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ZOLTÁN ÁBRAHÁM

## **CONSERVATIO PERSONAE GRATAE**

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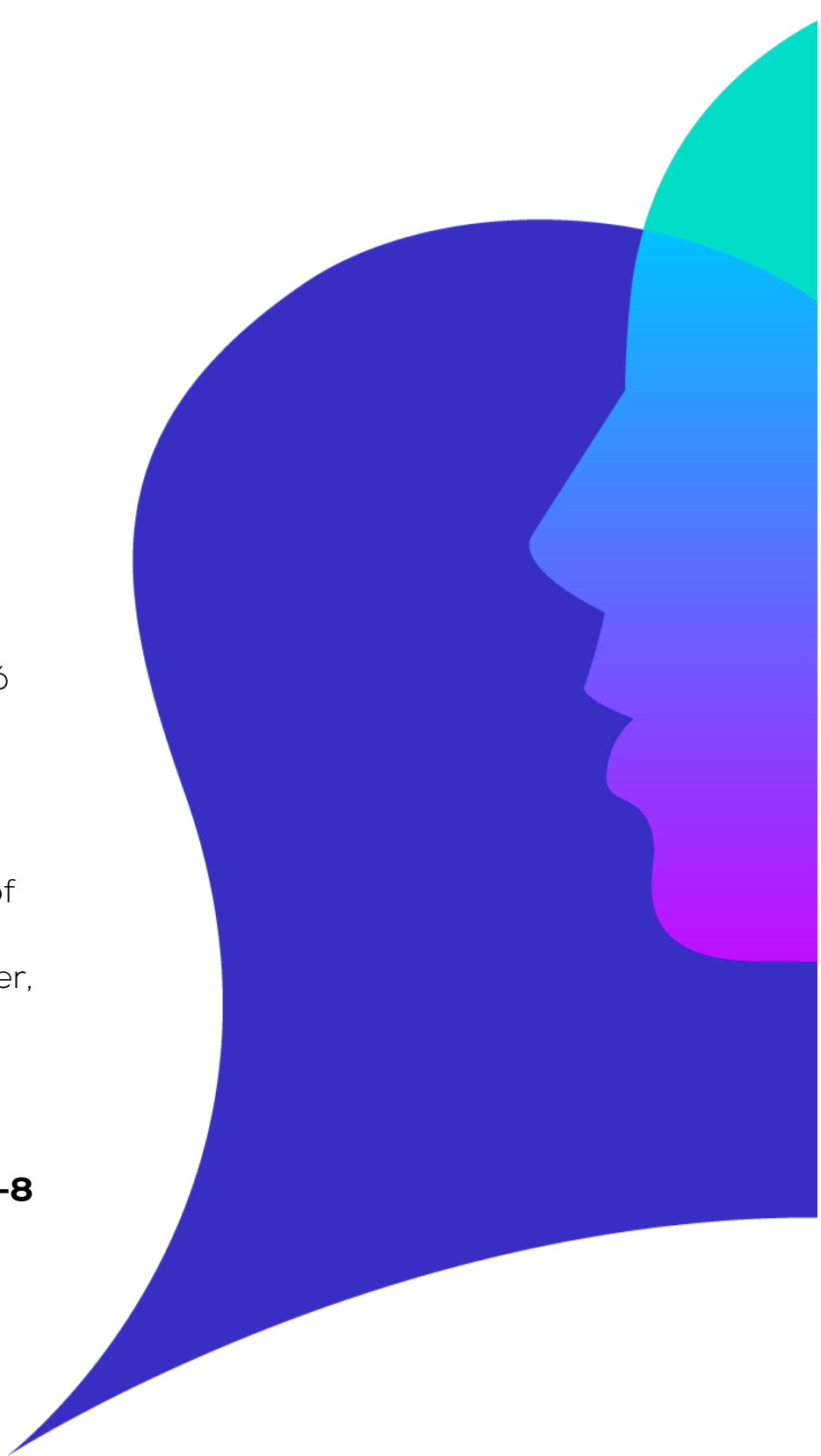
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# 1. THE PURPOSE OF THE INVESTIGATION

The purpose of this paper<sup>1</sup> is to sketch a theoretical and conceptual background for János Csák's paper, "Social Futuring – A Normative Framework"<sup>2</sup>, the primary aim of which is to outline the conceptual framework of the *Social Futuring Index* (SFI) to be constructed through an interdisciplinary and international cooperation, and its further aim being to present a normative description of the main characteristics of worthwhile life in viable social entities.

The attempt at giving a normative description targeting the future encounters from the start great difficulties, if only because of the contingency, the open horizon of the future. However, although the attempt at creating the SFI targets the future, its aim is not to predict a future state, but to identify present features that can secure the future existence of social entities, of which individuals find it worthwhile to be members. In this way, it can avoid facing the problem of prediction.

Normativity – as understood here – doesn't entail privileging a specific ethical approach, rather, it intends to combine the perspectives offered by virtue ethics (which focuses on whether, and to what extent, a social entity fulfils its function), deontology (which stresses the virtue of acting from and in accordance with duty obeying previously accepted rules), and consequentialism (the measure of which is the greatest happiness of the greatest number), suggesting that it is not justified without qualifications to make a sharp distinction between 'norms' (or 'values') and 'facts'.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Let me express here my indebtedness to János Csák for encouraging me to write about this fascinating topic, as well as my special thanks to Loránd Ambrus for his helpful and critical remarks. I am also indebted to Zoltán Hidas, Zoltán Oszkár Szántó, Péter Szabadhegy, and Gábor Tóth for their encouraging remarks.

<sup>2</sup>Csák (2018).

<sup>3</sup>The demand for the combination of at least their characteristic features is the more justified because of the recent tendency for their revision – in this vein, Martha Nussbaum questions the very concept of virtue ethics (see Nussbaum (1999)), Thomas E. Hill, Jr. stresses the role of virtue in the Kantian deontology (see Hill (2008)), or Mattison analyses Sermon on the Mount from the perspective of virtue theory (see Mattison (2017)). In order to be able to reflect upon recent attempts at understanding normativity, a flexible enough analytical framework must be constructed.

An analysis which targets the future with normative intent, inevitably involves the idea of utopia. In this approach, however, 'utopia' refers to the future explicitly from the perspective of the present: instead of projecting ideas into the future, which tends to be but a reflection of the present, it intends to identify and describe present features thought to guarantee the future existence of social entities deemed *worthwhile*, and therefore held to be *good* and *desirable*. Such an attempt ensures that this kind of utopia doesn't refer to a nowhere land<sup>4</sup>: it is the empirically existing world seen as good enough in itself, which isn't in need of fundamental change (repairing), at most the arrangement of which can be made more workable<sup>5</sup> through a kind of 'piecemeal social engineering'<sup>6</sup> (as opposed to utopian ones). Consequently, an important presupposition of this investigation is that, for any social entity, *goodness* presupposes *workability in the present*. Thus, the utopianism of this investigation is embedded in the present.<sup>7</sup>

Workability means in a first, passive sense viability, that something (a plan, or a measure) can be carried out. Without being workable, according to this approach, no arrangement can count as good for any social entity, since without being possibly implemented, it is not able to fulfil its function.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the spirit of this investigation is definitely anti-utopian because of the criterion of workability in the first sense: there can be no incongruence, we can not even speak in terms of incongruence between 'state of mind' and 'reality'.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Utopia understood as no place (ou-topos).

<sup>5</sup> This is an allusion to Lon Fuller's ideas, who coined the term 'eunomics' (the late descendant of εὐνομία, see Aristotle *Politics* 1294<sup>a</sup> 3-7) that he defined as "the science, theory, or study of good order and workable social arrangements." (A possible translation of the word is "well-ordered government"). See Fuller (2001), p. 62.

<sup>6</sup> See Popper (1957), pp. 64-69.

<sup>7</sup> It means that its point of reference (like for Augustinus' and Husserl's philosophy of time, or phenomenology of internal time-consciousness) is, and must be the present. This privileged status of the present in itself doesn't entail presentism, excluding historical consciousness, but it does entail an emphasis on the continuities with the past (as well as, hypothetically, the future), which is manifested in the use of the apparatus of conceptual history.

<sup>8</sup> This entails the relevance of virtue ethics in judging the operation of social entities.

<sup>9</sup> See Mannheim (1997), p. 173. The anti-utopian attitude of this paper corresponds to a great extent to what Mannheim characterized as the conservative utopianism, *ibid.*, pp. 206, 209.)

However, ‘workability’ in another, more technical, active sense means ‘to be able to work’, ‘to have an effect’ or ‘be effective’.<sup>10</sup> The ‘work’ in this sense, is the equivalent of ἐνέργεια (formed from ἔργον) or ‘actualitas’. In this sense, ‘workable’ is the feature of an idea: it is able to carry out something which due to being carried out becomes actuality.<sup>11</sup> In this sense, and paraphrasing Hegel’s dictum, one might say: “the actual is the good, and the good is the actual”<sup>12</sup> – without the possibility of becoming actuality, nothing can be considered as good. Or, for an idea or arrangement to be possibly good, it must be capable of being carried out in a social entity (workable). Within this framework, it *eo ipso* cannot make sense to speak about an incongruence between a ‘state of mind’ and ‘reality’.<sup>13</sup>

‘Workability’ taken in these two senses together means that a social entity is able to preserve itself in the particular, ever-evolving circumstances, the always particular present. This is what is meant here by social futuring.<sup>14</sup>

The very first condition of successfully coping with risks for any social entity is, of course, the ability of self-preservation,<sup>15</sup> the ability to maintain, preserve itself as an identifiable, in a certain sense self-same (identical), entity. This investigation, therefore, attempts at

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<sup>10</sup> This phenomenon can be observed in the case of words with suffix “-able”, since this can be taken as an independent adjective (“able”). E.g. “futable” is a reuse of such development. (The history of linguistics of course can witness cases where the suffix “-able” is to be understood in an active sense (as in the case of “comfortable”).

