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EXAMINING THE DIALOGICAL PRINCIPLE IN MAREK SIEMEK'S LEGACY

ABSTRACT

The paper¹ examines the evolution of Marek Siemek's "dialogical principle." The early version of this principle, sketched in the essay "Dialogue and Its Myth" (1974), meets several criteria of the phenomenology of dialogue and even hermeneutics. However, Siemek has continued to change his concept of dialogue over the decades. In his recent book, *Freedom, Reason, Intersubjectivity* (2002), he explores transcendental preconditions of free and reasonable activism, i.e., the Fichtean "limitative synthesis" of I and Non-I and its applications in social interrelations. He no longer considers the empirical, anthropological, and phenomenological aspects of dialogics and mutual recognition. He also replaces mutuality with reciprocity, asymmetry with symmetry, and phenomenology with transcendentalism.

Keywords: Marek Siemek, dialogue, recognition, mutuality, reciprocity, Goethe and Schiller, storied dialogue, truth, myth, phenomenology, hermeneutics, transcendentalism.

I. THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH TO DIALOGUE AND ITS DECONSTRUCTION BY MAREK SIEMEK IN 1974–2002

In their preface and afterword to the book *Prawdy szukamy obaj: z korespondencji między Goethem i Schillerem* [Both of Us Are Looking for Truth: The Correspondence between Goethe and Schiller, 1974], Jerzy Prokopiuk and Marek Siemek establish two distinct categories, i.e., the "principle of dialogue" and the "myth of dialogue," to *understand* (instead of *knowing*) the unique and ambiguous relationship between Goethe and Schiller, which was established through nearly one thousand letters exchanged by the poets in 1794–1805.

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According to Siemek's afterword, titled *Dialogue and Its Myth*,² "the myth of dialogue" feeds on ready-made interpretative schemes like "mutual inspiration," "spiritual sympathy and community," "creative competition," or "confrontation,"³ which are applied to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Friedrich Schiller's complex relationship. Siemek rejects such a scientific "acquisition of positive knowledge"⁴ as a method of getting to know personalities and the relationships among them for the same reasons Emmanuel Levinas rejects all schemes and categories that tend to simplify, unify, and, in Levinas' words, "dissolve the difference of strangeness" and the "plurality of being." In his early approach to dialogics, Siemek implicitly anticipates one of the most relevant claims of phenomenology and hermeneutics, namely, that dynamics, complexity, and tensions arising within the lived proximity (including the "verbal proximity"⁵) between two individuals (here between Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Friedrich Schiller) cannot be comprised within "the words which intend to establish a theoretical abstraction."⁶ It is clear that Siemek likes the phenomenological approach to Goethe's and Schiller's proximity: That model of a completely symmetrical and pre-formative relationship constitutes a more or less conscious premise of most interpretive approaches and hermeneutical schemes which have been applied, till today, to the connection between Goethe and Schiller. Surely, that model is simple, precise, and, in a way, effective. All the multifarious levels and motifs of the mutual closeness of the two great artists can here be described in terms of one, initial antithesis with a "binary" structure, which greatly facilitates any typological and comparative attempts".⁷

When facing authentic personal and interpersonal narratives, a reader's virtue consists in refraining from generalizing epistemological categories and meta-structures and blocking his or her own assumptions generated by those categories in order to better focus on the narrative reality and open space for a new, surprising meaning. Furthermore, in his interpretation of Goethe and Schiller

² Siemek, M. 1974. "Dialog i mit dialogu." In: Siemek, M., J. Prokopiuk (Eds.). *Prawdy szukamy obaj. Z korespondencji między Goethem i Schillerem*. Warszawa: Czytelnik, 375–390. German: 2004. *Wahrheit suchen wir beide Dialog und Mythos im Briefwechsel von Schiller und Goethe*. Sonderdruck.

³ Siemek, M. 1974, 375.

⁴ Ricoeur, P. 2005. *The Course of Recognition*. Pellauer, D. (Trans.). Cambridge, Mass.–London: Harvard University Press, 29.

⁵ Levinas, E. 1979. *Totality and Infinity*. Lingis, A. (Trans.). The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, Duquesne University Press, 80.

⁶ Kamińska, M. 2010. *Dialogische Pädagogik und die Beziehung zum Anderen*. Münster–New York–München–Berlin: Waxman, 80.

⁷ Siemek, M., 1974, op. cit., 376. In fact, Siemek's insight to the communicational asymmetries corresponds to research on semantics, speaking, and understanding as inverse and, at the same time, not inverse processes, and to the distinction "between the perspective of the speaker and the perspective of the listener," see Hendriks, P. 2013. *Asymmetries between Language Production and Comprehension*. Dordrecht–Heidelberg–New York–London: Springer, 184–185.

