various golden details reminiscent of these mosaics. For this reason, his paintings of this period are said to be created in the “golden style” or “Byzantine style”; these paintings impress through a successful combination of naturalistically represented details with decorative and symbolic elements. One of these paintings is *Adele Bloch-Bauer's Portrait*, which is the central topic of the book reviewed here.

The painting was confiscated by the Nazis, then remained in Austria for many years. Maria Altmann, Adele Bauer's niece, sued the Austrian government asking to have five paintings by Klimt returned, one of which was Adele's portrait. Once the painting was retrieved in 2006, it was soon sold. It was purchased by the cosmetics magnate Ronald Lauder, whose overt intention was to put together a collection consisting of the paintings retrieved from the Nazis and to exhibit it at Neue Galerie in New York. “This is our Mona Lisa”, he would say about the portrait bought for 135 million dollars, the highest price ever paid for a painting up to that moment. (Since then things have changed and the highest price paid for a painting is more than 250 million dollars for *The Card Players* by Cezanne).

The time from the completion of this work in 1907 until its retrieval in 2006 is presented in detail in Anne-Marie O'Connor's book *The Lady in Gold*, which she organized in three parts, each corresponding to a period in the history of the painting.

The first part, entitled *Emancipation*, analyses the social, cultural, political and economic context in which the main characters of the book live: Klimt and Adele. A detailed image is created about the people and their age (for instance, Sigmund Freud, Gustav Mahler); the author extends the analysis, bringing details even about Emperor Franz Josef and his lover, actress Katharina Schratt, as well as about Empress Elisabeth, beloved in Austria as “Sisi”. The economic and banking activity of numerous Jewish families is described, too: they were recognized as possessing significant financial resources in Austria. At the same time, the cultural and entertainment activity on Ringstraße is presented. (“It was 1898, and the devil himself seemed to dance in Vienna”.)

The author first presents Adela's Bloch-Bauer's biography, followed by that of Klimt. Adele was the daughter of a rich Jew, who was the head of an important Habsburg bank and the head of the Oriental Railway. She was married to Ferdinand Bloch, a Czech sugar-beet baron, who, on account of

their financial possibilities, succeeded in organizing an impressive salon, frequented by important Viennese intellectual figures and artists of the time. One of them was Gustav Klimt, whose friends used to call him *der König* – the King. “At thirty-five, Klimt was a king of Vienna art world” (p.8). The book introduces several periods of the artist’s life: his childhood in the family of a humble gold engraver (an important detail considering the use of gold in many of Gustav’s works); the studying years in *Kunstgewerbeschule* (School of Applied Arts), the creation of *Künstlercompagnie* (Artists’ Company) together with his brother Ernst and with Franz Matsch, and several important artistic commissions he got in this period; the formation of Secession in 1897 and Klimt’s appointment as its president.

In 1903, Ferdinand Bloch commissioned Klimt to paint a portrait which was apparently not the first for which Adele sat. In 1901, Judith in the painting *Judith* bears a striking resemblance with Adele. There were even rumours about a possible affair between the two.

O’Connor provides many details related to the creation of the famous portrait. For instance, she mentions that the painter produced around a hundred sketches in pencil on manila paper before he reached the final version completed in 1907. To emphasize Klimt’s painting manner specific of the golden period, the author even provides details related to Empress Theodora represented on one of the Ravenna mosaics.

A very important aspect should also be noted here: 1907 is the year when Hitler was rejected by the Viennese Art Academy, where he had applied for a scholarship. This was subsequently obtained by Oscar Kokoschka, who would say later: “If it had been the other way around, I would have run the world quite differently”. However, Hitler was not successful in 1908 either, the reason for his rejection being that his drawings showed a lack of talent for artistic painting. What the board meant was that the representations of the human body were absent from his work and that he had, however, a good eye for architectural representations.

In the second part of the book, *Love and Betrayal*, another important character features, namely Maria, nee Bloch-Bauer, Adele’s niece. In 1937, she was married to a Polish opera singer, Fritz Altmann. Not much later, in 1938, Austria is annexed (*der Anschluss*) and their fascinating life turns into a nightmare. One of those who had to leave Vienna was Adele’s husband (she had died in 1925, and Klimt in 1918); Fritz was incarcerated in Dachau. Their property is confiscated, their palace and the objects in it are disposed

of by the occupants. Due to Goebbels's order that the "degenerate" Jewish art should be destroyed, Adele's Jewish name was removed from the painting, so that all reference to the character should be obliterated. As Klimt himself was not despised by the Nazis, they exhibited the portrait in the Belvedere Palace under the title *The Lady in Gold*. The art the Nazis considered "degenerate" was in effect the art of the expressionists, one of them being Oskar Kokoschka.

After the war, a part of the pieces confiscated were returned to the state, but not to private persons. This was because the Austrian officials considered that all these paintings were "as symbols of their country", to quote O'Connor.

In the third part of the book, *Atonement*, Maria Altmann's legal action is presented; she was then living in America and was 82 in 1998; she sued the state to retrieve her property rights over Klimt's paintings that had been once confiscated. She was supported in her action by several relatives; the starting point had been the new law passed in Austria regarding the works of art looted by the Nazis. This section goes on to present the steps taken by Randol Schönberg, composer Arnold Schönberg's grandson, an ambitious young lawyer who acted on Maria's behalf. Through his incessant efforts, he managed to obtain Adele's famous portrait and four other paintings in June 2006, as mentioned in the beginning of this review.

It should be said that the topic of Adele Bloch-Bauer's portrait and its long and adventurous story had also been tackled in *The Age of Insight: The Quest to Understand the Unconscious in Art, Mind, and Brain, from Vienna 1900 to the Present* (2012) by Eric Kandel or the film *The Rape of Europa* (2008), made by Richard Berge, Bonni Cohen, Nicole Newnham.

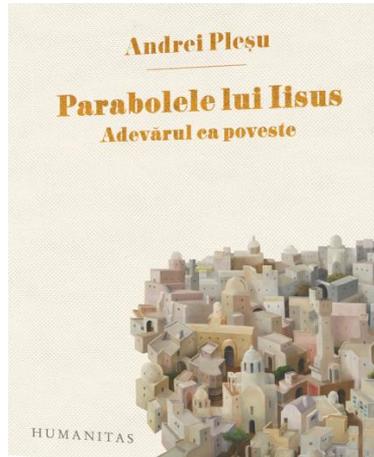
In the end, we return to the relation between Klimt and Adele, of whose nature we cannot, however, tell anything precisely except that she had sat for the painter for another portrait in 1912. However, from Anne-Marie O'Connor's conversations with Maria Altmann (in order to collect data for the book reviewed here) it can be seen that the latter implied that they were linked by more than just a friendly relationship. "People always asked me, did your aunt have a mad affair with Klimt? My sister thought so. My mother – she was very Victorian – said 'How dare you say that? It was an intellectual friendship.' [...] "My darling, she said finally, Adele was a modern woman, living in the world of yesterday." (*Prologue*)

Florin CRÎȘMĂREANU\*

**Simple Notes of Reading Concerning an  
Event Book:  
*The Parables of Jesus*<sup>3</sup>**

[Andrei Pleșu, *Parabolele lui Iisus. Adevărul ca poveste* (*The Parables of Jesus. Truth as Story*), Bucharest, Humanitas, 2012, 314 p.]

“No prophecy of the Scripture came about by  
The prophet’s own interpretation of things”  
[2 Peter 1, 20]



**Abstract** In his most recent volume, *The Parables of Jesus*, Andrei Pleșu intends to offer different interpretations of an important number of parables assigned to Jesus Christ. In parallel with the living exegesis of the fragments from Scripture encountered in this remarkable volume, I have tried to make an inventory in the lines below and a few small inconsistencies, errors of typing and quotation, that have slipped into the pages of the mentioned book.

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**Keywords:** The Scripture, The Parables of Jesus, interpretation, tradition, Andrei Pleșu.

A few days ago I was passing through a square when I saw from a distance a group of restless persons in a building with big windows. I went towards that store, which I have identified by the stairs as being a bookstore. In Romania of the year 2012, in a provincial city, could it be agitation in a bookstore? Bizarre situation... I opened the door with some difficulty and I shyly approached the group inside. Hard to guess their profession, but, considering the clothing and language, they seemed to be intellectuals. Not even a single moment did I waste and I started looking at the books arranged on shelves, and I eavesdropped, in an impolite manner, at their conversations. Shortly, as far as I understood, a book recently published at a prestigious publishing house was about to be launched, and the people gathered there, apparently, intended to buy it at any cost. The young lady at the cash-register did not take into account their carefully chosen words and requested the exact price posted on the fourth cover of the book.