<sup>11</sup> This argumentation exploits the Hegelian notion of “Wirklichkeit”, the equivalent of Aristotle’s actuality (ἐνέργεια) in the *Phenomenology of spirit*: “It is the coming-to-be of itself, the circle that presupposes its end as its goal and has its end for its beginning, and which is actual only through this accomplishment and its end.” See Hegel (2010). p. 16.

<sup>12</sup> This is a paraphrase of Hegel’s famous dictum: “What is rational is actual and what is actual is rational”. See Hegel (2008), p. 14. See also the explanatory note to this passage for clarification that this statement does not imply the justification of any arrangement: from that “reason is an actual [wirklich] power in the world, working to create the institutions of human freedom” doesn’t follow “that everything that exists or is ‘real’ is rational.” Ibid., p. 306 f.

<sup>13</sup> This conservative attitude was eloquently described e. g. by Oakeshott (1962), pp. 178 ff.

<sup>14</sup> For the details see Csák’s research paper, as well as the conceptual paper by Zoltán Szántó (2018). Szántó distinguishes between three kinds of social futuring, according to the attitude toward future changes\*: proactive, active, and reactive. In the present paper the word “preserve” is intended to be used in the sense embracing these three attitudes. From the perspective of this analysis, it is the consciousness (cf. συνείδησις, or conscientia) of these attitudes that matters, which has since the stoics been regarded as the main characteristics of self-preservation (understood as ‘homification’).

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Aristoteles: *De anima* 415b 13: “τὸ δὲ ζῆν τοῖς ζῶσι τὸ εἶναι ἐστίν” (“living is being for living things” – translated by Christopher Shields).

describing the conditions as well as the strategies for the successful adaptation to the continuously changing circumstances. This attempt, in accordance with the utopia as understood here (anti-utopia), can foster the hope to better understand the normal functioning of the societies we live in.

Devising the SFI aims at the quantification of the insights of the investigation. Venturing this involves hardly surmountable difficulties, since both the mathematical apparatus itself and the operations are always in need of interpretation. To see data and algorithms as in need of interpretation presupposes a certain view of human nature. This view eventually implies a dualism: understanding the world “in two incommensurable ways, the way of science, and the way of interpersonal understanding.”<sup>16</sup> According to this view, the notion of “person” makes truly sense following the path of the latter, while the former threatens eventually with deleting human freedom based on reason.<sup>17</sup>

Because of this duality, the elaboration of SFI requires the incorporation of the dimension of meaning into its apparatus, since otherwise it will not be able to treat human beings as persons, (as beings with intentions, affections, etc). Strategic thinking as well as decision making require as much and as accurate *quantification* as possible – *quantification* is, however, to be combined with creative *interpretation*.

The aim of quantifying certain aspects of the ideal, or at least a *good society* (a *society worth living in*), have since the beginning of philosophical thinking implied the demand of applying norms (see recently e.g. the attempt at creating the “decent society index”).<sup>18</sup> ‘Normativity’, taken in this sense, refers to the use of norms in a description in the light of which ‘social facts’ and phenomena are to be analysed and judged.<sup>19</sup> It can, however, refer also to the fact that within a social entity some norms count as valid, that some rules are

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<sup>16</sup> As it has recently been formulated by Scruton (2014), p. 34.

<sup>17</sup> This is the supposed move from humanism to a ‘new religion’, the dataism, as described by Harari. On humanism see Harari (2015), chapter 12, on dataism see Harari (2016), chapter 11.

<sup>18</sup> These attempts are summarised Abbott, Wallace, and Sapsford (2016).

<sup>19</sup> Normativity in this first sense counts as an important factor contributing to social stability: shared values can promote social cohesion, just as social stability can promote normative consensus. See Archer (2016b), p. 1.

followed, certain customs are observed. Understood in this sense, normativity “concerns the role that society’s moral or value system, norms and conventions play in social regulation.”<sup>20</sup> The two senses of ‘normativity’ are not difficult to combine.<sup>21</sup>

This investigation will be performed in three steps according to the title. The first chapter explores the semantic field of the “person”, the second analyses the notion of “conservation”, and the third investigates the meaning of “worthy” or “worthiness” in connection with “dignity”.

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<sup>20</sup> Archer (2016a), p. 142.

<sup>21</sup> If social stability and the the prevailing of norms are essential features of a society worth living in, and if they are presupposed by human flourishing, then securing both is a particularly urgent task in an age often described as that of social acceleration. Thus, the description can identify the desirability of norms being respected and followed as a condition for any society to count as a good one (worth living in) – and this is the second sense of normativity. (There is also a third, narrower sense of normativity, related to the second one: judging whether an entity or factor fulfils its function, or not. Fulfilling its function is, according to this criterion, the virtue of this entity. “All things are defined by their function; for things which are able to perform their function are each truly, e.g., an eye, if it sees.” (ἅπαντα δ' ἐστὶν ὠρισμένα τῷ ἔργῳ· τὰ μὲν γὰρ δυνάμενα ποιεῖν τὸ αὐτῶν ἔργον ἀληθῶς ἐστὶν ἕκαστον, οἷον ὀφθαλμὸς εἰ ὁρᾷ...), see Aristoteles: *Meteorologica* 390a 10–13.)

## 2. PERSONA: THE INDIVIDUAL IN PERSON

### 2.1. THE TWO ASPECTS OF THE PERSONHOOD

The first step towards the elucidation of the meaning of the title is to make as clear as possible what in this case “person” stands for. Without immersing into, yet always trying to bear in mind the complicated history of its concept<sup>22</sup>, the following characteristics seem to be essential here: 1. self-consciousness, which is also presupposed by social interactions<sup>23</sup>, 2. identifiability in space and time, 3. spontaneity, or the ability to “begin a series of occurrences entirely from itself”<sup>24</sup>, 4. responsibility and accountability, resulting from the imputability, or the possibility of ascribing an action to the person as its author. This entity as subject can also be endowed with rights, have duties and obligations, and be seen as to be endowed with dignity.

Thus “person” refers on one hand to an individual entity, on the other hand to an entity essentially in relation with others. (In this sense the word has ‘pluralia tantum’: “persons”.<sup>25</sup>) “Person” in the first sense – a particular existing in the spatiotemporal framework – is primarily the object of metaphysics and epistemology. In addition to this, a “person” is also a “relational being”, a being who can not be described without referring to her embeddedness in a network of relations. In this sense, a person is master or slave, father or son, etc. Person in this latter sense is the primary object of sociology. The boundary

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<sup>22</sup>For the history of the concept see the informative article in the Ritter (1971–2007), vol. VII, pp. 269–338, as well as Ralf Konersmann’s panorama offered by the tools of conceptual history, see Konersmann (1993).

<sup>23</sup> This presupposes seeing human being as entangled in the web of meanings. For an action to be social (to be an interaction in the full sense of the word), according to Max Weber, it has on the one hand to bear some meaning, on the other, the actor has to ascribe meaning to others’ actions, too. The requirement of meaning for an action to be social presupposes that the world is being regarded as a life-world, a world shaped by intentions which thus in addition to providing data, also conveys meanings for human beings. However, social actions are only one, although privileged class of actions, because they are characterised by consciousness, which is regarded here as the characteristic feature of the behaviour of an entity driven by the desire to maintain itself. Of course, it doesn’t follow from this that only conscious actions can contribute to a social entity’s preservation: in addition to conscious social actions, there is a vast realm (“that great absentee in history” as Braudel (1977) formulated it) of non-social actions resulting from observing traditions, following customs, obeying norms, etc.

<sup>24</sup> See Kant (1998a), p. 534 (A534/B562).

<sup>25</sup> See Spaemann (1996), p. 9

between these two senses cannot but be arbitrary to an extent, if only because the individual entity driven by the desires to save its integrity (or maintain itself) unavoidably enters into relations with other human or non-human entities.

According to the anti-Cartesian assumption implicit in its notion, the human person who is identifiable in space and time is not split into mind and body. Seeing human person as a unity makes possible to see her desires as directed towards a wide range of goods (“bodily”, “spiritual”, “material”, “intellectual”, etc.)<sup>26</sup>. This person can be seen as an entity with an implanted *striving* (*conatus*) for persisting, which is the presupposition of her freedom.<sup>27</sup>

The identifiability in space and time constitutes the possibility of the historicity of the person, since this makes her an ‘individual’ about which one can make the assertion that it occupies a definite portion of time and space.<sup>28</sup> (The point of reference for identifying the place in the spatiotemporal framework a person occupies is always the observer’s present position.) This feature endows that ‘individual’ with duration and extension.

