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Existence and Predication in Free Logics

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Abstract:

This paper presents a fundamental difference between negative semantics for free logics and positive ones regarding the logical relations between existence and predication. We conclude that this difference is the key to understand why negative free logics are stronger, i.e., they prove more, than positive free logics.

Keywords: free logics, existence, predication, square of opposition.

1. Introduction

Classical first-order logic assumes that all singular terms in the domain of quantification denote. Free logics do not make such an assumption, as they allow the use of empty singular terms. This means that in free logics one can assign a truth-value not only to non-empty-termed atomic formulae, but also to empty-termed ones. The way that assignment is done is the precise difference between **positive** free logics and **negative** free logics. While in the latter all empty-termed atomic formulae are false, the former allow some of them to be true [4]. Therefore, the distinction is mainly semantic. It is important to note that “free” is a shorthand for “free of ontological commitment” regarding singular terms in a *formal* language. This means that not all singular terms in a free semantics must have an interpretation in a specific domain of “existing” objects. The emphasis on the formal character of the language is needed, since we do not want to consider Russell, for instance, a free logician. In other words, the acceptance of free singular terms in a natural language does not make one a proponent of free logics.

A well-known inconvenience surrounding classical predicate logic is its inability to translate – using only existential quantification, individual terms and identity – sentences like “Socrates does not exist” without commitment to the existence of Socrates. The most intuitive way of translating the corresponding affirmative sentence is by means of the formula ‘ $\exists x(x=s)$ ’ (informally: “there is an x such that x is identical to Socrates”), which happens to be a valid formula in classical first-order systems, as every singular term must denote to make the sentence true – assuming, of course, that ‘ s ’ is an element of the interpreted language. Since ‘ $\sim\exists x(x=s)$ ’ is false under all interpretations, those systems fail to provide an intuitive translation of the negative existential statements of everyday talk, such as “Sherlock Holmes does not exist” or “Santa Claus does not exist”. Of course, this incapacity does not rely upon a syntactic impossibility to symbolize non-empty terms, but rather on an assumed ontological commitment with every bound variable. Surely, there are syntactic

formulations of sentences including empty terms in non-free logics (see [5] and [6]), but such formulations resort to more than just existential quantification, individual terms and identity.

On the other hand, free logics accommodate that kind of negative existential statements. Usually, free logics employ a one-place predicate ‘ $E!$ ’, such that ‘ $E!s$ ’ is true if and only if ‘ s ’ is non-empty. ‘ $E!$ ’ may be defined as follows:

$$E!t \text{ =}_{df} \exists x(x=t)$$

If a term ‘ s ’ is non-denotative, ‘ $\sim E!s$ ’ (informally: “ s does not exist”) turns out true. This is the common ground between positive and negative free semantics: a formula asserting the existence of some object may be true or false depending on whether its singular term denotes. But when it comes to assign a truth value to atomic formulae of the form ‘ $Pt_1\dots t_n$ ’, where ‘ P ’ is an n -place predicate other than ‘ $E!$ ’ and ‘ $t_1\dots t_n$ ’ are singular terms, the situation changes. Positive free logics allow some formulae of the form ‘ $Pt_1\dots t_n$ ’ to be true even when their singular term is empty; negative free logics, *au contraire*, assign the truth-value *false* to all formulae of the form ‘ $Pt_1\dots t_n$ ’ when their singular term is empty. One could ask to what extent those negative semantics are properly free, since they do not seem to be suitable for treating some sentences containing empty singular names (for instance, fiction talk). However, it is important to note that they still allow individual constants and variables without denotation, and this is precisely what makes a logic “free”. Let us consider the semantical clauses for ‘ $E!t$ ’ and ‘ $Pt_1\dots t_n$ ’ in both families of free logics.

2. Semantics for Free Logics

Assume a usual first-order language plus ‘ $E!$ ’ and call it L . Let $\langle D, I \rangle$ be a pair where D is a possibly empty set and I an interpretation function such that: (1) for each individual constant t of L , either $I(t) \in D$ or t is undefined, and (2) for each n -place predicate P of L , $I(P) \subseteq D^n$. The pair $\langle D, I \rangle$ is a *negative* model for L . A valuation function V is a function from the set of formulae of L to the set $\{T, F\}$ of truth-values. Formulae of the form ‘ $Pt_1\dots t_n$ ’ and ‘ $E!t$ ’ are evaluated as follows [4]:

- $V(Pt_1\dots t_n) = T$ if and only if $I(t_1), \dots, I(t_n) \in D$ and $\langle I(t_1), \dots, I(t_n) \rangle \in I(P)$.
- $V(E!t) = T$ if and only if $I(t) \in D$.

Informally, the first clause says that a predication or a relational sentence may be true only if its terms denote. So “Sherlock Holmes is a detective” and “Santa Claus wears a beard” turn out false. The second only says that an existential sentence like “Socrates exists” is true only if the term “Socrates” is non-empty.

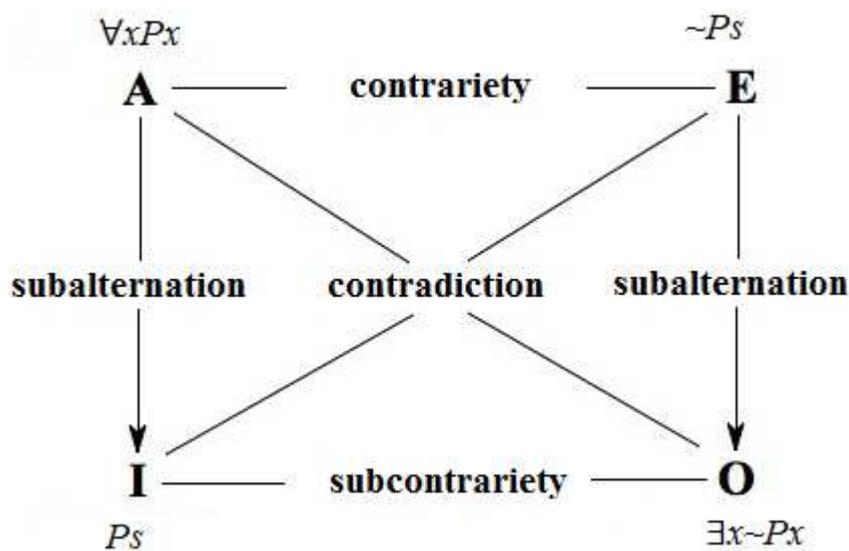
Positive semantics, on the other hand, are often *split-domain* semantics. Assume the same first-order language L . Then take a domain and split it into two: D_i (the inner domain, possibly empty) and D_o (the outer domain, necessarily non-empty).¹ I is an interpretative function such that for each individual constant t of L , either $I(t) \in D_i$ or $I(t) \in D_o$. The triple $\langle D_i, D_o, I \rangle$ is a *positive* model for L . A valuation function V is a function from the set of formulae of L to the set $\{T, F\}$ of truth-values. Formulae of the form ‘ $Pt_1\dots t_n$ ’ and ‘ $E!t$ ’ are evaluated as follows [4]:

- $V(Pt_1\dots t_n) = T$ if and only if $\langle I(t_1), \dots, I(t_n) \rangle \in I(P)$.
- $V(E!t) = T$ if and only if $I(t) \in D_i$.

So positive free logics have a weaker clause for the truth of formulae of the form ‘ $Pt_1\dots t_n$ ’ than negative ones, since they can be true even if none of their terms refer. The second clause, informally read, simply means that existence is the same as being in the inner domain. Informally put, “Sherlock Holmes is a detective” and “Santa Claus wears a beard” may turn out true according to positive semantics. Members of the outer domain, understood as “non-existing” objects, may belong to the interpretation of one-place predicates, as well as be an element of n -tuples that form the interpretation of n -place predicates (for $n > 1$).

3. Lambert’s Square

Lambert [3, p. 135] argued that the classical principles of *Specification* and *Particularization* give rise to a square of opposition built not only out of quantified formulae, but out of non-quantified ones as well. It looks like this:



Lambert correctly showed that the inferences from $\forall xPx$ to Ps and from $\sim Ps$ to $\exists x\sim Px$ only works with an important presupposition – that ‘ s ’ denotes, or equivalently, that ‘ $\exists x(x=s)$ ’ is true. He chose to consider the classical version of both principles simply wrong and to weaken them as follows:

- *Specification*: $\forall xPx \rightarrow (E!s \rightarrow Ps)$
- *Particularization*: $Ps \rightarrow (E!s \rightarrow \exists xPx)$

Lambert’s square sets positive and negative free logics equally apart from classical predicate logic, as both deny the classical version of *Specification* and *Particularization*, substituting them by the weaker versions presented above. When it comes to the logical relations between quantified formulae and its corresponding instantiations, positive and negative free logics are closer to each other than to classical first-order systems.

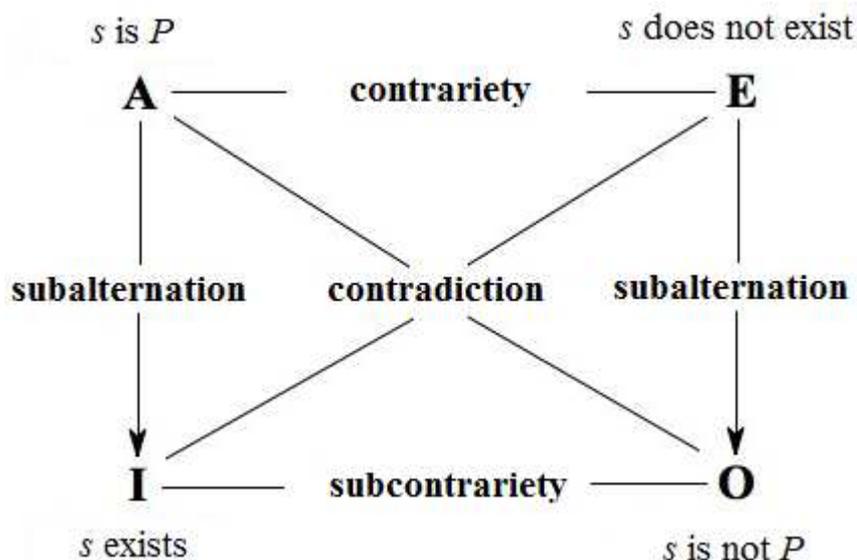
4. The Categories Square

In Aristotle’s treatise *Categories* [1], there is an implicit square different from the most-known diagram implicit in *On Interpretation*:

‘Socrates is ill’ is the contrary of ‘Socrates is well’. Yet we cannot maintain even here that one statement must always be true and the other must always be false. For, if Socrates really

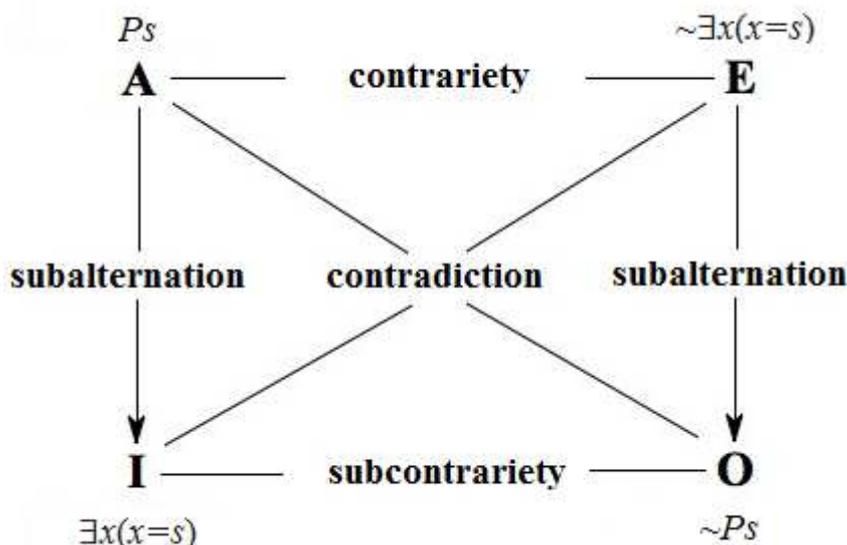
exists, one is true and the other is false. But if Socrates does not exist, both the one and the other are false. To say ‘he is ill’ will be false, and to say ‘he is well’ will be false, if no Socrates so much as exists. [...] To return to affirmation and negation. Of these we may say in all cases that one must be false and one true, be the subject existent or not. For, if Socrates really exists, ‘he is ill’ or ‘not ill’ must be true; ‘he is ill’ or ‘not ill’ must be false. And the same, if he does not exist. For, provided he does not exist, it is false to pronounce ‘he is ill’; ‘he is not ill’, however, is true [13b20-33].

This passage makes clear Aristotle’s position on empty terms: any affirmation (affirmative predication, of the form “S is P” or “S is not-P”) with a non-referring term is false, for its sentential negation (negative predication, of the form “S is not P”) will be true. By contraposition on “if s does not exist, then s is not P ”, we get “if s is P , then s exists”. The resemblance with negative free semantics is clear. The following square is implicit in those lines:



Those logical relations between predicative and existential sentences allow us to say that Aristotle was a forerunner of negative free logics.

Once couched in first-order language, the implicit square of the *Categories* looks like this:



None of those relations besides contradiction is valid in positive free logic. A positive free model which falsifies contrariety, subcontrariety and subalternation can be easily constructed²:

$$\begin{aligned} D_o &= \{s\} \\ D_i &= \{\} \\ I(P) &= \{s\} \end{aligned}$$

According to the clauses for ‘ $Pt_1\dots t_n$ ’ and ‘ $E!t$ ’ in positive semantics, we have $V(Ps) = T$ and $V(E!s) = F$. As $E!t =_{df} \exists x(x=t)$, we also get $V(\exists x(x=s)) = F$. So a positive free logic does not represent Aristotle’s stance on sentences containing empty singular terms.

A negative free semantics, on the other hand, handles perfectly the semantical ideas expressed in the *Categories* passage. All of the following are valid formulae in negative free logics³:

$$\begin{aligned} Ps \mid \sim \exists x(x=s) \\ \exists x(x=s) \vee \sim Ps \\ Ps \rightarrow \exists x(x=s) \\ \sim \exists x(x=s) \rightarrow \sim Ps \end{aligned}$$

The proofs are trivial, and can be carried out by *reductio ad absurdum*. Assume that $V(Ps \mid \sim \exists x(x=s)) = F$; then, $V(Ps) = V(\sim \exists x(x=s)) = T$. According to the clause for ‘ $Pt_1\dots t_n$ ’ in negative semantics, if $V(\sim \exists x(x=s)) = T$, then $V(Ps) = F$, which contradicts $V(Ps) = V$. So $Ps \mid \sim \exists x(x=s)$ is a valid formula in negative free logic.

Assume that $V(\exists x(x=s) \vee \sim Ps) = F$. Then $V(\exists x(x=s)) = V(\sim Ps) = F$. From the latter result we have $V(\sim \exists x(x=s)) = T$ and $V(Ps) = T$, which is impossible under the clause for ‘ $Pt_1\dots t_n$ ’ in negative semantics. So $\exists x(x=s) \vee \sim Ps$ is a valid formula in negative free logic.

Assume that $V(Ps \rightarrow \exists x(x=s)) = F$. Then we have $V(Ps) = T$ and $V(\exists x(x=s)) = F$. If $V(Ps) = T$, then we have, according to the clause for ‘ $Pt_1\dots t_n$ ’ in negative semantics, $V(\exists x(x=s)) = T$, which contradicts $V(\exists x(x=s)) = F$. So $Ps \rightarrow \exists x(x=s)$ is a valid formula in negative free logic.

Assume that $V(\sim \exists x(x=s) \rightarrow \sim Ps) = F$. Then we have $V(\sim \exists x(x=s)) = T$ and $V(\sim Ps) = F$. From this result we have $V(Ps) = V$ and $V(\exists x(x=s)) = F$. According to the clause for ‘ $Pt_1\dots t_n$ ’ in negative semantics, if $V(Ps) = T$, then $V(\exists x(x=s)) = T$, which contradicts $V(\exists x(x=s)) = F$. So $\sim \exists x(x=s) \rightarrow \sim Ps$ is a valid formula in negative free logic.

Even though classical predicate systems are set apart from free logics in the context of Lambert’s square, in the square drawn from Aristotle’s *Categories* the situation is quite different. We can easily see that the latter is satisfied not only by negative free logics, but also by classical predicate logic. As ‘ $\exists x(x=s)$ ’ is true in all classical models, ‘ $\sim \exists x(x=s)$ ’ turns out false; it is clear from these values that all first-order formulae corresponding to the relations expressed in the square are valid in classical logic. A conclusion immediately suggests itself: when it comes to consider the logical relations between atomic and existential formulae (and their corresponding negations), classical first-order logic is closer to negative free logics than to positive ones.

5. Conclusion

To sum up, there is a fundamental sense in which negative free logics – rather than positive free ones – more closely resemble classical predicate logic. The *Categories* square, once understood in the context of modern logic, appears as an important structure to show that families of positive free logics are the weakest of the three families considered above, *i.e.* they prove less. As the adding of ‘ $E!t$ ’ to *Specification* and *Particularization* is the weakening factor for both kinds of free logics in the case of Lambert’s square, so it is in the case of the *Categories* square, but only for positive free semantics. The following weakened versions are valid in the latter:

$$Ps \rightarrow (E! \rightarrow \exists x(x=s))$$

$$\sim \exists x(x=s) \rightarrow (E!s \rightarrow \sim Ps)$$

A pattern involving existential premises is now easily recognizable. First of all, the amendment of the standard square of opposition – the inferences of which are strictly invalid in first-order logics that allow empty general terms – was made through the substitution of $\forall xPx \rightarrow Ps$ and $\sim \exists xPx \rightarrow \exists x\sim Px$ by $\forall xPx \rightarrow (E!s \rightarrow Ps)$ and $\sim \exists xPx \rightarrow (E!s \rightarrow \exists x\sim Px)$, respectively. Then Lambert’s square was amended through the substitution of $\forall xPx \rightarrow Ps$ and $\sim Ps \rightarrow \exists x\sim Px$ by $\forall xPx \rightarrow (E!s \rightarrow Ps)$ and $\sim Ps \rightarrow (E! \rightarrow \exists x\sim Px)$, respectively, thus generating free logic. Lastly, the *Categories* square, supported by classical predicate logic and negative free logics, was amended through the substitution of $Ps \rightarrow \exists x(x=s)$ and $\sim \exists x(x=s) \rightarrow \sim Ps$ by $Ps \rightarrow (E! \rightarrow \exists x(x=s))$ and $\sim \exists x(x=s) \rightarrow (E!s \rightarrow \sim Ps)$, respectively, thus making positive free logics able to support it. In all three cases, the introduction of *E!s* between the original antecedents and consequents is what makes a logic able to support a given square, but also what makes it weaker

With respect to the issue of existential import, while the classical first-order reading of universal predications as universalized conditionals represented an improvement towards a solution to the problem, the analysis above shows, along with Lambert’s, that free logics are powerful tools for clarifying the presuppositions underlying certain inferences that connect predications with general sentences.

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Notes

1. The distinction inner/outer may seem to be an *ad hoc* way of making empty-termed sentences true, but it is possible to give it some philosophical account. While members of the inner domain represent “existing” objects, the members of the outer domain represent “non-existing” things like ideal entities, error objects, fictional objects or impossible objects [4]. This is the philosophical account for disjoint domains. If the convention makes the inner domain a subset of the outer domain, we can understand the distinction in Meinongian terms: while the members of the latter represent all objects that have being, the members of the former represent objects that have not only being, but are also “existing”. In both cases, the only restriction is the non-emptiness of the outer domain.
2. The four relations of the logical square can be reduced to propositional truth-functions according to the following table [2, p. 29]:

Relation	Truth-function	Combinations of truth-values	Symbol
Contradiction	exclusive disjunction	VF; FV	w
Contrariety	incompatibility	VF; FV; FF	
Subcontrariety	inclusive disjunction	VV; VF; FV	∨
Subalternation	Implication	VV; FV; FF	→

3. All of these can be replaced with formulae containing n -place predicates. We only use one-place predicates in order to better translate the sentences in the *Categories* square – Aristotle only considered sentences containing like “Socrates is sick” and “Socrates is well”.

A Praxeological Approach to Intentional Action¹

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Abstract:

The concept of Intentional Action is at the core of Praxeology, as developed by the Austrian economist Ludwig von Mises. Under this unique approach, defined as the science of human action and designed to study the field of the social sciences, Mises created an axiomatic-deductive system starting from the “action axiom”: the contention that every acting man is eager to substitute a more satisfactory state of affairs for a less desired one. From this axiom, the Austrian scholar is able to derive the fundamental features and implications of human action; such as value, scale of value, scarcity, abundance, profit, loss, uncertainty and causality, among others. This paper intends to present the praxeological perspective on intentional action and its epistemological implications; it also attempts to answer objections to this thesis.

Keywords: Mises, action, praxeology, logic, Austrian economics.

1. Introduction

Praxeology,² defined as the “Science of Human Action” and thoroughly developed by the Austrian School economist Ludwig von Mises³ in his *magnum opus* “Human Action” [65], is based on a specific approach towards the fundamental nature of intentional action. Mises, best known for his contributions to the debate on Economic Calculation under the Socialist system [62], is widely regarded today, along with Friedrich A. von Hayek, as the most important representative of the Austrian School of Economics in the 20th century.⁴ The foundation of his entire defense of the free market system,⁵ in the tradition of classical liberalism, is based on the concept of action defined as purposeful behavior, i.e. intentional action.

This approach is almost unique, since among the students of human behavior, Mises is one of the rare ones whose work consists in the development of an axiomatic-deductive system, which could pretend to explain the fundamental nature of human action as the basis for understanding the field of economics.⁶ Thus, “Economics, as a branch of the more general theory of human action, deals with all human action, i.e., with man’s purposive aiming at the attainment of ends chosen, whatever these ends may be” [65, p. 880]. As we shall argue throughout this paper, praxeology is able to explain the basic nature of human action, and to do so under a unique epistemological foundation.

In order to make a case for praxeology’s usefulness in understanding the nature of intentional action, first we will present its methodology and theory as an axiomatic-deductive system. Then we will analyze its postulates and their epistemological status, which will allow us to respond to possible objections and finally to present our conclusions.

2. The Methodology of Praxeology

We shall begin explaining Mises’s specific ideas with respect to human action by showing his views on methodology. This is essential to the entire approach and the reason will be clear by the end of this section.

Mises can be defined as a methodological dualist, since he regards the method of the natural sciences as necessarily different from that of the social sciences, due to the idea that the former study regularities in nature, while the latter study concrete cases where human action is involved.⁷ This kind of phenomena, under a social context, constitutes complex phenomena, and therefore requires a different methodology for its analysis.

Methodological dualism is based on the fact that Mises identifies an ontological dualism between physical concretes and human actions, where the latter cannot be reduced to the former [98, p. 2]. Thus, this implies that both phenomena must be treated differently while at the same time preserving a scientific approach to their study.

In the words of Mises:

The natural sciences too deal with past events. [...] But the experience to which the natural sciences owe all their success is the experience of the experiment in which the individual elements of change *can be observed in isolation*. [...] The experience with which the sciences of human action have to deal is always an experience of complex phenomena. No laboratory experiments can be performed with regard to human action. *We are never in a position to observe the change in one element only, all other conditions of the event remaining unchanged*. [...] The information conveyed by historical experience cannot be used as building material for the construction of theories and the prediction of future events. Every historical experience is open to various interpretations, and is in fact interpreted in different ways. The postulates of positivism and kindred schools of metaphysics are therefore illusory. It is impossible to reform the sciences of human action according to the pattern of physics and the other natural sciences. There is no means to establish an a posteriori theory of human conduct and social events. History can neither prove nor disprove any general statement in the manner in which the natural sciences accept or reject a hypothesis on the ground of laboratory experiments. *Neither experimental verification nor experimental falsification of a general proposition is possible in its field* (emphasis ours) [65, pp. 30 – 31].

As Mises explains, there is no such thing as *ceteris paribus* in the field of human action,⁸ although we may use such a concept in order to *illustrate* a specific idea (or *conceive* it).⁹ Thus, since no necessary regularities could be identified in this field,¹⁰ any use in the social sciences of concepts or methodological tools originated in the natural sciences would be an illegitimate extrapolation.¹¹

Therefore, he naturally rejected the positivist approach as presented by the Vienna Circle (in the same way he fought the German Historical School).

