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Refugees and the Philosophical Debate in Germany

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Abstract

The latest huge public debate over refugees in Germany – where about one million of them has recently been registered – focuses mostly on such major issues and topics as the relations between nation and modern multi-ethnic society, the state and over state institutions and their responsibilities for protecting human rights, as well as the feelings of anxiety and fear produced by cultural otherness. The debate is becoming part of Germany's postwar identity discourse. The author asks about philosophy and its role in this discourse. Can it interfere at all in the functioning of the State and its institutions? How can/should one understand the relationships between social theory and praxis? The next questions are already political and moral in nature, for example: does the defense of a particular interest – here: national culture – have to automatically mean the rejection of the universal? Or, should it mean a support for nationalist ideologies? Are there any rational criteria of such a debate? What does the rational mean at all in this context?

The purpose of this paper is to present and discuss the selected voices of critical intellectuals who take part in this debate. I consider hermeneutically the relevance of social philosophy, its critical power to change the public sphere, to transcend the academic discourse and interact with – subvert/deform/construct – social institutions.

Key words: *refugee debate, intellectuals, Germany, critical philosophy, Kant, Sloterdijk*

Abstrakt

Najnowsza wielka debata publiczna o uchodźcach w Niemczech skupia się na tak kluczowych problemach, jak relacja między a społeczeństwem wieloetniczny a państwem i jego odpowiedzialnością za ochronę praw człowieka. Debata ta staje

się częścią dyskursu tożsamościowego powojennych Niemiec. Autor pyta o filozofię/filozofów i jej/ich rolę w tym dyskursie, próbuje znaleźć odpowiedź na pytanie: czy jest to debata racjonalna? Jakie są/powinny być kryteria jej racjonalności? Przedstawione wybrane głosy w dyskusji pokrywają się z podziałami światopoglądowymi między lewicą i prawicą polityczną, mają być odpowiedzią na politykę strachu i podziałów narastającą w związku z napływem islamskich imigrantów. Filozoficznym zapleczem i wątkiem przewodnim lewicy intelektualnej/liberalnych krytyków społecznych jest myśl Immanuela Kanta.

Słowa kluczowe: *debata o uchodźcach, intelektualiści, Niemcy, filozofia krytyczna, Kant, Sloterdijk*

Two centuries after Kant, German philosophers speak, like him, in the public debate on refugees. The debate is more than an ordinary discussion on the current political and social problems associated with a mass influx of refugees from faraway countries. It is becoming part of Germany's postwar identity discourse, in which philosophers have always taken part. The significance/sense of their voices is, however, determined by the answer to several questions. Some of them are meta-theoretical, so to say, because they concern philosophy itself: Can it interfere at all in the functioning of State and its institutions? How can/should one understand relationships between social theory and praxis? The next questions are already political and moral in nature, for example: does the defense of a particular interest – here: national culture – have to automatically mean the rejection of the universal, a support for nationalist ideologies? Are there any rational criteria of such a debate? What does the rational mean at all in this context?

The purpose of this paper is to give a tentative answer to these questions based on the analysis of the selected excerpts from the current public debate taking place in the German press in which philosophers or intellectuals in general participate.

Refugees and German Interest

Below the photograph of miserable refugees at the border between Greece and Macedonia the editors of "Die Zeit" insert – in December 2015 – the answers to the question that they asked philosophers from "around the world": "what was left after Kant?" (*Was bleibt ...*) – Kant's philosophy is obviously supposed to be a kind of intellectual and political key to coping

with the problems of the contemporary world. What kinds of problems are they, and why Kant?

First, a brief item of information. The subject that most excites the Europeans today requires taking quick and bold political decisions in the EU institutions and by the parliaments and governments of individual states in order to undertake widescale logistical operations connected with assistance to refugees from the civil-war ridden areas of Syria, Libya, and Iraq. They are joined on a mass scale by economic immigrants from Afghanistan, Somalia, and other poor countries. It is estimated that at the gates of Europe there is now waiting a sixty-million strong mass of potential refugees, mainly from Africa. There has never been such population migration since World War 2. Their ultimate goal is to seek shelter in wealthy European countries, chiefly in Germany, Austria, Sweden or Norway. In all these countries there is a public debate going on as the refugee problem triggers hot disputes: the question is economic calculation but not only, also cultural. Democratic states are facing the problem of the integration of people from traditional societies with their characteristic inequalities, first of all with the social discrimination of women, which in turn is associated with religion. A largely secularized Europe but nevertheless, at least culturally, Christian in many of its areas – most of the now ruling political parties declare themselves to be Christian Democratic – receives Muslims, consequently it has to pit itself against Islam, which not only provokes opposition of Europe's inhabitants against gender inequalities but also, first of all, frightens them by fanaticism and terrorism. Islamist terrorists killed a hundred and several dozen random people in Paris in November 2015 (in March 2016, when I wrote these words, there were bomb attacks in Brussels, where several dozen people were killed at the airport and in the subway) exactly at the time when every day thousands of Muslim refugees ask the governments of France, UK, and Germany for help and shelter ... Many of the immigrants were expelled from their homes probably by the same terrorists and their bosses, which does not alter the fact that the so-called ordinary citizen of the host countries, horrified by terrorist acts, is naturally becoming receptive to a policy of fear and divisions, associating the influx the victims with an invasion of executioners. But the citizen is also facing the moral question whether justice requires that he support the reception of foreigners in need or be against them?

