

REACHING THE NONEXISTENT COMMUNITY: FOUNDATIONS FOR A PHILOSOPHY OF SOCIETAL FUTURE

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The urgency of the discussed issue is caused by the need to care about the future – our own and that of our children. We also care about what happens to those generations of people which will populate this planet hundreds of years from now. The sense of future-orientated societal responsibility is reinforced in media, political rhetoric and social theorising. Philosophers and social theorists offer a variety of approaches that aim to safeguard and promote the welfare of future people, but these approaches are diverse and sometimes conflicting.

The aim of the research is to emphasize the attitude towards the future in today's society.

The methods used in the study: comparative analysis of philosophical theories of the future; synthesis of the main positions and conclusions regarding the understanding of the category «Future»; classification of human capabilities, and a summary of the main results of the classification.

The results: The caring attitude towards future is the outer layer of the relational network that the present community members have with the future community. This attitude takes a form of an agent-centred ethical approach, where the patient of our future-orientated intentionality is absent and unable to initiate a demand on our morality or a response to our actions.

Key words:

Vision of future, community, existence, human capabilities, relation with future, human beings.

The analysis of the major theoretical positions we can start from J. Rawls. Cooperation and complementarity are necessary for our civilisation, Rawls asserts [1. P. 522–523], and human partnership that ensures societal prosperity and progress includes temporally displaced agents as well as contemporaries. Community is a dynamic formation and the temporal success of community is due to the cooperation of succeeding generations: «The cooperation of many generations (or even societies) over a long period of time» is necessary for «the realizations of the powers of human individuals living at any one time» [1. P. 523–525]. For Rawls, the relationship of complementarity and cooperation between generations must be formed on the idea of justice in the same way as the relationship between contemporaries. He draws on an original position as a hypothetical initial situation in which all parties, equal and free, form a social contract and agree on what is fair [1. P. 12]. The original position is marked by a «veil of ignorance» in respect of the members' actual positions whereby «no one knows his place in society, his class position or social status, nor does anyone know his fortune in the distribution of natural assets and abilities, his intelligence, strength, and the like» [1. P. 12]. This ensures that the parties in the initial situation are rational and mutually disinterested [1. P. 13]. And their agreement on what is fair and just does not contain an inherent preference for one particular social group but sets general principles for all parties.

In relation to succeeding generations the original position is marked by the veil of ignorance referring to their temporal position [1. P. 287]. Rawls formu-

lates the difference principle which marks a fully just society: people should «share in primary goods on the principle that some can have more if they are acquired in ways which improve the situation of what who have less» [1. P. 94].

Applying the difference principle to a just treatment of future generations, Rawls talks of long-term prospects of the least favoured members of society extending over future generations, and derives from this a just savings principle [1].

According to a just savings principle, each generation has the responsibility to «preserve the gains of culture and civilization, and maintain intact those just institutions that have been established» as well as putting «aside in each period of time a suitable amount of real capital accumulation, capital here meaning means of production, machinery, investment in learning and education» [1. P. 285]. Justice between generations should take into account the needs of the present generations as well, so saving for the future generations should not be undertaken at the expense of the least favoured in the present situation whereby their fortune declines because of being forced to make saving via increased taxation.

As far as possible, justice between generations should mean «equality», and no generation should be treated more or less favourably. «The mere difference of location in time, of something being earlier or later, is not in itself a rational ground for having more or less regard for it» [1. P. 293].

As well as being concerned for the rights of the present people, Rawls wants to safeguard the future from being abused by the present generation that can

advance their interests at the expense of the future. This is why in the original position persons should take a standpoint of each period, he insists. «In the case of society, pure time preference is unjust: it means... that the living take advantage of their positions in time to favour their own interests» [1. P. 295]. He calls for legislation to include «a provision for the just claims of future generations». Rawls' idea of justice provoked sharp criticism and yet was used by his critics as a springboard for the development of alternative social theories. He was criticised from different perspectives, but the main source of dissatisfaction seems to lie in the fact that his difference principle promises an uneven improvement for stakeholders. Theories that follow seek theoretical premises that would allow for all stakeholders to have an equal opportunity for advancement, in terms of both material welfare and societal prestige.

A. Honneth's search for societal improvement is founded in more subtle premises than Rawls'. Rather than talking of justice as fairness in distributive terms, Honneth explores a deeper level of social interactions, and positions societal esteem as the most important acquisition for communities and their members. In this he shifts emphasis from seeking solely material wealth to seeking recognition which, in its turn serves as a gateway to acquisition of material goods.

According to Honneth, people's social esteem, «recognition» is not granted according to merit but according to the position one happens to occupy in society. A person gets a quota of societal esteem, and no matter how much he or she contributes to society, they cannot exceed that quota. The denial of recognition to particular social groups is in Honneth's terms reification, «a type of human behaviour that violates moral or ethical principles by not treating other subjects in accordance with their characteristics as human beings, but instead as numb and lifeless objects – as «things» or «commodities» [2].