The absence of regularities in human action, in turn, brings us a problem since we cannot proceed by generalizing from specific instances. Rather, we must utilize the hypothetic-deductive model of causal realism. Therefore, we cannot count on past events in order to create any specific model of human behavior, which we could use to predict future behavior, since “statistics is a method for the presentation of historical facts concerning prices and other relevant data of human action. It is not economics and cannot produce economic theorems and theories. The statistics of prices is economic history” [65, p. 348]. In effect, without theory we are not even able to understand past behavior.¹² Thus, “there is no such thing as quantitative economics” [65, p. 348].

The historian can never derive theorems about *cause and effect* from the analysis of the material available. [...] This shows why it is wrong to contend that ‘it is from observation that even deductive economics obtains its ultimate premises.’ What we can ‘observe’ is always only complex phenomena. What economic history, observation, or experience can tell us is facts like these: Over a definite period of the past the miner John in the coal mines of the *X* company in the village of *Y* earned *p* dollars for a working day of *n* hours. There is no way that would lead from the assemblage of such and similar data to any theory concerning the factors determining the height of wage rates (emphasis ours) [67, p. 74].

What then, is the alternative to empirical scientific models in order to study human action? In Mises’s view, to understand this field we need an axiomatic-deductive model. The central axiom of such a model should be a *self-evident* truth¹³ (thus expressing its axiomatic nature¹⁴) by which theorems ought to be derived. These are later applied to the field of economics (*catallactics*¹⁵) in order to understand social phenomena. Such an axiom is defined as the “action axiom”.¹⁶ Thus, praxeology is based on the foundation of such an axiom. The fact that we could not know the ultimate end of every action¹⁷ does not imply that we could not engage in studying its structure.

The basis for the axiom as being self-evident is that we cannot deny it without engaging in a contradiction. This, in turn, provides the reason for its foundation as an irrefutable truth. In effect, its axiomatic nature implies that there is neither a possible nor a thinkable world where the axiom does not apply.¹⁸ Thus, it is non-falsifiable.¹⁹

Since we have explained the specific methodological approach taken by Mises, let us now examine what is the nature and scope of praxeology, based on the action axiom.

3. The Logic of Intentional Action

Mises defines human action as

[...] purposeful behavior. Or we may say: Action is will put into operation and transformed into an agency, is aiming at ends and goals, is the ego’s meaningful response to stimuli and to the conditions of its environment, is a person’s conscious adjustment to the state of the universe that determines his life. Such paraphrases may clarify the definition given and prevent possible misinterpretations. But the definition itself is adequate and does not need complement or commentary [65, p. 11].

As such, the action axiom consists in the fact that every “Acting man is eager to substitute a more satisfactory state of affairs for a less satisfactory” [65, p. 13]. Thus, the acting agent chooses those means that he *subjectively* identifies as the best in order to achieve his ends.

Although Mises rejects mathematical economics,²⁰ it can be useful to illustrate the action axiom and its theorems with the help of mathematical functions.²¹ In effect, if we say that every action (A) is a function of specific ends (E), then:

$$1) A = f(E)$$

This is so because if the acting agent has no ends he wishes to attain, then he will not engage in any action whatsoever. It must be also said that, in this respect, action always aims at a change in existing conditions, whether with respect to the acting man himself (*autistic* exchange), or to other/s (*interpersonal* exchange) [65, pp. 195 – 196]. In this regard, the focus of any specific action is irrelevant with respect to its fundamental character: it always purports to remove or alleviate some uneasiness.

In effect, human action is based on the presupposition that the subjective value that the individual gives to the end (vE) he wishes to attain is higher than the subjective value he gives to his effort or means (vM) to achieve it.

$$2.a) \text{ If } vE > vM \rightarrow \exists A$$

$$2.b) \text{ If } vE \leq vM \rightarrow \nexists A$$

Mises explains:

The most general prerequisite of action is a state of dissatisfaction, on the one hand, and, on the other, the possibility of removing or alleviating it by taking action. (Perfect satisfaction and its concomitant, the absence of any stimulus to change and action, belong properly to the concept of a perfect being. This, however, is beyond the power of the human mind to conceive. *A perfect being would not act*) (emphasis ours) [63, p. 25].

At any specific point in time, man wishes to attain several different ends, and therefore he will try to achieve those which he identifies as priorities according to his scale of preferences. How do we know it? Because if we follow 1) and 2.a), then it is obvious that the individual will act in order to achieve the end that he regards as most important, leaving the rest for a later time (according to his means). This is so because human action takes place in time (T), and depends on means (M); and since man cannot attain all the ends (E) he wishes simultaneously,²² he must necessarily choose. Such choice will be made according to some standard, thus ordering the ends with respect to the individual's judgment and values:

$$3.a) E_1, E_2, E_3, \dots, E_n$$

$$3.b) vE_1 > vE_2 > vE_3 > \dots > vE_n$$

$$3.c) vE_n = f(E_n)$$

As we can see in 3.c) the value that the individual gives to any specific end will depend on the position of such end in his scale of preferences. Now we may turn our attention to means themselves. As every human action makes use of some means for the attainment of its ends, these means (M) are also valued by the acting agent. We call this valuation *utility* (U), and it will be proportionate to the value that the individual gives to the end that could be attained with such unit of means.²³

$$4.a) M_1, M_2, M_3, \dots, M_n$$

$$4.b) U_1, U_2, U_3, \dots, U_n$$

- 4.c) $M = F(E)$
- 4.d) $M_n = F(E_n)$
- 4.e) $U_n = F(vE_n)$

Since the individual chooses the means he subjectively regards as the best in order to achieve its ends (4.c, 4.d), according to his value scale (4.a, 4.b), we can see that the utility of every (unit of) means is determined by the value that the individual gives to the end that could be achieved with it (4.e). Thus, the utility of every unit of means is ultimately a function of the specific end that could be achieved with it and its value for the acting man:

$$4.f.) M_n = F(E_n) \rightarrow U_n = F(vE_n)$$

This in turn implies that, in many cases certain units of means may be used for different ends, while at the same time being interchangeable and relevant, i.e. any of them could be used for the attainment of any end, regardless of their ranking in the individual's scale of preferences. Therefore, the utility of every unit will be determined by the value of the last possible end (or lower ranked) that could be achieved with them (since this last end is the *first* one the individual would be willing to sacrifice if he had one less unit of means). Since the last end is called the *marginal* end (because it is on the margin²⁴), and the last unit of means is called the marginal unit, the utility of this last unit is called marginal utility:

$$5.a) M_1 = M_2 = \dots = M_n \rightarrow U_n = f(vE_n)$$

This is the foundation for the law of marginal utility. Since every end is arranged under a scale of preferences (3.a) and the value of each end depends on how it is ranked in such a scale (3.b), then utility will necessarily decrease as the individual acts in the attainment of more ends (4.f). Such is the fundamental reason behind *diminishing* marginal utility.²⁵ Thus, as the individual increases its supply of units of means, U will consequently decrease:

$$5.b) \frac{\partial U}{\partial M_n} < 0 \quad ^{26}$$

$$5.c) U_1(M_1) > U_2(M_2) > U_3(M_3) > \dots > U_n(M_n)$$

Given the fact that each individual always has a specific amount of units of means to achieve its ends, if the amount of the former (M_q) is lower than that of the latter (E_q), therefore the individual will face scarcity. Thus, scarcity is a subjective evaluation of means with respect to ends, and not a particular feature of any given good (means).

- 6.a) $0 < M_q < \infty$
- 6.b) $E_q > M_q$

Given (6.a) and (6.b), the acting agent faces scarcity. If he would have enough units of means in order to achieve every end (and even more), then the marginal utility of each unit would fall to zero, and thus he would not engage in any purposeful behavior (to achieve more ends), i.e. he would not act.²⁷ This is because (2.b) would apply, where the effort to attain a specific end is valued more than the end itself.

Until this point we have only analyzed action *ex ante*. Let us now turn our attention to the implications of action *ex post*. The individual faces multiple possible different ends he could achieve with the means at his disposal. So, he will tend to choose which goals to attain according to his value

scale²⁸ at any specific point in time (3.a, 3.b). Thus, the concept of cost (C) is implicit in every human action.²⁹ The value of the best-discarded alternative use of the unit of means would be the cost of each action (or, as economic theory presents it, the “opportunity cost”).

7.a) $vE_1 > vE_2 \rightarrow A = f(E_1)$ and $C = vE_2$

7.b) $vE_1' > vE_2 \rightarrow P$

7.c) $vE_1' < vE_2 \rightarrow L$

As analyzed *ex post*, if the value the individual obtained by the action (vE_1') is greater than that given to the best other available option (vE_2), then he has in fact profited (P) from such action. In case the opposite happens, he has experienced a loss (L).

We can infer from this that there is no such thing as indifference in the field of human action, (2.a, 2.b), since a truly indifferent agent does not act; cannot act.³⁰ However, it may very well be the case that after the individual acts he may *say* he was indifferent with respect to acting in order to achieve E_1 or E_2 . However, since this analysis is *ex post*, we do not have any other alternative but to assume that there was, *ex ante*, *something* in E_1 that he found more valuable than E_2 .³¹ Preference always reveals in action, and, despite the psychological implications that the concept of “indifference” may have, it has no *economic* consequences whatsoever.

In the case of interpersonal exchange, the price (p) is the amount of money paid for an item, or the other good, in the case of barter. If there is no voluntary exchange, always based on (2.a), then there is no price (which can be expressed in monetary terms or as a simple ratio of exchange between two commodities).

Another implication of the action axiom is time (T), since every action takes place in time and requires time in order to manifest itself and give place to an outcome. This in turn implies that the very same fact that the individual acts due to (2.a), means that it must be the case that he valued more the attainment of the end chosen in t than in $t+1$ (8.a.).

Now consider:

8.a.) $vE_{1t} > vE_{1t+1}$

8.b.) $vE_{1t} < vE_{1t+1} \rightarrow \nexists A$

In effect, time preference (the ratio between the subjective value of the present with respect to the subjective value of the future) is an essential implication of human action.

8.c.) $TP = \frac{vE_{1t}}{vE_{1t+1}}$

Thus, in order to sacrifice the achievement of the end at present for its accomplishment in the future, the individual will demand to receive in the future a higher value than that which he could have attained at present. In terms of present and future consumption, time preference (TP) explains the existence of interest and savings. The latter exists because it permits one to expand future consumption, which compensates for the sacrifice of postponing present consumption.³² Therefore, the individual will demand future consumption according to his time preference in order to sacrifice present consumption, i.e. the value of present consumption for the individual is defined by the present value of future consumption discounted by his rate of time preference.

An objection to the foregoing involved the famous ice-in-winter versus ice-in-summer example.³³ It is now winter. A man, surely, will prefer the latter to the former. This seems like a refutation of the Austrian view that people always desire a good sooner rather than later. The refutation

of this objection as that these two are not the same good, economically, even though they are, but only chemically.

Another implication of the action axiom is the concept of causality. This is so because unless the acting agent *assumes* that by doing *p* (a specific action using specific means), he will not achieve *q*, then he would not engage in any action. In the view of Mises:

Man is in a position to act because he has the ability to discover causal relations which determine change and becoming in the universe. Acting requires and presupposes the category of causality. Only a man who sees the world in the light of causality is fitted to act. In this sense, we may say that causality is a category of action. The category *means and ends* presupposes the category *cause and effect*. In a world without causality and regularity of phenomena there would be no field for human reasoning and human action. Such a world would be a chaos in which man would be at a loss to find any orientation and guidance. Man is not even capable of *imagining* the conditions of such a chaotic universe. Where man does not see any causal relation, he cannot act. This statement is not reversible. Even when he knows the causal relation involved, man cannot act if he is not in a position to influence the cause (emphasis ours) [65, p. 22].

Thus, man will act only if he wishes to attain *q*, *believes* he had identified a causal relation of the type $p \rightarrow q$, and is able to engage in *p*. This, of course does not imply that causality should have a metaphysical character [98, p. 3], but that it has to be *considered* by the acting agent as such, if he wants to engage in any action.³⁴

Should be clear by now what is the nature and corollaries (for praxeology) of intentional action, i.e. human action.³⁵

As thinking and acting men, we grasp the concept of action. In grasping this concept we simultaneously grasp the closely correlated concepts of value, wealth, exchange, price, and cost. They are all necessarily implied in the concept of action, and together with them the concepts of valuing, scale of value and importance, scarcity and abundance, advantage and disadvantage, success, profit, and loss [...] There can be no doubt whatever concerning the *aprioristic* character of these disciplines (emphasis ours) [63, pp. 24 – 25].

4. The Epistemological Implications of Praxeology

Let us now analyze the epistemological implications of this unique approach toward intentional action. It must be clear by now that Mises ascribes to human action the condition of *rationality*. This requires further explanation, since this definition may at first sight appear as trying to justify every action as the *proper* one according to its specific context. But this is not the case, since Mises defines action as rational since it is always based in the selection of certain means for the attainment of specific ends, according to the *subjective* judgment of the individual who chooses to act. This in turn implies that, although the individual may be wrong, it does not follow that he did not regard the means chosen, at the *time* of choosing, as the best available to him. Mises defines as rational only the *structure* of human action, based on a means and ends approach, but not as an evaluative judgment. In other words, he does not regard rational action as necessarily the best choice that the individual could have made in a specific context (as judged by the best mind with the best knowledge in that context). But the fact that since he chose in a certain way, then it must necessarily follow that his judgment was made on the basis of his knowledge and based on his subjective considerations (value scale and preferences) as the standard.³⁶

This also explains another feature of human action: uncertainty with respect to the future. Since man can experience both profit and loss, while he would always prefer to experience the former rather than the latter, it follows that he does not have *perfect* knowledge.³⁷ Otherwise, men would always profit from every action they undertake, thus implying that there would neither be a concept of loss *nor* of profit (since this would be the standard). Man cannot always be right, and automatically so.

We may also ask why the category of action, as presented in praxeology, is an axiom. Its axiomatic nature comes from the fact that there is no possible way of escaping its truth. Even in the act of trying to deny the validity of the action axiom, one would have to choose certain means (arguments) in order to attain an end (refute the action axiom). In addition, one would have to assume that the act of trying to refute the axiom makes one pass from a less satisfactory state to a more satisfactory one. Thus any individual who tries to refute the action axiom affirms it in the very act of trying to deny it.³⁸

Mises was deeply influenced by Kant [63], [67]. By talking about the category of action as *inherent* in the *structure* of the human mind, Mises regards it as a Kantian category.³⁹ In effect, the action axiom is presented as a *synthetic a priori* proposition. Its truth is independent from any experience (thus making it *a priori*), while it is also present in every human action in the real empirical world (thus making it *synthetic*).

This does not imply that the concept of action cannot be learned. The *a priori* refers here to the identification of an essential attribute in human nature, and therefore an intrinsic characteristic of man; not necessarily the concept of *a priori* as prior to experience (as developed by John Stuart Mill). What Mises tells us is that the axiom is independent of experience, not that no experience is required in order to gain conscious awareness of its existence. In effect, by identifying the action axiom one is in fact engaging in an action.⁴⁰ In other words, the identification of the concept of action is *a posteriori* (in the sense of Mill), but the category of action itself is *a priori* since it responds to a fundamental attribute of human nature, independent of whether such an attribute has been conceptualized or not.⁴¹ Thus, the action axiom is not to be understood as a tautology of the same kind as those in logic and mathematics, applicable to any universe possible or thinkable; rather, it is especially applicable to the concrete universe of experience of human beings and at the same time *necessary*.

The a priori knowledge of praxeology is entirely different – categorially different – from the a priori knowledge of mathematics or, more precisely, from mathematical a priori knowledge as interpreted by logical positivism. The starting point of all praxeological thinking is not *arbitrarily* chosen axioms, but a self-evident proposition, fully, clearly and necessarily present in every human mind. [...] The characteristic feature of man is precisely that he consciously acts. [...] To act means: to strive after ends, that is, to choose a goal and to resort to means in order to attain the goal sought.

The essence of logical positivism is to deny the cognitive value of a priori knowledge by pointing out that all a priori propositions are merely analytic. They do not provide new information, but are merely verbal or tautological, asserting what has already been implied in the definitions and premises. Only experience can lead to synthetic propositions. There is an obvious objection against this doctrine, viz., that *this proposition that there are no synthetic a priori propositions is in itself a – as the present writer thinks, false – synthetic a priori proposition, for it can manifestly not be established by experience*(emphasis ours) [67, pp. 4 – 5].

5. Objections to the Praxeological Approach and Possible Answers

5.1. Psychologism and Polylogism

Although the argument by Mises seems compelling, possible objections may arise. Despite of the fact that human action is rational action; how can we know, in any specific case whether the individual's behavior corresponds to an action or a "reflex"? Mises himself recognizes that "Human action is conscious behavior on the part of a human being. Conceptually it can be sharply and clearly distinguished from unconscious activity, even though *in some cases it is perhaps not easy to determine whether given behavior is to be assigned to one or the other category*" (emphasis ours) [63, p. 24]. If we do not have any criteria in order to identify human action as such, then praxeology, although true *a priori*, would be useless in practice (and the action axiom would no longer be a *synthetic a priori* proposition).

Mises replies that

[...] all experience concerning human action is conditioned by the praxeological categories and becomes possible only through their application. If we had not in our mind the schemes provided by praxeological reasoning, we should never be in a position to discern and to grasp any action. We would perceive motions, but *neither buying nor selling, nor prices, wage rates, interest rates, and so on*. It is only through the utilization of the praxeological scheme that we become able to have an experience concerning an act of buying and selling, but then independently of the fact of whether or not our senses concomitantly perceive any motions of men and of nonhuman elements of the external world. Unaided by praxeological knowledge we would never learn anything about media of exchange. If we approach coins without such preexisting knowledge, we would see in them only round plates of metal, nothing more. Experience concerning money requires familiarity with the praxeological category medium of exchange (emphasis ours) [65, p. 40].⁴²

Although we could say that this answer to the problem makes sense, it is only a partial solution.⁴³ We need a stronger foundation for praxeology, and as we will show next, we may find it in the work of the Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (as presented by Long [59]).

In order to further analyze the validity of the praxeological approach we need to respond to several objections against this view. The first one is what Mises [65, pp. 75 – 89] defined as "polylogism", the view that there is no such a thing as a universal logic. For praxeology, the problem with this view can be easily seen: if there is no universal logic, then there is no way to derive any empirical application (including economic theory) from the action axiom, which is based on the idea of identifying every human action as rational action. Here, the Austrian author is in the tradition of Frege⁴⁴ [59, pp. 346-349], who in turn opposed the idea of "psychologism," the view that the laws of logic are nothing more than a *generalization* of how men think. This is an important distinction, since we can define two different views of polylogism [59, p. 347]: normative and descriptive.

Frege explained that "the laws of logic are normative for thought because they are descriptive of reality; but they are not descriptive of thought" [59, p. 347]. This implies a *reflectionist* view of logic, i.e. the idea that reality in itself is logical⁴⁵ and therefore our thinking, in order to reflect reality, ought to follow the laws of logic. The corollary of this approach is that logical thought is optional for man, meaning that although the proper way to think, if one wants to conform to reality, is by guiding thought according to the laws of logic, man can also think illogically. Now, for normative polylogism, which holds that "every group has its own logic, but they're all correct; each group's logic is valid for that group" [59, p. 347], the Fregean view described before is a proper response, since although men *can* think illogically, it does not follow that there *are* multiple logics.

But what about descriptive polylogism? This view maintains that “different principles of logic describe the thinking of different groups, but it does not follow that all these different logics are equally valid; one might well be right and all the others wrong” [59, p. 347]. The problem here is more difficult, since although it could be said that there is no such thing as multiple logics, there is no standard by which to judge which one is correct. This is so because the Fregean approach could be easily dismissed by pointing out that what the Fregean *thinks* that are the laws of logic, is only what his group *regards* as the laws of Logic, which can be different from what other group may *think*. This in turn implies that there is no way of knowing which Logic is the correct one, and therefore normative polylogism appears again. In other words, in order to refute normative polylogism, one may very well fall into descriptive polylogism, thus finally returning to normative polylogism.

Although Frege discards this possibility by not paying attention to descriptive polylogism (implying that the only problem is normative polylogism), Mises does in fact recognize that there is a difficulty with descriptive polylogism that should be solved.⁴⁶ In order to do that he adopts an *impositionist* approach to logic, which holds that the Logic of reality is in fact an imposition made by the subject *to* reality due to the structure of the human mind. As we can see, this is a standard Kantian approach. Thus, by adopting this position, Mises is discarding any possibility of illogical thought, due to the nature and functioning of the reasoning mind itself. However, at the same time there is no way for Mises to discard the chance that other beings have other mental structures, and thus, impose different categories on reality.⁴⁷ Therefore, this problem brings us back to normative and descriptive polylogism.

According to Long [59, p. 355], the solution to this problem is to be found in the work of Ludwig Wittgenstein. Why? Because based on his work we may reject the approach both of Mises and Frege to the problem of polylogism. Instead, he presents a case for what we may define as a *unified* view on the subject of thought and reality. Thus,

[...] impositionism is rejected because it pictures logic as a constraint imposed by us on the world, while reflectionism is rejected because it pictures logic as a constraint imposed by the world on us. To think of logic as constraining something is to imagine, or try to imagine, how things would be without the constraint. Since neither talk of an illogical world nor talk of illogical thought can be made sense of, the whole question cannot be meaningfully asked and so may be dismissed in good conscience: ‘in order to be able to draw a limit to thought, we should have to find both sides of the limit thinkable. <...> We cannot think what we cannot think; so what we cannot think we cannot *say* either’ [103, p. 49], [59, p. 366].

The unified view emanates from the fact that

It is a sign of confusion to say either that the logicity of the world has its source in the structure of thought or that the logicity of thought has its source in the structure of the world – as though the logicity of thought and the logicity of the world were two different facts that need to be hooked together, rather than being two sides of the same fact [...] [59, p. 366].

How do we make sense of the fact that praxeological concepts may not apply in practice all the time?

[...] although it is true that empirical considerations come into play in determining whether a praxeological concept is applicable in a particular case, such empirical considerations cannot confine themselves to the sorts of purely quantitative magnitudes and repeatable experiments with which the physical sciences (supposedly) deal, but must instead involve the intuitive, interpretive method that Mises and Hayek, borrowing from the hermeneutical tradition, call *verstehen*⁴⁸ [59, p. 358].

Thus,

In solving Frege's problem, Wittgenstein has solved Mises' problem as well. There can be a priori economic laws, because the terms that occur in those laws will be applicable only to phenomena that in fact obey those laws. [...] Mises agrees with Wittgenstein that economic categories legitimately apply only to those items that play the corresponding role in people's actions. He too invokes the specific example of coins, which count as money only if they are actually used to facilitate indirect exchange. That use is *constitutive* of money [59, p. 355].

Therefore, as Long [59, p. 359], explains by using a Kantian formula:⁴⁹ praxeology without thymology⁵⁰ is empty; thymology without praxeology is blind.

History, as such, is to be studied according to the previous approach since the historian identifies common phenomena according to praxeological concepts and deals with unique events by the use of *verstehen* [98, p. 8]. Thus, it can deal with specific men, ideas, events, and other historical data by using *ideal types*. How does it create these?

The aspect from which history arranges and assorts the infinite multiplicity of events is their meaning. The only principle which it applies for the systemization of its objects – men, ideas, institutions, social entities, and artifacts – is meaning affinity. According to meaning affinity it arranges the elements into ideal types [65, p. 59].

As Wittgenstein explained, illogical thinking cannot count as thinking⁵¹; and very much in the same way, irrational action cannot count as action.

To borrow a phrase from Hayek, the mind does not so much *make* rules as *consist* of rules [38, p. 18]; and a mind that 'consists of rules' cannot intelligibly be interpreted either as *making* rules (as though it might have left them unmade), or as having rules *imposed* on it (as though it might have been free of them) [59, p. 367].