Until those persons have passed the cash-register, paying for the purchased volume, I had already found two books with a discount, thrown in a basket at entrance. After the group left the bookstore, I went to the cash-register to pay for the two volumes. Curious by nature, while the young lady scanned the barcodes and prepared my bill, I took a look at the book from which a few copies have just been sold. It looked very good: it was a hardcover, wrapped in a bright colored jacket, with a very nice drawing, in qualitative paper, that makes one think of the Occidental luxury editions. In brief, it was a volume absolutely successful from an aesthetical point of view, which I would have liked to buy just for this reason. I was already imagining where I could have placed it in my modest library.

The conversation with the young lady at the cash-register gives me the opportunity to further skim over the volume. The title seemed familiar, I had encountered it somewhere for sure; the subject somehow familiar to any Christian, even to the Sunday one, seemed to be very well analyzed; and the author's name is known to almost any living from these lands; and precisely then, as something belonging to destiny, the young lady recommends another valuable book: *Minima moralia*, written by a certain Adorno. Out of courtesy, I would have appreciated her intention, if I had not been so thrilled already thrilled by the volume in bright colored jacket. Briefly, that particular volume gave me at that moment all the reasons to acquire it.

I bought the book. While walking out of the bookstore I also remembered the name of the famous author who happened to write a book

with the same title: the Lutheran Joachim Jeremias. Now, what difference did it make anyway? I was happy with my new acquisition. On my way home, I was thinking about this volume's subject. What can the parables of Jesus tell us today? After two millennia of their enunciation, are they still valid? Without any hesitation, I believe in the validity of these "true stories", in their timeless message. Without this minimal faith, one would not dare to read them, to tell them, to interpret them. A reading of Jesus' parables is what Mister Andrei Pleșu also suggests in his latest published book: *The Parables of Jesus*<sup>4</sup>.

The volume *The Parables of Jesus* has the following structure: after "Foreword" [pp. 7-8], follows an "Introduction" [pp. 11-22], then the first part of the book, which is also the most consistent from a quantitative point of view, "«Why do you speak to them in parables?»" [pp. 25-207] and the second one: "The parable as undermining of the ideological" [pp. 212-277]. Parts that are divided in turn in chapters and subchapters. Instead of "Conclusion" [pp. 281-312], it includes the text "Critics of exegetical reasoning" [281-300], "Bibliographical suggestions" [pp. 301-307] and "Index of Jesus' parables" [pp. 309-312].

Briefly, from the reading of these parables, and not only, it shows that "Jesus does not seem to be preoccupied with building a *doctrine*" [p. 211], and the core of the entire volume *The Parables of Jesus* seems to be summarized in the words: "What conclusion can we reach? None that can be enclosed in a recipe. The truth is always the same, but its colors, its «sides» are ineffably changing depending on the concrete case, the situation, the moment, the discourse's target. Truth is consubstantial with the *wealth* of the world and the *freedom* of the person. Nothing is taken as *standing to reason* [...] We are invited to a continuously *imitatio Christi*, but not to limp pastiche, to sterile good conduct" [p. 235].

An aspect that might seem strange to some is encountered right from the "Foreword" where the request of a publishing house to "order" the writing of the book is mentioned. For a normal reader, the request of such an "order" sounds strange. Anyhow, it is clear that such an "order" is not made to a person that is at the beginning of his career as an author, but to a person that has certain skills as a writer, who confirmed it in time, with a rich CV to support him. For those who do not get me yet, I will recall the fact that in the course of history great works, both texts and especially paintings and sculptures, were made at order. Someone ordered them, and someone else made them.

From the beginning, I have to confess the fact that I do not feel

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Andrei Pleșu, *Parabolele lui Iisus. Adevărul ca poveste (The Parables of Jesus. Truth as Story)*, Bucharest, Humanitas, 2012, 314 p. In our text, the references between parentheses without any other kind of mention, are for the pages of this volume.

worthy to evaluate in any way the novelty, the correctness and not even the usefulness of the interpretations suggested by Mr. A. Pleșu in the pages of his most recently published volume. Of course, there are going to be persons much more competent than myself that will state about these things, if they haven't already done it. In those bellow, I shall stop only at some minor issues, insignificant in the volume's economy, such as the little inconsistencies, incomplete bibliographical references, mistakes in typing, which, if someone finds them useful, can be taken into account in a very possible second edition of the volume *The Parables of Jesus*.

Towards the end of the volume, when a justification is presented, I have felt the absence of bibliographical references to the Patristic writings and even to the scholastic ones where Christ's parables are approached. From the pages of the book that we are taking into account, I understood that the Patristic authors, indiscriminately, belong to "entire centuries of scholastic seriousness and vapid homiletics" [p. 217; see also the final part of the volume, "Critics of exegetical reasoning"]. It is hard for me to accept such generalization. Moreover, I do not think we encounter in the writings of the Church Fathers just a moralizing reading – frequently found in the texts of Latin scholars – of the Christly message, but rather an anagogical reading, an actual feeling of this message. It is true, it is always started from the first meaning, literal, without which the reading would not be possible, but it is aimed at the final meaning, anagogical, that implies the appropriation and feeling of this message. Anagogic lecture is more than just a reading. We sometimes encounter texts even on the road to Damascus.

Can the Scriptures be read without asking help from tradition, neglecting, avoiding, deliberately or not, the writings of Church Fathers? Definitely, yes. An entire Christian confession struggles to do this. Reading the volume *The Parables of Jesus*, is it justified to ask yourself which is the tradition from which the interpreter of these parables claims himself? According to the used sources, it is hard to establish a unique tradition, the catholic and protestant authors are by far the most frequently used. On the other hand, one can say that the volume's author is eastern in spirit, whereas the "Tradition, as *paradosis*, is the continuous taking over and multiplied transmission of the gift: *tradition*, custom" [p. 180].

However, the direct or the indirect references to the writings of the Church Fathers do not lack completely from the pages of the volume *The Parables of Jesus*. Frequently, when it happens for a fragment to be quoted from the text of an ecclesiastical writer, the reference is made indirectly, after other sources, by means of several "apud". An example in this respect is given in a note [p. 153, n. 1], where Saint Irenaeus and Tertullian is quoted; his writings, *Adversus Haereses*, book IV, 26, 5 and, respectively,

*Adversus Marcionem*, book IV, 29, 9, are taken over after the writing of a certain Christine Gerber. Personally, I cannot argue even a simple thesis by calling on to the readings of others, without checking them first. One can call on fellows for many services, but not also for reading for you. Fortunately, in the mentioned case, Irinaeus' writing, *Adversus Haereses*, has received critical editions, I mention here the appearance of this text in the collection *Sources Chrétiennes*, no. 100-1 and 100-2, Irénée de Lyon, *Contre les hérésies*, livre IV, Édition critique d'après les versions arménienne et latine sous la direction de Adelin Rousseau, moine de l'abbaye d'Orval, avec la collaboration de Bertrand Hemmerdinger, Louis Doutreleau et Charles Mercier, Paris, Les Éditions du Cerf, Tome I: introduction, notes justificatives et tables, Tome II: texte et traduction, 1965 [2006<sup>2</sup>]. The same happy faith also had Tertullian's writing, which appears in the same prestigious collection: Tertullien, *Contre Marcion*, IV, tome IV [Livre IV], Texte critique par Claudio Moreschini, Introduction, traduction et commentaire par René Braun, Paris, Les Éditions du Cerf, 2001.

The line of several "apud" continues. At p. 168, n. 3, it is quoted a work of Saint Basil the Great, "On Renunciation of the World, 31.648.21 apud K. Snodgrass, Stories...". Hard to identify Basil's writing according to this reference. Finally, after some time dedicated to this search, I believe it is about *Sermo XI* [*Sermo asceticus et exhortatio de renuntiatione mundi*], PG 31, coll. 625-648 [Clavis Patrum Graecorum (CPG) 2889].

At the same page 168, n. 4, Saint John Chrysostom is quoted with the text "De Caeco et Zaechaeo, 59.601.42-46", probably after the same reliable source, K. Snodgrass, who does not appear this time in that note. Knowing now how to decipher this kind of *apud*, I have identified faster the text of Chrysostom in PG 59, col. 601, lines 42-46, the writing being mentioned at „Spuria”: „Ad homiliam de Caeco et Zacchaeo” [coll. 599-610]; [CPG 4592].

