

# THE PROBLEM OF THE ETERNITY OF THE WORLD IN THE CROATIAN CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHY

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The problem of the eternity of the world is common in the Croatian contemporary philosophy as well. During more than the past thirty years there have been discussions on the pages of the periodicals *Crkva u svijetu* (*Church in the world*) and *Bogoslovska smotra* (*Theologians review*)<sup>1</sup>, in which some of the below-mentioned authors participated with their articles. We have selected interesting thoughts and argumentations of some Croatian authors, who have observed this problem theodically or cosmologically during more than the past hundred years. We have chosen and chronologically sorted the following authors: *Josip Stadler* (1843–1918), *Antun Bauer* (1856–1937), *Stjepan Zimmermann* (1884–1963), *Vilim Keilbach* (1908–1982), *Rudolf Brajičić* (1918), *Juraj Božidar Marušić* (1914), *Ante Kusić* (1922) and *Tomo Vereš* (1930).

## *Josip Stadler*

Stadler starts from Aristotle's assertion that the world is eternal and the assertion of pagan philosophers, as he calls them, that the matter is eternal. He also states here that "recently Robinet, who — true enough — claimed that the world differed from God, and that it was not a part of the divine substance, still added that the world necessarily emanated from God's nature and that it did not have a beginning."<sup>2</sup>

He believes these are all misconceptions and thus claims that "against all these errors stands the true teaching that the world was created in time and with time<sup>3</sup>; hence the conclusion that the world has not been created from

1 For the list of the literature on these discussions see J. B. Marušić, *Lista priloga suvremenom teodicejskom dijalogu naših domaćih autora in Bogoslovska smotra 1987/1–2*, pp. 97–98; J. B. Marušić, *Teodicejski skok šepavog skeptika*, Split 1995, pp. 16–18.

2 J. Stadler, *Kosmologija*, Sarajevo 1909, p. 17.

3 The syntagma "in time and with time" used by Stadler deserves our comment. If the Platonic–Augustinian claim that with the world time was created, is accepted, then it should

time immemorial.”<sup>4</sup> This already shows quite obviously what his attitude to the problem of the eternity of the world is.

The central philosophical problem of the eternity of the world could be summarized in the question that St. Thomas Aquinas already put similarly: is it possible at all that God should create the world from time immemorial? To answer the posed question, Stadler — in order to assert God’s freedom — first quotes arguments that the world did not *have* to be created from time immemorial.<sup>5</sup> If the world was necessarily created from time immemorial, this necessity would have to be proved either by God or by the world. First, the arguments of the world.

The world is an unnecessary being, and this means that it does not have to exist at all, and even less so — exist from time immemorial, that is last forever. The point is that duration includes existence in itself, so one cannot even think without contradiction that a being is by its nature determined to last without being determined to exist. However, an unnecessary being cannot by its nature be determined to exist, because it is proper only to a necessary being. Thus, those who claim that the world requires eternal duration, or that it *necessarily has to be eternal*, have to claim that the world is necessary and unnecessary, which is contradictory.

Besides, if the world must have been from time immemorial, then all its parts must have been from time immemorial. Thus, one has to claim either that all the world may have had its beginning or, if some of its parts must have been from time immemorial, then the other parts could not have had their beginning either. However, experience confirms to us that every day new beings appear, which brings us to the conclusion that the world has not necessarily been from time immemorial.

Seen from God’s side, the world also has not existed necessarily from time immemorial. The point is that God’s nature does not necessarily require the world to be from time immemorial, because God is not by his nature predetermined to creating something but is free in it. He does not need anyone or anything, so he is independent, as he is limitlessly perfect. He created the world by his free will, which means that he could have also not created it. And since he was free in creating, what follows is that he was also not obliged to create it from time immemorial. And this means that it was also up to his

also be said that the world was created with time, or time with the world. One cannot speak then of the beginning of the world “in time”. If, on the other hand, the existence of some time before the world is accepted, then we could say that the world began “in time”, but not “with time”, too. Stadler was obviously not interested in the problem of the beginnings of time but only whether the world had its beginning or whether it is eternal.

4 J. Stadler, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

5 See J. Stadler, *op. c.*, pp. 18–19.

will, not only whether he would create the world, but also when he would create it. In other words, the being of the world depends on God's freedom as much as the determination of the beginning of creation of the world, which brings us to the conclusion that God did not have to create the world from time immemorial.

Stadler also lists arguments against the eternity of the world known to him from geogony and cosmogony, as he calls them,<sup>6</sup> teaching that the earth used to be a fiery ball, which means there could not have been much life on it, or that at the beginning nothing existed but gaseous the primordial mist which was moving and out of which the entire universe came to life. Not undertaking a critical analysis of this teaching he argues that the matter cannot be moving by itself but has to be moved by the other that is himself without cause but stays outside the entire series of movements, by God. It is interesting to hear his arguments that this moving is not eternal, because if it had been from time immemorial, it would have then had to disappear long ago since the internal heat of the earth and sunshine are disappearing more and more.