Thus, praxeological categories are not only an essential feature of the human *mind*, but also are a fundamental part of our understanding of human action in *reality*. The example of Mises on money is a case in point: without the category of medium of exchange, we would only see "round plates of metal." This example may be compared to that presented by John Wisdom when he discussed if we can correctly deduce emotions by perceiving the external behavior of individuals in the case of a person's face and then deducing he is angry in the same way "we know a kettle's boiling – from the steam we guess at bubbles and the rest, and from the bubbles and the rest it's a deduction that it's boiling" [104, p. 209]. Although we may be making an illegitimate extrapolation by deducing a specific inner state from an external reaction, what underlies both examples is that in order to understand both phenomena one needs the correct *concepts*. In other words, in order to deduce anger (an internal, psychological state) from a specific face under specific conditions (an external, physiological reaction) one needs to have the appropriate concept. In this respect, one also needs to have the concept of action in order to identify it in reality. Otherwise, one would never see actions, but only specific movements.

We are able to find in the work of Wittgenstein a solid foundation for praxeology and another justification for Mises's contentions, and thus we can leave behind the problematic analytic/synthetic distinction.⁵² Therefore, "Wittgenstein's arguments for the conclusion that whatever counts as *thought* must embody *logical* principles can likewise be deployed to show that whatever counts as *action* must embody *economic* principles" [59, p. 367].

5.2. Praxeology and Logic

Since Mises compares praxeological concepts with those of logic, in the sense that these are both *a priori*, this may lead to some confusions of their different natures in cognition. Praxeology consists of basic concepts, based on the action axiom, which are identifications of fundamental features of human nature. From this axiom, we derive the rest of the praxeological theorems.

It has been contended that no proposition could be derived from a concept, but only from another proposition [99, p. 4]. However, the problem here is that the concept of action is not understood in praxeology as specific, articulated, proposition, but an identification of a fact of reality: man acts. In addition, this fact may be stated in different ways, and later aid us in order to derive further implications of the axiom. It is not the proposition that defines “action” which gives rise to the concept or the theory that enables us to identify action in reality. Rather, it is the concept of action which in turn allows us to articulate it in a certain proposition. E.g., in order to define the concept “action”, one must already have the concept; and the same applies for identifying action in reality, otherwise one would not be able neither to define it propositionally nor identify it in reality (for different ways of stating the action axiom see above [65, p. 11]).

Scarano [99, p. 4] contends that if praxeology is formal, then every proposition with the same structure of the action axiom should be regarded as a praxeological truth for sharing the same structure. I.e. if the action axiom (“every action is purposeful behavior”) has the logical form “All S is P,” then every other proposition with such form (e.g. “All swans are black”) should be regarded as apodictically true. Further, Scarano explains that for Kantians every *synthetic a priori* proposition is not true due to its form, but because of its content:

Secondly, if praxeology is formal, then any sentence with the same form would be true. The statement ‘every conscious action presupposes ends’, has the logical form ‘if P then Q’ and, therefore the following should be praxeological truths, ‘All men are happy’, ‘All whales have lungs’. None of these statements are considered as praxeological truths... Praxeological truths, or synthetic *a priori* truths as a Kantian would say, are not true for their form, but for their content! [99, p. 4].⁵³

However, Mises explains that the fact that man acts, i.e. he chooses means in order to attain certain ends, is true of any situation where such an event takes place, regardless of the means or ends chosen.

Praxeology is indifferent to the ultimate goals of action. Its findings are valid for all kinds of action irrespective of the ends aimed at. It is a science of means, not of ends. It applies the term happiness in a purely formal sense. In the praxeological terminology the proposition: man's unique aim is to attain happiness, is tautological. It does not imply any statement about the state of affairs from which man expects happiness [65, p. 15].

To act is to choose means to attain ends. As such, the form which Mises has in mind here is not the *logical* form of a proposition, but the specific *sequence of events* that are conceptualized under “action,” choosing certain means in order to attain certain ends. The action axiom is not a logical proposition without content, but a specific concept, which abstracts from the given means and ends that any individual may choose, and only consider the structure of the event as such. Thus, the content of the axiom is its identification of a specific sequence of events that identify any situation where such sequence or phenomena take place, regardless of the specifics involved in the situation.⁵⁴

Let us give an example from the field of mathematics in order to better illustrate the idea. A function is a set of ordered pairs where for each value of the independent variable corresponds a unique value of the dependent variable, but not necessarily *vice versa*. For instance, if we have the function $y =$

$a_0 + a_1x + a_2x^2$, where $a_2 < 0$, there may be the same value of y for different values of x , but not the other way. As such, this function has the logical form of the *modus ponens*:

If P, then Q

$$\frac{P}{Q}$$

For any value of x there is a certain value of y

$$\frac{x}{y}$$

Let us assume that for this parabolic function, the value of $y = 7$ may correspond both to $x = 2$ and $x = 4$. As such, if we then conclude from the fact that $y = 7$ that $x = 2$ we are committing the fallacy of affirming the consequent, since it may also be that $x = 4$. This is so because the logical reasoning implicit in the function is (*modus ponens*):

$$\frac{\text{If } x = 2 \text{ then } y = 7}{\frac{x = 2}{y = 7}}$$

But if we say:

$$\frac{\text{If } x = 2 \text{ then } y = 7}{\frac{y = 7}{x = 2}}$$

This is false, since the conclusion may also be $x = 4$.

The point of this example is to show that the underlying logic behind this mathematical reasoning is the *modus ponens*, but there are many possible applications of the same logical structure to propositions of different nature. Because praxeology studies the logic of action, this does not imply that logic is to be understood here as symbolic logic. From the fact that two reasoning have the same structure one cannot conclude that they have the same nature.

This example implies that although one may very well identify the logical *structure* of a certain reasoning, this does not imply that the reasoning itself is of a logical nature (in this case, its nature is mathematical). With the concept of human action something similar happens: we identify the underlying logic of the axiomatic proposition of action as purposeful behavior. Thus, Scarano's critique that praxeology is not sensible since it is not formalized and refers only to concepts such as those of logic is wrong; although the action axiom has logical implications, it is not by itself of a logical nature. In other words, although praxeology studies the structure of action, as logic studies the structure of reasoning and propositions, we must not conclude that praxeology is of the same nature as logic; only that both deal with the *a priori*.

Praxeology has a conceptual nature, and if we are to identify the logical structure of the action axiom, then it is not "All S is P" but "S if and only if P" (biconditional⁵⁵). This is so because there is action if and only if there is purposeful behavior, i.e. only the choice of certain means to attain certain ends can be regarded as action. Thus, Wittgenstein's approach as presented supra applies in this regard. How so? Because the concepts of praxeology can only be applied to those situations where they identify reality, as such the concept of action applies if and only if someone acts. Therefore, the identity of the premises in the reasoning is the *content* of praxeology, but applicable to any phenomena which

has the *form* of action, *any* action. It is not the same to say that “if there is behavior, then there is action”, as to say, “If there is purposeful behavior, then there is action,” despite of the fact that both propositions are of the form “If P, then Q.”

5.3. Intuition and Introspection

Another critique of praxeology is that it not only depends on intuition⁵⁶ but also on introspection, and as such, it may be discarded as a form of subjectivism. However, this is not the case, since the Austrian approach does not rely on introspection in general, but only on introspection as a means of identifying the truth of the action axiom. How so? Since introspection is by itself an action, any introspective inquiry uses and thereby confirms the validity of the action axiom; regardless of the content of one’s introspection (thus it is valid for inter-subjectivity). As for the rejection of “concepts of consciousness” (on which introspection depends), Binswanger [8, p. 54] explains:

The denial that we are self-aware is self-refuting: the denial maintains, in one form or another, that concepts of consciousness are invalid, that they do not represent an awareness of anything real. Since this claim presupposes knowledge of the distinction between contents of consciousness and external facts, it is just another form of denying the axiom of consciousness and commits the same stolen concept fallacy: the concept ‘invalid’ presupposes, implicitly or explicitly, the concept ‘consciousness.’ ‘Invalid’ refers to the status of an idea, a status that is differentiated from that of a valid awareness of fact. But making that distinction presupposes that we have recognized what it is to be aware of facts, which implies an act of self-awareness. The denial of introspective self-awareness presupposes what is being denied.

We are here attacking the idea that introspection is invalid as a source of knowledge, because if so, so is the case that praxeology is invalid as a methodology. Binswanger’s approach is useful to explain why concepts of consciousness (which are the ones we reach by introspection, and give it validity) are reliable.

Further, it can be said that⁵⁷ if we accept that there can be such a thing as a “reflex” or behavior that is not purposeful, we cannot be sure that we are identifying action (as purposeful behavior) in any specific situation. However, this would be nothing more than a *reductio ad absurdum*, since it is a fact of daily life of any individual that his usual approach towards interacting with others is to assume that these follow the concept of action as presented here, i.e. they choose certain means to attain their ends.⁵⁸

The idea that men are motivated in general by “reflexes” or “unconscious movements” cannot be seriously contended nor applied as a usual policy. This is so because if “reflex” would be the standard of human behavior, then with what are we to contrast it in order to arrive to the concept of action? How could we make sense of any process of thought if we must assume that we are motivated just by “reflexes” and not by conscious awareness? Thus, there would be no way to explain not only the daily events in which human beings are involved, but also we would have to accept that civilization as we know it is the result of mere chance. Thus, an implication of the action axiom is that in every interaction with other individuals one has the expectation that these others will behave rationally (but, of course, not necessarily in a sensible way)⁵⁹; otherwise no theory could be constructed so as to explain human behavior in society⁶⁰ (with its great complexity). An individual who acts has expectations that those with whom he exchanges will act rationally. This is the regularity that permits us to construct economic theory (or any theory of social cooperation in general).

The standard for any theory of human behavior as such should be rational action, because if we would take, for instance, sleepwalking as a standard then there is no reason to distinguish between

conscious and unconscious behavior in the first place. To state that an industrial civilization may be the outcome of mere “reflexes” or unconscious reactions is nothing more than a *reductio ad absurdum*.

Moreover, rejecting the action axiom would imply that economic events (as a category of events in general) do not need to follow a means-ends structure not only in order to be understood, but also to exist at all. As Hayek [38] explained, many fundamental human institutions may not be and are not the result of human design, but human action.⁶¹ Following Mises’s approach we can say that they are nevertheless the *outcome* of human reason in pursuing individual ends. They are an *emergent*⁶² outcome.

The fact that reason is fallible⁶³ does not imply that it will necessarily be wrong. As such, whenever a certain behavior is interpreted as action while it was actually a reflex, we must conclude that there was an error of judgment, but not infer from this error that there is no such a thing as action, nor that a human being is unable, *in principle*, to identify it.

6. Conclusion

As we tried to show throughout this paper, the work of Ludwig von Mises in developing the field of Praxeology is highly useful in order to shed light on the concept of intentional action. Moreover, aided by the developments of other authors, such as Friedrich Hayek and Ludwig Wittgenstein (as presented by Long [59]), a solid foundation for praxeology is provided and thus a deeper understanding of the concept of action is achieved.

Intentional action is, under this approach, rational action, and therefore purposeful behavior. Although there are problems in the exposition and formulation of praxeology as presented by Mises⁶⁴, it is nevertheless useful not only in identifying the nature of the category of action, but also its implications, thus expanding our knowledge on the concept of intentional action as such. Despite the fact that there have been enormous advances in the study of action in general and in the field of economics in particular,⁶⁵ Mises’s approach is able to give as a unique basis on the subject.

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Notes

1. The authors wish to thank Rafael Beltramino for helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

2. For another approach on praxeology, see [57].

3. Lemberg, Austria, 09/29/1881 – New York, United States, 10/10/1973.

4. The present authors would include in this regard Murray N. Rothbard, even though he is lesser known than those two.

5. A “defense of free enterprise” is normative. The action axiom is an aspect of positive economics. Never the twain shall meet? See below.

6. Others include [9], [10], [11], [7], [30], [42], [43], [44], [45], [49], [76], [77], [82], [85], [86], [87], [88], [89], [92], [93], [94], [95], [97]. Further, virtually all of these are in effect standing on the intellectual shoulders of Mises.

7. “Action is a category that the natural sciences do not take into account. [...] There are constant relations between entities that enable the scientist to establish the process called measurement. But there is nothing that would suggest aiming at ends sought; there is no ascertainable purpose” [67, pp. 6 – 7].

8. Although it could be said that there is no such thing as *ceteris paribus* in any science, it is certainly possible to distinguish among different conditions for the application of the concept: 1. When the exact formal conditions which allow the application of a proposition hold; 2. When the variables not included in the theory are irrelevant or constant; 3. When such variables are neither relevant nor constant but have turned out to be so in a laboratory; and 4. The variables not included in the theory are neither constant nor irrelevant nor established in a laboratory, but we accept the current hypothesis arguing until we can make a new one which includes them [31]. We can infer that Mises refers here to the fact that formal sciences apply for 1, the natural sciences for 2 and 3, but economics pertains to 4.

9. A similar situation pertains with regard to equilibrium, or the evenly rotating economy. States Mises [62, p. 163] in this regard: “To assume stationary economic conditions is a theoretical expedient and not an attempt to describe reality. We cannot dispense with this line of thought if we wish to understand the laws of economic change. In order to study movement we must first imagine a condition where it does not exist. The stationary condition is that point of equilibrium to which we conceive all forms of economic activity to be tending and which would actually be attained if new factors did not, in the meantime, create a new point of equilibrium. In the imaginary state of equilibrium all the units of the factors of production are employed in the most economic way, and there is no reason to contemplate any changes in their number or their disposition. Even if it is impossible to imagine a living – that is to say a *changing* – socialist economic order, because economic activity without economic calculation seems inconceivable, it is quite easy to postulate a socialist economic order under stationary conditions. We need only avoid asking how this stationary condition is achieved. If we do this there is no difficulty in examining the statics of a socialist community. All socialist theories and Utopias have always had only the stationary condition in mind.” (emphasis in the original).

10. There are no constants in economics as there are in the natural sciences, such as gravity, or the periodic table of the elements in chemistry.

11. See Mises on Case Probability and Class Probability [65, pp. 107 – 113].

12. This insight by Mises was many decades later adopted by philosopher of science Karl R. Popper [78].

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13. Although the conception of axioms as self-evident has been abandoned at the beginning of the 20th century, this in turn works in favor of Mises, since it does not oblige him to justify the action axiom as the only and most fundamental basis for any knowledge, or knowledge as such. Despite of the fact that Mises indeed wants to prove that it is an axiom.
14. “Axiomatic Nature” is to be regarded in the sense of the self-evidence. However, as we have previously said in fn. 13, if axioms need not be self-evident, but chosen for a system, then there is no such a thing as axiomatic nature. Even so, we use the phrase as to follow Mises’s idea on this regard; which does not alter the reasoning. The action axiom is apodictic, since any attempt to deny it is *also* a human action.
15. “[...] to distinguish precisely, within the broader field of general praxeology, a narrower orbit of specifically economic problems [...] All that can be contended is this: Economics is mainly concerned with the analysis of the determination of money prices of goods and services exchanged on the market. In order to accomplish this task it must start from a comprehensive theory of human action [...] it must not restrict its investigations to those modes of action which in mundane speech are called ‘economic’ actions, but must deal also with actions which are in a loose manner of speech called ‘noneconomic’” [65, pp. 233-235].
16. Although not everything that *seems* evident is irrefutable nor everything that is irrefutable *is* evident, we will address possible objections throughout this paper in order to defend this view with respect to the action axiom.
17. The causes of the ends aimed by every action is studied by the field of psychology.
18. Despite of the fact that if we are to adopt the analytic/synthetic distinction we may discard the empirical validity of the action axiom as a mere *analytic* truth (or a tautology), and thus analyze this approach from a strict positivist view, we will deal with this objection by pointing out its contradictions further in the text.
19. Since we are approaching this subject matter from the point of view of methodological dualism, a falsifiability criteria such as Popper’s need not apply to define this approach as scientific or not.
20. See [64]. For a critique see [71]. Other Austrians, too, reject mathematical economics. Austrian economists who object to the hyper-mathematicalization of the dismal science include: [1], [2], [3][3], [4], [6], [18], [19], [20], [40, pp. 98-106], [41], [50, pp. 99-103], [53], [56], [58], [61], [64], [68], [72], [73], [80], [81], [82], [84], [86], [87], [91], [93], [96], [100], [102], [105]. There are even some economists not usually associated with the Austrian School who also oppose this hyper-mathematicalization of economics: [17], [27], [29], [51], [52], [70].
21. It is possible to formalize the theory with the help of symbolic logic, but functions are useful as well and we pursue that path at present. Why? Garrison [33], [34] inverted the triangle of Hayek [35] and Rothbard [87], placing time on the horizontal, not the vertical axis. Why did he do so? This was done in order to make the triangle, a pillar of Austrian business cycle theory, more amenable to mainstream economists, who are accustomed to that practice and might reject the triangle out of hand for this one characteristic. It is only in like manner that we employ mathematical format; for the same precise reason: to render Austrian economics more palatable to the profession, which is mainly neoclassical, and more than likely to reject praxeology for that reason alone (The popularity of Coase, [28] is an exception to this general rule.). As for the present authors, we join [5] in rejecting the triangle holus bolus, and, also, with the economists mentioned, *supra*, in the present footnote, who reject mathematical notation.
22. If he could do so, we would have achieved post scarcity. Then, there would be no need for human action, nor economics, which is its study.
23. Are we now treading in the direction of illegitimate cardinal utility? Austrianism is only compatible with ordinal utility. Let us reassure the reader that we are not. That is why we say that the individual orders his ends in a ranking, and he values his means in *proportion* to how he values the ends he intends to achieve with them; i.e. in relation to them. But we do not say that the value of the means is *equal* to the value of the ends. We intend to say that, for example, the individual values E1 more than E2 ($vE1 > vE2$); and the unit of means with which he intends to achieve E1 will be valued according to how he values E1 ($vE1$). Note that the values do not equalize; or that we can somehow measure them. In fn. 21 and 26 we say that formalization is done only for illustrative purposes.
24. Menger [69], by using the word “marginal” meant “additional.”
25. Let us note that the praxeological deduction of diminishing marginal utility is based on the fact that the first unit of means is used for the attainment of the highest ranked end, the second unit for the second ranked end, etc. regardless of the *psychological* satisfaction (reported utility) that the individual gets at each time. On the other hand, Gossen’s Law [32] (which is often used by neo-classical economists in order to illustrate this theory) is based on the idea that successive consumption of units of the same commodity will provide less utility each time. However, this depends on the commodity and the individual. For instance, the second unit may provide more satisfaction than the first one, and the third more than the second, etc. It is only eventually that we reach a point of diminishing returns. As such, it cannot be necessarily true, as are the categories of praxeology. In effect, this in turn implies that for praxeology marginal utility theory is not based on psychologism, and as we will see in section 5.i., this is relevant for the entire praxeological approach towards human action.

26. Since there is no continuity in the field of human action (because man only regards discrete quantities as relevant for action), to deriviate a function makes no *economic* sense. However, this formalization is intended to illustrate the postulates of praxeology, not to replace their conceptual truth, which is mainly shown in discursive reasoning.

27. Thus, economic goods are those which are scarce.

28. Let us be clear on this “value scale” business. It is not as if, on the one hand, we have the person, and on the other, his “value scale” that, perhaps, he is clutching in his hand, and consults, from time to time, before he acts. Rather, this value scale is *implicit* in his behavior. He chooses an apple instead of a banana, when offered both. On his value scale, the former ranks higher than the latter. We discover this, through his choice. However, he had no separate, perhaps printed, value scale, that he consulted. It is entirely possible, very likely even, that he was not thinking about fruit just before the moment he was offered this choice. It is highly plausible the even he did not know, beforehand, which he would partake in; that even he only discovered this ranking as he reached out his hand and grabbed up the apple.

29. “But acting man chooses, determines, and tries to reach an end. Of two things both of which he cannot have together he selects one and gives up the other. Action therefore always involves both taking and renunciation” [65, p. 12].

30. Thus, it would be impossible for anyone to demonstrate that he was indifferent between any two or more options. He could *say* he was indifferent, but how could he *reveal* (in the Rothbardian, [90]) sense, that he was? He could not.

31. Otherwise, why did he make that choice? Neoclassical indifference analysis is based on the idea that there is such a thing as indifference in human action (as presented in indifference curves and utility maximization analysis). Nozick [74, p. 369] argues that marginal utility theory requires indifference in order to explain why the agent may choose any of the units he possesses to achieve an end; thus, he avers, the Austrian rejection of the concept of indifference is self-refuting. But if the agent were truly indifferent between the aforementioned apple and banana, why, ever, would he pick one and not the other. For the Austrian critique of the concept of “indifference” in economics, see [2], [10], [11], [12], [13], [14], [15], [16], [46], [48], [49], [60]. For a neoclassical rejection of this Austrian view, and thus a defense of the mainstream doctrine of “indifference” see [22], [23], [24], [25], [26], [74], [75]. See also on this [106, p. 22]: “Nozick has objected that from the fact that one person chooses *a* does not imply that it does not want nor prefer *b*. It is true. But our contention that every action implies choosing between *a* and *b* does not mean deducing that the person does not prefer *b*, rather that since not every necessity could be satisfied at the same time, then the acting agent must create a value scale and set his priorities, according to which he will option. Perhaps, respect to this observation by Nozick we may say that every action implies to choose between *a* and *non a*” (translated by the first of the present authors from the original in Spanish, with permission of the original author).

32. Menger [69] classified economic goods in lower and higher order. Thus, lower order goods (or first order) are consumption goods, and those of higher order (or second, third, ..., *n* orders) are those which are used in the production process of lower order goods, classified as such according to how far they are from the consumption stage. Savings implies economic agents sacrificing present consumption in order to create higher order goods, which in turn can increase future consumption.

33. Which takes place before the advent of refrigeration.

34. Thus, the metaphysical status of the category of causality is outside the scope of praxeology. This is so because it is irrelevant for the acting agent: Whatever its metaphysical status, it must take it into account for the very nature of intentional action as such.

35. For a full analysis of praxeology see [65] and [106].

36. As presented in the previous section (4.c). “Choosing means is a technical problem, as it were, the term ‘technique’ being taken in its broadest sense. Choosing ultimate ends is a personal, subjective, individual affair. Choosing means is a matter of reason, choosing ultimate ends a matter of the soul and the will” [66, pp.14 – 15].

37. One of the characteristics of “Perfect Competition.” See Kirzner [55].

38. See Rizzo [82, p. 50].

39. Some disciples of Mises, such as the American economist Murray Rothbard, use an Aristotelian foundation for the action axiom. “All human beings *act* by virtue of their existence and their nature as human beings. We could not conceive of human beings who do not act purposefully, who have no ends in view that they desire and attempt to attain. Things that did not act, that did not behave purposefully, would no longer be classified as human.” (emphasis in the original) [87, p. 2]; this author also cites Aristotle’s *Ethica Nicomachea*, ch. vii, as the basis for his contention on the nature of action. See also [93], [95].

40. “All that is needed for the deduction of all praxeological theorems is knowledge of the essence of human action. It is a knowledge that is our own because we are men; [...] no experience, however rich, could disclose them to a being who did not know a priori what human action is. The only way to a cognition of these theorems is logical analysis of our inherent knowledge of the category of action. We must bethink ourselves and reflect upon the structure of human action. Like logic and mathematics, praxeological knowledge is in us; it does not come from without” [65, p. 64].

