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# Humanitarian intervention and human rights

Alkhattab REEM\*

**ABSTRACT.** We are living in the “era of human rights,” with increasing attention to them following the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Humanitarian interventions are mechanisms aimed to protecting human rights and reducing suffering, yet they pose ethical challenges due to the use of lethal force and its resulting harm to civilians.

In this paper I am attempting to answer the question: Does humanitarian intervention enhance human rights or violate them in other ways? Could it be a cover for other goals?

In an attempt to answer this question, the paper discusses the concept of humanitarian intervention and its relation to human rights, along with some conditions for such intervention and the ethical challenges of using lethal force. Finally, the paper presents a case study: Darfur as an example.

**Keywords:** *humanitarian intervention, human rights, Conditions for humanitarian intervention, Violations.*

## 1. Definition of humanitarian intervention

Analyzing the words ‘intervention’ and ‘humanitarian’ may lead us directly, spontaneously and simply to the nature of the term: the word ‘intervention’ means concern for the affairs of others, while ‘humanitarian’ is the description of this act. It stems from concern for the humanity, people, and human rights. Therefore, humanitarian intervention is intervention based primarily on humanitarian foundations.

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Although there are many types of intervention, and this paper addresses only the military intervention, which Eric A. Heinze defines as follows: “the use of military force by a state or group of states in the jurisdiction of another state, without its permission, for the primary purpose of halting or averting egregious abuse of people within that state that is being perpetrated or facilitated by the de facto authorities of that state.”<sup>1</sup> So, military intervention is a type of defense of others. Because it is a defense of the individuals of another country in cases where they are exposed to harm, deprivation of rights, and many other acts of violence by their own country. The primary purpose of humanitarian intervention is to deploy military force to protect individuals whose government is severely violating their rights, either through direct actions or by enabling and allowing extreme abuse.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, the core idea here revolves around humanitarian intervention as a mechanism to protect individuals from severe human rights violations perpetrated; it refers to an international action taken when a government either directly engages in or allows widespread violations of human rights, such as genocide, ethnic cleansing, or systematic oppression. The military force is seen as a last resort to stop these abuses.

Humanitarian intervention is similar to the presence of a building consisting of a group of floors and separate apartments. However, the residents can always hear violent sounds coming from a particular apartment of this building. With the repetition of the situation, it is discovered that the father in this house is always abusing his children, so the neighbors decide to defend these children and to preserve their lives by interfering in the affairs of this house by contacting the police or through other types of intervention with the aim of preserving the lives and dignity of these children.

Having this image in mind and following Anthony F. Lang Jr, we can understand the military intervention as: “the use of military force across national boundaries to alter the internal affairs of a state that has violated international law or other widely recognised international norms”<sup>3</sup>.

Because defending others is a moral virtue, some may call this intervention moral warfare, as Maja Zehfuss says in his book *War and the Politics of Ethics*: “I use

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<sup>1</sup> Heinze, Eric A., *Waging Humanitarian War: The Ethics, Law, and Politics of Humanitarian Intervention*, New York Press, United States of America, 2009, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> See Ibid, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Anthony F. Lang, “Punitive Intervention: Enforcing Justice or Generating Conflict?” in Evans, Mark (ed.), *Just War Theory: A Reappraisal*, Edinburgh University Press, United Kingdom, 2020, p. 50.

the phrase 'ethical war' to sum up the idea that war is pursued in the name of the good. More specifically, 'ethical war' involves the claim that it is at least partly fought for the benefit of people other than the populations of the Western countries at war [...] ethical war is imagined as fought on behalf of others, that is, to protect or liberate people subjected to oppression and human rights abuses."<sup>4</sup>

Accordingly, moral warfare is the war or humanitarian intervention in which the decision to wage is made based on moral and humanitarian foundations, such as preserving the lives and safety of people, enabling human rights, and defending others. From this point of view, it can be said that in specific instances, intervention is deemed essential for humanitarian purposes, aiming to uphold the responsibility of protecting civilians when their state fails to safeguard their fundamental human rights.<sup>5</sup> This means that the purpose of humanitarian intervention is solely ethical (,i.e., the overcoming of sin and the victory of virtue), free from any selfish motives or malicious intent. This is the true humanitarian intervention.

Thus, in brief: humanitarian intervention is one of the attempts to promote human rights and maintain general human security and peace. The same idea is illustrated by Eric A. Heinze: "Human security is a general condition of human dignity and welfare that includes safety from threats originating from both inside and outside the state, threats that are acute and disruptive 'e.g., armed conflict', and threats that are structurally-caused and chronic 'e.g., poverty'."<sup>6</sup> On this basis, acknowledging that the primary issue of intervention is a humanitarian one, and that this intervention must have humanitarian and moral foundations in the first place, Humanitarian intervention is limited and restricted by many conditions to ensure that it is truly humanitarian. Neither every intervention carried out by one state against another state is a humanitarian intervention, nor every war waged under the banner of morality is a moral war. Here arises the question that this paper will attempt to answer: When is humanitarian intervention truly just and humane?

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<sup>4</sup> Zehfuss, Maja, *War and the Politics of Ethics*, Oxford University Press, United States of America, 2018, pp. 10-12.

<sup>5</sup> See *Ibid*, p. 17.

<sup>6</sup> Heinze, Eric A., *Waging Humanitarian War: The Ethics, Law, and Politics of Humanitarian Intervention*, New York Press, United States of America, 2009, p. 38.

## 2. The relationship between human rights and humanitarian intervention

After all the changes and developments that took place in the past decades, all of which worked directly and indirectly to enhance human rights and duties, we can say that we live today in the era of 'human rights', especially since it has become a field through which we can judge any state or institution, or act as right or wrong.

Previous wars and calamities, such as the First and Second World Wars, may have had negative effects but they played a positive role in developing international and humanitarian awareness in general. After the end of World War II, we found in front of us, for example, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the founding of the United Nations and the drafting of the United Nations Charter, along with other human rights organizations. All of them have a very broad scope in that they do not speak to or relate to an individual in particular or a specific country, but rather take all people, individuals and countries as their subject. This may mean that the war taught us a lot, and this is proven by the United Nations, where it is "Famously, the Preamble of the UN Charter begins: 'We the peoples of the United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind'. "<sup>7</sup> and where the "universalist moral ideas are expressed in the Preamble of the UN Charter: 'We the peoples of the United Nations determined to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women'. Significantly, also expressed in the Preamble is a universalist idea of principles regarding the use of armed force: 'We the peoples of the United Nations determined to ensure, by the acceptance of principles and the institution of methods, that armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest'. Frequently, in moral philosophy, the idea of the common interest is a universalist moral idea."<sup>8</sup> Accordingly, there are universal moral principles and ideas that the United Nations works to confirm and consolidate in its Charter, such as: equal rights, living in freedom and dignity, in addition to the right to life, which is one of the most important human rights. Moreover, one of these principles is the necessity of restricting the use of armed force.

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<sup>7</sup> UN Charter apud Lango, John W., *The Ethics of Armed Conflict: A Cosmopolitan Just War Theory*, Edinburgh University Press, United Kingdom, 2014, p. 8.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p. 23.

Here we can move to the concept of humanitarian intervention, which is essentially based on the idea of protecting human rights. It is, in a sense, one of the methods of defending human rights and one of the forms of representing awareness of the problems of others, as

This growing transnational awareness of the plight of another nation's people has in part been the product of the last decade's expansion of human rights as an international rhetoric of demand aimed at governments by citizens and outsiders alike - a rhetoric that is simultaneously elaborated in international human rights treaties. Much of the human rights rhetoric, as well as the content of many international human rights treaties, is a "wish list" that goes far beyond a nation's capacity or political will to fulfill. Even so, new global and international communities are judging national compliance against international human rights standards. The UN, regional systems like the EU and the Inter-American systems, and myriad non-governmental organizations, have both direct and indirect input into human rights issues today.<sup>9</sup>

This excerpt highlights the increasing global consciousness regarding the struggles faced by people in other nations, driven by the growing prominence of human rights discourse over the past decade. This discourse, reflected in international treaties, acts as a framework for holding governments accountable through demands from both their citizens and the global community. However, the excerpt also notes the disparity between the aspirations outlined in these treaties—often described as an ambitious "wish list"—and the limited resources or political will of nations to fully implement them. Despite these challenges, international and regional organizations, such as the UN, the EU, and the Inter-American systems, along with numerous NGOs, play a vital role in shaping and monitoring compliance with human rights standards. Together, these entities contribute to creating a global benchmark for evaluating and addressing human rights practices across nations.

However, simply recognizing human rights from this point of view is not enough. Rather, there must be an application of these rights on the ground. Every project begins with an idea and this idea must end with implementation. But here is the question: What if these rights do not move into implementation? Here, human rights defenders respond by saying: 1. There must be someone to supervise the implementation of these rights and ensure that they are not violated in a particular

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<sup>9</sup> Stacy, Helen, *Intervention, Terrorism, and Torture: Contemporary Challenges to Just War Theory*, in Lee, Steven P. (ed.), Germany: Physica-Verlag, 2007, p. 93.

country or region, and supervision is often carried out by major powers. 2. Just as there is recognition of rights, there is also recognition of the duty to defend these rights. In this regard, Finlay says:

If we have human rights and if they are to have any meaning, then we must in some circumstances of political adversity also have a right to resist. That is, we must also have at least prima facie right to obstruct attempts to violate human rights and a right to remedy the failures particularly of states to fulfil the duties that some human rights entail.

Not only, therefore, is it likely that international actors 'foreign states, the UN, NATO' are burdened with a prima facie duty to try to prevent or remedy human rights abuses from outside the states inflicting them, as many believe, but there is also a right and, sometimes, a duty to try to do so from the inside, on the part of those suffering from unjust rule.<sup>10</sup>

This is a principled recognition of humanitarian intervention as a form of resistance to human rights violations and addressing the failures of states. These are the first and most important justifications for humanitarian intervention, as humanitarian intervention is justified first, last, and primarily on the basis of defending human rights.

The talks regarding human rights may sometimes seem very generic. However, there are various types of rights, some fundamental, some secondary. They may also be divided into: economic, social rights, cultural rights, civil and political rights and so on. The question here is: Are all of these rights in the same sense? do they have the same degree of importance? Certainly, all these rights are equal for all individuals but at the same time they do not have the same importance in all circumstances. For example, the right to life is equal to the right to freedom of movement, and we cannot place all human rights in one place despite the importance of each one of them in and of themselves.

Example: my right to save my property in the face of a thief does not mean that I can kill that thief and infringe on his right to life, while in contrast my right to save myself from death in the face of a serial killer might justify this. In such cases, following Rex Martin, "we need to know what level of rights violations is required for intervention and what the theoretical justification for picking that level is. Martin finds that Walzer and Rawls answer the question of the required level of rights

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<sup>10</sup> Finlay, Christopher J., *Terrorism and the Right to Resist: A Theory of Just Revolutionary War*, Cambridge University Press, United Kingdom, 2015, p. 20.

violations largely by pointing to shared judgments intervention is justified when the rights violations ‘shock the conscience of mankind’, but do not provide theoretical underpinnings for their answers.”<sup>11</sup> This idea emphasizes the importance of determining the threshold of human rights violations necessary to justify humanitarian intervention. Thinkers like Walzer and Rawls address this issue by relying on a shared moral intuition: intervention is justified when rights violations are so severe that they shock the conscience of mankind.

The question required here is: When is humanitarian intervention justified and just? What are the human rights that justify humanitarian intervention? Here we must emphasize that humanitarian intervention is only justified in light of serious and repeated violations of basic human rights. Accordingly, the debates around the turn of the century focused on the responsibility of the international community to respond, including the use of force when necessary, to severe human rights violations classified as crimes against humanity.<sup>12</sup>

This means that humanitarian intervention is limited and restricted, and therefore we must move to another level of discussion, namely the conditions that justify humanitarian intervention. In other words, we may ask: what are the conditions and actions that justify intervention, add humanity to it, and place it in an ethical context?

### 3. Conditions for humanitarian intervention

Every humanitarian action has pros and cons linked to the decision to carry it out or not, and therefore it is necessary to think carefully before undertaking any action, especially if this action is military or related to the decision to use armed force. As these actions have very dangerous consequences and horrific results specific rules, conditions, and limits must be set out.

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<sup>11</sup> Steven P. Lee, in the introduction to *Intervention, Terrorism, and Torture: Contemporary Challenges to Just War Theory*, referencing Rex Martin’s chapter: Walzer and Rawls on Just Wars and Humanitarian Interventions, Germany: Physica-Verlag, 2007, p. 8.

<sup>12</sup> See Sutch, Peter, “Defending Conventionalist Just War Theory in the Face of Twenty-First-Century Warfare” in Steven C. Roach and Amy E. Eckert (eds.), *Moral Responsibility in Twenty-First-Century Warfare: Just War Theory and the Ethical Challenges of Autonomous Weapons Systems*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 2020, p. 2.

Here we try to answer the question: when is humanitarian intervention justified or correct? Or in other words: what are the conditions that give humanitarian intervention its legitimacy and the possibility of carrying it out?

In what follows we will discuss a number of conditions that the intervention must meet in order to be considered a just and legitimate humanitarian intervention.

### **3.1. Seriousness of the threat**

This criterion or condition can be expressed in more than one term: the seriousness of the threat or the just cause or just issue.

In order for the intervention to be legitimate, it must be based on justifications, the most important of which is the existence of a reason for this intervention. As Larry May states, "It is certainly not enough to point to the fact that some of our own citizens' lives will be saved by a given war, or even that those who are innocent in another part of the world will be saved, in order to justify killing lots of soldiers and other civilians."<sup>13</sup> Rather, it must be proven that the issue on which the intervention depends is a major and important issue that deserves this intervention; therefore, the seriousness of the threat can be expressed, according to the United Nations' *Report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change*, by asking the following question: "is the threatened harm to State or human security of a kind, and sufficiently clear and serious, to justify prima facie the use of military force? In the case of internal threats, does it involve genocide and other large-scale killing, ethnic cleansing or serious violations of international humanitarian law, actual or imminently apprehended?"<sup>14</sup> Therefore, humanitarian intervention must be based on reasons related to major risks that deserve us to bear the consequences of this military intervention. Not all human rights violations - as we discussed previously - are at the same level of seriousness, and therefore humanitarian intervention should be limited to extreme cases or dire humanitarian emergencies to prevent causing more harm than good. For this reason, many advocates of humanitarian intervention view imminent genocide as a morally justifiable cause

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<sup>13</sup> May, Larry, *Contingent Pacifism: Revisiting Just War Theory*, Cambridge University Press, United Kingdom, 2015, p. 69.

<sup>14</sup> Report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change (December 2004) apud Lango, John W., *The Ethics of Armed Conflict: A Cosmopolitan Just War Theory*, Edinburgh University Press, United Kingdom, 2014, p. 19.

for military intervention, while excluding intervention for lesser offenses such as political repression or the denial of voting rights. The risks associated with armed conflict are simply too high to warrant the use of force in response to minor or less significant abuses.<sup>15</sup> This means the necessity of establishing limits and restrictions on military humanitarian intervention.<sup>16</sup>

Sometimes the consequences of not intervening at all are greater in some sense than the consequences of intervention, and this is what makes genocide, for example, and ethnic cleansing at the top of the list of legitimate reasons for intervention. This means that intervention must be limited to exceptional cases, only to those that can be called “crimes against humanity.” The list of cases for justified intervention provided by Eric Heinze runs as follows: “genocide, massive war crimes, crimes against humanity, wide- spread torture, ethnic cleansing, forced migration, enslavement, deliberate starvation, or the purposive creation of any other conditions intended to kill or displace large populations.”<sup>17</sup> This means that humanitarian intervention is not limited only to the concepts of genocide, but includes all other causes of death. In other words, it does not include only the direct killing of the population, but there are other acts that are tantamount to indirect killing of the population - that is, not by armed force and weapons - such as starvation and health neglect of the population. The idea as the idea of human security that humanitarian intervention seeks to protect includes many types of structural threats such as famine, disease, violence, poverty, and pollution. Although these threats are considered natural, they may be exploited by the state to engage in greater abuses that harm individuals.<sup>18</sup>

On this basis, Helen Stacy discusses in her paper ‘Humanitarian intervention and relational sovereignty’ that: “humanitarian intervention may also be justifiable for massive cases of letting-die, such as starvation and disease. In other words, national sovereignty cannot shield corrupt or neglectful governments that fail to distribute essential sustenance-food, medical care, and essential services to their

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<sup>15</sup> See Heinze, Eric A., *Waging Humanitarian War: The Ethics, Law, and Politics of Humanitarian Intervention*, New York Press, United States of America, 2009, p. 3.

<sup>16</sup> Although we also believe in the existence of these limits and restrictions for other types of intervention, such as political or economic intervention, these types are not the subject of our research here.

<sup>17</sup> Heinze, Eric A., *Waging Humanitarian War: The Ethics, Law, and Politics of Humanitarian Intervention*, New York Press, United States of America, 2009, p. 56.

<sup>18</sup> See *Ibid*, p. 37.

citizens in exigent circumstances. International morality is invoked not only for the commissions of nation-states, but also for their omissions. My argument is that widespread death by malnutrition or disease should make a government just as culpable as death by civil violence, where the government has the capacity to prevent starvation and disease and fails to do so.”<sup>19</sup> This perspective broadens the traditional understanding of humanitarian intervention by emphasizing that a state’s failure to meet its citizens’ basic needs can be just as harmful as acts of violence, asserting that the international community has a moral obligation to step in when a government neglects its responsibility to protect its population. Stacy’s argument underscores the importance of prioritizing human welfare over political boundaries, suggesting that sovereignty comes with moral accountability. This approach advocates for intervention in cases of systemic neglect, ensuring that all forms of human suffering are addressed with equal urgency.

According to the above, we find that justifying military humanitarian intervention necessarily requires, firstly, proving that such violations as discussed above have occurred and that these violations are widespread. Secondly, it requires proving that this particular party against whom the intervention is being carried out is responsible for the occurrence of these violations.

### **3.2. Proportionality**

We said previously that we must think carefully before performing any action because every action or lack of it has consequences. This is the criterion of proportionality, that is, the necessity of examining both the negative and positive aspects of an action before doing it, and make sure that the percentage of benefit resulting from doing or not doing it will outweigh the percentage of harm.

With regard to humanitarian military intervention, the principle of proportionality can be according to Lango as follows:

“It is morally obligatory not to follow a planned course of military actions, if those that are grievously harmful are not outbalanced by those that are vitally beneficent.”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Stacy, Helen, *Intervention, Terrorism, and Torture: Contemporary Challenges to Just War Theory*, in Lee, Steven P. (ed.), Germany: Physica-Verlag, 2007, p. 90.

<sup>20</sup> Lango, John W., *The Ethics of Armed Conflict: A Cosmopolitan Just War Theory*, Edinburgh University Press, United Kingdom, 2014, p. 182.

Which means that when planning any military action, it is essential to balance the harm that these military actions may cause ‘such as human casualties, material destruction, and environmental damage’ with the benefits that could be achieved ‘such as achieving peace, protecting human rights, or preventing a serious threat’. If the severe harm caused by these military actions is not outweighed or balanced by the vital benefits that will be achieved, then proceeding with the military action is unethical.

The principle of proportionality, as explained above, does not mean not recognizing the existence of risks and consequences resulting from undertaking any military action, but rather it means choosing actions with minimal risks: “the relevant question is not how to eliminate risk but how to make war and armed conflict something that can be conducted within reasonable risk limits.”<sup>21</sup> and this means the necessity of thinking carefully before starting the intervention in the first place, and during military action as well, and knowing well the danger of making any decision, and the duty not to carry out any action unless it has a direct and important benefit and is primarily related to the noble goal of the intervention. For example:

If there is a military mission that it is known will have no bearing on the outcome of the war and will not substantially reduce the harm to just combatants ‘or just non-combatants’, and yet will cause foreseeable, though unintentional, deaths to civilians in the country that is pursuing an unjust cause, then that mission fails the test of proportionality. It doesn’t matter whether 500 tanks will be destroyed in the process and only a single civilian killed. If the destruction of these tanks doesn’t change the war’s outcome or costs, then there can be no justification for killing even one innocent civilian.<sup>22</sup>

Accordingly, every humanitarian intervention must have a greater benefit than the harm that the action in question will cause. Also, this criterion is an indirect recognition that “choices in war are rarely between good and bad, but rather between bad and worse”.<sup>23</sup> In a sense, the criterion proportionality means choosing the bad with good benefits from the worst, which will perhaps lead us to the same benefits, but with greater costs and harm.

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<sup>21</sup> May, Larry, *Contingent Pacifism: Revisiting Just War Theory*, Cambridge University Press, United Kingdom, 2015, p. 175.

<sup>22</sup> Stephen R. Shalom, *Just War Theory*, in Brooks Thom (ed.), Brill, Netherlands, 2012, p. 136.

<sup>23</sup> Zehfuss, Maja, *War and the Politics of Ethics*, Oxford University Press, United States of America, 2018, p. 166.

### 3.3. Last resort

The decision to resort to war and use any military force carries with it long woes and suffering. Therefore, considering that it is the most difficult decision, it must be well ensured that all options have been exhausted before resorting to the option of using armed force meaning that the military solution must truly be the last resort, and this must be unequivocally proven, demonstrating that all other alternatives were thoroughly explored before resorting to it. When evaluating whether going to war is justified, it is sometimes necessary to weigh the reasons for opting for war over alternatives that might cause greater unjust harm, as well as the reasons for choosing war over options that might cause less unjust harm—or no harm at all.<sup>24</sup> Accordingly, military humanitarian intervention as a solution to stop human rights violations must be the last solution assumed and must be preceded by a long list of peaceful solutions that must be resorted to first. This idea is highlighted by Lango when he states: “The last resort principle morally requires that, before resorting to the use of armed force, every reasonable nonviolent action must be attempted”<sup>25</sup>. In other words, the last resort principle emphasizes that the use of armed force should only be considered after all reasonable and nonviolent alternatives have been thoroughly explored and exhausted. This means that morally, one must first attempt peaceful solutions, such as diplomacy, negotiations, sanctions, or other nonviolent measures, before resorting to violence or war. The principle ensures that armed conflict is treated as an absolute last measure, only justifiable when no other option can effectively address the situation.

This principle is evident even in the context of our daily lives. In our problems, we always rely on a general rule: the most harmful solution is necessarily the last solution. For example, I cannot fire an employee from a company as a result of a small or unintentional mistake, or if this mistake was done with good intentions. Rather, I must first talk to this employee and hear his point of view, determining why he made this mistake, and to what extent will this mistake have negative effects. After this, perhaps I may forgive him, or warn him, and then, in another step, I may sanction him in some way, but the solution of expulsion remains the last resort. On this basis, the criterion or condition of last resort -in military intervention- means

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<sup>24</sup> See Draper, Kai, *War and Individual Rights: The Foundations of Just War Theory*, Oxford University Press, United Kingdom, 2016, p. 170.

<sup>25</sup> Lango, John W., *The Ethics of Armed Conflict: A Cosmopolitan Just War Theory*, Edinburgh University Press, United Kingdom, 2014, p. 146.

primarily that before resorting to the use of armed force, one must try to take reasonable non-military measures, as negotiations or mediations, and try hard to ensure that those diplomatic actions end with positive results and a peaceful agreement. However, here a question arises: if peaceful solutions do not work and the diplomatic measures fail to bring any benefit, does this mean the possibility of resorting to a military solution immediately? The answer is a negative one, since, as in our example, there are many measures that can be resorted to before considering a military solution. For example, there are other peaceful measures such as voluntary judicial settlements, and there are also coercive non-military peaceful measures such as economic sanctions. Finally, military measures that authorize the use of armed force are the last and most difficult solutions.<sup>26</sup>

### **3.4. Non-combatant immunity**

One of the most important principles and conditions underlying humanitarian intervention is the principle of civilian immunity. This principle prevents humanitarian intervention from transforming from a defense of the oppressed into a cause of harm to them. It represents a fundamental recognition of the other and their rights. Therefore, in cases of humanitarian intervention, even if the situation is clear and the intentions can be considered good, the interfering party, willing to act upon the oppressor, must pay close attention to the innocents or non-combatants and their rights.

Accordingly, one of the most important conditions and standards for humanitarian intervention is respect for the rights and dignity of these innocent people. As Larry May pointed out, engaging with them can happen only under specific circumstances: “the rights of civilians during war has meant that they can be directly attacked only if it is clear that these civilians pose a threat to other civilians or soldiers.”<sup>27</sup> This means that the interfering forces do not have the right to harm civilians if they are truly innocent, especially if this harm is without justification. It is not possible to intentionally kill a single innocent civilian except with justification or if that would change the course of the entire intervention. This is what John W. Lango points out as follows: “The received noncombatant immunity

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<sup>26</sup> See *Ibid*, pp. 44, 29, 27.

<sup>27</sup> May, Larry, *Contingent Pacifism: Revisiting Just War Theory*, Cambridge University Press, United Kingdom, 2015, p. 95.

principle prohibits harming noncombatants intentionally, but it permits proportionate foreseen but unintended harm to them".<sup>28</sup> In a sense, this is an acknowledgment that using armed force has major consequences, the effects of which may extend to creating harm to innocent civilians, but this harm must be proportional to the good and benefit it must bring. The emphasis is put on the impossibility of killing civilians intentionally, John W. Lango considered this a "very major moral mistake. Since the act of killing is the worst of all unlawful acts, in all societies moral standards prohibit the killing of innocent people, especially if this killing is intentional and unjustified. "<sup>29</sup> This means the necessity of preserving the dignity and rights of innocent people even in the worst circumstances.

