INTRODUCTION: SUBJECTIVITIES AFTER THE DEATH OF THE SUBJECT

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Against the more apocalyptic visions of an emerging world order with clashes of civilizations and violent renaissances of religion, the 2004 Munich debate between Cardinal Ratzinger and Jürgen Habermas offered a quite different vision, which Habermas vaguely defined as the "postsecular." This postsecular mode was meant not only as a definition of a new relation between secular enlightenment and religion, beyond their classical mutual delegitimizations, but also as an indication of the emergence of a new paradigm for global culture. The concept of a postsecular culture on the global level seemed to presuppose new versions of subjectivity that would be able to inherit the tradition of modern subjectivity and carry its burdens, on the one hand, while redefining its ways of "being in the world," on the other. A new *world ethos*, with some serious political, social, and existential implications and corresponding effects on the classical understanding of "subjectivity," is emerging out of the demise of classical, secular enlightenment.

Postsecularity does not only presuppose the overcoming of exclusive secularism, aiming at the elimination of all religion and of antimodernist orthodoxies resisting modernity, democracy, and secularity. It presupposes the end of all utopian versions of a radically new subjectivity, the new man, and the new humanity, which have overloaded the legitimate political aims of the socialist, sexual, and feminist revolutions with protoreligious messianic expectations. Only through the liberation from the compulsion to liberation have these legitimate aims had a chance to become realized. The end of messianic eschatologies not only opens the space for a postsecular relation between religion, politics, and society, it also seems to be another aspect of the emergence of multiple forms and versions of subjectivity, which found a first voice in these ideologies. With their return to history and the reality principle, they managed to survive utopia and the disappointment over its

impossibilities. Instead, in the realm of a messianic time, they arrange themselves in the new open space of the global world.

When the early postmodernists translated Martin Heidegger's Delphic oracle "Der Mensch ist ein Versprechen der Sprache" as "man is a slip of the tongue" in order to adopt it as their slogan and the point of departure for their deconstructions of the concepts of subject and subjectivity, they had in fact overheard the semantic ambiguity of the German verb "versprechen," which means both "slip of the tongue" and "promise." Man was, according to Heidegger, always already both a failure and a promise. The project of overcoming humanism in language, discourse, and the cultural sciences was not only a misunderstanding. Very early on it led to new strategies of "saving the subject" in various forms of a posthumanism, a humanism of the other, that would cure the congenital defects of the Cartesian cogito, the Kantian transcendental ego, or the Nietzschean will to power that were held captive in the metaphysical framework of the classical concept of the substance as *subiectum*. Instead of eliminating the subject, it was to take up its responsibilities for its past, present, and future. "Otherness" and "Alterity" became fashionable signs for an awareness of all kinds of neglected and suppressed aspects of subjectivity, from the artist and genius to gender politics and the various forms of the outsider such as Jew, Black, Woman, or Homosexual. Postcolonialism was another aspect of this new consciousness of the different colors of subjectivity and the power relations defining it. After all, the concept of the subject meant both "vassal" and "sovereign": it always already included the dialectics of master and slave.

The prefix "post-" in "post-subjectivity" does not indicate much more than the fact that there is something to this classical concept of modernity that somehow is still "there," and in spite of the declarations of the end of man, it has not lost its validity while, undoubtedly, undergoing serious changes and transformations. After the breakdown of all secular eschatologies and political theologies, after the declarations of a possible end of history and its unexpected continuation, after the exhaustion of all utopias and counterutopias, and after the renaissance of religion, subjectivity obviously is still around and does not seem to need any justification for its pluralization, individualization, and alterity. There are, of course, enough signs of the emergence of a functionalized "one-dimensional man" conquering the global realms of economy, technology, politics, and culture, but the enormous plurality of lifestyles and versions of subjectivities seem to counterbalance this uniformed persona, the anonymous mask of subjectivity of power.

The philosophical discourse can be but one aspect of this new global scene, even if it tries to present an encompassing concept of this continuity or "resurrection" of man after the declarations of its end. It is part of the same

process of pluralization, individualization, and privatization that characterizes the age of post-subjectivity and cannot escape its hidden logic or destiny. The new lifeworlds and lifestyles do not depend on philosophical, theological, cultural, or sociological definitions; they develop alongside the turbulences of these theoretical discourses as effects of global capitalism, media technology, and communication systems. But still they are interrelated and seem to nourish each other's imagination. In this sense it is difficult, for instance, not to see the strange affinity between the self-representations of everybody on Facebook and in Leibnitz's monadology. Organized by a divine mathematical order, God as a computer, which harmonizes the infinite forms of monadic self-representations, the individual monads are screens of self-consciousness representing the world without any need of windows!