41. This fact may answer the contention that the *a priori* nature of mathematics and logic is demonstrable, while praxeology is not [98, p. 11]. "...axiomatic concepts are only *implicit* in experience. To identify them explicitly, to conceptualize them, requires a sophisticated development" (emphasis in the original) [8, p. 168].
42. Mises also said on this regard that "No talk about irrationality [...] can invalidate the statement that man makes use of his reason for the realization of wishes and desires. From the unshakable foundation of the category of human action praxeology and economics proceed step by step by means of discursive reasoning. Precisely defining assumptions and conditions, they construct a system of concepts and draw all the inferences implied by logically unassailable ratiocination. With regard to the results thus obtained only two attitudes are possible; either one can unmask logical errors in the chain of the deductions which produced these results, or one must acknowledge their correctness and validity" [65, p. 67].
43. "Now we can begin to see why it is a mistake to assimilate what the praxeologist does to what a Cartesian rationalist does when he spins out the laws of physical motion *a priori*. The conclusions of praxeology are not in themselves empirical statements. They do not predict what people will do. For example, they do not predict how people will behave with regard to metal disks and piles of wood. What they do predict is how people will behave *so long as they are buying and selling*. If that gives praxeology empirical content, then geometry has empirical content in just the same way. Geometry cannot predict how many edges your next slice of pizza will have; but it can predict how many edges it will have *so long as it is triangular*" (emphasis in the original) [59, p. 356].
44. Perhaps by the influence of Edmund Husserl.
45. While we respect Frege, the present authors do not accept his view that reality is "logical." We maintain that it just *is*. See on this Wittgenstein, below.
46. We follow Long's presentation [59]; Mises does not present his case specifically in this way.
47. [...] "by granting that such categories apply to the world only because we impose them on it, it leaves open the possibility that creatures of another sort might impose different categories [...] the reflectionist position, echoing Frege's view that logical principles are laws of reality rather than laws of thought [...] too seems vulnerable to polylogism. If the principles of psychology are normative for rather than constitutive of thought, then thought can depart from them; and once illogical thought is permitted, so is irrational action, and the fabric of praxeology is rent asunder" [59, p. 366]. Mises also points out that unconscious behavior may be difficult to distinguish from conscious behavior.
48. In Mises's analysis, *Verstehen* could be identified with Bergson's concept of *Intuition* [98, p. 6]. However, the approach here is not the same. The concept of intuition often responds to subjectivism and thus to relativism, turning it into an invalid source for objective knowledge. The idea is that experience is interpreted by *a priori* praxeological concepts, not that there is some kind of revelation that allows the individual to identify reality as it is without a specific means of cognition (in this case, the use of man's mind aided by praxeological concepts).
49. "Thoughts without content are void; intuitions without conceptions, blind" [54].
50. "'Thymology' is derived from the Greek *θυμός*, which Homer and other authors refer to as the seat of the emotions and as the mental faculty of the living body by means of which thinking, willing, and feeling are conducted." [66, pp. 265 – 266].
51. "Wittgenstein's view is that we must go beyond the descriptive-normative dichotomy to the position that the laws of logic are *constitutive* of thought. Without logic there is no thought and without thought there is no objective substratum of communication." (emphasis ours) [83, p. 377].
52. See Quine [79]. Thus, we do not have to respond to the reasons for the rejection of *synthetic a priori* propositions as presented in Scarano [99, p. 5].
53. Translated by the first of the present authors from the original in Spanish, with permission of the original author.
54. This may be presented as the reason why Mises seems to avoid distinguishing between primitive and defined terms, as well as axioms and theorems in the strict sense. He also does not specifically state theorems nor constructs nor proves a definite system where praxeological truth belongs to both the axioms and the theorems (such is a part of the critique by Scarano, [98, p. 9]). The key here is that although the concept of action may be defined only ostensively, it is nevertheless axiomatic.
55. $A \leftrightarrow B$.
56. We discussed this problem in section 5.1.
57. As we have said in section 5.1.
58. The concept of reflex is only used to identify such behavior that cannot be said to be an action, i.e. purposeful behavior. But it is not nor cannot be used *primarily* as an approach to human behavior in general.
59. Nevertheless, this pertains to evaluations, not mere descriptions of action as such. That is, their actions will be purposive, and rational in the *ex ante* sense. But they are of course not always so *ex post*. That is people make mistakes, but do not intend to do so.

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60. It could be contended that there are certain events where the individual expects the other parties to behave irrationally, such as in war. But here also the action axiom is valid, since even when human beings act to destroy each other, they choose what they regard the best means in order to achieve that end. Rational here refers only to ‘instrumental’ rationality.
61. Examples include the spontaneous order creation of language and money. No one intended that they be created, but they came about as a result of human action.
62. Austrian economics, especially of the Hayek [36], [37], [38], [39] variant, explain that the economy is a complex system where institutions appear as an emergent property, not due to design but because of *spontaneous orders*. This in turn explains why central planning fails: it does not take into account that emergent properties of certain systems, such as social organization, cannot be emulated by a central authority. There is, fundamentally, a knowledge problem that the price system (in part) tends to solve under a free market.
63. This fact, (as we have seen in section III) is also recognized by praxeology, which in turn is the basis for the *uncertainty* of the future as well as for the existence of *both* profit and loss (section IV).
64. We presented several objections to this methodology and their possible answers throughout this work.
65. For an analysis of *Human Action* in the light of Experimental Economics, see [101].

Christianity, the Free Market, and Libertarianism

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Abstract:

In recent centuries Christians of various denominations have endorsed many different political philosophies that they see as being truly biblical in their approach. Over this time there has been an increasing hostility, by some Christians, towards free markets and political philosophies that hold human liberty as the highest goal such as libertarianism and classical liberalism. This criticism is unwarranted and misplaced as libertarianism and free markets are not only compatible with Christianity, they are also the most biblically sound of all economics systems and political philosophies endorsed by Christians today. Therefore, this paper will argue that Christians of all denominations should endorse free markets and libertarianism if they wish to create a world that follows biblical principles and the teachings of Jesus.

Keywords: Christianity, free enterprise, libertarianism.

1. Introduction

Since Karl Marx began writing criticism of what he called “capitalism” and subsequently invented his own economic system known as “communism” the free market system has come under more and more scrutiny and hostility. This includes even some elements of Christianity. Catholic social teaching in the last century has become more critical of markets and as a result has been friendlier to government regulation and intervention into the market. What makes this an interesting phenomenon is that some of the earliest work by Catholic thinkers on economics, notably the Spanish Scholastics,¹ was strongly supportive of free markets. Not all elements of Christianity are as critical to the market as the Catholic Church has become over the last century.² Many Christians who would identify on the “Christian right” in America are perhaps at least semi-sympathetic to the market economy. However, even most of these Christians are ignorant or misguided regarding basic elements of economics.³ Most still favor some sort of government intervention and regulation of the market but just not as much as their Catholic brothers. There has also been an increasing hostility by Christians toward political philosophies such as libertarianism that endorse the free market.⁴ This criticism is unwarranted as, the theme of the present paper, free markets and libertarianism are completely compatible with Christianity. Many elements of Christian thought are found in free markets and libertarianism and it is for this reason that Christians should support free markets and political philosophies such as libertarianism and classical liberalism.

In section 2 we discuss the early scholastics. Section 3 is given over to an analysis of private property. In section 4 we discuss rendering unto Caesar. The burden of section 5 is our claim that Jesus was an anarchist. The Prince of Peace is the focus of section 6. We conclude in section 7.

2. The Early Scholastics

Early Catholic thinkers on economics were not always as hostile toward the market as their catholic successors in the modern era. In fact, with the rediscovery of many of the works of the Spanish Scholastics many of them could be considered friendlier to the free market than even some modern economists who claim to favor the free market. According to Tom Woods (2002):

Much of what these sixteenth-century Catholic thinkers taught in the economic realm revealed a considerable understand of and appreciation for the functioning of the market, including the role of entrepreneurship, the nature of exchange, and the justice of prices and wages determined by the free interplay of supply and demand.

The Spanish Scholastics were indeed ahead of their time compared to even some later economists in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁵ However, they were not perfect and lacked a method in their approach as “They were, moreover, interested more in the moral dimension of economics than in a descriptive elaboration of how various economic mechanisms functioned” (Woods, 2002).

The areas where the Spanish Scholastics excelled in economic thought were wages and prices. The Spanish Scholastic Juan de Mariana had strong words for those that would interfere with prices in the market:

Only a fool would try to separate these values in such a way that the legal price should differ from the natural. Foolish, nay, wicked the ruler who orders that a thing the common people value, let us say, at five should be sold for ten. Men are guided in this matter by common estimation founded on considerations of the quality of things, and their abundance or scarcity. It would be vain for a Prince to seek to undermine these principles of commerce. ‘This best to leave them intact instead of assailing them by force to the public detriment’ (Woods, 2002).

Even in the sixteenth and seventeenth century it was obvious to the Spanish Scholastics that state intervention in free markets, such as price controls, price floors, and price ceilings, was futile in nature and would always end up causing more damage and distorting the market more than helping it. At the time there was much debate of what the “just price” on the market was to be. The Spanish Scholastics demonstrated that “the just price was the market price, the price established by the ‘common estimation’ of buyers and sellers” (Woods, 2002). Although these economists, mainly Jesuit⁶ and Dominican priests lacked the knowledge of subjective value theory it was obvious to them that scarcity and supply and demand properly and morally influenced how prices arose on the free market.

The Spanish Scholastics also made progress in their analysis of wages. The Spanish Scholastics’ theory of prices had direct relation to their theory on wages in that “the just wage was that which was reached by means of the common estimation of the market” (Woods, 2002). In regards to wages the Spanish Scholastic Luis de Molina:

... taught that the owner was ‘only obliged to pay [the laborer] the just wage for his services considering all the attendant circumstances, not what is sufficient for his sustenance and much less the maintenance of his children and family.’ Domingo de Soto stated the matter even more concisely, concluding that ‘if they freely accepted this salary for their job, it must be just.’ He held that ‘no injury is done to those who gave their consent,’ and suggested to the laborers ‘[I]f you do not want to serve for that salary, leave!’ (Woods, 2002).

This viewpoint has been severely criticized by Catholic social thought in the modern era. The Catholic Bishops of several countries have issued letters on the economy that call for massive interferences in labor markets.⁷ Today it is a commonly held view by economists that wages tend to equal worker productivity. However, despite lack of knowledge of a worker productivity theory of wages, the Spanish Scholastics were able to discover that all prices on the market, including wages, come to be because of the problem of scarcity and supply and demand. One wonders, too, how the 16th century Jesuits and Dominicans of this School would have assessed the economic work of those bishops who came long after them. Not too highly.

Modern Catholic social thought conflicts with quite a bit of what the early Scholastics espoused. The general attitude of modern Catholic social thought is hostility to the market. According to Tom Woods (2002)

... the popes have consistently rejected the Marxist position...But having said that , they go on in their various critiques of the market to suggest, even if usually only implicitly, that all is disorder and chaos and that intervention by public authority is indispensable for obtaining justice in the economic realm.

Some Catholic social thinkers, such as John A. Ryan (1906, 1916, 1919, 1923) and Heinrich Pesch (1900, 1905 – 1923), dismiss the idea of economic law altogether. According to Woods (2002 among Catholic social thinkers “the concept of economic law, when it is mentioned at all, is generally ridiculed and dismissed as a rationalization of greed.” In addition, Ryan also “rejects the idea that wage determination has anything to do with worker productivity, which he argues is impossible to measure” (Woods, 2002). Ryan (1906) is a believer in a “living wage” and even wrote a book on the subject with that title. The problem, here, of course, is the if this “living wage” is greater than the productivity of the worker, he will be unemployed, something, presumably, not sought by the forces of social “justice.” More recent papal encyclicals have gone beyond the argument for a living wage by endorsing additional benefits for workers. The papal encyclical *Laborem Exercens* (John Paul, 1981) states “The expenses involved in health care, especially in the case of accidents at work, demand that medical assistance should be easily available for workers, and that as far as possible it should be cheap or even

free of charge.” The encyclical goes further in advocating a “right to rest” and pensions and insurance to employees. But, the higher the wage, whether in salary or in this case in terms of fringe benefits, the more unemployment ensues. The thought of the Spanish Scholastics contrasts with much of what modern Catholic social thought endorses. We go further: these older scholars are now spinning in their graves at the deterioration of economic knowledge that has occurred in this sector of *intelligencia*.

The Spanish Scholastics saw economic laws in action while most modern Catholic social thinkers try to deny them completely. These earlier scholars declared that the “just wage” is the “market wage” and that if an employee agrees to work for a certain wage and benefits, on his own free will and without being coerced, then it is just. Modern Catholic social thinkers believe that most laborers are under compensated and deserve not only a “living wage” but that if the employer doesn’t provide certain benefits in addition to the wage he is unjust. Such talk is nonsense of course. Economic law exists with just as much validity as laws in any other branch of science. To deny them is to deny reality. The fact that so many modern Catholic social thinkers deny or ridicule the laws of economics is even more disappointing in light of this statement by Woods (2002) that “One of the characteristic features of Catholic thought over the centuries has been its emphasis on reason.” If Catholic social thinkers would like to make progress in their views regarding economics it would be wise of them to once again bring this characteristic back into their economics analysis.

3. Private Property

The seventh commandment is the starting point for understanding how Christianity and private property intertwine. This commandment states “You shall not steal” (*Exodus* 20:15, New International Version). This is not necessarily an explicit recognition of private property but at least an implicit one. Private property rights are logically entailed by this commandment. If no one owned anything then the concept of stealing could not even exist. There could be no such thing as stealing without the existence of private property. The seventh commandment demonstrates that God does not see private property as an inherent evil as socialists and communists would have it. This commandment shows that God believes the private property of others should be respected and essential for doing so is to not take it away from them without their consent. The Reverend Larry Beane (2014), a Lutheran minister, has this to say about the seventh commandment and private property:

The seventh commandment is: ‘You shall not steal’ (*Ex* 20:15). This is the basis for capitalism. Without the seventh commandment, there is no civilization, but only barbarism, the law of the jungle, and the ethical principle of ‘might makes right.’ By contrast, God’s Law recognizes private property as not only a nice thing, but a commandment to be obeyed. Respect for private property lays down the capitalist economic system. No other system respects the seventh commandment.

“By divine revelation, private property is a given, and it follows that non-aggression against that private property is God’s Law. And by definition, property can be freely used by the owner in whatever way he does not aggress against his neighbor. As we would like to maintain our own property, so we should do unto others (*Luke* 6:31). The seventh commandment is the basis of the rule of law at home and of treaties abroad, of respected borders and is manifested in Scripture by stone markers laying out property lines (e.g. *Prov* 22:28). It is the foundation of trade, in which property-owners barter with one another, or use a common medium of exchange (money) to affect mutually-beneficial transactions.

Understanding the seventh commandment and private property is important to appreciating why Christianity and free markets are compatible.

Since the first encyclical concerning economics, *Rerum Novarum*, was written in the late eighteenth century the Catholic Church has been relatively consistent on the issue of private property. This encyclical explicitly denounces socialism and says of the socialists that “They are, moreover, emphatically unjust, for they would rob the lawful possessor, distort the functions of the State, and create utter confusion in the community” (Pope Leo XIII, 1891, par. 4). The encyclical goes on to say that “every man has by nature the right to possess property as his own” (Pope Leo XIII, 1891, par. 6). It is refreshing to see the Catholic Church take a decisive stand on an important issue that was of great debate during the late eighteenth century when socialism, communism, and Marxism were gaining in popularity. However, the papal encyclicals can be conflicting on some issues regarding private property such as one which states “Goods can be transferred to the public domain only by the competent authority, according to the demands and within the limits of the common good, and with fair compensation” (Pope Paul VI, 1965, para. 71). Although the last statement contains very ambiguous phrases, such as “competent authority,” “common good,” and “fair compensation,” it should not be overlooked that the Catholic Church has at least taken a hardline stance defending private property. Private property is indispensable for the functioning of a free market economy. The protection of private property under the seventh commandment shows that, at least regarding the issue of private property, Christianity and the free market are compatible with each other. And, as private property rights are virtually the bedrock principle of libertarianism, this demonstrates an even more profound link between the two.

4. Render Unto Caesar

In a well-known Bible passage Jesus is quoted as saying “Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s” (*Matthew 22:21*, King James Bible). This passage has been used by many Christians and clergymen to justify the state and its legitimacy. However, closer examination of this passage is necessary to understand the true context. It is said in the passage immediately before this that “the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words” (*Matthew 22:15*, New International Version). They then ask Jesus “is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?” (*Matthew 22:17*, New International Version). In asking Jesus this question the Pharisees were trying to trick him. If he answered It is right to pay taxes to Caesar the Pharisees could criticize Jesus for upholding Caesar’s law over the Jewish (Godly) law. If Jesus was to answer that it was not right to pay taxes to Caesar they could also trap him and accuse him of being a traitor to the Roman Empire and to Caesar himself. In this way Jesus’ answer to the question seems vague but also keeps him from falling into the clutches of the Pharisees.

When one analyzes the passage closer it can be seen that his reply is almost a joke of sorts. Jesus says “Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s” but what things does Caesar deserve to have rendered to him? The answer is, obviously, nothing. Caesar does not deserve anything rendered unto him as he is a tyrant who caused much grief for the Jewish people at the time.⁸ Now consider the last part of the passage. Jesus says “and unto God the things that are God’s.” What things does God deserve compared to Caesar? Coming from a Judeo-Christian point of view it is obvious that God deserves the exact opposite to nothing, that is, everything. God is the creator of everything and therefore deserves all things whether they are material or spiritual. Caesar deserves nothing. He is a tyrant and has not only given the Jewish people nothing. Not only has Caesar not given the Jewish people anything he has taken much away from them through violence and thus made them worse off; far worse off. Caesar does not deserve any taxes that are rendered unto him.

The passage ends saying that “When they heard this, they were amazed. So they left Him and went away” (*Matthew 22:22*, New International Version). The answer Jesus gave was perfect. He answered their question while not explicitly nor even implicitly taking one side or the other. The

Pharisees, not expecting such a cunning answer to their challenge, thus had no reply. Contrary to claims that this passage supports the state and its doings the very opposite is the case.

5. Jesus Was an Anarchist

The role of Jesus was to deal with spirituality and not necessarily with earthly matters. Stated this way it seems troublesome to even try and reconcile any one economic system or political philosophy as being the “right one in the eyes of God”. The Catholic Church does not endorse one political or economic ideology. As long as an economic system or political philosophy does not violate the beliefs of Christianity then it can be seen as acceptable in the eyes of a Christian and God. However, this means there are legitimate economic systems and political philosophies that Christians can endorse and those that must be abjured.

How does the political philosophy of libertarianism fit in? Although this is not the only political philosophy compatible with biblical teachings, it upholds biblical teachings to a greater degree than any other. Libertarianism essentially comes down to the non-aggression principle which “asserts that ‘aggression’ is inherently illegitimate. ‘Aggression’ is defined as the ‘initiation’ of physical force against persons or property, the threat of such, or fraud upon persons or their property” (*Principle of non-aggression*, 2014). Similarly Jesus says in the Bible “So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you” (*Matthew 7:12*, New International Version). This is sometimes known as the “golden rule.” After reconciling these two principles it can be seen that Christianity and libertarianism have much in common in regards to how others and their property should be treated.⁹

Libertarianism does not violate biblical principles and is therefore compatible with Christianity. Looking critically at some of the principles Jesus espouses it can be inferred that he was not a big fan of the state. Since Jesus favored non-violence and peace then it follows that no true Christian should support the government. After all the state is nothing but violence writ large (Rothbard, 1963). Taxes are theft and war is murder. The fact that the state gives these immoral actions a different name does not make them any less immoral. The state clearly violates the commandment regarding murder “You shall not murder” (*Exodus 20:13*, New International Version) and theft “you shall not steal” (*Exodus 20:15*, New International Version). If any Christian is to support the government then their biblical and philosophical beliefs will clash. Taking this to its logical conclusion, Jesus could not have espoused any view supporting such an immoral institution as the state. Although He never explicitly states any political philosophy it is implicit; the state violates even the most basic pillars of the Christian faith. Jesus would not have supported the state for any reason since it was founded on these grounds (Rothbard, 1982), and his followers should not support it either.

6. The Prince of Peace

In recent years there has been an unfortunate rise in the “Christian Right” of love for war, militarism, the military, and the warfare state in general. This is ironic in itself because Jesus is often given the title “The Prince of Peace.” This should be no surprise since He advocated non-violence, peace, and the “golden rule” as principles to which all Christians should adhere.¹⁰ Those Christians who hold neoconservative beliefs often use their religion, as justification for the wars and militarism they support. Nothing could be a greater distortion of the teachings of Jesus than to turn them into an endorsement of mass murder.

On the issue of war and peace Jesus and libertarians can find much to agree on (Vance, 2008A, 2009, 2012). Libertarianism itself, like Christianity, is not strictly pacifistic in nature. In fact very few libertarians are pacifists; most hold the right to self-defense in high regard. The non-aggression principle (NAP) states that it is only illegitimate to initiate force. Thus retaliatory force is legitimate.

The same is similar with Christianity. A devout Christian is not expected to be pacifist in nature, although some Christians do hold that view. Based upon the Bible, however, it would seem that Jesus was a pacifist.¹¹ The imperialistic use of force that those on the “Christian right” endorse is illegitimate. It is sad that many of these Christian conservatives have been tricked into believing that the state, the military, and constant warfare are somehow compatible with their religion that teaches peace and non-violence. If only these Christians could incorporate what the great Austrian economist Ludwig von Mises (2009, p. 59) meant when he said “War is harmful, not only to the conquered but to the conqueror. Society has arisen out of the work of peace; the essence of society is peacemaking. Peace and not war is the father of all things ... Peace builds, war destroys.” Libertarianism is a political philosophy that teaches peace and non-violence. The NAP world that libertarians envision is very similar to the Christian one. This is a world where peace and non-initiatory violence are respected by everyone.

7. Conclusion

All arguments claiming Christianity, private property rights and free markets are not compatible are either internally flawed or misrepresent libertarianism. These different institutions overlap in many different areas. The early Spanish Scholastics favored the free market and saw its compatibility with the teachings of Jesus and the Bible. Christianity and libertarianism both recognize and hold private property in high regard. A free market is predicated upon private property rights. Many different sayings and parables by Jesus have been used by Christians to justify their opinion that He favors the state. These arguments are mistaken. The only true political system from a Christian point of view is a “voluntary” state or anarchism. Finally, the recent rise of the Christian right and its fondness of the military and the warfare state is contrary to the teachings of Jesus. His precepts and the political philosophy of libertarianism are eminently compatible.

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Notes

1. The Spanish Scholastics were a group of economists, precursors to the Austrian School of economics, who favored free enterprise, profits, private property and the rule of law. The Catholic orders most highly represented in this school of economics were the Jesuits and the Dominicans. The main Dominicans included: Francisco de Vitoria, 1485 – 1546; Domingo de Soto, 1494 – 1560; Juan de Medina, 1490 – 1546; Martin de Azpilcueta (Navarrus), 1493 – 1586; Diego de Covarrubias y Leiva, 1512 – 1577; Tomas de Mercado, 1530 – 1576. The most important contributors from the Jesuit order were: Luis Molina (Molineus), 1535 – 1600; Cardinal Juan de Lugo, 1583 – 1660; Leonard de Leys (Lessius), 1554 – 1623; Juan de Mariana, 1536 – 1624. The dates of the main contributions of the Spanish Scholastics were from the early 16th to the 17th centuries. This was entirely a Catholic enterprise, since Protestantism did not arise until a century and more later. This school of thought is sometimes known as the School of Salamanca, since most of its adherents were located in Salamanca, Spain. States Rockwell (1995) of the School of Salamanca: “Vitoria, Navarrus, Covarrubias, and Molina were four of the most important among more than a dozen extraordinary thinkers who had solved difficult economic problems long before the classical period.” For more on this see: Booth, 2007; Carden, 2007; Chafuen, 1986, 2003; Grice-Hutchinson, 1952; Huerta de Soto, 1996, 2004, 2007, 2017; Ritenour, 2010; Rockwell, 1995; Rothbard, 1976, 1995 (pp. 97-133); Sirico, 1996, 2001; Vance, 2011; Watner, 1987; Woods, 2002, 2004, 2005, 2013.
2. See these Papal Encyclicals: Leo, 1891; Paul, 1965, 1967, 1981; John Paul, 1987, 1991; Benedict, 2009; Francis, 2015. On the other hand, non-Catholic Christians have not been exactly behind hand in criticizing the free enterprise system. See on this Gasaway, 2014; Sider, 2005, 2007.
3. For example, Mike Huckabee is associated with this community, and is not exactly known as an advocate of laissez faire capitalism (Hananoki, 2012).
4. For an antidote to this viewpoint, see Woods, 2002, 2005, 2007; Vance, 2005, 2007, 2008A, 2008B, 2009, 2011, 2012; Novak, 1978, 1979A, 1979B, 1981A, 1981B, 1984, 1985A, 1985B, 1985C, 1986, 1989, 1993; Sirico, 2001.
5. For example, see Rothbard’s (1987) devastating critique of Smith (1776) for being insufficiently supportive of free enterprise. For a defense of Smith see Ahlakpor (1992, 1999, 2008).
6. The modern Jesuits, with but a few honorable exceptions, support “social justice” a doctrine 180 degrees removed from their predecessors. One wonders what they would have thought of Francis (2015). Presumably, not too highly.
7. For critical reactions, see Barnett, 1987-1988; Block, 1983, 1985A, 1985B 1986; Heyne, 1985; Novak, 1985B, 1985C; Williams, 1985.
8. One of the authors of this essay is of Jewish descent, but is now a devout atheist. He interprets these passages in a poetic or metaphorical manner, and, as such, warmly supports them.
9. The non-aggression principle (NAP) is in some ways preferable to the Golden Rule. For, in the hands of the masochist, initiatory violence could be justified. The masochist says, in effect, “beat me.” But, according to the gold Rule, we are to deal with others in the manner we would like to be treated. If so, then the masochist, and only him, would be justified in going around beating people up against the will of the latter.
10. Congressman Ron Paul was vociferously booed and hissed at in the Republican debate in South Carolina in the run up to the 2012 election for saying that the Golden Rule ought be applied to U.S. foreign policy. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HGpXHYtkOS8>
11. The Christian doctrine of “just war” is roughly congruent with this libertarian insight. On this see McElroy, 2011; Rothbard, 1997; Vance, 2008.