In addition to these four criteria that were previously explained "i.e., seriousness of the threat, proportionality, last resort, and immunity for non-combatants," we can mention many other criteria, some of which relate to the decision to initiate military humanitarian intervention, while other relate to how this intervention is practiced, we can say: pertain to the standards and rules governing the conduct of such interventions.

As an example: "In the ICISS Report, there are six criteria for military intervention - namely, principles of 'right authority, just cause, right intention, last resort, proportional means and reasonable prospects.'"<sup>30</sup> All of these principles have a fundamental role in making decisions about humanitarian intervention, and what concerns us here is to prove that every action, in order to be a sound humanitarian action, must be subject to logic and sound rational thinking, and that humanitarian intervention must be subject to restrictions and controls; because the first and most important reason for humanitarian intervention is to improve people's lives and enhance and respect their rights, and this must be the primary goal of intervention.

In addition to the above, it should be noted that some thinkers propose other conditions for just humanitarian intervention. Some of these conditions relate to the party that will intervene and the reasons for such intervention, while other relate to the oppressed party whom the humanitarian intervention is trying to support and protect. Also, there are conditions related to the question:

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<sup>28</sup> Lango, John W., *The Ethics of Armed Conflict: A Cosmopolitan Just War Theory*, Edinburgh University Press, United Kingdom, 2014, p. 20.

<sup>29</sup> See May, Larry, *Contingent Pacifism: Revisiting Just War Theory*, Cambridge University Press, United Kingdom, 2015, p. 81.

<sup>30</sup> ICISS Report apud Lango, John W., *The Ethics of Armed Conflict: A Cosmopolitan Just War Theory*, Edinburgh University Press, United Kingdom, 2014, p. 27.

“What After humanitarian intervention?” That is, it has to do with the long-term goals of the intervention. For example, Helen Stacy suggests three conditions for humanitarian intervention:

- the first, the existence of a real and severe humanitarian crisis, as in cases of genocide, ethnic cleansing, famines and diseases on a large scale, which are caused by an actor;

- the second, a strong consensus among the affected citizens to accept the intervention, or, in other words, the existence of a support from the victims to intervene;

- the third condition, the intervention must achieve good. International intervention should only occur where it is beneficial or at least does not cause greater harm.<sup>31</sup>

Finally, it should be noted that the multiplicity of conditions and standards for military humanitarian intervention does not mean the priority of one over the other, nor does it mean that any of them can be more important than the others. All of these conditions are integrated to justify an intervention.

This means that for example, a just cause alone is not sufficient, because the use of armed force is not morally permissible unless the other conditions are met. Each of these conditions is not sufficient alone, but rather it must be proven that all the other standards of legitimacy are met, as each of these principles is considered a standard morally necessary to determine whether a particular use of armed force to stop genocide would be just.<sup>32</sup>

After talking about some of the conditions for humanitarian intervention, its limitations must be considered. In what follows we will see when such an intervention ends and how its boundaries can be understood.

Unfortunately, there is no clear and strict law that demarcates these borders with the required accuracy in order to guarantee the rights of the state in which an intervention is being undertaken. However, setting these borders is necessary for many reasons, two of which seem to be essential: ensuring the preservation of the sovereignty and independence of a state and ensuring that the humanitarian intervention is based primarily on ethical considerations and does not transform into an aggression aimed at occupying the country and exploiting its resources.

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<sup>31</sup> See Stacy, Helen, *Intervention, Terrorism, and Torture: Contemporary Challenges to Just War Theory*, in Lee, Steven P. (ed.), Germany: Physica-Verlag, 2007, pp. 8, 96, 97, 100.

<sup>32</sup> See Lango, John W., *The Ethics of Armed Conflict: A Cosmopolitan Just War Theory*, Edinburgh University Press, United Kingdom, 2014, pp. 32, 36.

As for the problem regarding the end of an intervention, some opinions suggest that intervention cannot end immediately even if its main goal is achieved 'stopping the massacres, for example', as the intervening state bears the responsibility to complete its moral mission and establish the foundations of peace. In this regard, May L. cites the UN Secretary-General as stating:

Societies which have emerged from conflict have special needs. To avoid a return to conflict while laying a solid foundation for development, emphasis must be placed on critical priorities such as encouraging reconciliation and demonstrating respect for human rights; fostering political inclusiveness and promoting national unity; ensuring the safe, smooth and early repatriation and resettlement of refugees and displaced persons; reintegrating ex-combatants and others into productive society; curtailing the availability of small arms; and mobilizing the domestic and international resources for reconstruction and economic recovery. Each priority is linked to every other, and success will require a concerted and coordinated effort on all fronts.<sup>33</sup>

This report by the Secretary-General highlights the critical and multifaceted approach required for post-conflict peacebuilding. It underscores that societies emerging from conflict face unique challenges that must be addressed holistically to prevent a relapse into violence and to build a sustainable future. Key priorities include fostering reconciliation, protecting human rights, promoting inclusive governance, and ensuring national unity. Additionally, the safe return of displaced individuals, the reintegration of ex-combatants, and the reduction of small arms availability are essential for stability. Success, however, depends on the coordination of domestic and international efforts, emphasizing that these priorities are interconnected and require a unified strategy to achieve long-term peace and development; this means that it is crucial to emphasize that effective intervention cannot merely aim to end violence but must also focus on rebuilding and revitalizing the nation. Intervention should leave the country on a path toward stability, prosperity, and self-sufficiency. This involves addressing the root causes of conflict, promoting inclusive governance, and ensuring economic recovery. Abandoning a country in a state of devastation not only risks a return to violence but also undermines the legitimacy and purpose of the intervention itself. True success lies in helping the affected nation rise stronger, with systems in place to prevent future crises and support sustainable development.

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<sup>33</sup> *Responsibility to Protect: Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty* apud May, Larry, *Contingent Pacifism: Revisiting Just War Theory*, Cambridge University Press, United Kingdom, 2015, p. 179.

#### 4. Consequences of humanitarian intervention

Despite the noble goal of humanitarian intervention, this does not prevent military humanitarian intervention from resulting in consequences that may be disastrous at times. On the other hand, military intervention - which depends primarily on allowing the use of armed force - despite all its conditions and restrictions imposed on it, remains an unlikely solution. It is undesirable for many reasons, the most important of which is the moral contradiction that this intervention carries. On the one hand, it aims to protect human rights and honor human life, but on the other hand, it may cause the killing of these people and sometimes their displacement from their homes, as well as the destruction of public and private property alike. In what follows we will discuss a number of consequences, outcomes, dilemmas or ethical problems of humanitarian intervention.

Indeed, there are many conditions that would like to be practiced by professionals with experience and draw its boundaries, as we discussed previously, and that try as much as possible to put this within a primarily professional framework. However, we must acknowledge according to Kai Draper that military conflicts and human rights do not make a great team:

There is an obvious tension here, for even the most discriminate of war efforts predictably kill many innocent bystanders as ‘collateral damage’, and presumably most if not all innocent bystanders have a right not to be killed. It is tempting, therefore, to attribute inconsistency and perhaps even hypocrisy to those who support war and yet demand respect for individual rights.

Briefly: even the noblest of liberation war efforts will infringe upon the rights of some innocent bystanders.<sup>34</sup>

The matter does not stop only at violating the rights of innocent bystanders and sometimes even taking their lives, but the matter extends culturally, environmentally, health-wise and socially. It is self-evident that the use of military force kills, maims and destroys people’s lives, and causes unimaginable suffering, even when it is in accordance with the rules of the just war. Secondary, the use of military force includes the destruction of private and public property, the disruption of economic

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<sup>34</sup> Draper, Kai, *War and Individual Rights: The Foundations of Just War Theory*, Oxford University Press, United Kingdom, 2016, pp. 1, 164.

activity and the draining of health care resources.<sup>35</sup> All of the above are basic features of armed conflicts and wars. War can only bring human, social and economic destruction, whether intentionally, recklessly, negligently, or as a side effect and nothing more.

All of what was mentioned above can be classified as direct effects of armed conflicts, but as for what can be classified as indirect effects, Eric A. Heinze points out “a broad range of adverse effects. For example, refugee flows force people into crowded conditions without access to clean water and create conditions for infectious disease; crime and homicide rates rise during wars and often remain so for some time afterward.”<sup>36</sup> Consequently, wars have violent and harmful effects that extend beyond the end of these wars, as psychological crises remain entrenched in the minds and feelings of the people who lived through them, fear remains dominant in the lives of the children involved these countries, and economic crises remain for many years without a solution. This means that future generations will live in poverty and extreme hunger. Although this is not a crisis of killing and genocide, it is a war of a different kind, a war of survival and terrible pain. Michael Walzer further develops on this point:

A successful and extended intervention brings benefits of an important kind: not only gratitude and friendship, but an increment of peace and stability in a world where the insufficiency of both is costly- and not only to its immediate victims. Still, any particular country will always have good reasons to refuse to bear the costs of these benefits; or it will take on the burden, and then find reasons to perform badly. So, we still need justice’s critical edge.

The argument about endings is similar to the argument about risk: once we have acted in ways that have significant negative consequences for other people (even if there are also positive consequences), we cannot just walk away. Imagine a humanitarian intervention that ends with the massacres stopped and the murderous regime overthrown; but the country is devastated, the economy in ruins, the people hungry and afraid; there is neither law nor order nor any effective authority<sup>37</sup>.

Walzer here draws a parallel between the arguments about risk and the aftermath of interventions. He asserts that when a country intervenes and its actions cause substantial negative consequences for others, it bears an ongoing

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<sup>35</sup> See Heinze, Eric A., *Waging Humanitarian War: The Ethics, Law, and Politics of Humanitarian Intervention*, New York Press, United States of America, 2009, p. 42.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, p. 42.

<sup>37</sup> Walzer, Michael, *Arguing About War*, Yale University Press, United States of America, 2004, p. 20.

moral responsibility. Simply walking away after achieving initial goals, such as stopping massacres or toppling a tyrannical regime, is not enough. Without ensuring the country's recovery—restoring law and order, rebuilding the economy, and addressing the people's basic needs—the intervention risks leaving the affected nation in a worse state than before; leaving a nation in chaos after intervention undermines the very purpose of humanitarian action and risks further instability. This perspective challenges intervening powers to balance their moral obligations with practical execution, ensuring that interventions truly serve the interests of the people they aim to help.

Violence, as Sjoberg suggests, is a continuum rather than a delineable entity, and that there is no nonviolent alternative to violence, emphasizing that there is no end to this violence. According to Sjoberg “even in well-known and well-documented set of conflicts the question of whether it is possible to declare a start point and an end point is not easily answered. ‘Beginnings’ have lead-ups, ‘ends’ have follow-ups, and those do not extend to days or weeks but to months, years, and even decades.”<sup>38</sup> Although there are standards, conditions and restrictions for humanitarian intervention, and although these standards are attempts to reduce and eliminate violence, they create violence of a different kind. In other words, according to the same author, “even if just war theorizing is rigorously applied and treated as strict limitations, it does authorize the practice of violence when/if all the standards are met. Even though that violence might well be ‘better’ violence than violence that does not meet those criteria, it is violence nonetheless.”<sup>39</sup> This is what drives some, like Maja, to reject what might be called ‘moral war’, meaning wars of humanitarian intervention, since, from his point of view, these wars put us in a war that seems to have no end and no escape. This means that a moral war is a war that make the human ideals a major element in justifying contemporary violence; moral war kills and destroys like any other war and therefore the idea that morality can tame war is a dangerous illusion.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> See Sjoberg, Laura, “The Fantasy of Nonviolence and the End (?) of Just War” in Steven C. Roach and Amy E. Eckert (eds.), *Moral Responsibility in Twenty-First-Century Warfare: Just War Theory and the Ethical Challenges of Autonomous Weapons Systems*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 2020, p. 50.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, p. 64.

<sup>40</sup> See Zehfuss, Maja, *War and the Politics of Ethics*, Oxford University Press, United States of America, 2018, pp. 3, 45, 180.

The main reason for thinking this way and rejecting these wars lies in the moral paradox that themselves produce: they risk the lives of those people whom they were primarily launched to protect, in addition to the destruction and tragedies that they can cause. For these same reasons, the standard of 'last resort' was established. Which is one of the most important conditions for waging humanitarian wars. For example, we rely on preventing the disease before first contracting it, but after contracting it, we initially choose those medications with occasional or mild side effects, meaning we always start with those low-cost solutions.

Finally, following Eric A. Heinze, it can be said that the humanitarian intervention poses a complex moral dilemma and requires ethical evaluation for at least two reasons. On the one hand, by employing military force, it is effectively akin to war, which negatively impacts international stability, results in loss of life, and leads to inevitable suffering. Moral arguments of this nature suggest that humanity is best served by minimizing such wars. On the other hand, such an intervention may be morally justifiable if it is the only means to protect innocent individuals from severe mistreatment by oppressive regimes. While one stance seeks to prevent what the other advocates for, both positions are inherently rooted in moral reasoning, as both regard human life as the fundamental value to be preserved.<sup>41</sup>

## 5. Case study: Darfur crisis

After discussing the paradoxical nature of humanitarian interventions, in what follows we will try to provide a brief overview of the Darfur crisis.<sup>42</sup>

Darfur in Sudan is suffering from an armed conflict that began in February 2003 and until now, despite the efforts made internationally to resolve this conflict, it still exists. The main reason for this conflict can be attributed to several factors as inter-communal violence, the discriminatory and unjust economical practices of the Sudanese government directed against Darfur, and the existence of accusations

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<sup>41</sup> See Heinze, Eric A., *Waging Humanitarian War: The Ethics, Law, and Politics of Humanitarian Intervention*, New York Press, United States of America, 2009, p. 15.

<sup>42</sup> This paragraph synthesizes ideas and arguments discussed in Damboeck, Johanna, "Humanitarian Interventions: Western Imperialism or a Responsibility to Protect? An Analysis of the Humanitarian Interventions in Darfur", in *Multicultural Education & Technology Journal*, Vol. 6, No. 4, 2012, pp. 287–300. and Bellamy, Alex J., and Paul D. Williams, "The UN Security Council and the Question of Humanitarian Intervention in Darfur", in *Journal of Military Ethics*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 2006, pp. 144–160.

directed against the same government for persecuting the non-Arab population,, Accusing the government of persecuting the non-Arab population in addition to the existence of poverty and other shortcomings. These factors amounted to the emergence of two rebel groups in Darfur, the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM). They launched attacks against government military installations while the government responded by militarizing the Popular Defense Forces (PDF) 'Janjaweed', military body known for its extraordinary ferocity.

Since conflict resulted in a huge number of victims, and attempts for international interventions began by means of consultations and negotiations. The principle of just cause as intervention was not undertaken until it was confirmed that this conflict was increasing in its violence. Moreover, the principle of last resort was observed, as we find many attempts to resolve the conflict peacefully: the international community started to react by sending the UN Commission on human rights to Darfur to report on the situation. The main conclusion was: 'it is clear that there is a reign of terror in Darfur' Since then, the Security Council was divided into two blocks: the first (United States, United Kingdom, and France) supports the intervention and the second (Pakistan, China, and Russia) considers that the situation was not serious enough for a humanitarian reaction of the international community.

Over the years, the Security Council has held many meetings to study the situation in Darfur, and as a result we find several resolutions, including *Resolution 1556*, demanding the government of Sudan to demilitarize the Janjaweed and to bring justice to the leaders of the inhuman regime.

*Resolution 1564* called for an expanded presence of the African Union (AU) and reiterated demands for all parties to adhere to the ceasefire. However, shortly after its adoption, the situation in Darfur worsened, making the extended AMIS (African Union Mission in Sudan) mission unsuccessful. This necessitated broader action, leading to the issuance of *Resolution 1590*, which aimed to establish UNMIS (United Nations Mission in Sudan) in Darfur. As part of this effort, 10,000 military personnel and a civil component of 3,000 were deployed to support AMIS.

In July 2007, *Resolution 1769* established UNAMID (United Nations–African Union Mission in Darfur), which proved to be more effective than previous missions. UNAMID significantly improved the humanitarian conditions in Darfur. By this point,

there was widespread acknowledgment that genocide had occurred in Darfur, reinforcing the urgent need to restore peace and stability in the region.<sup>43</sup>

Since then, the Security Council has been trying to send peacekeeping missions to protect civilians in Darfur and facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid by UN agencies and international relief organizations, as without this support thousands of people would die.

According to Alex. J. Bellamy, on March 31, 2005, the council made a historic decision by referring the Darfur case to the International Criminal Court (ICC). It is important to mention that within the Security Council about Darfur crisis, the commission insisted that military intervention should be considered if two just cause thresholds—large-scale loss of life and ethnic cleansing—and four precautionary principles—right intention, last resort, proportional means, and reasonable prospects—were met.<sup>44</sup>

Despite all of the above, we must acknowledge that all of this was not enough to stop the conflict, but the fighting was renewed, and Darfur became a humanitarian disaster and a human rights crisis.

In August 2023, International IDEA (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance) hosted a democratic and transparent dialogue on Darfur, Sudan, bringing together academics, experts, civil society activists, and youth groups from the Darfuri diaspora. The event, titled ‘From the Horrors of War to the Bliss of Peace, Coexistence, and Stability,’ took place in Kampala, Uganda, from the 28th to the 30th of August. The dialogue emphasized the importance of promoting peaceful coexistence in Darfur through negotiated discussions, identifying key conflict issues, and establishing mechanisms to ensure human security.

Peacemaking mechanisms were also discussed, and many suggestions were put forward, such as:

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<sup>43</sup> This paragraph synthesizes ideas and arguments discussed in both Damboeck, Johanna, “Humanitarian Interventions: Western Imperialism or a Responsibility to Protect? An Analysis of the Humanitarian Interventions in Darfur”, in *Multicultural Education & Technology Journal*, Vol. 6, No. 4, 2012, pp. 287–300. and Bellamy, Alex J., and Paul D. Williams, “The UN Security Council and the Question of Humanitarian Intervention in Darfur”, in *Journal of Military Ethics*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 2006, pp. 144–160.

<sup>44</sup> See Bellamy, Alex J., “Responsibility to Protect or Trojan Horse? The Crisis in Darfur and Humanitarian Intervention after Iraq”, in *Cambridge University Press: Ethics & International Affairs*, Vol. 19, Issue 2, 2005, pp. 31-54.

- Supporting peacebuilding efforts in Sudan in a collaborative international partnership involving the entire global community, including regional and international organizations. The peacebuilding process would be kept free from international rivalry and polarization to ensure its effectiveness.

- Showing that atrocities often start with words, such as hate speech and dehumanizing language, local communities and civil society organizations (CSOs) expected to address intercommunal hatred, thereby playing a vital role in preventing atrocities.

- The involvement of women and young people, along with gender and youth analysis for enhancing the inclusivity of initiatives.<sup>45</sup>

The intervention in Darfur did not rise to the level of military intervention, as all the missions that were sent were peacekeeping missions and not explicit military missions. Therefore, we can say that this intervention remained within the framework of moderate intervention.

Referring to the conditions for humanitarian intervention, we can notice the extent of the Security Council's commitment in its intervention in Darfur. The Security Council's resolutions on Darfur were not put forward until it was confirmed that the situation in Darfur is critical, as the missions proved the existence of a violation of human rights along with cases of genocide and injustice. Those were related to the seriousness of the threat. Moreover, these decisions were always trying to create a state of proportionality, so that the severity of each decision changed from the decisions that preceded it, due to several reasons: firstly, the worsening of the humanitarian situation, and secondly, the parties to the conflict did not adhere to the decision, so the subsequent decision came in more severe language to make it proportionate to the situation. Not resorting to a military solution is one of the indications of the need for military intervention to be the last decision and the last resort to resolve the conflict, as until now, as we noted in the dialogue that organized by International IDEA the peaceful solution was present. All Security Council resolutions included the necessity of establishing the rules of peace between warring parties through negotiation, consultation, and concluding peace agreements or treaties.

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<sup>45</sup> See Saeed, Sami, *Darfur Dialogue: From War to Peace, Coexistence and Stability*, Organized by International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, Kampala, Uganda, 28–30 August 2023.

In brief, the transition from the stage of peaceful intervention to military intervention is a dangerous step and it should not be taken except within certain conditions and limits that no one can exceed.

## **7. Conclusion**

In general, humanitarian intervention is a political concept that carries the characteristic of humanity and altruism. It was created in an attempt to consolidate cooperation between countries with the aim of preventing or alleviating human suffering in the targeted country. Military intervention is one of the attempts to impose peace using force, and it is the highest level of intervention. Since it is a military action, it raises many problematics in international law and in international and humanitarian relations. Because of the seriousness of this intervention, it has several conditions; it is only legitimate when these conditions are met. It also requires the approval of the Security Council to ensure the right intention and neutrality in this intervention.

Despite the declared noble goal of the intervention, it carries many humanitarian and moral problematics, such as harming civilians, creating long-term instability, etc...

Finally, we may say that every problematic situation has two sides and we must set limits for each type of action. Accordingly, we must set conditions for humanitarian intervention, since even though it supports human rights, it has very wide effects on innocent people who may be affected by the consequence of such an intervention.

On the one hand, humanitarian intervention is a type of humanitarian altruism, moral cooperation, and an act of caring for others; however, on the other hand, it may turn into the opposite if it includes bad intentions or transgressions of the imposed limits, such as attacking civilians or trying to turn this humanitarian intervention into aggression and occupation of state lands.

In order for humanitarian intervention to promote human rights, it must be truly a humanitarian intervention, i.e., it must have clear limits and conditions. It must also be Integrative, meaning that there must be a subsequent economic, psychological or a humanitarian intervention of another kind, following the military humanitarian intervention.

In short, determining whether the risks of war or humanitarian intervention are justified or worth depends on the scale and severity of the human suffering in question.

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# Unraveling the self: How postmodern philosophy reshaped the narrative of personal identity

Diana MIHEȘ\*

**ABSTRACT.** This paper examines the philosophies of Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, and Judith Butler, focusing on their insights into identity and individualism. While self-help literature often advocates fixed identities, this study argues for an alternative: existence as constant transformation, challenging stagnation in personal growth. Using a materialist lens, it explores identity through interactions of internal and external experiences with power dynamics. Postmodernists collectively highlight the self's fluidity and its perpetual evolution. The goal is to assess their influence on understanding the self and explore implications for future narratives on identity.

**Keywords:** *identity, body, becoming, performativity.*

## Introduction

My recent research aims to reveal contemporary mechanisms of control, resistance, and survival. In this effort to understand complex relationships, I have become aware that no research can be started without some definition of the individual. This obsessive issue of the individual does not claim any innovation; on the contrary, it is highly visible how it becomes more and more prominent in contemporary

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society due to oppressive capitalist systems that want to intentionally shift the focus on the problem of the individual, of self-accountability, taking away the importance of the institutions, of the systemic issues, and painting an image of the ultra-potent self, that is always alone and fully functional in its own singularity.

In contemporary times, there has been a growing trend towards embracing self-belief and our authentic selves. Therapy encourages us to give ourselves the upmost importance, as do self-help books, movies, modern social sciences, and other similar sources. The discourse on revolution has shifted its focus from collective societal actions to individual capabilities. Unfortunately, this mindset originates from the assumption that we have a fixed and unchangeable identity. It suggests that we can discover our true selves by pursuing external achievements, such as climbing mountains, changing jobs, or adopting a more positive mindset. In his book *The Burnout Society*, Byung-Chul Han argues that

Today's society is no longer Foucault's disciplinary world of hospitals, madhouses, prisons, barracks, and factories. It has long been replaced by another regime, namely a society of fitness studios, office towers, banks, airports, shopping malls, and genetic laboratories. Twenty-first-century society is no longer a disciplinary society, but rather an achievement society [Leistungsgesellschaft]. Also, its inhabitants are no longer "obedience-subjects" but "achievement-subjects." They are entrepreneurs themselves.<sup>1</sup>

which only highlights the way in which our toxic cult of the self, where we are the own gods of our existence and no external factor can overcome that, makes us the slaves of our own existence. The existence of your current state implies that you are obligated to exert greater effort, refrain from idleness, and consistently recover from setbacks, regardless of the circumstances, as it is perpetually your own culpability and obligation.

This essay aims to refute the widely held notion that one's identity is solely self-determined. Instead, it presents postmodern perspectives that argue that one's identity is a social construct shaped by external influences. It emphasizes the importance of self-awareness and recognizing that our identities are not fixed but rather an ongoing process of development. Without appealing to the sources of classical philosophy, this paper aims to understand the identity crisis and to demonstrate the need to redefine identity on an ontological level. This paper will first examine the conceptual

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<sup>1</sup> Han, Byung-Chul. *The burnout society*. Stanford University Press, 2015, pp. 8.

framework, beginning with Jean-Paul Sartre and Friedrich Nietzsche in the twentieth century, followed by postmodernist perspectives. Next, I will analyze Michel Foucault's insights on medicalization and its implications for the body, considering the influence of power dynamics. Subsequently, I will incorporate a Deleuzian perspective and conclude with Judith Butler's contemporary interpretation of Foucault, elucidating her rationale and perspective.