Phenomenology with or without the theological turn, critical theory, the renaissance of St. Paul in present political theologies, the philosophical discourse on love, and the "therapeutic turn" seem to be reactions to the new world order as they influence its languages and representations. While the phenomenology of Emanuel Levinas has rediscovered the philosophical fundament of ethics in the concept of the other who, while turning his face to us, breaks up the limits of our selfhood, Jean-Luc Marion has taken phenomenology to the new horizons of "the given" and the "gift" as saturated phenomena, thus opening it for genuine religious experience as well.

The critical theory of Jürgen Habermas and Axel Honneth has translated the project of enlightenment following Theodor Adorno's neo-Hegelianism into a theory of communicative action and an ethics of recognition and memory that corresponds with an engagement for human rights on a global level. The trauma of Auschwitz initiating Critical Theory in postwar Germany in fact became part of a world ethos when the UN introduced a global remembrance day for the victims of the Holocaust.

The remarkable renaissance of the (political) theology of the apostle St. Paul in phenomenology (Jean-Luc Marion, Alain Badiou), in critical theory (Jacob Taubes, Giorgio Agamben), and in present existential and psychoanalytical discourse (Michel Serres, Slavoj Zizek) follows the steps of Karl Barth's famous reading of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans. Barth's reading seems to be the reflex of the correlation between the cosmopolitan horizon of a new form of "being in the world" and the radical individualization demanded of us with the breakdown of the traditional social frameworks of family, society, nation-state, and so on. In light of the demand for a new global law beyond the local forms of constitution and legal organization, it is no surprise that love has become a point of departure for the overcoming of localities and fixed identities. Paul's famous words—that

there is no Jew and Greek, no master and slave, no man and woman—echo the spirit of the global space in search of a new Nomos of the earth.

It is no wonder, then, that philosophy has been engaged for some time in new thought regarding love. Since Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality*, the concepts describing love as Eros, Agape, Sex, and Charity have become the objects of numerous investigations questioning the psychoanalytical reductions of love to sexuality as they rediscover the ethical and religious layers of the concept of love (Alain Badiou, Jean-Luc Marion, William Desmond) trying to redefine the very fundament of thought and being in love.

If one can speak today of a "therapeutic turn" in philosophy initiated by Pierre Hadot and Michel Foucault, it seems to be no accident that this turn, influenced by modern psychoanalysis, focuses on the various philosophical schools of antiquity—the Stoa, the school of Epicurus, the Cynics, and the Platonic academy—which have understood the interrelation between truth and therapy of the self. These schools developed in the cosmopolitan atmosphere of the emerging Roman Empire as they tried to give answers to the meaning of life and existence while the individual was left to him/herself.

The pluralization and individualization of these philosophical styles seem to correspond all too well with the global scene in at least one perspective—namely, the interrelation between the cosmopolitan horizon and the radical privatization of existential experience. While the global horizon widens, it seems that local cultures are flourishing and deteriorating rapidly at the same time, thus becoming a destination for tribal fundamentalism and tourism in search of the exotic. Subjectivity seems to find itself in a constant process of evacuation and displacement from its original locality, its homeland with its histories, arts, and moralities. Subjectivity moves, then, between the poles of a cosmopolitan openness and the insistence on rather local "patriotic" traditions and habits, between a flexible, mobile transformation of the self and a kind of fundamentalist resistance and insistence on the immediate lifeworld. The new existentialist with laptop is thrown into a "being in the world" that constantly expands or closes itself in the familiar lifeworld, or it moves between these modes while trying to create a practicable bridge between them. In fact the new global "being in the world" splits into multiple parallel cultural worlds with quite different temporalities and tempos demanding complicated synchronizations of these simultaneities and hopeless anachronisms.

Subjectivity thus sometimes appears in its pure arbitrariness and contingency, without place and time, and hopelessly lonely. The hero of revolution—once a revolutionary like Che Guevara who was, according to Jean-Paul Sartre, the incarnation of the existentialist—has been replaced by more lonely forms of partisanship, if he has not become a fundamentalist

fighter of al-Qaeda. Like Rambo in the Vietnamese jungle, this partisan is sent on a mission to nowhere land and is perfectly on his/her own, and unknown to all. Like the soldier in Southeast Asia after World War II, this lonely fighter might not have heard that the war is over. The present existentialist, if he is not just a tourist in search of paradise lost, appears often rather like the Don Quixote whom Georg Lukács has described as the metonymy of a new transcendental homelessness and loneliness.