Therefore, the world did not have to be created from time immemorial, from the point of view of the world and the point of view of God, since God creates freely, and the world is an unnecessary being, that thereby excludes the necessity of creating from time immemorial. Furthermore, on the basis of teachings known to him about the beginnings of the earth and the universe, he concludes that the world once began.

Stadler poses another philosophical question: *could* God create the world from time immemorial? He first presents the arguments of the philosophers who claim that God could not have created the world from time immemorial. Let us look at the arguments.<sup>7</sup>

1. God is the cause of the world and the world is God's effect. A cause has to precede the effect and therefore there was duration<sup>8</sup>, when there was no world and there was God. Besides, the world was created out of nothing, which means that it began existing after it had not existed.

6 See J. Stadler, *op. c.*, pp. 19–20.

7 See J. Stadler, *op. c.*, pp. 20–21.

8 It is interesting that in this argument Stadler says that there was duration when there was no world. We have seen that duration is for him inseparable from existence. Following his terminology and argumentation, duration could here refer only to God, who exists already "before" the world, as the world before its beginnings does not have its duration. He might have used this terminology and argumentation to avoid a philosophical problem of the "before" world which could, on the one hand, also have a temporal meaning and on the other, one could not speak of temporal "before" if time began along with the world.

2. For an unnecessary being, such as the world, one cannot even think that it has existed eternally as eternity has no beginning, or one has to think, since it is unnecessary, that it began existing. Moreover, producing a being that has no beginning of duration seems contradictory, because if this being was made, it was made at a certain moment.
3. If the world was from time immemorial, then one infinity would be greater than another because up to now infinite hours, infinite days, infinite months, or infinite turns of the stars must have passed by. We have measured by time, and that means by hours, days, months how long the world has existed. The number of hours is bigger than the number of days, and the number of days is bigger than the number of months. So, if the world was eternal, then one infinity would be bigger than another, which is impossible. Besides, if the world was eternal, one should then claim there was an infinite series that can be multiplied because the movement and turns of the stars would be infinite, and could even grow on, and one can add nothing to the infinite.

So, these would be the arguments why God *could not have* created the world from time immemorial.

Let us now quote some arguments of the philosophers who claim that God *could have* created the world from time immemorial although he created it in time, as Stadler claims:<sup>9</sup>

1. Creation of the world from time immemorial does not contradict God as he has had power of creation from time immemorial; it does not oppose the world either because the effect does not have to follow the cause by duration, in fact, the effect can be simultaneous with the cause only if it gets its existence from the cause, such as light, for instance, in relation to the sun; it does not contradict the act of creation either which does not imply movement because it starts being in “a flash”. Besides, that “out of nothing”<sup>10</sup> should not be understood as if it did not exist at first, and later it did, but it means that it was not derived from some previous subject, or that it is sufficient for creation that the effect comes after nothing, not by duration, but by nature.
2. There is no contradiction in the existence of a series without beginning when the cause that the effect refers to is eternal.

<sup>9</sup> See J. Stadler, *op. c.*, pp. 22–24.

<sup>10</sup> Here we take literally the expression “out of nothing” that Stadler uses, which is important for this argumentation, although a better philosophical syntagma for creation would be “not using anything” than “out of nothing”.

3. Regarding the rise and fall of the infinite, there is the simply infinite (*simpliciter infinitum*), that is the infinite that includes every perfection and thus cannot either rise or fall. The infinite in view of something (*infinitum secundum quid*) is in many ways limited and here one infinite can be bigger than another infinite. For instance, God knows all the possible persons of the human species, the number of whom is infinite, but he also knows all the possible things of all other kinds that he can create and that are also infinite. This latter infinite is greater than the former infinite.

It is interesting that Stadler, after listing one group of proofs and the other says: “Whether the first

or the second opinion is true, what is beyond any doubt is that it suits God’s wisdom more to have created the world in time, than to have created it from time immemorial.”<sup>11</sup>

This could bring us to the conclusion that Stadler did not directly but indirectly answer the question asked: *could* God have created the world from time immemorial? He claims that it suits God’s wisdom more to *have created the world in time* than to have created it from time immemorial because it is a proof that God is good, that he does not act necessarily and that the power of his action is infinite. From the expression “*to have created the world in time*” than “*to have created it from time immemorial*”, it can obviously be seen that he advocates the view that the world has not been from time immemorial. This is also confirmed by his mentioned claim, as we saw, that the world was created in time and with time, which means that the world has not been created from time immemorial. This claim, to say the truth, was rather stressed as a counterthesis and criticism against the misconception on the eternity of the matter and the world necessarily originating from God. It is also interesting to hear his argument for the beginning of the world on the basis of cosmological “facts”, as he calls them.

After all this, it can be concluded that Stadler supported the thesis that the world is not eternal but had its beginning in time and that God created it.