A “person”, however, is taken here to refer also to individuals consisting of more individuals (provided they constitute ordered pluralities that obey principles the source of which is the life-world, and so themselves can be regarded as unities)<sup>29</sup>. The two extreme

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<sup>26</sup> Undivided nature entails for this investigation and for the constructing of SFI that the various possible spheres of human activity (economy, science, arts, religion, politics, etc.) are equally to be treated as spheres of manifestations of human freedom and creativity. The overlappings between these spheres are virtually unavoidable\*\*, since just as “person” is not split – and according to the accepted viewpoint neither can be meaningfully split – into different kinds of constituents, neither can the spheres of her activity or creativity be broken apart into different realms. Their separation is always a result of the particular perspective from which they are at the moment being regarded.

<sup>27</sup> Spinoza’s terminology is being used here also to indicate his pivotal position (together with Hobbes) in the history of the concept of self-preservation. See *Ethica* IIIp6–9p.

<sup>28</sup> This topic was discussed by P. F. Strawson, in his ‘essay in descriptive metaphysics’, see Strawson (1959).

<sup>29</sup> Their principle is the “unity of order”. For Aristotle, although the greater whole precedes by nature in perfection the lesser whole (eventually the individual human being), in the order of knowledge the parts precede the whole (*Politica* 1252a 24). The commentator Aquinas, while acknowledging this priority, felt elsewhere necessary to introduce the new concept of “unity of order” (*unitas ordinis*) for describing and explaining the kind of unity possessed by the society (*Sententia Ethicorum*, lib. 1 l. 1 n. 5). (He was theologically motivated in this also by the need of

cases of ordered pluralities are on one extreme the individual human being (the potential members of ordered pluralities), on the other the humankind (embracing all ordered pluralities).

From the perhaps dominant epistemological or metaphysical point of view (or from legal aspect) the starting point is, of course, the individual human being, the individual who is conscious of his action, to whom actions, thoughts, etc. can be ascribed or attributed (1, 2). This presupposes the freedom of the will as at least a theoretical possibility. The possibility of free will (or free choice of the will<sup>30</sup>) is taken here rooted in (pure practical) reason.

These are *typical features* of personhood. Taking them to be *criteria* of it would entail depriving of personhood those who, for whatever reason, can't be regarded as conscious and accountable agents. Therefore, at least as a rule of thumb, it seems advisable to link human life itself with personhood, to take "personam" as a "nomen dignitatis" (honorary title)<sup>31</sup>: a person is somebody, not something, who just by belonging to the human race is endowed with dignity, and therefore rights and – if he is accountable for his deeds – obligations.<sup>32</sup> Personhood so understood attaches only to the individual human being as the bearer of dignity.

From a sociological point of view, however, besides being endowed with reason, autonomy, and free will, an individual (natural as well as artificial, from the singular human being to humankind) exists

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distinguishing the unity of a society and that of the Trinity (STh I<sup>a</sup> q. 31 a. 1 arg. 2, and ad 2, I<sup>a</sup> q. 39 a. 3 co.).

<sup>30</sup> Both Augustine and Aquinas speak about "free decision" (*liberum arbitrium*), not free will (*libera voluntas*). For Aquinas "*liberum .... arbitrium est facultas voluntatis et rationis*" ("Free decision is a faculty of will and reason" – *De veritate*, q. 24 a. 3 arg. 1.). Consequently to act freely is to act "*per arbitrium voluntatis*" (by the decision of the will – *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2 cap. 23 n. 1.), and "*totius libertatis radix est in ratione constituta*" ("the basis of all freedom is built upon reason." *De veritate*, q. 24 a. 2 co.; see Kenny (1993), p. 83.). Accordingly, still Martin Luther writes *de servo arbitrio*, not *de serva voluntate*. For Kant, however, will is not a faculty of decision between possibilities, but the ability to initiate a new series of events („a power of *spontaneously* beginning a series of successive things or states" – *Critique of Pure Reason*, B476). For the significance of this change in the philosophical thinking see Arendt {Arendt, 1978, #73644}, II/p. 20.

<sup>31</sup> See Aquinas: *De potentia*, q. 8 a. 4 co.

<sup>32</sup> Spaemann (1996), p. 11. Person is an individual, paradoxically, through belonging to the human species.

necessarily in relations to others (including itself, 3, 4).<sup>33</sup> I can surely assert that I am somebody's son/daughter, in the average case one is somebody's husband/woman/lover, father/mother, etc.<sup>34</sup> Analogically, this applies to pluralities as well (patricians and plebeians, masters and slaves presuppose the existence of the other). This logic can be extended also to humankind seen as unity: the point of reference of humankind is the Earth, its existence is bound to this globe: without the Earth as a habitat "humankind" lacks reference.

## 2.2. THE KANTIAN PERSPECTIVE

The formulation of the above points is inspired to a great extent by the Kantian moral philosophy, the influence of which on ethical thinking is primarily due to the universal claim of his moral philosophy<sup>35</sup>. Because of its claim to universality, this standpoint

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<sup>33</sup> The father of this kind of relationism is Boëthius, for whom just as there is no "left" or "right" in itself, so there is no "Father" or "Son" in himself. Despite this relativity, however, "it cannot be said that any relative predicate augments, diminishes or changes the thing itself of which it is said." (*De Trinitate* 5).

<sup>34</sup> These cases are examples of relations that I am in average situations aware of. But relations, of course, constituted by the interactions of social actors, exist at any level of society as a texture of interactions. From the point of view of relational sociology, relations create a *sui generis* world; they can't be deduced from a higher category. Relations, according to Pierpaolo Donati, "as a *sui generis* reality" can account for example for the correspondence between individual and collective identity, and provide an explanation for collective action or agency. See Donati (2011), p. xvi.

<sup>35</sup> Kant's moral thought is usually summarised by reference to the principle of duty as epitomised in the so-called categorical imperative. Of the four formulations of this principle, three seem to establish formal criteria ("act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law", „So act that the maxim of your will could always hold at the same time as a principle in a giving of universal law", and "act in accordance with the maxims of a member giving universal laws for a merely possible kingdom of ends"), while the fourth a more substantive one: „So act that you use humanity, in your own person as well as in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means." With referring to "humanity", to our nature or human essence, this fourth formulation lays claim to an equal degree of generality as the other three. See Kant {Kant, 2015, #85518}, p. 72 (AAV 87 f.). The Kantian moral philosophy can also be seen as the culmination of the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition. From this perspective, the starting point is Aquinas' famous dictum "persona significat id quod est perfectissimum in tota natura, scilicet subsistens in rationali natura" ("person signifies what is most perfect in all nature, that is, a subsistent individual of a rational nature" – STh I<sup>a</sup> q. 29 a. 3 co.), the endpoint being Kant's view of the autonomous moral person. According to Aquinas, the human freedom has its roots in the reason, according to Kant although reason can't prove human freedom, it can't disprove it either: it must even postulate it together with the immortality of the soul and the existence of God as the three cornerstones of morality (in this respect, it is a result of the classification of theoretically possible types of persons that

seems to be able provide a solid common ground or starting point for outlining an ethical framework for thinking about the abilities (including “futurabilities”) that should be embraced and cultivated by social entities (“persons”) for the sake of self-preservation. In addition to it, the Kantian concept of person as an autonomous moral being who, in possession of reason, is able to act freely does not seem to involve a commitment to any particular worldview, or religion.<sup>36</sup>

As a first step, Kant proclaims the respect of humanity in the person declaring at the same time the autonomy of will<sup>37</sup>, and as a second, he defines reason as a power to judge autonomously.<sup>38</sup> The autonomy of will and the autonomy of the faculty of judgment are combined on the one hand with separating morality from religion, on the other hand with the “freedom to exhibit the thoughts and doubts which one cannot resolve oneself for public judgment”<sup>39</sup>, or the requirement of the public use of reason<sup>40</sup>, in the spirit of the famous battle cry of the Enlightenment: *Sapere aude!*

This moral philosophy, as stated, doesn’t seem to entail any explicit commitment in terms of religion, tradition, or way of life – in other respects, however, it does require strong commitments. First it implies commitment to the view that morality is central to the life of the individual, thus for any social entity. Second, the horizon of

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Kant speaks about angels.) His achievement can be seen in saving the possibility of a transcendent realm as a guarantee of the possibility of morality with the three postulates of freedom, immortality of soul and the existence of God. See Kant (2015), p. 106 f. (AAV 132.) (Aquinas’ definition, who quotes a bit earlier in the text Boëthius [Contra Eutychen, III] – “persona est rationalis naturae individua substantia” [STH I<sup>a</sup> q. 34 a. 3 ad 1] – fits in the larger context of the explicitly Christian problem of the person: since Augustinus, the Trinity has been regarded as the model of personhood, and still Aquinas’ statement refers to the possible uses of the concept of the person (whether and how we can refer to Creator and other beings surpassing humans with this notion).

<sup>36</sup>Emphasising, in the passage formulating the humanity formula of the categorical imperative that human being can “not even by God” “be used merely as a means ... without being at the same time himself an end” – see Kant (2015), p. 106. (AAV 131) –, and in the Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason declaring to be one’s own fault if somebody needs something else (“another Being over him”, or “an incentive other than the law itself”) “to do his duty”. See Kant (1998b), p. 33 (AAVI 3).

<sup>37</sup>Kant (2015), p. 106 (AAV 131ff).