The Quest to Solve Problems That Don't Exist: Thought Artifacts in Contemporary Ontology

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Abstract:

Questions about the nature of reality and consciousness remain unresolved in philosophy today, but not for lack of hypotheses. Ontologies as varied as physicalism, microexperientialism and cosmopsychism enrich the philosophical menu. Each of these ontologies faces a seemingly fundamental problem: under physicalism, for instance, we have the ‘hard problem of consciousness,’ whereas under microexperientialism we have the ‘subject combination problem.’ I argue that these problems are thought artifacts, having no grounding in empirical reality. In a manner akin to semantic paradoxes, they exist only in the internal logico-conceptual structure of their respective ontologies.

Keywords: physicalism, panpsychism, cosmopsychism, idealism, hard problem of consciousness, subject combination problem.

1. Introduction

While advances in technology – enabled by the predictive models of science – have influenced early 21st century culture more than anything else, questions of ontology loom large in the contemporary psyche: What is the nature of reality? What is the essence of phenomenal consciousness and how does it relate to matter? Our tentative answers to these questions color – if not outright determine – our view of life’s meaning, thereby underlying every aspect of our existence.

Philosophy has not been idle in face of the demand for a menu of hypotheses in this regard. The mainstream physicalist ontology, for instance, posits that reality is constituted by irreducible physical entities – which Strawson has called ‘ultimates’ [21, p. 9] – outside and independent of phenomenality. According to physicalism, these ultimates, in and of themselves, do not instantiate phenomenal properties. In other words, there is nothing it is like to be an ultimate, phenomenality somehow emerging only at the level of complex arrangements of ultimates. As such, under physicalism phenomenality is not fundamental, but instead reducible to physical parameters of arrangements of ultimates.

What I shall call ‘microexperientialism,’ in turn, posits that there is already something it is like to be at least some ultimates, combinations of these experiencing ultimates somehow leading to more complex experience [21, pp. 24 – 29]. As such, under microexperientialism phenomenality is seen as an irreducible aspect of at least some ultimates. The ontology of panexperientialism [8, pp. 77 – 116], [16, pp. 91 – 103], [20, pp. 21 – 22] is analogous to microexperientialism, except in that the former entails the stronger claim that all ultimates instantiate phenomenal properties.

Micropsychism [21, pp. 24 – 29] and panpsychism [20, pp. 15 – 22] are analogous – maybe even identical – to microexperientialism and panexperientialism, respectively, except perhaps in that some formulations of the former admit cognition – a more complex form of phenomenality – already at the level of ultimates, as an irreducible aspect of these ultimates.

Among microexperientialism, panexperientialism, micropsychism and panpsychism, microexperientialism makes the narrowest claim and, therefore, is the most generic. In a strong sense, panexperientialism, micropsychism and panpsychism are variations or extensions of microexperientialism, the latter being the canonical basis of all four ontologies. Therefore, I shall henceforth speak only of microexperientialism.

Whereas microexperientialism entails that bottom-up combinations of simple subjects give rise to more complex ones, such as human beings, cosmopsychism [15], [18] takes the opposite route: according to it, the cosmos as a whole is conscious, individual psyches arising from top-down discontinuity in the integration of the contents of cosmic consciousness. Cosmopsychism can also be interpreted so as to include the further claim that, in addition to being conscious, the cosmos has a facet irreducible to phenomenal properties: the physical universe we can measure. This implies a form of dual-aspect monism, *a la* Spinoza [20, p. 88], so I shall call this interpretation ‘dual-aspect cosmopsychism.’ Under dual-aspect cosmopsychism, the cosmos as a whole *bears* phenomenality, but is not *constituted by* phenomenality. In other words, the cosmos is supposedly *conscious*, but not *in consciousness*.

My goal with this brief essay is to show that the thought processes underlying many of these ontologies are flawed, for being based on unexamined assumptions and unwarranted logical bridges. Once this is lucidly understood, some of the most important open questions associated with these ontologies – which contemporary philosophers see as their job to answer – are exposed as artifacts. Indeed, it is my contention that some of the key problems of ontology that contemporary philosophers have been grappling with do not actually exist. The next sections will elaborate upon this claim.

Anticipating a point that is bound to be raised, I acknowledge that offering a coherent alternative to the ontologies I am about to criticize is important for the completeness of my argument. And as attentive readers will notice, only idealist ontologies – those entailing that all existence is essentially phenomenal – are left unscathed by the criticisms in this paper. For this reason, I have extensively elaborated on a formulation of idealism elsewhere [10] and also rebutted many objections to it [11]. Here, however, I shall limit myself to deconstructing the rationale behind the mainstream physicalist ontology and two of its more recent alternatives. Readers interested in my formulation of idealism are referred to the works cited above.

2. Thought Artifacts in Physicalism

As discussed in the previous section, physicalism entails the existence of a world outside and independent of consciousness, which I shall henceforth refer to as the ‘objective physical world.’ This postulate seems to be self-evident from the perspective of modern and post-modern culture, yet it is merely a theoretical *inference* arising from interpretation of sense perceptions. After all, what we call the world is available to us solely as ‘images’ – defined here broadly, so to include any sensory modality – on the screen of perception, which is itself in consciousness. (To avoid possible misinterpretations, notice that my point here is agnostic of whether these perceptual images are a

valid given – in the sense of being both epistemically independent and efficacious [17] – or not. My point is that, in either case, *the objective physical world is surely not a given.*)

Stanford physicist Prof. Andrei Linde perhaps explained best the inferential nature of the objective physical world:

Let us remember that our knowledge of the world begins not with matter but with perceptions. I know for sure that my pain exists, my “green” exists, and my “sweet” exists. I do not need any proof of their existence, because these events are a part of me; everything else is a theory. Later we find out that our perceptions obey some laws, which can be most conveniently formulated if we assume that there is some underlying reality beyond our perceptions. This model of material world obeying laws of physics is so successful that soon we forget about our starting point and say that matter is the only reality, and perceptions are only helpful for its description. This assumption is almost as natural (and maybe as false) as our previous assumption that space is only a mathematical tool for the description of matter. But in fact we are substituting reality of our feelings by a successfully working theory of an independently existing material world. And the theory is so successful that we almost never think about its limitations until we must address some really deep issues, which do not fit into our model of reality [14, p. 12].

Now, we know that consciousness is perfectly capable to autonomously generate the imagery we associate with physicality: dreams and hallucinations, for instance, are often qualitatively indistinguishable from the ‘real world.’ Therefore, the motivation for positing the existence of an objective physical world must go beyond the mere existence of this imagery. And indeed, what physicalism attempts to make sense of are certain basic facts observable *in* the imagery, such as:

1. The correlations between observed brain activity and reported inner life [cf. 12];
2. The fact that we all seem to inhabit the same world; and
3. The fact that the dynamics of this world unfold independently of personal volition.

After all, if consciousness isn’t a product of objective arrangements of physical elements, how can there be such tight correlations between brain activity and experience? If the world isn’t made of physical elements outside our individual psyches, how can we all inhabit the same world beyond ourselves? If the world isn’t independent of consciousness, why can’t we change the laws of nature simply by imagining them to be different? Clearly, thus, the objective physical world posited by physicalism is an attempt to make sense of these three basic facts. As such, it is an *explanatory model*, not itself an observation. We *imagine* that there is an abstract physical world underlying our perceptions – and in some sense isomorphic to these perceptions – because doing so helps explain the basic facts.

Conjuring up an objective physical world to make sense of observations would – at least in principle – be legitimate if it didn’t create an insoluble problem known as the ‘hard problem of consciousness’ [3], [13]. Indeed, one of physicalism’s key tenets is that consciousness itself must be reducible to arrangements of objective physical elements. The problem, of course, is that it is impossible to conceive of how or why any particular structural or functional arrangement of physical elements would constitute or generate experience [16, pp. 13 – 30], [21, pp. 2 – 30]. The qualities of experience are irreducible to the observable parameters of physical arrangements – whatever the arrangement is – in the sense that it is impossible to deduce those qualities – even *in principle* – from these parameters [3]. There is nothing about the momentum, mass, charge or spin of physical particles, or their relative positions and interactions with one another, in terms of which we could deduce the greenness of grass, the sweetness of honey, the warmth of love, or the bitterness of disappointment. As long as they fit with the observed correlations between neural activity and reported experience, mappings between these two domains are entirely arbitrary: in principle, it is as (in)valid to state that spin up generates the feeling of coldness and spin down that of warmth as it is to say the exact opposite. There is nothing intrinsic about spin – or about any

other parameter of physical elements or arrangements thereof – that would allow us to make the distinction.

For this reason, neuroscience finds itself posing a slew of conflicting speculative theories about the neural constitutors or generators of experience, varying from information integration across vast networks of neurons [23] to microscopic intra-neural dynamics [9]. Indeed, as skeptic Michael Shermer wrote, “the neuroscience surrounding consciousness” is “nonfalsifiable” [19]. Such nonfalsifiability derives from the fact that the logical bridge between the felt qualities of experience and the configurations of an abstract world beyond experience is arbitrary.

Let us take a step back and unpack the thought process that brought us to this dilemma: first, the consciousness of a physicalist wove the conceptual notion that some patterns of its own dynamics – namely, those of sense perception – must somehow exist outside itself; then, the consciousness of the physicalist tried to project its own essence onto these patterns. The glaring artifact of thought here becomes apparent with an analogy: imagine a painter who, having painted a self-portrait, points at it and declares himself to *be* the portrait. This, in essence, is what physicalism does. The consciousness of the physicalist conceptualizes self-portraits within itself. Sometimes these self-portraits take the form of electrical impulses and neurotransmitter releases in the brain [12]. Other times, they take the shape of quantum transitions or potentials [22]. Whatever the case, the physicalist’s consciousness always points to a conceptual entity it creates within itself and then declares itself to *be* this entity. It dismisses its own primary, first-person point of view in favor of an abstract third-person perspective. Consider Daniel Dennett’s words: “The way to answer these ‘first-person point of view’ stumpers is *to ignore the first-person point of view* and examine what can be learned from the third-person point of view” [6, p. 336, emphasis added]. The contempt for direct experience, primary datum of existence, is palpable here.

This arbitrary dislocation of epistemic primacy from direct experience to explanatory abstraction is what conjures up the ‘hard problem.’ If we didn’t insist that direct experience must somehow be constituted or generated by ‘something beyond’ direct experience, there would be no problem. And since this ‘something beyond’ is a conceptual invention derived from an explanatory model, the ‘hard problem’ itself is a conceptual invention.

The issue here is that the invention forces the physicalist into the impossible position of *having to reduce consciousness to consciousness’s own abstractions*. This is as absurd as trying to reduce a painter to his paintings; cause to its effects. As such, the ‘hard problem’ is akin to a semantic paradox: the difficulty behind it is grounded not in empirical reality, but in its internal logico-conceptual structure.

For as long as they fail to remain alert to the fact that an objective physical world outside consciousness is a conceptual creation of consciousness itself, physicalists will continue to struggle with an insoluble problem. Indeed, the fundamental insolubility of the problem is itself a glaring hint that something has gone wrong in the underlying thought processes that led to it in the first place.

3. Thought Artifacts in Microexperientialism

As we have seen, microexperientialism posits that entities as small as subatomic particles are experiencing subjects in their own merit. Microexperientialists imagine that the unitary subjectivity of more complex experiencing subjects, such as human beings, arises from *bottom-up combination* of countless simpler subjects. This circumvents the ‘hard problem’ by positing that consciousness is a fundamental, irreducible property of ultimates and, as such, does not need to be explained in terms of anything else.

However, another problem immediately arises: the combination of subjects is an unexplainable process, perhaps incoherent [5]. It is just as hard as the ‘hard problem’ itself [7]. We cannot coherently explain how or why any physical action – such as bringing two subatomic particles close together or having them interact in some way – would cause the unification of their

subjective points of view, as required by microexperientialism. This is known in contemporary philosophy as the ‘subject combination problem’ [4]. And, just like the ‘hard problem,’ it is an artifact of thought.

Indeed, the motivation for microexperientialism is that subatomic particles are the discernible ‘pixels’ of the empirical world we perceive around ourselves. But to imagine, for this reason, that the subjectivity of living beings is composed of myriad subatomic-level subjects makes a rather simple mistake: it attributes to *that which experiences* a structure discernible only *in the experience itself*.

Let us unpack this. The notion of fundamental subatomic particles – ultimates – arises from experiments whose outcomes are accessible to us only in the form of perception (even when delicate instrumentation is used, the output of this instrumentation is only available to us as perception). Such experiments show that the images we experience on the screen of perception can be divided up into ever-smaller elements, until we reach a limit. At this limit, we find the smallest discernible components of the images, which are thus akin to pixels. As such, ultimates are the ‘pixels’ of *experience*, not necessarily of the *experiencer*. The latter does not follow from the former.

Even the fact that human bodies are made of subatomic particles says nothing about the structure of the *experiencer*: what we call a human body is itself an image on the screen of perception, and so will necessarily be ‘pixelated’ insofar as it is perceived. Such pixelation reflects the idiosyncrasies of *the screen of perception*, not necessarily the structure of the human subject itself. As an analogy, the pixelated image of a person on a television screen reflects the idiosyncrasies of *the television screen*; it doesn’t mean that the person itself is made up of pixels.

To conclude that a living subject – that is, the consciousness of a living being – is made up of a combination of lower-level inanimate subjects requires an extra logical step for which, unless we beg the question of ontology, there is no justification. It is analogous to saying, for instance, that water is made of ripples simply because one can discern individual ripples in water. Obviously, individual ripples make up the structure of the *movements* of water, not of water itself. Analogously, subatomic particles are the ‘pixels’ of the observable ‘movements’ of consciousness, not necessarily the building blocks of consciousness itself. We have just as much reason to conclude that our subjectivity is composed of myriad subatomic-level subjects as to conclude that water is made of ripples.

Clearly, thus, the ‘combination problem’ of microexperientialism is an artifact of a fallacious logical bridge. Just like the ‘hard problem’ faced by physicalism, it is not grounded in empirical reality, but in the internal logico-conceptual structure of microexperientialism itself.

4. Thought Artifacts in Dual-Aspect Cosmopsychism

Dual-aspect cosmopsychism is the least problematic ontology among the three criticized in this brief essay. By positing that the cosmos as a whole is conscious, the associated cosmic consciousness being an irreducible aspect of reality, it circumvents both the ‘hard problem’ and the ‘combination problem.’ One might then be tempted to conclude that a third, equivalent problem must be incurred, which we might call the ‘decomposition problem’: How does one cosmic consciousness apparently break up into myriad individual psyches, such as yours and mine? This, however, is actually not a fundamental problem, for “a disruption of and/or discontinuity in the normal integration of consciousness” [2, p. 191] that can account for the *appearance* of decomposition is well known and understood today, under the label of “dissociation” [1].

So what is the thought artifact behind dual-aspect cosmopsychism then? It is the redundant and inflationary postulate that the cosmos as a whole is a “*bearer* of consciousness” [18, p. 408, emphasis added], as opposed to being *constituted by* consciousness. For the cosmos to *bear* consciousness there must be something to it – some aspect of it – beyond consciousness itself, which can in turn carry consciousness. Otherwise, what sense is there in saying that consciousness

bears consciousness? This postulate of dual-aspect cosmopsychism may be an unexamined concession to the reigning physicalist view that there exists something beyond phenomenality. By accommodating this view, dual-aspect cosmopsychism certainly becomes more digestible under the contemporary zeitgeist. However, the key challenge incumbent upon cosmopsychism is to explain how a unitary cosmic consciousness can give rise to apparently distinct individual psyches. The idea of a physically objective facet of the cosmos is not necessary or helpful for tackling and overcoming such a challenge [cf. 15], [18]. Therefore, by accommodating the physicalist view that there exists something beyond phenomenality, dual-aspect cosmopsychism also ends up incorporating a redundant and inflationary postulate.

If the notion of an objective physical world is left out of cosmopsychism, the latter boils down to idealism: the view that the cosmos as a whole is *in consciousness* – as opposed to being *conscious* – and that individual psyches arise from a process of top-down dissociation in cosmic consciousness [10]. Although idealism faces challenges regarding its explanatory power – that is, its ability to make sense of the facts that we all seem to share the same world outside the control of our volition, that physical interference with the brain clearly affects inner experience, etc. – it does not fall victim to any of the artifacts of thought discussed in this essay.

5. Conclusions

The key philosophical problems faced by today's most popular ontologies – such as the 'hard problem of consciousness' faced by physicalism and the 'subject combination problem' faced by microexperientialism – are artifacts of unexamined assumptions and fallacious logical bridges inherent to their respective ontologies, having no grounding in empirical reality. In a manner akin to semantic paradoxes, they exist only in the internal logico-conceptual structure of these ontologies. The sooner philosophers become lucid of this fact, the sooner philosophical thought can move towards more constructive avenues of inquiry.

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**Kennan and the Neglected Variable in Post-Socialist Societies:
The Loss of Honest Dialogue and the Need for Empathy**

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Abstract:

This paper analyzes the symbolism of George Kennan’s famous “X” article relative to the challenges of contemporary post-socialist and post-conflict transitions. It unpacks recent developments in the field of contemporary political discourse, discussing the critical application of practices such as thinking with your heart, parrhesis, and pathos, as well as Kennan’s suggestion of the significance of uncertainty and reflection for global relations. The central question is: What would Kennan write in an X Article to the societies and states in transition? While various definitions of the term “parrhesis” exist, this paper employs both the definition suggested by Michel Foucault who understood it as “fearless speech” and Eric Voegelin who closely follows Plato’s meaning linking it with “heart”, i.e. vision of the spiritual, an existential (dis)order of representatives of a society.

Keywords: conflict, parrhesis, communication, liminality, transitions.

1. The Significance of Uncertainty

In mathematics, X often symbolizes an unknown variable which can be discrete or continuous. In the famous X Article the letter replaced the signature of the author, George Kennan, Deputy Chief of the US Mission in Moscow in 1946. Kennan, as a Foreign Service member, necessarily used a pseudonym in the *Foreign Affairs* publication, but we contend that Kennan's relative anonymity and

use of the variable also symbolizes his personal experience and his political theoretical perspective [30].

Kennan's mother died shortly after his birth, and he felt himself orphaned. He pondered his identity as he moved to his grandmother's home in Germany and later attended military boarding school. In this context, the X identifier was a variable – who was he? What should he call himself? For Kennan then, the X might be considered more than a pseudonym for anonymity. The X also represented his contemplation of self and the human condition. A name would create certainty and limit his identity; the X allowed for openness, searching, pathos, and uncertainty.

Indeed this sense of disquieted uncertainty also characterized Kennan's response to America's policies following the publication of the X article. Kennan contended that policy-makers misinterpreted and misapplied his assessment of Soviet character and advice for the United States. Specifically, Kennan asserted that he did not intend containment to be only a policy toward the USSR. Rather, containment also needed to contemplate and consider the US's own limits and needs, and from this perspective develop a policy which positioned the US for moral leadership. Indeed, such advice was consistent with Kennan's standards for his personal character and behaviour.

Stefan Rossbach writes convincingly about the spiritual Kennan and his valuation of parrhesia against modern gnosticism, [39] consistent with Michel Foucault's genealogy of the subject [12], [13]. Rossbach claims that Kennan did not intend the X article as a call for the US to engage the USSR in a Cold War. Kennan did perceive the USSR as embracing its gnosis, its zealous truth about people and systems, but Kennan opposed a US military effort to counter the Soviet particular truth [39]. Instead, Kennan's preference was for a parrhesia in which the US continuously contemplated and meditated in a form of self-criticism which would enable the country to strive to be its best self, i.e., a civilizing model of leadership in the world consistent with Norbert Elias understanding [35], [36]. The Marshall Plan would constitute such leadership. So too, would an attentiveness to domestic weaknesses, such as racial inequality. Practices such as McCarthyism, in which US leaders in Congress asserted a single gnostic truth without serious self-reflection, were contrary to Kennan's advice. Further, Kennan opposed the mimetic violence associated with contending truths and “fighting” the Cold War [2], [3], [16], [17], [18]. Rather he reasoned the US should focus upon enhancing the well-being of Americans and through example and assistance, other peoples and countries.

The decline of America's leadership beginning after the Vietnam War witnesses to the error of dismissing Kennan's preference for self-reflection and moral leadership. The US's messianic gnostic anti-communist crusade led to eternal divisions and unattended social problems. Further this behaviour now continues in the post-9/11 period with the United States' national security machinery again launching messianic crusades in distant lands and in some cases against “unrealities.” Rossbach notes that Kennan identified crisis in “The inability to distinguish reality from unreality” [39, p. 215]. He discusses that in 1988 Kennan wrote that such a condition would cause the US to “lose both the credibility of true moral behaviour and the great force such behaviour is admittedly capable of exerting” [39, p. 215]. Kennan's prognosis seems correct.

Indeed in the current era, Kennan's spiritual reflections still offer valuable thoughts for leaders and states willing to contemplate how to become their own best self. The post-Cold War proliferation of complex wars involving claims of religious and ethnic truths provides abundant context for consideration of what is civilizing. Yet, contrary to parrhesia's emphasis on such contemplation of the truth, these conflicts have seized the Gnostics' hubristic claim of the truth, and fuel cyclical violence. The inability or unwillingness to distinguish unreality from reality contributes to decay and death, and in countries such as Syria the destruction of great and historic symbols of civilization [20, pp. 131 – 146], [2]. The intentionality with which civilization and its accomplishments and symbols are destroyed highlights a crusading messianism and spiritual deconstruction which Kennan probably would lament, likely concurring with Hennigsen's argument. Kennan, a diplomat, would advise attention to self-reflection, pathos, and discourse. As a

former ambassador to both the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, Kennan's advice might hold special insight for post-socialist societies in transition struggling with contending truths and unrealities.

2. The Origin of Parrhesis

Philosophy starts from the basic question: what is cosmos and what is being? Yet, often the fact is ignored that these question(s) appear not in an empty sphere, a sphere where no one dwells. These questions surface among humans in their conversations. Accordingly, we define conversation as a historical fact, and thus as part of the most fundamental phenomenon of society which is discourse. Thence history appears at the moment when humans (subjects) start to converse either through art as in cave paintings or speech forms such as Greek tragedy and later novels [1]. Agnes Horvath identifies Palaeolithic cave paintings as the representation of artistic form as discourse. One of the most strikingly beautiful examples of this human communication is the collection of murals in Altamira, Spain. As Horvath would argue, these paintings are the symbolic forms of a particular epoch which place prehistoric humans within the full experience of nature:

... The caves of Altamira, Chauvet, Cosquer, Lascaux, Le Le Madeleine and others were all hermetically sealed tubes, often miles long, containing the concentrated scenes of a life in delight and strength, with hundreds of paintings expressed – close to saturation point – the representation of the fairest and the best of life [28, p. 26].

Indeed, we translate this phenomenon, even in contemporary art, as a form of “muted” or “X” storytelling phenomenon ala Kennan. The author's anonymity opens the message to various interpretations.