### *Antun Bauer*

Bauer starts by presenting different opinions on the problem of the eternity of the world. Materialists have to claim that the world is eternal, and the similar also has to be claimed by pantheists. However, among all those who claim

11 J. Stadler, *op. c.*, p. 24.

that the world was created by God, some claim that God must have created the world from time immemorial, i. e. that the world is necessarily without a beginning; some others on the contrary, such as St. Bonaventura, claim that God could not have created it from time immemorial and that is why the world must have had its beginning and eventually, the third ones, such as St. Thomas Aquinas for instance, claim that the human reason can prove neither that God could not have created the world from time immemorial but that he must have created it in time nor the claim that the world had to begin in time.<sup>12</sup>

After presenting various opinions about the issue, Bauer adopts the attitude that, according to what he claims, generally prevailed at his time, i. e. that impossibility of eternal creation can be almost strictly proved.

Similarly to Stadler, he points out that God did not have to create the world from time immemorial, by which he denies one of the mentioned opinions, because he could not have been determined to it by the world, which does not by its essence necessarily require existence, and this means that it can be or not be, and there is nothing even in God which would determine his having to create the world from time immemorial. God, as the efficient cause of the world, does not act necessarily but freely, and this means that the purpose for which God created the world could not have determined him to create the world from time immemorial.

He mentions possible objections such as, if God created the world in time, then some change took place in God. He replies that God's act of creation is eternal and unchangeable, and the external effect begins in time in which God wanted it to begin. The other possible objection would be: if the world was created in time, God was before the world, and then God would also be subject to time. He accepts here the Platonic–Augustinian claim that the time begins with the world, that is why this “before” has no temporal meaning here but marks eternity or a possible time. God's eternity is eternal *now*, with which there is no *before or after*. That is why verbs in different tenses are used differently for God, and differently for a temporal being. When one says, for instance: *God was* before the world began, then it means that God's *now* did not begin along with the world.”<sup>13</sup>

One should particularly stress here Bauer's claim that God could not have created the world from time immemorial as it is metaphysically impossible. “It is, therefore, absurd to claim that God could have created anything which would have no beginning. And why could not God do it? The reason does not

12 See A. Bauer, *Naravno bogoslovlje ili koliko može čovjek samim razumom spoznati Boga*, Zagreb 1892, p. 152.

13 A. Bauer, *op. c.*, p. 76.

lie in God's will or power, which is immeasurable, but in the object. *To be created'* and *to be without a beginning, from time immemorial'* is something absurd, something metaphysically impossible, and thus even God cannot do it".<sup>14</sup>

He also quotes the opinion of those who claim that in a created being *not being* has to be before *being*, but *prioritate naturae* and not *prioritate durationis*. He answers: "We are not saying that creatures first *did not exist'* for some time and then started *existing'*. This would be an absurd thing to claim, as before creatures there was no time. And we accept that *not being'* in a creature is only *natura prius from being'*, and not *duratione prius*. And what does this mean? This means that the essence and nature of every creature is such that we first have to think of him *not being'* and then *being'*. And this means again that in every creature I first have to think of his *internal objective possibility*, and only then *his being*. And this does not allow a possibility that a created being could be eternal, that it could exist without a beginning".<sup>15</sup>

Besides, if the world was eternal then the sequence in moving and changing would also be eternal, that is without a beginning, and then this sequence could have never reached the present level.

Therefore, Bauer claims that God created the world that started in time. Moreover, unlike St. Thomas Aquinas, he explicitly claims that it is contradictory to believe that the world has been created from time immemorial, as for him being created and being from time immemorial is metaphysically impossible.

### *Stjepan Zimmermann*

Stjepan Zimmermann first argues that the world, being unnecessary, depends in its being on God who created it out of nothing. He did not create it out of himself as this would contradict God's perfection, and he did not produce it from the matter, as he would then be limited by it in his power and besides, the matter is not a necessary being.<sup>16</sup>

As for the particular problem of the eternity of the world, he presents three different opinions: the first one is the opinion of those who claimed that the world had to be created from time immemorial, the second one is Aristotle's claim that the world is eternal, but dependent on God in its movement, with God constantly moving it as the *Prime Immovable Mover*, and the third

14 A. Bauer, *op. c.*, p. 157.

15 A. BAuer, *op. c.*, p. 156.

16 See S. Zimmermann, *Religija i život*, Zagreb 1938, p. 216.

opinion is the one represented by St. Thomas Aquinas, who claimed that it was not contradictory to claim that the world had been created from time immemorial, that is — although the world is changeable and although it was created, it might have as well been from time immemorial.

