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SUMMARY OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS

On the Principle of Plenitude in Aristotle, Leibniz and Constantin Noica

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Thesis theme and objectives

The doctoral thesis *On the Principle of Plenitude in Aristotle, Leibniz and Constantin Noica* aims to bring three thinkers from different eras together in front of a very generous theme that has been subject of philosophical thought for centuries, long before it received a name. It is about the principle of plenitude that was theorized as such by Arthur Oncken Lovejoy, an American researcher in the field of the history of ideas, with the publication of his work The Great Chain of Being (1936). The work, considered by the international press "probably the most influential work on the history of ideas in the United States in the last half century", almost 100 years after its launch, continues to concern many exegetes of the principle of plenitude and to bring new interpretative approaches through the lenses of the philosophical systems to which it can be applied.

Originally described by A. O. Lovejoy as a principle of abundance in terms of creation, existence and life forms, but especially as a principle that postulates the actualization of all genuine possibilities, the principle of plenitude fascinates due to the richness of the approaches it generates, the diversity of the levels it adresses to and due to its theoretical consequences.

The choice to carry out an analysis of the three philosophical systems from the point of view of the principle of plenitude is due to my concerns in recent years regarding the philosophical views of Aristotle, Leibniz and Constantin Noica on possibility and actualization, as well as the reasons for their commitment to the principle, reasons that arise from the mechanism of actualization of the possible that each of the three thinkers had in mind.

The general objective of the thesis is to prove the applicability of the principle of plenitude in the philosophy of Aristotle, Leibniz and Constantin Noica, presenting the context and consequences of the three thinkers' adherence to this principle from a logical and metaphysical point of view. The first specific objective of the thesis as assumed in the chapter dedicated to Aristotle aims to defend the philosophical position according to which the Stagyrite adopted the principle of plenitude. Contrary to Lovejoy's opinion, our thesis supports Aristotle's commitment to this principle, an aspect that was extensively debated by the philosopher Jaakko Hintikka in his work *Time&Necessity* (1973).

Regarding Leibniz's perspective on plenitude, Lovejoy considered that "the Great Chain of Being appears most evident, determining, and influential" in his works and encouraged us to highlight certain less discussed aspects related to the German philosopher's commitment to the principle of plenitude. Our objective pursued in the chapter on Leibniz is to analyze and explain the mechanisms of actualization of possibilities both from the perspective of the individual possible and of possible worlds, as well as to highlight a very important and less known source of inspiration for Leibniz's theory of monads: the ontological treatise of Countess Anne Conway.

A special case of adoption of the principle of plenitude is that of the philosopher Constantin Noica, the author of an ontology based on the concept of possible and of a very special logic, the logic of Hermes, which is intended to be a reinterpretation of the Aristotelian Organon from the perspective of the preferential positioning of the individual. The objective pursued in this chapter is to follow the mechanism of actualization of possibilities in the system of Hermes logic, as well as from the erotetic perspective of the question "why not?" and the modulations of being. The paper brings into discussion for the first time the relationship between the principle of plenitude, Noica’s

thesis on the plurality of worlds and the existence of other forms of life and intelligence in the universe.

Presentation of the workflow/ chapter structure

The thesis begins with an introduction that includes general considerations on the principle of plenitude, specifications regarding its genesis in ancient Greek philosophy and certain representative formulations throughout the history of philosophy. The principle of plenitude is integrated into what can be called a philosophy of the interval in the sense identified by Michel Harr, "in the interval between the metaphysical subject and worlds", starting from that fundamental location in something else – the interval of ontological difference. The principle of plenitude presupposes a transition between two ontological status, being at the same time a mediator/middle term between certain key ideas and conceptions throughout the history of thought.

The first two chapters represent a review of the way in which the two philosophers, Aristotle and Leibniz, are related to the principle of plenitude, and the third part represents an element of novelty that the thesis offers to the reader. It is a principle of plenitude based on the characteristics of the Romanian logos and the Romanian *feeling of being*, it is another way of looking at plenitude, this time not through the lenses of Ares' logic, but through the magnifying glass of Hermes' logic. The innovative elements that Hermes' logic brings have meaningful implications on the nature of the possible and actualization, and the application of Noica's modal categories as described in Hermes' logic represents an important contribution of this work.