At a certain point, we encounter the following quotation: "We must act – says Maximus the Confessor – as some contemplative persons and to practice contemplation as active people" [p. 230]. At this quotation, Mr. A. Pleșu does not make any reference, as it would be normal, to a Maximian writing, but to an article signed by André Scrima, „The Hesychastic Tradition. An Orthodox-Christian Way of Contemplation”, in Yūsuf Ībish, Ileana Mărculescu (eds), *Contemplation and Action...*, ed. cit., pp. 136-150 [p. 230, n. 2]. In order to find the Maximian writing from where the quotation is, I went to the "source", i.e. to the article of A. Scrima. I cannot find it in the mentioned version, but I have found a translation in Romanian of that article: André Scrima, „Tradiția isihastă: o cale contemplativă creștin-ortodoxă” [translator Sorana Corneanu], in *Despre isihasm (On Hesychasm)*, edition cured by Anca Manolescu, Bucharest, Humanitas, 2003, pp. 205-224 [the translation quoted however by A. Pleșu a few pages further, at p. 243,

n. 1], where at p. 218 we read a fragment similar to the one invoked by A. Pleșu: “to act as a contemplative person and to contemplate as an active person” (Maximus the Confessor). A first question: why wasn’t the translation into Romanian of that article quoted, since the author knew about it, as he informs us a few pages below. Quoting this translation would have solved also the distinction singular-plural that differentiates the two translations [A. Pleșu and S. Corneanu]. I come back to A. Scrima’s article. To my disappointment, not even here did I find an exact reference to a Maximian writing. Indeed, the idea seemed to be a Maximian one, but in order to identify that passage, I had only one option left: to review the entire Maximian corpus. Going through these texts has strengthened my belief that the idea is a Maximian one, because I have found it in several places<sup>5</sup>. Among all the inventoried passages, the closest to the fragment quoted by A. Pleșu from A. Scrima seems to be the following: “the activity appears as a working contemplation, and contemplation as an experienced activity” [*Answers to Thalassius*, 63, Romanian translation D. Stăniloae, in *Filocalia*, vol. III, Bucharest, Humanitas, 2005, p. 327; see the entire answer given by Maximus to question 63].

Regarding the Confessor, A. Pleșu also reminds us about the “*philautia* upon which Saint Maximus the Confessor constantly warns us” [p. 244]. One of these places where we can find Maximus’ “warning” is the following: “mother of passions, i.e. bodily love of self [Φιλαντία]” [Maximus, *Chapters on Love* II, 8, translator D. Stăniloae, in *Filocalia*, vol. II, Bucharest, Humanitas, 2005, p. 65; see also *Ibid.*, II, 59: “mother of all evil, <i.e.> love of self [Φιλαντία]”, p. 74].

We encounter with another indirect reference when the following passage is invoked: “Prayer – says Saint Theophan the Recluse (1815-1894) – «is spiritual life in action [...]. To pray means to put in act the godly feelings and attitudes, which leads to a more intense, a brighter life»” quoted

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Saint Maximus the Confessor, *Chapter on Love* II, 28, translation D. Stăniloae, in *Filocalia*, vol. II, Bucharest, Humanitas, 2005, p. 68: “A strong man is the one who unites knowledge with making”; *Idem.*, *Ambigua*, 10 [Romanian translation D. Stăniloae, Bucharest, EIBMBOR, pp. 160-161]; *Ibid.*, 92 [Romanian translation, p. 355]; *Ibid.*, 102 c [Romanian translation, p. 382]; *Ibid.*, 124 [Romanian translation, p. 460]; *Idem.*, *Answers to Thalassius*, 48 [Romanian translation D. Stăniloae, in *Filocalia*, vol. III, Bucharest, Humanitas, 2005, p. 164]; *Ibid.*, 58 [Romanian translation, p. 268]; *Ibid.*, 58 [Romanian translation, p. 268]; *Ibid.*, 63 [Romanian translation, p. 333]. Things have been similar also in the western Christianity. For example, for Hugo de Saint-Victor [1090 / 1100-1141], perfect wisdom consists in uniting the two, i.e. to conjugate “jubilation of contemplation” with “fertility of action” [PL 175, coll. 514D-515A]. The Victorin emphasizes especially the complementarity and on each ones insufficiency taken separately [*Ibidem*, 176, coll. 655C-657C].

after Eugraph Kovalevsky, *A Method of Prayer for Modern Times...* [p. 242, n. 2]. Hard to identify the writing where this passage is taken from. Meister Eckhart is also indirectly quoted, „*Apud Coomaraswamy...*” [p. 254, n. 1]. I do not have the time to look for that quotation in the huge work of Eckhart.

To our peace, not just the Patristic and scholastic authors are quoted by using second sources, but also contemporaneous authors, such as J. Jeremias, *apud* C. Blomberg [p. 161, n. 2]. We do not find out about Jeremias' text from this reference. We can assume that it is about a sequence of a discussion with a friend. Maurice Blondel, *Histoire et dogme...* is quoted after Jean Pirot [p. 231, n. 1]; Hermann Hesse *apud* Martin Leutsch [p. 291, n. 2].

Usually, during the volume, clues that send to footnotes are after the point from the end of phrase. I have also noticed a few exceptions from this rule, when clues that send to footnotes appear before the point. For example: p. 25, n. 1; p. 32, n. 1; p. 33, n. 1; p. 35, n. 2, 3; p. 37, n. 1; p. 38, n. 1; p. 40, n. 1; p. 41, n. 2; p. 47, n. 1; p. 62, n. 1; p. 63, n. 1; p. 69, n. 1, 6; p. 70, n. 1; p. 80, n. 2; p. 109, n. 1; p. 117, n. 1; p. 119, n. 3; p. 121, n. 2; p. 134, n. 2; p. 158, n. 2; p. 295, n. 1; p. 297, n. 3.

According to the rules of editing of footnotes unanimously accepted, at p. 89, n. 2, we should have *Ibid.*, as it is used also with other occasions during the volume, for example p. 80, n. 1. At the beginning of the great majority of the footnotes we have the abbreviation *Cf.*, but other times this abbreviation does not appear anymore, as it happens for example at p. 89, n. 1 and 2; p. 103, n. 2; p. 115, n. 1; p. 117, n. 2; p. 134, n. 2; p. 162, n. 1; p. 168, n. 2, 3; p. 174, n. 1; p. 288, n. 1; p. 297, n. 2 and 3.

Going through the volume, I have noticed that there are also references insufficiently used, as it happens for example at pp. 246-247, n. 1, where two texts are quoted, without mentioning where those writings have been published, talking about Princeton and Paris. It is true that from the entire reference, one can understand it all, but, even so, it is a discordant note, compared to the majority of the other references from the bottom of the pages, most of them complete.

From the important saying: „Filozofii vor să te lămurească, fără te oblige la decizii fatale” („Philosophers want to enlighten you, without forcing one to make fatal decisions”) [p. 218], the sequence „să” (‘to’) is missing.

The reference to the autochthonous translation of the work of Chrysostom, *Homilies to Matthew*, does not have the pages mentioned; the same situation is also encountered in p. 134, n. 2.

„Cartea Înțelepciunii lui Isus, Fiul lui Sirah” („The Book of Wisdom of Jesus, Son of Sirach”) [for example, thus quoted at p. 105; p. 291, n. 3], also appears as „Cartea Înțelepciunii lui Iisus, Fiul lui Sirah” [p. 224, n. 2].

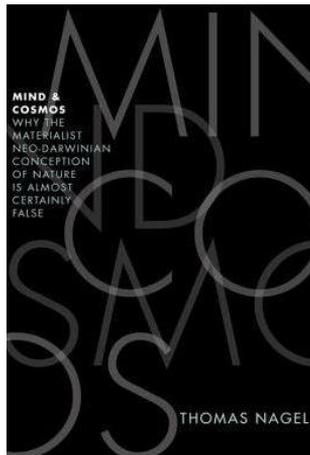
Briefly, in the volume *The Parables of Jesus*, I have encountered a variety of inconsistencies, incomplete references and errors of typing; a few of them exemplified in the lines above. Therefore, be careful, because not the devil, as we may think, but „le bon Dieu est dans le détail” [a sequence assigned to Gustave Flaubert].

Ending the reading of this beautiful volume, I am still thinking about those intellectuals encountered some time ago in the bookstore, imagining at the same time the situation generated by the pride of colleagues when seeing the book *The Parables of Jesus* on their desk. How interesting and useful should it be for the soul to enter into a conversation with this kind of people ... Regarding my notes above, I can only say this: if the fact that I have lingered too much in search of “fern spores” [p. 293] is to be taken seriously, then I apologize; as for the “elephant”, be it “in broad light”, I leave it to others more worthy than myself, obviously to the intellectuals.

Ciprian JELER<sup>6</sup>

## Philosophy Struggles with Nature

(Review of Thomas Nagel's *Mind and Cosmos. Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature Is Almost Certainly False*, Oxford University Press, 2012)



**Abstract.** Thomas Nagel's most recent book, *Mind and Cosmos*, announces in its subtitle that it would show 'Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature is Almost Certainly False'. Through an analysis of some of the most important concepts of this book, this paper shows why Nagel's book doesn't live up to the promise of its subtitle.

**Keywords:** consciousness, evolutionary theory, variation, natural selection, Thomas Nagel

At just under 130 pages long, Thomas Nagel's most recent book, *Mind and Cosmos*, is certainly an ambitious project. The sheer magnitude of its scope is clearly visible on the cover of the book, where we can read its subtitle: *Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature is Almost*

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*Certainly False*. However, the contents of the book doesn't live up to the expectation created by this audacious subtitle, and an account of the downsides and upsides of this book can be given by a simple comparison between what the subtitle announces and what the book actually delivers. This is what I'm going to try to do here: analyze the claims that are made in this subtitle in the light of what is actually said in the book. Hopefully, this critical analysis will succeed in highlighting the salient ideas in Nagel's book and the shortcomings of his approach to the subject matter. By way of consequence, breaking down the subtitle into its components – the 'why', the 'materialist neo-darwinian conception of nature' and the 'almost certainly false' components – will actually offer the main lines of this account of the book.