The question sounds especially important in Germany, which registered over a million refugees in their territory in December 2015. In Germany, whose postwar national identity was almost incessantly built on the experience of abandoning their homelands and escape, including the reunifica-

tion in 1990, and the subsequent great wave of immigrants in 1990s, the so-called late resettlers, from Central and East Europe, mainly from the former Soviet Union countries. But openness to refugees singles out Germany for one more reason. In modern Europe, it is the Germans who stood up for refugees in the field of philosophy or what we would call today political science. Immanuel Kant is known to have done it in his 1795 essay *Toward Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Project*, in which the subject of refugees was combined with the title idea of perpetual peace, otherwise known from the eighteenth-century, and treated as the supreme political good. In order that states, organized according to republican principles, might unite into one federal union of free states, as reason wills it, they must in practice be subject to the cosmopolitan law or "the Rights of men as Citizens of the World", which "shall be restricted to conditions of universal Hospitality". Hospitality (*Hospitalität*), Kant continues, "indicates the Right of a stranger in consequence of his arrival on the soil of another country, not to be treated by its citizens as an enemy". This right should by no means stem from some charity of the hosts, dependent on their changing moods and emotions, but from the natural state of affairs, i.e. from the "Right to the common possession of the surface of the earth" (Kant, 2010, p. 22), which is after all owned by all of us regardless of where we were born and where we live.

Kant's political philosophy is implied by his dramatic question about man, the question composed of the theoretical part – "What can I know?", practical – "What should I do?", and practical-theoretical, directed towards imagination "What may I hope for" (Kant, 1998, p. 677). These are the dilemmas and quandaries of the modern subject, being eradicated, living in uncertainty, "inserted" into the world, as Kant's twentieth-century "descendants" will readily describe him (the subject) and at the same time dependent on this world and having to rely on his close and distant neighbors. The reflection initiated by this question permeates the German thought of the next centuries, trying to overcome the individualism of modern Western philosophy by arguing that homelessness is neither the cosmic nor social destiny of man. The essence of human existence cannot therefore be contained in a lonely individual but in his coexistence with another human being. Already before World War Two this intuition was investigated by the philosophers of dialog like Franz Rosenzweig or Martin Buber, who combined Western thought with the Jewish tradition, and also by such phenomenologists as Max Scheller, who analyzed forms of sympathy – "compassionate heart" (*teilnehmendes Gemüt*) or "spontaneous universal love of man" in the context of and in opposition to the rationalist Western culture (See in-

ter alia Rosenzweig 2005 and Scheler 1970). Finally, we cannot also forget about Hannah Arendt, compelled to defend against the world the dignity of Jews expelled from their own country, as *human beings*. This philosopher in a way erects a gravestone to this extraordinary intellectual tradition, which suffered a total defeat in confrontation with nationalism and Nazism. "The comity of European peoples went to pieces when, and because, it allowed its weakest member to be excluded and persecuted" (Arendt, 1994, p. 119) – this is how she ended her 1943 article *We Refugees*.

An extraordinary thing happened today: in the eyes of the middle generation of German leftwing intellectuals, refugees define the turning point in the postwar history of Germany – they confirm its final parting with the tragic past and return to the unrecognized ideas of hospitality and sympathy. Harald Welzer, sociologist and columnist from Europa-Universität Flensburg, enthusiastically wrote in a "Der Spiegel" article (*Deutschland, ein Sehnsuchtsland*) on September 12, 2015:

"And now, with this great flight, something entirely incredible is happening, something that will be overlooked in the dazzle of indignation at the arson attacks [on refugee homes] by Neo-Nazi terrorists and at the unconscious or openly racist attitude towards refugees in other European countries: to people all over the world Germany has become a country one longs for (*Sehnsuchtsland*), a country of hope for living under the protection of law, in freedom and security. I think this is the best compliment about this country if people write "Germany" on their hands held out to the cameras, and if various groups of refugees and prospective emigrants believe that it is the country worth living and working in.