<sup>38</sup>“Now the power to judge autonomously – that is, freely (according to principles of thought in general) – is called reason.” See Kant (1996), p. 255 (AAVII 27).

<sup>39</sup>See Kant (2000), p. 650 (A 752/B 780).

<sup>40</sup>See Kant (1991b), p. 55. (AAVIII 36 ff.)

Kantian moral philosophy is necessarily the whole world<sup>41</sup>, so this Kantian-Thomistic set of principles entails a stoically inspired cosmopolitanism.<sup>42</sup> The necessity of cosmopolitan position is also enforced by the incessant process of 'globalisation' (which in everyday life is manifested perhaps first of all in the development of the 'techno-economic order'<sup>43</sup>, first of all in the possibilities of worldwide communication).

Kant, however, who perhaps most consequently disclosed and investigated the implications of the concept of person as an entity endowed on the one hand with reason, on the other with (at least the theoretical possibility) free will, can at the same time with equal right be regarded to stand for the tragic failure of the Enlightenment project of justifying morality as well.<sup>44</sup> According to this approach, after having lost ground in the sciences, teleology has also lost its role as a principle of explanation also in the realm of morality. Without telos, however, moral prescriptions have lost their point of reference, and having lost it, they have lost their meaning, too. As a consequence of this, the conclusion from 'is' to 'ought' (from factual to normative) sentences ceased to be regarded as valid, without exemption. And, as a consequence of this, generally accepted norms ceased to count as valid, which in turn led to the rule of the individual judgment, or the birth of the specifically modern individual in "not only a largely new social setting, but one defined by a variety of not always coherent beliefs and concepts".<sup>45</sup> Moreover, according to the standard argumentation, Kant himself saw inclinations eventually as a hindrance to overcome if in conflict with the moral law or duty: for an action to have moral content, it must be performed from duty (to be in conformity with duty is not enough<sup>46</sup>) as against from inclinations. Since inclinations are essential constituents of human nature, and morality and the freedom of the will are reciprocal notions<sup>47</sup>, therefore to embrace the Kantian moral philosophy is to be

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<sup>41</sup> In addition to Kant's universalist attitude, this was also a consequence of the level globalisation attained in 18th century. See Kant (1991a), pp. 107 f (AAVIII 360).

<sup>42</sup> About the stoic roots of the Kantian cosmopolitanism see Nussbaum (1997).

<sup>43</sup> This expression is borrowed from Bell (1976), pp. 10-15.

<sup>44</sup> This development was influentially analysed with the tools of both analytical philosophy and conceptual history by MacIntyre (2007).

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, p. 61. For the detailed analysis of this process see chapters 4 and 5 of this book.

<sup>46</sup> For the distinction see Kant (2011), p. 25. (AA IV 398).

<sup>47</sup> Timmermann, (2007), p. 132.

involved in a tragic conflict between human nature and human freedom.

One possible source of the failure to justify morality had already been anticipated by Kant himself when he diagnosed antagonism, the 'unsociable sociability' inherent in human nature, and with it the will to master others.<sup>48</sup> This antagonism was elaborated by Hegel, for whom self-consciousness is "desire itself"<sup>49</sup>, which strives for recognition by the other, and "attains its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness".<sup>50</sup> The death struggle that therefore ensues for recognition and the always constrained and reversible power of the lord above the bondsman (of the master above the slave) who are dependent upon each other, can be seen as a modern expression of the inescapable sociality of human beings, or in other words: that the existence of an I presupposes and requires the existence of the Other, on the other hand, both the I and the Other embody a We, both going through the stages prescribed by a We (a group), phases of the evolving spirit (which can be understood as sharing a common past).<sup>51</sup>

The failure of the "Enlightenment project of justifying morality" as diagnosed by MacIntyre led to the rise of a new kind of "polytheism" hinted at one hundred years ago by Max Weber.<sup>52</sup> This new "polytheism" refers to the situation where rival views, concepts, values, and beliefs compete for prevalence, without any of them being in the position (in the lack of a standpoint counting as a measure) to decide between them.<sup>53</sup> For thinking seriously about the

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<sup>48</sup> See Kant (1991c), pp. 44 f. (AAVIII 20 ff.)

<sup>49</sup> The expression itself was probably borrowed from Spinoza's *Ethica* (IIIP57d). According to Spinoza, who together with Hobbes was the main exponent of the idea of self-preservation in modernity "desire is each man's essence or nature, in so far as it is conceived as determined to a particular action by any given modification of itself" (ibid., IIIP56d).

<sup>50</sup> Hegel (2010), p. 159.

<sup>51</sup> This is summarised in the famous formula: "I that is we and the we that is I" (ibid., p. 160.). The formula, which is a topic of lively debate among the Hegel scholars, is possible to be interpreted as to anticipate the theme of sociality. The topic of recognition is the core of the master/slave dialectic. This philosophical topos has been applied in an extended sense to the relationship between various pluralities (groups and cultures) as well, e.g. by Taylor (1994).

<sup>52</sup> See Weber (2008), pp. 57 f.

<sup>53</sup> This has also been one source of the various kinds of anti-intellectualism recently mightily supported by the use of ubiquitous technologies. The potentially liberating effects of this attitude go hand in hand with potentially dangerous consequences (e.g. the erosion of trust indispensable for social cohesion).

contemporary intellectual and moral situation, this ought to be taken for granted. In addition to this, thinking about our recent and future situation demands concepts and notions that are general enough to be able to account for the particularities of the orders (in Weber's sense) of society and the several intellectual and practical attitudes towards treating the emerging social phenomena, but still allowing concretisation without which they cannot meaningfully refer to the particular situation delivered by the experience.

### 3. CONSERVATIO AS OIKEIOSIS

#### 3.1. WHO IS CONSERVED?

"Members of a society" here, in accordance with the idea that morality is a central element for any social entity that can count as good, is taken to refer primarily to moral agents who are accountable for their deeds. This excludes animals from the set of "members of a society", despite the tendency to endow them with more and more rights, as well as the potentially conscious products of AI technology, robots. A future community could well decide to secure by the force of law their physical existence, etc. too, endowing them with rights and obligations just like humans (since nothing excludes the possibility of the boundaries between humans and computers using advanced AI technology being blurred). For the sake, however, of avoiding a "rights inflation" (in the sense of widening the circle of possible subjects of rights), it is reasonable to formulate as a preliminary qualification that neither animals, nor robots are to be regarded here as persons, because of the necessarily reduced character of the interactions possible with them, as well as because of their lack of accountability. This qualification, however, does not apply, according to the above said for those human beings who temporarily or permanently (because of their age, mental illness, addictions, etc.) lack the ability of reflection, and consequently – in their lack of self-consciousness – are not accountable for their actions (or whose deeds are not actions in this sense).<sup>54</sup> It is because of this consideration that the list given above (2.1) enumerates characteristic features instead of criteria of personhood.

That a crucially important function of the organised political community is to secure the physical existence of its members – which is, obviously, an eminent function of any organised political community – is agreed upon by the vast majority of concepts of the state, from Plato's theory to the classical liberal view of night-watchman state. (The ordinary working of the state – securing the

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<sup>54</sup> This was proposed by Spaemann (1996), p. 11., arguing against Derek Parfit and Peter Singer that every human being is ipso facto a person. This marks also the boundaries of validity and meaningfulness of virtue ethics, since from this perspective a human being fulfils its 'function' just by being in existence. (With this assertion, however, nothing is said about possible practical implications.)

physical existence of its citizens – can be seen as its continuous re-establishing and renewing itself). This can be guaranteed by institutional, or technical means. Striving to preserve themselves, individuals necessarily strive for preserving the community to which they belong, and inversely: striving to maintain itself, a community must strive for the preservation of its members. Therefore, in the case of a finite entity, the conservatio sui seems to be the counterpart of freedom, or the equivalent of negative freedom, namely the ability to prevent to be forced to do something, or eventually, be physically destroyed by an outer force.<sup>55</sup> So the link between the drive for self-preservation and freedom seems to be obvious: only entities as self-conscious, free agents can strive for preserving themselves, and it is free life that is eminently worth striving for, together with preserving the community ready to guarantee it.<sup>56</sup>

Due to the finiteness of the human being, that human being is a part of nature (his possibilities of self-realisation are bounded by the possibilities given by nature), freedom seems to exclude the possibility of acting contrary to nature.<sup>57</sup> The combination, the mutual dependence of freedom and self-preservation, seems to offer a perspective which allows securing freedom while doing justice to nature (both in the sense of general framework for living beings – the cosmos – and in the sense of one's characteristic dispositions).

Such doing justice to nature, however, has increasingly been perceived as being unduly restricted by nature, and as a consequence of this, technology has increasingly been regarded as an emancipatory force<sup>58</sup> with the promise of liberating humankind from the rule of nature. So state technology has been emerging recently as a further guarantor of humans' physical existence. Technology became a 'vocation of humankind'<sup>59</sup>: it appears to

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<sup>55</sup>In the sense of the distinction between positive and negative liberty made by Isaiah Berlin, who at the same time stressed that this distinction was not absolute, since "they start at no great logical distance from each other", cf. Berlin (2002), p. 35f.

<sup>56</sup>This of course doesn't exclude that rules and customs not consciously followed and observed can also contribute to self-preservation, see above, 2.1.

<sup>57</sup>This is a weaker version of Spinoza's definition: "That thing is called free, which exists solely by the necessity of its own nature, and of which the action is determined by itself alone." (P1d7).