He does not agree with any of the mentioned assertions. He does not agree with the first one as it would mean that God would be dependent on the world if he had to create it from time immemorial. He does not agree with Aristotle either, because the world has its beginning. He also disagrees with St. Thomas Aquinas as “the world *could not have* been created from time immemorial because created’ means that it was produced or that it came to life and that it did not exist prior to it, and ‘prior to it’ and after that” is a temporal determinant. The world was thus created at certain time (unknown to us).<sup>17</sup>

From this quoted Zimmermann’s text we can single out two claims: the first one, that the world if it was created, which means came to life out of nothing, includes in itself a beginning in time, or if the world was *created*, then it is not eternal; and the other one that “prior to it” or “before” is a temporal determinant and he includes it in the argumentation that the world began contrary to Aristotle, who uses it precisely to conclude that the world is eternal. Aristotle actually claimed that time was eternal as there is no time without “now”, and now is the end of the past time, which means there is neither “before” without time.<sup>18</sup> Since time is eternal, and time is “the number of movements in relation to before and after”,<sup>19</sup> moving also has to be eternal, that is the world is eternal.<sup>20</sup>

Let us single out two more arguments against the eternity of the world that Zimmermann quotes. One is based on the *changeability* of the world, and the other one on the *results of some natural sciences* of his time.

The world is not eternal “as it is *changeable*, i. e. if we also look at the world regardless the fact that it was created, but only regarding the fact that it is changeable, we conclude that it can’t have been from time immemorial. The point is that changeability means transition from one state into another, for instance the change of day and night. Here follows one part after another according to time. Quantities of time can be measured (days, years.) by the

17 S. Zimmermann, *op. c.*, pp. 216–217.

18 See Aristotle, *Physics*, VIII., 1, 251b 11–25.

19 Aristotle, *Physics*, IV, 11, 219b1.

20 St. Thomas quotes this Aristotle’s argument as a reason in support of those who argue that the world is eternal. The point is if time is not eternal then one should allow its non-being before its being. However, *before* and *after* cannot exist if there is no time; as time is *the number of the former and the latter*, which means that time is eternal. And time cannot be without a carrier, that has to be a created substance, or the world. See Th. AQUINAS, *Summa contra Gentiles*, II, c. 33.



Earth turning around the sun. Even before the Earth turned, and when there was nobody who would count, it was still possible at least to count and reach some kind of limit by counting. If the world, on the other hand, was from time immemorial, there would never be any limits in its duration, so the measuring of time would have not started today either. It should also be said that today's state of the world may have been such from time immemorial, that from time immemorial passed but came now. And eventually, there would be no difference between a day, year and other parts of time if the duration of the world was indivisible, immeasurable, from time immemorial. This argumentation of ours is also confirmed by the fact that the world will have its end, i. e. it will not last forever (as natural sciences prove). If it was from time immemorial, the end of time should not be expected either."<sup>21</sup>

While arguing that the world is not eternal Zimmermann also uses the results of some natural sciences of his time<sup>22</sup>, which demonstrate that everything in the world has its beginning in time, on the basis of which he then concludes that the entire world also has its beginning "because everything that began in the world (people, animals, plants, earth and today's solar system), could not have begun precisely at a certain time if the world was from time immemorial: the question is why it began precisely at the time, and not before, when over the duration from time immemorial a certain beginning did not need or could not be waited."<sup>23</sup>

It is interesting to mention that he, to emphasize the non-necessity of the world, still takes into consideration Aristotle's teaching, so he says: "because even if the world was from time immemorial (as Aristotle taught), it still does not mean that it is independent or necessary in itself. In our arguing that there is God, we have not even referred to the statement that the world is temporal or that it has not been from time immemorial, but regardless of this issue we looked at the facts: the changeability of the world, causal dependence and unnecessariness."<sup>24</sup>

Zimmermann, thus, claims that the world could not have been created from time immemorial but that it was created in time. However, he does not use this as a proof of God's existence, but he bases his argumentation on the unnecessariness of the world and also its causal dependence on God.

21 S. Zimmermann, *op. c.*, p. 217; see *op. c.*, p. 187.

22 Zimmermann claims that paleontology proved that people, animals and plants, that is everything living on the earth has not been from time immemorial, geology proves that the earth has not been from time immemorial and astrophysics that the solar system has not been from time immemorial either. See S. ZIMMERMANN, *op. c.*, pp. 187–188.

23 S. Zimmermann, *op. c.*, p. 188.

24 S. Zimmermann, *op. c.*, pp. 217–218.

*Vilim Keilbach*

In his book entitled *Problem Boga u filozofiji (Problem of God in Philosophy)*, Vilim Keilbach poses the problem of the beginning of the world and says: “That is why we do not deal here with the problem of cosmogony, if it has a purely natural and scientific character. Neither do we deal more closely with the issue of evolutionism, referred to by either cosmology or psychology, but we only claim that there cannot be eternal matter in the sense that it would exist by i t s e l f. Whatever the development of the world or in the world was, the relation of the world to God is certainly such that the world was created by God.”<sup>25</sup> Of course that Keilbach also argues that the world does not exist by itself but that it was created by the Necessary and Transcendent Being that is different from the world.<sup>26</sup>

To the explicitly asked question: is an “eternal created world” possible in itself?” Keilbach quotes a claim by St. Bonaventura, according to whom “the world cannot have been created from time immemorial, because there is a contradiction in the very notion of a changeable world that would have no beginning. Since this is impossible in itself, God could not have created the world from time immemorial, although he may have had a decision from time immemorial for the world to exist in time.”<sup>27</sup>