Such a longed-for country of freedom was the United States from the early nineteenth century [...]. But paradoxically, precisely this country from which the greatest mass crime of the twentieth century originated, from which it was necessary to escape because one's life was jeopardized by racism and political persecution, took today the aura of freedom and the state of law, which the USA no longer has." (*Habermas*).

For the first time after World War Two ended, the Germans feel freed, owing to the refugees, from the burden of their own past, from the need to identify themselves with the state that bears a historical guilt, not long ago thoroughly analyzed in public debates held in connection with the so-called historians' dispute initiated by Jürgen Habermas in 1986 or with Martin Walser's famous speech of 1998, devoted to the remembrance of the Holocaust, when he was awarded the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade. Thirty years after the dispute Habermas was awarded (29 October

2015) the Library of Congress John W. Kluge Prize for Achievement in the Study of Humanity. Answering the question given him on this occasion by the journalist of "Deutsche Welle" (1 October 2015) he said as usual in accordance with the Kantian respect for law: "The right of asylum is a human right, and everybody who applies for political asylum should be treated rightly and in a given case received with all the consequences that that entails." (*Habermas*).

However alongside the necessity of emphasizing the respect for law one hears in Habermas' words also another motivation to provide assistance to refugees. The philosopher reveals it while he admits that he cares about being guided not only by an objective law but also by some satisfaction connected with the application of that law: "For many years I have not been more satisfied with our government than since the end of the last September. Angela Merkel's sentence, 'If we are still to justify, when we show friendly face to the people, who need our help, then it is no longer my country', has me surprised, and I have also found it as a decent speech." (*Habermas*).

These remarks show how much the burden of everlasting apologizing for the sins of the ancestors weighs upon the Germans. Nothing but the humanitarian aid to refugees can change their, that is the Germans' fate, changing once for all their country. Kant probably would not support such a reasoning, seeing in it a different motivation than the moral one – namely the care about self-happiness and pleasing ourselves.

Kant and the Public Use of Philosophy

The question about Kant in the twenty-first century in the public debate on the most important political and social problems of the present day (the national identity crisis and migration crisis) is also the question in general about philosophy and its usefulness for practice: is it able to interfere in the functioning of institutions of the State and society?

The question itself is problematic, at least for two reasons. Firstly, because it is addressed to scholars usually employed at state universities, who in principle are/should be loyal to their employer – the State. How can they criticize it then? But there is the second reason why the question so asked raises doubts, this time methodological, let's say. From the perspective of classical philosophy it is an act of resignation from or even betrayal of the idea of theoretical cognition – the *theoros* devotes himself to knowing for the sake of knowing, which makes him resemble gods. From the historical perspective, the objection against the practical application of philosophical meditations

has become groundless since the so-called nominalist turn in the Western thought, i.e. from the birth of philosophy, which began to associate the question about the validity of its cognition not with being/the world subjected to the incessant question about the reasons for its existence, "why?", but with the determinants of knowing it and its existence. From the time when between being and the subject (self) a medium appeared in the form of thought, consciousness, which gradually replaces the being itself, or, in other words: since theory begins to have an equal status as practice, it begins to perceive the objects of its inquiry as its own constructions.

Although Plato and Aristotle established their schools and practiced philosophy there, among *friends*, they regarded theory as a kind of "understanding and knowledge pursued for their own sake" (Aristotle, p. 982) rather than for any gains, practiced by a loner. Live speech, which, for Plato, functioned as the carrier of the truth of being while writing was only its weak, commonplace reflection/copy, was in fact feigned, as confirmed by the Platonic dialogues, while dialogue was more of a rhetorical and didactic device than a genuine method of arriving at the truth. A classical philosopher originally soliloquizes: in his theoretical contemplation, human relations not only will "hinder" him but even make him seem "absurd" (Aristotle, 1999, p. 176, 178), he appears in the agora only to present what he earlier managed to grasp with his own mind in solitude. The case is different with a modern philosopher. When Kant answers the question: "What is the Enlightenment?", he in fact agrees with the classics when he concludes that the issue is something inherently philosophical, our being guided by reason, by free thinking, on our own but – and here is the difference – he believes that this cannot be practiced at the expense of breaking human relations, that it is not an act of solitary contemplation. On the contrary, we always reason in company with other, special people: those with whom we share certain common convictions and assumptions at a given place and time. Our inquiries and debates always take place in a certain specific and intellectual context. The public addressed to by Kant in "Berlinische Monatsschrift", Alasdair MacIntyre points out, was the network of subscribers and correspondents of the periodical as well as members of the associated Society of Friends of the Enlightenment (*Gesellschaft der Freunde der Aufklärung*). The philosopher joins in the mutual conversation "before the entire public of the world of readers", making, he says, "public use of one's own reason" (Kant, 1996, See also MacIntyre 2006b, p. 174-175).