In a better future, everybody should benefit from societal recognition according to their contribution, and this is the future goal for those who are currently denied recognition and consequently denied access to material wealth. Socially downgraded groups of people initiate a struggle for recognition, and in order to legitimise their actions to themselves, they create a vision of a future community in which they are appreciated, and use this image to guide them in their pursuit. They accelerate the historical process speeding up time in order to achieve the desired future for themselves.

Sen and Martha Nussbaum join Honneth in his criticism of Rawls' focus on economic wealth by criticizing Rawls' contractarianism. Rawls talks of those who enter into a social contract as initially equal and able agents, but Sen and Nussbaum insist that any such contractarian relations are often asymmetrical, with some agents being dependant on others either permanently or temporarily: women, disabled, children and elderly. Sen and Nussbaum propose to

replace the language of contractarian justice with the language of capabilities that entail «what people are able to do and be» [3. P. 39] and what societies ought to be striving to achieve in order for people's capabilities to be actualised.

In line with Honneth, Sen criticizes traditional welfare economics which measure well-being by economic prosperity stressing that wealth is not the ultimate aim, as people seek wealth for the sake of achieving something else [4. P. 44]. It is more important to consider what people are able to achieve whilst converting their income and commodities into specific achievements.

Sen provides a framework for capabilities approach, introducing the term «capability» as «the alternative combination of functionings the person can achieve, from which he or she can choose one collection» [5. P. 31]. Whilst Sen does not aim to develop a definitive list of specific capabilities, Nussbaum produced such a list, claiming that the ten items below represent most important human capabilities «whatever else the person pursues or chooses» [6. P. 74].

Table. Human Capabilities (Sen and Nussbaum)

The Central Human Capabilities	Meaning
Life	Living to the natural end of a human life and having a good quality of life
Bodily Health	Enjoying good health; having access to adequate nourishment and shelter
Bodily Integrity	Ability to move freely from place to place; freedom from violence and assault; choice in matters of sex and reproduction
Emotions	Being able to love, grieve and form attachments
Practical Reason	Ability to form a conception of the good and to reflect critically on one's life
Affiliation	Dignified coexistence and engagement with others free from discrimination
Other Species	Ability to relate to nature, animals and plants
Play	Ability to enjoy recreational activities
Control Over One's Environment	Freedom of speech and political participation; property rights; employability and employment rights [3. P. 42]

Nussbaum argues that the endorsement of these entitlements is a necessary condition for persistent national development. According to her, it falls to governments to issue relevant legislation and make sure that it is observed.

Nussbaum's view on the future application of capability approach is as follows.

Her thought fluctuates from a micro-level account, where she deals with concrete situations and concrete people, to the mega-level theorizing whereby she maps out solutions to social problems on a global scale. In this approach community appears as a transparent formation that stands between global society and individual people. Nussbaum promotes the idea of autonomy that requires global worldly support, penetrating community and reaching an indivi-

dual via institutional involvement. Institutional involvement is required for a massive redistribution of wealth from richer nations to poorer nations and for securing basic capabilities of disadvantaged people. Nussbaum's justification for appealing to global worldwide structures and world community lies in her argument that states are not self-sufficient [7. P. 5]. Besides, Nussbaum seems to imply that it is desirable for «international agreement [s] in the area of human rights» to «have the power to alter domestic institutions» [7. P. 9].

As a future goal, Nussbaum favours the idea of a global community formed according to principles of «human fellowship, and human respect» rather than on the basis of a mutually advantageous contract (against Rawls) [7. P. 15].

Nussbaum's views that promote personal autonomy of future people are undermined by communitarian theorists whose position emerged as a critical response to Rawls but stands in opposition to the autonomy of capabilities approach. Alasdair MacIntyre (After Virtue), Michael Sandel (Liberalism and the Limits of Justice), Charles Taylor (Sources of the Self) and Michael Walzer (Spheres of Justice) oppose to: *at-first*, the liberal advocacy of autonomy which supposedly downgrades the role of community and communal commitment (Avineri & de-Shalit, Bell, Berten et al., Mulhall & Swift), *the second*, the very idea that it is possible to live a freely chosen life uninfluenced by one's immersion in his/her social reality.

Also, whilst Rawls' aim was to develop a universal theory of justice, a theory that can be true for all people and applicable to all circumstances, communitarians argue that the standards of justice can vary depending on traditions and ways of life of particular societies and social groups. Taylor and MacIntyre insist that moral as well as political judgments depend on people's worldviews which in their turn depend on the society's interpretive framework. According to them it is not possible to have a universal abstract notion of political good detached from the interpretive dimensions of concrete practices, beliefs and institutions. Any theoretically produced set of goods and values, abstracted from concrete social reality and claiming to be universally applicable would be «of little use in thinking about particular distributions» (Walzer; Young). Our selves are constituted by our family ties and other communal attachments to such an extent that they cannot be separated from the nature of our self (Taylor). Contrary to the Capability approach, the future of community (understood in communitarianism as a local, closely knit community) is not a matter of an arbitrary choice but a path leading to the fulfillment of socially given shared goals (MacIntyre).