<sup>58</sup>This has recently been exposed systematically by Höffe (2015), pp. 43 ff.

<sup>59</sup>See Jonas (1979), pp. 31-34.

provide in principle much more than any state ever could, that is to transcend human nature. Attempts at transcending human nature are manifested in the various ways of 'enhancing' human beings, as well as in the ideas of trans-, or post-humanism that eventually claim to give immortality to humankind. The price of this, however – if, as usually the case, the continuity of consciousness, or psychological continuity are taken to be as criteria of personal identity –, seems to be the reduction or restriction of the person to her mental or cognitive aspects, and with it the abstraction from the body (which amounts to the denial of the undivided nature – cf. "individual") of person.<sup>60</sup> To abstract from body radically questions the image of human person according to which it is an original unity not to be divided into different 'parts'.<sup>61</sup> Immersing oneself into the virtual world tends to deprive one of a basic characteristics of person as listed above: the identifiability in space and time<sup>62</sup>. In terms of identifiability, body functions as an interface between the person and its world. From this point of view, creation of virtual reality completes only the ongoing process of producing ever new electric 'extensions of man'.<sup>63</sup> According to perhaps most widespread opinion, their inherent nature is to "by-pass space and time"<sup>64</sup>. If this is in any respect so, it must affect our concept of the person as well because of the criterion of identifiability in space and time (which in contrast to the other characteristics obviously applies without exception to human beings). This phenomenon was diagnosed fifty years ago by Marshall McLuhan, who described electronic media as extensions of consciousness, instead of body. The final phase of producing extensions of man is "the technological simulation of consciousness, when the creative process of knowing will be collectively and corporately extended to the whole of human society...".<sup>65</sup> In itself, it is a formulation of the cosmopolitan horizon supported and necessitated by technological development, or at least the

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<sup>60</sup> And as a consequence, it would deprive of personhood those human beings who, for whatever reasons, fall short of fulfilling these criteria.

<sup>61</sup> In another context, Hubert L. Dreyfus drew the attention to the relevant changes caused by the new experience of immersing oneself into the virtual reality stressing that by eliminating contact with physical reality it deprives human experience from its proper context, with considerable consequences for the identity as well. Cf. Dreyfus (2009), particularly pp. 121 ff.

<sup>62</sup> The logical endpoint of this being the pythagorean/gnostic view of body as a prison (σῶμα/σῆμα – cf. Plato: Gorgias 493a 2) be fled from. See Heim (1993), p. 101.

<sup>63</sup> The term is a borrowing from McLuhan (1994).

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 105.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., pp. 3ff.

description of a situation which can give rise to a new kind of "Republic of Letters".<sup>66</sup> That the attitudes towards these developments vary on a wide scale from nearly total rejection to fast unconditional embracing, only underlines the significance of technological developments, including their potential regarding the alleged emancipation of humankind from nature's yoke.<sup>67</sup>

The drive for self-preservation (*conservatio sui*) is a general anthropological feature and generally used principle or model of the world's working; at the same time, however, due particularly to its constitutive role in rationality<sup>68</sup>, it counts as a specifically modern phenomenon providing the basic structure of modern philosophy, or theoretical thinking.<sup>69</sup> This structure or model entails on the one hand the demise of teleological explanations in scientific thinking, including philosophy; on the other hand, due to its use of rationality as an instrument of power, it entails a "disenchantment" – it marks the end of thinking about man's place in the cosmos, as well the end of thinking primarily in terms of virtues in moral philosophy. Since then, the prevailing paradigm for scientific thinking has been that of self-preservation, the alternatives to which were doomed to remain peripheral.

Conservation in this context, due to our perceptual being to a great extent under the spell of the metaphor of the irreversible "flow" of time, can't possibly mean the effort to preserve the individual (or any entity) in the same, identical state not subject to change. If we still

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<sup>66</sup> This possibility was outlined by Nyiri (2008); the conclusion of his paper seems to be a reiteration of the description given by McLuhan: "the network individual is the person reintegrated... into the collective thinking of society", see (1994), p. 149. This possibility of a "global village" goes hand in hand with retribalisation due to the same technological means seeing to McLuhan's worst fears be tragically realised. (Cf. McLuhan (1994), pp. 24. 236. 304.)

<sup>67</sup> The one extreme is represented by Dreyfus (2009), according to whom virtual reality deprives man of the bodily dimension, and with it his experiences and perceptions from meaning. (This has serious consequences for the ability to choose, for the ability to form attachments with others.) In short, in this analysis, the virtual world deprives human being of his life-world. The other extreme is represented by Kelly (2010), for whom "technium" is an autonomous sphere with the drive to maintain and perpetuate itself. It "extends beyond shiny hardware to include culture, art, social institutions, and intellectual creations of all types." (ibid., pp. 11 ff.)

<sup>68</sup> It is explicated by Abbott, Wallace, and Sapsford (2016).

<sup>69</sup> This thesis was formulated by Henrich (1974). The close connection between freedom and self-preservation is provided by consciousness, and historically is further supported by the fact that freedom, too, in the sense individual autonomy, became a central topic of moral philosophy with modernity.

keep speaking – necessarily metaphorically, in a figurative sense – in terms of identity, reflecting upon ourselves as ourselves, we do so by keeping another aspect of conservation in mind. To conserve, in ordinary language means not to preserve something or somebody in an alleged identical state, but according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, “to preserve ... in its existing state from destruction or change”, i. e. to preserve something or somebody as the same individual identifiable in space and time (without the requirement to be internally unchanged). To conserve oneself means to avert the threat of annihilation, be it by another person to whom intentions can be attributed, or by the nature (or by their combination). Therefore, whoever wants to conserve himself, is necessarily oriented toward the future, attempting at preparing himself for possible risks and dangers for the sake of securing his physical existence, including his reproductive existence in the next generation, proving his capacity as an agent. The attitude aiming at conservation is, therefore, basically directed toward the future.<sup>70</sup> This self-preservation, however, in the case of *human* beings means not the preservation of the mere physical existence, but preservation of oneself within his *life-world*, together with preservation of the life-world for the possible future generation. This attitude involves the appropriation of one’s cultural and social settings, making oneself home in his surrounding world (*milieu*). Self-preservation in this sense, which involves also caring for others (the next generation) within an open horizon, is understood here as *oikeiosis*.<sup>71</sup>

The future oriented conservative attitude, due the awareness of the human finitude, cannot but aim at conservation in the sense of continuation in the next generation, in another person. The drive for self-preservation therefore dictates to be open for the future, to accept that although we keep speaking in terms of personal identity, this identity is not to be understood as the identity of a certain person identifiable in space and time, but as that of somebody with whom an open horizon to future, in a “vivid”, or “living present” embraces “by

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<sup>70</sup>I rely here on the argumentation by Nyíri (2012), who mentions as a matter of course the conservation of one’s own culture and religion. This is the sphere of previous attachments one can not choose.

<sup>71</sup>Oikeiosis is taken here, following a consideration of Reinhard Brandt (see Brandt (2003), p. 181) primarily as *conservatio sui* in a narrower sense, inasmuch as referring to the activities of self-conservation in a life-world.

protention"<sup>72</sup> the next generation as well. The conservation of the personal identity in the present supposedly without extension seems to be a theoretical possibility, borderline case, a reduced version of the conservation of the personal identity with an open horizon. More generally, from this perspective, the "individual" human being is a borderline case of plurality. If this plurality ordered, then it can be understood as a unity or "individual". This entails, however that any ordered plurality can be endowed with attributes traditionally (or from the point of view of the methodological individualism) acknowledged as the attributes only of individual human beings (mental capacities, actions) – the members of such pluralities are "reflexive in a social, instead of an individual way" because they are "in a special relation".<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> The expressions borrowed from Edmund Husserl and Alfred Schütz intend to underline the not necessarily conscious nature of this activity. On the other hand, the use of these terms is intended to suggest that this conservative attitude may be rooted in the kind of time experience described by Augustinus and Husserl, or at least that there seems to be an affinity (*Wahlverwandschaft*) between them. A further suggestion is that although the consciousness is a criterion of personhood, it of course doesn't entail that someone is a person only and if only he always acts consciously.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. above, note xx. According e. g. to Archer (2016a), p. 151, the crucial difference between a single member of a community and the community itself is that the latter lacks self-awareness, that is one cannot attribute legitimately self-awareness to a group, since its decisions, feelings etc. can be reduced to the acts and mental states of the members making the majority at a given moment. Consequently, to speak about a corporate will seems to be a *μετάβασις εἰς ἄλλο γένος* ("πλήθει γὰρ καὶ ὀλιγότῃτι νομίζουσι διαφέρειν ἄλλ' οὐκ εἶδει", Aristotle: *Politica*, 1252a 9f.). It may seem to be a residuum of magical thinking to attribute intentions and mental states to groups and institutions; at the same time, however, it can also be seen as the manifestation of the "intentional stance" ("we make sense of each other by adopting the intentional stance" see Dennett (1987), p. 12), as well as that of attachment (attachment to mere abstractions, institutions etc. presupposes a degree of self-consciousness which does not characterise the everyday behaviour guided mostly by customs and mores), even of a desire to re-enchant social relations that can contribute to social cohesion. It may remain problematic to speak about the consciousness, desires, or will of a group, but it is not less problematic to speak about these in case of individual human beings. Moreover, according to everyday experience, a group or an artificial person can well exercise influence, or is able to decide (*senatus consultum*); in international relations it does make sense to speak about the will of a country, since as an *ultima ratio* it can be supported by military force. That an abstract entity – the *res publica* – can be regarded as a person is expressed e. g. in Hobbes earlier cited statement.