To Kant, the modern equation of theory and practice opens the possibilities for philosophy to organize a community into an "artful unanimity" (Kant

1996) oriented towards public goals. It therefore involves the awareness of the constructionality of social world and the philosopher's responsibility for its shape. This responsibility is probably what "Die Zeit" journalists have in mind when asking philosophers about Kant today. They thereby break with the dominant tradition in the twentieth-century German philosophy, imposed by such great figures as Hannah Arendt, Leo Strauss or Theodor Adorno, the tradition of criticizing modernity, arisen from seeking the ideological sources of totalitarianisms and the Holocaust and connecting them with the characteristic attitude of the era towards technology and production. Adorno writes about this as follows: "Since utopia was set aside and the unity of theory and practice demanded, we have become all too practical. Fear of the impotence of theory supplies a pretext for bowing to the almighty production process, and so fully admitting the impotence of theory." (Adorno, 2005, p. 44).

Adorno and his School exposed the social theory, seeing it as a tool of ideological struggle and of maintaining the political *status quo* in the social system geared exclusively to the production and consumption of goods. However, capitalism also embodies utilitarian and pragmatist theories, as a result of which "we have become all practical." The question is whether there will be some theoretical competition to these conceptions of rationality, capable of fighting its way into social practice and removing manipulation mechanisms from it? Alasdair MacIntyre, an espouser of Aristotelian-Thomist philosophy, is also trying to cope with this problem: like Kant, he sees the place for rational discussion only in the public sphere – he is classical and modern in one.

The Scottish philosopher does not ignore the reflections of his great German partners in the discussion on modernity. He also sees the helplessness of theory, and argues that we are living in the socio-cultural reality which "in its central aspects" (MacIntyre, 2006a, p. 121) resists all criticism from the standpoint of moral, and more broadly: social, philosophy. He shows the example of three resistant practices that, anyway, his Frankfurt colleagues associate with what they call instrumental rationality: firstly, it is the professionalization of procedures; secondly, the division of activities according to the performed professional and social roles; thirdly, the evaluation of the effects of these actions in terms of gains and losses (MacIntyre, 2006a, p. 114, 121-122). These kinds of phenomena will deepen discrepancies between theoretical inquiries in the humanities in the broad sense and social practice, and in particular they cause the work of political philosophers on understanding justice to have a negligible effect on the process of political

decision-making (Murphy, 2003, p. 157). Theory does not match practice in the sense that it cannot itself break free, distance itself from practice and it adopts its characteristics: it is becoming a profession basically pursued at universities, in accordance with the social division of work in a functional approach. This ultimately leads to the situation, MacIntyre concludes, in which "whatever force moral philosophy might have had as criticism is neutralized by its status as professionalized theory, as belonging to a realm in which the victories and defeats of theorists have become irrelevant to the victories and defeats of everyday social life" (MacIntyre, 2006a, p. 121).

Under these circumstances, and this is another conclusion, one cannot rationally discuss human affairs. Rationally means in such a way as to provide "ordinary people" with conceptual frameworks, based on which they could formulate their life problems, think of them and behave accordingly, and build a consistent set of beliefs about them. A straightjacket preventing possible interference by philosophy should be not only the dominance of instrumental rationality in daily life, the functioning in impersonal relations within institutions subjected to the logic of economic utility. The force of impact and the edge of criticism that philosophical discourse can potentially use against practice is additionally blunted in our world of public life, in which there are many competing and mutually contradictory beliefs about morality and justice, the one which is better seen as a matter of free choice rather than of rational justification. This is the social effect of what MacIntyre calls the doctrine of emotivism. In his view, political philosophers who want to struggle through these civilizational barriers with their arguments and to conduct rational discourse capable of generating non-manipulative social relations are opponents of liberalism. They are clearly at a disadvantageous position because, he argues, they do not have any "institutional forum or arena within which the terms of the debate have not already predetermined its outcome." (MacIntyre, 1988, p. 392-393).

It would appear that the current German debate about refugees perfectly supports this diagnosis and predicts the end of the two hundred-year-old ethos of a public work made by philosophers – and it happens mainly because of the media, which mostly support the state government losing sight of any other options. Even Habermas notes this phenomenon, while telling the editor of "Die Zeit" (9. July 2016) almost one year after his enthusiastic welcome to the migration policy of the government the following: "However I adopt the newspapers reader perspective taking part in a discussion, and ask whether the carpet made out of the Merkel's sleep policy foam could be rolled out over the whole country without some adaptability of our press.