So what should we do? Accept, with Rawls, social inequality as an integral part of social justice and allow it to be projected into the future? Or should we contest the idea of inequality in justice and steer our actions towards a future where everyone would have

an equal chance to gain recognition and, as a result of it, have better access to material goods? Who is right – Nussbaum with her universal list of entitlements or communitarians with their claim that communities must follow their own paths?

The truth is that all future-orientated theories give misleading guidance because they start from faulty theoretical premises. Social theorists agree that the present community is responsible for the welfare of future people but derive their future-orientated ethical discourse from their broader ethical theories that deal with contemporaries. This is wrong because the relations between contemporaries cannot be applied to temporally distant agents, and ethical deliberations into the nature of the future and future-orientation must be underpinned by an ontological enquiry.

Theorists agree that we must work towards improving the future for communities although they disagree on what exactly constitutes the improvement and how it should be achieved. They arrive at their future-orientated views from the premises of their more general theories on social welfare and social responsibility. These theories first consider relations between contemporaries, and then adjust them to suit temporally removed stakeholders. In doing so they disregard the fact that the relations between contemporaries who can dialogue with each other are fundamentally different from the relations between present people who are active and acting and future, non-existent people. Rawls expresses concern for their passivity and vulnerability and suggests securing their rights in legislation. Before something like this could be done, what we the present people do for future ones and on their behalf should be based on an understanding of what precisely constitutes the future.

What is this future non-existent world like? Is it the same as ours, only waiting to appear? Or does it change while it is waiting? What is the ontological and existential relation that we have with a future community? These questions need to be addressed before we question our responsibility towards the future and how should we put it to practice. The ethical relation to the future must be derived from the ontology of the future and the ontology of our relation with it, not from the ethical relations between contemporaries.

The AHRC (Arts and Humanities Research Council) – funded scoping study of a number of social and philosophical theories that consider the temporality of community has revealed a significant void: future receives little or no attention in philosophy and the future of community, although it was examined philosophically, has not been a subject of a systematic philosophical investigation.

A fleeting analysis of future can be found on the periphery of the philosophy of time (often merely listed alongside past and present), in logic (Can we predict statements about future?) and deliberations about free will (Are we capable of independent futu-

re orientated actions?) but future itself as a subject worthy of a focused philosophical enquiry, the ontology of future, has not been adequately addressed.

Whilst discussing future, theorists remain on the premises of a present-centred ontology and cannot get away from the utilitarian orientation to what is real, obvious, and relevant to the present. Turning one's attention to future would require changing that orientation, going against the current of conventional thinking, violating our habitual mode of reasoning that gravitates to what is concrete, palpable and models the future as concrete and palpable but not here yet.

All problems and concerns sprout from the present, it may seem, and so must all solutions which result in future-orientated attitudes and actions. Diagnosing a problem in the present and resolving it for the sake of future people seems the right course of action to take. Any considerations that may originate purely from the future position would seem bizarre, as a future does not exist and there is no future position.

However, the non-existence of the future is not the same as a total, absolute and unconditional non-existence; being «not yet» is not the same as not being at all, or not being ever, and understanding what is the difference between the two may be beneficial to us in the present and to those who will be present some day. Whilst the future has not been shaped into a new present, we must care for the future qua future, and in order to balance our responsibilities well between what is now and what will be, our actions should be underpinned by a systematic research in the sphere of the ontology of future and the future of community.

A philosophical inquiry investigating the ontology of future and the nature of our relation with future qua future should provide a theoretical support to more applied community-orientated approaches to social planning.

Future of community is not a community that simply is «not yet», it is more than that, and this ontological fact should be accounted for when considering ethical and epistemological aspects of future orientation.

The future of community is, first of all, the existence of future people. Social theories, discussing or implicitly indicating ethical considerations that we, the present people, ought to think about if we want to treat future generations ethically, treat future people in the same way as they would treat present ones, with the only difference that future generations are not here yet. Thus theorists take the existence of future people as already given and treat them as if their future appearance on the world stage were settled and it is only a matter of time before it is realised. Theorists ignore the significant ontological difference between past, present and future failing to acknowledge not only the abundance of future possibilities but also the uncertainty of the factuality of future – while it is future. They treat future as if it we-

re merely a postponed present and direct their considerations at an imagined realm that is as definite and singularly shaped as past and present reality which has already been actualised. Thus they misunderstand grossly the nature of the future.