He also quotes Thomas’s opinion that the eternity of the created world includes no contradictions. The summarized proof goes as it follows: “God on his side has limitless power, omnipotence, thereby he could have created an eternal world, if that one is not impossible by its notion; the world itself as God’s effect could be eternal because the effect can be simultaneous’ with the cause; creation is action without movement and sequence —*actio in instanti*—, so it cannot be seen why this action could not have been from time immemorial.”<sup>28</sup>

He also quotes Suarez’s opinion that the existence of an eternal but unchangeable world would not be contradictory, but it would be contradictory if a changeable world, such as ours, was eternal. Keilbach, following A. Rohner, compares the philosophers of the Middle Ages and presents their common ground and differences concerning this problem: Maimonides and St. Albert the Great, Maimonides and St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Albert the Great and St. Thomas Aquinas.

25 V. Kailbach, *Problem Boga u filozofiji*, Zagreb 1944, p. 241.

26 See V. Kailbach, *op. c.*, pp. 242–243.

27 V. Kailbach, *op. c.*, pp. 244–245.

28 V. Kailbach, *op. c.*, p. 245.

It is thereby evident that Kailbach was not unfamiliar with different opinions regarding the eternity of the world but it seems that he did not quite define his own attitude regarding the problem. What he finds important is the fact that the world was created by God.

### *Juraj Božidar Marušić*

In his writing over the years<sup>29</sup>, Marušić pays most attention precisely to the problem of the eternity of the world demonstrated through a series of causes.

He quotes two kinds of causes that St. Thomas distinguishes, and these are: the series of causes put in order *per se* (*causae per se ordinatae*) and the series of causes put in order *per accidens* (*causae per accidens ordinatae*).

For the series of causes put in order *per se* it is important for all the members to act on each other simultaneously, i. e. these causes are *causae simul agentes*, or such a series is a series of simultaneously acting causes. For the causes in the series put in order *per accidens* it is not important to act simultaneously, they are *causae non simul agentes*, or a series of successively acting causes. To illustrate the first series, Saint Thomas used a picture of a hand which moves a stick which moves a stone and such a series cannot be infinite<sup>30</sup>, and for the other series, St. Thomas takes a picture of grandfather–father–son, or a master who works with many hammers, as one breaks after another.<sup>31</sup> Such a series can be infinite for St. Thomas.

For the series of causes put in order *per se*, Marušić takes the image of yachts at sea that are mutually connected and the wind blows into the sails of the first boat that moves, pulling along the second yacht, and the second pulling the third. Every member in this series essentially needs help of the one in front of him so that he could causally influence the member behind.

Disagreement with St. Thomas can emerge here, Marušić claims. If one says: even if the series of causes put in order *per se* is infinite, it is still dependent on some cause out of this series, or if we use Marušić's image of yachts, disagreement would begin if we claimed: "No sail–boat can move by itself, so the entire series of boats cannot move by itself either, even if it was infinite; thus, even if the series is *infinite*, it is still dependent on some cause out of this series."<sup>32</sup>

29 Marušić has been intensely dealing with the problem of the eternity of the world for almost five decades, that is since 1953, and this is the central theme of his publications.

30 T. AQUINAS, *Summa contra Gentiles*, II, 38.

31 T. AQUINAS, *Summa theol.*, I, q. 46, a 2.

32 J. B. MARUŠIĆ, *Teodicejska slikovnica*, Split 1963, p. 12.

In other words, such a series according to St. Thomas *cannot* be infinite, which Marušić agrees with, and the disagreement with St. Thomas begins when it is claimed that such a series *can* be infinite. Marušić claims that if the series of boats, where one boat pulls another, was infinite, it would be a contradiction, as that series then *would not move by itself*, because none of its members can move by itself, and at the same time *this series would move by itself*, as every boat is pulled by another which belongs to *that series*. Because of this Marušić claims that this series of boats or the series of *causes put in order per se* cannot be infinite, i. e. *every* boat cannot be pulled by another but there has to be one end-boat moved by an external mover, i. e. immovable mover.<sup>33</sup>

The series of causes put in order *per accidens*, and this is in St. Thomas illustrated by the grandfather–father–son series, is in Marušić illustrated as a series of candles. In a series of candles, the first one is lit by a man by means of a match, and the second one by the first candle, the third one by the second one, the fourth one by the third, etc. What is important here is that no candle can light the next one by itself but it has to be done by somebody else. Every lit candle can be used to light the neighbouring unlit candle no matter whether the other candles, that were lit, are burning. For instance, the third candle can be used to light the fourth one no matter whether the second one is still burning. St. Thomas would say that the third candle lights the fourth one because it is burning, and not because it was lit by the one preceding it, Marušić explains.

For such a series of causes it is important that causes should not act simultaneously but successively, and such a series — according to St. Thomas — can be infinite.