The line of thought shrinks when one thinks no more with alternatives." (Habermas, 2016).

As shown below indeed the media does not see any alternative for Angela Merkel's politics – the popular slogan coined by her is: "we can do it!" (*Wir schaffen das!*).

Refugee Debate: Civil War: "Aesthetes" and "Therapists" vs. Barbarians

The German debate of intellectuals about refugees – in its most important moments – illustrates the Kantian conviction that our intercourse with other people is a matter of universal laws, understandable to everyone. The other man can be objectively known, and the relationships with him could be described by the dichotomies such as universal/particular, cultural/non-cultural ... It is the press or generally the largely liberal media that is the institutional public forum for debate, which seems to predetermine its outcome in advance. Philosophers just like all other people are also tempted to yield to political correctness.

The landmark or better the hot spot of the public debate is the criticism of Angela Merkel's refugee policy in the peak period of the flood of immigrants in the second half of 2015 and the beginning of 2016, the criticism undertaken by the greatest German intellectuals among others by Peter Sloterdijk, Rüdiger Safranski, Botho Strau, and others. The press spares no epithets in denouncing them: it calls them "phalanx" (Schröder, 2016) (the word associated with fascism), founders of the "new conservative revolution," "polished thinkers led astray" (Hütt, 2016), "thoughtless (*ahnungslos*) thinkers," "temporary mentors of the Republic" (about Sloterdijk and Safranski) (Münkler, 2016).

Sloterdijk speaks out against the open borders policy in his interview with the editors of "Cicero" journal. The interview has been significantly entitled, "*There is no moral obligation to self-destruction*" (Sloterdijk, 2016). The philosopher says there among others that "We have not yet learnt to express our recognition for borders," because we are still confident in Germany that "every border is just to be crossed." "Europeans will develop sooner or later an effective common border policy. The territorial imperative will win in the long term. Finally there is no moral obligation to self-destruction." "Long life" for nation state is being predicted there, because it is to be "the only grand political structure that is tolerably functioning today." "The EU as a looser [countries] connection has a greater future than

when it puts on closer ties [among countries]." Sloterdijk is critical of both politics and the media: "The ether of lies is so dense as never before since the cold war days." "Negligence" and "all too distinct boundless partiality" are to emerge in journalism today, and the concern to preserve the neutrality is scarce, since "professional exponent of public opinion are paid for being relaxed and they take this job."

The interview evokes a wave of comments – their common denominator being to track down the rightist, nationalistic beliefs of the interlocutor. Sloterdijk addresses these comments collectively in the "Die Zeit" article entitled *Primitive Reflexe* (3.03.2016), interpreting the press statements both on him and Safranski as the expressions of the title "primitive reflexes." It is known that Pavlov's behaviorism referred in the text is nothing as one of the forms of the resentment conception of culture invented by Friedrich Nietzsche – Sloterdijk's protoplast. There has been undoubtedly some calculation: the philosopher had to acknowledge that much better is to avoid the name of Nietzsche in the public debate, because the name still must have negative connotations in the colloquial awareness of 21st-century Germans. Let us recall that according to the author of *Beyond Good and Evil* everything we call "higher culture" is based upon cruelty. This conviction, originally developed by Sloterdijk in his numerous books, when applied to the "present German 'cultural debate'," allows him to see in the debate "the tragedy of the loss of culture, which is developing each day in the 'social media' as well as in the high quality media." If we release the breaking – as Sloterdijk reasons – to conditional reflexes understood as "the basic habitus of high culture *in genere*," then we realize "how much heating the climate of the debate in our country indicates some deculturalization tendency." Animal instincts take precedence over the high-cultural art of dialogue and discussion, thereby resulting in political extremism: "The propelled holding-off primary (even when it is the 'acquired primary') can be hardly repulsed. We should remember it in respect of the 'Alternative for Germany' phenomenon. What is wrong always is an alternative for what is worse."

In other words, the responsibility for the AfG policy initiatives style finally rests with the liberal mainstream media, exacerbating public sentiments – controlling the stress level, as the philosopher used to writing elsewhere – by stimulating primitive reflexes, expressing themselves in the feelings of aggression, hatred, anger, fear etc.