The relation between present and future is ontologically complex, but this fact has never been duly acknowledged. Future is not merely a postponed present, as it is implicitly portrayed in philosophy and social theories. Future is a realm of would-be potentialities and is richer in content than the present reality that it will become. If we talk of future per se, i. e. while it is future, then future is not what *will be* but what *can be*, and what can be is more abundant than what will be. Present to some extent defines which future potentialities will become real. In this there is an underlying inequality between present and future whereby the future stands, ontologically, at the mercy of the present. There is even a dramatic un-ethical component deeply embedded in our ontological relations with the future, the component which could be regretted but which cannot be eliminated. It consists in future qua future containing a range of multiple possibilities, including reproductive combinations, and our actions in the present – purposeful or casual – shaping the future by eliminating all future possibilities except one. We prevent the actual existence of events and people which, had we made different choices, would otherwise become actualised. Our preventing of would be events and preventing would be people from existing forms part of the ontology of the relations between present and future reinforcing the vulnerability and passivity of future.

The future or, more specifically, community future, is uncertain. Future people are not simply people who are not here yet; they are not people-in-waiting. Rather than there being an orderly queue of pre-planned hypothetical people expecting to enter the community after we are gone, there is a pool of possible would-be people, very few of whom will come to exist, and most of whom will not. We know that only a fraction of potential people will come to exist, but we do not know which ones. In our treatment of future people, we totally disregard and dismiss those that will never reach the level of existence. In doing so we do not engage with future per se but merely project and extend forth our own present.

Future qua future is a pool of potentialities and not just the slim future which will actually become present after some potentialities win the competition for existence. While the future is future, the slim future has not been delineated yet. It becomes delineated at the point of actualisation as present, so that retrospectively we can trace the chain of events that were future once and which led to the fruition of a particular potentiality, leaving all other potentialities at the wayside of existence.

We, the present people, were future would-be people for a very long time. If someone could witness the ontological competition of potentialities for their existence, the observer would be taken aback by the

statistical fierceness of this contest, where myriads of circumstances would have to fall into place during tens of thousands of years and more in order for one particular potentiality to come to fruition at a particular moment in time. During those tens of thousands of years of competition alongside would-be us there were myriads of others would-be people of the 21 century, who could be here with us or instead of us but who did not succeed in the circumstantial contest for a chance of biological existence. In the course of evolution and biological reproduction, our ancestral lines remained unbroken, and choices that our ancestors made, significant and trivial ones, led to particular reproductive combinations that resulted in producing us, the living people of today. Only this unimaginably complex combination of circumstances over long periods of world history could secure the existence of us as particular individuals. A slightest diversion of circumstances which could have happened at any point would have prevented our existence and secured someone else's. Ignorant, we take our own existence for granted, as no one was there to follow and witness this awesome struggle and no one can fully appreciate the significance of this fantastic success.

H. Bergson's advocacy of the reality of time and his refutation of finalism can be used as a useful platform for investigating the ontology of future. Bergson argues that, in the existing tradition of thought, objective things, from Plato's Ideas to Kant's noumena, are considered outside time. This implies that everything already exists, but the limitations of our cognitive ability prevent us from seeing everything as already existing, making us perceive everything as becoming, unrolling *in time*. Thus temporality is superimposed on the real by our subjectivity and is seen as superfluous to the real being.

Bergson asks: if everything is already given at once and the future is thus predetermined, why does it take a certain amount of time for events to unroll? His answer is that time is not a mathematical construct that can be reduced, stretched or eliminated completely from real events. Time is real, absolute and irreducible as it *is*, and it plays a constructive role in the process of becoming. Time is «causally efficacious» [8. P. 41] for the following reasons.

The time it takes for a process to unroll is irreducible and is an integral part of the makeup of that process – just like its physical components. It takes a certain length of time for a process to happen; this *time* cannot be eliminated from the process, or reduced: therefore it is not relative but absolute.

Each moment of time succeeding the previous one has never occurred before and will never occur again, and is in this sense absolutely new and unique. It always takes a *new, different* period of time for a new process to happen: thus time ensures novelty.

Time is not an empty container being gradually filled with the eventual content. Events «make» time as they unroll, and constitute time itself. Thus the newness of each portion of time automatically beco-

mes a property of its content. So the content can be apparently the same as in the past, but it is nevertheless different because it happens at a different time.

Thus the future of community can be characterised as predetermined in form (e.g. in that people will grow old and that all future events will be new) but indeterminate in content.

Future of community is thus partially predetermined and changes with every new present. If in a current state of things we can see what will become of it next, there is a plan as an anticipation of the future. But the realisation of the future in the present will affect the state of affairs, and then the plan for the more remote future will change, as it will be a projection of different circumstances: so, *the predetermination itself will change*. It is only in the present that events and things take their final and definite physical form and become what they are. It is the present that is determined in such a way that it cannot change, but the future, a projection of the present, is subject to change and infinitely flexible – until it becomes present. Our key claim here is that *different presents have different futures*.

