Pluralism in the XX-XXI Century and the Option of Philosophical Counseling

Arthur Wagner, PhD
Independent Researcher, Germany
arthur1@gmx.net

ABSTRACT: The article outlines the phenomenon of pluralism and its challenges in modern and postmodern Western civilization. The pluralistic world is confronted with different concepts of ethics and morality, which not so rarely trigger diffusions from which conflicts often derive. Practical philosophy can make a new constructive contribution through its neutral view on the modern pluralist world.

KEY WORDS: Pluralism, consolation, moral, ethics, philosophy

Pluralism is a sign of modern civilization. An early proof of the term „modern" appears in the Latin publications in a circular letter from Pope Gelasius I in the 5th century. „Quis enim aut leges principum aut patrum regulas aut admonitiones modernas dicat debere contemni, nisi qui impunitum sibi tantum aestimet transire commissum?" (Thiel 1868, 389), and the term „modern time" appears according to Habermas in the 8th century. Other authors date the modern era between the 5-9th centuries (Welsch 2002, p. 47). This finding, however, is more difficult than it seems at first sight, because it is not unambiguous, because in itself it is very multiple and there are different types of pluralism. A careful observation of the different spheres of life, reveals a multiple variety of ideological beliefs. (Bauman 1995, 222). On a social level, large groups are organized that pursue very different goals

and interests. Culturally, plurality, manifests itself in various lifestyles, forms of action, language games, aesthetic currents. In science, with the help of different questions and methods, different theories are developed that give answers to questions (Manolache 2017, 85-90). From the political point of view—in the democratic society—there are several parties, parallel, in competition, such as the nongovernmental organizations or the movements of the civil society that play an important role. Thus, the high degree of differentiation of delimitation as well as exclusion is largely characterized by the increase of plurality. (Welsch 1988,35). Thus, the core of postmodernism is defined as „radical plurality". Postmodernism „is not an anti-modern, but a radicalized modernity" (Welsch 1988,35). "The situation of postmodernism is characterized by the fact that we face an increasing variety of different life forms, concepts of knowledge and orientations; that we become aware of the legal character and impregnability of this plurality; and that we are increasingly recognizing and appreciating this diversity". (Welsch 1988,35).

Characteristic for modernism and especially in postmodernism, there is a great variety in belief, attitudes, behaviors and interests in different areas of life, which at the same time—this multidimensional plurality—is, normatively recognized, respectively stated. In addition to ideological, religious (Manolache 2016, 85-90), social cultural, scientific and political pluralism, there is also moral pluralism which is a part of regional social pluralism, and another part at the same global time. (Knight 2003,104; Bauman 1995, 222.)

Depending on the understanding of moral pluralism, an assessment may be required in the sense whether or not a specific type of moral pluralism has been adequately identified and at the same time in what way was the pluralism diagnosed and whether it can be positively or negatively evaluated. (Witschen 2016, 45-52).

„There are people, (...) in which men offer themselves in public brothels, (...) where the death of children is mourned, but that of the elders is celebrated, (...) where everyone worships what they enjoy, (...) where some eat without discrimination from all herbs and reject only those which odor they do not like. (...) where Fathers offer their children and husbands offer their wives to guests for money" (Montaigne, 2004, 62f). These examples, quoted by Micael de Montaigne, show that the world beyond its own horizon

is narrow, and at the same time more heterogeneous than one's imagination. There seem to be great differences between people because they live in different cultural and religious contexts, so certain practices can provoke and irritate us (Tuiavii 1977).

In this direction, the ethnologist Clifford Geeretz also argues, often claiming that the world, despite - or perhaps because - the political and economic strains is breaking down (Geeretz, 1996, Chap. 1 comp. Habermas 1988, 331). In the last century, in the 1970s, Pierre Bourdieu proved in empirical studies the fragmentation of personality and identity, which was reconfirmed in the Sinus studies. Bourdieu postulates the thesis that there is a fine but clear difference between the different social classes, environments, and social strata. In this context it provides evidence that there is a relationship between income, standard of living and education, which form different opinions and manners within social classes, despite the fact that they live together in a society, nation or state (Bourdieu 1979, 212).