### *The 'why' component*

It is difficult to understand why the subtitle of the book lets us expect that we will find a demonstration of the falsity of what Nagel calls the 'materialist neo-Darwinian conception of nature'. After the introductory first chapter, the beginning of the second chapter already announces what the book would actually provide:

My aim is not so much to argue against reductionism as to investigate the consequences of rejecting it—to present the problem rather than to propose a solution. (p. 15)

This phrase accurately anticipates on the contents of the book: readers who expect to find here arguments against reductionism – or against 'materialist naturalism' of Darwinian descent – will be disappointed. Whether they expect an argumentation based on the lack of empirical evidence for the Darwinian theory of evolution by natural selection or an argumentation indicating the inconsistencies in the logical or epistemological structure of evolutionary theory, these avid readers' expectations are not going to be fulfilled by this book.

In this case, it remains a mystery as to why the subtitle announces that a demonstration of this kind would be provided by Nagel's book. While some mysteries are worth pursuing, I think this mystery is best left unsolved, since, in all probability, there is nothing philosophical about it. Let's just say that a more accurate subtitle for the book would have replaced the 'why' component and would have sounded something like this: 'What alternative theories could be proposed in case the neo-Darwinian conception of nature were proven to be false'. This subtitle would have provided a more suitable indication of the contents of the book since the three important chapters of the book (chapters 3, 4 and 5) pose this question with respect to consciousness, cognition and values. Chapter 3

poses the question of what alternative or additional principles would be necessary to explain both the manner of existence and the fact of the historical appearance of consciousness if we assume that the current neurosciences are unable to provide an explanation for the relationship between the body and the mind and that evolutionary biology in its current form is unable to provide an explanation of how this relationship itself has come into existence. Chapter 4 poses the same question with regards to superior cognition processes, stating that while evolutionary theory can provide an explanation for the appearance and persistence of simpler forms of cognition (e.g. perception), we need a more comprehensive approach in order to understand how superior forms of cognition (that may lead, for example, to the discovery of physical laws) have appeared historically and how their intrinsic functioning is to be described. Finally, chapter 5 asks a similar question regarding the alternative/additional principles needed in order to provide an explanation of the nature and appearance of moral values when the latter are described in a moral realist manner. However, the inadequacy of the ‘why’ component in the subtitle is the mildest of the problems of this book, and we need to move on to the more serious ones.

*The ‘materialist neo-Darwinian conception of nature’*

This notion is certainly the most problematic one of the book. It constitutes the target of critique throughout the book, and yet it is a target that Nagel both unjustifiably rejects and keeps using even after he has allegedly distanced himself from it. These two aspects – the insufficiently justified rejection and the surreptitious usage of what had been previously rejected – are actually interrelated, and I will detail them below.

First of all, in what way is Nagel’s rejection of the neo-Darwinian frame of thought insufficiently justified? A brief clarification is needed. In its ‘canonical’ form, the theory of evolution by natural selection describes the latter as a ‘two-step process’.<sup>7</sup> The first step consists in the appearance of genetic variation (by way of different processes like mutation, recombination etc.), whereas the second step is the selection process itself, that favors certain variations and increases their representation in the global population (by way of viability and/or fertility selection etc.). These two steps are to be kept distinct: the variation step describes *how* an organism is (what are the underlying bio-chemical mechanisms and elements that make, for example, black mountain goats be what they are and, consequently, what distinguishes them from their immediate predecessor); the selection (or, in Mayr’s terms, the ‘elimination’ step) provides an explanation for the fact *that*

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<sup>7</sup> Ernst Mayr, *What Evolution Is*, Phoenix, London, 2002, pp. 131-133.

that type of organism keeps existing (it explains – in this openly imaginary example – why the blackness of mountain goats proves to be important for their persistence or, in other words, for the fact that while non-black mountain goats have been eliminated or have become less common, the black ones have not shared the same fate).

However, and this is the important point, even if the two steps need to be kept distinct, even if the ‘*how* an organism exists’ and the ‘*that* a type of organisms keeps existing’ are two separate questions, this doesn’t mean that they do not shape one another *historically*. To put it very bluntly, if a type of organism is eliminated by natural selection (so, by the second step), then this elimination has limited the amount and the types of future variations that remain available. New variations of a genome cannot appear since that genome is no longer extant. The selection step therefore partly determines the type and quantum of new variations that are possible in the future,<sup>8</sup> while, conversely, the new variations can determine the type of selection processes that could possibly occur within a given population (if the variation step doesn’t only introduce the blackness of mountain goat in a population of goats with a different color, but also introduces, for example, running speed differences within the same population, then we might have two selective processes that will act on the two varying traits within the given population). To sum it up: natural selection involves two distinct steps, but precisely because they are distinct, the two steps shape each other historically. Evolutionary biology is a historical science *precisely because* it keeps these two steps distinct.

This properly *historical* structure of evolutionary theory is what Nagel completely misrepresents. He does indeed distinguish between what he calls a constitutive question (with respect to consciousness it reads: ‘why specific organisms have the conscious life they have’) and a historical question (‘why conscious organisms arose in the history of life on earth’). But he then goes on to add:

Suppose there were a general psychophysical theory that, if we could discover it, would allow us to understand, for any type of physical organism, why it did or did not have conscious life, and if it did, why it had the specific type of conscious life that it had. This could be called a nonhistorical theory of consciousness. It would accomplish task (1) [i.e. give an answer to the constitutive question]. But I believe that even if such a powerful non-historical theory were conjoined with a purely physical theory

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<sup>8</sup> In my imaginary example, if non-black mountain goats are eliminated and only black ones remain in existence, the new variation that may appear will only affect the gene pool of this type of organism. A new variation may appear – let’s say, goats with longer horns and goats with shorter horns –, but they will necessarily be *black* goats with longer horns and *black* goats with shorter horns.

of how those organisms arose through evolution, the result would not be an explanation of the appearance of consciousness as such. It would not accomplish task (2) [i.e. give an answer to the historical question]; it would still leave the appearance of consciousness as an accidental and therefore unexplained concomitant of something else—the genuinely intelligible physical history. (p. 51)

This is certainly a puzzling statement. Even if we could explain the connection between the physical aspects of an organism and the consciousness that it has – so even if we were to give an accurate account of *how* a given conscious organism is, in the terms of my distinction above – this couldn't explain the appearance of consciousness in the history of life. But, in the account of the two-step process of natural selection given above, if we did have the kind of 'general psychophysical theory' that Nagel talks about, it would mean that we would have an account of several other facts: 1) of the previous type of organism a variation of which (step 1) has led to the given organism with the given consciousness we are now fully capable of explaining; 2) of why that previous type of organism had previously been favored by selection (step 2). In other words, the conjunction of the two steps, made possible by their historical co-shaping I've described above, would offer us the means to explain why consciousness has appeared (provided, of course, that we did have at our disposal that powerful psychophysical theory that Nagel is imagining here). All that would be left for us to explain would be not why conscious beings have come into existence, but why they kept existing, i.e. what trait – whether it's the consciousness itself or something else – is responsible for the fact that they have persisted over time.

But why doesn't Nagel acknowledge this? Why does he insist that having an answer to the constitutive question (*how* a conscious organism exists, i.e. how the specific organism that it is corresponds to the specific consciousness that it has) doesn't explain the appearance of consciousness? The deeper answer is not axiological – the fact, as stated in the text, that consciousness cannot be 'accidental' or a 'concomitant' of something else –, but theoretical. As the discussion above has shown, he misrepresents the questions that evolutionary theory poses. As I've shown, there are two answers that are needed in evolutionary theory: *how* an organism exists and an account of the fact *that* it keeps existing<sup>9</sup> at a given moment. It is only the conjunction of these two answers – and therefore the co-shaping of the two steps involved in natural selection – that renders evolutionary biology a historical discipline. But Nagel's questions are not identical with the ones above. While the constitutive question is pretty much the same as the 'how'

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<sup>9</sup> Or that it exists in a certain proportion with respect to other types within the given population.

question above, when he sets his ‘historical’ question next to it he leaves aside the other question regarding the fact ‘that’ a type of organism – the type described by the ‘how’ question – keeps existing. But it was only the conjunction of the ‘how’ and the ‘that’ questions that introduced history in discussion in the first place. In other words, by only referring to two questions – the constitutive and the historical ones –, Nagel actually misses the very historicity of evolution. What he is actually seeking – at least with regards to consciousness – is a theory that would give *the same answer* to the constitutive and the historical question. But this is tantamount to saying that the theory he is looking for is non-historical. It gives the impression of historicity, but it is only an impression. This is obvious in the passage below:

It isn’t enough that C should be the consequence, even the necessary consequence, of B, which is explained by A. There must be something about A itself that makes C a likely consequence. I believe that if A is the evolutionary history, B is the appearance of certain organisms, and C is their consciousness, this means that some kind of psychophysical theory must apply not only nonhistorically, at the end of the process, but also to the evolutionary process itself. That process would have to be not only the physical history of the appearance and development of physical organisms but also a mental history of the appearance and development of conscious beings. *And somehow it would have to be one process, making both aspects of the result intelligible.* (p. 52, my emphasis)

What Nagel is looking for, is a general theory of evolution whereby the historical appearance of consciousness is explained, but that would also show that consciousness had been there all along, it had been there from the very beginning, long before its actual appearance. This is visible in the way he answers his two questions, the constitutive and the historical question with respect to consciousness. Since, he argues, no accurate scientific explanation of the mind-body problem has yet been provided, we might offer a reductive solution to the constitutive question and support a panpsychism whereby physical particles are intrinsically ‘mental’. The building blocks of nature are also the building blocks of consciousness (‘all the elements of the physical world are also mental’ – p. 57). This is a philosophical hypothesis, and should be treated as such. The problem however is that when he moves on to the historical question, he also tends towards a reductive – and not emergent – solution, but then the difficulty Nagel raises for himself is the following: why conscious organisms appear at a certain moment, if everything physical is also mental? What is even more problematic is that he frames this question in biological terms, asking how the monistic (i.e., at the same time, physical and mental) properties that

underlie consciousness lead ‘to the appearance of conscious systems on the menu of mutations available for natural selection’ (p. 65).<sup>10</sup>

The serious problems of Nagel’s project become clearer now. First of all, he rejects the historicity of evolutionary biology by neglecting one of its questions that is however fundamental for the historicity of the object itself of evolutionary theory. Why he rejects it remains unclear, since, as stated above, he offers no empirical evidence against the theory of evolution by natural selection (not even with respect to the evolution of consciousness); nor does he criticize the epistemological structure of evolutionary biology. Instead, he simply replaces the two central questions of evolutionary theory *and their conjunction* with just two questions of his own – the constitutive and the historical ones – where one of them (the historical one) is meant not only to replace the corresponding question of the evolutionary theory, but also the conjunction of the two questions – or the co-shaping of the two steps of natural selection – that actually underlies the historicity of the object of evolutionary theory. However, having done this replacement, Nagel would somehow like to keep his answers to the historical question within the conceptual frame of evolutionary theory – by appealing to mutations, selection etc. –, even though this move has been rendered impossible by his substitution of the central questions of evolutionary theory.

*The ‘almost certainly false’ component*

This decidedly undecided nature of Nagel’s theoretical enterprise also underlies the end of his book’s subtitle. One of the motivations for Nagel’s project is presented in the following way:

It may be frustrating to acknowledge, but we are simply at the point in the history of human thought at which we find ourselves, and our successors will make discoveries and develop forms of understanding of which we have not dreamt. Humans are addicted to the hope for a final reckoning, but intellectual humility requires that we resist the temptation to assume that tools of the kind we now have are in principle sufficient to understand the universe as a whole. Pointing out their limits is a philosophical task, whoever engages in it, rather than part of the internal pursuit of science. (p. 3)

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<sup>10</sup> For lack of space, I will leave aside here his responses to the constitutive and historical questions with respect to cognition and values. I will only state that he tends to offer an emergentist answer to the constitutive question with respect to cognition and values, while he argues that a teleological – of a non-purposive type – answer to the historical question regarding cognition and values would probably be preferable.

It is precisely this argument that can be turned against Nagel himself, since it is this very humility that his enterprise betrays. There are two main ways in which the limits of science can be indicated, and neither is sufficiently represented in Nagel's book.

The first one would be that of indicating what remains unexplained by the 'neo-Darwinian' frame of thought with regards to, for example, consciousness, cognition and values. But the fact that certain things are not yet explained by a scientific theory is certainly not sufficient to lead us to the conclusion that that theory is false. The 'humility' Nagel is talking about would, in this respect, be simply that of conceptually isolating what remains unexplained by that theory and, subsequently, passing to the scientists themselves the task of building explanatory theories that would encompass what is yet unknown. This patience lacks in Nagel's book because, we are lead to assume, if evolutionary theory hasn't explained consciousness yet, then the theory is simply false. Why this is so remains another mystery, particularly since, as stressed above, his book doesn't offer empirical arguments against evolutionary theory, nor theoretical arguments indicating inconsistencies in the logical and epistemological structure of evolutionary biology. When the subtitle announces that the book would prove that the 'neo-Darwinian' conception of nature is almost certainly false, this 'almost' underlines the fundamental impatience that underlies Nagel's philosophical project.

There would however be another way of indicating the limits of current knowledge or science, and that would be a more speculative one. It wouldn't consist simply in trying to isolate what is not yet explained, but in trying to show why current science could *never* explain certain phenomena because the fundamental principles and presuppositions that their epistemological structure assumes is incompatible with the 'essence' of those phenomena. An attempt to do this exists in Nagel's book, as manifested by the equivalence he tries to establish between 'materialist naturalism' and the 'neo-Darwinian' frame of thought. But, from this point of view, Nagel's project is not radical enough. If this is the road a philosopher wants to take, than it would be vital for him not only to criticize those fundamental principals and presuppositions, but also, and above all, to avoid making use of them when he tries to forge the building blocks of a new explanatory theory. This is where Nagel's enterprise falls short, and this is visible in the fact that his stab at an explanation of consciousness can't help involve mental 'particles' or 'microelements' (p. 62), while his stab at an explanation of the historical appearance of consciousness is still framed in terms of mutations, selection etc. If one wants to provide a deeper, properly philosophical explanatory theory by criticizing certain sciences, than it is crucial that one keeps clear of the

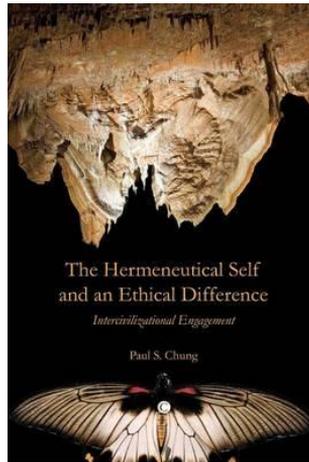
presuppositions and principles that govern those very sciences. The physical-biological language that Nagel keeps using marks the fact of an insufficient radicalism of his philosophical enterprise. What he would need, as we've seen above with respect to consciousness, is a theory that would explain that something can preexist without being pre-formed (for example without being given under the form of 'particles'); and, at the same time, a theory that would explain the fact that something can preexist and yet be entirely new at the moment of its actual appearance. But such a *philosophical* theory exists and it is known since Bergson as the theory of actualization. It is a shame that Bergson's only appearance in Nagel's book is connected to a theodicy problem regarding values and not to the ontological theory of actualization. It is also a shame that an entire line of French philosophers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that tried to build on the theory of actualization are completely left out from this discussion. Since Nagel's project is not humble enough anyway, it could at least have become more radical.

In conclusion, Thomas Nagel's book doesn't live up to its subtitle's promise. However, it is an interesting read and it is stimulating in that particular way in which insufficiently grounded philosophical works sometimes provide food for thought.

Dana TABREA<sup>11</sup>

## A Global Hermeneutics. The Cave and the Butterfly<sup>12</sup>

(Review to *The hermeneutical Self and an Ethical Difference. Intercivilizational Engagement* by Paul S. Chung, James Clarke and Co., Cambridge, 2012, 287p)



**Abstract** Paul S. Chung's all-encompassing hermeneutical project is relevant for the historical inquiry into hermeneutics, and for the comparing of different hermeneutical approaches, coming from the Western as well as from the Eastern traditions (on the one hand, from Schleiermacher to Gadamer, and on the other hand considering Confucianism and Daoism). And mostly it is a plea for a global hermeneutics as a consequence of and need for *intercivilizational engagement*.

**Keywords:** ethics, hermeneutics, intercivilizational reconstruction, global hermeneutics, Plato, Zhuangzi

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Paul S. Chung's all-encompassing hermeneutical project is relevant for the historical inquiry into hermeneutics, and for the comparing of different hermeneutical approaches, coming from the Western as well as from the Eastern traditions (on the one hand, from Schleiermacher to Gadamer, and on the other hand considering Confucianism and Daoism). And mostly it is a plea for a global hermeneutics as a consequence of and need for *intercivilizational engagement*.