For Bergson the reality of the present inherits all of its history, so that we can say that the next stage following every present state is predetermined by all of its past, all of the content of its being up to the present moment. What happens in the future is largely predetermined by the past, and what happens in our present will contribute to the totality of the past that will precede that future. So, a societal process completed up to a particular moment has its future partially determined and limited by all of its content. The process at time t , comprising a content of abc has its future lying ahead of itself, determined as $abcdef$, destined to have occurred by time t' , and $abcdefghi$, destined to have occurred by time t'' , as in Fig. 1.

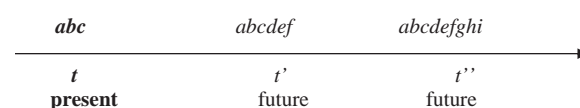


Fig. 1. The state of affairs at time t

Fig. 1 illustrates the state of affairs at time t , with the state abc being the history of an object up to this moment. The state $abcdef$ is a development of abc , where the abc element will be retained and def , added on by time t' . As a further development of abc , the state $abcdefghi$ will have occurred by time t'' . So, at time t , the future states $abcdef$ at t' and $abcdefghi$ at t'' are determined by abc at time t' .

However, the state $abcdef$ at t' is a new reality, and at t' it is $abcdef$ that will determine the future state at t'' , and not abc . A new, different reality with new content, $abcdef$, will determine a different future from the old reality, abc . So, at time t' the future state at t'' is altered compared to what it is at t . At present time t' the future t'' may be, for example, $abcdefghik$, as illustrated by Fig. 2.

So, the future exists as an array of possibilities, predetermined by the whole of the accumulated tem-

poral content, and it is altered every time some new reality is added on to the whole of the existence of things.

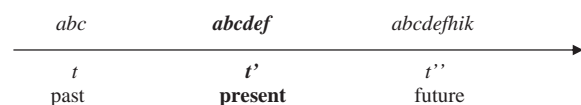


Fig. 2. The state of affairs at time t'

If we use the present tense standpoint as the ultimate platform of ontology (and this is what theorists unwittingly do), the reality of future things seems highly questionable. From the point of view of the present future events are as ontologically inadequate as occurrences that had never taken place, because future events, indeed, have never taken place. However, it is possible to consider future events as a self-projection forward in time of the present, and then the future is not non-existent in the same way as something that cannot exist, because its existence is expected and is, to some extent, predictable.

We would find it difficult to establish qualitative features of future events. Qualities, whether accessible by mind and senses or not, must have some definite form: for example, if a thing is round, it is definitely round, and not square or triangular at the same time. But this is not so with the qualities of future events and future entities. States and events, consequent in relation to the present, are inevitable (because it is inevitable that there will be a future) but, prior to their actual embodiment, their exact nature and exact parameters are uncertain. Due to this fuzziness, we cannot establish the tautology of the future content (saying x is x about something in the future) and hence ascribe identity to the future which, vague as it is, cannot have a relation of presentness with itself.

As the future is uncertain, its projection consists of a variety of alternative possibilities that are all imagined to occupy the same place and time in the future. The insurmountable difficulty in determining future qualities will lie in this haziness and mutual overlapping of alternative properties. When thinking of the future as a range of possibilities, we ascribe to the same future period of time different incompatible characteristics, and therefore cannot fix and identify future qualities. The future of a community thus entails a range of possible states, all of which are mutually exclusive. Only one of these possibilities will actualise itself, but while it has not actualised itself, we must think of *the whole range of possibilities as the community's future*.

We may accept futurity as a relation between the embodied present and consequent states and events which are not yet defined and embodied. The only definite characteristic of the future that is possible is the relation of futurity between the hazy future content and the present, established in the present, and the only definite fact we can establish about the future, which content lacks identity, is that it is future.

Thus the only indication of the being and of the reality of the future comes from outside the future,

prior to its own existence, as an external relation superimposed on the terms in question. We have a situation where one term, the present, has a relation of futurity with another term, which is indefinable, having neither identity nor concrete inner structure. Should we admit here that the relation of futurity is that element which constitutes any idea of the future at all? If we do that, we can end up asserting a relation prior to one of the terms and fall into substantiating this relation and presenting it as a quality instead of letting it appear as a side effect of the mutual co-existence of two terms.

Actually, this substantiation occurs in our practical attitude to the future, primarily realised in relational terms, which have a qualitative value for us. We know that, whatever the content of future events will be, the relational framework for them is fixed: whatever happens, Christmas day will fall on the predicted day, and if this year is 2014, in ten years time it will be 2024. We can treat our own lives lying ahead, and those of others, like an empty diary, which guarantees relational facts such as dates and ages, which will definitely become present regardless of their qualitative content.