33 J. B. Marušić, *op. c.*, pp. 13–14. Although it is clear from the context that Marušić obviously uses this image as a ladder in proving God, starting from the world or moving in the world, as St. Thomas does it, it is necessary, due to possible confusions, to look back on the image of a series of yachts that Marušić brings. Marušić concludes well that this series of sailboats has to be finite, presuming that the series is observed from the last boat in the series, because here one has to come to the first boat that was not moved by another boat but by an external cause, where I totally agree. However, nothing stops this series of boats from being infinite if it is observed from the point of view of the first boat. The point is, if the force of the wind that moves the first boat, and hence the entire series of boats, was infinite, then this series would not have to have a last member, i. e. it could be infinite although it has the first member. That is why I find this image with sailboats, where the first boat is already included, unsuitable as this first boat or, better, the external cause should be obtained through deduction. In the mentioned image of boats, which before them have a boat which moves the one behind, there should not be that first boat which has no boat moving it in front of it but some other cause. Instead of this boat, three little dots should be put. This boat or the external cause should be reached by deduction. This lack of illustrative demonstration, however, does not weaken the strength of Marušić's argumentation.

Let us go back now to Thomas's series. The series of stone–stick–hand is the *series of middle causes*, since this series forms a triad where the stick is the middle cause, and according to St. Thomas, Marušić points out, the series of grandfather–father–son does not form a triad, and father is not a middle cause between grandfather and son; that is why this series is *accidental*, and according to St. Thomas, it can be infinite.

Marušić, unlike St. Thomas, believes that the grandfather–father–son series forms a triad in which the first member is via the middle one the cause of the last one, and this grandfather–father–son series is also a series of middle causes, as well as the evolution of the world, because the present stage of the evolution of the world is the middle cause between the previous and future stages.

Interesting thinking should be mentioned here, which might be some news in philosophy. Marušić thinks that moving is not explained well enough by the potentia–actus dualism, but triadism has to be introduced, i. e. it should be said how what went *ex actu* exists and this way of existing is called a *fundamental* way of existing by Marušić. Thus, according to him, a new definition of moving would go as follows: “simultaneus transitus de potentia in actum et de actu in fundamentum.”<sup>34</sup>

So, movement is not only transition from potency into an act but also transition from an act into the foundation. If this is applied to the grandfather–father–son series, then the present man has in the *foundation (in fundamento)* his father and all his ancestors, so when he has his son, he does it with the help of his father and all his ancestors, i. e. father is the middle cause between son and grandfather. The same is true for the stages in the evolution of the world where the present stage of the evolution of the world is the middle cause that did not happen without the help of the previous stages, that is the evolution of the world is a series of middle causes.<sup>35</sup> This means that yesterday has passed into the foundation of today's, current day, and tomorrow's day is in the potency of today's current day.<sup>36</sup>

This series of the evolution of the world or the series of *causes put in order fundamentally essentially*, as Marušić also calls it, has to be finite as well as the series of causes put in order *per se*. The point is that in a series of causes put in order fundamentally essentially, all causes and consequences have to be taken as a whole at once and that is why this series cannot be infinite either,

34 J. B. Marušić, *Magistralna dilema moguće beskonačnosti ili nužnog početka niza srednjih uzroka u suvremenoj teodicejskoj nauci i u sv. Tome* in: *Crkva u svijetu* 1967/5(II), p. 36.

35 See J. B. Marušić, *Magistralna dilema.*, p. 36.

36 See J. B. Marušić, *S Akvincem protiv Akvinca k Akvincu: o pokretniku ili stvoritelju svijeta* in: *Bogoslovska smotra* 1987/1–2, p. 95.

because that would mean a contradiction, i. e. the series would then have the same number of sons (consequence) and fathers (causes) as the last man would only be son and every second man would be son and father.<sup>37</sup>

From all the above–quoted, therefore, Marušić’s attitude to the eternity of the world can be deduced. In his opinion, the evolution of the world cannot be an infinite series<sup>38</sup>, i. e. this evolution has its beginning and its absolutely prime mover.

### *Rudolf Brajičić*

In his book *Filozofski eksperiment (Philosophical Experiment)*, Rudolf Brajičić regards the problem of the eternity of the world within the boundaries of Thomas’s paths which are neglected “due to the discussion on the possibility of a series of subordinated causes into infinity”.<sup>39</sup> He quotes an assertion of St. Bonaventura “Claiming that the world is eternal and (simultaneously) that all the things were produced out of nothing, is so much against reason that I believe no philosopher, no matter how narrow mind he might have, has not assumed it”<sup>40</sup> and St. Thomas’s claim “that the world has not always existed is only held true through faith and cannot be strictly proved.”<sup>41</sup>

On the other hand, he also quotes St. Thomas’s opinion that it is impossible to list valid proofs of impossibility of an infinite cause–effect series. Brajičić claims: “I personally believe that the infinite series of effect–cause (effect) is absurd”.<sup>42</sup> He presents, as he says himself, apodictic evidence that creation from time immemorial is not possible. He starts from the claim that a property of a necessary being is to realize itself necessarily from time immemorial, and not in time and this property does not belong to unnecessary

37 See *Ib.*

38 Marušić tries to separate the notion of “infinite (infinitus)” from the notion “immeasurable (immensus)”. He, more precisely, considers apart/abstracts? how many members there is in a series when this series is limited on one end and the other. Thus in the series of the evolution of the world, this immeasurability (immensity)?, he says, could be called eternity. For Marušić, it is important for this series to be limited on one end and the other, and he permits “that there may even be immensely (immensum) many of them, if this concept can be separated from the concept infinite (infinitum)”, and in this case, it should be said that the evolution started from time immemorial”. J. B. Marušić, *S Akvincem.*, p. 96; see J. B. MARUŠIĆ, *Povijesna sjećanja i aktualna razmišljanja pred jednim značajnim teodicejskim torzom sv. Tome in: Crkva u svijetu 1974/2*, p. 182.