Sociologist Ulrich Beck takes Geerety and Bourdieu's ideas one step further in his studies, documenting under the keyword *individualization*, eroded processes in Western society. For one's own success in life, for ensuring risks and avoiding life failures, the individual can no longer rely on the support of society. Each individual must take responsibility for his or her own life and bear the consequences and risks of life alone for his or her luck or misfortune. Each must fight alone and can rely only on himself. Thus there can be no uniformity or homogeneity in Western society (Beck, ch. 1, 1986, ch. 1-2., 2002).

If in the past the society had norms, and universally valid rituals - defined *as good* or *bad* - they corresponded to a moral ideal set by the society, which obliged the individual, to correspond to a so called „*you must be*". When the actions from this perspective are evaluated, then they are identified from a moral point of view as good and right or wrong and bad. From this perspective, actions can be of good or bad moral nature. The positive part of this model is the comparative reviews between the different courses of action. If such a decision is issued, it is accompanied by the request to refrain from disqualified moral execution. Failure to follow this attitude triggers outrage. This makes it clear that moral qualification is universal and concerns all parties involved (Apel 1996, 38 also see Spaemann 1987, 17f).

A tension in the moral evaluation of actions becomes, when differences in behavior appear, determined by interpretations and beliefs, in identical situations. The decision in such a case is not easy at all, as both parties consider their action morally correct. Such situations have a great potential for conflict. Empirical consultations classify the following categories of moral differences:

1. Cultural differences: Cultural differences based on different moral beliefs can be advised by clarifying the differences of different cultures. (Ingelhard, 2005, 48-76). A very plastic example shows the difference in understanding of the honor crime. Notable is the form of the defense of honor in the German language, which is closely related to the moral notion that from the beginning implies the disqualification of the act itself. In other cultures in the case of a crime, or rape, the dishonored family is expected to take revenge by an act of violence to restore their honor. Thus suggesting that he is capable of defending his family. See UNFPA / DSW Weltbevölkerungsbericht 2000, 39; in the year 2000 over 5,000 people were killed for honor reasons.

2. Social differences: social differences also appear interculturally and are documented in morality themed studies. It has often been proven that moral beliefs are the trigger of conflicts in a society. Various roles, environments or social blankets may have divergent views or attitudes that trigger moral actions by themselves (Ingelhard 2005, 94-134). Conflicts of roles can trigger tension, and class struggle can shake a society. For example, rebellions and revolutions can be started in which one social class rises, or one environment against another, to impose its moral position on the opposition.

3. Situational differences: both the different daily actions and the extra-daily actions can appear as reasonable/adequate moral actions (Vossenkul and Sellmaier 2001, 138). A historical example would be the attempt of Count Claus Schenk von Stauffenereg on 20. 07. 1944. The colonel planned a coup in connection with an attack on Hitler. After the failure of the operation „Walkür" he was caught, convicted according to the laws in force and executed the same night. Today, the same attack is being discussed in democratic circles with appreciation. Despite the moral crime in the form of a homicide attempt, Stauffenberg is considered a resistance fighter, who risked his life in the fight against the crimes of World War II. The attempt receives post mortem admiration and respect, justifying its action. This example shows

us clearly that a moral judgment can not only vary but turn into a contrary judgment. What is generally valid should not be considered in the same way and valid in all circumstances.

Other examples would be to mention: In the eighteenth century began the movement against slavery leading to its disintegration at the congress in Vienna 1815 and in the USA in 1865. Today slavery is outside the law, through human rights, and finds a moral disapproval. However, there are child soldiers and pimping (UNFPA, DSW Weltbefoelkerungsbericht 2000, 38). For morality the people's perspective of perception when facing the same conditions and acting differently from their beliefs is decisive. There are also moral differences from the biographical perspective (Wagner 1978, 95-102, Ingelhard 2005, 94-134, Nussbaum 1993, 222-226).