### 3.2. WHO CONSERVES?

It is all the more justified to proceed this way, because in legal terms individuals (with the exception of those under age, suffering mental illness, etc.) are responsible for their actions, even if they offend the law not out of disrespect of it (e. g. following rules dictated by customs and morals, or if they do not act consciously at all). Consequently, it seems possible to apply the terms of moral responsibility mostly figuratively even for the deeds of individual human beings. Moreover, it is difficult to imagine to speak about individual contents of consciousness in any other way than metaphorically: speaking about individual morality or private language leads to absurdity (the so called private moral or private language equally presupposes the existence of a moral code or language common to a group).<sup>74</sup> If the above terms (consciousness, responsibility, etc.) are still being used for the actions of individual agents, it seems equally justified to use them with the necessary qualifications for the actions of pluralities understood as individuals. This would make possible to attribute decisions to collectivities, with responsibility for their actions making them accountable for their deeds. The advantage of this would be that by and large the same norms of behaviour would be operative (of course with the necessary modifications, and always keeping in mind the workability) at the various levels of social entities which could contribute to social cohesion. This might offer a remedy for the perceived 'macro-moral disconnect'.<sup>75</sup> Thus, the "self" to be preserved can refer here to any kind of individual at any level of society. These individuals identifiable in space and time act in a lifeworld, i. e. in a world, the various constituents of which (including other persons) have some meaning for them, which orient them, and toward which they typically turn with some intention which makes them agents.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> As it has recently been emphasised e.g. in Wittgenstein's wake by Kenny & Kenny (Kenny & Kenny, 2006), p. 138ff, or in Husserlian spirit by Sokolowski (2008), pp. 68 ff.

<sup>75</sup> According e. g. to Porpora, "macro-moral disconnect" is "a cultural tendency not to regard macro-moral issues in moral terms, to regard, that is, morally freighted, collective actions like war or torture or the provision of health care to all as matters not of a moral nature, to regard them instead simply as matters of politics or of purely self- or, at most, national self-interest." See Porpora (2015), p. 193.

<sup>76</sup> This means of course that the world doesn't consist of pure data for them (in the sense of the information theory): agent is someone in a lifeworld (as opposed to the actor in a network, in terms of the actor/network theory). The importance of lifeworld has recently been stressed in Husserl's wake by Scruton (2014), pp. 70-76 as a distinctive feature of humans in opposition to

### 3.3. THE ARISTOTELIAN PERSPECTIVE OF THE POLIS

The sense of preservation highlighted above (3.1) implies that the primary goal of individuals (individual human beings as well as ordered pluralities) must obviously be their *self*-preservation, since without being able to ascribe deeds, thoughts, feelings, etc. to *themselves* as persons, preservation would be meaningless in the absence of a referent.

According to the model sketched above, every social individual represents an ordered plurality (the individual human being can be regarded as a boundary case). Therefore, individual drive for self-preservation implies the more or less conscious striving for the preservation of others as well. Thus, the drive for preserving oneself eventually means the striving for finding a home in the cosmos (within the most embracing order transcending humankind).

In its most consequent elaboration by the stoic Hierocles<sup>77</sup>, this concept of *oikeiosis* can intuitively be represented with concentric circles embracing ever greater pluralities from the individual human being to humankind. According to this model, one's self-preservation is intimately connected with the preservation of humankind: one's virtue consists of closing the concentric circles ever closer together. This stoic concept – previously appropriated by Christian thinking<sup>78</sup> – can be seen as revived among others in Kantian moral philosophy.

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animals, which involves the rejection of giving explanation of social phenomena in terms of science (e. g. evolutionary biology) alone. His main opponent in this respect is Dennett who accepts the language of intentions only for explanatory purposes. (This would question for example the distinction between animals and humans, as well as between humans and robots.) In other respect, his thinking is directed against the neurophilosophy as represented by Patricia Churchland threatens the annihilation "the concept of the person, which has been a central concern of philosophy at least since the Middle Ages" (Scruton (2014), p. 52.). Scruton defends the notion of the person as a free agent responsible for his deeds, at the price of a sharp distinction between the life world and the sciences. (The relation of science and life-world was not clarified enough by Husserl who alternates between separating without any qualification the life-world from sciences and regarding science as a sphere of the life-world. See Carr (1970).

<sup>77</sup> For a recent analysis of the notion see the introductory essay to Hierocles' writings by the editor Ramelli (2009), pp. xxx-xlvii.

<sup>78</sup> See Ramelli (2014).

This model of the *oikeiosis* ('homification', or 'home-making'<sup>79</sup>) seems to presuppose infinity on the part of the individual. However, due to human finitude (including finitude of natural resources), and the requirement of workability (including stability of the political community), as well as because circles ('my city', 'my nation'<sup>80</sup>) are not always easy to identify in today's world, the virtue of *oikeiosis* can but imperfectly be exercised in the real world.

Cicero, who used the expression *conservatio sui* for the first time, declares that "whoever aims at self-preservation must also love each of their parts"<sup>81</sup>, suggesting the requirement of preserving them in the best possible state.<sup>82</sup> Implicit in this assertion is the requirement of acknowledging that the whole precedes the parts as formulated with the help of a bodily metaphor by Aristotle.<sup>83</sup>

In this model, each bodily organ has its own function, and each has to fulfil its function should the whole work – and, by inversion, an organ is truly an organ if and only if it fulfils its function, otherwise not. Its virtue consists precisely in fulfilling its function.<sup>84</sup> The whole organised for the sake of good works properly only if its parts work properly. In this political context, not any plurality counts as a whole – a plurality can count a whole if it is ordered obeying an overarching goal, a *telos*. In this model, the *telos* of "every human community" (κοινωνία) and every action is the good ("for all men do all their acts with a view to achieving something which is, in their view, a good."), and the "most sovereign and inclusive association" is the city-state (πόλις)<sup>85</sup>. Thus, the maintenance of a political order seems to be a necessary condition for associations and activities directed at the good, and conversely: for any association or activity to count as

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<sup>79</sup>These words are suggested by Kenny (see Kenny (2010), pp. 281 ff., Kenny & Kenny (2006), pp. 184 f.) as a literal translation of the greek terminus technicus, with the intention to refer to the process converse of the adaptation to cosmic nature.

<sup>80</sup>See Kenny & Kenny (2006), p. 185.

<sup>81</sup>"cui proposita sit conservatio sui, necesse est huic partes quoque sui caras esse": De finibus bonorum et malorum V.XIII.37. See Cicero (2001).

<sup>82</sup>Earlier he mentioned that "various arts are required to assist nature" in preserving itself. "Chief among them is the art of living, whose purpose is to preserve what nature bestows and supplement what she lacks." (IV.VII. 16.)

<sup>83</sup>In the sense explored by Aristotle, *Politica* 1253a 20 ff.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid.

<sup>85</sup>Aristoteles *Politica* 1252a 1-7. See Aristotle (2009).

good, it seems necessary that they contribute to the maintenance of a political order, and with this, the identity of political community.

Writing about duties, Cicero gave a comprehensive list of various associations.<sup>86</sup> Starting from the association in the widest possible sense, brought about by the “tie of common humanity”, he enumerates “nearer relation of race, nation, and language”, the city, and the circle of the kindred. After this deduction “from above”, he starts again “from beneath”, from the closest tie between man and woman who unite for the sake of producing offspring, thereby constituting the home (οἶκος), which is the “germ of the city”. (“But”, he adds, “of all associations none is more excellent, none more enduring, than when good men, of like character, are united in intimacy.”)

The associations thus enumerated by Cicero, can be seen, relying on Arendt’s distinction<sup>87</sup>, as belonging to two different realms, the public and the private – the former being that of man as ‘political’, while the latter that of man as ‘social animal’.<sup>88</sup> In this model, while the household is the realm of necessities, and the polis is that of freedom, the household is the condition of freedom, since it provides the necessities of life, thus securing the physical existence of the community. At the same time, however, it remains true that “the city is prior in the order of nature to the family and the individual. The reason for this is that the whole is necessarily prior to the part”, since without the whole the parts wouldn’t have functions to fulfil.<sup>89</sup> The “formal cause” what gives shape to (informs) the polis (the historical phenomenon) is the politeia (constitution), “a way of organizing the inhabitants of a city”.<sup>90</sup>

Thus, from the Aristotelian perspective (applying it also to reflect upon the modern state), the first of all characteristics of “viable societies” is their ordered nature, their meaningful articulation, which

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<sup>86</sup> De officiis I.16–17.

<sup>87</sup> Arendt proposes to make a (philologically not quite justified) distinction between ‘political animal’ (ζῷον πολιτικόν) and ‘social animal’ (animal sociale). (See Arendt (1998), pp. 22–28.)

<sup>88</sup> In addition to the private and the public sphere, also a further sphere can be identified according to Arendt as the “social sphere”, consisting of associations and communities don’t seem to belong neither to the private, nor to the public sphere, threatening both eventually with destruction. See Arendt (1998), p. 28.

