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Philosophy of the world and philosophy of Karl Löwith as a precursor and incentive to the idea of integrative bioethics

ABSTRACT

Traditional cosmology, once used to explain the world, was suppressed by the domination of science over philosophy which happened after their separation. Nowadays, scientific (in terms of natural sciences) cosmology is given the advantage in answering the question what is the world, while the "non-empirical" catholicity (the basic characteristic of traditional cosmology) became useless. Encouragement of one's effort to re-establish the category of catholicity can be found in the idea of integrative bioethics on one side and in the philosophy of the world on the other. In this paper the relation between the idea of integrative bioethics and the philosophy of the world will be established through philosophical discussions which were held in Augsburg and in Zagreb (1988, 1990, 1993) and also with reliance on understanding the world in philosophy of Karl Löwith.

Key words: Philosophy of the world, Karl Löwith, integrative bioethics, philosophy of history

Introduction. The notion of the world and the philosophy of the world

"We speak about the world in philosophy, as in common discourse, in many different ways, implying under that notion variety of things. It is customary to use expressions such as objective world and subjective world, interior world and exterior world, mental world and the world of objects, macro-world and micro-world, living

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world and the world of artificial nature, realistic world and the world of fantasy, the world of art and the world of science, the world of good and the world of evil, old world and new world, developed world and poor world, existing world and possible world, etc. If we also say that we all live in the same world or that every one of us has his own world, we can see that the boundaries of the notion of the world are elastic. Once it can be a whole *Kosmos* but, on the other hand, looking in the framework of these astronomic dimensions, man-particle has his own inner world. By all that something that should be the solid groundwork of our existence (based on which we should be able to define our place in the world) is being distributed on numerous significations and avoiding unique meaning."¹

As in the Greek comprehension, the question about the *Kosmos* was suppressed by the question about the Being, accordingly, by further ontologisation, the notion of the world became subordinated to the notion of the Being. Therefore, the crucial idea of the philosophy of the world is to reverse this relation by understanding the world as a necessary groundwork on which epistemological relation can be established. Cognition is not done by penetration (penetration of a subject into the object or vice versa), it is done by construction, equally it is not revealing of 'it is' by which only reduced notion of the world can be expressed. With this, the impossibility of metaphysics and ontology to comprehend the notion of the world² in its comprehensive character is expressed and philosophy of the world is constructed to correct hierarchical inversion in which the notion of the world came with the notion of the Being.³ Therefore, the Augsburg-Zagreb discussions (1988, 1990, and 1993) took the notion of the world in the centre of philosophical thinking. The comprehension of the notion of the world in Augsburg-Zagreb discussions was reasoned in German idealism, but also within contemporary philosophy. Although, as above mentioned quotation states, it is very hard, or almost impossible, to define the notion of the world and accordingly to establish any kind of division that is covering all spectrum of meanings, in this paper two comprehensions of the notion of the

¹ Zdravko Radman: "Simboli i svjetovi. O nekim aspektima filozofije E. Cassirera i N. Goodmana", *Filozofska istraživanja* 20 (1/1987), p.155-166. (translation M. S.)

² Milan Kangrga in his philosophy also denies the possibility of metaphysics to comprehend the notion of the world. The reasoning of the world as something that is given and therefore cannot be changed, understanding of the world as a solid object that is independent of subject in active (creative) sense, and only dependent in theoretical (penetrating) sense Kangrga is equalising with metaphysical (ontological, which is the same for Kangrga) understanding of the world as something that is given and which finds its accomplishment in science: "Metaphysics is here (as the one that is non-historical) being presented as a positivism and a historical confrontation between positivism and metaphysics is only an illusion and epochal confusion. The only thing that is happening here is consequent finalisation of important presumptions of metaphysics done by positivism and particular sciences. Therefore science itself is just a finalisation of metaphysics." (Milan Kangrga, *Čovjek i svijet: povijesni svijet i njegova mogućnost*, Razlog, Zagreb 1975, p. 26. (translation M. S.)

³ Ante Čović: " Uz temu", *Filozofska istraživanja* 20 (1/1987), p. 3.

world are of exceptional importance. First is the anthropocentric understanding of the notion of the world and second is cosmological understanding of the notion of the world.