Philosophical counseling, an option in pluralistic society

The term counseling originates from the Platonic philosophy based on Socrates' theories, and has a therapeutic pedagogical connotation. Caring for the soul has positive implications for the body. (Nauer 2014.75). About Socrates (Rotaru 2005, 122-128) it is said that in his own way of asking questions and discussing on the Athens market would have led to counseling (επιμελεισθαι της ψυχης) (to take care of the soul) so it can be said that Socrates is the founder of counseling. The way to ask questions first and foremost (αρετη) as a virtue is primarily a reasonable behavior and doing something good or even very good. From here Socrates developed the arguments of his apology. Plato noted them after the Socrates death in 339 BC (Schmid 2017, 162.). In the church we meet the term of counseling in the sense of caring for the soul at Basileu of Caesarea 330-379 AD The term *counseling* develops three connotations. Caring for the poor and marginalized. Second, in the Platonic sense (Rotaru 2014a, 226, 230) caring for one's own soul, though here the lack of reasoning is replaced by the term of sin. And last but not least, it is the care of the souls of the parishioners, a task for the church leaders (Nauer, 2014, 76ff.) There is currently a wide variety of concepts and methods of counseling. In this sense is also observed a process of pluralism, not only in the delimitation with regard to the therapeutic practices as well as from the confessional and contextual point of view.

(systemic, diaconic, intercultural etc) (Nauer 2014, 83ff). Starting with the middle of the twentieth century we are experiencing a cultural revolution characterized by changing the system of values, which has repercussions on the perspective of human nature. Not only the phenomenon of globalization (Rotaru 2014b, 532-541) but also other categories such as ethnicity, social belonging, gender and religious origin not only represent identities, but also normative attributes (Haker 2014, 37ff).

Even though theology has so far dominated the field of religious counseling, in the context of ideological pluralism it is required the need for a concrete, specified and adapted differentiation of the term counseling. In this case it is about the pluralization of counseling. In this sense, the concept of philosophical counseling offers a practical option. It offers counseling in the sense of exchanging information, analyzing arguments and alternatives as well as giving advice, in order to make a decision. The purpose of the discussion is to give and receive advice and not in a Weisung genbend form. Philosophical counseling involves the process of helping the discussion partner find their own position. Thus the task of perceiving and reflecting together does not have a normative but an optative function. Thus, the philosophical counselor sees his task in opening options and describe them in for and against arguments. The counseled person is ultimately the one who makes the decision according to the values he has chosen (Schmid 2017,171ff).

The advantage of the philosophical concept lies primarily in its optative feature devoid of ideology. Its objective is to lead to reflection and self-reflection, to transform thoughts into words and to explain what is implicit, regardless of its value or ideological orientation, insofar as the individual holds a certain ideological position. Philosophical counseling can integrate it in the analysis process, because it builds on the individual bases of coherence. The basic concepts with which philosophical counseling operates are the question of motive, purpose, and self-responsibility (Schmid 2017, 174ff).

The significant difference between religious and philosophical counseling is:

+ The religious counseling focuses on norms, traditions, own ideological belonging, while the philosophical counseling promotes an internal reflection mechanism.

- In Christian counseling, ideas are conveyed from the outside to the inside of the individual. while in the philosophical counseling the individual's ideas are visualized from inside to outside.
- The religious counseling emphasizes the quality of life after death, and the philosophical counseling focuses on the present life and its possibilities regarding the internal and external resources that are available and must be used.
- Due to the ideological openness and neutrality the philosophical counseling proves to be an optimal instrument in the present pluralistic context.

References

Apel, K.O. 1996. „Die Vernunftfunktion der kommunikativen Rationalität. Zum Verhältnis von konsensual-kommunikativer Rationalität, strategischer Rationalität und Systemratiionalität." In Ders.Kettner, M., *Die Vernunft und die vielen Rationalitäten*, Frankfurt.

Bauman, Z. 1995. *Flaneur, gamblers and tourists. Essays about postmodern life-forms.* Hamburg: Hamburg Edition.

Beck, U. 1986. *Risk Society, Towards a New Modernity.* Frankfurt: Suhrkarnp.

Beck, U. and Beck-Gernsheim, E. 2002. *Individualisation. Institutionalized Individualism and its Social and Political Consequences.* London: Sage.

Bourdieu, P. 1979. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste.* Frankfurt/M: Suhrkamp.

Geeretz, C. 1996. *The World in Pieces. Culture and Politics at the End of the 20 th Century.* Wien: Passagen.

Habermas, J. and Habermas, J. 1998. "The unity of reason in the diversity of its voices." In Habermas, J., *Postmetaphysical Thinking. Philosophical essays,* Frankfurt.

Habermas, J. 1999. "Richtigkeit versus Warheit, in Ders.: Wahrheit und Rechtfertigung." *Philosophische Aufsätzte.* Frankfurt.