<sup>89</sup> Aristoteles Politica, 1253a 18ff.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 1274b 38.

in the (polytheistic) modernity encounters the problem of securing social cohesion.<sup>91</sup> The main question is, as Charles Taylor formulated it, the following: “How can free societies – societies whose institutions can only function with widespread voluntary participation – maintain their unity and their vitality?”<sup>92</sup>

This question displays a parallel with (or perhaps can be traced back to) Kant’s problem of the necessity of an “incentive” (*Triebfeder*) to perform a duty<sup>93</sup>; a crucial requirement for both maintaining institutions of democratic societies and performing duties seems to be the emotional attachment. For securing the unity and vitality of free societies two important ways offer themselves, according to Taylor – both of which can be subsumed under the single notion of culture. One is that of *cultura animi*<sup>94</sup>, the other being the *cultura dei*<sup>95</sup>. The first way is that of cultivating the soul, fostering emotions and attitudes that help maintain societies deemed to be able to guarantee worthwhile life for its citizens,<sup>96</sup> while the other is to see the state or the political community as a manifestation of some transcendent power (or at least to see the society as having “a touch of divine”<sup>97</sup>). The two ways are not difficult to combine: the notion of conscientia (συνείδησις) can serve as a suitable starting point for both approaches.<sup>98</sup>

### 3.4. HUMANITY BOUND TO EARTH

In the sense of relationism outlined in chapter 2, the reference point of humankind, from an ordered unity perspective, is the Earth. It means that humankind, consisting of finite individuals identifiable in space and time who can preserve themselves in the next generation, is bound to Earth inasmuch as it marks for itself the ultimate

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<sup>91</sup>For this argumentation see Taylor (2015), pp. 100, 121ff.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., p. 122.

<sup>93</sup>See for example Kant (1991d), p. 46 (AAVI 218).

<sup>94</sup>Cicero Tusculanae disputationes III.13.

<sup>95</sup>This can again be understood in two ways: “Colimus enim Deum, et colit nos Deus.” – Augustinus Sermones LXXXVII 1.1.

<sup>96</sup>This approach has recently been influentially applied among others by Martha Nussbaum, see (2013).

<sup>97</sup>See Taylor (2015), p. 71. The most pregnant formulation of this idea by Hegel is the following: It is God’s way in the world that the state should exist”. See Hegel (2008), pp. 233 f.

<sup>98</sup>This possibility was identified in a slightly different context by Manent (2012).

boundaries of the possible life-world. The conservation of humankind in the next planet (under a new heaven, on a new Earth), or in a new, artificially generated and secured way of existence as conceived by the post-, or transhumanists, would entail a radical change as a consequence of which "man would have to live under man-made conditions" instead of ones offered by the Earth<sup>99</sup>, thus the eradication of humankind, its uprooting from the literally understood life-world of "the children of nature".<sup>100</sup> The self-preservation of humankind in a physical sense would perhaps be secured, however, without the conservation of humanity (the human essence and dignity), i. e. humankind in its life-world. Thus, for the future-directed conservative attitude, the previous attachment to Earth must be unquestionable.<sup>101</sup> Cutting this bond, which religates humankind with its natural habitat, would mean the completion and sealing of the process as a result of which humankind becomes its own maker and creator, eventually threatening its own destruction. The unquestioned and unconditional attachment to the Earth as a habitat seems to provide the horizon for all discussion about the human condition in the future. Therefore, the decision about the artificial extension of natural limits for humankind seems to be the decision about human life itself, consequently "it is a political question of the first order and therefore can hardly be left to the decision of professional scientists or professional politicians".<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Arendt (1998), p. 10.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>101</sup> Arendt regards as the manifestations of the same "flight from the world" (Weltflucht), "desire to escape from imprisonment to the earth" the attempts at conquering the space and creating an artificial life, because they are directed "toward cutting the last tie through which even man belongs among the children of nature." See Arendt (1998), p. 2.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

## 4. WORTHINESS

“Persona” is a “nomen dignitatis” (title of honour)<sup>103</sup>: it confers dignity on its bearer. Beyond being a descriptive, it is also a prescriptive notion, it contains the moment of normativity. As stated above, in this paper it is regarded as an axiom that each and every individual, by belonging to the human species, is endowed with dignity.<sup>104</sup> From this, however, follows that only the individual human being can be the bearer of “dignity”, while other properties (e. g. will and consciousness) can be applied to any ordered pluralities as well. This also suggests that the source of one’s dignity can not be another human person (neither one can attribute dignity to oneself<sup>105</sup>). This privileged status of dignity may be suggested also by the linguistic fact that in English “dignity” isn’t derived from a corresponding adjective (‘dignus’ – a word which offers a wide semantic field for its interpretation).<sup>106</sup> Dignity is “the quality of being worthy or honourable; worthiness, worth, nobleness, excellence” (OED). Thus, dignity implies value.<sup>107</sup> This privileged nature of dignity was expressed powerfully by Kant who made e. g. a distinction between price and dignity, declaring: “What is elevated above any price, and hence allows of no *equivalent*; whereas what is elevated above any price, and hence allows of no equivalent, has a dignity.”<sup>108</sup> This human being endowed with dignity must be pleasing for or beloved by (grata)<sup>109</sup> the society to count as worthy to live in<sup>110</sup>, and conversely:

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<sup>103</sup> See Aquinas Super Sent., lib. 1 d. 10 q. 1 a. 5 co.

<sup>104</sup> For a position according to which dignity is a quality that “can be attributed to entities other than [individual] persons, including populations, societies, cultures, and civilisation” see e.g. Bostrom (2008), pp. 193-195. (On the intricacies of the individual and collective dignity see Werner (2015).)

<sup>105</sup> However, it can very well be denied: “... I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof” (Mt 8,8).

<sup>106</sup> As observed by Kolnai (1976), p. 251.

<sup>107</sup> As is suggested in German by the etymological connection between Werth and Würde.

<sup>108</sup> See Kant (2011), p. 97 (AA IV 434).

<sup>109</sup> “Gratus”, unlike “dignus” does imply a relation: “beloved”, “dear” can be somebody for somebody, or grateful to somebody. Human beings endowed with dignity are to be “beloved” by societies worthy to live in. However, whether speaking about being grateful to somebody or something makes sense, remains an open question.

<sup>110</sup> This standpoint attaches value to the existence itself of the human person, and thereby acknowledges her privileged status in nature, or it implies speciesism. Acknowledging human dignity due to belonging to the human species seems to stand or fall with speciesism. To accept this standpoint is to an extent of course a matter of choice, particularly in an age of “polytheism” with the alleged incommensurability of standpoints and values, along with the proliferation of “cultures”.

the society or community (although not endowed with dignity) must be beloved by and dear for the individual, since it provides him the life-world, in the absence of which it would be impossible for him to exercise his free and his reason alike. The source of the characteristic features (not the criterion) of the person, from the perspective of this paper, is the capacity of free will (or decision) based on the reason. The necessary condition of free will as well as reason is the existence of a community. For carrying through intentions and revealing insights a space seems to be necessary – in this “public space”<sup>111</sup>, where the actor is person in the two etymological senses of the word: by entering the “space of appearances”, of “something that is being seen and heard by others as well as by ourselves”, he necessarily appears in a mask, and can be heard by others through it<sup>112</sup>. So the most important condition of the conservation of any worthwhile society is the possibility of communication: the condition of the κοινωνία (“partnership”) is the *communicatio*.

The second criterion of a society worthy living in is that it takes human dignity for granted, at the same time acknowledging that the source of this dignity is beyond society itself. Since human dignity is not something given by society, all the state can do for securing a milieu worthy living in is guarantee that its operations obey impersonal rules, excluding arbitrary use of power in the service of mere selfish interests (the soil of corrupt forms of constitutions)<sup>113</sup>. In this respect the chief characteristics of perverted constitutions (that they serve one person’s interests) is manifested in that they tend to make the law “situational”<sup>114</sup>, which threatens eventually to lead to the denial of the order of unity. In contrast to societies with defective and perverted constitutions, a “well-ordered society”<sup>115</sup> is regarded here as actors who obey rules – which are subject to supervision, the process of which is transparent – in contact with each other as well

<sup>111</sup> See Arendt, (1965), pp. 50-58.

<sup>112</sup> Arendt explores the senses of persona in (1965). p. 293.

<sup>113</sup> Aristotle Politica 1279a 17-21.

<sup>114</sup> See Carl Schmitt’s dictum: “All law is “situational law”.” Schmitt (2005), p. 13.