In the ontology where the present is not the measure of being, the view of the future from the future position can be as follows. In order to establish the relation of tautology of the future event to itself, it needs to shape itself. This shaping has not happened yet in the present, but it *will* happen, so all we have to do and all we can do is to wait. In time, future possibilities become defined whilst becoming present, and then we can say retrospectively that this present was the future of that other present which is now past. So, in the ontology liberated from the present tense interests, future events may have the same status as past and present ones, because they will define themselves in their own time, and for the present-free ontology it does not matter when being is present – it is real as long as it was, is, or will be present at some point.

In order to direct our actions towards future, or in order to take future into account, we need to access it somehow, and the only way it can be done is when we consider future as a network of relations. Relationally defined, future can be planned, controlled and predicted to some extent. As qualitative phenomenal content of events, states and processes, future is affected by our actions, and this effect is unknown to us. E. g. we can control (to some extent) the relational parameters of the future, so that a particular set of parents will produce a child in a certain time period, or in a predicted fixed point in the future there will be 50 less nurses in hospital x because of the implementation of planned redundancies. What we cannot do is to predict or to control the sex, character, temperament and the appearance of the future unconceived child, or to know in advance the names of the nurses which will lose their jobs.

In fact, there is a general feeling that relational planning of the future is acceptable (planning to have a child, initiating a war, planning redundancies)

but attempts to negotiate the phenomenal content is morally wrong and epistemologically abnormal. Examples of accessing the phenomenology of future and interfering with it could include genetically programming a child with specific features; predicting which soldiers will die during the military campaign; naming the workers who will be made redundant rather than creating a «competition» for employees and giving them a chance to stay.

Perhaps there is a feeling that whilst interfering with the phenomenal content of future we pre-determine it and deny future a certain freedom to evolve by itself and whilst pre-determining some parameters we upset the balance of things and end up with a lopsided reality (e. g. gender imbalance in China as a result of a «one child policy» encouraging families to produce boys only).

There is something abnormal and pervasive in attempts to overcome the uncertainty of the future and concretize its phenomenological qualitative composition either epistemologically (prophecy, fortunetelling) or ontologically (genetic engineering of people with pre-known qualities; creating employment opportunities for concrete people (nepotism) rather than seeking those who fulfil certain conditions).

People feel that they ought to retain their innocence and ignorance in regard to the qualitative phenomenal content of the future. Interfering with the phenomenal content is controversial and somehow upsets the naturally balanced course of events, the evolution of the future.

Our future-orientated intentional actions are thus directed at a relationally framed would-be community, and future social planning involves creating and altering future relations within community. The future community that we address is *a community*, a relationally framed would-be community with a fuzzy phenomenal content curbed by the relational framework. In reality we affect and help create a particularly shaped community, *the community*, although we are unable to access *the community*.

Future community that we deal with is *a community* delineated by the relational framework superimposed on it by its entire past, our present actions in combination with unknown future circumstances of its existence. *A community* is vague, fluctuating and fuzzy.

The future of community as a historical process appears to be greatly uncertain and resistant to planning. Rather than being guided by remote future goals, political figures are pressurised by the demands of immediate problems, and have little, if any, room for manoeuvre whilst making historical decisions that affect the future of communities. Also, history involves wills of many combined with unexpected objective circumstances such as a natural disaster or a discovery of a new source of oil, so the future is hard to plan and even harder to predict.

A biographical process of the self as a community member is more straightforward because it ultimately involves only one willing agent, so an individual

has a greater control over his or her personal future than subjects of world history have over the future of history. Our actions are not always a mere response to circumstances – we make plans and work on their realizations.

This complicates the temporality of the community in the following way. As well as being informed and influenced by the past, community is also informed and influenced by the future – not by the future of real events because they are not certain yet, but by the future which people invent; not by the future which is projected by the past and the present and which constantly changes, but by the hypothetical, imagined future which is a state that people may strive to achieve, and which will not happen by itself as a natural continuation of our previous life but requires a special, purposeful effort.

So, in its present community negotiates two futures, the real projection of our present and the hypothetical future of our goals. Whereas the real future emanates from the present and is viewed from the present point, the relation of the hypothetical future to the present is the reverse. [9]. When we act in our present with the view of the hypothetical future, as an acting agent we remain in the present, but as an observing and monitoring agent we place ourselves at the point of the planned achievement in the hypothetical future and evaluate our actual present from that position [10]. Our imaginary position in the future is treated as the imaginary present, and from the point of view of this present our real present becomes the past of our imaginary present.

Viewing our actual present from the position of the distant goal, we gain a retrospective view of it and modify it from the foundation of the real future into the foundation of the hypothetical future, with the aim of changing the hypothetical future into the real future. Then the present also appears in two ways. Firstly, it remains that actual present which is a spindle that turns temporal reality and changes the future, but secondly it, whilst being looked at retrospectively, gains for us the properties of a reality that is affected by subsequent times and subsequent events. The current day and the current hour project themselves naturally into tomorrow and into the next hour, but they are also seen as a potential foundation for the goal in the more remote future.