Sliding across epochs one arrives at Homer and his “singing” or journey storytelling, an approach which sparks contemplation prior to responsive conversation. In Homer's *Odyssey* [22, book 1-12] it is not just the story that is being told. The very journey Homer relates intends to knit us into the action of opening the heart, thereby inviting us to life and constant movement. In Plato's sense, this movement is kinesis, the most fundamental action which presents the divine to mortal, i.e. human. Once this stirring movement, only seemingly telegraphic, fragmented, and “out-of-context”, gains momentum it becomes a form of speech, thus history and reality. In one space and time, starting with one voice and tone, this action slides through space, regardless of cultural milieu, binding different tones and voices in what is called conversation or parrhesis.

In ancient Greece this type of conversation or parrhesis evolved into the typical Hellenic tragedy and later into Plato's philosophy. This form of actualisation of history became the main pillar of the Greek polis and hence democracy. Yet this ancient development in conversation now troubles us as it did Foucault. Why are some human hearts, such as Kennan's, open and attentive, while other hearts grow cirrhotic or rigid? What pathology arrests such human hearts? Is there a relation between parrhesis and democracy? Can the core of Hellenic democracy reveal an antidote for uncivilized politics, messianic crusades, and economic and ethnoreligious empires, whether local or global? Might such conversation especially benefit societies in transition in which individuals must come to understand one another anew and apart from categories of socialism? And what of the liminality following ethnic conflicts in which communities struggle to transition from enemy to co-citizen? In Szakolczai's words regarding the opening of the heart:

... I suggest a turn away from ‘reason’, a guide considered already by Max Weber as unreliable even for ordinary liminal situations, and look into something which for us seems the exact opposite of reason and as a most unreliable guide, which is the heart [45, p. 5].

In today's world, particularly in post-socialist, post-conflict societies multiple truths buzz amidst contending claims of ultimate truth and knowledge. The restoration of the practice of parrhesis and conversation is daunting, but offers a foundation for the reflective deliberation of civilizing politics.

We define parrhesis as not merely truth telling, or “fearless speech”, but rather a primal motion towards an opening of the human heart. Parrhesis is similar to Michel Foucault’s arguments in the lectures at the Collège de France (1981 – 1984), and represents an ongoing phenomenon. It is the phenomenon of the most fundamental action, which springs from the level of the human heart. Foucault points at his presentation of truth, thus parrhesis, in the following:

...My intention was not to deal with the problem of truth, but with the problem of the truth-teller, or of truth-telling as an activity: ... who is able to tell the truth, about what, with what consequences, and with what relations to power [W]ith the question of the importance of telling the truth, knowing who is able to tell the truth, and knowing why we should tell the truth, we have the roots of what we could call the ‘critical’ tradition in the West [14].

Such a tradition might benefit polarized societies seeking to transition or rebuild.

Parrhesis in our Foucauldian terms is asymmetric activity. Foucault emphasizes the polarity between the passive seeker and active teller of truth. Truth belongs to no one, but emerges via parrhesis. From the perspective of Gorbachev, we might view parrhesis as *glasnost*, a type of openness to the true opinions which might be hurtful or challenging. Thus, this initial action of opening your heart is risky because this truth telling (and listening) is potentially defiant and even dangerous. The gravity becomes especially keen when critical decisions await, such as when leaders operating in the realm of power politics consider truths which affect not only themselves but peoples or nations. Parrhesis often counters empires of truths, laws, identities, and lands [14], [40, p. 33, note 4: “four major figures of truth-telling, the prophet, the sage, the teacher and the parrhesist owes much to Weber’s conceptual separation of the prophet from the magician, the priest, the lawgiver and the teacher of ethics (Weber 1978a:439 – 446)”].

Parrhesis is the beginning or primal cause for conversation whether painted, spoken, or written. This action presents a movement of and toward an open heart. Parrhesis seeks ears and voices to support the kinesis and subsequent discourse. The variability of “X” presents the unknown or uncontrollable that (should) spark the communication and open hearts. Indeed Kennan’s preference thus would fall under the “reflexive historical sociologists” temperament as “...a choice between the philosophical life and the search for understanding...” in the context of Szakolczai’s argument on parrhesia [42, p. 92, also 97, 186, 249], [41, pp. 179 – 186, 197, 253, 255, 256], [44, p. 31]. Kennan, as contemplative parrhesist, [44, pp. 19 – 23] encourages understanding to promote the best rather than a particular truth. We concur, but this poses the critical question whether and to what extent hearts can be melted during critical political moments such as pacted transitions, colour revolutions, and peace negotiations. Some post-socialist states seem to have made this leap, such as in Czechoslovakia’s Velvet Revolution and Divorce, while contemporary developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo, and Ukraine suggest a rejection of parrhesis, conversation, and the call to think with your heart.

3. Thinking with Your Heart

Voegelin commenting on *The Gorgias* [49], [3, pp. 28 – 29] seems only partly correct concerning communication (and from our perspective parrhesis). He is correct that at the level of the heart people “reason” differently, but Voegelin’s interpretation of that element or “pathos” seems only partially valid. He correctly states that in spite of Socrates’ deep “pathos,” Socrates cannot lead Callicles to speak with his heart. So too, Voegelin acknowledges that Callicles’ resistance does not excuse him from Socrates. He asks:

...Here, in the *Gorgias*, the situation is revealed in which the conception of a metamorphosis of Eros originates. The issue at stake is that of communication and intelligibility in a decadent society. Are the existential differences between Socrates and

Callicles so profound that the bridge of a common humanity between them has broken down?

Voegelin answers that Callicles as the spoiler must either open his heart or live in the world of nothing, “Eros.” Thus, Voegelin’s “pathos” is a passive experience for humans:

... Pathos is what men have in common, however variable it may be in its aspects and intensities. Pathos designates a passive experience, not an action; it is what happens to man, what he suffers, what befalls him fatefully and what touches him in his existential core – as for instance the experience of Eros (481c-d). In their exposure to pathos all men are equal, though they may differ widely in the manner in which they come to grips with it and build the experience into their lives. <...> The community of pathos is the basis of communication. Behind the hardened, intellectually supported attitudes which separate men, lie the *pathemata* which bind them together. However false and grotesque the intellectual position may be, the pathos at the core has the truth of an immediate experience. If one can penetrate to this core and reawaken in a man the awareness of his *conditio humana*, communication in the existential sense becomes possible [49, p. 83].

Pathos and *pathemata* are experiences and sufferings which happen to us: humans are passive in these events, but these events offer common ground beyond “hardened, intellectually supported attitudes which separate men...” In this sense it seems some barrier blocks the core of Callicles’ heart. What is that “one” or “...if one can penetrate...” which would engender movement? Could that “one” or pathos be the one-and-the-same spirit which leads one to ascend to a higher epistemological level as in Plato’s cave metaphor [37, Book VII, 514a-521d] or Gorbachev’s glasnost? Are these instances of the spiritually awakened person? And, must individuals initially will to place themselves into spiritual reflection, to undergo parrhesis, and ultimately engage in communication, i.e. return into the cave?

It seems, Voegelin does not attribute appropriate strength to this Foucauldian will/pleasure of a spiritual awakening which allows *conditio humana* communication to follow. This awakening process often seems a painful (spiritual and physical) journey for societies in transition as in Poland’s pacted transition and shock therapy. Yet, the people and leaders in Poland accepted submission to “one [who] can penetrate to the core,” allowing the painful process towards the “gnosis” of “X.” Simultaneously active and passive, this movement to parrhesis, illuminates the vital spark in Kennan’s “X” variable.

Indeed, for Voegelin not only is the process passive, but conversation is secondary in as much as societies seem to lie in the world of silence and darkness prior to conversation. But what is that movement which ends the darkness, silence, and immotion, if not the very spark of the will to cross-cut, i.e. scission or “con-soci-ation” or conversation, within one and thus between two. It is this aspect of conversation as a form of multiplication and motion that is found in the art paintings on the walls of caves [45]. It is this aspect that emerges into the grand polyphony of multiple human voices in Plato’s dialogues. Gorbachev also submitted, awakening such will, thawing frozen hearts, and thus engendering pathos. Perhaps then the divinely inspired core where pathos lies and conversation is sparked, also is a magnetic monadic level that contains *conditio humana*. At this magnetic core, this monadic level of potential pathos and parrhesis, remains a question: why Kennan and Gorbachev, and not Callicles? The process from immobility into Plato’s kinesis, must begin within whereby one “con-verts” the heart, and opens up the passage to pathos. What we suggest is that awakening the *conditio humana* and thus the pathos in the core of human existence starts first with the will against the will and the assent to submit, to enter parrhesis.

This assent to submit, both active and passive, to parrhesis is that “X” variable. But how does one translate this pathos-filled conversation into hierarchies of international relations (IR) and domestic politics when the moments of parrhesis are limited? Callicles’ types prefer power and rhetoric to justice and community. Voegelin seems to argue that such conversation becomes an almost impossible task in the world of political religions or modern gnosticism [48]. His conclusion

while pessimistic, seems realized in today's failure of elite led democratic transitions and permanent ethno-religious conflict. Leaderships in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Ukraine seem to possess hardened hearts resistant to reconciliation. As with Callicles, some people simply do not desire conversation. They reject Kennan's parrhesis preferring rhetorical conclusions based upon unrealities or a dream world [20]. Further, some leaders reject pathos and morality, employing their superior skills and power to maintain control. Macedonia's Colorful Revolution simultaneously illustrates and responds to such concerns. What is to be done? Kennan's "X" variable suggests that individuals must find their "pathos" to minimize the differences and highlight the *conditio humana*. "X" lies in the difficult journey towards the pathos which opens the conversation.

4. Contemporary Political Contemplation and Conversation

To understand the transitory moments in which the human condition now exists – the post-cold war era of complex conflicts, informal violence, non-state actors, multiplying gods and no gods – one requires a bird's eye view of the world. Such perspective does not necessitate the knowledge of multiple languages to understand, and perhaps even share, the "Other" view point. One only needs to possess the courage to listen and open the heart to different views. Many forces threaten contemporary transitory regions: environmental crisis, refugee flows, cyberterrorism, technological depersonalization, and human commodification. We are concerned, however, with the hushing down (or minimally Foucault's controlling) of dialogue and conversation. In the gnostic world, citizens and particularly leaders no longer engage in the truth-telling discourse of Plato's dialogues. This is most evident in totalitarian systems, but so too among dictatorships and elite controlled polyarchies. In the latter, the system is by the people, but not for the people; polyarchies in post-socialist regions variously frustrate, confuse, and manipulate the powerless, dividing and freezing societies in transition.

Some societies risk implosion from frozen conflicts or suspended democratisation. Societies emerging from authoritarianism have witnessed self-interested elites who advance their own power, too often through violent exclusive nationalism, rather than the civic trust and inclusive norms necessary to consolidate democracy. In some instances, well established conflict management mechanisms offer a bridge away from violence, but elites remain resolute regarding their particular nationalism at the expense of a common "best" future. In the former Yugoslavia Macedonia, Kosovo, and Bosnia and Herzegovina are trapped in such transition. Elsewhere too in post-Soviet Europe (Georgia, North Ossetia, Abkhazia, Ukraine, Crimea, and Moldova) efforts to democratise face a roller-coaster ride of institutional decline and social polarisation. Indeed, even among states such as Hungary which have entered NATO and the EU, worrisome intolerance ferments. Elites and masses prefer a buffet style democracy in which they can select their own combination of rights and freedoms, rather than compromising and sharing on the offerings of governance. These situations advantage elites who do not engage in parrhesis. They lack pathos for *conditio humana*, and instead as tricksters monopolize conversation [23], [24], [25], [26], [27], [29], [31] locking individuals into liminal states in which souls are corrupted and constrained. The result places democratic values and institutions under pressure from schismatic forces which reject norms of openness and inclusion, and threaten to stall transition or shred democracy.

Accordingly, we suggest the wisdom of Kennan's spiritual reflections for regions of suspended democratisation. Kennan served as US Ambassador to Yugoslavia from 1961 – 1963, and worked to maintain Yugoslavia's neutrality in the Cold War context. At the end of his ambassadorship, Kennan travelled to Skopje to donate blood to Macedonian earthquake victims. Such an act was consistent with his spirituality which called for doing the best and focusing upon human survival, progress, and dialogue. Such an act shared the human condition. Thus, the symbolism of his X and the possibilities of his parrhesis now resonate with the situation in the region in which much of existence seems to be an unknown variable given the contending absolute ethnic and religious truths of leaders. X conveys a lack of identity, or at the minimum refusal to

identify, separate and/or prescribe. This confusion of identity lost can be resolved through inclusion in a democratic polity which refuses to separate and/or prescribe identities into contending ethno-religious nationalisms that impede a common humanity and therefore future. Many talented individuals already have emigrated from the region; other individuals inclined to conversation are marginalized. What would Kennan write in an X Article to transitional societies emerging from authoritarianism or conflict? What would Kennan say about the post-Dayton situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina which for centuries was known for its ecumenical tolerance, willingness to embrace difference as normal, and Olympic cosmopolitanism? How can this society and other post-socialist societies move from externally supported and engineered transitions to an indigenous parrhesis? How might the European Union's Special Representatives finally leave Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Georgia? And is it possible for Ukraine to avoid a renewed hot war and move beyond a frozen conflict?

A culture of dialogue seems an essential prerequisite for divided societies and post-socialist, post-conflict states in constructing a durable democratic outcome. For example, since the conflict and celebrated Dayton Peace, Bosnia and Herzegovina exists in a trapped liminal state of mimetic violence, contending gnoses, and apocalyptic histories (on liminality see [15], [42], [46], [47], on Yugoslavian crisis see [38]). The tri-partite leadership pursues a spiritual deconstruction which denies the shared Abrahamic monotheism. Society(ies) and the state reel. A comparable situation exists in Kosovo. The frozen conflict in the Ukraine appears worse, threatening to disintegrate into renewed violence rather than engage in meaningful dialogue. As during the Cold War, "artificial created unrealities are more important than realities" [39, p. 215]. Each ethnoreligious leadership claims "the Beyond" for his/her nation and levels the gnostic claim: I will destroy the idols and replace them with the true God. As during Soviet purges and American McCarthyism, the polity and land will be cleansed of anyone who is an infidel, or appears to be an infidel, or even assumes an "other" identity. The outcome of contending leaderships within one state, each engaging in such gnostic action and reaction, leads not to dialogue, but rather a void, or worse, chaos in which some people perceive elites as unresponsive, irresponsible, and corrupt, while others accept leaders as God-like re-presentations. In the absence of critical reflection, and therefore pathos, the leadership fails to contemplate their shared human sufferings and experiences.

Kennan's warning for such societies possibly would parallel his warning at the start of the never declared Vietnam War, "we cannot conclude that everything we want automatically reflects the purpose of God" [39, p. 202]. So too, Kennan stated "...real events had to be denied, false ones invented, or true facts distorted beyond recognition in order to produce a version that was compatible with the party's neurotic vision of the environment in which it lived and of its own reaction to that environment" [39, p. 207]. The termination of the inner quest for truth leads to a quest to impose truth upon others, which then degenerates to violence and chaos. Such is the situation in lands beset by significant ethno cum linguistic conflicts. These contested regions witness the inability to tolerate the polyphony of other point of views. Ethno-nationalism now offers an alternative to democracy in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Moldova, Georgia, and Ukraine where resolute leaders seek to impose their own truths and build local empires of ethnic-religious identity. They ignore their shared experiences and sufferings under other empires and ideologies, and focus upon divisive, hardened rhetoric and attitudes. This Callician response to the possibility of parrhesis and discourse not only rejects the opportunity of movement to the best, but at times justifies interference from external gnostic empires.

Alternatively, a responsive civilizing leadership will consistently challenge itself to consider values and processes that allow for the ongoing revelation of truth, appreciating that it cannot be known in whole and should not be assumed to or imposed as such. A genuine democratic leadership is contemplative, and not dismissive. Civilized leadership embraces a parrhesis which commits its quest to the common good. In the case of societies and states caught in suspended democratisation processes, such parrhesis necessitates each member abandon egocentrism and engage in a selfless effort to clarify unreality and reality. Leaders must recall, appreciate, and emphasize the shared

human condition. All their people seek jobs, peace, security, and well-being. Their leaders must balance the multiple realities, moving to the best, and rejecting temptations to devolve into the violence of contending truths.

During the Cold War, the gnostic conclusions of the US and the USSR led each superpower on messianic crusades to create utopian empires. Such crusades displaced Kennan's preference for contemplative leadership which offers an example of searching for the best within one's reality. The mimetic, crusading violence of empire-building justified and required force, domination, and the imposition of the "true" culture. Indeed, remnants of these gnostic campaigns still impede transition in post-socialist states. Consider the 2016 coup attempt in Montenegro, tripartite leadership dispute over genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina, ongoing conflict in Ukraine, and recent efforts at walling in Serb regions of Kosovo. In each case gnostic voices over power genuine democratic leadership that seeks in a pluralist fashion simultaneously to support other peoples' world-views and find their own best. These Gnostics pursue winning and empire, locking people into the simplistic unreality of frozen conflict without contemplation of how to transition or progress (see on Dayton [4], [5], [6], [7], [8], [9], [10], [11], [33], [34], and contra arguments [19], [32]). Post-socialist leaderships must transcend and become open to the parrhesis of fluid and multiple identities because the assertion or demand of singular and fixed identity is an unreal truth. If Calliclean leaders continue to resist such reflection and movement, then Socratic voices within European and local civil societies must initiate the discourse, criticizing the rhetoric of the sophists, and advocating for parrhesis and heartfelt pathos for the human condition.

5. Conclusion

To claim to know a specific solution to the stalled transitions and frozen conflicts denies the necessity of indigenous contemplation, thrusting us into sophistry and ideational empire-building. Yet, our analysis suggests that the way forward is for leadership to sincerely strive to do what is best. Those who refuse and claim a singular truth are messianic elites bent on empire building who must be challenged by diverse voices: Socrates, Voegelin, Kennan, the European Union, and local civil society. The way forward for conflictual world-views is through parrhesis, a culture of dialogue, and discourse. Global actors, including the US and EU must encourage and model civilizing leadership, with a balance between involvement and detachment. Notably, Foucault criticized France for its failure to sufficiently support Solidarity and its movement of collective will in Poland. The international community should encourage reflection and communication, but leave the essential conversation to the local people. We do not forget that European powers waged the world wars and Cold War. Far from being idealists and glorifying the West, we emphasise the delicate social and institutional transitions which must occur to transcend authoritarianism and attain freedom.

Individuals and societies must will to uncover and spark contemplation, allowing parrhesis and conversations. The renewal of communication among open hearts invites an understanding of differences and entrance into common ground among people who have shared past experiences. Currently people experience similar sufferings, but in segregation and isolation. They suffer under unhealed scars of war, the broken promise of transition, and the festering wounds of unemployment and corruption. Opening one's heart to listen to other hearts created channels for civilizing movement in other difficult situations such as Northern Ireland and South Africa. The movement can engender common cause to call forth and support leaders who challenge the tricksters' mentality which relishes in power and permanent liminality. As in the case of Poland's Solidarity, leadership that *a priori* accepts different world-views as normality rather than threat is an asset.

Recall in this regard, that Solidarity arose from civil society. Elsewhere, civil society movements can press leaders. Bosnia and Herzegovina's Dosta (in English, "Enough") often offers a nourishing environment for conversations of the heart. These conversations can be asymmetrical; Dosta initially opens the discourse to present a truth of what is felt, and invite a reassessment of the

truth. Dosta and other movements and groups reflect and communicate, inviting conversation with leaders. Likewise, local exercises akin to Macedonia's truth and reconciliation commissions have provided the safe (perhaps sacred) space for people to offer and hear truths, share common experiences, and move beyond unrealities. So too, the process of conversion of the heart must spark democratic leaders to reflect upon their shared *conditio humana*, setting aside "attitudes which separate." Post-socialist societies, particularly regions which have experienced violence, lack a guaranteed future. Elitism sometimes nullifies the conversations and conversion of the heart of peace treaties, colour revolutions and pacted transitions. Power politics fuelled with the rhetorical competition between gnostic truths then seem doomed to trap people into a stalled transition or even cyclical violence. By contrast, acceptance of the uncertainty of X accompanied with a willingness to listen, a commitment to compassion (that is *com-pathos*), and a movement to heart-felt discourse open the opportunity to promote Kennan's best outcome. Reflection and discourse, however, require courage to embrace uncertainty. Decades passed before Willy Brandt's heart-felt, silent, spontaneous genuflection at the Warsaw Ghetto. Reflection, acceptance of difference, and discourse requires commitment and persistence. Kennan, understanding the uncertainty of X, probably would counsel the former Soviet and East European regions he knew so well to consider Winston Churchill's dictum: "courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen."

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Adaptation in South Korean Society of North Korean Elite Defectors

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Abstract:

This paper aims to explain the adaptation of North Korean elite defectors who fled from North Korea. Data used for the purpose of this article came from surveys of North Korean defectors conducted in the late 2000's. Findings of the realized research indicate that the majority of senior defectors are experiencing less psychological and material issues when adjusting to society than regular North Korean defectors. The paper will proceed in three steps: explaining the notion of defectors, outlining their background, and focusing on their adaptation in South. Although defectors as a whole has emerged as of the most research group as a minority in South Korea, the so-called senior defectors have hardly been spotlighted. Basically North Korean senior defectors are supposed to strengthen the anti-Kim movement and legitimize the power of the South Korean government and the image of South Korea abroad. What has to be enlightened upon is the fact that North Korean senior defectors partially disagree with the integration policy of South Korean authorities. A major research question emerges: How are the experience of elite defectors localized in South Korea? How do their specific identities impact their opinion within the South Korean society? The aim of the article is also to categorize senior defectors and to provide in a single document a list of senior North Korea defectors based abroad. This kind of information is only available for Korean speaking readers. I wanted to make it accessible to the English-speaking community.

Keywords: adaptation, cultural differences between both Koreas, integration in South Korea, North Korea, North Korean elites, North Korean senior defectors.

1. Introduction

This article presents the results of a study of North Korean senior defectors (고위탈북자 – Kouï Talbukja) who escaped their home country and living now abroad. It provides also a historical account on the changing social definitions of North Korean defectors. It also provides an account of the difficulties of these individuals whose identities are between “defector” and “migrant”, the problems they face in capitalist South Korea are examined in the major areas of social changes – consumption, education, ideology, and work. To my humble knowledge, there are no published papers dedicated to the differences in experiences and adaptation of different groups of North Korean migrants to South Korea. According to Andrei Lankov, elite defectors represent 10 percent of the total number of refugees [16, p. 96]. There are around 28,000 defectors in South Korea. At the end of the article, the reader will find a list of senior defectors who defected abroad. No documents like this are available in western languages.

2. Objectives

First, the author analyzed the roots of North Korean defections. Secondly, this article discusses, the adaptation of North Korean senior defectors to the South Korean one. In particular, this integration could be changed through changes of views on defectors by the South Korean population and by massive and regular campaigns. Third, the text provides some information related to the adaptation of defectors to other societies than the South Korean one.

3. Research Questions

This article addresses the following research question: For which purposes North Korean elites are leaving their home country and to what extent even elite defectors have difficulties to integrate and to assimilate to the South Korean society.

4. Theoretical Framework

This empirical research is based on adaptation and identity theories. According to Eric Erickson, the identity must fit into the larger society in order to reduce the unsuccessful outcomes of identity formation [8, p. 47]. These include “negative identity” based on opposition to others’ wishes. According to Wenger, socio-cultural learning theory argues that people learn through engagement with actions and interactions and participations within socio-cultural and historical contexts. Participation “refers not just to local events of engagement in certain activities with certain people, but to a more encompassing process of being active participants in the practices of social communities and constructing identities in relation to these communities” [19, p. 4]. I will consider that adaption may be related to three areas: psychological, sociocultural, and economics [4, p. 6]. Psychological adaptation means interaction between environment and behavior, sociocultural is the adaptation to the society and economics adaptation is the behavior in a society with new economic rules.