39 R. Brajičić, *Filozofski eksperiment. Signifikantni i egzistentni vidici u filozofiji*, Zagreb 1996, p. 70.

40 *Ibid.*

41 *Ib.*

42 R. Brajičić, *op. c.*, p. 71.

beings that cannot necessarily be from time immemorial. However, he wonders whether those unnecessary beings can be from time immemorial by unnecessary eternity, *aeternitate participata* (participated eternity)? He bases his answer in a chain of causes that cannot be from time immemorial. Namely, “for a chain of causes to be able to exist from time immemorial, the first cause in the chain would have to cause not in time but from time immemorial. However, the only one that can act from time immemorial is the one in whom being and acting is the same in reality and different in nature (*natura*), so that his acting coincides temporally with his being from which it is distinguished only by nature (*natura*), which is not the case with any member of the chain of causes. In all of them there is *real* difference between being and acting so that their being is temporally, and not only by nature, before acting. So, there is no activity of such beings from time immemorial. How can then the chain of causes be from time immemorial? Can such beings at least exist from time immemorial? Being means *to be able* to act. If they *cannot* act from time immemorial, they cannot exist from time immemorial either.”<sup>43</sup>

At another place, when he argues that the series of causes does not have in itself the reason of its existence, he claims: “In cosmological argumentation it is not the issue of possibility or impossibility of the infinite series of causes but impossibility that this series, finite or infinite, has in itself the reason of its existence. Satisfaction of the human mind with itself in cosmological evidence, on the other hand, is not based on the completion of the series’ of causes but on the completion of the discussion on the source of existence of contingent beings, no matter whether these beings are in a chain-like manner, dependent one on another in a limited chain or an immeasurable one.”<sup>44</sup>

It is obvious from the above-presented that Brajičić supports the thesis that the world is not eternal, and in cosmological argumentation claims that the series of causes cannot have a reason of existence in itself.

### *Ante Kusić*

Ante Kusić, analyzing contemporary cosmology, accepts that the world has a beginning. However, within philosophical reflection he is not interested in the physical beginning of the world but the ontic dependence of the world as an unnecessary being on God as a necessary being. He says: “not wishing to enter the area of mathematical problems of infinite’ and finite’ series and philosophical assumptions regarding the physical law of preserving energy

43 R: Brajičić, *op. c.*, p. 70.

44 R. Brajičić, *Zašto postoji nešto a ne ništa?* in: *Obnovljeni život* 1994/2 (49) p. 153.

or indestructibility of the matter, nor the problem of natural and scientific extension of 'caused causes' even into infinity, we want to point out only the absoluteness of the ontic dependence of the unnecessary' that has been generalized: where dependence on the Absolute Being is true for every unnecessary individual, as well as for the whole of these individuals, regardless of its potential prolongment in the contexts of natural sciences. Not even in infinity can the non-being' of the beginning and being' of the existing be fused into one."<sup>45</sup> Not even in the case of the self-creation of the matter, illustrated by stories of the constant self-production of new stars, Kusić does not allow the conclusion that our world has been self-sufficient from time immemorial.<sup>46</sup>

The question of how God could have created the world from time immemorial is answered by Kusić through his explicit statement that he does not categorically claim either that God created it or that God did not create it from time immemorial. He yet argues that the very connection of the beings in the world into a chain-like order, due to the ontic dependence of the unnecessary on the Necessary, no matter how long this connection has gone on, requires a Connector. The point is that God as the Absolute Being could have used his omnipotence from time immemorial, and this means that God could have created from time immemorial,<sup>47</sup> that is "since the Absolute Being is Absolute Fulness of Being' (thus, from time immemorial), it had at the same time power of giving outwards', i. e. training the beginning beings for different forms of moving' in the horizontal of their interdependence."<sup>48</sup>

We can generally say that Kusić is primarily not interested in the temporal beginning of the world but its ontic dependence on God. He says: "We abstain consciously from any physical and temporal location of the moment of creating the world as it is irrelevant here. We wish to point out that the matter, even if we see it as eternal', due to the moving' itself, i. e. beginning and ending of beings in the world, in the entire context of the evolution of the world has to be conditioned by the Absolute Being, i. e. by God."<sup>49</sup> Presuming that the matter is eternal, "its evolution' cannot be spontaneous or automatic, but it has to be conditioned' by God".<sup>50</sup> Or "precisely due to being in permanent evolution or movement', the matter cannot automatically have been from time

45 A. Kusić, *Filozofski pristupi Bogu*, Split 1980, p. 135.

46 Matter can here be understood as a group of beings coming to life with temporally specific beginning or without anyhow determinable temporal beginning, i. e. from time immemorial. See A. Kusić, *op. c.*, p. 125.