In our plans we also reach out for those times that exceed the limitations of our individual lives and the progressive existence of community is our guarantor that promises that our wills and testimonies, legacies and living gifts and hopes for future people will radiate our will beyond the end of our lives.

More drastic for the future, however, is our voluntary and involuntary ability to control and restrict the very existence of would-be future people.

While in the animal world natural selection prevails and all possible reproductive combinations and outcomes are limited and streamlined spontaneously, human community membership is purposefully restricted for future would-be members. Curbing and

controlling reproductive behaviour, e.g. via an institution of marriage, availability of contraception or higher morality associated with restricted or revoked sexuality, society purposefully prevents a vast number of potential reproductive combinations from being formed [11].

Society may pride itself for caring for its vulnerable members, but in order to be cared for, one needs to be visible, palpable and occupy space – i. e. exist in the present. Babies are not as vulnerable as we are used to thinking of them. They exist and impact on our senses and our consciousness. Foetuses are in a weaker position; they are not publically visible and cannot appeal to our compassion, mercy and the sense of responsibility in the same way. People who have not been conceived are even worse off. Mere potentialities, they are ultimately vulnerable. They may be future possibilities but if, when the future becomes present, they have missed the opportunity to exist, this omission will not be known by anyone including themselves, and will not be deplored by anyone [12]. As was pointed out previously, we were such potentialities once, and if our chance to exist were missed, our absence would not be noticed and would not be regretted.

Would-be future reproductive possibilities are vastly larger in number than those that can come to fruition, and it is the previous world history complemented by our present activity that determines the selection of the outcome.

Although present people are not in a position to choose which potentialities should be actualised and which ones should not, they can and do choose the conditions and circumstances of future potentialities whose fruition would suit the present, albeit not concrete potentialities. Decisions to have a child next year rather than this year, or not at all, with this partner rather than someone else, as well as a multitude of more trivial behavioural choices result in hugely important consequences for would-be people: few particular ones will be fortunate to exist eventually, whilst the majority of other particular ones will not.

There is a huge unrecognised imbalance between the triviality of our present choices that lead to production or prevention of specific human life, and the magnitude of consequences for future people for generations to come.

Any possibility of justice between generations is preceded ontologically by the initial great injustice between generations, whereby the present generation has the power to affect the coming to fruition of future possibilities unwittingly or deliberately.

The pool of possibilities is vast. Only a fraction of them will become present later, and our actions and choices, sometimes trivial but always present-centred, determine the course of our selection. We choose and shape the future which is convenient to our present.

Future while it is future is larger than the present that it will become. Future is populated with possi-

lities. If we want to discuss a relation, or communication with future, this needs to be the relation with this abundant pool of possibilities, not the streamlined imagined future which we model on the present reality and which we treat as present-in-waiting. This streamlining of the future is already a violent manipulation and restructuring of future. If we want to think of future per se it must only be defined by the limits of what is possible. It would involve an exponential multiplication of mutually exclusive scenarios, resulting in an amorphous picture of the infinity of «what if's».

Future qua future is a realm of potentialities. The more remote the future, the greater is the range of those potentialities. As the remote future becomes less remote, it is subjected to the funnelling effect whereby current, already realised occurrences including our voluntary and involuntary actions, eliminate some potentialities and streamline the future until, as it enters the realm of the present, all potential would-be states of the world are eliminated except one which becomes present [13].

Our existence can be seen both as an outcome of all previous processes leading to our birth and maturity and as an intermediate phase of the same process leading to future people's success of existence. Immersed in this process that moves on beyond our lives, we pose as means for future people's existence and wellbeing as parents, educators or wealth producing agents in the same way as previous generations were the means for our existence.

Crucially, our temporal role entails conflicting components: we are both ends and means of the temporal process of community development. As ends, we benefit from the entire history of our community, setting and achieving personal goals, striving for personal satisfaction in sensory and intellectual spheres. Our involvement in community life is not confined to the boundaries of our individual life [14]. What we do, will affect others after we are gone, and in that sense we are means to the ends of their existence and their welfare. Our apparent relation with the future is that we are means of it, and our being means for the future interrelates with our being ends in the present.

Our relation with future people is complicated by the duality of this role: gravitating towards the present and our present ends, we may treat future as means. As ends of the societal process we make choices favourable to us that affect unfavourably future people. A current government may take out a loan to meet its current targets and commit two or three generations to repaying it, for example.

In more subtle ways, people in the present may appeal to the future ones, as in the following example.