The book under review here is structured into four parts as it follows: Part I is focused on the Western philosophical tradition and the development of hermeneutics as a theory (authors such as Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger and Gadamer are brought into discussion) with the purpose of finding the bridge across the theory of interpretation and ethics (the moral concept of virtue is analyzed at this point). Part II reveals the relationship between the hermeneutical self and moral theory (Foucault and Gadamer are considered, but a comparative undertaking is also assumed between the West and the East – some possible dialogues between Confucius and Aristotle or between Aquinas are created). Part III connects the theory of interpretation with the theory of communication, and even considers the aesthetical dimension of postmodern ethics. Finally, Part IV is the most relevant to the issue I am concerned of here – an intercivilizational reconstruction, beyond an inquiry enclosing both hermeneutics and ethics, as well as the Western and the Eastern traditions.

The author insists upon the possibility of an intercivilizational dialogue with the intention of constructing an ethical-hermeneutical theory by which to bridge the gap between the West and the East by examining various theories of interpretation in terms of ethical self, on the one hand, and of self-cultivation on the other hand. The great number and density of complex religious traditions makes a very generic concept out of the globalization of hermeneutics. The main issue that the author has in mind – a comparative religious study of ethical hermeneutics focused upon a dialectics of enlightenment between the East, specifically East Asia, and the West – conflicts the real possibility of complete systematization of the religious traditions under discussion.

A global hermeneutics represents the background of the comparative religious study that Chung undertakes with the purpose of bringing upfront the topic of the dialogue among civilizations. The intercivilizational reconstruction based upon what the author names a *global-critical inquiry* establishes its main goal: the link between the Western dialectics of enlightenment and Neo-Confucian hermeneutics and ethical self. Following this line of thought, the author makes use of two distinct metaphors: 1. Plato's metaphor of the cave; 2. Zhuangzi's metaphor of the butterfly. The two metaphors are meant to mediate some „cross-cultural encounter for a hermeneutic of intertextuality through assuming the human subject as

hermeneutical self and moral integrity". First, the Confucian theory of ethical hermeneutics is elaborated while Zhu Xi's analogical hermeneutics is brought into dialogue with Gadamer and Aristotle's notion of analogy. Second, Wang's discursive hermeneutics of elimination is reinterpreted within the frame of thought of Heidegger's notion of Dao as original saying.

The comparison between Plato's analogy of the cave and Zhuangzi's story about the butterfly dream serves for the entire comparative religious study of interpretation and morality in an intercivilizational framework. The myth of the cave, that can be considered the basis of the Western dialectic of enlightenment, illustrates the human condition as a difficult journey from the state of prisoner to that of the enlightened, from shadows to light. The sun symbolizes the light and the illumination brought to the human being when it comes across the truth. Zhuangzi used to live in China around Plato's time. He is one of the main pupils of Laozi. He used to tell his dream about the butterfly: the dream was about him being a butterfly and the special enjoyment that this felt that he forgot who he really was; he forgot that he was Zhuangzi. He began to question this: Did Zhuangzi dream about the butterfly? Or was it that the butterfly dreamt of Zhuangzi? Human consciousness, he thought, and rationality are not enough when it comes to understanding the truth. One could reach reality as a whole by the recognition of the otherness of the self. This otherness can be referred to as the unconscious, nature, or the others. Anyhow, the metaphor of the butterfly, differently from the one of the cave suggests that liberation and enlightenment resides within the individual and not outside him or her.

Florin CRÎSMÎREANU<sup>13</sup>

## Sur la métaphysique de R.G. Collingwood



Dana Țabrea<sup>14</sup> est l'auteur d'un excellent livre, le meilleur peut-être dans notre littérature de spécialité, sur le philosophe anglais Robin George Collingwood (1889-1943)<sup>15</sup>. Contrairement à une opinion largement

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<sup>14</sup> Docteur en philosophie depuis 2008, Dana Țabrea est une présence importante et constante dans les publications de spécialité et culturelles. En plus des études, des articles parus dans des revues comme par exemple *Hermeneia*, *Meta*, *Collingwood and British Idealism Studies* e.a., Dana Țabrea est également traductrice du volume signé par Katherine Crowley, Kathi Elster, *Mă exasperează să lucrez cu tine. Cum să scapi din capcanele emoționale de la serviciu*, București, Editura Trei, 2012.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Dana Țabrea, *Dezvoltarea metafizicii ca hermeneutică: Robin George Collingwood. O filosofie practică*, Iași, Editura Universității „Al.I.Cuza”, 2012, 358 p. Autant que je sache, dans la culture roumaine, jusqu'à la parution de cette étude, ce n'est que Florin Lobonț et Sergiu Bălan qui se sont préoccupés de manière systématique de l'œuvre du penseur Robin G. Collingwood; voir, dans ce sens, F. Lobonț, *Noua metafizică engleză. O regretabilă necunoscută*, București, Editura Trei, 2002. Une contribution également importante est la traduction en roumain d'un ouvrage de R.G. Collingwood, *O autobiografie filosofică*, réalisée par F. Lobonț et C. Mesaroș, București, Editura Trei, 1998; voir aussi Sergiu Bălan, *Între istorie și filosofie. Sistemul lui R.G. Collingwood*, București, Editura Academiei Române, 2009, 202 p. Afin

répandue, qu'analyse aussi en détail l'auteur de l'ouvrage que nous désirons présenter brièvement, R.G. Collingwood n'appartient pas à la philosophie analytique, mais plutôt à une tradition intitulée « le tournant herméneutique », à côté d'autres auteurs représentatifs pour ce paradigme tels M. Heidegger, R. Bultmann, H.-G. Gadamer, P. Suppes, T. Kuhn, M. Eliade *et alii*.

L'ouvrage *Dezvoltarea metafizicii ca hermenetică: Robin George Collingwood. O filosofie practică* (*Le développement de la métaphysique comme herméneutique: Robin George Collingwood. Une philosophie pratique*) est structuré de la manière suivante: I. « Premisele filosofiei lui R.G. Collingwood - Francis Herbert Bradley » / « Les prémisses de la philosophie de R.G. Collingwood – Francis Herbert Bradley » (pp. 21-62); II. « Cum este posibilă metafizica în mediul analitic? » / « Comment est-elle possible la métaphysique dans le milieu analytique? » (pp. 63-223); III. « Istorie și hermenetică » / « Histoire et herméneutique » (pp. 225-275); IV. « Presupoziții în posteritatea lui Collingwood: lecturi alternative » / « Présuppositions dans la postérité de Collingwood: lectures alternatives » (pp. 277-339). Les quatre chapitres de l'ouvrage sont, à leur tour, formés de plusieurs sous-chapitres. Le livre finit par une « Conclusion » (pp. 341-347) et la « Bibliographie » (pp. 349-358).

Dans la première partie du volume notamment on analyse les textes des auteurs ayant exercé une influence quelconque sur la pensée de Collingwood. Parmi ceux-ci, H. Bradley (1846–1924), dont l'auteur d'*Autobiographie filosofică* emprunte la formule « présuppositions absolues », détient une place importante, car « c'est à partir de Bradley que Collingwood élabore sa fameuse théorie des présuppositions » (p. 61). Au long de l'ouvrage on invoque également d'autres auteurs importants ayant influencé, d'une manière ou d'autre, l'œuvre de Collingwood, tels: I. Kant, G.W.F. Hegel, A. J. Ayer, B. Croce, G. Gentile, G. de Ruggiero, A. N. Whitehead. De même, on mentionne des auteurs dont les thèses ont été analysées par certains exégètes en parallèle aux écrits de Collingwood, par exemple E. Husserl (1859-1938) et H.-G. Gadamer (1900-2002). Pour une raison qui m'échappe, souvent (mais ce n'est pas le cas pour l'analyse proposée par Dana Țabrea), la chronologie normale est renversée lorsqu'on a en vue l'analyse comparée entre Collingwood et Gadamer. Pour l'exégèse, en général, c'est le philosophe allemand qui a la primauté lorsqu'on parle de données préalables, tradition, herméneutique e.a. Je considère que l'un des exemples les plus éloquents dans ce sens c'est la thèse du « passé encapsulé dans le présent » (p. 231), fort similaire à ce que, plus tard, dans *Vérité et*

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d'esquisser un tableau aussi complet que possible de la présence de Collingwood dans la littérature roumaine, je tiens à signaler aussi la traduction récente : Robin G. Collingwood, *Ideea de natură. O istorie a gândirii cosmologice europene*, traduit de l'anglais par Alexandru Anghel, București, Herald (Collection „Mathesis”), 2012, 304 p.

*méthode* (1960), H.-G. Gadamer allait appeler « fusion des horizons » (*Horizontverschmelzung*).