Another suitable framework for the examination of adaptation of North Korean defectors is the one developed by the South Korean researcher Kim Young-yun. He prepared a relevant theoretical framework which is related to the adaptation of refugees. Kim conceptualizes an adaptation as an interplay between the person and the environment. According to Kim, humans have a capacity to adapt themselves to environmental challenges, secondly, the adaptation of an individual in a different cultural environment occurs through communication. Finally, the process of adaptation is a dynamic process that brings about qualitative changes of the considered individuals. Kim believes that in a new environment, human beings have the natural tendency to adapt. The process of adaptation takes place through communication where partners gets information and

responds to information [20, p. 28]. According to Paulisch, being a defector is only a temporary situation [1, p. 119].

From the theoretical political background, these North Korean elites belong to the first class of North Korean citizens. According to the North Korean class system (Songbun) established in 1957 on a decree entitled "On the transformation of the Struggle with Counterrevolutionary Elements into an All-People All-Party Movement" passed by the Politburo for the WPK, there are 3 major social classes (*kyechung*) according to the degree of loyalty toward the WPK and the parental background of the population. The core class (*haksim kyechung*) is composed of bereaved families of the Korean War. The second class (*tongyo kyechung*) consists of some merchants, who may act against the regime and intellectuals [15, p. 185]. The third class is called the antagonist one (*choktae kyechung*) considered as antagonist to the regime, such as landlords and capitalists¹. These senior defectors are defined in the present article as people belonging to the *haksim kyechung*. They are usually either members of the Korean Workers' Party, or citizens of Pyongyang, people with a high education, people who travelled abroad and in the majority men. Interestingly, defectors of the *tongyo* or *chokate* classes are usually women, who left their country for economic reasons.

Finally I would like to introduce the concept of acculturation which is a cultural change resulting from contacts between two cultural groups [2, p. 69]. I do consider here that North and South Korean are similar but only to a certain extent. They do have a similar language, some similar dishes and games but basically they developed each other in a different environment. The concept of assimilation needs also to be noted in this article. According to Berry, structural assimilation is a high degree of contact and participation, regarding cultural assimilation, it's a high degree of cultural mix [4, p. 12].

5. Hypothesis

In preparing the present article, I have hypothesized that most senior defectors do not interact with foreigners due to their limited speaking capability. They do not have real interactions with other communities than the Korean one. Therefore, foreign South Korean communities play a role of adjustment environment for North Korean senior defectors. I also consider that North Koreans who are abroad are only temporary defectors. After an adaptation period, they must adapt and adjust themselves to their new environment.

6. Methodology

Generally speaking, on a regular basis, surveys are conducted in order to get a better understanding of North Korean defectors. Nevertheless, surveys focused on North Korean senior defectors are barely available. It's probably due to the sensitivity of the positions of these former North Korean people. Another important issue is the fact, that many senior defectors are afraid to speak out even under the condition of anonymity. They feared of being murdered or excluded by the defectors community. I must recognize the dubious practices that underpin most research articles based on interviews with North Koreans living in South Korea as all that North Koreans do and say in South Korea is heavily surveilled by the South Korean intelligence services, some are even afraid that if they speak out against the approved narrative, they fear being murdered. Finally, I must also underline that there are some limitations on the preparation of this research article as access to North Korean senior defectors is highly difficult especially during the worsening of relations between both Koreas. It's clearly affecting the quality and the potential of this research paper.

7. The Notion of Defector

First overall, the division of the Korean Peninsula is a result of the World War II. Around 65 years ago, important differences emerged between both Koreas. Since the 60s, many North Koreans are risking their lives to cross the border between both Koreas. Leaving their home country without a

permission is still considered as being illegal under the North Korean criminal code (북한형법 – Pukhan Hyongbom). Since the end of the Korean War 1953, 300,000 North Koreans fled abroad mainly to China and Russia. Most of whom have gone to Russia or China. Religious groups supporting defectors consider, that there are more than 1,000 defectors in Russia and approximately 100,000 – 200,000 in China [12, p. 3]. Between 1950 and 1989, 607 North Korean defectors arrived in South Korea. From the 1990s, North Koreans began to move to China in large numbers. To cross the border between North Korea and China is not an unreachable task as both countries are separated by the Tumen and Yalu river which is narrow, and frozen during winter times. As of the end of 2015, there are 28,597 North Korean defectors established in South Korea. Based on a study of South Korean defectors, women are the majority of defectors. As of 2002 they represented around 56% of defections to South Korea (1,138 people) and in 2011 the figure rose 71% (2,706 people). More women leave the North because they suffer of economic difficulties. Being employed in the service and administration sectors, they earn low salaries [9]. Men still mainly defect for political and ambition reasons as their aspirations are limited on North Korea. In South Korea there are different ways of calling defectors. The average North Korean defector is a poor woman from the Northern part of North Korea. In comparison, the typical Soviet defector was a member of the Soviet *Intelligensia*. As I mentioned previously, senior defectors represent 10% of the global population of defectors. Secondly defectors had been granted different identities taking in account the historical timeframe. Several terms are referring to North Korean refugees. Until 1993, North Korean defectors were called *kwisunsa* (귀순자 – defectors) or *kuisunyongsa* (귀순용사 – brave defectors), between 1994 and 1996 *Ttalpukja* and *kuisunpukhantongpo* (귀순북한동포). Between 1997 and 2004, two appellations were used: *Ttalpukja* (탈북자 – “people who fled the North”) and *Pukhanitaljumin* (북한이탈주민 – “people, who renounced from North Korea”). Starting from 2005, the South Korean Ministry of Unification (통일부 – *Tongilbu*) started to use the term of *saeteomin* (새터민 – “people of new land”) instead of *ttalpukja*, a term unappreciated by North Korean officials.

8. Motives of Defections

Regarding motives of defections, according to the South Korean researcher Sung Hong-ko, on a global scale until the early 1990s, motives were rather political, because people were dissatisfied with the North Korean regime and its policy. Those who defected were diplomats based abroad, soldiers, students and traders based abroad and representing North Korean companies. Later, starting basically from 1995, the economic motive was prevalent due to the food crisis [10, p. 75]. Since the mid 1990s, defecting women became also more dominant especially from the northern parts of North Korea (from the following provinces: Jjagang, North Hamgyung, North Pyongan, and Ryanggang). Interestingly not only people with a low-background are going to South Korea. Some North Korean elites are also moving from their former country for the following reasons. The first one is that these people do not feel secure in their own country, this argument is prevalent for important for North Korean defectors who belonged to the key structures of the North Korean apparatus (Korean Workers’ Party, Korean People’s Army, Foreign Trade North Korean Company). As examples we can quote the personalities of Hwang Yan-yop, the initiator of the North Korean ideology, the Juche, and the chief political ideologue; Choe Kun-Chol – former Regional Korean Workers’ Party Secretary). Regarding regular North Korean defectors, they used to defect because of economic issues and to a lower extent because they were in position of being threatened, because they expressed some kind of scepticism over the North Korean system or feared that it may collapse. In April 1991, Ko Young-hwan, a former diplomat at the North Korean embassy to Zaire was in a way afraid that a similar situation to the execution of Nicolae Ceausescu may happen in North Korea. One month later Ko defected as he was afraid of being sent back to Pyongyang for his

remarks. As of now he lives in South Korea and works as a senior analyst for Unification organizations.

9. Classification of North Korean Defectors

According to the South Korean researcher Sung Ho-ko, the Koreans exist as a single ethnic group for more than 2000 years. Following the Korean War (1950 – 1953), the situation of Korean evolved quickly. The number of defectors started to increase with economic problems of North Korea in the 80's. Before there were no real cases of defections. For example, there were only 59 defectors from 1971 till 1980. People within the North Korean defectors community differ in their sense of identification with South Koreans. Despite of having a common history until 1950, the Korean and Cold Wars created two distinct countries. The degree of intensity with which they share majority beliefs. Some of them identify to Koreans, some other feel that they are foreigners in South Korea. North Korean elite defectors can use one of the various subterfuges to enter into South Korea or a foreign country. They may try to defect while being abroad (Hwang Jang-yop, Kim Dok-hong) or by using a kind of Very Important Person treatment (quick transfer to South Korea via direct flight from Shenyang to Seoul, etc.) [7, pp. 239 – 247]. Some of these elite defectors are freedom fighter. These people try to improve the situation of their country-mates who are still in North Korea. Other elite defectors are the members of the Kim family who avoid to appear in public. Their position is more neutral than the others mentioned previously. These people defected in any cases for economic reasons. They defected either for political (Hwang Jang-yop) or philosophical reasons (Ri Han-Yong). Some of these North Korean elite defectors moved to the US. Two of them are Ri Kang and Ko Yong-Suk. Both of them belong to the ruling Kim family in North Korea. They supposedly moved for freedom reasons to a third country and finally established in the United States at an undisclosed localization. Ri Kang is running a laundry business. Their three children are studying in different states of the United States [11]. Other members of their family defected earlier. One of them is Ri Han-yong. Ri Han-yong's mother was Song Hye-rang, a sister of Song Hye-rim, and a former mistress of Kim Jong-il. He studied mainly in Moscow, travelled all over Europe (including Poland) and for freedom reasons, defected to South Korea in 1982 during his studies in Switzerland. Globally speaking, the integration in South Korea is very upsetting and stressful for North Koreans. The majority of North Korean defectors identify themselves as North Koreans [17]. They usually feel stressed in South Korea Nevertheless, those who are too much depressed, are moving to other countries face with a different other level of difficulties. In spite of their education, many North Korean elite defectors faced with language barriers and to a lower extent in comparison to life in South Korea, fail to adapt to their new life. Some of them were educated in former communist countries and may speak in Russian or other similar languages as they used to study in foreign universities. Some of them have a limited knowledge of foreign languages as they started to study in foreign countries and learnt basic of a specific language (usually the mother tongue of the country where they studied). Otherwise the majority of elite defectors, that I identified, do not speak in English, none of them were living in an English-speaking country. Basically out of South Korea, North Korean elite defectors tend to live either with other Koreans in Korean towns (like in Los Angeles or in New Malden, a suburb in south-west of London) but to a lower extent than regular North Korean defectors.

10. North Korean Elite Defectors and Their Adaptation to South Korea

According to John Berry, adjustment can be considered as being a process of an individual coming into harmony with various conditions and circumstances [3]. This article defines the adjustment of North Korean defectors as a complex issue of inter-cultural adaptation. In spite of similar language and common ethnicity, North Korean defectors shall adjust more or less to South Korean society. Regular North Koreans defectors experienced great difficulties and challenges and do not adapt to the South Korean society. A limited number of defectors can be considered as experiencing a real

“adjustment” or “integration”. The majority of them are first workers and traders who works in foreign currencies companies, secondly former Central and Eastern European students, and thirdly diplomats who were based abroad. All of them were exposed to foreign systems and therefore possess knowledge and skills. Therefore some created successful commercial activities in South Korea such as Choe Sae-ung (최세웅), the owner of an exchange company [22]. Other successful adjustments are realized by those who starts a new University education in South Korea. Except education they are also educated to South Korean manners. Later they may get a job in the South Korean administration however they are more successful by running their own businesses.

What needs to be underlined is the so-called socioeconomic background of these defectors. If they had a high social status in North Korea, their social adjustment is done easily and they remain to a certain extent to the same social position. Any downgrading is still limited. That’s why all of that leads to the creation of class differentiation between Korean defectors. Defectors who either worked in foreign trade companies, or were students in foreign countries are said to have adapted most successfully, as they were already used to a different society from the North Korean one. For example, one defector arrived to South Korea during the summer 1990, and operates currently an IT software production entity. He obtained a degree of Applied Mathematics at the University Khabarovsk, in the state of Russia. Through utilizing his network, when he came to South Korea, he imported less expensive, skilled programmers from Russia to create IT products [21]. Lee Chong-guk, a son of an elite clan, who was a cooker at Chongryugwan, the most famous of all Pyongyang restaurants, established his own restaurant chain in South Korea.

Sin Yong-hui, dancer in the Mansudae troupe became a moderately successful actress. The father of her husband was working in the financial department of the KWP. Her husband Choi Seung, worked for many years in the overseas offices of North Korean trade companies, founded a highly successful company that deals in currency exchange. The creation of self-companies seems to be more profitable for these senior defectors than working in regular companies. It may be due to the fact, that they are not discriminated, being the owners of their own business. Many of these defectors who were working in foreign Furthermore, North Korean elite defectors used also to be students in the best universities. In spite of having no access to Internet while being in North Korea, at their universities they used on a regular basis “decent” computers, used the North Korean Intranet and therefore have IT skills [7, p. 277].

In opposition, the Russian researcher Andrei Lankov considers that even elite defectors are facing challenges in South Korea. They have trouble to find a prestigious job, because their potential employers feel suspicious about their origins and lacks of networks. North Korean elite defectors belong in any cases to networks from people from the same region, same university, or same clans [16, p. 98]. Therefore, even elite defectors feel lonely in South Korea.

North Korean elites who are defecting to South Korea have a special treatment upon their arrivals. These elites are used by South Korean Authorities in order to obtain a better understanding of the North Korean reality [12, p. 10]. Based on research conducted by the Center of Unification (*Tongilbu 통일부*), many North Korean are considered as being welcomed upon their arrival in South Korea. Regarding North Korean elites, due to their special statue, these people are considered as regular North Korean escapee or Heroic Defector. Heroic defectors are mainly related to people who escaped North Korea at the beginning of the Cold War. We can quote No kum-sok, an Air Force senior lieutenant who flew North Korea on the 21th September 1953. He resides now in the United States. Kim Shin-jo, a member of a group which was supposed to assassinate Park Chung-hee in 1968 (the so-called *Simildo* Incident). He lately became a missionary and help North Korean to defect in South Korea. Finally, we can quote Jang- Gil-su, a child who defected and depicted the North Korean reality of Labor Camps (*Kwanliso*). Due to integration problems, many senior defectors are rather entering research institutes than private or own business. In these private institutions, they sell their knowledge. Nevertheless, supply of jobs within these institutions is more than limited especially taking in account that South Korean institutions are cutting funds for these research centers. Some of these elite defectors met with the regular defectors community through the participation to broadcasted South Korean TV shows such as *Ijae Mannaro Kamnida*

(이제만나리갑니다 – “on my way to meet you”) or *Pukhan Suda* (북한수다 – “meetings with North Korea”). The senior defector Kang Myong-do is participating to the first one. Some of these North Korean defectors are one of the main source of information for the South Korean government and affiliated institutions. Elite defectors are those who can provide more valuable information as being in the past inside the North Korea system. These elites tend to make more money from their research activities than from working in a regular company. Many North Korean senior defectors have an aversion towards organizational life. They still are sceptical and considered as unwanted by South Koreans in South Korea and abroad [13]. The majority of other defectors are working in North-South Organizations. Interestingly, the majority of them are still in touch with North Korean authorities or people (North Korean and foreigners) living in North Korea. Some of these senior defectors do not feel secure in North Korea, and have financial problems (such as Lee Myong-Kuk or the deceased Ri Han-yong). Therefore, they publish book telling their histories in North Korea. For example, Ri Han-yong authored a book called 대동강로열패밀리 – the Taedong River Royal Family: my 14 years incognito in Seoul] and published in 1996. Hwang Jang-yop, the former North Korean KWP Secretary who escaped in 1997, published also more than 10 books, being in South Korea (the most famous is 나는역사의진리를보았다 – I was a witness of History, written by Hwang Jang-yop) [12, p. 5]. Some of elite family members are defecting while being abroad. We can quote for example, Ri Eun-kyong, the daughter of Choe Sam-suk (a famous North Korean actress) who escaped while working in a North Korean restaurant or Hwang Jang-yop who escaped during a trip to Beijing. Regarding him, he defected probably for political reasons being feared of a purge in North Korea. Hwang Jang-yop mainly mentioned that he defected for freedom issues, but being a high dignitary while in North Korean, we can put in question his motive for leaving North Korea. His statue was very high, he was practically a member of the Kim family and the initiator of the Juche (self-reliance) ideology. Therefore, I consider that he defected because he felt unsecured in North Korea.

An important category of senior defectors are nuclear scientists. North Korean nuclear scientists who defected are literally caught either by South Korean or American authorities. They are supposed to possess the most important information regarding the military system of their former country in the eyes of the United States and South Korea. One of them is Kyong Won-ha, the so-called father of the North Korean nuclear program. He defected during the operation Weasel in March 2003. Some other North Korean scientists defected also through the currently closed embassy of Nauru in Beijing. Most of them live now in the United States, where they feel more comfortable than in South Korea as they feel less stressed and living in a more friendly environment [14, pp. 15 – 21].

Interestingly, in spite of their material situation, some of the North Koreans elite defectors are re-defecting by leaving South Korea to another western country. We can quote for example Lee Young-kuk. With his family, he was living in South Korea and finally moved from this country. This former bodyguard of Kim Jong-Il reached Canada in March 2016. He fled South Korea and became an asylum seeker, claiming against threats and persecution by South Korea for his outspoken criticism of the North Korean regime [5]. Their defections are due from one side to adaptation problems in South Korea, but also in the seeking of new challenges. The key adaptation problem is related to long-term issues and financial one. The adaptation issue is due to a lack of recognition by South Korean citizens. For regular defectors they do have a double adaptation problem. First, they need to understand the technology and the way of living of South Korean people. Then, they need to fit to the South Korean society getting in interactions with them. Regarding senior defectors their major problem is related to psychological, and sociocultural issues. They do face difficulties to find friends within South Korean people, due to their former *songbun*, they do not feel also comfortable with regular South Korean habitants. In North Korea, they were highly respected. At their arrival in South Korea, they became regular citizens with some extra financial benefits but nothing else. Regarding economic matters, they usually use their maintained background for developing a business in South Korea. The economic aspect is the base for their

integration in South Korea where South Korean citizens consider that the economic success is a key element of mutual acceptance. However, their total integration cannot be pursued as the South Korean society cannot be considered as a framework explicitly open to foreigners and different cultures. North Korean felt prejudiced in South Korea and thus refuse assimilation. That's why usually North Korean defectors remain in their own community with their own system of value. It's less true for elite defectors who based their integration and then recognition by South Korean citizens on economic issues. These senior defectors are better assimilated than regular ones. They also accept the assimilationist policy of the South Korean government and accept to be a part of the major group of the population. They fit with the structural assimilation but accept to a lower extent the cultural assimilation by spending their free time only with other senior defectors.

11. Conclusion

In spite of their material situations, some North Korean elites decide to defect abroad. They defect mainly for safety reasons as they do benefit from financial advantages in North Korea, as they belong to the *haksim kyechung*, nevertheless in spite of this, they do not feel secured in North Korea and may defect. After the defection process, North Korean senior defectors adapt themselves to the South Korean society by working in institutions dealing with North Korean Issues or running their own businesses. They are working either in public institutions (Ministry of Unification, The Committee for the Five Northern Korean Provinces (이북 5 도위원회 literally "The North's Five Provinces Committee" – a South Korean government body under the Ministry of Security and Public Administration) or private institutions (Free North Korea Broadcasting – 유북한방송 Jayu Pukhan Bangsong). As I mentioned earlier, some of them feel persecuted or cannot adjust to the South Korea society and are looking for asylum in other countries especially in Canada, the US and Europe, and Japan [6, p. 97].

The majority of these elite defectors adjusted with difficulties to the South Korean or foreign societies due to a theoretical problem of communication-adjustment. Nevertheless, some of these senior defectors such as former students or business representatives in foreign countries have less difficulties out of South Korea. Therefore, the major adaptation problem for North Korean elite defectors is not related to economic issues, but to sociocultural ones and to their socialization. They face huge difficulties to get back their position they obtained in North Korea. And that's their major adaptation problem. Therefore, most of them consider that working for the Korean Unification can improve their sociocultural adaptation (even in spite of the fact they were not keen on this topic being based in North Korea). Consequently, many of the North Korean elite defectors can be categorized as being openly "Freedom fighters". Those who are based out of South Korea are usually not fighting, at least officially, for the freedom of North Korea or the Unification of both Koreas. Those who are belonging to the Kim family are sometimes showing openly their harsh criticism of the North Korean regime (Ri Han-yong, Hwang Jang-yop), however to a lesser extent than other senior defectors. Some of defectors are also going to North Korea however it's still a minority [18].

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ANNEX - Selected list of North Korean elites who fled to South Korea

Identity	Year fled	Last position in North Korea	Current position	Current place of living
Choe Ju-hwal	1996	Deputy director at the Section 1 of the Foreign Affairs Desk of the Foreign Affairs Department of the Korean People's Army	Researcher	South Korea
Choe Kun-chol	Unknown	Former Regional Korean Workers' Party	Advisor, New Focus International	South Korea
ChoeMyung-chul	1994	Professor, Kim Il-sung University	Politician, Saenuri member	South Korea
Choi Se-ong	Unknown	Foreign Trade official	Owner of a	South Korea

	n		trading currency company	
Choi Seon-young	1996	North Korean official	Journalist, employee at the North Korean desk of the South Korean Press Agency Yonhap	South Korea
Hwang Jang-yop (passed away in December 2010)	1997	Secretary of the Central Committee of the Korean Workers' Party	Former politician	South Korea
Hyeon Seong-il	2009	Diplomat	Affiliated at the Faculty of North Korean Studies of the Dongguk University	South Korea
Im Young-sun	Unknown Date	Military officer	Director at Seoul Pyongyang TV	South Korea
Jang Jin-sung	2003	Poetry, Propaganda Department	Writer, activist	Seoul
Jang Seung-ho	1997	Diplomat at the North Korean delegation in France	Unknown function	South Korea
Jang Seung-il	1997	North Korean Ambassador in Egypt	Unknown function	Unknown localization
Joo Seong-ha	2002	Professor, Kim Il Sung University	Journalist	South Korea
Kang Myong-do	1994	Director at a university under the Ministry of the People's Armed Forces. Step-son of Kang Song-san, former North Korean Prime Minister	Researcher and Professor, Kyungmin University	South Korea
Kim Cheol-ung	2002	Pianist	Researcher, Donkkuk University	Unknown localization
Kim Dok-hong	1997	President of Yogwang General Trading Company and deputy chief of the office of documents of the Central Committee of the Workers Party.	Unknown function	South Korea
Kim Dong-sik	1995	Official, North Korean delegation of the World Food Organization	Researcher - Analyst at the Institute for National Security Strateg	South Korea
Kim Dong-soo	1998	Military officer	Unknown function	
Kim Heung-	2002	IT Professor at the Kim Il Sung	Founder and	Unknown

kwang		University	directory member of <i>North Korea Intellectual Solidarity</i>	localization
Kim Hyeong-soo	2009	biophysicist, Institute of Kim Il Sung Longevity (a.k.a the National Security Sciences Institute – <i>Mansumugang</i> Institute)	Unknown function	Unknown localization
Kim In-tae	Unknown	Unknown function	Researcher, Institute of National Security Strategy	Unknown localization
Kim Min-kyu	2009	Diplomat at the North Korean embassy in Russia	Unknown function	Unknown localization
Kim So-yeon	1992	Director, Kim Il Sung Longevity Institute (a.k.a the National Security Sciences Institute)	Unknown function	Unknown localization
Kim Tae-san	2002	North Korean Trading Company Official	Unknown function	Unknown localization
Kim Young-il	2006	Unknown function	PSCORE Organization Director (People for Successful Corean Reunification)	Unknown localization
Kim Yu-song	1991	Colonel, Korean People's Army	Board Member of Unification Organizations	South Korea
Ko Young-hwan	1991	Diplomat, director of the African Desk at the DPRK MOA, former first secretary of the North Korean embassy in Congo	Board Member of Unification Organizations	South Korea
Ko Yong-suk	1998	Member of the Kim family, younger sister of Kim Jong-un's sister	Unknown function	South Korea
Kyong Won-ha	2002	Scientist, sometimes considered as being the father of North Korea's nuclear program	Unknown function	South Korea
Lee Myong-kuk	2002	Kim Jong-il's bodyguard	Activist	Canada
Oh Young-nam	Unknown date	Captain in State Security, supposedly a relative of Marshal O Jin-u	Unknown function	South Korea
Park Seung-won	1999	Korean People's Army 2 stars general	Unknown function	South Korea

Park Sang-hak	1999	Employee at a propaganda unit of the Kim Il Sung Socialist Youth League	Activist, board member of foundations.	South Korea
Ri Han-yong (passed away in 1997)	1982	Member of the Kim family	Businessman	South Korea
Ri Kang	1998	Member of the Kim family	Businessman	United States
Seol Song-ha	2008	Foreign Trade Manager, Ministry of the Korean People's Army	Journalist	Unknown localization
Seong Ha-joo	2002 (left North Korea in 1998)	Lecturer at the Kim Il-sung University	Journalist	South Korea
Sin Yong-hui	Unknown date	Dancer at the Mansudae Theater	Actress	South Korea
Song Byeok	2002	Artist	Artist	South Korea
Thae Yong-ho	2016	Diplomat at the DPRK embassy in UK	Unknown function	South Korea
Yoon Tae-hyong	2014	Kim's family Fund manager in Russia	Unknown function	South Korea

Source: own research (nicolaslevi.wordpress.com)

Notes

1. Each class is splitted in sub-classes. The *haksim kyechung* has 12 subclasses, the *tongyo kyechung*, 18, and the *chokdae kyechung*, 21. The first class represents 25% of the population. Tongyo and Chokddae 55% and 20% respectively.