## Understanding the postmodern framework

And yet, although this is not a historical work, we will resort to a genealogical method in unraveling the hegemony behind the cult of individuality. Thus, a key point in the effort of mapping this phenomenon is represented by the emergence of existentialism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which marked a crucial moment in philosophical discourse, proposing a profound reconsideration of the nature of human existence and identity.<sup>2</sup> At the heart of this philosophical revolution was a fundamental question: *is identity something fixed, immutable, and predetermined, or is it a dynamic, evolving process of becoming?*

Among the notorious existentialists, Friedrich Nietzsche and Jean-Paul Sartre are the ones who dared to confront conventional notions of identity directly.<sup>3</sup> This has paved the way for the future postmodern perspective we will talk about. Firstly, Nietzsche, in his philosophical work *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, shattered the prevailing belief in fixed identity, proclaiming the death of God: "And lately, did I hear him say these words: "God is dead: of his pity for man hath God died"<sup>4</sup> and advocating the emergence of *the Übermensch*<sup>5</sup>—a being freed from the shackles of traditional Christian morality and able to shape its own morality. For Nietzsche, identity is not a fixed structure from the exterior but a dynamic process of self-actualization and continuous transformation. Similarly, Jean-Paul Sartre, in his seminal text *Existentialism is a Humanism*, challenged the idea of a pre-existing fixed identity,

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<sup>2</sup> Bakewell, Sarah. *At the Existentialist Café: Freedom, Being, and Apricot Cocktails with Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Albert Camus, Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Others*. Other Press, LLC, 2016, pp. 8-12.

<sup>3</sup> Gold, Greyson. "Meaning, Morality, and the Good: Articulating the Self through Nietzsche, Sartre, Taylor, and Murdoch." PhD dissertation, 2023, pp 10-30.

<sup>4</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, New York: Modern Library, 1995, pp. 96.

<sup>5</sup> Idem.

stating that “For if indeed existence precedes essence, one will never be able to explain one’s action by reference to a given and specific human nature; in other words, there is no determinism—man is free, man is freedom”.<sup>6</sup> Rejecting any predetermined essence or teleological purpose of human existence means for Sartre, that individuals are thrust into a world deprived of any inherent meaning and are thus free to define themselves by their actions and choices. So, to sum it up, according to Sartre’s existentialist framework, identity is not a given but a perpetual project, shaped and reshaped by the continuous flow of lived experience.

While Nietzsche and Sartre’s existentialist investigations revealed the limits of fixed identity, their insights paved the way for a broader examination of the self in later philosophical thought. Postmodern philosophy, which gained prominence in the mid-to-late 20th century, has frequently critically examined and rejected the concepts of essentialism, universality, and the fixed nature of identity that have traditionally been fundamental to modern Western philosophy. This also meant going against other types of philosophy, such as psychoanalysis and metaphysics. The postmodern approach is distinguished by its skepticism towards grand narratives or meta-narratives that claim to universally structure and elucidate knowledge and reality, as expressed by Jean-François Lyotard.<sup>7</sup>

Postmodern philosophers such as Jacques Derrida have questioned the notion of a fixed and stable identity, emphasizing the instability and inconsistency of language and signs. Derrida’s notion of *différance* argues that meanings are not fixed, but rather vary and defer from each other, implying that identity is never fully present or singular but is always in relation to other identities and meanings<sup>8</sup>. This perspective argues that individual identities are malleable, constantly evolving, and shaped by language and cultural circumstances rather than being predestined. He argues against the existence of a *secret self* by stating:

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<sup>6</sup> Kaufmann, Walter. *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*. Pickle Partners Publishing, 2016, pp. 287-310.

(Jean-Paul Sartre, 1946, *Existentialism Is a Humanism*)

Can also be found: <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/sartre/works/exist/sartre.html#idem..>

<sup>7</sup> Lyotard, Jean-François. “The Postmodern Condition,” in *The Postmodern Turn: New Perspectives on Modern Theory*, 27-38. 1994.

<sup>8</sup> Derrida, Jacques. “Différance.” In *Margins of Philosophy*, translated by Alan Bass, University of Chicago Press, 1982, pp. 1–27.

How can another see into me, into my most secret self, without my being able to see in there myself and without my being able to see him in me? And I (my secret self, that which can be revealed only to the other, to the wholly other, to God if you wish, is a secret that I will never reflect on, that I will never know or experience or possess as my own, then what sense is there in saying that it is "my" secret, or in saying more generally that a secret belongs, that it is proper to or belongs to some "one," or to some other who remains someone? It is perhaps there that we find the secret of secrecy, namely, that it is not a matter of knowing and that it is there for no-one. A secret doesn't belong, it can never be said to be at home or in its place [chez soi].<sup>9</sup>

What this statement proves to us, apart from his viewpoint on secrecy and the fact that it transcends the individual if we go deeper into the argument, is that he did not see this *self* as accessible, as a given, or even as something we should ever be certain of, as we cannot check it. It also shows the *other* as the one that is able to recognize or acknowledge the self, as a mere truth revealing contingencies and need for the self to be reaffirmed through the other, confirming once again the theory according to which our hyper-individualized bodies need the others, the system if we may, and so it is dependent on it.

Postmodernists oppose essentialism, which is the belief that entities possess a fixed set of attributes that are essential to their identity and function.<sup>10</sup> Philosophers such as Michel Foucault and Judith Butler have played a crucial role in this analysis, particularly in relation to gender and sexuality. Foucault's examination of how discursive practices influence and generate individuals within particular historical and cultural contexts implies that identity is a type of social fabrication that can be altered. Butler's theory of gender performativity<sup>11</sup> suggests that gender is not an inherent characteristic but rather a series of actions and expressions that are shaped by societal expectations. These theories will be discussed extensively later in this paper.

Discussions of identities are not purely neutral or descriptive but rather strongly influenced by power dynamics that seek to regulate and control. Foucault's concepts of power and knowledge elucidate that power is not simply a force exerted

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<sup>9</sup> Derrida, J. *The gift of death ; and, literature in secret*, 2008, p. 92.

<sup>10</sup> Ashley, David. "Postmodernism and Antifoundationalism." In *Postmodernism and social inquiry*, Routledge, 2015, pp. 53-75.

<sup>11</sup> For more information about what performativity means for Butler see *Gender Trouble*, 1990, Routledge, Preface, passim..

by a higher authority but rather a pervasive element that shapes the fundamental nature of identities through processes of knowledge generation and communication. As I shall demonstrate, postmodernist perspectives emphasize the influence of language, power, and knowledge on the formation of identity narratives, highlighting the political aspect of personal identity construction.

### **Foucault: a genealogical approach in the era of medicalization**

Foucault explores the same themes we find in Nietzsche's work regarding the idea that humans are in a state of collective historical transformation. Human nature is thus not fixed but shaped by historical circumstances, power dynamics, and pervasive inequalities. In his article *Nietzsche, genealogy, history*, Foucault discusses his approach as a genealogical method. According to Foucault, genealogy is the process of revealing the origins of contemporary thought.<sup>12</sup> In order to fully understand these, it is imperative to engage in the study of history; however, mere historical analysis is not enough because, to fully understand history, it is necessary to carefully examine the specific complexities and points of contingency that coincide with the emergence of a particular idea or way of life.<sup>13</sup> Thus, it is at least as important to examine the circumstances of ordinary people as it is to focus on the governing authorities of a particular era. Genealogy does not, however, involve searching for origins through questions such as: *Where did the concept of capitalism come from?* Instead, it focuses on understanding the complex and gradual development of things before they are even aware of their own development.

Foucault asserts that the basic truth about things is that they lack any essence; thus, coinciding with one of Sartre's main points, whom I mentioned in the introduction, *existence precedes essence*, and due to the existence of the body on which relations are prescribed as it develops, objects have no singular source.<sup>14</sup> Concepts, values, institutions, societies and configurations all emerge in a complex and somewhat disorganized manner. Foucault's interest lies in demonstrating the diverse nature of existing institutions and the diversity of what has been conceived as intrinsically coherent outside of a relationship. Similar to Nietzsche, Foucault

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<sup>12</sup> Foucault, Michel. 1977. "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History.", pp. 150-153.

<sup>13</sup> Idem, pp. 139.

<sup>14</sup> Idem, pp. 142-143.

challenges the notion of a historical perspective existing outside of history. In his article, the author discusses the concept of actual history, arguing that it encompasses all aspects of development and includes all that is considered immortal or transcendent. Everything, including emotions and physical bodies, has a historical context.<sup>15</sup> Genealogy attempts to uncover the hidden narratives of entities that may seem to lack historical records.

But we cannot only dwell on the influence of existentialism, Foucault was among the few openly homosexual philosophers of his time<sup>16</sup>. However, he takes a rather negative view of the gay liberation movement that took place during the period in which he wrote. One reason for this is that such a movement claims that individuals possess an inherent and unchanging identity that should be celebrated.

In this context, homosexuality is appropriated by what we can call in Deleuze's texts the *body without organs (BwO)*<sup>17</sup>, by that we mean a machine of such vast dimensions that it can control and appropriate any culture, because once fixed, identity is subject to power dynamics. Such an approach could take away from the potential of genealogy by putting all kinds of sexuality into pre-established sexual categories. Instead, genealogy does not operate in predetermined patterns but emphasizes the importance of recognizing discontinuity, change and unexpected transformations.

## What is the body?

But as we have opened a new theoretical lane, we note that we cannot embark on the discovery of personal identity without an analysis of the *body*. Gilles Deleuze, together with Félix Guattari, introduced the notion of the *body without organs* in their influential publication *Anti-Oedipus* and later extended it in *Thousands of Plateaus*<sup>18</sup>. This body without organs is not a static or predetermined entity but rather a space of possibility, a virtual plane of existence in which desire can flow

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<sup>15</sup> Idem, pp. 139-164, *passim*.

<sup>16</sup> Michel Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984, Vol. 1, edited by Paul Rabinow (New York: The New Press, 1998), 135–155.

<sup>17</sup> First introduced in Deleuze, Gilles, and Guattari, Felix, 1983. *Anti-Oedipus, Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, pp. 8 while talking about Desiring Machines.

<sup>18</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia II*, Bloomsbury Academic, 2013.

without being constrained by the limitations of structure and organisation.<sup>19</sup> As a response to the abstract concept of the body in metaphysics and of the unconscious in psychoanalysis, Deleuze and Guattari propose this theory that materialistically encapsulates the given theme and closes the issue of the metaphysics of the body. They argue that conscious and unconscious fantasies reveal potential forms and functions of the body that require liberation. They also suggested using biology, especially the body's homeostatic process, which maintains stability, is constrained by its organization and especially its organs, which can be interpreted as conditioning the being to be a certain way according to *the code* assigned through experience. The concept of BwO (body without organs) in Deleuze's philosophy thus intersects with Foucault's examination of the body, particularly in their mutual focus on the physical aspects of power and resistance. Foucault's examination of disciplinary techniques and biopolitical regimes highlights how power manifests itself on and within the body, controlling its actions, behaviours and aspirations. Through the implementation of surveillance, normalization and medicalization, individuals are subjected to systems of bodily control that generate certain kinds of subjectivity while suppressing any alternative ways of expression.<sup>20</sup> However, Foucault recognizes the potential of the body to resist and defy the disciplinary systems imposed upon it, perceiving it as potentially a space of rebellion and subversion. In his later works, such as *The History of Sexuality* and *The Courage of Truth*<sup>21</sup>, Foucault examines the ways in which individuals engage in self-governance as a means of resisting power structures.<sup>22</sup> Through the process of regaining control over their own bodies and developing ethical practices to shape themselves, individuals challenge the established norms that dictate their identities and assert their independence in the presence of controlling influences.

Foucault's analysis provides a nuanced understanding of how the gay movement has responded to these perspectives that view homosexuality through

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<sup>19</sup> see Deleuze, Gilles. "Lecture 03/12: Body without Organs." Purdue University Deleuze Seminars. Accessed 02.11.2024. [https://deleuze.cla.purdue.edu/lecture/lecture-03-12/#\\_ednref6](https://deleuze.cla.purdue.edu/lecture/lecture-03-12/#_ednref6).

<sup>20</sup> These ideas are mainly discussed in Foucault, Michel. 1995. *Discipline and punish The Birth of the Prison*, but also many courses such as lectures at the State University of Rio de Janeiro where he firstly mentioned biopolitics.

<sup>21</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Courage of Truth*, Springer, 2011.

<sup>22</sup> Idea that he especially highlights by introducing the concept of parrhesia (or truth-telling) in Michel Foucault, Edited by Frédéric Gros; Translated by Graham Burchell., *The Government of Self and Others: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1982-1983*, which is best described from pp 42-68 as a way of living, and better described starting at pp. 74 with a political approach to parrhesia.

a medical lens.<sup>23</sup> The medicalization<sup>24</sup> of homosexuality recognized it as a fundamental aspect of a person's identity, rather than a temporary behavior. This unintentionally created the conditions for the creation of a collective sense of community, which served as a focal point for the mobilization of the gay rights movement. From this perspective, the term „pathological label“<sup>25</sup>, despite its oppressive and stigmatizing nature, played a role in the formation of a political identity and community among individuals who were given this label. The platform has served as a common ground for resistance, allowing the gay movement to challenge negative perceptions and promote alternative visions of identity. However, Foucault was wary of the movement's occasional reliance on scientific discourse that initially labeled homosexuality as a pathology. By relying on medical and psychological science to seek validation and affirm normality, such as by arguing that homosexuality is an inherent characteristic, the movement risks reinforcing the influence of these discourses in determining social and sexual acceptability. Foucault expressed his disapproval of any approach that unintentionally supports the dominance of the medical gaze and reinforces the power/knowledge structures he believed were responsible for marginalizing and dividing individuals into normal and abnormal classifications<sup>26</sup>. Therefore, while recognizing the oppressive characteristics of medicalization, Foucault also recognized the potential for marginalized groups to use these structures to establish unity and advocate for independence and recognition. However, he always maintains a critical approach, urging movements to be wary of inadvertently reinforcing the existing power structures they seek to dismantle. This approach is consistent with his overall philosophy, which involves continually questioning impartial truths to expose the power dynamics they support.

In short, Foucault's exploration of identity is closely intertwined with his analysis of power dynamics and discourse. He argues that power is not only repressive but also has a productive aspect, generating knowledge, subjects and practices. According to Foucault, institutions such as prisons, hospitals and schools exercise power by using authoritarian discourses to dictate and restrict identities.

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<sup>23</sup> The problem of homosexuality is discussed in interviews, and its theoretical approach is present in Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality vol. I* pp 23-102.

<sup>24</sup> The problems of medicalization for Foucault we can find in the *Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*, Routledge, 2010, this specific fragment is a commentary on pp. 104-111.

<sup>25</sup> Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality vol. I*, pp 67-68.

<sup>26</sup> see Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*, Routledge, 2010, chapters 1 and 3.

Identities are formed through historical and cultural discourses that objectify individuals, positioning them in a complex system of social and political connections. Foucault's notion of *technologies of the self*<sup>27</sup> demonstrates how individuals internalize these discourses and actively engage in their own subjectification.

Butler expands on Foucault's theories, offering significant critiques, particularly of his approach of the body. In his works such as *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality*, to name a few, Foucault examines the process by which societal institutions and discourses shape and standardize the human body. He sees the body as a physical space in which power is present and where power dynamics are both executed and challenged. Butler agrees with this framework, but criticizes Foucault for inadequately investigating the body's capacity to resist these norms.<sup>28</sup> According to her, Foucault's model sometimes implies a deterministic viewpoint in which the body seems to passively accept and comply with cultural and social commands. However, Butler refutes this argument by emphasizing the significant influence of the body on the performativity of gender. She argues that every performative act is a restatement of a standard but also has the potential to deviate from the norm. Each instance of repetition has the capacity to cause disruption and deviation, creating an opportunity for opposition and transformation.<sup>29</sup> This subtlety adds another layer of complexity to Foucault's portrayal by implying that the body is not only shaped by power but at the same time capable of resisting and contesting the oppressive narratives that try to define it. According to Butler, physical (bodily) actions produce meanings that go beyond what is required by societal regulatory norms. This particular manifestation of performative actions has the potential to disrupt the fundamental structures that define the physical limitations of individuals. She argues that the body possesses a concept known as *performative agency*—the capacity of bodies to reshape the rules that govern them through practices of meaning that go beyond those rules.<sup>30</sup>

Butler's examination of Foucault not only offers critiques, but also broadens his discussion, providing powerful resources for feminist and queer analysis of conventional gender and sexual identities. Butler's reimagining of the body as a participant engaged in performative action expands the possibilities for what we today call social activism

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<sup>27</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Courage of Truth*, Springer, 2011, *passim*.

<sup>28</sup> More about her approach on the body: Butler, Judith. "Bodies and power, revisited." in *Radical Philosophy* (2002): 13-19.

<sup>29</sup> Butler, Judith, *Gender trouble*, pp 37-38.

<sup>30</sup> Idem, pp 101-163.

and political defiance. She provides a theoretical basis for LGBTQ+ movement's claims that gender and sexual identities are not static but malleable and can be transformed at both individual and societal levels.

### **From Michel Foucault to Judith Butler: contingencies and differences**

Judith Butler's work challenges and expands on Foucault's theories, particularly in relation to the idea that bodies are not merely passive recipients of disciplinary forces but rather active participants in their own agency. This extension is central to understanding current issues around gender and sexuality, providing a powerful framework for ongoing struggles for personal control over the body and recognition of identity. Her theoretical advances promote an ongoing reassessment of how identities are shaped, expressed, and potentially changed through the physical actions of everyday existence. Her entire ontology revolves around the concept of performativity, which she focuses on primarily in relation to gender identity. As previously discussed, Butler argues that gender is not an inherent or fixed quality that individuals possess, but rather a behavior that is repeatedly enacted according to societal norms and expectations. Frameworks like heteronormativity or the gender binary are in charge of regulating these performances. Through frequent repetition, these norms are assimilated, causing individuals to perceive them as inherent elements of reality. Butler's concept of performativity suggests that these fixed categories of identity are cultural-social constructs that can be challenged and possibly modified by undermining or disrupting the actions that constitute them.<sup>31</sup>

Both Butler and Foucault argue that identity is formed through social mechanisms.<sup>32</sup> While Foucault explores disciplinary practices linked by power and knowledge, Butler examines this process by concentrating on performative actions within gender norms. Both authors reject the notion of a pre-existing self, independent of social interaction. Instead, they argue that the self is constantly shaped and changed, either through language and discourse (Foucault) or through actions and performativity (Butler).

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<sup>31</sup> Idem, pp. 174.

<sup>32</sup> Idem, pp. 166, agrees with Foucault.

Butler's theoretical focus is specifically on gender and the performative nature of gender norms. In contrast, Foucault's scope is broader, encompassing a wider range of institutions and discourses, such as sexuality, criminality, and mental health. Foucault's framework allows for the analysis of different manifestations of identity, which are not limited exclusively to gender. Thus, at first reading or impression, we can consider the two perspectives as complementary. However, this type of interpretation would not be complete since the differences between the two are extremely strong, not in the way they identify the problem but in their approach to solving it. Butler stresses the ability of individuals to exercise agency when they become aware of their identity. She proposes that through the act of disrupting performance, individuals have the ability to resist and redefine oppressive norms. In Foucault's earlier work, such as *Madness and civilization*<sup>33</sup> or *The birth of the clinic*<sup>34</sup> the prominence of agency in performance is diminished, as he seems to present a more deterministic view of how discourses influence individuals. In his later work, such as *The courage of truth*<sup>35</sup>, Foucault presents additional avenues for resistance and self-creation<sup>36</sup> through what he calls *technologies of the self*<sup>37</sup>. Butler's approach is explicitly normative in nature, focusing on norms and values. She critically examines the restrictive norms governing gender and sexuality in her discussion of the performativity of gender. In contrast, Foucault typically refrains from normative assessments and instead focuses on elucidating the processes by which power is disseminated and individuals are formed. The differences between Foucault's and Butler's theories stem from their distinct interpretive emphases, concerns, and angles of approach, despite their shared agreement on the constructed nature of identity and its connection to wider societal structures. Butler uses a microanalytic methodology to examine the everyday operations of power, particularly in relation to gender. She uses Foucault's comprehensive theory of power and discourse as a contextual framework.

Essentially, this analysis demonstrates two key points: firstly, that Judith Butler's approach can be regarded as more effective in contemporary society due

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<sup>33</sup> Foucault, Michel. *Madness and civilization*. Routledge, 2003.

<sup>34</sup> Foucault, Michel. *The birth of the clinic*. Routledge, 2002.

<sup>35</sup> Foucault, Michel. *The courage of truth*. Springer, 2011.

<sup>36</sup> James Mark Shields, "Foucault's Dandy: Constructive Selfhood in the Last Writings of Michel Foucault," 1992.

<sup>37</sup> see Foucault, Michel. "Technologies of the Self." In *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault/Tavistock*. 1988.

to its adherence to normative principles, and secondly, that Foucault and Butler's works present a similar perspective on the issue of personal identity, albeit with distinct approaches to its resolution.

To sum it up, my ongoing investigation into Judith Butler's work has left me with great appreciation for her theory, but also with some reservation. The effectiveness of her work appears to align with the capitalist system, rather than contradicting it, as she intends to convey<sup>38</sup>. This critique takes into account some of her more recent work following the publication of *Undoing Gender* in 2004. It examines her non-violent approach, which engages with the excessively optimistic paradigms of capitalist strategy in opposition to revolutionary thinking. Furthermore, it should be clarified that Foucault's approach is not inherently violent; in fact, it is a peaceful endeavor. However, it does necessitate a greater level of disruption to existing structures, whereas Judith Butler merely proposes the inclusion of new structures within the current status quo.

## Conclusion

The notion of identity as a process of becoming highlights the malleability and continuous development of a person's sense of self. This view allows individuals to have a greater capacity to adapt to new circumstances, obstacles, and stages in life. Viewing identity as a process, it recognizes that change is a continuous and typical part of life, providing psychological adaptability; thus, individuals are more inclined to embrace new experiences, perspectives, and information that might otherwise be ignored due to a rigid self-perception. This level of openness has the potential to cultivate a more diverse and fulfilling life experience while promoting continuous learning and individual growth.

Fixed identities frequently depend on classifications associated with race, gender, sexuality, nationality, and so on. By conceptualizing identity as a developmental process, there is greater potential to transcend simplistic classifications and embrace instead complex and nuanced understandings of self and others. This can foster the development of equitable societies. The concept of identity as a process of becoming challenges the constraints imposed by social categorizations and preconceived

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<sup>38</sup> Boucher, Geoff. "The politics of performativity: A critique of Judith Butler." *Parrhesia* 1, no. 1 (2006): 112-141.

notions, which can limit individuals to oversimplified roles or predetermined expectations. Seeing identity as a flexible concept renounces the reinforcement of stereotypes and prejudices, allowing individuals to constantly redefine themselves.

Finally, seeing identity as a transformative process promotes a more flexible, receptive, and understanding mindset towards life and interpersonal connections. This corresponds to today's perception of the dynamic characteristics of modern life, in which conventional roles and boundaries are becoming increasingly indistinct and individual life trajectories are diverse and non-selective. This view promotes both resilience and individual development while serving as the basis for progressive social norms that prioritise inclusion and continuous personal and collective progress.

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# Creating with AI: On recent debates about authorship revisiting the influence of Barthes and Foucault

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**ABSTRACT.** Artificial Intelligence (AI) models are now capable of producing artifacts that mimic human creation, such as visual art, text or music. The remarkable sophistication of these results reignited the debate on authorship, calling into question issues such as intent, originality, autonomy or aesthetic engagement. I will present and explain the main positions on authorship that have emerged from this questioning, drawing on Emanuele Arielli's recent account in *AI-aesthetics and the artificial author* (2023). Furthermore, I will show how Roland Barthes' *The Death of the Author* (1967) and Michel Foucault's *What is an Author?* (1969) are central to understanding the philosophical implications of the debate and how conceptualisations pursued in these works inform current perspectives on authorship when AI is involved.

**Keywords:** *artificial intelligence, authorship, intention, the death of the author, author-function.*

## 1. Introduction. The issue with authorship and AI

The field of artificial intelligence has seen notable progress in recent years, prompting conversations regarding the impact of AI across various domains. AI systems designed to produce media such as images, text, or music have shown

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remarkable sophistication. Their outputs are often indistinguishable from human-authored works and sometimes even preferred according to certain criteria<sup>1</sup>.

While the objective to synthesise new artifacts using computers is not new, the specific methods involved in achieving this have undergone a significant shift, from step-by-step or rule-based programming to a sub-symbolic approach. This novel approach does not require explicit rules and is instead based on machine learning and artificial neural networks<sup>2</sup>, making it possible for an AI system itself to extract deep structure from a set of artifacts and synthesise new ones as a result<sup>3</sup>. The innovative architecture of these networks and the computing power now available have had a major impact on the progress of this field. However, their success heavily relies on the input data used for their training. The large amount of data that is necessary for this process—commonly called the ‘corpus’ in literature—is mined and collected from various sources. It is then analysed and processed by the AI, constituting a foundational base for its function and outputs.

Given this situation, there has been significant debate surrounding questions of authorship and their implications—philosophical, socio-cultural, ethical, or legal. Several key questions that arise in almost every discussion and are of concern to this paper include: Can AI be considered an author in the traditional sense? Is the claim to authorship from the humans involved legitimate? What does proper attribution of authorship mean given the amount and variety of data necessary for an AI system to perform? Not last, will AI force us to reconsider or reshape our understanding of authorship and how it should be granted?

The claims in addressing this question, both within academia and the public sphere, are difficult to reconcile. Some critics argue that AI systems are mere tools or instruments, citing the absence of intentionality and creative agency to support their position, while others, applying the criterion of autonomy, argue that AI systems engender a new form of expression, specific and proper to the system

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<sup>1</sup> For example, *Sunspring*, a 2016 science fiction film written entirely by an AI, which was placed top ten in Sci-Fi London’s annual film festival. In Carys J. Craig, Ian R. Kerr, “The Death of the AI Author” (March 25, 2019), in *Osgoode Legal Studies Research Paper* (March 25, 2019). Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3374951>, p. 36.