In the commentary on the abovementioned Sloterdijk's "Cicero" article, by Armin Nassehi, a professor of sociology, one of the most important German public intellectuals nowadays, the sentence from this interview – "it

is a refugee who decides now about the state of emergency" – has explicit connotations with the thought of Carl Schmitt (the theorist of the ideological foundations of Nazi dictatorship: it is enough to use this name in public debate to defame someone) and it means that the refugee is a sovereign. This is not an innocent wordplay, but an explicit statement that the true sovereign lost his sovereignty through the open borders policy a long time ago, as Nassehi asserts in "Die Zeit" (Nassehi, 2016). The sociologist goes on to say that that Sloterdijk describes refugees as an alien body penetrating into the already fragile structure of what is our own, and it (the alien body) poses a challenge to the defense capabilities of our [German] identity. Conclusions: ignorant about sociology, the savant of philosophy, i.e. Sloterdijk, preaches the nationalist ideology, although he never directly uses right-wing resentments; nevertheless, all his arguments are based on the notion of a collective subject threatened by refugees. Other polemicists confirm this opinion. To them, the phrase "territorial imperative" used by Sloterdijk in the interview in question sounds nationalistic and anti-European, the negation of the "humanitarian imperative, which is supposedly confirmed by his statement that one can prophesy that the nation-state will have a long life because it is the only grand political structure that is tolerably functioning today." According to the editor of the "Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung," a well-known conservative newspaper, the author of these words does not understand that the issue at stake can be solved only in the European rather than national context; moreover, he does not understand that he thinks and speaks "rightwing," "inhuman" and anti-European language," and this makes his participation in the debate a "no-go-area for cultural people" (Geyer, 2016).

The discussion presented here is based on the general assumption that critical thinking consists in operating with binary oppositions between the universal (it means liberal, leftist) and the particular (conservative, right-wing) or, in other versions, between the individual and community, freedom and enslavement, and between human/civil rights and the *Blut und Boden* [Blood and Soil] ideology. Intellectuals and especially philosophers, according to one of the press recipes for them, should choose the first parts of the dichotomies because this choice will make them experts in dealing with complex, intrinsically inconsistent social structures rather than in cultivating "identity thinking," expressing "the spirit of dominance" (Hornuff 2016). Certainly, there are other voices, according to which the identity thinking, appealing to the feelings of fear of the aliens, does not necessarily have to be antidemocratic since democracy cannot be reduced to liberal rationalism, to the domain of sober exchange of arguments because this conceals

its emotional and agonistic dimension. (This agonistic dimension has been recently emphasized particularly by the Belgian philosopher Chantal Mouffe (Mouffe, 2005, p. 6). The diagnosis is as follows: If a democracy open to the world cannot take emotions and passions into account and make them part of progressive politics through specific forms of channeling, then it hands them over to madmen, those who will use such sentiments to incite hatred and prejudices as PEGIDA (*Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes*) does in Germany today. To be a community is to manage anxiety in the common communication space, to make concerns, fears and indignations our common experience. Today, democracy consists in publicly negotiating through the media which needs, concerns and fears are socially important. In the current debate on asylum these feelings need to be correctly identified: in which of the "worried citizens" fear is a manifestation of hatred, and in which it is only a symptom of actual fear of degradation, and democratic channeling. This is what Nils Markwardt recommends (Markwardt, 2016).

MacIntyre would probably make the following comments on the foregoing opinions: liberal critics behave as "therapists" or "aesthetes," i.e. as the main (beside "managers") modern drama characters – the victims of moral fictions (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 73) who invoke the political order imposing unity on society through universal laws. Such an order, to hypothetically follow the Scottish philosopher's arguments, obscures the nature of political obligation expressed by patriotism, which is by no means an easy feeling/obligation: it is the question, to use the well-known expression, about unity in diversity, about the point that our "patriotic task" consists in sustaining the possibility of mutual coexistence, preserving everything that differentiates us as individuals and groups. Universal social or political laws will never accommodate all our needs and interests, in a word: our claims to differ; therefore we will always live with anxieties and social conflicts. This is obvious. "The nature of any society therefore is not to be deciphered from its laws alone, but from those understood as an index of its conflicts" (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 254), writes MacIntyre in his characteristic essentialist style. Therapists and aesthetes (it is nothing more than being politically correct today), who play a dual role in the debate in question, are only trying to suppress these conflicts but in vain. Certainly, they are right in thinking that patriotism in the contemporary world "is often a façade behind which chauvinism and imperialism are fostered" (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 254), but their unmasking approach does not take into consideration their own conditions, which means that it does not reveal the oppression hidden be-

hind the moral mask of the people who hold power in the State. And this is a conflictual state/institution imposing upon the community a "bureaucratized unity" that has nothing to do with "moral consensus," it is always involved in temporary/accidental relations between the authority and capital. The determinants of their critical/liberal thinking are connected with legitimizing this authority: these critics unmask critics of the State rather than the State as MacIntyre would have it.