Hindu Spirituality: How to Grasp the Divine?



Max Demtchenko is an Associate Professor at the Moscow State Linguistic University. He has authored: *Aspects of Hindu-Christian Dialogue in the Mid-Twentieth Century (according to Jules Monchanin's and Henri Le Saux' Experience)*, PhD thesis (Moscow, 2011) and *The Path of Saccidānanda* (Moscow, Ganga, 2008). He has also published the first Russian translation of Swāmī Abhishiktānanda's *Guru and Disciple* (Moscow, Ganga, 2013). His current academic interest is in the field of North Indian rural bhakti movements with a special focus on Nānak-panths as well as on Rāma-rasika traditions' poetry and practices.

Andrew Schumann: India is one of the most mysterious countries over the world. It has been a focus of attention for many philosophers since ancient times. Let me remember Apollonius of Tyana who visited India in the 1st century A.D. for developing an extra-sensory perception. What is so attractive in India for Europeans? Why are we looking for some instructions from the Hindu *gurūs*? What are the basic features of the Hindu thinking and the Indian philosophy as such? How is this philosophy distinguished from the European tradition?

Max Demtchenko: The overwhelming interest in Indian thought flooded the West in early 1960s due to various factors the main of which is probably disappointment of the “hippy generation” in Christian patterns traditional for Europe and the US. Gandhian *ahimsā* was perfectly fitting for pacifist trends while exotic costumes, colours, sounds and smells seemed to be a relief from rigid Catholic and Protestant ways of worship. However this “Oriental spirituality revival” was preceded by earlier interest in Hindu and Buddhist thought cherished by British, German and French intellectuals since early 19th century. Leaving aside more or less professional indological studies by

Max Müller (1823 – 1900), Ralph Griffiths (1826 – 1926) and others we can recall such writers as Romain Rolland (1866 – 1944) who was deeply inspired by a Bengali “Universalist” saint Rāmakṛṣṇa (1836 – 1886) and his main disciple Vivekānanda (1863 – 1902), Leon Tolstoy (1828 – 1910) who wrote: “The metaphysical, religious idea of Krishna... is the eternal and universal basis of all religions and all philosophical systems.”¹ Even Anna Akhmatova (1889 – 1966) couldn’t escape from the charm of contemporary Bengali poetry and rendered her own version of Tagore’s *Gurū Rāmānanda!*

Replying to your further questions I should say that Indian philosophy is a too vast subject to enumerate basic features that would be intact for all its branches and schools. While European philosophy for centuries had been confined within the framework of Christian dogma, Indian thought had been freely developing in healthy atmosphere of dialogue and dispute (akin to the pre-Christian Greek and Roman scene). If you analyze classics of the Medieval Indian philosophy such as *bhāṣyas* by Śaṅkarācārya, Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, Rāmānujāchārya, etc., you will find that most of them are based on a free exchange with their counterparts. As a result, during the first millennia A.D. India produced a treasury of human thought comprising probably all possible approaches to the nature of Reality, Universe and place of living beings in it.

Speaking about “Hinduism of the majority” as we know it nowadays I would say that it is characterized by a relative universalism and attempts to embrace all possible religious concepts (both Hindu and non-Hindu) in order to present them as various manifestations of the same Truth (*In pluribus unum!*). This feature is probably the most attractive for foreign seekers coming to India in search of inspiration and enlightenment (as they understand it). It should be noticed however that the universalist rhetoric is often limited by particular philosophical and practical patterns adhered to by this or that school/sect. Another motivating factor is an astonishing coincidence of certain contemporary scientific concepts with Hindu and Buddhist worldview features that has always tended to see the Universe rather in evolutionary and relative perspective than in the linear one more common for Bible-based traditions.

Andrew Schumann: Local religions in India have no strict boundaries. For instance, Sufism can flow into Sikhism, and Sikhism into one of the branches of Hinduism. Boundaries among religions are ethnic or caste rather than doctrinal. How is it possible to distinguish religious beliefs in India? For example, there is an old community of Kamboj, located in the Northern part of India and Eastern Pakistan. How is it possible to define their religious identity? Is it rather an identity of an ethnic group / caste? How is their identity related to identities of the neighbor ethnic groups/castes?

Max Demtchenko: The British colonial administration has easily solved the riddle by strictly dividing Indians into Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, Muslims etc. as defined in the legislation. Of course, I am being sarcastic – this division led to a huge identity crisis within community’s members of which had never thought over the question whether they were Hindus or Sikhs before. In many instances, they were both. As an example, I can mention Udāsīn congregation of itinerant *sādhus* who were basically Hindus (as traced their mythological lineage back to the four Kumāras, children of Brahmā, and accepted the authority of the Vedas) however they were also inspired and led by gurū Nānak’s elder son Śrīchandra (born in 1494) and thus were known as Nānak-putras, children of the first Sikh master. Undoubtedly, they retained many Sikh elements, were propagating the Sikh scripture all over India and generally settled around Sikh *gurudwārās*. The Udāsīn community was inseparable from the Sikh one and a great deal of Udāsīs had a kind of double identity. It was only in 1925 when according to the adopted “Sikh Gurudwārās Act” Udāsīnsādhus and devotees officially lost the right to call themselves Sikhs.

The majority of Kambojas, the ethno-cultural group that you mentioned here above, since mid 18th century have been moved by the life and legacy of their first major saint Bābā Bhūman Shāh (1687 – 1747) who being an Udāsīnsādhu since an early age highly revered (and, according to some sources, personally knew) the 10th Sikh master gurū Gobind Singh (1666 – 1708) as a result his teachings represented creative fusion of *bhakti* (preponderantly Nirguṇa), Vedānta, Sikhism and local folk versions of Sufism. It is interesting to note that his among his first disciples there were Muslims who granted him a plot of land near Pakpattan in West Punjab (now in Pakistan) which belonged to *mahants* (spiritual leaders) of his subject until the Partition tragedy in 1947 culminated in Kambojas' genocide and exodus to the Indian Republic. The massacre of Hindus and Sikhs in Pakistan has undoubtedly put an end to involvement of Sufi *sheikhs* and followers in the life of Bhūman Shāh's community however the cult of Muslim saints who belonged or just were close to Kambojas' *gotras* (clans) is still widespread in most of their villages in Punjab and Haryana (the present *mahant's* residence is located a few kilometers from Sirsa and is known as *ḍerā Bābā Bhūman Shāh*). The reasons are basically two: firstly Kambojas' saints are regarded as such not on the account of their religious affiliation but due to their belonging to this or that particular *gotra* (that is, in case I am a member of, suppose, Kamboja Dhot subcaste, I will revere all saints from the same *gotra*, no matter whether they were Hindus, Sikhs or Muslims) and secondly North-Indian folk Nirguṇa-bhakti presupposes the idea of the one nameless and formless Divine Being who, as Kabīr beautifully puts it, manifested himself under names of Rām and Rahīm. For the movement's "holy poets" theological and ritualistic differences are secondary in comparison with God's self-revelation in form of the sound converted by them into *bāñī*, verses chanted even nowadays on a daily basis (including those that became the core of the Sikh scripture). It is devotion to Rām/Rahīm, recitation of his holy name and devoted listening to *bāñī* that brings the adept to the supreme goal and not theology or rituals. Thus a Kamboja devotee performing a pilgrimage will most probably visit not only Hindu temples and Sikh *gurudwārās* but also *mazārs* (tombs) of Sufi saints (a significant number of such tombs such as *mazār* of Bābā Kale Shāh located in Darbi village, Haryana, are even owned and used for ritual purposes by Hindu Kambojas).

Andrew Schumann: India has given rise to a special version of monotheism with expressing ecstatic love to the Lord. One of most vivid manifestations of this "erotic" monotheism became the movement of Bengalese followers of Prabhu Jagadbandhu, the 19th-century Hindu Vaishnav Saint. Which main features of this monotheism can you mention? May be can this movement give something to European religions at times of our secular world?

Max Demtchenko: Jagadbandhu's Mahānāma-sampradāya is one of the facets of the 19th century's Bengali renaissance characterized by a rise of humanist egalitarian ideas boosted by cults of "God-men", ecstatic saints looked upon as incarnations of God Viṣṇu/Kṛṣṇa (less often of other deities). Haripurūṣ Jagadbandhusundar (1871 – 1921) believed he was a reincarnation of a renowned 19th century mystic Chaitanya (1486 – 1534) famous for his ecstatic love towards God Kṛṣṇa from the perspective of the latter's beloved Rādhā. Actually Chaitanya is seen by many of his followers as a joint form of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā or as Kṛṣṇa experiencing the devotional mood of Rādhā. Haripurūṣ in his turn considered himself to be a joint incarnation of Chaitanya himself and his male counterpart Nityānanda. The cornerstone of Jagadbandhu's cult is the so called "Mahānāma", a short prayer thoroughly commented by the saint's major disciples Śrīpad Mahendra and Dr. Mahānambrata, which introduces him as the only Male towards whom all other living beings should take feminine attitude being manifestations of his Śakti (feminine energy). Of course, such attitude presupposes certain erotic sentiments, but on a subtle level of the adept's consciousness. Jagadbandhu's biography "Bandhu Līlā Taraṅgini" written by Gopībandhu Das, reveals the teaching's Tantric roots. The author reports the saint's own statement that his only *gurū* was none else but Rādhā whom even Kṛṣṇahad accepted as his divine preceptor. Is this confession a confirmation of Haripurūṣ's "unique manhood" or rather a search for his (and his listeners')

irrespectively of their sex) innate and often hidden feminine nature? Probably both as the key word in Jagadbandhu's religion is *mahāsanmilan* or “the great fusion” synthesis realized on various levels. Though Haripurūṣ himself often manifested his ecstatically feminine side (those interested in the subject matter may refer to June McDaniel's *The Madness of the Saints: Ecstatic Religion in Bengal*, Chicago, 1989) in practice the *sampradāya*'s devotional approach is quite simple and does not include any specific features that would highlight its erotic character – they remain hidden behind the veil of adepts' contemplative life.

I am not sure if Jagadbandhu's experience can be fully transplanted to the Occidental intellectual and spiritual soil however I'd like to mention an interesting encounter which took place in 1930th in the US. It is a well-known fact that Thomas Merton, a Trappist famous for his experiments with Buddhist contemplative practices, was influenced by a certain “Hindu monk” as he himself later wrote, who allegedly motivated the young man to go back to his Christian roots. It is seldom mentioned that the monk's name was Dr. Mahānambrata who came to America with the scope of preaching Jagadbandhu's message. The attempt was not successful mostly because the teaching seemed obscure to Westerners and the Bengali immigrants' community in the US was still at its childhood stage. Probably Dr. Mahānambrata's failure was also due to his approach to Jagadbandhu's personality in an exclusively religious and devotional light while the saint could be an interesting object of research for anthropologists and even psychologists specializing in gender identities issue.

Andrew Schumann: Many cults in India, especially belonging to low-castes, are so sensual in nature. It is originated from the notion of *rāsa-līlā* – the sensual or even erotic dance around Kṛṣṇa. How is the subject of sex reflected in the Hindu practices now? For example, is it possible to consider Hijra, the caste of transvestites and transgenders, as a special religious group in India?

Max Demtchenko: It depends on the community which the adept belongs to. Attitude towards *rāsa-līlā* and its projection on religious life may vary from its emotionally charged implementation in the ritualistic practice (most often clandestine) to absolute denial with all possible options in between. My own interest is in Rāma-rasika tradition rather than in Kṛṣṇa-rasika due to my personal background as well as my focus on Avadhī poetry which is predominantly Rāma-oriented. General approaches towards the Divine are similar in both movements: just like I mentioned above in respect of Jagadbandhusundar's views, God is regarded as the supreme Male, while other living entities should consider themselves as his feminine energy and thus see him as the Supreme Beloved. In *rasika-bhakti* the adept chooses (or rather his preceptor “reveals” to him) his eternal *sambandh* (type of relationships) from the perspective of which he from now on should contemplate God. Normally *sambandh* is determined by the *gurū*'s particular sub-sect – for example all members of the Sakhī-sampradāya are automatically initiated into the *sakhī-sambandh*, that is the mood of Sītā's sisters or female companions. In rare cases, the initiated disciple's behavior also changes – he may manifest feminine traits and manners, wear female clothes, etc. But most often *sambandh* (as well as the fact of initiation itself) is kept in secret and is practiced on the personal contemplative level only. The central narrative for all Rāma-rasikas is the story of love between Rāma and Sītā as described in the *Rāmāyaṇa* as well as in its various local versions and Rāmaite poets. Thus a 19th-century classic of Rāma-rasika poetry Yugalānanya wrote in his *Nāmakānti*:

प्रीति प्रनय परतीति एकरस श्री मजनु लैले सि है।
युगलानन्य इशक बलों को कीमत चाहिए जैसी है॥

“The love of Majnun and Laila is the unquenchable sensuality and devotion. [The one, who chants Rāma's name] should also be possessed by such love.”

It is interesting that the author widely uses Persian and Arabic references while describing realities of the Rāma-bhakti. He goes on to say that for a *rasika*-devotee it is a waste of time to turn to *brāhmaṇa*, deities and sages:

छन्द प्रबन्ध योग जप तप से परतम प्रभा प्रकासेगि॥

“Do you really hope that chanting of the Vedas, meditation, yoga, prayers and ascetic efforts will help you to see the Supreme Spirit’s light?”

It shows that there has always been a certain argument between *rasika-bhaktas* and orthodox Hindus on both theoretical (or philosophical) and practical aspects of spiritual life.

Unlike *sakhīs* and other *rasikas* Hijras are not a religious group. Practically any transgendered or transvestite person can be considered as a Hijra. A great number of Hijras traditionally form a caste comprising many sub-divisions and very few of Hijras are involved in Hindu temple worship mostly as dancers and singers. For example in one of the main temples of Rāma-rasikas called Kānak-bhavan Hijras often sing and dance during the evening *āratī* collecting donations from visitors. Position of Hijras in Indian society is quite ambiguous: they can be considered as outcastes by some orthodox Hindus however their presence at weddings and other social functions is believed to bring luck so in such cases they impart their blessings and are treated in high esteem by participants and guests.

Andrew Schumann: In mass media we often listen to different sex scandals with some Indian pop *gurūs*. For instance, Saint Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh Ji Insaan was embroiled in such a scandal in the recent days. Perhaps, is it one of the parts of *rāsa-līlā*? That is, is the sex with the *gurū* examined as a norm of showing respect to him? Who are the *gurūs* for the Indian communities now? Which role do they play?

Max Demtchenko: I don’t think these sex scandals have anything to do with the *rāsa-līlā*. It is rather a question of personal crimes committed by particular people. To be a *rasika* devotee one should be duly initiated into the *sampradāya* by a bona-fide *gurū* taking into consideration that its eroticism is primarily of spiritual, contemplative nature (unlike in some *bāula* and *sahajiyā* sects). Gurū Rām-Rahīmhas a totally different background and his teaching can be defined as neo- (or rather, pseudo-) Sikh while for Nānak-panths (traditions tracing back their spiritual genealogy to gurū Nānak and his family) sensual practices are not common.

Notes

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1. Quoted from Dr. A.P. Gnatyuk-Danil’chuk. *Tolstoy and SwāmīVivekānanda*. Kolkata, 2006, p. 10.

Book Review “Religion Explained? The Cognitive Science of Religion after Twenty-Five Years”

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Abstract:

I review the book “Religion Explained? The Cognitive Science of Religion after Twenty-Five Years.” I discuss all the papers in the book and highlight some recurrent issues.

Keywords: Cognitive Science of Religion, psychology of religion, definition of religion, history of Science.

Religion Explained? The Cognitive Science of Religion after Twenty-Five Years, Edited by Luther H. Martin & Donald Wiebe, Bloomsbury Academic 2017, 272 pp.

In the book “Religion Explained? The Cognitive Science of Religion after 25 years” some of the leading scholars in cognitive science of religion (CSR) reflect on the past, present and future of their discipline. Although the subdivisions suggest that past, present and future are discussed separately, most contributors share their reflections on all three. Contrary to what the title suggests, the book offers much more than historical reflection. All contributors present their (sometimes critical) take on the strengths and weaknesses of CSR

1. Retrospectives

The first part, titled ‘Retrospectives,’ has papers by the two fathers of CSR (E. Thomas Lawson and Robert McCauley). Lawson discusses how the body of knowledge delivered by CSR has grown over the years. He repeats his well-known criticism of other, more descriptive approaches to the study of religion and considers this a prerequisite for the growth of knowledge of religion. He highlights theories about the role of cognitive mechanisms, like agency detection, as important accomplishments in CSR. Lawson is critical about David Sloan Wilson’s failure to take cognitive mechanisms into account. Another important accomplishment in Lawson’s view is the successful application of Dan Sperber’s epidemiology of beliefs to religious beliefs. Lawson concludes that by-product theories (CSR-theories that consider religious belief not as evolutionary adaptations in themselves but rather as by-products of adaptations) have yielded a far more interesting and broader picture of religion than competing adaptationist theories.

Robert McCauley’s also reiterates the points of divergence of CSR and other approaches in religious studies. He defends his discipline by pointing to its many successes. In line with his work

on explanatory pluralism, McCauley celebrates the diversity within CSR. He ends with a warning that CSR should not aim at offering complete explanations of religion. In science there is no such thing as a complete explanation.

Harvey Whitehouse begins his paper with a discussion that returns in many other papers of the volume, namely the lack of clarity about the explanandum of CSR. In his view the explanandum, i. e. religion, is not a natural kind and is not a single coherent phenomenon but a rather loose bundle of things. These things demand different theories and approaches. He claims that the single most important insight CSR has taught is the idea that religious belief is shaped and constrained by implicit, universal intuitions. Whitehouse goes on to discuss his own work on religious rituals and how he was influenced by Pascal Boyer's ideas.

Uffe Schjoedt and Armin Geertz' paper starts with a warning. While CSR has matured it still consists of a small group of scholars who need to stick together to stand up to dominant competition in religious studies. They offer a longer list of CSR's achievements consisting of religious epidemiology, animism, agency detection, ritual representation, counterintuitive ideas and modes of religiosity. They suggest that future research in CSR should be more multidisciplinary to gain recognition in the humanities.

2. State of the Art

The second part of the book starts with a paper by the grandfather of CSR, Stewart Guthrie. He returns to the problem of defining the explanandum of CSR. In his view, the lack of a clear definition for 'religion' is a real problem. Guthrie also notes another apparent problem for CSR. He distinguishes two lines of research. One states that religious belief is generated intuitively. A clear example is Guthrie's own theory of animism. A second states that religious belief is counterintuitive. Its main defender is Pascal Boyer. In Guthrie's view both conflict.

The paper by Pascal Boyer and Nicolas Baumard highlights a problem for CSR that returns in later papers. The problem is how CSR-theories about general human cognitive mechanisms and their outputs can shed light on, or can be reconciled with particular historical religious phenomena. They also note a tension between CSR-theories that focus on the unconscious cognitive processes leading to religious beliefs and theories that take explicit, consciously held religious beliefs at face value. They propose ways how the divide can be overcome. They also return to the problem of defining 'religion' and argue that the term is of little use for cognitive and social scientists.

The paper by Panayotis Pachis and Olympia Panagiotidou focuses on the divide between the general universal features of religion and the particular historical religious phenomena. They call for intensified collaboration between scholars of history of religions and cognitive scientists to overcome it.

Anders Klostergaard Petersen continues on the same problem. His case study is magic, a topic which CSR has yet to do a lot of explaining. He suggests that cognitive science is indispensable for a future study of historical instantiations of religion but that a lot of work remains to be done.

3. CSR 2.0

Leonardo Ambasciano continues on the problem of bridging cognitive science and study of historical religions. He argues that CSR-theories has often been misunderstood as downgrading the history of religions or as considering them mere providers of data to test theories on. He accuses some prominent CSR-theorists of falling in this trap. Ambasciano also accuses some CSR-theorists of biased selection of variables and control groups to confirm their hypotheses. He argues that future CSR should do better justice to historical, particular context that always shapes religion.

The paper by Michael Porubanova and John Shaver is perhaps the most focused in the volume. They return to Pascal Boyer's theory stating that religious concepts matter to people because they are minimally counterintuitive. They argue that the theory needs to incorporate a role

for emotions. They conclude from an experiment that subjects are more likely to remember (minimally counterintuitive) concepts in context of high emotional arousal.

The most critical piece in the volume is the paper by Benson Saler and Charles Ziegler. They return to the problem of defining CSR's explanandum 'religion' again. They also survey the criticisms of Ara Norenzayan's Big Gods Theory. The theory states that belief in moralizing gods became salient during the axial age when people started living in large-scale societies. They accuse Norenzayan of 'physics envy,' a tendency to portray theories as resembling theories in exact sciences.

Jesper Sorensen proposes a solution to the problem of bridging the gap between general cognitive theories of religious belief and particular historical religious phenomena. He argues that particular historical religious traditions should be considered as ways how humans modify their particular ecological niche with the tools furnished by their general cognitive systems. He claims that this is a fruitful approach to overcome the gap.

4. Looking Forward

Richard Sosis is the first to answer the title-question of the book 'Has religion been explained?'. His answer is: no, but we are getting there. His paper gives advice to CSR-scholars on how they can succeed in explaining religion. He compares CSR to two other related disciplines, behavioral ecology and evolutionary psychology. He warns against following a path like behavioral ecology. Behavioral ecology saw a wide proliferation of societies and journals but no sufficient quality increase. Evolutionary psychology, by contrast, focused in producing qualitative research. As a result evolutionary psychology as a discipline is in much better shape than behavioral ecology. Unsurprisingly, Sosis sees evolutionary psychology as a good example for CSR to follow.

Justin Lane's paper mainly discusses the deep history of CSR. He traces its roots all the way back to late 19th century theories about memory and perception (he calls it the prehistory of CSR). He also points to mid-20th century theories about language as influential for CSR. Like many of his predecessors, Lane discusses the problem of CSR's explanandum.

Steven Hrotic also discusses the deep history of CSR, mainly its predecessors in Victorian theories of evolutionism and cognitive anthropology. He concludes that there remains a lot of work to be done in CSR and highlights the importance of interdisciplinary work.

The final paper by Justin Barrett distinguishes a number of core commitments of CSR. One commitment is that CSR aims to explain cultural expressions that are commonly regarded as religious. By pointing to this commitment, Barrett proposes a solution to the problem of defining CSR's explanandum, namely by relying on a common sense understanding of the term. Other core commitments according to Barrett are methodological naturalism, interdisciplinarity and a focus on cognition. He also addresses the problem of bridging the gap between general theories and historical, cultural instantiations of religion. He sees it mainly as a problem of how to combine individual features of importance for religion and group-features.

5. Conclusion

While the quality of papers varies (which is almost inevitable in edited volumes) the book offers an indispensable discussion of the current state of CSR. Most of the papers presuppose too much information for the book to serve as an introduction to the field. For people who are familiar with CSR, the book presents new takes on key issues and problems in the field.

One point of criticism I want to put focus on is the almost conspicuous absence of philosophy. Philosophy not only helped shape the cognitive research program to which CSR is indebted, philosophers recently also offered insights how cognitive science can be improved or broadened. A major development is the stress on 4E cognition (cognition as embodied, embedded, enacted and extended). Only Robert McCauley mentions 4E cognition. Another way forward for CSR is engaging with these new insights.