Anthropocentric and cosmological understanding of the notion of the world

Zdravko Radman in his paper *Symbols and Worlds. About some aspects of philosophy of Ernst Cassirer and Nelson Goodman*⁴, which is one of proceedings of Augsburg-Zagreb discussions, explains when the notion of the world started to be understood in philosophy as man's creation. When traditional philosophy asked the question what the world is, it perceived the world by itself and its essence independent of conditions and possibilities by which it exists for us. Not before the appearance of Kant this neutral and indifferent world vanishes and basic becomes the question of how is the cognition of the world possible. In the framework of this question the well known turn will happen: the appearance of the world becomes dependent on the conscious, or, as Kant stated, objects must adjust to the capacity of our cognition. By that the cognitive subject was given the creative role by which the reality became dependent on subject's creative potential.⁵

"The world that is being discussed here is overcoming the experience of senses, and also the boundaries of environment. World characterised as human is becoming real only when transcendence of what is directly present is done. That is done not by interaction with the fragments of nature with which the world is coming into touch. It is done by coming into touch with symbolic forms which have made this transcendence possible. That kind of world is a product of our creative practice which is realised in symbolical languages and represents the result of cognitive effort of these actions."⁶

No matter whether we are talking about the notion of the world in relation with art, symbol or technique, practice or production as human essence, or, as another example, self-consciousness as a scientific fundament:

"According to philosophical beliefs of The Modern Age the fact that the existence of self-consciousness is obvious must represent absolute fundament of knowledge, a

⁴ Zdravko Radman: "Simboli i svjetovi. O nekim aspektima filozofije E. Cassirera i N. Goodmana", *Filozofska istraživanja* 20 (1/1987).

⁵ For further research see *ibid.* p.155-166.

⁶ Zdravko Radman: "'Korijenske metafore' i spoznaja svijeta", *Filozofska istraživanja* 38-39 (5-6/1990), p. 1382. (translation M. S.)

critical instance, constitutive substrate on which all sciences must be built or measure their results."⁷ we are discoursing the world which, after Kant, is by human.⁸ That kind of understanding of the notion of the world will be defined as anthropocentric. On the other hand, we have cosmological understanding of the notion of the world.

"The world is eternal possibility and actuality. It is actualising its eternal possibility in determinative possibility of actuality... The world is in its beginning unchanged and unchangeable. The only thing that is being changed is worlds as historical realisations of this original experience of the world in its beginning of its possibility. Which of this world has been or will be close to this actual world depends on how much did one of these worlds overcome the idea of itself, its inner fixation."⁹

Every philosophical cosmology, doctrine about the world, relies on the basis of one definition of the world in a sense of some coherence of totality of the being, hierarchically articulated according to the order of a range of the Being.¹⁰

"Opposed to individual frames-notions which are being accomplished in the framework of physiological mechanisms, the image (or the notion) of the world is transcending physiological mechanisms and is being represented as a kind of an over-shape which is being formatted on a level of totality of life experience. Having in mind that the totality of life experience has a universal character of transcendental value – it is avoiding time-space quantification. That means that neither the notion of totality of life experience, nor the notion of the world are forms, although they are subordinated to the laws of forming. They are over-forms, in a sense that they are making possible and comprehend every concrete forming."¹¹

Interesting example of understanding the notion of the world as *Kosmos* is Eugen Fink's comprehension of the world as Cosmo-ontology. For him the world is the place of all places, time of all times and if the Being would originally be the world, it would not be in its substance joint but un-joint. Also, as Fink emphasises, the notion of the world has the primacy over the notion of the Being because it is, as a part of a concrete life, directly present. In this, as he calls it, confrontation of the world,

⁷ Darko Polšek, "'Diskonekcija svijeta' – nužni korak fenomenološkog zasnivanja ontologije?", *Filozofska istraživanja* 20 (1/1987), p. 23. (translation M. S.)

⁸ Milan Kangrga in his philosophy also comprehends historical understanding of the world and is concluding that the world is a modern notion that has its historical origin in the French revolution and his philosophical origin in Kant's *Critique of pure reason*.

⁹ Željko Pavić: "Povijesnost i izvanpovijesnost svijeta", *Filozofska istraživanja* 20 (1/1987), p. 50.

¹⁰ For further research see: Damir Barbarić: "Igra svijeta. Uz Finkov pokušaj novog određenja pojma svijeta", *Filozofska istraživanja* 38-39 (5-6/1990), p. 1303.

¹¹ Josip Užarević: "Svijet i oblik", *Filozofska istraživanja* 20 (1/1987), p. 120. (translation M. S.)

human, which is positioned between the sky and the ground is a co-fighter, co-player, he is the mediator, he is *ens cosmologicum*. In original experience of the world implicitly lies the new interpretation of the Being where the substance of the Being finds its place and time in the circulation of the world.