More specifically, each of the three chapters analyzes the views of the three philosophers concerning possible, possibility, and actualization, aiming to outline the mechanism of actualization of the possibilities, a mechanism that emerges from the structure of each of the three philosophical systems analyzed as well as to identify cases in which possibilities do not meet the conditions for actualization and to offer alternatives for reformulating the principle of plenitude according to the specificity of the three philosophical conceptions. The paper therefore emphasizes the way in which possible things come into existence and the consequences of this ontological path.

The chapter dedicated to Aristotle follows the direction outlined by Jaakko Hintikka, who considers that the principle of plenitude has its genesis in the philosophy of the Stagyrite, and describes the meanings of the possible and actualization, the couple *potency-act*, as well as some terminological difficulties, from a logical and metaphysical point of view, that arise in the Aristotelian theory of actualization. The meanings of the Aristotelian possible are presented in two dirrections, the first being a review of the meanings of the possible in various parts of the Aristotelian corpus, and the second pursuing the metaphysical and logical meaning of the possible. Through a comparative analysis of different translations, the paper also examines the fragments of the *Metaphysics* that Arthur Lovejoy considers to be a refutation of the principle of plenitude.

The possibility described by Aristotle in terms of *δύναμις/dynamis* has two meanings, both of them being relevant to the proper understanding of the principle of plenitude. The first meaning refers to *possibility* as *power* defined in terms of *change/movement*, and the second meaning is that of *potentiality*. The latter meaning reflects the capacity of a thing to reach a new state without changing into something else. This type of possibility is an immanent possibility, which contains within itself a tendance towards actualization. As Jaakko Hintikka explains, the mechanism of

actualization is viewed by Aristotle in a formula that presupposes an essential element –time - aspect that will be explained in the second chapter.

Aristotelian actualization involves two terms that apparently have the same translation *ένέργεια/energeia* and *έντελέχεια/entelecheia*, but which have different meanings. Just as *δύναμις/dynamis* as *potency/potentiality* is viewed in relation to *capacity ἕξις/exis*, *ένέργεια/energeia* can mean both *activity* and *act/actuality*. This is explained by Aristotle in terms of *χρῆσις* (the opposite term of *ἕξις*) which means to use, to employ that capacity in order to reach a goal and a finality (έντελέχεια). The correct understanding of the couple *possibility-actualization* also concerns other relationships such as that between *movement* (*κίνησις/kinesis*) and *the possible* as *power* (*ἡ κατὰ κίνησιν λεγομένη δύναμις*), the relationship between *form* and *matter*, between *substance* and *matter*, between *actualization* and *movement*. Another very important idea for Aristotelian thought is that of the primacy of actuality over possibility in a logical sense (from the perspective of the definition of possibility), in a metaphysical sense (from the perspective of the form and the finality to which the possible tends) and in a certain way, actualization is prior to possibility even from a temporal point of view (only the actualization of the individual is subsequent to the possible).

The chapter dedicated to Aristotle ends with several paradoxes of the possible, both from the point of view of the possibilities related to the past (history) placed in opposition to the possible as *probable* in *Poetics*, and from the point of view of the possible seen in relation to the *truth* about contingent future events, a problem that appears also in Leibniz's *Theodicy*.

From the Aristotle's potential infinite we pass through Leibniz's infinite which prefigures the plenitude of possible worlds that exist in God's mind (intellect). Here the possible takes on a systemic form, it is no longer viewed individually and related to an actualization of a thing or a being. The individual possible is an inhabitant of a possible world alongside other individual possibles to which it establishes a relationship of *com-possibility*. The particle *com* suggests its coexistence with the other possible individuals according to rules of *com*-patibility.

