



Perspectives of Philosophy / *Die Perspektiven der Philosophie*

Introduction

The underlying intention of papers gathered in this section – with which we are closing the project that started with the “Perspectives of Philosophy” symposium (23rd *Days of Frane Petrić*, Cres, 22–25 September 2013) – is two-fold: on the one hand, to investigate the role and position of philosophy today, and on the other, to examine its developmental potentials, particularly those that have resulted in an increasing number of sub-disciplines of philosophy. More specifically, it seems that, despite predictions of its end which have been following it for at least a century, philosophy today has been revitalised both theoretically and practically. The traditional philosophical disciplines have been given fresh impetus, and are being joined by new fields of thought, which have found their place within the philosophical system. Accordingly, this symposium wishes to research the perspectives of the development of philosophy itself, and the potency of its newly shaped forms for discussions of the already existing, “eternal” philosophical questions, as well as of the latest ones marking the beginning of the 21st century.

One of the most widely known theses on the “death” of philosophy was formulated by Heidegger. His diagnosis was that philosophy had been disintegrating into individual sciences and that this, in turn, had led to nihilism. Even after the warning it had been issued by Nietzsche, as Heidegger and later Rorty would say, philosophy continued with its monolithic self-presentation, spending its time nostalgically in an antique shop of traditional concepts, polishing the old rather than creating the new. Rorty will add that philosophy has lost the role it once had in society. The philosopher too has been left without the task of developing a coherent system of thought and a rounded off explanation of the world, turning into a playful post-philosopher who observes with irony both metaphysical idealism and literary textualism, in the end choosing to re-describe concepts rather than keep firm definitions. On the other hand, the endeavour to “clear thought and critique language” (Wittgenstein) was aiming to obliterate philosophy, ambitiously setting itself the task of solving all philosophical questions. Moreover, confidence in the sustainability of the defined method also supported this research optimism, while to many the research potency of philosophy finally appeared to be clear and precisely defined. Philosophical problems seemed solvable, and philosophy itself was enthused, which marked an important period of its recent history. Nevertheless, it seems that the project of the “philosophy of language as the first philosophy” lost its vigour in its grand endeavour to arrive at the end of philosophy (Searle).

However, philosophy has not been successful in its attempts at self-annihilation, not either by inertness or concerted effort. The linguistic, mathematical or, most generally speaking, scientific attempts to provide answers to “eternal” questions have been successful in tacking only a part of its subject matter. Which is why the question on the perspectives of philosophy is today still

valid, for its (self-)developmental power and the changes it has been undergoing. Many traditional philosophical unknowns live an unusual life today: some have been “figured out” by displacement from the field of philosophy (a fate that will most probably befall the topic of consciousness or that of the mind-body relationship), for some separate fields have been created which philosophy finds difficult to approach (such as the “life sciences”), and some have been revisited and their meaning questioned which has led to their departure from their philosophical roots (e.g., questions which are today securely anchored in economics, psychology, pedagogy, anthropology, etc.).

Nevertheless, philosophy still can and must offer orientation, provide a firm basis for fundamental moral values and question reality critically. The traditional philosophical disciplines are still present and have been gaining in strength, starting from political and social philosophy, through aesthetics which has been particularly invigorated producing new theoretical concepts, to ethics which perseveres in reinforcing its links with everyday life. These and other traditional philosophical disciplines have been opening up to new impulses, have been questioning their limits, and have been producing new concepts. This rehabilitation of philosophy which comes from within, as well as the development of new, recent philosophical sub-disciplines, unquestionably require a critical approach and examination. Besides this future facing perspective of philosophy itself, this symposium also aimed to look at the ways in which philosophy deals with the question of actuality, which should, according to Foucault, always be at the heart of all its efforts. The extent to which new, recent philosophical sub-disciplines have been boldly destroying the internal boundaries of philosophy as a discipline is, however, equal to the extent to which they have remained strongly tied to philosophy. They aspire to be linked with everyday life, have been focusing on current issues and have been tackling specific points at which the theory and practice of human activities meet.

New tendencies have been emerging, such as philosophy in practice, which works with users, people, trying to help them find meaning, while leaning on philosophical tradition and methods. The foundation of most forms of philosophy in practice is Socratic dialogue, which in philosophical counselling encourages people to reflect on themselves and the world surrounding us. Philosophy for children, which exists in different forms in at least sixty countries around the world, teaches children through dialogue to think critically and creatively, is creating critical citizens of the future, teaches children the basics of formal and informal logic, helps them master argumentation and dialogue, and steers children (and their parents) towards a life of higher quality. In these and other forms of philosophy, philosophers are practitioners who “deal” directly with people. There have also emerged philosophical sub-disciplines which analyse and question different phenomena, which have until recently been almost exotic for philosophy, such as sport, the media, the question of others (nature, animals, asylum seekers, prisoners, etc.), terrorism, cyborgisation, etc. The list is long and varied. Philosophy has been looking into its ties with biology, physics, psychology, psychiatry, environmental studies, and cultural and artistic practices. Publishing houses are devoting their new book series to the philosophical research of popular culture, in that way popularizing philosophy in general public. The popularisation of philosophy issues from the most curious nooks and crannies of life, while contemporary culture has been unearthing and discovering the traditional teachings of philosophers and schools of philosophy. The papers collected here, together with those published in journals *Filozofska istraživanja* and *Metodički ogledi* in their 2014 issues, reflect on some of the above mentioned questions.

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