And, as Honneth says, if the experience of disrespect and humiliation projects itself into a societal struggle, then people: «uncover a form of expression with which they can indirectly convince themselves of their moral or societal worth. For, given the anticipation that a future communication-community

will recognize them for their present abilities, they find themselves socially respected as the persons that they cannot, under present circumstances, be recognized for being» [15. P. 164]. Thus people taking part in the struggle use future ones as the source for their self-respect. In that sense they treat the future as a flexible passive material that can be shaped at will to suit their own future-orientated aspirations.

Once we have made all the choices that would shape the future to our liking, we remember that we have some responsibility for those future people that we will allow to be born and grow up. But even in this we service our own present-orientated ends, because the feeling of one's own righteousness (in this instance, caring for future) is beneficial for one's healthy existence regardless of whether the apparent intended beneficiary benefits from it or not. The real, unmistakable beneficiary is the present community that can enjoy the feeling of self-righteousness in the present.

Present grants itself a privileged status and is protected legally and morally whereas future receives no protection, and this crucially constitutes the core of our relation with the future.

The following exemplifies the ultimate vulnerability of the future. Infanticide that allegedly takes place in some countries (e.g China) shocks the civilised world [16]. Killing a presently living person is a dreadful crime. It is even more terrible when a baby is killed because we care for the future and denying life to a baby is denying someone a whole long life. In countries like Russia termination of an unwanted pregnancy is a prevailing means of family planning [17] and, although it is problematic for some people, is less morally and legally challenging than infanticide. The discreet use of widely available contraception that is promoted in Western countries is mostly considered ethically neutral and may be even commended as responsible behaviour. Celibacy is celebrated in a religious context as a morally superior form of conduct.

The situations listed above seem different and evoke opposing emotional response. It is a crime to kill a person who has already been born. Preventing a conceived future person from being born is less morally problematic and may not be seen as a crime. Preventing would-be people from being conceived at all is ethically neutral and could be commendable from the standpoint of the present time morality. These evaluations are so different because they are present-orientated and based on what is happening in the

present. As far as the future is concerned, the outcome of all these attitudes and actions is the same – prevention of future life, denial of existence to future persons. We in the present are concerned with how to do so humanely, before future life, that would cause inconvenience to us in the present, started actualising itself. In actual fact «humane» here ultimately refers to us in the present and not to them in the future, because we want to prevent them from living before they can impact on our senses and disturb our consciousness [18]. As far as they in the future are concerned, their non-existence at the point when they could exist is the same regardless of whether their emerging existence had been cut short violently or prevented altogether. In this sense those who existed for a short time and killed afterwards are more privileged than those who had not existed at all.

Thus our relation with future people is marked by their extreme and inevitable, albeit not duly acknowledged dependency on us for their very existence. It is complemented by the complete lack of their legal rights as well as permissibility of absence of moral considerations on our part. The caring attitude towards future is *the outer layer* of the relational network that we, the present community members, have with the future community [19]. This attitude takes a form of an agent-centred ethical approach, where the patient of our future-orientated intentionality is absent and unable to initiate a demand on our morality or a response to our actions.

It is entirely up to us how we understand and realise our responsibility towards future. This situation allows for a short-sighted, selfish vision of future, or even complete future-blindness, where present community simply emanates its existence without leaping forward in its projections [20]. Consequences may be disastrous for future in this case. For example, the development of nuclear weapons of a large scale was a necessity of the cold war, but the legacy of its destructive potential hangs over the entire planet as a potential threat that under certain conditions may become real for one unfortunate future generation.

Further research into future, linked to a broader theme of the temporality of community must investigate in great depth *what is obvious and what is not* in the relation between the people who shape the future and the future that they shape. This warrants a detailed investigation of qualitative and relational components of present and future that affect their relationship.

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КОММУНИКАЦИЯ С НЕСУЩЕСТВУЮЩИМ СООБЩЕСТВОМ: ОСНОВНЫЕ ПРИНЦИПЫ ФИЛОСОФИИ БУДУЩЕГО СОЦИАЛЬНОЙ РЕАЛЬНОСТИ

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Статья посвящена вопросу заботы о будущем настоящих и последующих поколений. Авторами рассматриваются современные теории, затрагивающие этот вопрос: теория справедливости Джона Роллза, теория общественного признания Акселя Хоннета, а также анализируется позиция Амартии Сена и Марты Нусбаум, касающаяся реализации человеческих возможностей, степень которой выступает как критерий социальной справедливости.

Цель исследования – подчеркнуть отношение к будущему в современном обществе.

Методы, используемые в исследовании: сравнительный анализ философских теорий будущего; синтез основных положений и выводов, касающихся понимания категории «Будущее».

Результаты: Авторы приходят к выводу, что тема заботы о будущем представляет собой лишь внешнюю, видимую оболочку сложных отношений настоящего поколения к будущим поколениям. В основе этих отношений остаются собственно интересы настоящего поколения.

Ключевые слова:

Видение будущего, сообщество, существование, человеческие способности, отношение с будущим, человек.