Le noyau dur du livre est en même temps la partie la plus substantielle, le II<sup>e</sup> chapitre, où l'on analyse en détail les éléments centraux de l'œuvre de Collingwood: la métaphysique, la doctrine des présuppositions absolues, la logique de la question et de la réponse. Ce qui est intéressant c'est le fait que ces composants de la philosophie de Collingwood font partie d'un tout, engendrant ainsi un système, car il est impossible de les théoriser et de les comprendre les uns sans les autres, dans un conditionnement réciproque. Ainsi, pour le philosophe anglais, « la métaphysique, en tant que science des présuppositions absolues, est une discipline historique-herméneutique. Le devoir du métaphysicien consiste à détecter, comparer et identifier les contextes de la transformation survenue dans les sets de présuppositions absolues » (p. 156). La métaphysique comprise comme discipline herméneutique apparaît comme possible avec F. Nietzsche (1844-1900), qui, à un moment donné, affirmait qu'« il n'y a pas des faits, mais des interprétations seulement » (aspect analysé à la p. 261). Indestructiblement liée à la doctrine des présuppositions, est la logique de la question et de la réponse<sup>16</sup>, qui, à son tour, « se dévoile comme une herméneutique » (p. 182). En définitive, dans les cadres établis par Collingwood, « penser signifie poser des questions, et ces questions ont pour point de départ nos présuppositions absolues » (p. 187).

Dana Țabrea distingue attentivement dans son livre entre présuppositions et propositions, en délimitant les premières tant par rapport aux assomptions et aux préjugés, qu'aux paradigmes. Les présuppositions absolues ne sont rien d'autre que « des systèmes de *croyances*, qui constituent le fondement de la pensée et de la pratique d'une certaine société à un moment historique donné » (p. 125). Qui plus est, « les présuppositions absolues n'apparaissent que sous la forme de "constellations", qui doivent être "consuptionnelles", c'est-à-dire, après qu'on en découvre une, toutes les autres apparaissent nécessairement » (p. 61 *et passim*).

Une des idées directrices du volume est celle conformément à laquelle R.G. Collingwood « conteste le sens traditionnel, aristotélien de la métaphysique en tant qu'ontologie ("science de l'être pur") » (p. 15, 63, 82 *et passim*), ce qui signifie qu'« au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, la métaphysique ne saurait plus être une science de l'être pur, mais elle devient une métaphysique » (p. 18). Aussi Dana Țabrea met-elle en évidence le fait qu'« à une ontologie abstraite de l'être se substitue une ontologie concrète, du devenir » (p. 339). Ce qui

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<sup>16</sup> Pour cet aspect, voir aussi H.-G. Gadamer, *Adevăr și metodă*, traduction en roumain par Gabriel Cercel, Larisa Dumitru, Gabriel Kohn, Călin Petcana, București, Teora, 2001, p. 228 *sqq.*; P. Ricoeur, *Temps et récit*, t. III, Paris, Seuil, 1985, p. 402, cite aussi bien Gadamer et Collingwood lorsqu'il se réfère à la « logique de la question et de la réponse ».

est intéressant c'est qu'un auteur comme « Collingwood ne fait pas une distinction entre la métaphysique et la théologie, dans la mesure où les deux concernent des convictions fondamentales, des croyances implicites de notre pensée » (p. 89). A partir de cette formulation, sans précisions supplémentaires, on peut déduire que la métaphysique conçue de cette manière par le philosophe anglais est spéciale, tout comme la théologie (seulement celle rationnelle, il est vrai) est une métaphysique spéciale (selon la distinction formulée à la p. 82).

Un autre enjeu de l'ouvrage est de démontrer l'inconsistance d'une perception, commune au rang des exégètes, de considérer R.G. Collingwood comme un philosophe analytique: « l'un des mythes que j'ai l'intention de détruire est celui de Collingwood vu comme philosophe analytique » (voir surtout pp. 64-67). Dans ce milieu, analytique, on peut comprendre la métaphysique d'une manière différente, tant comme analyse logique du langage, comme étude des présuppositions absolues, mais le plus souvent, dans le cadre de cette tradition philosophique, on a essayé d'« éliminer la métaphysique ».

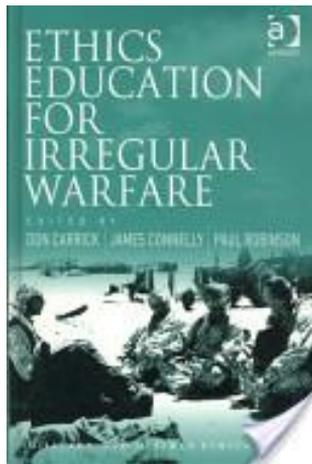
Le dernier chapitre est extrêmement intéressant par la vaste perspective qu'il offre à une éventuelle recherche à venir. La doctrine des présuppositions absolues théorisée par Collingwood est analysée en parallèle avec d'autres expressions célèbres, comme, par exemple, « les jeux de langage » (L. Wittgenstein), « le paradigme » (T. Kuhn), « l'épistème » (M. Foucault), « les présuppositions des cultures archaïques » (M. Eliade), « les préjugés » (H.-G. Gadamer), « les jeux de l'esprit » (I.-P. Culianu). Le IV<sup>e</sup> chapitre finit par « Receptarea lui Collingwood în filosofia română » / « La réception de Collingwood dans la philosophie roumaine » (p. 330-339).

Je considère que, ayant une excellente connaissance de la pensée de R.G. Collingwood et de la langue de ses œuvres, comme il résulte du volume analysé ci-dessus, Dana Țabrea accomplirait son projet en traduisant en roumain le texte fondamental pour la compréhension de la métaphysique du philosophe anglais: *An Essay on Metaphysics* (1940).

Dana TABREA\*

## Military ethics: issues of non-conventional battleship<sup>17</sup>

(Review of *Ethics Education for Irregular Warfare*, editors Don Carrick, University of Hull, James Connelly, University of Hull, Paul Robinson, University of Ottawa, Canada, Ashgate Publishing Limited, England, USA, 2009)



**Abstract** Irregular warfare means war operations other than conventional war, such as counter – insurgency (COIN) and peace operations (peacekeeping, peace building, peacemaking, and peace enforcement). We can follow the red thread of the book by considering its different parts (theoretical, operational, or applicative, and pedagogical). The main issues of the book under review here consider ethical aspects of war with the purpose of answering questions such as how to educate troops to act ethically or how to guide military institutions to respond ethically to difficult situations that may appear in irregular warfare. The book addresses issues of interest for specialists in military ethics, adding an important contribution on irregular warfare situations and proper ethical responses to more regularly discussed topics of conventional war. But it can be also of interest to the non-specialist reader. The virtues evoked in reference to military personnel are general

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human virtues. The same can be said on vices. Moreover, the situations presented in the book can be extrapolated so that they cover humans in general.

**Keywords:** professional ethics, military ethics, irregular warfare, ethics education, moral/immoral conduct, ethical/unethical behavior, moral character, dispositional vs. situational ethics

*Irregular warfare* or *asymmetrical warfare* or *operations other than war* are terms that refer to non-conventional warfare, distinct from conventional war. There are several types of irregular warfare among which I enumerate: Counter – insurgency and peace operations. Insurgency means non - state actors acting against the authority of the state in order to change the government. Terrorism and guerrilla warfare may be used as forms of irregular warfare instead of military combats. Terrorism involves illegal violence against the civilian. Guerilla may appear behind the front lines, associated with conventional war (e.g. The Vietnam War). Peace support operations are attempts to rebuild the state system: peacekeeping (a third party force preserves an agreed ceasefire and create conditions for a settlement between the two sides to be formulated), peace building (an attempt to prevent a conflict from resuming by addressing its causes, disarming, demobilizing, training police and armed forces), peacemaking (actions undertaken to bring a conflict to an end, involving either negotiation or force), and peace enforcement (the use of force to impose, maintain, or restore a peace settlement). The boundaries between the various types of irregular warfare are not strictly delimited and they may slip from one into the other and sometimes even into conventional war.

The main issues of the book under review here consider ethical aspects of war with the purpose of answering questions such as how to educate troops to act ethically or how to guide military institutions to respond ethically to difficult situations that may appear in irregular warfare. The book is divided into three parts: a theoretical part on the ethics education for irregular warfare, an applicative part, including an examination of torture, and case studies from Iraq and Israel. A final conclusive part explores how military academies in the USA, UK and Netherlands address the problem of educating military officers for irregular warfare.

Part one, a theoretical background, includes articles on *Preserving Soldiers' Moral Character in Counterinsurgency Operations* (H. R. McMaster), *The Philosophical Warrior* (Alexander Moseley), *Culture Centric Warfare: The Moral Dynamics* (Patrick Mileham). Part two, dedicated to operational issues, is composed of the following articles: *Preventing Torture in Counter – insurgency Operations* (Jessica Wolfendale), *The Fall of the Warrior King: Situational Ethics in Iraq* (Paul Robinson), *Military Ethics of Facing Fellow Citizens: IDF Preparations for Disengagement* (Asa Kasher). Part three, on pedagogical issues, contains the

following articles: *Teaching Military Ethics in the United States Air Force: Challenges Posed by Service Culture* (Martin Cook), *Counter Insurgency Ethics at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst* (Stephen Deakin), *International Law and the Ethics of War at the UK Joint Services Command and Staff College* (David Whetam), *Ethics Education for Operations Other Than War: The Dutch Approach* (Peter Olsthoorn).