Karl Löwith and philosophy of the world

This cosmological comprehension of the notion of the world can also find reliance in philosophy of Karl Löwith¹². Löwith sees history as a history of men's falling into anthropocentrism:

"It is obvious that Löwith was disturbed by the philosophy of history, eschatology, historical conciseness which penetrated into the core of scientific (in terms of natural sciences) reasoning."¹³

What he claims for is the return of ancient Greek understanding of the origin. He sees history as oblivion of nature in ancient understanding of *physis*. He understands the world opposed to anthropocentric orientation of philosophy, the one which represents the apology of subject, subjectiveness, which ends in western rationalism in a definition of a man as a being with reason. What he opposes to this understanding of the world is the idea that there always has been and will be one world for a man and that is the world of nature, ever existing catholic world in which man by nature lives and dies.

"Löwith is trying to persuade us that man is above all *homo naturalis*, he is nature, he has it as a man and his nature is therefore human from the beginning. It is logical to say that this idea has certain truth inside itself which is starting to be of a providential importance in the time when we are questioning ourselves about the conditions and possibilities of one new, ecological civilisation, whose principles are expressed in a multitude of individual motives and differences precisely by Karl Löwith."¹⁴

In order to explain and therefore to reveal or, it is maybe better to say, to criticise contemporary scientific (in terms of natural sciences) reasoning, Karl Löwith questions philosophy of history and takes the notion of the world as a central issue of his phi-

¹² Karl Löwith (January 9, 1897 – May 26, 1973) was a German philosopher and a student of Heidegger. His best known works include two books: *From Hegel to Nietzsche*, which describes the decline of German classical philosophy, and *Meaning in History*, which discusses the problematic relationship between theology and history.

¹³ Karl Löwith, *Svjetska povijest i dogadanje spasa*, August Cesarec Zagreb/ Svjetlost, Sarajevo 1990, p. 15.

¹⁴ Karl Löwith, *Svjetska povijest i dogadanje spasa*, August Cesarec, Zagreb/ Svjetlost, Sarajevo 1990, p. 21.

losophy.¹⁵ According to Löwith, world can be comprehended only in relation with God and man, while the world history is just a manifestation of changes in that relation. Karl Löwith divides stages in world history on theism, deism and atheism.¹⁶ In the God-world-man trinity hierarchy is not propound, but the world history appears as result of hierarchical changes in that relation. First stage of the world history is ancient world of Greek *cosmotheology*, where God is in the world, meaning he cannot be separated from the world. God and world are the one, while the man himself is subordinated to the world and therefore God. In the second, *anthropotheological stage*, God is personalised and placed above the world, while the world is redundant and seen as an obstacle in men-God relationship, so it could be said that the world is now subordinated to God and man. In the third, *anthropocosmological*¹⁷ stage, God is pushed out of the God-world-man trinity, argues Löwith. Although this is a stage of atheism, taking into consideration the rise of man's power of creation (i.e. penetrating and being able to change the nature of all living beings including himself), God is now inside a man. This is not in the harmonic sense as God pervaded all world in the *anthropotheological stage*, but in a sense that man deems himself God:

"Ancient times believed in prophecy, the Church believed in predestination while the modern man, unless he is superstitious, believes neither in destiny nor in providence. He believes he can create the future himself. From great conceptions of ancient times and Christianity – cyclical moving and eschatological accomplishment – we are now coming to the turning point in the history of the world in which man appears on the horizon as soon the only creator of himself and therefore the future." ¹⁸

It can be seen that Karl Löwith's epochs were framed in a sense of a history of oblivion, estrangement from primordial history, from Greek-Roman notion of *Kosmos* and nature. History of nature and physical world have only been metaphorically spoken about. They have been included in one philosophy of the world history, in a

¹⁵ What Löwith sees as doubtful are dramatic divisions of the world of nature and the world of spirit (history). Although it could look as the world of history is the only world, more powerful and more meaningful than the world of nature, which is by itself absolutely self-relevant (od quod substat), the one that moves from itself, we are staying a part of nature even when we are changing it into the dangerous artificial world through science and technology. (Ibid., p. 11-12.) (translation M. S.)

¹⁶ For further research see: Karl Löwith: *Gott, Mensch und Welt in der Methaphysik von Decartes bis zu Nietzsche*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 1967.

¹⁷ "Anthropological attribute which philosophy is accepting in the third stage should not be related to the philosophical anthropology or seen as its predominance. What is being demonstrated here is the foundation of the whole philosophy of human who is establishing his world and is becoming its subject, in a Heidegger's understanding of the Modern Age metaphysics as 'ontology of subject'. But to accomplish symmetry in denoting and linguistic equivalence term anthropocosmology will be used for the third stage. By doing that, the logic of Löwith's thought will be followed." (Ante Čović: "Aporije Löwithova povratka 'prirodnom svijetu'", *Filozofska istraživanja* 51 (4/1993), p. 955-965.) (translation M. S.)