The politics supported by the *loyal critical* intellectuals cannot be based on a "genuine moral consensus" – rather we are dealing here with a "civil war" (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 253) carried by means of liberal axiology, which hides real social conflicts behind the rhetoric of social pluralistic ideas and political programs. Consequently, the debates and controversies that are taking place right now in Germany remain unsolvable "in a rational manner" on the philosophical, moral and political levels. Finally, MacIntyre would express his conviction that to take into account the moment of "moral consensus" achieved in connection with loyalty to the local and the particular does not necessarily mean rejecting the universal, that this dualistic thinking – based on binary oppositions such as universal/particular, liberal/conservative – is not justified. Patriotic discourse does not therefore need to be barbarian. This statement assumes that there is no way to distinguish the "object" of the narratives or descriptions of patriotic behaviors and attitudes from these narratives and descriptions themselves. There is no pure/true patriot or barbarian purified from the language about him. There is no place, however, for such language in the current German immigration discourse, dominated by the liberal media, the ideological frameworks of which are represented by the dualistic philosophy operating with such dichotomies as objective/subjective, true/false etc. These oppositions with respect to social thought express themselves in divisions into liberal/conservative, leftwing/rightwing, but also into friend and enemy. This is fundamentally monological thinking that we cannot rationally discuss.

Kant and the problem of theory in isolation from practice

One of the modes of explaining the case of academics being mistaken in the refugee debate indicates the hermeticism (*Abkapselung*) of political philosophy (Geyer, 2016). The objection seems to refer to the phenomenon of professionalization of theory, also discussed by MacIntyre. The same was also recently pointed out by Charles Taylor in FAZ. Admittedly, Taylor is more interested in English and American analytical philosophy, but his observa-

tions, according to the FAZ editor, also seem to apply to German philosophy. Incidentally, MacIntyre and Taylor speak of what is called "politicization of theory", in contemporary philosophical and political discourse: it consists in the theory's departure from professions, institutions, from the academic ivory tower, and in turning to practice, to the conditions for the realization of its ideas, which, as Taylor suggest, it could achieve (following Pierre Rosanvallon, Michael Sandel and Jürgen Habermas) by overcoming disciplinary boundaries between philosophy, history, and politics. Taylor's concern is that: "A certain direction of political philosophy came into being in succession after John Rawls, namely the direction that basically ignores politics. It is exclusively concerned with that which is normative. If I say that it ignores politics, this means that it [the direction] never reaches the conditions of its own realization." (Taylor, 2016).

Characterized in such a way, this direction indeed seems to dominate the public philosophical discourse about refugees. It is normative approaches that isolate theory from practice, and turn theory into moralistic discourse involved in political contexts. They usually use Kant for this purpose. The argument is simple: an example of it could look as follows (as suggested in the press ["Die Zeit"] by one of the philosophers, who declares himself as a "Kantian"): "Together with Kant we have to stick to the idea of republican society because that's the only place where people can participate in power." And further: "Angela Merkel's policy complies with the Kantian spirit insofar as it takes the right to asylum seriously as a legal claim (*Rechtsanspruch*). Generosity (*Großherzigkeit*) alone is not enough here. Although according to Kant generosity is worthy of praise, the point is that it could be a form of willfulness. That's why the refugee policy has to be a policy of law and justice" – concludes Rainer Forst (2015). In "Der Spiegel", another philosopher cautions in the same vein: "The [refugee] arrivals [to Germany] should not be seen as a means to an end, neither in demographic and economic terms, nor as [a means] to self-realization. From the Kantian perspective, a refugee is first an end in itself. The question is not what these people can do for us but how we can help them because most of them first of all need one: protection against specific persecution and life-threatening danger. That is what the essence of the asylum law actually consists in." (Eilenberger, 2016)

The law State and human rights are of great significance for peaceful coexistence in the contemporary Western culture – both of them need to be protected. That is beyond question. However, the question still remains whether such humanitarian thoughts are not too abstract in regard to

the heterogeneous reality, whether they do not omit many practical conditions of their own actualization? Whether another philosophy would under these circumstances have to advocate the *Blut und Boden* ideology? And we need to add one more question: What is the relationship between the modern individualist philosophy and the present-day German world of life?