47 See A. Kusić, *op. c.*, p. 138.

48 A. Kusić, *op. c.*, p. 143. See A. Kusić, *Nenužnost svijeta i razumsko argumentiranje o Božjoj opstojnosti*, in *Crkva u svijetu* 1967/2, p. 59–6.

49 A. Kusić, *Filozofski.*, p. 145.

50 A. Kusić, *Filozofski.*, p. 152.



immemorial. If it may have existed from time immemorial, if it is eternal, then it is — as being evolving, i. e. since it is in the state of constant movement' of new beings in the world — necessarily dependent on the Other”.<sup>51</sup>

Kusić, thus, regards the eternity of the world rather as a theodical and not cosmological problem, he actually claims that the world necessarily depends on God by its being. So in his argumentation, he puts an emphasis on the ontic dependence of the matter on God even in the case of the eternity of the matter, i. e. the world.

### *Tomo Vereš*

In his book *Iskonski mislilac (Primordial Thinker)*, Tomo Vereš puts into a historical frame Thomas's opinion which was directed to the criticism of the theologians of Augustinian orientation Alexander of Hales, Matthew from Aquasparta, St. Bonaventura, who thought that the temporal beginning of the world was a truth provable by reason, moreover — according to St. Bonaventura the very syntagma *creating the world from time immemorial* is contradictory. By this thesis of theirs they rose against the teaching of Siger from Brabant, Boethius from Dacia and other averroists.<sup>52</sup>

Vereš thinks that Thomas's point of view concerning the problem is unique in the history of philosophy and theology, according to which “the world is such by nature that it shows itself to us people as indifferent to both temporal beginning and eternal duration. That is why these two theses are non-provable.”<sup>53</sup>

It is interesting that Vereš remains sceptical in interpretations of some natural sciences that speak of the beginning of the universe, because all these conclusions were obtained on the basis of the observation and examination of the present state of the universe. He here follows St. Thomas who says: “those are wrong — Thomas concludes — who on the basis of some changes in the present developed state of the world want to prove that its temporal beginning is necessary, or impossible”<sup>54</sup>

Vereš claims at the end of his analysis that only Thomas and Kant believe that the attitude to the problem of the eternity of the world is not and cannot be exclusively rational and reasonable, not even at the level of philosophy, but even more powerful initiators than the reason hide in interests directed

51 A. Kusić, *Filozofski*, p. 159.

52 See T. Vereš, *Iskonski mislilac*, Zagreb 1978, p. 93–94.

53 T. Vereš, *op. c.*, p. 97–98.

54 T. Vereš, *op. c.*, p. 96. See T. Aquinas, *Commentum in IV libros Sententiarum*, Lib. II, dist. 1, q. 1, a. 5. c.

by world views and vital emotions. “These decisions are always the result of man’s commitment with all his being, i. e. with his belief in one part of the alternative and non-belief in the other.”<sup>55</sup> It seems that this sentence expresses Vereš’s attitude regarding the problem of the eternity of the world.

We believe that the mentioned claim on the commitment regarding the problem of the eternity of the world can be true for St. Thomas, but not for Kant, too, as Kant elaborates the issue of the eternity of the world as an antinomy in transcendental dialectics of the *Critique of Pure Mind* and he offers the solution of this problem within transcendental idealism and this only at the level of speculative philosophy, moreover such a solution is used by Kant as an indirect proof of the claims presented in transcendental esthetics.

### *Conclusion — summary*

The presented text shows that the problem of the eternity of the world is of a topical interest in the Croatian contemporary philosophical thought, where various opinions and arguments can be perceived, which means that the solution of this problem in the Croatian and world’s philosophical thought is not unique. Most mentioned authors observe the eternity of the world rather as a theodical than a cosmological problem, as they are more interested in the ontological dependence of the world on God than whether the world has its temporal beginning or not. Some of them orient themselves in their argumentation to the attitude that the world is not eternal, but has its beginning, which we also support. Among them there are also those who think similarly to St. Bonaventura, that being created and being from time immemorial is an absurd assertion, i. e. it is metaphysically impossible. Some of them did not make a decision either in favour of the eternity or in the favour of the temporal beginning of the world, and some took to a view about the problem of the eternity of the world similar to St. Thomas Aquinas’s. Among the mentioned arguments and critical attitudes, some arguments can be recognized that are well-known in the history of philosophy, especially in St. Thomas Aquinas and other philosophers, which suggests good knowledge of the problem in the history of philosophy, and on the other hand, original thoughts can also be observed, which are at the same time a Croatian philosophical contribution to this problem.

55 T. Vereš, *op. c.*, p. 98.