<sup>2</sup> Hannes Bajohr, “Writing at a Distance: Notes on Authorship and Artificial Intelligence” (march, 2023), in *German Studies Review*, 47(2).2024, The German Studies Association, p. 321.

<sup>3</sup> Lev Manovich, “Defining AI Arts: Three Proposals”, in *AI and Dialog of Cultures*, Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg, 2019, p. 5.

itself, given that human control may be minimal<sup>4</sup>. An alternative view posits that AI's outputs are in a sense authorless by default, given that they depend on viewer interpretation and are thus inherently meaningless<sup>5</sup>, or that the very idea of AI as an author is conceptually inconsistent and inherently flawed<sup>6</sup>.

I do not intend to present a conclusive answer or validate any specific standpoint over another. Instead, I will outline the primary positions on authorship that emerge from this questioning of the issue of authorship, explaining their underlying assumptions, aims, and implications. I will do this in the next section, primarily building on Emanuele Arielli's recent account on authorship in *AI-aesthetics and the artificial author* (2023). Furthermore, I will show how Roland Barthes' *The Death of the Author* (1967) and Michel Foucault's *What is an Author?* (1969) are central to understanding the implications of the debate and how the conceptualisations pursued in these works inform current perspectives on authorship when AI is involved.

## 2. Authorship perspectives, presuppositions and related concepts

In his recent publication, *AI-aesthetics and the artificial author* (2023), Emanuele Arielli provides a way of looking at and synthesising the problem concerning the identification and necessity or relevance of an author in creations that are made with the use of AI, that is "AI-generated works". While he seeks to avoid side-taking in the matter of pointing out where the authorship lies, his approach is motivated by an interest in how different views on the authorship of AI-generated works influence their aesthetic experience and vice versa.

Arielli begins by locating the concern with the legitimacy of applying the notion of authorship within developments of structuralism and post-structuralism, which have provided a context or framework that undermines the privileged position of an author as the sole or ultimate source of a work<sup>7</sup>. As he suggests by pointing out an alignment of this type of effort with the objectives of New Criticism

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<sup>4</sup> This is explained by E. Arielli in Emanuele Arielli, "AI-aesthetics and the artificial author", in *Proceedings of the European Society for Aesthetics*, The European Society for Aesthetics, 15.2023, pp. 41-42.

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>6</sup> Position advanced in Carys J. Craig, Ian R. Kerr, Op. Cit.

<sup>7</sup> Arielli, Op. Cit., p. 43.

and Beardsley’s intentional fallacy—which criticised the reliance on external evidence, such as the author’s intention, in the assessment of a work<sup>8</sup>—the scepticism over authorial intent was something that became generally shared in literary studies and criticism. This scepticism is seen to culminate in Roland Barthes’ *Death of the Author* and, although concerned beyond the problem of intention, in Michel Foucault’s *What is an Author?*, which Arielli references with the merit of having discredited “the image of the unique individual artist or author”<sup>9</sup>. However, in his view, these philosophical achievements or theories have not yet truly manifested phenomenologically in our consideration of human-made cultural products, as we would continue to think in terms of authorial intent and the figure behind the work, whose motives and intentions we consider<sup>10</sup>.

Departing from this last claim, Arielli continues by addressing the necessity for an author in aesthetic appreciation. In this, he links “agency and intentionality attribution” and “the need for a recognisable subject behind an artifact” to the perception of authorial depth and views the results of AI as a possible test to determine in which forms of cultural production is it necessary<sup>11</sup>. This is “the threshold of authorial relevance”, which is concerned with when authorship is relevant or even crucial for aesthetic appreciation and what type of work requires an author in this sense. The other threshold that he identifies as relevant is “the threshold of instrumentality”. That is, what separates human-made from machine-made? Recent art has given us examples of great collaborations between man and machine, where “the complexity of the mechanism [...] does not shift the locus of artistic authorship”<sup>12</sup>, meaning that AI remains a tool for artists to achieve their intent. On the other hand, new models are increasingly responsible for “creative decisions”<sup>13</sup>, that is, “creating” and influencing the aesthetic qualities of a work, producing intricate outputs with minimal human input.

Based on these thresholds, which Arielli considers to be at the centre of authorship questioning, the main perspectives on authorship in the context of AI use emerge. He identifies and categorises them into five main groups. The first is the “human-centric view”, which considers the author to be “the first designer”, the

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<sup>8</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>9</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>10</sup> Ibidem, pp. 43-44.

<sup>11</sup> Ibidem, pp. 45-46.

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem, p. 47.

<sup>13</sup> Ibidem.

initiator of the creation process for an “original idea or concept”<sup>14</sup>, who is therefore linked to the work by an essential causal relationship that is established outside a later stage of execution. This perspective considers AI as a tool used to fulfil the author’s intention, including the idea of “author as selector” or “author as prompt-engineer”<sup>15</sup>. The second perspective regards “AI as a full author” within a framework that anticipates the moment when the outputs of AI would be seen as the result of their own agency<sup>16</sup>. The future delineation and acceptance of this sense of agency are crucial because, according to Arielli, authorship in a work is to emerge and be recognised from the attribution of intentionality and autonomy rather than solely from the characteristics of the work itself<sup>17</sup>. The third perspective is “Remixed authoriality”, which Arielli aligns with theories proclaiming the death of the author and the post-productive stance<sup>18</sup>. This emphasises that AI-generated works are the result of an interplay and blending of different sources, influences, and pre-existing materials, and therefore, a “reflection of collective human intentionality” that rather points towards a form of artificially transformed collective authoriality<sup>19</sup> than to a sole author figure. The fourth perspective draws from narrative theory and is concerned with “implied authoriality”. The implied author is “the voice grounded in the text and expressed by its content and style”, indicative of a construct that “emerges from the work, over and above the original source that produced it”<sup>20</sup>. This can occur even when the viewer is aware of the lack of intentionality behind a work, becoming an “actively imagined authoriality” that allows ascribing meanings to something inherently inanimate<sup>21</sup>. Rather than trying to assign ‘real’ authoriality, this perspective focuses on the implied author as it is constructed through the engagement with a work, either separate from the ‘real persona’ of the author or actively imagined in its absence. Finally, there is the option to disregard concerns about authorial intention and attribution, marking a potential change in how we engage with certain works. For Arielli, this could shift our focus, for example, towards formal and aesthetic qualities, regardless of the creator’s identity or origins of a

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<sup>14</sup> Ibidem, p. 48.

<sup>15</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>16</sup> Ibidem, p. 49.

<sup>17</sup> Ibidem, pp. 49-50.

<sup>18</sup> Ibidem, p. 50.

<sup>19</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>20</sup> Ibidem, p. 51.

<sup>21</sup> Ibidem.

work<sup>22</sup>. However, it remains questionable whether and in what way we would still be open to engaging with machine-produced works if we were to completely give up considerations related to their authorship<sup>23</sup>.

In short, the first aspect of the problem involves questioning the legitimacy of attributing authorship to AI-generated works with respect to the concern of whether there can be a discernible author who confers meaning that is essential to the appreciation of a work as such. The second issue concerns the key thresholds identified by Arielli regarding authorship: that of author relevance and that of instrumentality. When is there a crucial need for an author and at what point does instrumentality end? In addition, the distinct perspectives on authorship that have been presented, together with their argumentative unfolding, point to several related presuppositions and concepts, such as the primacy of the original idea or concept, intention, autonomy, agency, or the mental construction of a person behind the work. These points can be better understood through the conceptualisations pursued in Roland Barthes' *Death of the Author* and Michel Foucault's *What is an Author?*.

### 3. Roland Barthes and the *Death of the Author* (1967)

Against the theoretical backdrop of the divide between structuralism and post-structuralism, Roland Barthes writes and publishes his seminal essay *Death of the Author* (1967), which questions the actual role of the author in its ties to the text. He does not ultimately undermine the legitimacy of the attribution of authorship *per se*, but criticises the search for the ultimate meaning or truth of a work in the figure of the author, and the construction of the identity of the author as such. With Barthes, the question of who is speaking remains unanswered as he argues that writing, in its multiplicity, erases any point of origin, thereby making way to proclaim the death of the author and, shifting the locus of a text's unity, the birth of the reader.

Piecing together a brief history of writing and authorship, Barthes held that the celebration of the author is—in contrast to what he calls 'ethnographic societies'<sup>24</sup>—a product of modern Western society and the prestige it has bestowed

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<sup>22</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>23</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>24</sup> Barthes, Roland, "The death of the author", in *Image, music, text*, Fontana, London, 1990, p. 142.

on the individual. Drawing on the linguistics and semiotics of that time, he sees language as taking on its own life: “the whole of the enunciation is an empty process, functioning perfectly without there being any need for it to be filled with the person of the interlocutors [...] the author is never more than the instance writing, just as the I is nothing other than the instance saying I”<sup>25</sup>. This ‘truth’ of language reveals that writing acts “outside of any function other than that of the very practice of the symbol itself”<sup>26</sup> and, in this, “has no other origin than language itself, language which ceaselessly calls into question all origins”<sup>27</sup>.

Holding these views, and in this particular framework, the author, if such a thing can still be argued to exist, is an extremely fragile entity, subject to transformations like language itself, and becomes marginal in the appreciation of a work. This situation, though not necessarily proof of the complete disappearance of the author, has led to a general undermining of the idea that the author’s identity and intentions permeate the text and of his authority over the final work. If the question of the legitimacy of attribution for AI-generated works is taken to be whether we can truly point towards an author just by engaging with a work, we are left in a difficult position to ponder.

Barthes contends that trying to find the lineage from the text to the author, which is to locate the truth, creates an artificial division into before and after, ultimately turning the author into a god-like figure through direct attribution of creation<sup>28</sup>. For him, this paradigm cannot hold as “a text is not a line of words releasing a single ‘theological’ meaning (the ‘message of the author-god’)”<sup>29</sup>. He opposed this view the idea of a ‘modern scriptor’, which is “born simultaneously with the text”<sup>30</sup> and does not claim originality and authority over the text, but rather emerges as a master of the narrative code: “Succeeding the Author, the scriptor no longer bears within him passions, humours, feelings, impressions, but rather this immense dictionary from which he draws a writing that can know no halt”<sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibidem, p. 145.

<sup>26</sup> Ibidem, p. 142.

<sup>27</sup> Ibidem, p. 146.

<sup>28</sup> Ibidem, p. 145.

<sup>29</sup> Ibidem, p. 146.

<sup>30</sup> Ibidem, p. 145.

<sup>31</sup> Ibidem, p. 147.

“The book is only a tissue of signs” suggests that there is nothing that is purely original as meaning is shaped through a collective negotiation of understanding and the text is seen as “a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash”<sup>32</sup>. This way of looking at a work has inevitably been linked by multiple scholars to the process behind AI-generated works, which, by building on patterns extracted from training on a large corpus—data from diverse sources, encapsulating varying ideas in different forms—appears as a mastery of the code and annihilates the possibility of pointing out any precise origin. If we are to put anthropocentrism aside, considering Barthes’ philosophical developments, this can be seen as reinforcing the idea that there is not always a real need for a unique individual author outside the work.

#### 4. Michel Foucault’s analysis in *What is an author?* (1969)

In *What is an author?* (1969), Michel Foucault is interested in the relationship between the author and a text, that is “the manner in which a text apparently points to this figure who is outside and precedes it”<sup>33</sup>. Building on similar theoretical principles as Barthes, Foucault asserts that a key attribute of the modern text is that “[it] has freed itself from the necessity of ‘expression’; it only refers to itself”<sup>34</sup>. In the context of the broader linguistic and cultural shift that favoured signification over representation, he refers to the same idea that linguistic formations seem to exist on their own and, being detached from representation, the ceaseless transformation in the logic of signification leads to the situation that “the writing subject endlessly disappears”<sup>35</sup>. The work attained the right to “murder” its author, in the sense of effacement or cancellation of “the signs of his particular individuality”<sup>36</sup>. However, here is where Foucault, despite proclaiming the “death” or disappearance of the author in an apparently shared gesture, distances himself from the Barthesian approach and ventures into a much more complex process of dissection.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibidem, p. 146.

<sup>33</sup> Michel Foucault, “What is an author?” (1969), in *Language, counter-memory, practice. Selected Essays and Interviews*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1977, p. 115.

<sup>34</sup> Ibidem, p. 116.

<sup>35</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>36</sup> Ibidem.

One key difference is the inquiry ground that Foucault opens up to discuss “the equally problematic nature of the word ‘work’”, because what constitutes a work, “if a work is not something written by a person called an ‘author?’”<sup>37</sup>. He ponders what Sade’s works that he wrote in prison before he was consecrated as an author were, or whether, by referring to Nietzsche, all that an author wrote should be considered part of their body of work<sup>38</sup>. Further analysing the use of an author’s name compared to that of the proper name, he concludes that the former only accompanies certain types of text, characterising and serving as a function within only certain types of discourse<sup>39</sup>. In terms of attribution of authorship and its legitimacy, Foucault notes that modern criticism, in its strategies of defining authorship and displaying its function, employ devices derived from the Christian tradition of authenticating texts, which sought to prove their value or truthfulness by establishing the “holiness” of their author. He references here the four criteria in Saint Jerome’s *De Viris Illustribus*, which show that the author ensures and defines a certain level of quality, conceptual or theoretical coherence, stylistic uniformity, and, nonetheless, constitutes a historical figure. Having noted that the search for authorial markers has to do with the way we handle texts and that particular signs in a text that seem to refer to an author do not actually refer to the writer, it is out of this “scission” that the author-function arises<sup>40</sup>. This function of discourse is explained by its four main features, conveniently summarised as follows:

The ‘author-function’ is [1] tied to the legal and institutional systems that circumscribe, determine, and articulate the realm of discourses; [2] it does not operate in a uniform manner in all discourses, at all times, and in any given culture; [3] it is not defined by the spontaneous attribution of a text to its creator, but through a series of precise and complex procedures; [4] it does not refer, purely and simply, to an actual individual<sup>41</sup>.

By replacing the conventional author figure with the author as a ‘function of discourse’, which, critics argue, “authorises the very idea of ‘author’”<sup>42</sup>, Foucault

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<sup>37</sup> Ibidem, p. 117.

<sup>38</sup> Ibidem, pp. 118-119.

<sup>39</sup> Ibidem, p. 120.

<sup>40</sup> Ibidem, p. 130.

<sup>41</sup> Ibidem, p. 130.

<sup>42</sup> Adrian Wilson, “Foucault on the ‘Question of the Author’: a critical exegesis”, in *The Modern Language Review*, 99 (2). pp. 339-363.

emphasises its constructed-ness, which can simultaneously give rise to multiple selves or subjects<sup>43</sup> and makes it impossible to think that we can simply and straightforwardly point to a real individual outside the text. The author figures within a specific moment of power/knowledge relation, making it a constrained entity rather than solely someone who creates something new.

Concerning the discussion about the authorship of AI-generated works, we can see that Foucault's conceptualisations carefully address the need for an author figure to be attached to certain works. He emphasised that what constitutes a work in this sense is not a constant but is determined through a negotiation between different factors about the modes in which it exists and circulates within discourse. From here, the question follows: do AI-generated works require the attribution of authorship, and in what way would they be considered "works" without the attachment to such a figure? Foucault challenges the traditional view of authorship precisely by revealing that the "real authority" that governs a work is not an individual author but discourse itself<sup>44</sup>. Furthermore, he pointed out the division<sup>44</sup>, in the case of text, between the author and the writer or producer, and that the author-function is one of the "subjects" that emerge in the distance between the two. By problematising the figure of the author in this way, Foucault signalled a potential "crisis" in the mechanisms for legitimate attribution of authorship. Having noted these, the framework in which Foucault treats the issue proves insufficient to attribute authorship over solely intentionality or execution in a creation process, whether we would try to argue in favour of a single human, machine, or collectively shared authorship.

Another subject that emerges in the distance between author and writer, distinct from the author-function and identified by Foucault through its link to the authorial markers present in a text as a 'second self', is what Arielli mentioned in relation to narrative theory as the implied author. The influence that Foucault exerted over this notion is that, while the concept was already present in the narrative theory of the 60s as an authorial construct, by positing the author-figure as a construct of the reader, he opened up the way for a series of later constructivist conceptions such as the 'postulated author', 'fictional author' or 'interpretative author'<sup>45</sup>.

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<sup>43</sup> Foucault, *Op. Cit.*, p. 131.

<sup>44</sup> Wilson, *Op. Cit.*

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 343.

Nonetheless, Foucault looked forward to the possibility of moving away from the search for the author and instead of “arresting the possibility of genuine change” to explore the gap left by its disappearance. In this sense, he does not advocate a complete abandonment of the subject but proposes that we focus on the subject not in relation to its creative role, but as “a complex and variable function of discourse”<sup>46</sup>. However, at the end of his lecture and essay, Foucault opens the discussion on the possibility of a culture in which discourses circulate and unfold in complete anonymity, and in which new questions will thus arise amid “the murmur of indifference: ‘What matter who’s speaking?’ ”<sup>47</sup>, prompting us to rethink how we engage with and inquire into works.

## 5. Conclusions

The field of artificial intelligence has made significant progress in recent years, leading to discussions about the influence of artificial intelligence in various fields. Artificial Intelligence systems focused on the creation of media content, such as images, text, or music, have shown remarkable complexity, which has sparked significant debate around questions of authorship from philosophical, socio-cultural, ethical, or legal perspectives. Approaching the question of authorship from a philosophical point of view has resulted in various perspectives that are difficult to reconcile, precisely because of the questions surrounding the foundations of the notion itself. These perspectives, which I have drawn from Arielli’s *AI-aesthetics and the artificial author*, new and conflicting as they may be, are ultimately rooted in a philosophical questioning that can be said to have challenged thinkers at least since the 1960s. As the case was to discuss the works of Barthes and Foucault, their developments did not result in the emergence of a new conception of the author and method for its attribution. Instead, they demonstrated the underlying complexity of the matter and the careful consideration it necessitates, perhaps their accomplishment being a change in our presuppositions and attitudes when questioning the author’s figure. With the increasing diversification and use of AI in the production of different works, it is imperative that we engage with the enduring discussions raised by Barthes and Foucault, as the conceptualisations pursued in their work inform our perspectives on authorship when AI is involved and shape our attitudes towards their implications.

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<sup>46</sup> Foucault, Op. Cit., p. 138.

<sup>47</sup> Ibidem, p. 138.

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## The bad peace and the good war. Rhetoric of duplicity in Augustine, from *De Civitate Dei* to *Epistola 185*

Ileana CORNEA\*

**ABSTRACT.** The present paper is rooted in an older concern, regarding Augustine's contradictions<sup>1</sup>. In the history of ideas there is a common place that authors contradict themselves and that their ideas migrate from one pole to another. This paper aims to present the case study regarding Augustine's contradictions. I propose to focus on an issue that interfered later with the Church's politics, namely the subject of peace and war, as we find them in *De Civitate Dei* and *Epistola 185*. Even though the issue of peace and war appears in several of his writings, those mentioned before seem more relevant for the topic, as they were also approached previously by other authors. I equally propose to highlight that Augustine echoes some ideas on war that can be read under Plato's pen, although he was more of a Plotinus's follower. But, as a personal touch, I would try to incorporate it within the entire dual thought of Augustine, that was echoed in the following centuries in the thought of the scholastics and the policy of The Catholic Church.

**Keywords:** *peace and war, Catholic Church, Plato, Plotinus, Augustine.*

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<sup>1</sup> I'm aiming to speak about the ideological contradictions in the present article (the good peace/the bad peace, the good war/the bad war, connected to the good love/the bad love etc)



## The dual thinking at Augustine

In a review of Hanna Arendt's doctoral thesis, *Love and Saint Augustine*, published in *Gnomon*, Max Zepf claims that the origin of Augustine's contradictions could be found in the double tradition he inherited: "ancient philosophy and the oriental Christian ideas"<sup>2</sup>. A similar point of view can also be found in Catherine Marés's presentation, *Augustin d'Hippone et de Carthage, un palimpseste de cultures*, from November 4<sup>th</sup> 2022, at Nîmes.<sup>3</sup> The French classicist takes the argument further and stresses the double origins of Augustine, a Berber born from a pagan father and a Christian mother<sup>4</sup>. She also pays a peculiar attention to the dualism of each spiritual trend to which Augustine acceded, as the Manicheism and the Neoplatonism, the last one represented by Plotinus. It may be relevant in the context the duality of the way the Neoplatonism was read by some Christians, especially Ambrose<sup>5</sup>, even though Plotinus may seem less dualistic, because Neoplatonism was the way Augustine approached Christianity and Ambrose was the one who influenced him mostly.

Augustine's duplicity, his so-called lack of consistency, has been a well-known question<sup>6</sup>, a matter of never-ending debates and the reason for several and regrettable misunderstandings, as well as misinterpretations, along the centuries

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<sup>2</sup> Arendt, Hannah, *Love and Saint Augustine*, edited and with an Interpretive Essay by Joanna Vecchiarelli Scott and Judith Chelius Stark, University of Chicago Press, 1996, p 21. This page corresponds to the Romanian version (*Iubirea la Sfântul Augustin*, Humanitas, București, 2022). Max Zepf's opinion is quoted in the introduction, signed by Joanna Vecchiarelli Scott and Judith Chelius Stark.

<sup>3</sup> Marés, Catherine, *Augustin d'Hippone et de Carthage, un palimpseste de cultures* in *Mémoires de l'Académie de Nîmes, Xe série, tome XCV, Année 2023*, Académie de Nîmes, 2023, pp 201-219 (Séance du 4 novembre 2022).

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem, p 204.

<sup>5</sup> Fredriksen, Paula, *Augustine and the Jews. A Christian Defense of Jews and Judaism*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2010, p 131: "Intellectuals both pagan and Christian pored over Plotinus and Porphyry in Milanese reading salons. Ambrose preached that Christianity was not simply compatible with the best philosophy but that it *was* in fact the best, the truest philosophy. Ambrose's allegories operated by sharply contrasting, indeed by opposing, spirit to flesh, while maintaining that God, purely good, had made them both."

<sup>6</sup> We can find it at Jaspers, *Plato and Augustine*, edited by Hannah Arendt and translated by Ralph Manheim, A Harvest Book, A Helen and Kurt Wolff Book, Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., New York, 1962, p 111 ("Augustine's *Biblical Exegesis* seems to be fundamentally contradictory"), and at Paula Fredriksen (see *supra*, p 261), when she talks about the contradictions coming from Augustine's works regarding the Jews ("If we regard Augustine's theological teachings about Jews as evidence for what he really thought or really felt about Jewish contemporaries, we will come away with the impression of a man riddled with deep inconsistencies..."), and others.

that followed. Speaking of love as we find it at Augustine, Arendt exposes the two kinds of love in Augustine's works – *cupiditas* and *caritas*, the bad love and the good love – as well as two deaths included in the death of the body: a good death for the good ones (the believers) and a bad death for the evil (the sinners)<sup>7</sup>. And how else could it be as long as we have two cities – the city of God and the city of man, two communities – the former represented by Abel (the good one) and the latter represented by Cain (the bad one)<sup>8</sup>. Further on, in the “story” of the two cities, Augustine goes on and builds up the foundation for a new duality that will last for centuries and will be used as an argument in the politics of wars and persecution. We are talking about the concept of peace (and subsequently, of war) as it appears in *De Civitate Dei*, mostly in Book XIX<sup>9</sup>. Peace is a major theme in Augustine. He had already written about it nine years earlier, in *Epistola 185 (Liber de correctione donastitarum)*, addressed to count Boniface in 417, in a completely different context.

An interesting fact, considering the changes Augustine went through – young pagan student, Manichaean adept, and finally, Christian bishop, the ruler of an important community in North Africa<sup>10</sup> – is that the good in each of all his dual options is always embodied in the Christian truth. Because, even if we have two kinds of almost everything, there is only one truth and that is Jesus Christ's<sup>11</sup>. From this point of view, the good love, *caritas*, is the love of Christ, the love of the only true God; the good death is the death of the body in the name of Christ, that changes death into eternal life, the good city is the city of God and, finally, the good peace

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<sup>7</sup> Arendt, Hannah, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 1996 by Joanna Vecchiarelli Scott and Judith Chelius Stark, 1996 by The Literary Trust of Hannah Arendt Blücher. The volume includes Hannah Arendt's doctoral thesis. One can find the discussion about *caritas* and *cupiditas* in the first part of the academic work, as well as in the second part, a second chapter in both sections treating this topic. In the third part of the thesis, *The social life*, Arendt will approach the question of the good and the bad death at Augustine.

<sup>8</sup> Ibidem – there is a footnote in the third part of the thesis, at p 170, that develops the topics, starting from the affirmation from the main text that the community of all the nations comes from Adam. The original thought of this theory can be found at Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, Book XV.

<sup>9</sup> Saint Augustine, *De Civitate Dei, Concerning the City of God against the Pagans*, Penguin Books, 2003, pp 843-894.

<sup>10</sup> Brown, Peter, *Augustine of Hippo. A Biography*, A New Edition with an Epilogue, University of California Press, Berkley and Los Angeles, 2000. The first two parts of the book, from chapter 3, *Education*, to chapter 14, *Presbyter Ecclesiae Catholicae: HIPPO*, follow the evolution of Augustine, from a young pagan student to a Christian bishop.