¹⁸ Karl Löwith, *Svjetska povijest i dogadanje spasa*, August Cesarec, Zagreb/ Svjetlost, Sarajevo 1990, p. 36.

perspective of one eschatology – history of salvation. What happens in that case is something that is fateful for all history and also for the present. That is ignoring and unexponentiation of the world of nature, its mystery and order, the world which is not man's act and artificial creation.¹⁹

In the contemporary *anthropotheological* stage, scientific (in terms of natural sciences) understanding and consequentially exploitation of the world is dominating. The reason for that lies in the fact that the world is perceived as man's creation, something that can and should be empirically explained. On the other hand, cosmological understanding of the notion of the world can be seen as encouragement to contemplate the world otherwise:

"By placing analogy with Greek or Roman cosmology we are just pointing out one philosophical/historical benchmark which never got real chance."²⁰

Bioethics and philosophy of the world

This cosmological understanding of the world for which we can find incentive in philosophy of the world on one hand and which is being used in the philosophy of Karl Löwith as an alternative to anthropocentric reasoning of the world, also shares some similarities with contemporary 'movement' of integrative bioethics.

To explain this statement furthermore, it is essential to see when bioethics appears. Bioethics rises in the climax of contemporary *anthropocosmological stage* and precisely in men's encounter with himself in the field of medicine²¹. Gradually bioethical horizon has been widened, from medical ethics and principlism to ethical pluralism and interdisciplinary approach. Finally, bioethics extends its framework to the notion of a life as a whole with corresponding pluriperspectivism and integrative approach.²²

Both, integrative approach and cosmological understanding of the notion of the world can be seen as an alternative to anthropocentric tradition of modern philosophy, meaning that human is here comprehended and positioned only in co-existence. As a

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 13-14.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 15.

²¹ Here it is referred to Seattle case in 1962 where it was realised that man cannot be simply seen as a scientific fact or mathematically as a count of defined parts – meaning that scientists were not able to decide who shall live and who should die, therefore we could say that the catholicism of a man was awoken.

²² For further research see: Hrvoje Jurić, Ivana Zagorac: "Bioetika u Hrvatskoj", *Filozofska istraživanja* 111 (3/2008), p. 601-611.

result of integrative approach we can see the rise of bioethical sensibility²³ in a concern for non-human living beings and responsibility for maintenance of all conditions of preserving life in general. Also, methodologically speaking, in ancient thinking mesh of the man, world and God was implied, and in contemporary scientific rationality we still cannot find an obverse to it. But we can see modern reflection of ancient non-divided rationality in pluriperspective approach of integrative bioethics. Since integrative reasoning²⁴ was developed as a resistance to hierarchy of truth and knowledge and as a resistance to exclusiveness of scientific understanding of the world, it can be said that, with its pluriperspective approach which includes non-scientific views on contemporary problems, it also assimilates catholic character.

While in the framework of philosophy of the world we start from the notion of the world and by deduction come to the man as its integral part, in the framework of bioethics, which through integrative understanding widens its horizon from man (medical ethics), from *bios* to *Kosmos*, by induction we come to the notion of the world. Remembering that the aim of integrative bioethics approach is to give a specific kind of knowledge which is supposed to provide orientation in the world, it can be said that integrative bioethics also takes the notion of the world as a central notion in its reasoning and with broadening its activity on life as a whole catholicism as its basic quality. Therefore, we can say that bioethics enforced itself as a 'natural' response to the philosophy of the world. If we see history as a history of man's falling into anthropocentrism (K. Löwith) and take into consideration the appearance of bioethics as an attempt of overstepping narrow anthropocentric perspective the question rises whether that kind of integrative bioethics approach leads us to a threshold of a new epoch where, in Löwith's words, *Kosmos* is once more taking over the priority over *Anthropos*.

²³ "In bioethical discourse the notion of sensibility describes emphasised delicacy towards environment. It is implying morally reflected referring towards human existence and the existence of other living beings. It is containing enlightened affection towards those who are weak and unprotected, but it is also opening new horizons in 'old' notions of respect, love and sympathy. Bioethical sensibility appears as an important integral element of humanity with a high level of respect, finding again its place alongside cold rationality." (Ibid., p. 608). (translation M. S.)

²⁴ For further research see: Ante Čović: "Pluralizam i pluriperspektivizam", *Filozofska istraživanja* 101 (1/2006), p. 7-12.