But can we think of the global sphere without its persistent political and natural catastrophes? Here the real refugees of the global scene are evacuated from their hometowns, looking for shelter and exile. These catastrophes suggest apocalyptic visions and the need for new communications systems and technologies. In light of the endless suffering of these victims, a new hero of subjectivity has emerged here as well—the anonymous NGO volunteers, the Doctors Without Borders, the human rights activists—sacrificing their lives on the fronts of these global catastrophes.

The essays in the present volume are only a very first reflex and attempt at an articulation of some of the new meanings of subjectivity, or rather, a first attempt to give expression to some of those processes of evolving subjectivities in the wake of our transitory world. Are we in the process of a new Hegelian "formation of the spirit" working itself through new negations without finalities and teleologies? Are there new possible post-Foucauldian archaeologies and post-Nietzschean genealogies of modern subjectivity waiting to be written? Which *Hermeneutics of the Subject* is on its way? What role does religion actually play in these new forms and formations of subjectivity? What are the ends and beginnings of post-subjectivity, that is, the aims and means of its constitution? Which new modes of a legitimacy of the modern age are on their global way?

The essays in the present volume begin by reconsidering the demands that phenomenology has made on our understanding of subjectivity. The problem engaged by both Gabriel Motzkin and John Panteleimon Manoussakis is that of the unity of consciousness or, perhaps better put, the unity of the various consciousnesses. It is assumed that for phenomenology consciousness does not need a unifying principle such as the transcendental I was for Kant and German Idealism, for it draws its unity by its intending "object." The paradox here seems to be that what unifies consciousness is not "in" it, or "inside" it, but "outside" it—for it unifies itself by escaping itself through the bridges that intentionality continuously builds. Yet, the question remains, in what sense can the various consciousnesses be said to be *mine*? Can we still retain the possibility of unity and identity in the absence of the Ego and the Subject? The following two essays by Michael Roubach and Klaus Held intensify these opening questions by taking into consideration the always already

present element of community, being-with, and intersubjectivity, as well as the role that the Other might play in the constitution of a self without subjectivity. By taking psychoanalysis as the leading paradigm of his discussion, Joel Pearl's essay draws attention to time as the factor that unifies one's experience of the world and of others without thus necessitating the appeal to a subject that would remain transcendent of time and its vicissitudes.

The themes of time and intersubjectivity, already announced in the first five essays, are more closely examined in the following articles that explore the themes of Eros, Love, and Subjectivity. The authors' insights focus on the erotic as the means to a transcendence that completes itself in self-transcendence. William Desmond's essay looks at "selving" in the light of recent concerns about modern subjectivity. Selving is shown to be not merely a lack trying to complete itself but a process understood in terms of what might be called its agapeic promise: its giving of itself beyond its own being-for-self. Drawing from a variety of classical sources, ranging from Barth's epoch-making reading of Paul's Epistle to the Romans to Max Scheler's *Phenomenology of Love*, Christoph Schmidt's essay reconstructs a modern history of the secularization of love. He describes a dialectic between the religious and the secular meanings of love that culminates in the radical rejection of its religious and ethical dimensions. Schmidt's historical analysis leads to the redefinition of subjectivity on the basis of Eros and temporality. Shem Shemy continues the engagement with Scheler by considering whether it might be possible to ascribe to love the role of a primordial intentional act of consciousness, which explains the essence of morality. Since no examination of the erotic would be complete without an appraisal of sex and sexuality in present culture and society, Volkmar Sigusch's essay takes the reader through just such a reevaluation of the construction of sexualities in the closing decades of the past century.

Turning a self-reflective as well as critical eye toward the philosophical tradition out of which the foregoing discussion has been operating, the following contributions trace the development of subjectivity throughout the history of philosophy from Plato to Heidegger while engaging the unreflective subject of philosophy itself. In Andy German's essay we find a critique of Hegelian modernity grounded on a distinction, retrieved from Plato, between freedom and randomness. In the same spirit Eli Schonfeld argues that Heidegger's critical identification of subjectivity with substantiality does not apply to Plato, who provides a different way of thinking about the soul that might escape some of the pitfalls of a philosophy of the subject. As opposed to the view that we have moved beyond such a "philosophy of the subject," Emily Hartz and Carsten Fogh Nielsen argue that

Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* remains relevant in contemporary discussions about a possible post-subjectivity. Hegel reveals the inherent contradictions and inadequacies of traditional conceptions of freedom and subjectivity while also showing how modern, individualistic conceptions of freedom can only be realized through the gradual development of socially and historically embedded conditions of agency.

The volume ends with a theological coda: Hillel Ben-Sasson reflects how, based on an ontological reading of Exodus, human subjectivity was historically grounded on the corresponding subjectivity of God as *Esse Ipsum*. The deconstruction of that reading, resulting in a God "without Being" (to invoke Marion's title), finds its correspondence in a Man without Being, or a subject without subjectivity.

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