<sup>11</sup> Arendt, Hannah, *Love and...*, also *Sermones in epistola Iohannis primam, X, 8: Extend your charity (charitas) over the whole earth if you will love Christ, for Christ's members are over all the earth. (Homily 10 on the First Epistle of John, 8 - <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/170210.htm>)*

can only be the peace of Christ – *pax Christi*. Consequently, the war, even if it is a bad thing itself, when waged in order to obtain the peace of Christ, the good peace, it will be a good war.<sup>12</sup>

### The concept of peace and war in *De Civitate Dei*

Nowhere is the idea of peace better expressed in Augustine’s works than in *De Civitate*. As the French theologian, Dominique Gonnet, noticed in an article from 2002, the word *peace* (*pax*) appears in *De Civitate* 133 times, while in *Epistola*, we find it occurring only about twenty times<sup>13</sup>.

*De Civitate Dei* represents the most significant work of Augustine and was written between 413 and 427, that means it was a work that covered about fourteen years including the late middle and old age of the philosopher. This may explain why, besides his well-known duality, one can find here some more definite opinions on essential questions, such as peace and war.

It is in *De Civitate*, Book XIX, where Augustine talks about the necessity of wars “waged with peace as their objects”, about the natural peace and “the perverted peace” of the wicked, which needs medicine to be cured, namely the war “waged with peace”, the natural, good peace, of course.<sup>14</sup>

We can find here an idea from Plato’s *Laws* (628d-e), even if Augustine seems to refute most of Plato’s ideas in *De Civitate*.

The highest good, however, is neither war nor civil strife – which things we should pray rather to be saved from – but peace one with another and friendly feeling. Moreover, it would seem that the victory we mentioned of a state over itself is not one of the best things but one of those which are necessary. For imagine a man supposing that a human body was best off when it was sick and purged with physic, while never giving a thought to the case of the body that needs no physic at all! Similarly, with regard to the well-being of a state or an individual, that man

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<sup>12</sup> See Hannah Arendt, *Love at Saint Augustine* and Dominique Gonnet, *Théorie et pratique de la paix selon Augustin dans l’Epistola 185 et le De Civitate Dei, XIX, 17*.

<sup>13</sup> Gonnet, Dominique, “Théorie et pratique de la paix selon Augustin dans l’Epistola 185 et De Civitate Dei, XIX,17”, in *Regards sur le monde antique, Hommage à Guy Sabbah*, dirigée par Madeleine Piot, Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 2002, p 120.

<sup>14</sup> Saint Augustine, *De Civitate Dei, Concerning the City of God against the Pagans*, Penguin Books, 2003, pp 866-869 (Book XIX, Chapter 12).

will never make a genuine statesman who pays attention primarily and solely to the needs of foreign warfare, nor will he make a finished lawgiver unless he designs his war legislation for peace rather than his peace legislation for war.<sup>15</sup>

Augustine was closer to Plotinus than to Plato in his thought. He even takes some distance from Plato in his writings. But, regarding this idea, the connotation is the same. The bad peace is like illness. War is medicine in that case. And sometimes bitter medicine is needed in order to attain the good peace. Individuals in mankind are like parts of the body. If one of them is ill, then the entire body is ill. To have a healthy body and a healthy mankind we have to cure the inflicted parts of the body, to correct the “wrong” humans who live within this world. The war in order to get the Christian peace is, therefore, a good war. Augustine sees peace in *De Civitate* as *ordinatio*, a social project, *ordinata concordia*, based on justice, but justice can be done only by means of grace<sup>16</sup>. Therefore, the earthly peace is just a temporary and fragile peace, permanently at risk. The true eternal peace is the heavenly peace, the peace we shall gain only in the City of God. “For even they who intentionally interrupt the peace in which they are living have no hatred of peace, but only wish it changed into a peace that suits them better.”<sup>17</sup>

The same idea of necessary wrongs in view of a right end can be found in Aristotle’s *Politics*, Book 7, 14-15:

The proper object of practising military training is not in order that men may enslave those who do not deserve slavery, but in order that first they may themselves avoid becoming enslaved to others; then so that they may seek suzerainty for the benefit of the subject people. (14, 1334a)<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Plato, *Laws*, Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, London, William Heinemann LTD, 1984, p 16 (628 d-e).

<sup>16</sup> Gonnet, Dominique, “Théorie et pratique...”, p 122.

<sup>17</sup> Augustin, *De Civitate Dei*, XIX, 12. This quote is from an alternative translation, by Marcus Dods, to the one from Penguin Books edition, from 2003, referenced in the bibliography. In the Penguin edition of *De Civitate Dei*, the translator formulates this passage in this way: *In fact, even when men wish a present state of peace to be disturbed, they do so not because they hate peace, but because they desire the present peace to be exchanged for one that suits their wishes.* (p 866) I find this phrase from the Penguin edition even a bit more Ciceronian than in Augustine’s original text and that’s why I preferred the other one. (*Nam et illi qui pacem, in qua sunt, perturbari volunt, non pacem oderunt, sed eam pro arbitrio suo cupiunt commutari.*)

<sup>18</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, VII, 14, 1334a.

Since the end of individuals and of states is the same, the end of the best man and of the best state must also be the same; it is therefore evident that there ought to exist in both of them the virtues and the leisure. For peace, as has been after repeated, is the end of war, and leisure for toil [...] For many necessities of life have to be supplied before we can have leisure. (15, 1334a)<sup>19</sup>

It is very unlikely that Augustine knew Aristotle's work that well, considering he almost didn't know Greek and that he was more interested in Neoplatonism. Yet, being brought up in the pagan culture of Antiquity, he was somehow familiar with these ideas, although it is difficult to make any direct connection between the two philosophers. Nevertheless, the idea of war seen as a tool, even an evil one sometimes, yet necessary to achieve the final goal, the good one, embodied by peace, is present both in Plato and Aristotle, and later in Augustine, in strikingly similar terms.

Of course, there is no one in this world who would not wish peace. But Augustine notices that there are many kinds of peace and not each of them is good. All men look for peace, yet not all look for the good kind. The vicious person regards peace as domination. In a perverted way, he sees himself as God and demands obeisance from the others, disregarding the fact that all humans are equal in front of God. Bottom line, he loves *the bad peace* and not *the good one*: "It abhors, there is to say, the just peace of God, and loves its own unjust peace."<sup>20</sup>

Augustine goes on, defining the kinds of peace, the way they are aiming at harmony, under the guidance of God. *Ordinata concordia*<sup>21</sup> is operating between man and man and between "those of the family who rule and those who obey", praying that the only true God will bring us eternal life along with eternal peace after the temporal peace that we gain during our mortal life.

But, in order to have even the domestic peace, it is necessary to have punishment, correction, the just one, of course. Even though the term *coercitio* appears better reflected in *Epistola 185*, we can find a sort of constraint in *De Civitate*, book XIX, chapter 16, in a softer way, reinforcing thus the idea that the two works were written in different contexts.

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<sup>19</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, translated by Benjamin Jarvett, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1908.

<sup>20</sup> Saint Augustine, *De Civitate Dei, Concerning the City of God against the Pagans*, Penguin Books, 2003, p 869: *This means that it hates the just peace of God and loves its own peace of injustice. As in De Civitate Dei, Book XIX, 12: Odit ergo iustam pacem Dei et amat iniquam pacem suam.*

<sup>21</sup> Augustin, *De Civitate Dei*, ediție bilignvă, XIX, 17: *...ordinatissima scilicet et concordissima societas fruendi Deo et invicem in Deo; quo cum ventum erit, non erit vita mortalıs, sed plane certeque vitalis nec corpus animale...*

And if any member of the family interrupts the domestic peace by disobedience, he is corrected either by word or blow, or some kind of just and legitimate punishment, such as society permits, that he may himself be the better for it, and be readjusted to the family harmony from which he had dislocated himself. For as it is not benevolent to give a man help at the expense of some greater benefit he might receive, so it is not innocent to spare a man at the risk of his falling into graver sin. To be innocent, we must not only do harm to no man, but also restrain him from sin or punish his sin, so that either the man himself who is punished may profit by his experience, or others be warned by his example.<sup>22</sup>

Accordingly, for the righteous it is not enough to do no harm to anybody, but he has to bring the sinner to the right path, to reunite the lost sheep with the herd. And for this purpose, any means, the word or the blow, would be justified. We shall see how this theory was developed in *Epistola 185* and which were its echoes in the centuries that followed. But here, in *De Civitate*, we find the idea of a well-known Latin proverb, *Qui bene amat, bene castigat*<sup>23</sup>. In this way, the punishment is justified when it is done for a good purpose. And what purpose could be better than the good peace, the peace of God? To reach it and to correct the bad peace of the wicked, we can wage war which, in that case, would be justified. The war of the great emperors who fought in the name of Christ to bring His peace, would be as good as a bitter medicine that brings about health in a sick body. According to Dominique Gonnepet, we have to consider here the position of authority in Augustine thought. The *ordinatio* here means that the head of the family, as well as the ruler of the state, has the authority to correct those who don't obey (children and

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<sup>22</sup> Saint Augustine, *De Civitate Dei. Concerning the City of God against the Pagans*, Penguin Books, 2003, XIX,16, p 876, the translation differs a little bit from the alternative one of Marcus Dods, mentioned before. I opted for the translation above (Marcus Dods) because of the word "innocent" that I found closer to the Latin *innocentis*. In the Penguin edition, the last sentence sounds as follows: *Hence, the duty of anyone who would be blameless includes not only doing no harm to anyone but also restraining a man from sin or punishing his sin, so that either the man who is chastised may be corrected by his experience, or others may be deterred by his example.* *De Civitate Dei*, XIX, 16: *Si quis autem in domo per inoboedientiam domesticae paci adversatur, corripitur seu verbo seu verberare seu quolibet alio genere poenae iusto atque licito, quantum societas humana concedit, pro eius qui corripitur utilitate, ut paci unde dissiluerat coaptetur. Sicut enim non est beneficentiae adiuvando efficere, ut bonum quod maius est amittatur, ita non est innocentiae parcendo sinere, ut in malum gravius incidatur. Pertinet ergo ad innocentis officium, non solum nemini malum inferre, verum etiam cohibere a peccato vel punire peccatum, ut aut ipse qui plectitur corrigatur experimento, aut alii terreantur exemplo.*

<sup>23</sup> "He who loves well, castigates well" or the more colloquial, adapted form, "spare the rod and spoil the child."

citizens)<sup>24</sup>. In a footnote, mentioning an article of E. I. Fortin, he quotes from Augustine: “Men’s freedom is more seriously jeopardized by the rejection of all authority than by the manifest abuses to which the exercise of authority lends itself.”<sup>25</sup>

Therefore, the authority of the Church and of the leaders ointed by the Church, more precisely, of all those who act in the name of the one and only true God, is entitled to punish, to correct, to go to war in the name of the good love and the good peace.

Let us not forget, though, that *De Civitate Dei*, “the only political tractate” of Augustine, as Hannah Arendt named it<sup>26</sup>, was written after the conquest of Rome by Alaric. The fall of Rome made many Romans blame their fellow citizens for having chosen the Christian faith abandoning the traditional Roman religion. The renouncement of the *mos maiorum* would have led to the sack of Rome. Augustine wrote *De Civitate* in response to these allegations. His purpose was to prove that not only Christianity did not lead to the collapse of Rome, but, on the contrary, it brought a new rising, a new order, a new peace. A peace that, nonetheless, was gained through war. Therefore, it becomes clear that the war brought by Alaric was a good war, because it replaced a bad peace, the pagan peace, with a good peace, the peace of Christ. If we may speculate, it was the bad peace of the pagans who worshiped several gods instead of the unique, real one, that brought the war. The good peace that comes along with the city of God is supposed to be eternal, with no war needed to interrupt it.

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<sup>24</sup> Gonnet, Dominique, “Théorie et pratique de la paix selon Augustin dans l’*Epistola* 185 et *De Civitate Dei*, XIX,17”, in *Regards sur le monde antique, Hommage à Guy Sabbah*, dirigée par Madeleine Piot, Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 2002, p 125.

<sup>25</sup> Ibidem, the footnote No 4 also mentions the title of Fortin’s article, the place and year of publication, as well as the page number where the article can be found: *The Political Implications of St Augustine’s Theory of Conscience*, *Augustinian Studies*, 1 (1970), p 133-152

<sup>26</sup> Arendt, Hannah, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 1996, by The Literary Trust of Hannah Arendt Blücher, 1996, by Joanna Vecchiarelli Scott and Judith Chelius Stark, p 221. This page corresponds to the Romanian version (*Iubirea la Sfântul Augustin (Love at Saint Augustine)*, Humanitas, București, 2022). Actually, Arendt named *De Civitate* this way in an essay, *What is freedom?* from the volume *Between Past and Future*, but the quotation mentioning it was used in the present volume, in the afterword that follows the doctoral thesis of Arendt (the main corpus), signed by Joanna Vecchiarelli Scott and Judith Chelius Stark.

### Another perspective: *Epistola 185*

On the other hand, but not necessarily on the contrary, *Epistola 185* speaks of peace in an answer to another challenge, the Donatist “issue”. Written to count Boniface, in 417<sup>27</sup>, it approaches the methods that can be used to bring the Donatists back to the Church. The Donatists, a schismatic rather than a heretical sect, were a movement detached from the Church, in North Africa, which focussed on the moral purity of its members, especially of those who practiced the sacraments (the priests). Augustine, himself a sinner and a wanderer before he reached the shore of the true faith, understood the danger that lay underneath this rigor and started a debate in order to prove that no man is without sin. After all, he says, we all descend from Adam and we inherit the sin that came into the world together with his fall. We are saved only by grace. Donatists’ claim they are pure is but a testimony of vanity and arrogance.<sup>28</sup>

Besides, it is important not to forget that Augustine was not only a theologian and a philosopher, but also a political leader. He was the bishop of Hippo Regius in Numidia. As a political man, entitled to lead the Christian community in the area, it was essential for him to have a united, powerful Church. The Donatists were making too much trouble, breaking the unity and the peace, the Catholic Christian peace, the only good one in Augustine’s view. As Dominique Gonnet observes in his article, *Théorie et pratique de la paix selon Augustin*, while in *De Civitate* Augustine builds up the theory of peace, in *Epistola 185*, he approaches the practice of it<sup>29</sup>. Because, while in *De Civitate*, he answers to some hypothetical reproaches, in *Epistola 185*, he faced the very real danger of the Donatist schism, which spread through the entire North Africa, threatening the unity of the Church and the peace of the Christian community, led by Augustine.

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<sup>27</sup> Brown, Peter, *Augustine of Hippo. A Biography*, A New Edition with an Epilogue, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2000, p 282.

<sup>28</sup> Ibidem, pp 207-221, the chapter *Ubi Ecclesia?*

<sup>29</sup> Gonnet, Dominique, “Théorie et pratique de la paix selon Augustin dans l’*Epistola 185* et *De Civitate Dei*, XIX,17”, in *Regards sur le monde antique, Hommage à Guy Sabbah*, dirigée par Madeleine Piot, Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 2002, p 116 (*L’Epistola 185 est adressée au comte Boniface, et elle concerne les moyens de ramener les donatistes à la vérité.*) and p 123 (*Comment interpréter la relation entre la théorie de la paix de la Cité de Dieu, XIX, et la pratique de la paix dans l’Ep. 185?*).

Returning to the same Dominique Gonnet, *Epistola 185* approaches the theme of peace almost exclusively from a religious point of view<sup>30</sup>. As the French theologian notices, let us remember that while the word *peace* (*pax*) appears 133 times in Book XIX from *De Civitate* (from a total of 300 times in the entire work), in *Epistola* it is used around twenty times<sup>31</sup>. In *Epistola 185*, as in *De Civitate*, the only desirable peace is the peace of God. Only that here, God is represented by the Church. Thus, the peace of the Church (*pax ecclesiae*) is the real and good peace. The peace of the Donatists is the peace of compromise when it comes to their own members, as it happened with Maximianus. That makes them as well hypocrites, if we think about their criticism of the Catholics. Therefore, the peace of Donatus is false (*vana*)<sup>32</sup>. Gonnet makes a parallel between *Epistola 185* and *De Civitate*, seeing in these different levels of peace “a confrontation that evokes (reminds us), *mutatis mutandis*, the one between the two cities”. And here we have the metaphor of Absalom’s rebellion against his father, David, regarding which Gonnet states:

An earthly kingdom that keeps on going with a civil war can’t find peace but with the death of the rebel son, no matter how painful might it be. Peace is gained with the cost of David’s pain, as well as the salvation (redemption) of those who return to the Church is gained with the cost of losing some, those who were committing suicide among the Donatists.<sup>33</sup>

In other words, there is a price to be paid in order to attain peace, but this is an inherent loss. It would provoke some pain, but it does so for a superior cause, for a better goal. After all, didn’t Aristotle, too, say that “many necessities of life have to be supplied before we can have leisure”? To achieve a good purpose, to have

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<sup>30</sup> Gonnet, Dominique, “Théorie et pratique de la paix selon Augustin dans l’*Epistola 185* et *De Civitate Dei*, XIX,17”, in *Regards sur le monde antique, Hommage à Guy Sabbah*, dirigée par Madeleine Piot, Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 2002, p 116. The word *peace* is used in association with the religious terms, avoiding political connotations. And there are some examples given by Gonnet here: *pax Christi* (15, 17c, 32c, 47a), *pax salutis aeternae, acquise par le sang du Seigneur* (31), *vinculo pacis* (référence à *Éphésiens 4,3*) (24, 43), *pax catholica* (14a, 14b, 18), *pax ecclesiae* (44a, 44b), *pax des donatistes* (17a, 17b, 47b), *pax dans l’Ancien Testament (David)* (32a, 32b), (*Jérusalem* (46abc).

<sup>31</sup> Ibidem, p 120.

<sup>32</sup> Ibidem, p 117 and Ep 185, 47 – see also Augustine – *Letter 185*, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1102185.htm>

<sup>33</sup> Ibidem, p 118: “Un royaume Terrestre plongé dans la guerre civile ne peut retrouver la paix que par la mort du fils rebelle, si douloureuse soit-elle. La paix est au prix de la douleur de David, comme le salut de tous ceux qui reviennent à l’Église est au prix de la perte de quelques-uns, ceux qui se suicident parmi les donatistes.”

leisure (peace) there are always necessary losses. Let's recall this quote from *De Civitate*: "To be innocent, we must not only do harm to no man, but also restrain him from sin or punish his sin, so that either the man himself who is punished may profit by his experience, or others be warned by his example."<sup>34</sup> To be innocent is also to accept the "side effects", so that those who are to be saved would take advantage of them.

This leads us to the "righteous persecution". In *Epistola 185*, Chapter 2,11, Augustine comes up with this concept:

If, therefore, we wish either to declare or to recognize the truth, there is a persecution of unrighteousness, which the impious inflict upon the Church of Christ; and there is a righteous persecution, which the Church of Christ inflicts upon the impious. She therefore is blessed in suffering persecution for righteousness' sake; but they are miserable, suffering persecution for unrighteousness. Moreover, she persecutes in the spirit of love, they in the spirit of wrath; she that she may correct, they that they may overthrow: she that she may recall from error, they that they may drive headlong in error. Finally, she persecutes her enemies and arrests them, until they become weary in their vain opinions, so that they should make advance in the truth; but they, returning evil for good, because we take measures for their good, to secure their eternal salvation, endeavor even to strip us of our temporal safety, being so in love with murder, that they commit it on their own persons, when they cannot find victims in any other. For in proportion as the Christian charity of the Church endeavors to deliver them from that destruction, so that none of them should die, so their madness endeavours either to slay us, that they may feed the lust of their own cruelty, or even to kill themselves, that they may not seem to have lost the power of putting men to death.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Augustine, *The City of God*, XIX, 16, alternative translation of Marcus Dods.

<sup>35</sup> Augustine, *Letter 185*, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1102185.htm>; *Epistola 185*, 2, 11: "Si ergo verum dicere vel agnoscere volumus, est persecutio iniusta, quam faciunt impii Ecclesiae Christi; et est iusta persecutio, quam faciunt impiis Ecclesiae Christi. Ista itaque beata est quae persecutionem patitur propter iustitiam 27; illi vero miseri qui persecutionem patiuntur propter iniustitiam. Proinde ista persequitur diligendo, illi saeviendo; ista ut corrigat, illi ut evertant; ista ut revocet ab errore, illi ut praecipitent in errorem: denique ista persequitur inimicos et comprehendit, donec deficiant in vanitate, ut in veritate proficiant; illi autem retribuentes mala pro bonis 28, quia eis consulimus ad aeternam salutem, etiam temporalem nobis conantur auferre, sic amantes homicidia, ut in seipsis ea perficiant, quando in aliis perpetrare non possunt. Sicut enim caritas laborat Ecclesiae sic eos ab illa perditione liberare, ut eorum nemo moriatur; sic eorum laborat furor aut nos occidere, ut suae crudelitatis pascant libidinem, aut etiam seipsos, ne perdidisse videantur occidendorum hominum potestatem".

*Temperata severitas* made Leon Poliakov say that the Inquisition wasn't a Spanish invention, but that even since Augustine "we found in its respect an anticipative apology"<sup>36</sup> and Giovanni Filoramo wonder how could the delicate young man from *Confessiones* turn into a disillusioned old man, an Inquisition theorist<sup>37</sup>. The same Filoramo also claims that the same *Epistola 185* legitimates the concept of *coercitio*, when Augustine refers to a fragment from the Apostle Paul, where we find the parable of the master who first bids the guests to his supper and afterwards compels them to come, from Luke 14:22-23.<sup>38</sup>

*Epistola 185*, even if it is written earlier, puts a greater emphasis on the authority that needs to be used when it's necessary to achieve the good peace. It is the point of view of a political man, while in *De Civitate*, the one who speaks is the philosopher and his reflections on peace will gain more shades, even if Hannah Arendt claimed that *De Civitate* was Augustine's only political treatise. But his contradictions will remain also in *Epistola*. He will praise the importance of free will, but, at the same time, will strengthen the idea of a right punishment. The punishment will be done in the spirit of love, but it will be done at any cost, in order to bring the sinner back to the righteous. Of course, Augustine's dogmatic rigidity amplified while he aged, as Hannah Arendt, in her doctoral thesis, and many others pointed out in a very accurate manner<sup>39</sup>, however, as Arendt herself said, yet, Augustine, unlike Luther, never made a radical choice between the philosophical

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<sup>36</sup> Poliakov, Leon, *Istoria antisemitismului, De la Mahomed la marani, vol II*, Editura Hasefer, București, 1999, p 191. The translation in English is mine, if otherwise not specified. In fact, Poliakov refers here to *Letter 93*. For this, also see: Augustine, *Letter 93*, New Advent, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1102093.htm>: "It is manifest, however, that moderate severity, or rather clemency, is carefully observed towards those who, under the Christian name, have been led astray by perverse men, in the measures used to prevent them who are the Christ's sheep from wandering, and to bring them back to the flock, when by punishments, such as exile and fines, they are admonished to consider what they suffer, and wherefore, and are taught to prefer the Scriptures which they read to human legends and calumnies." "Sed plane in eis qui sub nomine Christi errant ducti a perversis, ne forte oves Christi sint errantes, et ad gregem taliter revocandae sint, temperata severitas et magis mansuetudo servatur, ut coercitione exsiliorum atque damnorum, admoneantur considerare quid et quare patiantur, et discant praeponere rumoribus et calumniis hominum Scripturas quas legunt."

<sup>37</sup> Filoramo, Giovanni, *Crucea și puterea. Creștinii, de la martiri la persecutori*, Humanitas, București, 2022, p 373.

<sup>38</sup> Ibidem, p 372, also see *Letter 185*, 6, 24, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1102185.htm>

<sup>39</sup> Arendt, Hannah, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 1996, by The Literary Trust of Hannah Arendt Blücher, 1996, by Joanna Vecchiarelli Scott and Judith Chelius Stark, p 27. This page corresponds to the Romanian version (*Iubirea la Sfântul Augustin*, Humanitas, București, 2022).

reflection on his own self and the obedience to the faith<sup>40</sup>. Most likely, it wasn't easy to be a philosopher, a theologian and a political person, all at the same time. And above all, it was certainly hard to be the heir of the pagan legacy. His inner fights must have been tougher than anyone can imagine. It must have been a hard mission to bring together Cicero, Plotinus and Apostle Paul, all in the name of Jesus Christ. This might be one reason why Augustine seems inconsistent here and there. And that made Paula Frederiksen and others claim that, by reading him, one might think that he suffers from a comportsmental (bipolar) disorder<sup>41</sup>. Here he says that the war is bad and the peace is good and there he discovers that peace may be bad or, at least false, and war might be good when it comes to change a bad peace with a good one. Maybe we should not forget that first of all, besides a theologian, a philosopher and a political man, Augustine was an orator. Cicero's influence on his thought and his writings (just think about his long and complicated phrases) was huge. And actually, all that Augustine did was to adapt his speech to the opponent against whom it was built.

### Later echoes on the subject of peace and war

Undoubtedly, Augustine was the greatest thinker of the Late Antiquity. His thought and his works left a remarkable trace behind, a trace that was followed in the centuries that came after his death. And, as so well noticed James Carroll in his book, "After Constantine, the conversion of Augustine (354-430) may be the most momentous in the history of the Church."<sup>42</sup> His conversion brought to Church one of the greatest orators of the time, able to build up speeches that were meant to manipulate the listener into turning to the direction that the speaker aimed. And that direction was the one of making the catholic Church the ruling church in the

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<sup>40</sup> Ibidem, p 32

<sup>41</sup> Frederiksen, Paula, *Augustine and the Jews. A Christian Defence of Jews and Judaism*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2010, p 261. In this paragraph, the author considers Augustine's position regarding the Jews: *If we regard Augustine's theological teachings about Jews as evidence for what he really thought or really felt about Jewish contemporaries, we will come away with the impression of a man riddled with deep inconsistencies, emotional conflicts, unresolved anger, and so on.*

<sup>42</sup> Carroll, James, *Constantine's Sword. The Church and the Jews*, A Mariner Book, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston. New York, 2002, p 208.