The contributors to the volume are: Martin Cook (Professor of Philosophy and Deputy Department Head at the United States Air Force Academy), Stephen Deakin (who has taught at The Royal Military Academy Sandhurst), Asa Kasher (Senior Research Associate of the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) College of National Defense, Vice-Chair of the Jerusalem Centre for Ethics and Emeritus Professor of Philosophy at Tel Aviv University), H.R. McMaster (an officer in the USA army, Doctor in history, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, has taught military history at the United States Military Academy at West Point and is a senior consulting fellow at the International Institute for Strategic Studies), Patrick Mileham (a defence analyst working for the Ministry of Defence), Alexander Mosely (former Lecturer at the University of Evansville, now he runs a private educational company), Peter Olsthoorn (Assistant Professor of Sociology at the Netherlands Defence Academy), Paul Robinson (Associate Professor in Public and International Affairs at the University of Ottawa), David Whetham (works at the Defence Studies Department of King's College London), Jessica Wolfendale (an Australian Research Council Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Centre for Applied Philosophy and Public Ethics at the University of Melbourne).

The theme of the present volume reunites ideas such as: *Education in ethics can help produce ethically better behavior in soldiers*. Soldiers should learn that use of force that reduces risk to the soldier, but places either the mission or innocents at risk is seen as inconsistent with the military's code of honor and professional ethic. Apart from educating soldiers in professional military ethics, they should be prepared to cope with the stress – a factor that may determine bad ethical behavior in irregular warfare. Part of the stress is not only stress generated by danger, but also cultural stress determined by the fact that soldiers are to encounter a different culture. And educating soldiers should consider familiarizing them with the language, history and culture of the region they are to operate in. Also cultural training of soldiers help them properly evaluate sources of information and anticipate potential consequences of their actions, recognize and counter the enemy's misrepresentation of history for propaganda purposes, and develop moral conduct in counterinsurgency operations by generating empathy for the population, this empathy to the population being an effective weapon against insurgents.

The operational issues of the volume consider, above all, preventing torture in counter – insurgency (COIN) operations. Torture in COIN operations is often authorized by military superiors, most often with the support of the political administration, and claimed to be necessary in order to fight terrorism or for successful operation.

Torture is rationalized and justified by different arguments such as the *new wars* argument. The new wars argument stress upon the fact that the COIN operation is like a new war that requires special methods and a different approach against terrorist acts. The rules of war are morally important, but they must be overridden in order to fight a very dangerous enemy. For instance, torture is necessary to force a terrorist to reveal the location of a bomb that will kill thousands – even millions – of innocent people if it is not deactivated. So the new wars argument reveals the resort to torture as not only morally permissible because of the importance of protecting innocent lives, but even morally desirable and even virtuous. However, in COIN operations torture is used mainly as a means of interrogating prisoners that may hide important information concerning acts of terrorism or insurgency.

More than often soldiers engaged in COIN operations have to face situations where the rules of the game named war are being broken: insurgents may hide among the local population, making it hard for soldiers to distinguish the enemies from the civilians, insurgents often use propaganda and lies to get the support of the local population, and they may use tactics such as terrorism, child soldiers, and human shields. Also they may provoke soldiers to break the rules, by their attacks and terrorist tactics. And there is a human tendency that manifests in soldiers as well to give moral standards away, or at least to loosen them when the opponent is not playing by the rules. Therefore it is imperative to cultivate moral restraint among soldiers so that they do not change their moral principles when confronting terrorists and insurgents or when encountering a climate of violence and immorality.

Torture used in COIN operations is justified and normalized by different institutional structures. The normalization of torture is facilitated by the diffusion of responsibility (the division of responsibility within army minimizes the individual's personal moral responsibility and may, consequently, facilitate torture, as individuals can arrive to perform acts that they wouldn't normally perform, if torture is authorized and required by superiors), by the role - orientation (individuals in large hierarchical institutions such as army, in which tasks are divided tend to focus not on the morality of the actions they are carrying out, but on how well they are performing the task assigned to them), and by the obedience to authority (soldiers are expected to obey orders however immoral they might be).

Preventing torture cannot be realized only by training programs. The military should disobey the civilian government if the government authorizes the use of torture. In order to accomplish this, theoretical training of soldiers and practical experiencing should merge. If it is important that soldiers disobey orders such as to throw prisoners into a river, then it would be useful to create scenarios in which soldiers on field exercises are ordered to throw prisoners into a river. Their response can then be determined, lessons learnt and the correct behavior taught.

The values of military ethics are courage, responsibility, discipline, loyalty, integrity, moderation and restraint, and the respect of the human life. A soldier is required to jeopardize his or her own life or that of a subordinate when and only when it is necessary under the circumstances of a special military activity. If soldiers find themselves in circumstances that put their lives at risk because of actions taken by citizens violating the law, they will have to react in exactly the same way as would the police in such circumstances. The whole military mode of operation is going to be special, careful, moderate, and patient. Just as during a confrontation with citizens committing a crime the police do not assault the criminals, soldiers coming to the help of the police do not use their weapons to assault, but act in a restrained and responsible way so as to ensure protection of human life, both their own and others.

Analysis of study cases show that it is not sufficient to work on building the character of the soldier. There are two different sorts of explanations for abusive behavior: the *dispositional ethics*, which considers abusive behavior as the result of failures in personality and by contrast the *situational ethics*. Situational ethics considers that people act according to a certain environment, independently of their character. In most countries, military ethics education focuses on the dispositional approach, as it insists on the development of the character of the soldier. Enrolled officers who sometimes order illegal crimes during war are nothing but ordinary people not at all immoral, and not at all lacking a good character. The environment that they are placed into sometimes forces them to perform abominable deeds (e.g. the case of Colonel Sassaman, described as an intelligent, knowledgeable, and ethical, a good man, who in 2004 ordered his troops the forcing of two Iraqis into the Tigris River; one of the two Iraqis drowned, and the facts were hidden from investigators; finally the deeds were discovered and the guilty ones court - martialed).

Examples prove that the problem resides not in lack of character, but in lack of education, training, and moral leadership. It is imperative to understand that conventional war and guerrilla war are highly different and that they necessitate different moral preparations in both soldiers and their leaders. The credo of the American soldier (the *Warrior ethos*), part of which I will quote here - "I will always place the mission first/ I will never accept

defeat/ I will never quit/ I am disciplined, physically and mentally tough, trained and proficient in my warrior tasks and drills. I will always maintain my arms, my equipment and myself/ I am a guardian of freedom and the American way of life” - does not fit the COIN operations where soldiers are expected to protect somebody else’s way of life, to use minimum force, and accept losses in order to help others. So we may say that Colonel Sassaman acted as if educated for proper war (to do anything to protect his soldiers, to destroy the enemy, and succeed in combat without being defeated) and not for irregular warfare. And this lack of preparation is his main guilt, which is not a real guilt after all. In order to behave properly in irregular warfare, soldiers must be educated and prepared for irregular warfare.

Military academies in many countries have special courses that train the officers - to - become in military ethics, insisting on ideas such as *just war* (bringing as much justice as possible in warfare), together with their consequent ethics (use of minimum force and applying *hearts and minds* policies, meaning that the local community should be won by amiability rather than by force). Some illustrative military academies are chosen for their ways of teaching these ideas, and they are analyzed in the present volume (the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, the UK Joint Services Command and Staff College, the Netherlands Defence Academy).

The book addresses issues of interest for specialists in military ethics, adding an important contribution on irregular warfare situations and proper ethical responses to more regularly discussed topics of conventional war. But it can be also of interest to the non-specialist reader. The virtues evoked in reference to military personnel are general human virtues. The same can be said on vices. Moreover, the situations presented in the book can be extrapolated so that they cover humans in general. Nowadays stress is the main factor of illnesses, dysfunctions, and disorders. And these may lead to unethical behavior. People the most stressed at work have the most immoral conduct: they have affairs with their co-workers, disobey elementary rules of politeness, correctness, and respect to others. This corresponds to the situation of the soldiers having to face COIN operations that stress them by being totally unknown, frightening, and menacing. In order to change the situations, ethics education seems to be the key. This solution also applies to society in general where personnel should be educated to face new situations, such as those created by difficult customers or unpredictable scenarios. It is important that we come to think that some other’s not playing by the rules does not justify our own immoral conduct.

Violence in society can be prevented by educating teenagers against the wrong way education provided by movies and computer games. In schools, practical scenarios should be created so that students may learn the

democratic values that should guide them along the way. However, should any violent act affect us in any way, we must learn that sometimes dispositional ethics cannot offer the best explanation and that we should look for justification further on in situational ethics. If people wrong us, it is not always a sign of their lack of character, but they can be good people acting wrongly because of the environment. This new perspective helps us differently understand the situations that we come across in our everyday life, at work, at school, in public as well as private space. Also we may learn to forgive our friends, colleagues, people who have wronged us in one way or another, because we find out that the fault is not in them but in what happens to them.