Haker, H. 2002. "The perfect body. Utopias of biomedicine." In: *Conilium 38,* 115-123.

Imbusch, P. 2002. *Modernity and Violence: the twentieth century in the perspective of the theory of civilising processes.* Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

Ingelhard, R., Wetzel, C. 2005. *Modernisation, Cultural Chance, and Democracy. The Human Development Sequence.* Cambrige: Cambridge University Press.

Knight, G.R. 2003. "Philosophy and pedagogy." *Spes Christiana*, Issue 7, Hamburg.

Manolache, Stelian. 2016. "The Dispute between Political Theology and the Politics of Theology in the Twenty-first Century on the Meanings of the Postmodern Globalizing and Individualistic Society and the Chistian Globality." *SEA - Practical Application of Science* 1(10): 85-90.

Montaigne, M. 2004. „Über die Gewohnheit und dass man ein überkommendes Gesetz nicht leichtfertig ändern sollte." In *Essais. Erste moderne Gesamtübersetzung*, Darmstadt, (1999), pp. 60-68 (1595).

Müller, M. 2009. *Trends 2016. Die Zukunft lieben*. Basel: Brunnen.

Nauer, D. 2014. Krankenhausseelsorge. Glaubwürdiger christlicher Dienst in und an der pluralen Gesellschaft, in Augusttin; George et al. (ed), *Christianity in Dialogue*. Freiburg im Breisgau, pp. 421-432.

Nussbaum, M.C. 1993. „Menschliches Tun und soziale Gerechtigkeit. Zur Verteidigung des aristotelischen Essentialismus." In: Steinfath, H.(Hg.), *Was ist ein gutes Leben? Philosophische Reflexionen*, Frankfurt.

Rotaru, Ioan-Gheorghe. 2005. *The history of philosophy from the beginning until the Renaissance*. Cluj-Napoca: Cluj University Press.

Rotaru, Ioan-Gheorghe. 2014.a. "Aspects of the concept of eternity of the soul in the view of Plotinus according to Grigore Tăușan." In *Proceedings in Human and Social Sciences at the Common Conference*. EDIS - Publishing Institution of the University of Zilina, Thomson Ltd, Slovakia, 226-230.

Rotaru, Ioan-Gheorghe. 2014.b. "Globalization and its effect on religion." In *Journal for Freedom of Conscience*, edited by Mihnea Costoiu, Liviu-Bogdan Ciucă, Nelu Burcea, 532-541. Les Arcs, France: Editions IARSIC.

Schmid, W. 2017. *Das Leben Verstehen, Von den Erfahrungen eines philosophischen Seelsorgers*. Berlin: Suhrkamp, Ulm.

Spaemann, R. 1987. „Was ist Philosophische Ethik (What is Philosophical Ethics)." In Ders., *Grenzen* pp. 15-26.

Thiel, A. 1868. *Epistolae Romanorum Pontificum genuinae et quae ad eos scriptae*. by S. Hilaro, Pelagium II. Braunsberg: E. Peter.

Tuiavii. 1977. *Der Papalagi. Die Reden des Südseehäuptlings aus Tiavea. (The Papalagi. Speeches of a South Sea chief from Tiavea)*. Zurich: Tanner & Staehelin.

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). 2000. Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevölkerung (German Foundation for World Population

(DSW). World Population Report 2000: Women and men - separate worlds?) Stuttgart.

Vossenkul, W., Sellmaier, S. 2001. „Situative Ethik, moralische Identität und Moralkonflikte (Situational ethics, moral identity and moral conflicts), in Beck, U., Bonß W. (Ed), *Die Modernisierung der Moderne (The modernization of modernity)*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 137-143.

Wagner, H. 1978. "Kant gegen 'ein vermeindliches Recht, aus Menschenliebe zu lügen." In Geismann, G., Oberer, H. (Eds), *Kant und das Recht der Lüge*, 95-102. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann.

Welsch, W. 1988. *Postmoderne – Pluralität als ethischer und politischer Wert*. Köln: Bachem.

Welsch, W. 2000. *Unsere Postmoderne*. Berlin: Wiley-VCH, 1988.

Witschen, D. 2016. *Ethischer Pluralismus. Grundgarten Differenyierungen Umgangsweisen*. Paderborn: Schoningh.