Empire. He built a dogma in order to empower the Church. And the pattern he used for his purposes was one of a rhetoric of duality.

Where did this pattern lead? The pattern of a troubled man, with so many traits that contradicted each other. We have, on one hand, the pagan philosopher and the rhetor and on the other, the theologian and the leader (the political man). His personality and his thought were the product of two traditions that melted into one, as Max Zepf noticed<sup>43</sup>, but he also was the pioneer of a new way of thinking and acting down the line. What was next? The Crusades, the Inquisition, many succeeding wars, all in the name of love and peace. The good peace that could be achieved only by the means of war. Did Augustine imagine how his words would be reinterpreted? Would he do anything differently?

Maybe, before I go any further, it would be necessary to bring up two opinions on Augustine's duality. The first one belongs to the before mentioned Catherine Marés, from her presentation at Nîmes Conference:

Et pour ceux qui seraient encore rebutés par certaines prises de position extrémistes d'Augustin, je leur suggère de se laisser prendre par son style, quintessence de sa culture. La fougue berbère s'y mêle aux principes de la rhétorique romaine en un ensemble d'une grande expressivité. Le musicien qu'est Augustin se délecte en clausules cicéroniennes et mélodies du phrasé. Sa sensibilité extrême se complait dans des métaphores baroques. La Bible, assimilée au point de faire partie intégrante de son écriture, surtout les psaumes et les lettres de Saint Paul, couronne, par des images frappantes, ce mélange étonnant d'un grand tempérament et d'une grande culture.

Le portrait serait incomplet si je ne signalais quelques domaines où Augustin a été un précurseur. Il a bouleversé la philosophie de l'histoire, lui donnant un sens et l'arrachant définitivement à la vision cyclique qui prédominait chez les anciens. La mémoire et le temps furent parmi ses sujets favoris. La psychanalyse, l'existentialisme et la sémiotique peuvent se réclamer de lui, excusez du peu!<sup>44</sup>

Indeed, Augustine's thought resorted to a kind of existentialism and in this respect, I shall bring here a fragment from Karl Jaspers' *Die grossen Philosophen (The Great Philosophers)*, that I found in the afterword of Hannah Arendt's, *Love at Saint Augustine*:

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<sup>43</sup> See supra, quoted in Hannah Arendt's book.

<sup>44</sup> Marés Catherine, *Augustine d'Hippone et de Carthage, un palimpseste de cultures* in *Mémoires de l'Académie de Nîmes, X-e série, tome XCV, Année 2023*, Académie de Nîmes, 2023, p 218.

Nothing is easier than to find contradictions in Augustine. We take them as a feature of his greatness. No philosophy is free from contradictions – and no thinker can aim at contradiction. But Augustine is one of the thinkers who venture into contradictions, who draw their life from the tension of enormous contradictions. He is not one of those who strive from the outset for freedom from contradictions; on the contrary, he lets his thinking run aground on the shoals of contradiction when he tries to think God. Augustine faces contradictions. And more than that: he presses them to their utmost limits. He makes us aware of the provocative question: Is there a point, a limit, where we are bound to encounter contradiction? And of the answer: Yes, wherever, moved by the source of being and the unconditional will within us, we seek to communicate ourselves in thought, that is to say, in words. In this realm, freedom from contradiction would be existential death and the end of thinking itself. It is because Augustine took up these essential contradictions that he still exerts so provocative a power. And it is because, working with the methods of ecclesiastical thinking, he encompassed a maximum of contradictions – even in opposition to reason – that he was able, within the authority of the Church, to meet its needs so eminently without devising a system.<sup>45</sup>

Undoubtedly, contradictions are essential in philosophy, mainly in existentialist philosophy, but what happens when they cross the border, from philosophy to politics? Obviously, Augustine used them in his public debates and his writings against his opponents. It is a necessary exercise to analyse the contradictory lines towards one disputant or another. Accordingly, depending on the debates he was engaged in, he could turn the meaning of the phrase in the direction that suited him.

When arguing against the Donatists, he used all the arsenal he had available. For that purpose, he used the image of referential enemies, in order to castigate the Donatists. Therefore, he will use the triad “pagans-heretics-Jews” in his speeches. His controversies in his letters, sermons and works are mostly against pagans and heretics. Jews will be used just as a reference. It is hard to say if Augustine had met any Jews during his life. In his texts, some sort of hermeneutical Jews show up, imaginary persons, drawn out of the Scriptures<sup>46</sup>. He would use them

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<sup>45</sup> Arendt, Hannah, *Love and Saint Augustine*, 1996, by The Literary Trust of Hannah Arendt Blücher, 1996, by Joanna Vecchiarelli Scott and Judith Chelius Stark, p 314, apud Jaspers, Karl – *Plato and Augustine*, edited by Hannah Arendt and translated by Ralph Manheim, A Harvest Book, Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., New York, 1962, p 111. The page from Hannah Arendt’s volume corresponds to the Romanian version (*Iubirea la Sfântul Augustin*, Humanitas, București, 2022).

<sup>46</sup> Fredriksen, Paula, *Augustine and the Jews. A Christian Defence of Jews and Judaism*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2010, pp 226-227, regarding the Jews in the rhetoric of all Christian authors, and chapter *Slay Them Not*, specifically for the way Augustine had “made acquaintance” to the Jews (pp 290-352).

to show the righteous how bad the Donatists can be and how the righteous should avoid becoming, using a sort of cross-identification between the Donatists and the Jews<sup>47</sup>. It's a rhetorical strategy, "not even the Jews are as bad as you (Donatists) are" type, "not even the Jews do this or that" technique, as Paula Fredriksen named it<sup>48</sup>. In the centuries that followed Augustine, the Donatists were absorbed by the Catholic faith and the pagans were converted to Christianity. The Jews were the only ones who still didn't accept conversion. And they were still alive. During the Middle Ages, it became a problem to explain how this was possible.

The other theory of Augustine, the doctrine of the Jewish witness, prevented Jews from being killed by the furious Christian mobs. Yet, the concept of *temperata severitas* endured. And so did the *coercitio*. They were to be punished in the spirit of love. If Augustine himself, the greatest Father of the Catholic Church, was ambiguous, why shouldn't the Church adopt the same approach? For centuries, the heretics and the Jews, those who misinterpreted the true faith and those who rejected it, were persecuted and harassed in the name of love, using the words of Augustine. That lasted until Luther used Augustine in a more radical way and took the misinterpretation of his words to a new level of anti-Judaism. What happened further is a matter which is not subject of this paper. But we can find there a bitter echo of the theory of war and peace.

## Conclusions

Ovidiu Raetchi's book, *The History of Holocaust*, begins with the chapter "The Holocaust of words. The genocidal speech: in the beginning was the word."<sup>49</sup> "In the beginning was the word, and the Word was with God and the Word was

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<sup>47</sup> Shaw, Brent, *Sacred Violence. African Christians and Sectarian Hatred in the Age of Augustine*, Cambridge University Press, 2011, p 272. *The cross-identification of Jews with dissident Christians is explicitly made in many sermons. In an early homily, after a series of extended remarks against the "Donatists", it is noted that, like them, the Jews (along with Arians and Manichees) will be condemned on the day of the Final Judgement (Aug, Sermo 5-4 f(CCL 51: 53-56, see note 39 from page 272).*

<sup>48</sup> Fredriksen, Paula, *Augustine and the Jews. A Christian Defence of Jews and Judaism*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2010, p 309.

<sup>49</sup> Raetchi, Ovidiu, *Istoria Holocaustului. Desființarea omului: de la ascensiunea lui Hitler până la execuția lui Eichmann*, Litera, București, 2022, p 37: *At the beginning of this chain, that finally led to the gas chambers, there was the word: the antisemitical speech that made Hitler chancellor.*

God" (*John 1:1*). Afterwards, the man came and fell, and the Word became a weapon. Did Augustine know that? Most probably yes, but also most probably, he thought his words to be weapons in the good war, made to correct the bad peace. The double traditions that he inherited made him slip from one point of view to another one, completely opposite. Besides, it may be useful to remind that he spent many of his early years as a Manichean. This must have left a mark on his way of thinking for sure. And, above all, he was a rhetor and a political man, as well, the ruler of Hippo region. That forced him into adapting his position depending on the debate he was involved in. As the necessity imposed to defend a certain point of view, he modified his speech according to that. It became obvious, in this case, his training in rhetoric.

He remains, undoubtedly, the most significant thinker of the Late Antiquity. And his concerns for peace remain a turning point in the peace talks all over the centuries. But the way he relativised the concept of peace, as well as that of constraint, persecution and war and the way this relativism was used in the time of the Crusades (the good wars, waged to correct the unfaithful) and in the time of Inquisition (when *coercitio* meant autosdafé and death) cast a shadow over his work, a question we will probably never be able to answer. *Quaestio mihi factum sum*, said Augustine in *Confessions*. "I have become a question to myself"<sup>50</sup>. And so has he to us.

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<sup>50</sup> Fericitul Augustin – *Scrieri alese. Partea întâia. Confessiones – Mărturisiri*, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 1985, p 231 (*Confessiones*, X, 33, 50).

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## Phenomenology and ontology in the thought of Edmund Husserl

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**ABSTRACT.** In this paper I examine Husserlian phenomenology and its relations with a possible ontology that the great German philosopher cultivated as a project, an undeclared ontology. Husserl's expression of the "ultimately and truly absolute" as a "primeval source" is not explained by a declared ontology and the concept of the "continuum" is in the same situation.

Claiming that the roots of all ontologies seem to belong in phenomenology, Husserl appears to proclaim the uselessness of developing any ontology. The analysis of the possible development of the Husserlian concepts of "absolute" and "continuum" shows that it would have led Husserl either to an ontology or to the overcoming and dismantling of the phenomenology, because the Husserlian phenomenology and the ontology are actually incompatible. Perhaps that is exactly what he wanted to avoid.

The guiding thread of the text is that Husserlian phenomenology is not fully realized as an authentic philosophy without a declared ontology or a clear statement about the relations between phenomenology and ontology.

**Keywords:** *"absolute", continuum, time, phenomenology, ontology, transcendental "Absolute", "absolute" Being, God, consciousness, "ultimately and truly absolute", sich bekunden, real world.*

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## I. The “ultimately and truly absolute” and the “transcendental interpretation of all ontologies”

The analysis of the term “absolute”, as it appears in different places of Husserl’s writings, requires detailed research because this term has many significations, each of these fulfils a specific function in the architecture of his philosophical system, and at least one of these would have led the author to an ontological solution<sup>1</sup>. Yet, surprisingly, Husserl develops a contradictory attitude towards ontology: he cultivates it, either as a project or as an undeclared ontology, or he rejects it in the name of its possible reduction to phenomenology, as I shall show in the following pages.

In his work *Ideen I*, Husserl makes an important distinction between the *transcendental “Absolute”*, which we have laid bare through the reductions is in truth not ultimate<sup>2</sup> and the “ultimately and truly absolute”<sup>3</sup>.

It should be noted that after establishing the distinction between the *transcendental “Absolute”*, on the one hand, and the absolute as *primeval source*, the “ultimately and truly absolute”, on the other hand, Husserl does not clarify this ontological problem, after all. This concept of the “ultimately and truly absolute” was supposed to be properly defined and analyzed but it is at least regrettable that the author does not do so. In one of the phrases systematically eluded by those who have analyzed his work over time, and in which Husserl establishes the aforementioned distinction, phrase belonging to his work *Ideas. General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, Husserl argues as follows:

The transcendental “Absolute” which we have laid bare through the reductions is in truth not ultimate; it is something which in a certain profound and wholly unique sense constitutes itself, and has its primeval source in what is ultimately and truly absolute (*Ideas*, p. 165-166).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I consider that the term “absolute” in Husserl’s work is “a term with a constellation of notions”, to use an expression of Gheorghe Enescu from his well-known *Dictionary of logic* (Gheorghe Enescu, *Dicționar de logică*, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, București, 1985, p. 255). It is therefore an error to seek or claim to identify a single concept of “absolute” in Husserl’s work.

<sup>2</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Ideas. General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, Ed. London and New York, 2012, Routledge, p. 165-166.

<sup>3</sup> Edmund Husserl, op. cit., p. 166.

<sup>4</sup> Edmund Husserl, op. cit., p. 165-166.

The term “absolute” is put in quotation marks at the beginning of this phrase, precisely to show that the *transcendental absolute* does not have an ultimate ontological character but has its origin in an “ultimately and truly absolute”. Now, this “ultimately and truly absolute” should be able to explain the “*transcendental absolute*” and the givenness of subjectivity as such. Husserl points us to the primordial ontological source, but he does not give us the strictly necessary details later on.

The researcher of Husserl's work should avoid identifying *the ultimately and truly absolute* referred to by the German author with the traditional concept of God. In this sense Husserl offers numerous hints in *Ideen I* and in his other writings, and we have serious testimonies confirming this perspective. Dorion Cairns tells us that:

The term God is used occasionally by Husserl in private conversation to mean the community of *transcendental egos* which “creates” a world, but this is for Husserl a “private opinion”. (*Conversations with Husserl and Fink*, 17/8/31)<sup>5</sup>

Returning to the analysis of the Husserlian texts, we see that the concept of “God the Subject of absolutely perfect knowledge, and therefore, also of every possible adequate perception” is presented as absurd.<sup>6</sup> In other places in the work cited above, God is thought as a being who does not possess omnipotence in Cartesian sense, i.e. for Husserl the power and freedom of God could not change mathematical values and relations<sup>7</sup>, precisely in order to remove this concept. If “the immanence of God in the absolute Consciousness cannot be grasped as immanence in the sense of Being as experience (*Erlebnis*) (which would be no less absurd)”<sup>8</sup>, “the transcendence of God” must instead be “suspended”<sup>9</sup>. If he had admitted the existence of God, Husserl should have had to specify what role the Supreme Being plays in the ontological “scenario” he proposes and, first of all, to specify what he means by this term. The concept of absolute in Husserl’s writings is an open concept, i.e. a concept to which the definition is not finished and the search for it is deliberately not concluded. Such a concept suggests a phenomenological

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<sup>5</sup> Dorion Cairns, *Conversations with Husserl and Fink 17/8/31*, p. 14, Ed. Martinus Nijhoff / The Hague/ 1976.

<sup>6</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Ideas. General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, Ed. London and New York, 2012, Routledge, p. 81.

<sup>7</sup> Edmund Husserl, op. cit., p. 83.

<sup>8</sup> Edmund Husserl, op. cit., p. 99.

<sup>9</sup> Edmund Husserl, op. cit., p. 112.

search without end, not an ontological indeterminacy in principle, but only a way of thinking that follows its own path, marking to certain landmarks. The absolute means continuum, it generates the “transcendental absolute”. Husserl thus thinks *the ultimate and true absolute* in order not to abandon the phenomenological method.

In *Ideen III*, Husserl insistently analyzes the possibility of an ontology. But here is very relevant, what he calls “the inclusion of ontologies in phenomenology”; he states here that, “pure phenomenology seemed to contain within itself all ontologies [...] the roots of all ontologies are their basic concepts and its axioms”<sup>10</sup>, which leads naturally to the futility of elaborating any ontology for his philosophy, or to the secondary place of any ontology in relation to phenomenology (as a rigorous “scientific” activity, as Husserl expresses himself elsewhere, for phenomenology is, he believes, “*strenge Wissenschaft*”<sup>11</sup> but in its own sense).

Moreover, Husserl states that “all ontologies become subject to reduction”<sup>12</sup> and, taking up the philosopher's idea, previously cited, that “the roots of all ontologies are their basic concepts and axioms”<sup>13</sup> (talking about pure phenomenology) and that “these (roots) seem to belong in phenomenology”<sup>14</sup>, we would have expected the author to clarify this important spiritual property, which he neither does nor dwells on it. The mere fact that these concepts and axioms, “can be reinterpreted into certain eidetic interconnections of pure lived-processes”<sup>15</sup> is not able to fully clarify their situation. A solution presented by Husserl is also not such as to clarify the situation of ontology in general or of its legitimate removal or, scientifically speaking, of any ontology at all: “it is imperative to carry out the distinction between *science* of transcendental consciousness *in general* and the *Intuitive eidetic doctrine* of this consciousness”<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Phenomenology and the Foundations of the Sciences. Third Book. Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, Ed. Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1980, p. 66.

<sup>11</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft*, Ed. Felix Meiner Verlag, Hamburg, 2009.

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<sup>13</sup> Edmund Husserl, op.cit., p. 66.

<sup>14</sup> Edmund Husserl, op.cit., p. 66.

<sup>15</sup> Edmund Husserl, op.cit., p. 66.

<sup>16</sup> Edmund Husserl, op.cit., p. 66.

The Husserlian solution, as we shall see below, is not to be pursued along the direction of achieving an ontology in the proper sense of the term, even if the author postulates “an ultimately and truly absolute” In *Ideen III* he proposes only “the transcendental interpretations of all ontologies”<sup>17</sup> and the understanding of any “ontological theorem” is grasped as an “index” for “quite definite connections of transcendental consciousness”<sup>18</sup> just as “every empirical truth, every proposition of the experimental sciences of every sort [...] becomes an index for transcendental interconnections; that, therefore, a manner of research must be possible, which makes the total realm of factual consciousness, the total stock of absolute monads with their factual make-up of lived processes, the object of scientific consideration”<sup>19</sup>. This subject of scientific research involves the interpretation of factual sciences by means of the monads that constitute the interconnections of consciousness.

Husserl's conclusion is disarming: “Everything that the sciences of the *onta* [...] offer us [...] *resolves itself into something of a phenomenological*”<sup>20</sup> and phenomenology is presented as “the great organon of transcendental cognition in general”<sup>21</sup>. Husserl should have had to explain in the fullest possible way in what sense phenomenology is a discipline that could be described in this way. He could have developed a broad theory in this sense but he did not. To speak in passing and without the necessary precision about phenomenology in this sense is a fact that can only be justified, perhaps, by the time that the author no longer had to fully realize his philosophical project.

Phenomenology, the author assures us, is “*the science of “origins”, of the “mothers” of all cognition*”<sup>22</sup>, taking on a metaphor of Goethe's from the tragedy “Faust” (a remarkable poetic-philosophical theme in the German writer's work), but from the Husserlian perspective, an undeclared ontology *seems* to take shape, which the philosopher intends to overcome at any moment for a higher consideration, a kind of ontology that is above what is usually accepted as ontology<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> Edmund Husserl, op.cit., p. 66.

<sup>18</sup> Edmund Husserl, op.cit., p. 66.

<sup>19</sup> Edmund Husserl, op.cit., p. 66.

<sup>20</sup> Edmund Husserl, op.cit., p. 66-67.

<sup>21</sup> Edmund Husserl, op.cit., p. 67.

<sup>22</sup> Edmund Husserl, op.cit., p. 69.

<sup>23</sup> Perhaps Husserl invokes only an intuition of an inexpressible philosophical vision.

## II. The “absolute being” and the “transcendence revealed in consciousness”

The problem of the absolute is in fact restricted by Husserl to “the realm of transcendental consciousness [...] as [...] a realm of absolute being”<sup>24</sup>, “*absolutes Sein*”, and does not go beyond this limit. As the philosopher wrote: “my consciousness is absolute being and any other consciousness is absolute being”<sup>25</sup>. Developed extensively, the question of the absolute would have led Husserl either to an ontology or to the overcoming and dissolution of phenomenology, and perhaps this was precisely what he wished to avoid<sup>26</sup>.

Another inadmissible vagueness in the approach to “absolute” Being (Husserl puts the term in quotation marks) occurs when in *Ideen I*, in § 76 transcendental consciousness is considered “the original category of Being generally [...] in which all other regions of Being have their root”<sup>27</sup>, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the “transcendent” Being (Husserl also puts this term in quotation marks) “which is “*revealed*” itself (sich [...] “*bekundendes*”) in consciousness”<sup>28</sup> (the author also puts this term between quotation marks, further complicating his exposition with these quotation marks that seem to reduce these essential terms for understanding his philosophical system to the masks of metaphors for a deeper discourse than the explicit one): transcendence has its origin in transcendental consciousness, but then how can it “reveal itself” there? In the absence of any ontologically binding clarification, we have here a contradiction, an admission of the absurd, and the invocation of the method of phenomenological reduction as the only proof in this respect it is not such as to remove the inconveniences mentioned above. The term *bekunden* appearing in the Husserlian texts of *Ideen I* as *sich [...] bekunden*, therefore in a reflexive sense, not impersonal, but as an entity manifesting itself, can be translated as to *reveal itself*

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<sup>24</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Ideas. General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, Ed. London and New York, 2012, Routledge, p. 146.

<sup>25</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Zur Phanomenologie der Intersubjectivitat. Erster Teil 1905-1920*, Ed. Den Haag, Martinus Nijhoff, 1973, p. 6.

<sup>26</sup> In the same vein, Dan Zahavi (*Husserl and the “absolute”*, p. 73) polemically cites Dillon's view that *Husserl would have destroyed his own transcendental idealism, with its latent solipsism, if he had rigorously developed the implications of the notion of the “life-world” in his work Krisis.*

<sup>27</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Ideas. General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, Ed. London and New York, 2012, Routledge, p. 146.

<sup>28</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie, Erstes Buch*, Ed. Felix Meiner Verlag, Hamburg, 2021, p. 159.

(Christian Ferencz-Flatz)<sup>29</sup> or *to manifest itself*<sup>30</sup>. Listing some contexts in which the term appears in *Ideen I* is necessary for this analysis. First of all, in § 76 of *Ideen I* Being is both, “Sein als Bewußtsein” (being understood as consciousness) and, “*Sein als sich im Bewußtsein “bekundendes”, “transzendentes” Sein*”<sup>31</sup> (being understood as “transcendence”, which “reveals itself” in consciousness). Husserl puts the terms “bekundendes” and “transzendentes” between inverted commas in the original German text just as Einstein used to put the term “time” between inverted commas when explaining the theory of relativity<sup>32</sup>.

Then, in § 81 of *Ideen I*, “cosmic time reveals itself within the phenomenological time”<sup>33</sup> in a way that is not identical with “other real essential phases of the world present themselves phenomenologically”<sup>34</sup>; in the Husserlian text, in German: “kosmische Zeit sich in der phänomenologischen bekundet.”<sup>35</sup> One of the most important Husserlian ontological problems, however, remains this term *sich bekundet* of transcendence. One cannot use this term *sich* in this context so loaded with obvious ontological suggestions and projects it without the obligatory precision. And yet, Husserl does not clarify the ontological and gnoseological situation of transcendence, as would be required.

The author states that “The relations between phenomenology and all other sciences, a topic we have frequently touched on, but must go into more deeply at a later stage, have their ground in this essential relation between *transcendental* and transcendent Being”<sup>36</sup>. But the way in which Husserl understands *transcendental Being*,

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<sup>29</sup> I have considered the translation of the original Husserlian text as it was done by Christian Ferencz-Flatz in Edmund Husserl, *Ideii privitoare la o fenomenologie pură și la o filozofie fenomenologică. Cartea întâi: Introducere generală în fenomenologia pură*, Ed. Humanitas, București, 2011.

<sup>30</sup> As I translated after the German original text from Edmund Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie, Erstes Buch*, Ed. Felix Meiner Verlag, Hamburg, 2021, p. 159.

<sup>31</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie, Erstes Buch*, Ed. Felix Meiner Verlag, Hamburg, 2021, p. 159.

<sup>32</sup> Albert Einstein, *Relativity. The special and general theory*, Ed. Signature Press Edition, p. 29

<sup>33</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie, Erstes Buch*, Ed. Felix Meiner Verlag, Hamburg, 2021, p. 181.

<sup>34</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Ideas. General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, Ed. London and New York, 2012, Routledge, p. 165.

<sup>35</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie, Erstes Buch*, Ed. Felix Meiner Verlag, Hamburg, 2021, p. 181.

<sup>36</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Ideas. General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, Ed. London and New York, 2012, Routledge, p. 146.

*transcendent being* and the relations between them, seems to frustrate finding the philosophical sought perspective, assuming that it has been clarified by the author, even as a private opinion.

### III. The real world, formal ontology, regional ontologies and the specificity of phenomenology

The analysis of the concept of the “real world” in Husserlian philosophy might suggest that the author has nevertheless an ontological perspective. In his work *Ideen I*, Husserl analyzes “*the real world*”<sup>37</sup> (again the quotation marks belong to him) in a complex philosophical context of “possible worlds” and “possible non-worlds”: “the correlate of our factual experience, then presents itself as *a special case of various possible worlds and non-worlds* [Welten und Unwelten], which, on their side, are no other than *correlates of the essentially possible variations of the idea “empirical consciousness”*”<sup>38</sup>. The complexity of the discourse increases far beyond the simple analysis of the idea of a possible world because Husserl surprisingly introduces the term *possible non-world*, and constructs in the most speculative possible way an unapproachable complex of worlds and non-worlds. He does not clarify, however, this wholly original construct in the history of philosophy and does not come back to this problem, *seeming once again to have the vision of a kind of ontology that is above what is usually accepted as such*. We would expect that the analysis of the “real world” together with that of “absolute consciousness” could lead us to an understanding of the “ultimately and truly absolute”, but Husserl does not directly offer such an understanding.