Leibniz's possible is numerically infinite, but the actual is limited only to the world in which we live, the only one chosen by God to be created, therefore to be actualized. In the created world, however, there is freedom, an inner freedom described as an urge towards being called *Daseinstreben* or the *theory of the striving possibles*. From our point of view, the possible world does not differ in terms of its composition from the actualized world (it is one and the same world in two hypostases, one possible and the other after the act of choice/creation), because the possible world resulting from the divine choice is entirely actualized. The only difference between the possible and the actualized world being is one of ontological status. The individuals which compose the possible world differ from those in the actual world only in terms of ontological status. This means that the actual world do not receive any other attributes or determinations following the divine choice that allows them to be actualized.

From our point of view, the freedom offered by *Daseinstreben* is a freedom from within the world, it is not the freedom of a contingent individual or a contingent set of possibles, but the freedom that possibles have as members of a world chosen for actualization. Freedom seen from outside the world is God's freedom of choice itself. In order to give freedom a chance from an external point of view, Leibniz needs an infinity of sets of possibilities in the form of possible worlds that is, sets of ideas that originate in the divine mind (which can only be perfect and infinite), but also the act of selection. In our opinion, the actualization mechanism that operates in the case of the principle of plenitude in the Leibniz version is a selection mechanism that we could call theological.

Freedom is based on the act of choice because freedom implies acting according to different range of alternatives. Leibniz could have considered that God simply created a world in his image and likeness, that is, a world as close to perfection as possible. But a simple creation based on an imperative such as *Fiat!* , without the option of choice, would have thrown the Leibniz's system into absolute determinism. The transformation or translation of *creation* into *selection* opens a path to freedom as selection can be achieved only through different alternatives.

We consider that Leibniz adopted an exclusive form of plenitude, in which the possible world chosen to be actualized is the one that contains the richest variety of beings (compatible with each other), according to the ontological argument, the principle of sufficient reason, the principle of the optimum and the benevolence of God. As an element of novelty, our approach on Leibniz's view on plenitude is placed alongside the view of Countess Anne Conway (a contemporary of his and author of a treatise on ontology) and only tangentially with that of Spinoza, as described by most of his scholars. Her influence on Leibniz's philosophy is recognised by the German thinker in a letter to Thomas Burnett.

As in the case of Arthur Lovejoy who gave name to the principle of plenitude, Romanian philosopher Constantin Noica dedicates a whole study to the principle that leads any coming into being. The study is called "The becoming into being" and this title leads us dirrectly to the idea of plenitude. Concerned with the *possible being*, *becoming* and *full being*, Constantin Noica adopts the principle of plenitude and grants it a privileged status within his ontology. He also provides a special ontological approach of the principle in the book called *The Romanian Feeling of Being*. The problem of the actualization of the possible appears also in his work *Twenty-seven Steps of the Real*, where Noica speaks about the infinite possibility of matter, about the *category of the possible* in relation to reality and presents his own version of the principle of plenitude. Within his ontology, the Romanian philosopher also tries to solve the problem of actualizing the contingent possible through the concept of *holomer*, which represents a potentiated individual that rises to the power of the general and loses its contingent character.

Except from a single article where the scholar speaks about plenitude in Noica's works in terms of the principle of continuity and only tangentially throught the *modulations of being*, I have not come across any other paper that debates the principle of plenitude in Noica's philosophy. Another innovative aspect of this thesis is not only to show the connection between the system of *becoming into being* and the principle of plenitude, but also the relationship between the principle of plenitude and Noica's conception of *possible worlds*. Noica's theory on the plurality of worlds , be they possible worlds or simply fictional worlds, as well as his ideas related to the existence of other forms of life and intelligence in the universe (aspects that derive from his commitment to the principle of plenitude) also constitute elements of novelty of this thesis, elements that have not been debated by other scholars.

Conclusion

This paper therefore sketches the origins/genesis of the principle of plenitude in Greek philosophy, captures a point of maximum intensity of the problems raised by the adherence to this principle in modern philosophy and continues with its "settlement" in the space of Romanian thought. It could have been also called *On the genesis and apogee of the principle of plenitude and its echoes in the Romanian philosophical thought*. In the vast space of plenitude it is difficult to capture aspects that have not been longly debated during the last almost ninety years since Lovejoy offered to the history of ideas a compendium dedicated to the problem of plenitude**.**