<sup>115</sup> For Plato, the first thinker to make an attempt at describing the requirements and characteristics of a well-ordered (καλῶς οἰκισομένη) politeia (Respublica 421 C 2f), the soul can be well-ordered (εὖ κεκοσμημένος, cf. Timaeus 90 C 3) in an eminent sense. Recently, Rawls has deployed the notion of well-ordered society (or rather “peoples” – see Rawls (1999), p. 4) referring to Jean Bodin as a wide enough notion to include “decent peoples”, “whose basic institutions meet certain specified conditions of political right and justice” (ibid. p. 3.)

as with actors of other well-ordered societies. The use of this formal criterion intends to acknowledge on the one hand the state of value pluralism, on the other it seems to reflect that individuals are precious for and beloved by the community as a whole, which doesn't treat them as mere means for achieving allegedly transcendent goals. Taking extraordinary measures (declaring state of exception)<sup>116</sup> can be justified according to this approach only for the sake of preventing an external attack that threatens imminent physical annihilation, otherwise it must seem to be rather a sign of fatal weakness. A community in a 'state of exception' or 'permanent revolution' is not regarded here as a community worth living in: such a state may be rather the manifestation of disintegration, a loss of identity. On the other hand, in a well-ordered community the actual use of power for securing social cohesion is of vital importance for the individual, since the collapse of the community threatens him with the loss of his life-world. With Arendt's words: "What first undermines and then kills political communities is loss of power and final impotence; and power ... exists only in its actualisation."<sup>117</sup>

Dignity, in light of the above, is transcendent in the sense that it can not be bestowed upon any individual by anybody, and due to this it is also unalienable from the individual, who cannot be deprived of it, neither can he renounce it. Individuals, however, are born into a community, the rules, customs and traditions of which must remain mostly unquestioned. They are not chosen by the individuals; they are objective, seem to be external to him, preceding any choice, the lack of which tends to be a source of serious disorders.<sup>118</sup> Thus, social cohesion, the possibility of communication, can be supported by unwritten law (*agraphos nomos*, sanctioned by the tradition) as well – by a set of rules followed more or less consciously and voluntarily by the citizens (the only condition being that they contribute to maintaining a well-ordered society).<sup>119</sup> Or, with other words, they

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<sup>116</sup> According to Carl Schmitt's definition: "Sovereign is he who decides on the exception." (Schmitt (2005), p. 5). He highlights with it the power due to which the sovereign is distinguished from everybody else. Being forced to take extraordinary measures instead of using the usual ones suggests rather the sovereign's weakness instead of real power.

<sup>117</sup> Arendt (1998), p. 200.

<sup>118</sup> See e.g. Durkheim (2013), p. 20.

<sup>119</sup> As diagnosed by Höffe (2007), p. 21., this aspect of the law seems to be to a great extent neglected by current theories of justice and state.

have in this sense a “transcendent” nature (without necessarily assuming explicitly a religious character).<sup>120</sup>

In addition to these two criteria there is also a fundamental indicator of the worthiness of a society. If “living is being for living things” then the willingness to live in a given community is a fundamental indicator of its worthiness to live in. This is captured by Renan’s famous dictum: “L’existence d’une nation est ... un plébiscite de tous les jours, comme l’existence de l’individu est une affirmation perpétuelle de vie.”<sup>121</sup> The willingness to live in a given community can be seen as a particular case of the willingness to live at all. The willingness to live has to all its abstractness still something to do with community, since it is eventually about the willingness to live as a member of the most embracing community, humankind.

The *taedium vitae* can assume several forms, from the various forms of self-destruction to suicide. However serious consequences these phenomena can have, particularly if being fixed in patterns, they become Durkheimian “social facts”; they may affect only the individual indulged in self-destruction or committing suicide. The attitude, however, to question the *value* of life, worthiness of living itself may prove more far reaching. This attitude of life (or world) rejection, which was first pregnantly formulated in archaic greek thought<sup>122</sup> and exerted a powerful influence through gnosticism<sup>123</sup>, has recently been assuming various forms of anti-natalism, which denies the value of life itself (at least compared with suffering it

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<sup>120</sup> They can have, however, much to do with religion. Analysing Durkheim’s notion of religion as a product of society, Scruton has recently directed attention to “the relations of belonging that precede political choice and make it possible”, adding that they “are the core of all true communities, and are recognised precisely by their “transcendent” character – that is to say, their character as arising from outside the arena of individual choice.” He adds that “the normal tendency of the religious urge is toward membership”, meaning by it a “network of relations that are neither contractual nor negotiated, but which are received as a destiny and a gift.” He critically remarks that “It is one of the weaknesses of modern political philosophy that it makes so little room for relations of this kind”. Scruton (2014), p. 14. So it seems that two fundamental phenomena of any society, the very conscious use of power and the largely unconscious following of rules to a large extent neglected topics.

<sup>121</sup> See Renan (1882), p. 27.

<sup>122</sup> Theognis Elegiae 425–428: “The best of all things for earthly men is not to be born and not to see the beams of the bright sun; but if born, then as quickly as possible to pass the gates of Hades, and to lie deep buried.” (Transl. by J. M. Edmonds.)

<sup>123</sup> See Jonas (2001), pp. 144f.

brings about) and regards human reproduction irresponsible and immoral.<sup>124</sup>

## 5. CONCLUSION

### MUTUALITY OF RIGHTS AND DUTIES

In light of the above considerations, the individual human being is as the bearer of dignity “transcendent” to the community of which he is a member, on the other hand he is also embedded in that community; this community provides the life-world for him, the customs and rules to be obeyed and followed without the bounds of which his dignity (although in this approach it is independent of human recognition)<sup>125</sup> would be an empty notion. In this sense, although itself not a bearer of dignity, society (or community in general) is “transcendent” to the individual.

From the model deployed in this paper, according to which in addition to individual human beings, ordered pluralities are also to be regarded as persons, follows the mutuality of rights: a right from the perspective of the individual is an obligation from the perspective of the community, and vice versa: a right of the community appears as an obligation for the individual – this mutuality seems to be a *conditio sine qua non* of guaranteeing human dignity.<sup>126</sup> A possible consequence of acknowledging the mutuality of rights is preventing “rights inflation” (“the tendency to define anything desirable as a

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<sup>124</sup> This view is concisely formulated by the title of Sarah Perry’s book: “Every Cradle is a Grave”. Recently, Thomas Metzinger (2017) has outlined a scenario according to which “the emergence of a purely ethically motivated anti-natalism on highly superior computational systems is conceivable”, facing real technological possibilities.

<sup>125</sup> In Hegelian spirit, Fukuyama asserts a close connection between the dignity and the recognition by others, for the price of a non sequitur: “... dignity is not felt unless it is recognised by other people; it is an inherently social and, indeed, political phenomenon.” (Fukuyama (2012). From the fact that dignity to be experienced the recognition by others is necessary, it does not follow that it is in itself a social phenomenon.

<sup>126</sup> From the perspective of this investigation, the contested notion of ‘dignity’ typically involves the freedom to decide according to reason and conscience.

right"<sup>127</sup>); mutuality is based upon "negotiation and agreement"<sup>128</sup>, which involves responsibility and accountability – these are typical characteristics of personhood. At the same time, mutuality can contribute to strengthening social cohesion as well as maintaining the community under the circumstances of scarceness. On the other hand, the existence of the community can guarantee rights for the individuals – this insight was summarised straightforwardly by Arendt: there is only one right of man, that of membership in a political community.<sup>129</sup>

## THE REALMS OF FREEDOM

From the considerations outlined above it follows that a community or society worth living in has to fulfil two criteria: 1. reason and freedom are regarded as undisputed values (in practice it presupposes and requires a well-ordered state, which secures a public space for discussing ideas), 2. it respects life, since "living is being for living things".

Freedom is regarded here<sup>130</sup> as a general anthropological characteristic of human beings, and at the same time (together with self-preservation) as a specific historical phenomenon of modernity. Accordingly, the SFI to be constructed must take into account the main spheres where human freedom can manifest itself: 1. the realm of technology as a force liberating from the constraints of nature, 2. the realm of economy and society (it is the realms of various kinds of social entities<sup>131</sup>), 3. the realm of creativity (science and arts), 4. the realm of political freedom, and 5. the realm of personal freedom.<sup>132</sup> The most important task is to examine the phenomena in these spheres from the perspective of the question in what respects and to which degree they support freedom, and with it self-preservation. Each sphere is to be regarded from the perspective of the ability of self-preservation (the future-directed conservation) of the given

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<sup>127</sup> See Ignatieff (2001), p. 346.

<sup>128</sup> In referring to the "rights inflation" I rely mainly on Scruton's analysis, see Scruton (2014), pp. 85sq.

<sup>129</sup> See Arendt (1949), p. 770.

<sup>130</sup> Following the insights formulated by Henrich (1974) and Höffe (2015).

<sup>131</sup> See them listed in Csák's paper (Section 3).

<sup>132</sup> I follow here the systematisation given by Höffe (2015)

person (from the individual human being to the various kinds of pluralities).

In light of the above, creation of the SFI requires a multi-disciplinary effort, the horizon of which must be the notion of civilisation, of “a cultural order... which consists of economic, religious, political, artistic and scientific elements”. This order can be seen as the framework by being oriented to which “the actions of the actors are provided with a general meaning”, or put another way: this order provides a life-world for the actors (who can take responsibility for those, who are not in a position to become ones).

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## NOTES



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**Social Futuring Center (SFC)** is a multidisciplinary research unit of the Corvinus University of Budapest (CUB). Our aims are to develop the conceptual and normative framework of social futuring, to construct the **Social Futuring Index (SFI)** and to manage the **ConNext 2050** research project. The main scope of its research is the analysis and interpretation of social futuring of different social entities, focusing on short and long-term future changes (2017-2050). The SFC periodically publishes **working papers** that highlight the findings of its research. They are published to stimulate discussion and contribute to the advancement of our knowledge of multidisciplinary matters related to philosophy, sociology, psychology, bionics, informatics, economics, political science, environmental studies, futures studies, network science. SFC working papers are available online on the **www.socialfuturing.com** website.