The returning to subjectivity and, implicitly, intersubjectivity seems to solve the problem, but as Dan Zahavi remarked, in Husserl's philosophy, “Subjectivity (and [...] intersubjectivity) is a condition of possibility for reality. Without subjectivity there can be no reality”<sup>39</sup>. But, if the idea of the “*real world*” is analyzed as mentioned above, subjectivity is also not analyzed in such a way to open the understanding of the “ultimately and truly absolute” postulated in *Ideen I*. Dan Zahavi rightly criticizes the fact that in *Ideen I*, Husserl analyzes “the relation between the constituted objects

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<sup>37</sup> Edmund Husserl, op.cit., p. 91.

<sup>38</sup> Edmund Husserl, op.cit., p. 91.

<sup>39</sup> Dan Zahavi, *Husserl's Phenomenology*, Ed. Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 2003, p. 53.

and the constituting consciousness [...] the way in which the givenness of objects is conditioned by subjectivity”, but he “did not pursue the question concerning the givenness of subjectivity itself any further [...] such a silence is *phenomenologically* unacceptable.”<sup>40</sup> . Now, we might say, going along the lines of Zahavi's criticism, the givenness of the subjective condition once clarified, if Husserl had done so, could have opened the way to the “ultimately and truly absolute” that he postulated. This clarification would have prompted Husserl to found an ontology, yet ontology is the philosophical horizon towards which the author systematically refuses to go.

In *Ideen I* and also in *Experience and Judgment*<sup>41</sup>, however, Husserl explicitly presents the project of a formal ontology, or rather an outline of such a project. Presenting formal ontology as a theoretical approach to any possible object, Husserl remains at the level of a summary Propaedeutics and of an ontological project, independent of the previously mentioned ontological project of the “ultimately and truly absolute”. In this regard Husserl states that: “We take our start from formal ontology (conceived always as pure logic in its full extension so as to cover the *mathesis universalis*), which, as we know, is the eidetic science of object in general”<sup>42</sup>. Husserl also specifies that there is no formal region, “*but only the empty form of the region in general [...] superordinate* (even if only formally) to all regions, with their materially [*sachhaltig*] determined specific of essence”<sup>43</sup>. The conclusion that the philosopher emphasizes is that “*the formal ontology comprises in itself [...] the forms of all possible ontologies in general and [...] prescribes to all material ontologies a common formal constitution*”<sup>44</sup>. In relation to formal ontology, regional ontologies are material ontologies referred to distinct domains of Being, ontologies distinct by matter or content. For example, geometry is the science of spatial entities, biology is the science of living organisms, etc. Each region opens up a well delimited horizon of research. However, not only does the author not present a detailed ontology, but, moreover, he makes clarifications that seem to obstruct such a possibility by considering that “in no case does a single intuition of a thing or a finite closed continuum or collection

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<sup>40</sup> Dan Zahavi, op. cit., p. 80-81.

<sup>41</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Experience and Judgment. Investigations in a Genealogy of Logic*. Ed. Northwestern University Press, Evanston, 1973

<sup>42</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Ideas. General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, Ed. London and New York, 2012, Routledge, p. 23.

<sup>43</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie, Erstes Buch*, Ed. Felix Meiner Verlag, Hamburg, 2021, p. 26.

<sup>44</sup> Edmund Husserl, op.cit., p. 26.

of thing-intuitions suffice to obtain in *adequate* form the desired essence in the total fullness of its essential determinations.”<sup>45</sup>

If, as Husserl concludes that “ontology is not phenomenology”<sup>46</sup>, then the phenomenological analysis of time must avoid constituting itself in any kind of ontology but in something of a completely different philosophical or rigorous-scientific mode. Right from the beginning of his first “lesson” on time – “Phenomenology of the inner consciousness of time”, Husserl makes it clear that phenomenology does not assume the analysis of Objective time or real time intervals and their errors of appreciation<sup>47</sup>. This is because the real object, real time, the time of nature is not a phenomenological datum<sup>48</sup>. However, Husserl does not explain why real time should not be a datum of a well-oriented phenomenology, correctly developed and open, in a metaphysical or scientific sense, towards nature - the philosopher himself, in fact, specifies that “phenomenology [...] excludes only any naive metaphysics that operates with objects that are absurd in themselves (but not metaphysics in general)”<sup>49</sup> and, as we have already mentioned, he conceived phenomenology as a rigorous science.

In conclusion, however, we can situate the phenomenological analysis of time in opposition to the common intuition of time as well as to establish philosophical and scientific theories.

Returning to the problem of the undeclared Husserlian ontology, which places the problem of time in a deep metaphysical perspective, the concept of the continuum and that of passive synthesis must be analyzed as the philosopher thought them, as ontological concepts, in fact.

#### IV. The Husserlian concept of continuum

The importance of the concept of continuum in Husserl's philosophy has already been emphasized by some researchers. Claudio Tarditi considers that this

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<sup>45</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Ideas. General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, Ed. London and New York, 2012, Routledge, p. 312.

<sup>46</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Phenomenology and the Foundations of the Sciences. Third Book. Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, Ed. Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1980, p. 117.

<sup>47</sup> Edmund Husserl, *The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness*, Indiana University Press, 2019, p. 23.

<sup>48</sup> Edmund Husserl, *op.cit.*, p. 23.

<sup>49</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Cartesianische Meditationen*, Ed. Felix Meiner Verlag, Hamburg, 2019, p. 155.

Husserlian concept represents “a real *leitmotiv* of the phenomenological method as a whole”<sup>50</sup>.

*Husserl gives to the concept of continuum an essential role in understanding time and space* but what makes of this concept a fundamental idea and an ontological principle or a kind of ontological medium is the way it is invoked and used to explain them, its undeniable and a self-evident reality having significance and its own grounding and explanatory power. The fact that this concept of the continuum is not mathematical but ontological in Husserl’s work is also confirmed by Dorion Cairns<sup>51</sup> who argues that for the father of phenomenology the experience of the continuum, of each continuity, is not necessarily linked to any process of mathematization or formalization but these secondary processes can correspond to a subsequent activity. Since Husserl speaks generically about the continuum without specifying as in physics or mathematics whether it is a one-dimensional continuum, a two-dimensional continuum, a three-dimensional continuum or a four-dimensional continuum<sup>52</sup>, and, moreover, the problem of the continuum occupies a place of prime importance in his philosophy, we can assume that for this thinker the continuum has the status of an ontological principle or is a kind of ontological medium, as we have stated above. It remains a peculiarity and a problem of Husserlian thought that, on the one hand, he does not analyze this concept as it should be analyzed and, on the other hand, he does not take into account the concept of discontinuity as it is in his contemporary physics, a concept that Einstein and Infeld claimed that “has taken the place of continuity”<sup>53</sup>. Husserl does not explain his exclusive preference for the concept of continuity. Evidently, he had his reasons for it because we cannot assume that he didn’t actually knew quantum mechanics from the perspective of which “the energy levels are, as a rule, not continuous but discontinuous”.<sup>54</sup> Incidentally, the concept of discontinuity was widely debated in the scientific literature of the time, especially in relation to quantum physics. Both concepts, the continuum and the discontinuous, could have found a more prominent place in Husserl’s writings, which unfortunately did not happen. As a pure conjecture, it

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<sup>50</sup> Claudio Tarditi, *Rethinking Spatiotemporal Extension: Husserl’s Contribution to the Debate on the Continuum Hypothesis*, *Horizon* 7 (1) 2018: I. Research: C. Tarditi: 141, *Studies in Phenomenology*, <https://doi.org/10.21638/2226-5260-2018-7-1-137-159>.

<sup>51</sup> Dorion Cairns, *Conversations with Husserl and Fink 17/8/31*, p. 17, Ed. Martinus Nijhoff / The Hague/ 1976.

<sup>52</sup> Albert Einstein, Leopold Infeld, *The Evolution of Physics*, Ed. The Scientific Book Club III, Charing Cross Road, London, 1938.

<sup>53</sup> Albert Einstein, Leopold Infeld, op. cit., p. 312.

<sup>54</sup> Albert Einstein, Leopold Infeld, op. cit., p. 283.

is possible that Husserl considered the discontinuum to be a concept erroneously constructed by the physicists of his time and rejected it on such grounds, or, that he considered the continuum theory to be sufficiently consistent not to be disturbed by any exceptions. Husserl does not tell us in what relation the “ultimately and truly absolute” is with the continuum itself. We can also establish a certain ontological importance for it insofar as the concept of the continuum is systematically implied by Husserl in his philosophical discourse on time and space as well as on the flow of experiences of the pure self. But unfortunately, Husserl puts certain concepts into his philosophy and attaches fundamental importance to them but in the same time blocks any metaphysical development or clarification of them. Borrowing and reorienting a well-known clever-spoken of Constantin Noica, the terms *absolute* and *continuum* are in Husserl’s writings a kind of opening that closes itself, and with all the clarifications made by the father of phenomenology, the concept of passivity is in the same semantical condition<sup>55</sup>.

Tarditi appreciated that “the problem of the continuum is at the very core of the general problem of the perception of space and time”<sup>56</sup>, and Dan Zahavi in his well-known work “Husserl’s Phenomenology” approaches the concept of continuum in the philosophy of his illustrious predecessor, not in terms of the analysis of time but of space<sup>57</sup>.

The natural conclusion is that we cannot understand Husserl’s conceptions of time and space without involving the concept of continuum, a concept independent of any strictly metaphysical, mathematical or logical interpretation, and the phenomenological interpretation of time and space does not even need the latter.

As Husserl stated, “phenomenological method proceeds entirely through acts of reflection”<sup>58</sup>, but the real problem of Husserlianism is that of the original way in which the specificity of these acts is conceived and also the sphere of strange prohibitions that

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<sup>55</sup> In *Ideen II*, Husserl states that “In opposition to the active ego, is the *passive ego* and wherever the active ego is, the ego is always at the same time, passive” (*Idees directrices pour une phenomenologie et une philosophie phenomenologique pures, Livre Second, Puf 1982, p. 297*). Now, this passivity which is deeply interwoven with activity, should have, in principle, either a psychological explanation (which Husserl would not admit) or an ontological explanation, given that “the realm of transcendental consciousness” must be understood in a very precise sense, as “the realm of the “absolute Being” as Husserl states in *Ideen I §76*.

<sup>56</sup> Tarditi, op. cit. p. 143.

<sup>57</sup> Zahavi, D. (2003). *Husserl’s Phenomenology*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, p. 100.

<sup>58</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Ideas. General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, Ed. London and New York, 2012, Routledge, p. 149.

the author establishes in relation to the possibility of extension the phenomenological method. In this sense, we have already mentioned the Husserlian idea that real time, the time of nature, cannot be a phenomenological datum. Such an idea can be discussed in relation to Stephen Hawking's assertion that "it is impossible to imagine a four-dimensional space"<sup>59</sup> referring to Einstein's theory of the space-time continuum<sup>60</sup>, an impossibility that also questions the possibility of a development of Husserl's and other phenomenologists' intention to give a graphic representation to temporal consciousness. Such an interdiction cannot affect any openness or dialog of phenomenology with contemporary sciences without isolating the former.

In regard to the temporal continuum alone, Husserl stated that "every real experience is necessarily one that endures [...]; and with this duration it takes its place within an endless continuum of durations - a concretely *filled* continuum"<sup>61</sup>.

This "temporal purview concretely filled", as Husserl calls it, "stretching away endlessly on all sides"<sup>62</sup>. Husserl also states that "every experience, as a temporal being, is an experience of its pure Ego"<sup>63</sup>, "but the stream of experience cannot begin and end"<sup>64</sup>. The relation between the pure Ego and the stream of filled experiences, this necessary relation between a pure Ego and an endless continuum of durations<sup>65</sup>, requires clarifications that Husserl does not make, as we have shown above, probably also for fear of not orienting the phenomenological discourse towards a purely metaphysical discourse or one proper to mathematics or logic, even though the involvement of the concept of continuum in the description of space, time and the stream of experiences of the pure Ego should have led the author to an ontological conclusion. However, Husserl postulates that "cosmic time reveals itself [*sich bekundet*]" within the phenomenological one in a fundamentally different way from the way in which "other essential moments of the material [*sachlich*] world phenomenologically appear"<sup>66</sup>.

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<sup>59</sup> Stephen W. Hawking, *A Brief History of Time from the Big Bang to Black Holes*, Ed. Bantam Books, London, Toronto, Sydney, Auckland, Johannesburg, 2016, p. 28.

<sup>60</sup> Stephen W. Hawking, op. cit., cap. 2, *Space and Time*, p. 17-39.

<sup>61</sup> Edmund Husserl, op. cit., p. 166.

<sup>62</sup> Edmund Husserl, op. cit., p. 166.

<sup>63</sup> Edmund Husserl, op. cit., p. 166.

<sup>64</sup> Edmund Husserl, op. cit., p. 166.

<sup>65</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie, Erstes Buch*, Ed. Felix Meiner Verlag, Hamburg, 2021, § 81, § 82, p. 180-185.

<sup>66</sup> Edmund Husserl, op. cit., p. 181.

Even the very concept of revealing, necessarily refers to ontological or scientific clarifications, as also does the postulate that “time, which is essentially a matter of living itself [...] cannot be measured [...]”<sup>67</sup>. Husserl visibly intended to keep phenomenology and the search for the “truly absolute” away from science or metaphysics, in a state of superiority that unfortunately remains an unfulfilled project (for reasons inherent to his thought, or because of the tragedy of his life that affected and ended a stage of his life, which was probably enlightening, etc.).

Husserlian thought has undergone an evolution throughout the author's life in terms of the structure of the temporal phases of consciousness in the transition from the conception shown in his work “*On the Phenomenology of the Internal Consciousness of Time*” (1893-1917) to the perspective contained in his texts from 1917-1918, the so-called “*Bernau Manuscripts*”. As for the Husserlian texts from 1929-1934, called the “*C Manuscripts*” and the later “*L Manuscripts*”, Dan Zahavi says that they are “difficult and rather enigmatic”<sup>68</sup>, suggesting their irrelevance.

By analyzing the first two Husserl's works we can see the changes that he made within his own conceptions. If in “*On the Phenomenology of the Internal Consciousness of Time*” the author speaks of three functions in the following structural order: primal impression, retention and protention but in the *Bernau Manuscripts* the primal impression becomes the “frontier” between retention and protention. We can admit that the definitive perspective that Husserl himself assumed is the one that he formulated last in chronological order, but once this historical-philosophical aspect is admitted, we do not implicitly clarify the ontological problem pursued, we do not shed light in any way on the concept of the continuum.

The concept of the continuum also appears in Husserl's analysis of what could be called *historical time*, the humanity being conceived “as a single life comprising people and nations linked only by spiritual traits, with a multitude of human and cultural types, but flowing from one another in a continuous way”<sup>69</sup>. Therefore, at Husserl, all that is time and becoming involve the continuum.

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<sup>67</sup> Edmund Husserl, op. cit., p. 181.

<sup>68</sup> Dan Zahavi, op. cit., p. 87.

<sup>69</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Die Krisis des europäischen Menschentums und die Philosophie*, HUSSERLIANA, VI 1953.

## V. Conclusions

As is clear from the analysis of Husserlian work, from *Ideen I* to *Ideen III*, the father of phenomenology does not realize an ontology: he hesitates, postpones or simply refuses to construct it explicitly. In this respect, it is not so much the ontological project, if it can be called like so, of *Ideen I*, but especially what Husserl claims in *Ideen III*, that must be taken into account, since the major importance of the author's late work in relation to his earlier one is already confirmed by well-known researches, as L. Landgrebe emphasized<sup>70</sup>.

The *sui-generis* relation between phenomenology and ontology is proposed by Husserl in *Ideen III* as the ideal solution, for both the construction of phenomenology and for the solution of any ontological problem. We also find here an original project of Husserl's philosophy, a project that unfortunately could not be carried out by the great thinker. The relation between the "absolute" being and transcendence must be mediated by the idea of the "self revelation" or the "self manifestation" (*sich bekundet*) of transcendence, but Husserl does not make the necessary clarifications in this regard. The importance of the Husserlian concept of continuum brings to the forefront of the great philosopher's thought an extremely complex idea and a kind of ontological principle or ontological medium that becomes a constant in his philosophical discourse. But Husserl does not develop a proper analysis of this ontological concept so important for a correct understanding of his thought.

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<sup>70</sup> L. Landgrebe, *Die Phänomenologie als transzendente Theorie der Geschichte*, in *Phänomenologische Forschungen*, hrsg. von der "Deutschen Gesellschaft für phänomenologische Forschung", Bd. 3: *Phänomenologie und Praxis*, Verlag K. Alber Freiburg/ München, 1976, p. 17-47.

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## Was Aristotle a non-classical logician?

Luis F. BARTOLO ALEGRE\*

**ABSTRACT.** This paper discusses the possible classification of Aristotle's syllogistic as a non-classical logical system, positing Aristotle himself as a non-classical logician. Initially, we find compelling arguments for this thesis, particularly regarding the expressive power and the rules governing logical inference inherent in Aristotle's approach. My analysis nevertheless addresses two significant counterarguments. The first, the *special case objection*, posits that Aristotle's syllogistic can be framed as a classical logic which deals with canonical syllogistic forms. I argue that this objection is insufficient, as it is possible to point cases in which his system seems to differ from classical logic. The second counterargument, the *formalisation gap objection*, highlights that Aristotle's syllogistic resists straightforward modern logical interpretations. This latter objection is evaluated as more compelling and substantial. In particular, a distinction between two concepts is proposed which could help us understand what Aristotle was aiming at in his theory of inference: the notions of 'to follow from' and 'to be a conclusion of'. While the former aligns with the usual sense formal validity, the second requires an inferential structure connecting the premises to the conclusion, explaining why Aristotle excluded inferences like  $A \vdash A$  from syllogisms despite acknowledging that  $A$  follows from  $A$ .

**Keywords:** *history of logic, logical system, syllogistic, paraconsistent logics, connexive logics.*

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## Introduction

Was Aristotle a classical logician? Answering this question calls for a comparison between the classical (or standard) logical system and Aristotle's syllogistic to evaluate whether they coincide or not. If they do, then Aristotle was a classical logician; if they do not, then he was not. But Aristotle's syllogistic differs from the standard system at least in terms of expressive structure. For instance, as De Morgan<sup>1</sup> argued, inferences such as 'man is an animal, therefore, the head of a man is the head of an animal', which are easily representable in polyadic first-order logic<sup>2</sup>, are not syllogisms in Aristotle's system. Therefore, Aristotle was not a classical logician and, hence, he was a non-classical logician.

But is it correct to conclude that Aristotle was a non-classical logician from the fact that his system is not equivalent to the classical logical system? It would seem so, as non-classical logic seems to be just the complement of classical logic. That is, a logical system which is not classical is non-classical. Moreover, a logician who proposes a logical system which is classical or non-classical is, accordingly, a classical or a non-classical logician. Hence, if we accept that Aristotle was a logician, and that his system is not equivalent to the classical one, then we should accept that he was a non-classical logician.

There is nevertheless more to the distinction between classical and non-classical logic than this. In this paper, I will discuss two objections that can be made against classifying Aristotle as either a classical or as a non-classical logician.

The first counterargument, which I will call the *special case objection*, states that Aristotle's syllogistic, as a logical system, is not different from classical logic, but is just a special case of it. Thus, for example, standard sentential logic and standard first-order logic are the cases of classical logic dealing sentential and first-order forms. In the same way, Aristotle's syllogistic would be, according to this objection, the case of classical logic dealing with the syllogistic forms systematised by Aristotle.

The second counterargument, which I will call the *formalisation gap objection*, states that Aristotle's syllogistic does not qualify as a logical system in the modern

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<sup>1</sup> Augustus De Morgan, *Formal Logic*, p. 114. De Morgan did not intend to undermine syllogistic with this example. Rather, he used it as a motivation to extend its power. For an engaging discussion on his approach, see Sun-Joo Shin, 'Logic of relations by De Morgan and Peirce'.

<sup>2</sup> See R. G. Wengert, 'Schematizing De Morgan's argument'.

sense of the term. The main reason for asserting this is that Aristotle's system does not contain some concepts (e.g., a distinction between the conditional and the entailment relation) which are crucial for defining modern logical systems.

Each of these objections are discussed and assessed in Sections 2 and 3, respectively. Section 4 builds on Section 3, outlining a distinction that suggests a different perspective on Aristotle's syllogistic. Section 1 provides the conceptual framework of this paper.

## 1. Definitions

I will call 'inference' any sequence of statements, some of which are its premises and one of which is its conclusion. An inference is *valid* if it is correct to infer its conclusion from its premises, and *invalid* otherwise. The precise meaning of 'correct' here depends on the philosophical conception of logical validity adopted. A detailed discussion of this concept is beyond the scope of this paper. It suffices to note that correctness, for our purposes, is related to the transmission truth from premises to conclusion. Now, a 'syllogism', in the Aristotelian sense, is a valid inference, but there may be more to its definition as we will see in Section 4.

A *logical system* is a framework that enables us to differentiate between valid and invalid inferences, at least with respect to inferences of a specific form. Modern logical systems are usually defined as pairs  $S = \langle \mathcal{L}, \vdash \rangle$ , where  $\mathcal{L}$  is a set of sentences of a formal language and  $\vdash: \wp \mathcal{L} \times \mathcal{L}$  is a relation of logical consequence relating sentences  $A \in \mathcal{L}$  with the sets of sentences  $\mathcal{A} \subseteq \mathcal{L}$  of which they are a logical consequence. The sentences of  $\mathcal{L}$  are closed formulae of a sentential language (i.e., formulae with sentential connectives and sentential variables) or a first-order language (i.e., formulae with sentential connectives, predicates, individual variables, individual constants, and quantifiers)<sup>3</sup>. Thus,  $\mathcal{A} \vdash A$  means that sentence  $A$  is a logical consequence of the set of sentences  $\mathcal{A}$ . If our inference has a finite number of premises, then we may abbreviate  $\{A_1, \dots, A_n\} \vdash B$  with  $A_1, \dots, A_n \vdash B$ . Finally,  $\vdash A$  denotes that  $A$  is a logical consequence of the empty set of premises or, as some might say, that  $A$  is a logical truth.

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<sup>3</sup> There are logical systems with other kinds of languages, notably, modal and second-order languages. However, in this paper we will not need to pay attention to those.

A special class of logical systems are *standard or classical logics*, which are those logical systems satisfying the standard rules of logic. For example, sentential classical logic enables us to differentiate between valid and invalid inferences in sentential languages according to the rules of standard deductive bases; first-order classical logic does the same in first-order languages.

*Non-classical logics* are logical systems which do not satisfy some of the standard rules of logic. For instance, *paraconsistent logics* are logical systems in which the rule *ex contradictione sequitur quodlibet* (ECQ) does not hold in general.<sup>4</sup> This rule, which has held a central place in mathematical logic, posits that, from contradictory sentences or sequences of sentences, any conclusion can be derived; in symbolic notation,  $A, \neg A \vdash B$  or  $A \wedge \neg A \vdash B$ , among other options.

*Contra-classical logics* are special kinds of non-classical logics which not only restrict the generality of some classical rule (like paraconsistent logics do with the ECQ), but rather assert the generality of principles which are not present in classical logic. For instance, *connexive logics* feature a rule known as ‘Aristotle’s thesis’, which I will hereafter call the ‘connexive principle’.<sup>5</sup> This principle is often formalised with the rules  $\vdash \neg(A \rightarrow \neg A)$  or  $\not\vdash A \rightarrow \neg A$ , none of which are featured by classical logic.

While it is widely accepted Aristotle’s syllogistic was the first logical system ever devised, it is uncertain whether it can be formalised as a modern logical system. In order to bypass the potential ambiguity of the term ‘formalise’<sup>6</sup>, let us rephrase the idea. It is uncertain whether we can construct a formal system  $S = \langle \mathcal{L}, \vdash \rangle$  such that: (a)  $\mathcal{L}$  includes precisely the types of expressions that Aristotle would recognise as possible premises or conclusions of a syllogism; and (b)  $\vdash$  captures precisely the series of expressions of  $\mathcal{L}$  which Aristotle would recognise as valid inferences. I will argue that this uncertainty complicates any meaningful discussion on whether Aristotle’s syllogistic should be classified as classical or non-classical.

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<sup>4</sup> On paraconsistent logics and the ECQ, see: Ayda I. Arruda, ‘A survey of paraconsistent logic’; Evandro L. Gomes and Itala M. L. D’Ottaviano, *Para além das Colunas de Hércules*; and Graham Priest, Koji Tanaka, and Zach Weber, ‘Paraconsistent logic’. For a historical document on the coining of the name ‘paraconsistent logic’, see Francisco Miró Quesada C., ‘In the name of paraconsistency’.

<sup>5</sup> On connexive logics and the connexive principle, see: Storrs McCall, ‘A history of connexivity’; Hitoshi Omori and Heinrich Wansing, ‘Connexive logics’; and Heinrich Wansing, ‘Connexive logic’.

<sup>6</sup> See John MacFarlane, ‘What does it mean to say that logic is formal?’; and Catarina Dutilh Novaes, ‘The different ways in which logic is (said to be) formal’.

Notwithstanding this point, it is still the case that Aristotle's syllogistic has rules which enable us to differentiate between valid inferences, or *sylogisms*, and invalid inferences of a specific kind: the canonical syllogistic figures. It seems that Aristotle did not regard such figures as the only possible forms of admissible inferences. However, as we will later see, he discarded some forms of inferences which are currently accepted, such as inferences with a single premise<sup>7</sup>. Thus, Aristotle's syllogistic is applied to a domain of inferences which does not exactly match that of sentential and first-order languages. I will call this the domain of 'canonical syllogistic forms' or 'syllogistic forms' for short.

