
REPORT | POROČILO

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FRAGILITY OF EXISTENCE

In Poland, during the month of May, the International Institute for Hermeneutics/Institut international d'herméneutique, presided by Prof. Dr. Dr. Andrzej Wierciński, annually—in collaboration with locally and globally acknowledged (academic) institutions—organizes the International Summer School in Philosophy and Education. This year, the summer school was hosted by the Center of Formation and Training Księżówka in the city of Zakopane, the health resort and winter retreat nestled at the bucolic foothills of the Tatra mountain range. In accordance with the underlying idea of the school, dedicated to the ensuring of space and time for a dialogue between scholars of different provenances, between teachers and (their) students, between students and (their) teachers, to the enabling of a welcoming, open conversation among various and varied voices concerning common issues of the contemporary world, participants from Israel, Poland, Slovenia, and the USA gathered to discuss—as designated by the title—the topic(al)ity of “Fragility as a Mode of Being-In-The-World: Hermeneutic Ethics of Capability.”

Although a written report neither can nor could claim to re-present—that is to say, re-call (from) the absence (of the past: of what remains, retains itself only in passing and being passed onwards)—the liveliness of—inter-personally shared—experience(s), of the papers delivered and of the exchanged opinions,

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the debates, moderated throughout, with extraordinary hermeneutic vigor, by Wierciński, it is—for such sort of an endeavor—, nonetheless, possible to denote the principal problem realms disclosed at the summer school, in order to, at least, demonstrate the abundance of aspects and of approaches to the theme or the motif of fragility as it essentially determines our finite worldly existence, yet at once also exhorts to a becoming (aware) of all the capabilities bestowed upon us.

Without effacing the particularity of the singular existence, a deliberation upon fragility, however, bears witness to the universal generality of the human condition. Ramsey Eric Ramsey and Ronny Miron, both, the former through a re-consideration of philosophy as a way of life, as practice, which finds its fundamental modality in the figure of Socrates, the latter through a re-reading of Wilhelm Dilthey's notion of self-understanding, which attains meaning in the historicity of experiencing reality, emphasized the dimension of linguality, of communicative inter-action among people leading towards the well-being within, and of, a community. The contributions of Marcin Baran and Wojciech Hanuszkiewicz dealt with the questions of morality and its boundaries: Baran, drawing inspiration from the work of Charles Taylor, circumscribed the social atomism symptomatic of the contemporary consumerist society, whilst Hanuszkiewicz, on the basis of Alasdair MacIntyre's critique of the liberal tradition, addressed the dialectics between the individual and a society. In a similar vein, Małgorzata Przanowska's talk on the relation between philosophy and education, focusing on the problematic of listening, emphasized the fragility of our participation in the event of being.

Several papers devoted attention to specific, often conflict inducing phenomena of post-modernity, yet did not neglect to indicate the historical pre-suppositions of today's (hermeneutical) situation. Ayelet Yokev, bespeaking (against) the inherited trends of a prevalent romanticizing of childhood, outlined the possibility of an ontological—even metaphysical—understanding of parenthood. Taking into account the experiences of refuges confronted with the exigencies of resettlement, Tracey Sands accentuated the fragile character of identity that is frequently, within the conditions of cultural imperialism, condemned to marginality. Dilemmas in choosing a profession, a career to follow, in the globalized environment ruled by multinational

corporations were debated in the speech of Kamil Kołodziński, whereas Patryk Szaj attempted, productively engaging Hans-Georg Gadamer's thought in the dispute regarding the Anthropocene, to reflect upon the task of humanity faced with the threats of technological science, of climate change, of extinction of life on earth.

In compliance with the opulently ramified hermeneutic tradition, some of the participants, explicitly or implicitly, in-directly addressed the problems of textual understanding, of its multiply stratified nature. While Alenka Koželj, referring to Friedrich Schleiermacher's influential theory on the different methods of translation, contemplated upon the experience of fragility in translating the work of Étienne de La Boétie, I myself, explicating the unreadability of the world through a reading of a poem by Paul Celan, discussed the fragile equilibrium within the in-between of the text and its contexts. The interpretation of Virginia Woolf's oeuvre offered by Małgorzata Hołda touched upon Paul Ricoeur's idea of the capable self and ultimately conveyed, re-tracing the path of self-formation from a confused to the defused self, a plea for the taking of responsibility for one's own life (and death).

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Not only literature, but art as such, insofar as it necessarily needs to be conceptualized as one of the foremost and eminent manners of the un-folding, un-concealing of being(-in-the-world), received careful consideration in the contributions of Yael Canetti-Yaffe, Diane Gruber, and Jordan Huston. Canetti-Yaffe presented a hermeneutic understanding of the architecture of urban public spaces as built environments, to which meaning is imparted by their use. Lectures delivered by Gruber and Huston converged in the pondering upon the importance of the role of art and (artistic) imagination in the potential achievement of social change and political liberation: whereas Gruber stressed the ambiguity of human suffering shining through the fragile—perhaps fractured—image, inviting the beholder to take part in the conversation, Huston, recounting the movement of situationism, in the artistic event as a transformation effectuated through materialized imagined worlds recognized the prospect of revolutionary action.

Lisa Watrous and Elise Poll, although, in their respective papers, dealing with heterogenous matters, approached the issue of fragility from a common, the same theological perspective: both assumed, as their departure point, the

theory of an atheistic re-turn to God beyond God as proposed by Richard Kearney. However, Watrous, in the search for the potentiality of a redemptive language, introduced the notion of sabbath as the (w)resting-free from the demands of the profane, and Poll, in view of the doubts and the risks of “a faith easily broken,” underscored the emancipatory force of the advent of the strange that requires a response.

The human—as a fragile—being, in its existence directed towards, and through the mystery of communication connected with, the other—(as) the Other?—, as a creature of sociality, is summoned to dwell in—of course, preferably peaceful, albeit oftentimes strained and imperiled—cohabitation, which raises the question of distinct and distinguished forms of solidarity. Paulina Sosnowska’s speech on Hannah Arendt’s understanding of the tragedy and the happiness, the suffering and the consolation constituting the human condition argued that in the multispectrality of the world a narrative identity preserves memory against the forgetfulness of action. According to Urszula Zbrzeźniak, vulnerability and solidarity concern the relation
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The vivacious, at times vehement debates during the sessions and the informal meetings at the International Summer School in Philosophy and Education “Fragility as a Mode of Being-In-The-World: Hermeneutic Ethics of Capability” offered not only a supportive forum for meaningful conversations within a community of re-searchers, but also an intriguing overview of some of the fundamental dimensions of the fragility of—the human(e)—existence.