To Think Left and to Live Right

I will start with the last question. One of the possible answers based on empirical evidence is given in the foregoing debate by the abovementioned Armin Nassehi. He claims that the old political categories such as the left-right divide do not apply to the current German society. "The fact that something is right or left wing contains less and less informational value", he writes. The social world becomes really more and more complicated, and real dividing lines become more and more opaque. He tersely describes in one sentence the divergence between theory and practice in Germany: "to think left and to live right". This observation is otherwise also shared, regardless of the German context in question of course, by MacIntyre, who speaks of most of our contemporaries as alienated persons, detached from the consistent sets of dispositions, sentiments, thoughts and "language-in-use", usually "unquestioningly" accepting in everyday life "the assumptions of the dominant liberal individualist forms of public life, but drawing in different areas of their lives upon a variety of tradition-generated resources of thought and action, transmitted from a variety of familial, religious, educational, and other social and cultural sources" (MacIntyre, 1988, p. 397).

It must be recognised that the arguments used in this public debate indicating that its participants are disintegrated, unstable and finally dishonest individuals – since they think left and live right – are hardly prudent and high-risk. Nassehi apologizes in the press as follows:

"Leftist liberal middle class is very operational in asserting that skin color, nationality, social stratum or environment make no difference for it. However real-life practice makes these differences very significant. We may observe that exactly in these environments is paid very close attention to choose schools with the smallest possible number of immigrants or not to live in the districts with social flashpoints in order to make a profit from one's own difference. We speak universal left-wing, however we live then and behave particularistic right-wing. It does not mean that people have right-wing orientation. But this is the thorn in

the flesh of our easy speaking as argue many right-wing intellectuals. Left-wing arguments are incredibly easy to accept through our mouth, however when it comes to real life testing then it is not so easy to live really universally. This is a vital lie of this social environment" (Nassehi, 2015).

Regarding the above diagnosis of a structural unreliability of the social groups audit opinions the faith in the rational discussion, which would be able to solve the conflicts between these groups, is becoming ridiculous. There is no way to resolve conflicts through rational argumentation under such circumstances. In his latest book *Die letzte Stunde der Wahrheit (The Last Hour of Truth)* Nassehi writes about the escalation of hostility and resentment directed against aliens – especially in Saxony: violent demonstrations, arson of refugee asylum centers – who may allegedly threaten to Islamize the country and who may allegedly be a social-welfare burden. The author claims that there is no way to dispel this kind of collective fears, the vague feelings of strangeness that take people to the streets, [no way to dispel them] through universal arguments. There is no way to make the world more transparent by giving people hard information about for example the fact that the aliens are net budget contributors.

On the contrary, the left-wing i.e. universalist arguments against such social fears, be they real or imaginary, are counterproductive. Therefore, Nassehi concludes: "The left wing rhetoric, which perceives society as a project, is the only one that can be verified as thinking, is somehow acceptable, yet it can be experienced only with great difficulty. Left-wing universalist thinking needs the new man whom it wants to create only now. There is no way to express the uneasiness (*Unbehagen*) of the opaque world, even in the sentimental form, which is remote from the habitus of those who earn their money by describing the world." (Nassehi 2015).

Nassehi sees the fundamental constraints of the left-wing thinking and its ambivalent role in the public sphere – it has the power of utopian, abstract thought, which is however further from reality, usually concrete and ambiguous, such as ambiguous are people who used to saying one thing and doing another. Nassehi's arguments then are likewise ambiguous too.

Final conclusions

Philosophy, which imposes the transcendental framework of the idea of freedom and human rights upon the public debate on refugees, remains deaf to the experience of diverse forms of social life, frail, unstable, tossed between

inherited and newly acquired needs, emotions, and anxieties. The abstract approaches developed as a result of Kant's theory and proposed currently by the mainstream of German intellectuals do not reach the opaque, heterogeneous living world of the "ordinary people" – these approaches however are not innocent speculations or idiosyncrasies. They have performative power since they strengthen the world of fiction, on which most of our moral statements and practices are to be based. This fiction is the modern illusion that reason brings righteousness to the world. It is only critical thinking that is able to resist the charms of this vision, the kind of thinking that originally does not start from the tension between what there is and what there ought to be. It starts rather from a diagnosis of its own origins, its relationships with the social environment, institutions, discourses or narratives. The argumentative debate conducted by means of such rational thinking would have to meet not only logical, but also personal criteria. We are to engage ourselves wholly, that is our intellect, sensitivity and imagination at the same time in order for us to be open to newcomers' and strangers' idiosyncratic tales of the world, to be able to understand them; to be open to our coexistence with them, as free from dominance relationships as possible. We would not be able to do that losing our own particular and opaque identity.

Maybe we would have to assume that our life ethics is ahead of logic and justice of truth and freedom. Philosophy based on this assumption is inevitably entangled in a public dispute over righteousness and justice, whose sources are not located in abstract laws, but in dealing with concrete persons free from humiliation and empowered to choose their own place on Earth.

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