There is some discussion about whether Aristotle's syllogistic should be regarded as a classical or as non-classical logic<sup>8</sup>. In particular, there have been arguments for classifying it as paraconsistent<sup>9</sup> and as connexive<sup>10</sup>. An argument can also be made that, since this system does not deal with proper sentential or first-order forms, then it lacks the expressive power of classical logical systems. Hence, it should not be considered as some kind of rival of classical logic since, in the domain of syllogistic forms, the theses of both logical systems would coincide. This is what I have called the special case objection, which I discuss in the next section.

## 2. The Special Case Objection

The fact that a logical system is not isomorphic to some of the usual systems of classical logic does not necessarily mean that it is non-classical. The system in question could be a special case or an extension of classical logic, in which case it would still be entirely reasonable to consider it classical.

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<sup>7</sup> As will become clear in Section 4, I am not claiming that Aristotle denied the possibility of individual statements having logical consequences. Rather, my point is that sequences of two statements (hence, with only one premise) did not, for Aristotle, qualify as inferences, even if the would-be conclusion logically follows from the would-be premise.

<sup>8</sup> Among the authors who defend the 'classicality' of Aristotelian syllogistic are: Susan Haack, *Philosophy of Logics*; and Francisco Miró Quesada C., 'Las lógicas heterodoxas y el problema de la unidad de la Lógica'. Among those who question it are: Graham Priest, 'Paraconsistency and dialetheism'; and Storrs McCall, 'A history of connexivity'. Finally, there are those authors who think that no straightforward answer can be given to such question, including: Graham Priest and Richard Routley (eds.), *Paraconsistent Logics*; Evandro Luís Gomes and Itala M. L. D'Ottaviano, 'Aristotle's theory of deduction and paraconsistency'; and Jean-Yves Béziau, 'Is modern logic non-Aristotelian?'

<sup>9</sup> See Graham Priest, 'Paraconsistency and dialetheism'.

<sup>10</sup> See Storrs McCall, 'A history of connexivity'.

Thus, some authors have considered that classical logic is just an enhancement of Aristotle's syllogistic, the latter being a *special case* of it. The idea is that the basic conceptions about logical inference and logical truth of Aristotle's syllogistic find their most accomplished form in standard logic. Susan Haack made a very explicit statement in this sense, noting in parentheses that 'modern "classical" logic is an extension [of] traditional Aristotelian logic'<sup>11</sup>. Similarly, Francisco Miró Quesada stated that classical logic is 'a development of Aristotelian and medieval *assertoric logic*' and follows the 'three classical principles': non-contradiction, excluded third, and identity<sup>12</sup>. These principles, also known as 'the three Aristotelian principles', are also featured in classical logic – and they arguably have a special place in it. Consequently, it might be fair to say that classical logic is just a more formalised and complete expression of Aristotle's syllogistic.

So, what is the main difference between Aristotle's syllogistic and classical systems? In terms of modern logical systems, Aristotle's syllogistic would differ from the usual systems of classical logic with respect to the language  $\mathcal{L}$  but not with respect to the consequence relation  $\vdash$ . In general, it could be said that classical first-order logic has more expressive power than Aristotle's syllogistic, which would be a special case of it. As it is commonly agreed, any first-order logical system with monadic predicates could represent all the canonical syllogistic forms<sup>13</sup>. Thus, any inference rule of Aristotle's syllogistic would correspond to some inference rule in classical first-order logic – but not the other way around. (Our translation would have to take into account some special features of Aristotle's logic, e.g., those related to existential import.)

This was not the way in which some of the founders of modern logic regarded their relation to Aristotle's system. In fact, if we conceive classical logic – following the suggestion above – as an inference system based on Aristotle's conceptions, then we should probably say that the first explicit – though *avant la lettre* – non-classical logician was no other than George Boole:

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<sup>11</sup> Susan Haack, *Philosophy of Logics*, p. 5.

<sup>12</sup> Francisco Miró Quesada C., 'Las lógicas heterodoxas y el problema de la unidad de la Lógica', pp. 18–9.

<sup>13</sup> For an exhaustive reconstruction of Aristotle's syllogistic forms in classical logic, see Jan Łukasiewicz, *Aristotle's Syllogistic*. For a less exhaustive yet interesting reconstruction in paraconsistent logic, see Newton C. A. da Costa and Otávio Bueno, 'Paraconsistência: Esboço de uma interpretação'.

The aim of these investigations *was in the first instance confined to the expression of the received logic, and to the forms of the Aristotelian arrangement*, but it soon became apparent that restrictions were thus introduced, which were purely arbitrary and had no foundation in the nature of things. ... When it became necessary to consider the subject of hypothetical propositions (in which comparatively less has been done), and still more when an interpretation was demanded for the general theorems of the Calculus, it was found to be imperative *to dismiss all regard for precedent authority, and to interrogate the method itself* for an expression of the just limits of its application.<sup>14</sup>

We must nevertheless note that Boole did not explicitly point any flaw in Aristotle's system, nor in its inference rules; he rather said that its aims were not broad enough to serve as a scientific theory of inference<sup>15</sup>. Thus, regarding conceptions about inference, it would seem that modern standard logic (that is, classical logic as we understand it today) is compatible with Aristotle's syllogistic. Hence, if we restrict our language to syllogistic forms, both systems should be considered equivalent (again, doing the necessary adjustments).

Furthermore, one might speculate that, had Aristotle been able to expand the expressive structure of his system to a full first-order language, he would have proposed an inference system equivalent to standard first-order logic. This conclusion may seem inevitable if we believe that the rules of logic (or at least a subset of them sufficient to infer the other ones) are necessary and intuitive, and that classical logic correctly accounts for those rules. Hence, nobody, let alone Aristotle, could be wrong nor have divergent views about the rules of logic! We can only be confused about what is the logical form of some expressions, but once we find it, we should be able to recognise how those forms are logically related. Had Aristotle seen a way to formalise De Morgan's head-of-a-man inference, he would have certainly found it to be valid within the resulting system. Hence, Aristotle's inability to propose a full classical first-order logic was just his inability to see (or, rather, to systematise) some logical forms, and not an inability to see the inferential relations among them.

The problem, of course, is that disagreements about inference rules exist among logic experts. Non-classical logics exist, some of which are proposed as replacements of classical logic. More importantly for our question, Aristotle seemingly defended rules which would be at odds with classical logic and in favour of some non-classical ones. Let us see two examples.

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<sup>14</sup> George Boole, *The Mathematical Analysis of Logic*, pp. 7–8, my emphases.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. David E. Dunning, 'George Boole and the "pure analysis" of the syllogism', pp. 85–6.

The first example concerns paraconsistent logics: those logical systems in which the ECQ does not hold in general. It seems that Aristotle, while defending the principle of non-contradiction, nonetheless regarded as invalid some inferences with opposite premises which would be valid according to the ECQ. Priest<sup>16</sup> provides as an example the inference below, which is not a (valid) syllogism in Aristotle's system:

Some men are animals.  
 No animals are men.  
 —  
 All men are men

This means that, in Aristotle's syllogistic, some propositions cannot appear as conclusions of (valid) syllogisms. This has led Priest to state that 'syllogistic is, in the only way in which it makes sense to interpret the term, paraconsistent'<sup>17</sup>. It would seem, according to this argument, that Aristotle's syllogistic was the first paraconsistent system – and Aristotle the first non-classical logician.

The second example concerns connexive logics: those logical systems in which the connexive principle holds in general. Since Aristotle expressed that it is impossible that something be not-*A* if it is *A* (*Analytica Priora* II 4 57b14), then it would seem that a logical system expressing his views would have to be connexive and, thus, contra-classical. Now it would seem that Aristotle's syllogistic was also the first connexive system – and Aristotle the first contra-classical logician.

No wonder Aristotle was called *the philosopher*! Not only did he create a whole discipline (logic), but also inspire its standard system (classical logic) and some of its rivals (non-classical and contra-classical systems). This makes it seem as if Aristotle's syllogistic was indeed non-classical. The special case objection seems now to be unsubstantiated, for it seems that Aristotle's syllogistic cannot be construed as a special case of first-order logic. But what about the second objection?

### 3. The Formalisation Gap Objection

Consider the question: was Plato a classical or a non-classical logician? I think the only possible answer – to both alternatives – is, 'no'. Why? Because, although Plato was arguably 'the first great thinker in the field of the philosophy of logic'<sup>18</sup>, he was no logician at all.

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<sup>16</sup> Graham Priest, 'Paraconsistency and dialetheism', p. 132.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> William C. Kneale and Martha Kneale, *The Development of Logic*, p. 17.

No doubt, he had deep insights about some important logical notions, and some of these insights are still relevant today. For instance, Plato's truth definition deeply resembles Tarski's: 'the [statement] that says what things are is true and the one that says what they are not is false' (*Cratylus* 385b)<sup>19</sup>. He nevertheless proposed no systematic criterion for distinguishing necessarily true statements from necessarily false ones, let alone valid inferences from invalid ones. He proposed no system allowing us to make the distinctions between valid and non-valid inferences (or statements) that logical systems can do.

This is obviously not the case of Aristotle. He did propose one such systematic criterion, albeit a very limited one compared to those that can be formulated using modern logical systems. The basic notions with which he formulated his syllogistic were very different from those of modern logicians, and it is not always easy to interpret them in modern logic. Even the very notion of Aristotelian syllogism is quite difficult to translate. Łukasiewicz, for example, remarks that Aristotle's syllogisms are not construed as inferences, but as 'implications having the conjunction of the premisses as the antecedent and the conclusion as the consequent'<sup>20</sup>. Crivelli, instead, argues against Łukasiewicz that syllogisms 'are inferences of a certain type'<sup>21</sup>. We do not need to get too deep into this discussion in order to see the difficulties of translating the Aristotelian logical notions into modern logical notions.

For instance, the connexive principle mentioned above (it is impossible that something be not-*A* if it is *A*) could be expressed in at least three ways in sentential logic: (a)  $\vdash \neg(A \rightarrow \neg A)$ , (b)  $\nVdash A \rightarrow \neg A$ , and (c)  $A \nVdash \neg A$ . Current logicians can discuss separately about each of (a–c) and their corresponding variations: (a')  $\vdash \neg(\neg A \rightarrow A)$ , (b')  $\nVdash \neg A \rightarrow A$ , and (c')  $\neg A \nVdash A$ . All this corresponds to the idea that no statement can imply or entail its own negation, opposite, contradictory, or the like. But which one of these would represent Aristotle's own view? Maybe all, maybe some, maybe none. Aristotle did not provide a distinction between what we currently conceptualise as the conditional ( $\rightarrow$ ) and the entailment relation ( $\vdash$ ). And although we might interpret some of his theses as being related to this or that logical system, many of them might simply be intuitions which cannot be represented as inference principles in modern logical systems.

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<sup>19</sup> Translation adapted from Friedrich Schleiermacher's version.

<sup>20</sup> Jan Łukasiewicz, *Aristotle's Syllogistic*, p. 2.

<sup>21</sup> Paolo Crivelli, 'Aristotle's logic', p. 125.

However, let us assume that Aristotle's remarks in the *Analytica Priora II* (4 57b14) should be interpreted in terms of all of (a–c'). Does this mean that he would have maintained this view if faced with the challenge of stating the logical principles for a full first-order language?

I do not think we can tell one way or the other. We do not know whether he would have been able to give up the principles that one must give up in order to assert (a–c') as generally valid. Moreover, although in Aristotle's syllogistic some inferences with contradictory premises are not valid, we do not know how he would have reacted to modern arguments for the ECQ. Maybe he would have found this rule more compatible with the rest of his system and ideas than any consideration he had about not allowing for the validity of those syllogisms. After all, he did accept the validity of some syllogisms with contradictory premises in the second and third figures (cf. *Analytica Priora II* 15). Moreover, he did seem to have a greater commitment to some of his ideas about logic than to others; e.g., he was more confident about the principle of non-contradiction than about that of excluded third.

This is the essence of the formalisation gap objection<sup>22</sup>. It is not straightforward to interpret Aristotle's logical notions and theses in the framework of modern logical systems. Moreover, if this objection is accepted, then there is now reason to doubt whether the special case objection actually fails. Since we cannot interpret Aristotle's syllogistic one way or the other, we cannot discard for sure that it could be interpreted as a special case of classical logic.

In the next section, we will expand on this objection by introducing a distinction that could offer a new perspective on interpreting Aristotle's syllogistic.

#### 4. To Follow from and to Be a Conclusion of

There is another important difference between Aristotle's syllogistic and modern logical systems. Aristotle's syllogistic is not just a system of inference rules like modern logical systems. It can also be regarded as an account about which series of sentences can correctly be considered as premises and conclusions of a given inference. His definition of the concept of syllogism suggests one such interpretation:

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<sup>22</sup> Another version of this objection can be found in Jean-Yves Béziau, 'Is modern logic non-Aristotelian?'

‘Syllogism’, on the other hand, is a discourse in which, certain things being posited, something other than what is given results of necessity because of those being what they are. When I say ‘because of those being what they are’ I mean that ⟨it⟩ results because of those, and when I say ‘results because of those’ I mean that there is no need for any term taken from the outside for the necessity ⟨of the result⟩ to come about. (*Analytica Priora* I 1 24b18–22)<sup>23</sup>

This definition is far more restrictive about what constitutes a syllogism compared to how modern definitions treat valid inferences. In this regard, Crivelli notes:

[This passage] requires that every syllogism be an inference whose conclusion follows necessarily from the premises, i.e., a valid inference (‘invalid syllogism’ is an oxymoron). The plural clause ‘certain things having been posited’ indicates that only inferences with two or more premises are syllogisms. The requirement that the syllogism’s conclusion be ‘different from the things laid down’ intends to banish *petitio principii*: a syllogism must not assume what it sets out to establish. Aristotle therefore applies ‘syllogism’ to some (but not all) of the inferences that modern logicians usually regard as valid.<sup>24</sup>

By treating syllogisms as inferences, the closest translation we have of ‘syllogism’ into modern logical notions is ‘valid inference’. (We do not need to restrict the domain of valid inferences to those conforming to Aristotle’s syllogistic figures since, at this point, he was not yet focusing on this kind of syllogisms which he treats systematically.) In this understanding, it is clear that some inferences which are valid in modern logic do not satisfy this definition, since modern logic allows for valid inferences with only one premise, including the *petitio principii* (i.e.,  $A \vdash A$ ).

Modern standard logic, unlike Aristotle’s syllogistic, is unrestricted with respect to the relation between the premises and conclusion of an inference. Any sequence of statements or well-formed formulae, one of which is marked as the conclusion, is a candidate for a valid inference. All that matters is that the intended conclusion follows from the (possibly empty) set of premises according to the account of inference being assumed.

This suggests that Aristotle’s syllogistic not only provided a criterion for demarcating between valid and non-valid inferences. It seems to also contain a criterion for demarcating between proper inferences (that is, sequences of statements

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<sup>23</sup> All my translations of Aristotle are adapted from Lucia Palpacelli’s version.

<sup>24</sup> Paolo Crivelli, ‘Aristotle’s logic’, p. 125.

which are somehow argumentative) and mere sequences of statements. Such a distinction is not made in modern logical systems. Thus, if a sequence of statements has only one premise, then it could never be regarded as an inference, even if the intended conclusion does follow from the intended premise. The next passage sheds significant light on this matter:

Postulating, or assuming, what was originally to be proved falls ... among the cases in which one does not prove what one sets out to prove. If anything, since some things are of such a nature that they are known by themselves and some things are known by means of others (i.e. principles by means of themselves and instead what is subordinate to principles by means of something else), when one tries to prove by means of oneself what is not known by itself, it is at that moment that one postulates what originally had to be proved. ... Think of the case in which *A* is proved by means of *B* and *B* by means of *C*, and *C* is of such a nature that it is proved by means of *A*: those who draw conclusions in this way are in fact proving *A* by means of *A* itself. ... [T]hose who draw conclusions in this way turn out to say of each thing that it is if it is: but then each thing will be known by itself, which is impossible. (*Analytica Priora* II 16)

Aristotle is not saying here that *A* does not follow from itself. Quite the opposite. He admits that this is a very trivial way of reasoning, which nevertheless is not sufficient to prove the truth of something. (Also recall that he uses conversion procedures<sup>25</sup>, which enable us to obtain a proposition from another, by swapping the subject and predicate of the latter. For instance, if ‘some *S* is *P*’ can be inferred from two premises, then ‘some *P* is *S*’ can also be inferred from them.) Moreover, he also says that ‘some things are of such a nature that they are known by themselves’, in which case *A* could be proven from itself. But for the things which have a different nature, we cannot *prove* them from themselves, even though they obviously *follow* from themselves.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> *Analytica Priora* II 2; cf. Paolo Crivelli, ‘Aristotle’s logic’, pp. 131–2.

<sup>26</sup> I am here intentionally not addressing the distinction that Aristotle makes between syllogisms and proofs. Aristotle did not think that all valid syllogisms constituted proofs or demonstrations. A *syllogism* roughly corresponds to a valid inference in modern logic – but normally with the restriction that it has to fit the syllogistic form. A *proof* or *demonstration*, instead, corresponds to a sound inference; more precisely, to a (valid) syllogism whose premises are true or, rather, necessarily true. The reason I am glossing over this distinction, despite it being relevant in this quote, is that, as we have seen, Aristotle does forbid syllogisms with the structure of the *petitio principii*, and not only demonstrations with that structure.

In the same line of reasoning, it would be possible to interpret that Aristotle thought (or could have thought) that sequences of statements with contradictory or opposing premises would be valid inferences – for the same reasons that they are in classical logic – if they were proper inferences. However, since they are not, we cannot assign them validity at all. That is, maybe anything does follow from contradictions, but this does not allow us to make syllogistic inferences using this fact.

Rather than trying to ascribe a classical conception of validity to Aristotle, I would like to propose a distinction between two concepts which, though not present in Aristotle, might help us better understand what he was probably aiming at: the concepts of ‘to follow from’ and ‘to be a conclusion of’. The senses I give to these terms are somewhat arbitrarily chosen, and the way I will define them is not necessarily aligned to how Aristotle (or anyone) might have used them.

We define the first notion:  $B$  follows from  $A_1, \dots, A_n$ , in this sense, iff the inference  $A_1, \dots, A_n \vdash B$  is valid according to classical logic (or whatever conception on the rules of logic we want to ascribe to Aristotle).

For instance, the inferences  $A \vdash A$  and  $A, \neg A \vdash B$ , express the relation of ‘to follow from’ in this sense. We nevertheless know that Aristotle excluded  $A \vdash A$  from syllogisms. In fact, as we have seen above, he excluded any inference with only one premise. And yet, it does not seem that Aristotle thought that  $A$  does not follow from  $A$ . So why did he not consider it as a (valid) syllogism?

This brings us to the definition of our second notion:  $B$  is a conclusion of  $A_1, \dots, A_n$  iff (a)  $B$  follows from  $A_1, \dots, A_n$  (in the sense above) and that (b) there is an accepted inferential structure by which  $B$  can appear as a conclusion of  $A_1, \dots, A_n$ .

In order to illustrate condition (b), I will provide an analogy with modern logic. Depending on the logical system we are using, open formulae – that is, formulae with free variables such as  $Px$  – can or cannot be part of an inference. Let us consider a system of the latter kind. In this case, such conventional rules as the *modus ponendo ponens* ( $A \rightarrow B, A \vdash B$ ) or the hypothetical syllogism ( $A \rightarrow B, B \rightarrow C \vdash A \rightarrow C$ ) or reiteration ( $A \vdash A$ ) cannot be instantiated with such formulae. This does not mean that those logical systems have restrictions on the generality of those rules. It is just that those logical systems do not allow us to apply their rules to such formulae. Thus, while it could be said that  $Qx$  follows from  $Px \rightarrow Qx$  and  $Px$  in those systems, in the sense above, it would not be a conclusion of them, for the structure  $Px \rightarrow Qx, Px \vdash Qx$  is not an accepted inferential structure in those systems.

In the case of Aristotle's syllogistic, we can see that, not only there are some conditions on the validity of syllogisms, but there are also restrictions as to the form of syllogisms. Aristotle placed other restrictions to the kind syllogisms that he systematically developed: the need of two premises, a middle term, among others. Neither the *modus ponens* nor reiteration conform to those restrictions. Nor does the inference  $A \vdash \neg A$ , which is the contradictory of one of the interpretations we can make of the connexive principle, as it only has one premise. This could mean that this principle might have been accepted by Aristotle himself because of this restriction, and not so much because he did not think that there were no cases (perhaps absurd cases) in which  $\neg A$  could follow from  $A$  in the sense defined above.

It seems that Aristotle did not think that these restrictions had to be placed on all syllogisms. However, it seems that he did believe that there can be no syllogism with only one premise, not even in a more exhaustive theory of syllogisms. As previously mentioned, the quote where he establishes that condition appears very early in his *Analytica Priora*, before he placed further restrictions leading to the canonical syllogistic forms.

The distinction between 'to follow from' and 'to be a consequence of' can provide a framework to understand the function of those restrictions in Aristotle's theory of inference and the relation of this theory with modern logic. In particular, a key question would be whether the modern notion of *logical consequence* should be understood as a sharpening of 'to follow from' or of 'to be a conclusion of'.

At this point, the question becomes highly speculative, for I have provided no justification that this distinction represents any relevant aspect of Aristotelian syllogistic – nor have I intended to. The question has nevertheless relevance for contemporary discussions about what *non-classicality* means in logic, and whether we can classify Aristotle's syllogistic as a classical or as a non-classical system.

Suppose we consider non-classicality to be related only to the possible deductive relations between formulae, and not to language or the logical form of statements and inferences. In such case, if we want to answer the question which titles this paper, we need to understand whether Aristotle excluded some syllogisms because of their logical form rather than because of their conclusion not *following* from the premises. And we need to know in which of these cases we would be entitled to characterise Aristotle's syllogistic as non-classical. Clarifying what is logical consequence a sharpening of would help us in solving this puzzle.

But answering all these questions requires much more scholarly knowledge than I currently possess. My intention in this paper was not so much to really answer whether Aristotle was or was not a classical or a non-classical logician. I am sorry for the clickbait. My intention was rather to show the complications that such a question generates.

Of course, Aristotle was in many ways a forerunner of classical and a few non-classical logics, in this latter group including paraconsistent, connexive, and, perhaps most importantly, relevant logics – the latter of which I have not addressed in this paper. But it will not be easy to ever classify him as classical or non-classical logician, for his syllogistic and other logical theses are hard to interpret within a mathematical formalism isomorphic with a modern logical system. This explains Priest's and Routley's early view regarding the possible paraconsistency of Aristotle's syllogistic:

Though Aristotelians held that a contradiction cannot be true, Aristotle's syllogistic is not explosive. However, like a purely positive logic it is not paraconsistent either. The point is that the poverty of the forms of syllogistic inference and its associated grammatical forms makes it impossible to ask the question of what follows from a contradiction.<sup>27</sup>

Priest later changed his view and stated that 'syllogistic is, in the only way in which it makes sense to interpret the term, paraconsistent'<sup>28</sup>, arguing the non-validity of some inferences with contradictory premises in Aristotle's syllogistic.

I do not want to imply that there can never be a sufficiently good argument for interpreting Aristotle's syllogistic as representing some class of modern logical systems, including paraconsistent systems. I nevertheless wanted to show that the fact that a given rule was or was not explicitly subscribed by Aristotle in his syllogistic is not enough to do the job.

## 5. Concluding Remarks

In this paper, I have considered the question about whether Aristotle's syllogistic can be classified as a non-classical logical system and Aristotle as a non-classical logician. At first glance, there seemed to be good arguments for this possibility, since his syllogistic seems to differ from classical logical systems both in terms of expressive capabilities and of logical rules. I have nevertheless considered two possible objections against this interpretation.

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<sup>27</sup> Graham Priest and Richard Routley, *Paraconsistent Logics*, p. 5.

<sup>28</sup> Graham Priest, 'Paraconsistency and dialetheism', p. 132.

The special case objection states that Aristotle's syllogistic can be construed as a classical logic which deals with syllogistic forms. We saw that that this objection was not good enough, as there are some inferences of syllogistic form which are possible in classical logic but impossible in Aristotle's syllogistic. As to the formalisation gap objection, we have that Aristotle's syllogistic cannot be straightforwardly interpreted in terms of modern logical systems. I argued that this objection was much more solid and that, if accepted, we also have reasons to doubt whether the special case objection actually fails.

Moreover, I proposed a distinction between the concepts of 'to follow from' and 'to be a conclusion of', which could lead to a better understanding of Aristotle's syllogistic. The former refers to the idea that a conclusion is logically connected to the premises according to the rules of some logical system. The latter, instead, requires not only this logical connection but also that the inference conforms to an accepted inferential structure. Thus, the difference lies in the structure required for something to count as a proper inference.

Let us close by stating that, although Aristotle would agree – perhaps on connexive grounds – that his syllogistic cannot be non-classical if it is classical, he would probably not be so sure that it has to be either classical or non-classical. This question, much like the sea battle he once contemplated, lies in uncharted waters beyond his conceptual reach.

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I want to thank Evandro Gomes, Itala D'Ottaviano for pointing me to the pertinent literature on this topic, much of which I could not reference here. Their paper on the relation between Aristotle's syllogistic and paraconsistency<sup>29</sup> is a much more thorough investigation on the matter. They distinguish between two senses of 'paraconsistent' and conclude that only one of them may be ascribed to Aristotle's syllogistic. Discussing their arguments in detail would have made this paper much larger, and would have escaped to its aims. I nevertheless strongly encourage the readers to consult it.

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<sup>29</sup> Evandro Luís Gomes and Itala Maria Loffredo D'Ottaviano, 'Aristotle's theory of deduction and paraconsistency'.

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