“meeting halfway”⁸ as a storied meeting, Siemek (not unlike Levinas) especially rejects abstraction, dialectical synthesis, and enforced symmetry, which deform the pre-existent singularity, uniqueness, and asymmetry⁹ of interpersonal relations, for they do not lead to the truth in its hermeneutical sense.¹⁰ Nevertheless, it is not always clear if he distinguishes between lived experiences and narrative (textual) phenomena. These two ontologies seem to interweave:

“The symmetrical perfection of the form and content of all these antitheses—and the corresponding syntheses—and the ease with which they are formulated and multiplied—arouses suspicions. If this clear and simple scheme could actually be applied to the phenomena it was intended to explain, this would be a powerful testament to the strength of philosophical ideas and concepts to strongly influence historical reality.”¹¹

“It is not the insufficiency of the I that preserves totalization but the Infinity of the Other,”¹² Levinas suggests, or the infinite polisemy of her/his actions, interactions, and experiences as something precommunicative, historical, and epistemologically still invalid. Experience and history always happen to individuals, so it is individuals (not historians and other story-retellers) that are privileged to make them valid, i.e., to tell and share their own narrative stories in their own way and in their own words, instead of those stories being categorized and validated by other (meta)narrators or interpreters. Siemek is fully aware of the invalidity of raw experience and its inappropriate validation by interpreters and scientists: The meeting of two personalities, described in those letters, retains, from the beginning to the end, the original, source nature of the *event* and of the particular processes initiated by that event, of the event and the process which, in their factuality and historical contingency, are alogical, free of any meaning and devoid of any

“‘internal purposefulness’—especially, they do not encompass any of the organic maturation of both partners toward a mutual relationship [...], any of the symmetrical-performative concept of their meeting ‘halfway,’ as a pure conceptual philosophical synthesis; there is only what there is in them, and what should be taken quite literally and seriously, that is, the story of an ac-

⁸ Siemek, M. 1974, op. cit., 375.

⁹ Ibid., 376.

¹⁰ “For hermeneutic truth concerning the realities of the texts, these scientific interpretations must be placed in brackets. *Epoché* modifies the sense of a text as it appears in interpretation so that it can be valid and can be taken for further scientific analysis. In experience there can be no validity; that must be set in brackets. Thus also sciences as approaches to the text are invalid and must be put in brackets.” Musa Dibadj, S. 1998. *The Authenticity of the Text in Hermeneutics*. Washington: RVP, 45.

¹¹ Siemek, M. 1974, op. cit., 377.

¹² Levinas, E. 1979, op. cit., 80.

cidental meeting of completely heterogeneous personalities, biographies, and attitudes.”¹³

Siemek’s acknowledgment of the role of narrative as a “valid” reality assures his reader of the fact that one may become familiar with others’ personal traits, identities, biographies, etc. only to a small degree if one is to know them in the way scientific knowledge is thought to appropriate its object. “The Other is not unknown but unknowable” at the level of experience, Levinas claims, and “the relationship with the other is not an idyllic and harmonious relationship of communion, or a sympathy [...] we recognize the other as resembling us, but exterior to us.”¹⁴

Siemek considered Goethe and Schiller’s dialogical relationship to be beyond the “epistemological exaltation”¹⁵ that is typical for researchers oriented toward one universal truth (or rather an illusion of truth¹⁶) and convinced that “the nature of reality is rational, that the phenomena of life, history, and culture are thoroughly transparent for our cognitive schemes, that the ontology of facts and events fully coincides with the logical and teleological structures of our reflection.”¹⁷ Instead, Siemek postulated a return to experiences and facts (for “facts are never symmetrical”¹⁸) reported in authentic narratives to protect the “truth” of dialogue from illusory “myths.” Siemek assumes that, “Here more than elsewhere, we are in need of some type of ‘return to origins’ and ‘things in themselves’.”¹⁹ But what kind of experience can we face when reading Goethe and Schiller’s correspondence other than the narrative experience? We face narratives reporting past events that happened to, or have been created by, the “storied selves” (in Paul Ricoeur’s terms). But Siemek does not see them as memoirs. Rather, he shows that an “absolutely spontaneous, not determined by any additional factors and arbitrary constructions, ‘epigenesis’ of the significance”²⁰ of Goethe and Schiller’s friendship is to be inquired by each reader

¹³ Siemek, M. 1974, op. cit., 379–380.

¹⁴ Levinas, E. 1987. *Time and the Other [and Additional Essays]*. Cohen, R. A. (Trans.). Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 43.

¹⁵ Reagan, Ch. E. 2002. “Personal Identity.” In: Cohen, R. A. & J. L. Marsh (Eds.). *Ricoeur as Another. The Ethics of Subjectivity*. New York: SUNY Press/State University of the NY Press, 6.

¹⁶ Siemek, M. 1974, op. cit., 378.

¹⁷ Ibid., 378–379.

¹⁸ Ibid., 379.

¹⁹ Ibid., 379.

²⁰ Ibid., 380–381. The “arbitrary construction” does not meet, e.g., the criteria of irrationalism proposed by Rice, R. A. 2016. “Irrational Baroque Thought: Violence, Lovesickness and the Supernatural in *Tales of Disillusion* (1647) by María de Zayas.” *Studia Metodologiczne*, Gan-Krzywoszyńska, K. & P. Leśniewski (Eds.). Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM (in press). Rice also undermines the myth of “epistemological exaltation” in her own way. She calls for a return to the storied events, that is, for “objective, provable (i.e. valid) phenomena which can be intersubjectively conveyed and comprehended.” This has also been described by Ricoeur as collective narrative recounting, sharing meanings, retroactive understanding, remembrance of and

experiencing their narratives on her/his own. In his later reflections he consequently assumes that “outside of language there is no thinking or action for us altogether, to say nothing of rational thinking and action.”²¹ He still advocates the phenomenological and hermeneutic way of knowing another human being. He calls for microhistorical, “realistic descriptions of phenomena in their historical concreteness,”²² which are far from speculative discourses leading to “history that amounts to a system” and “reduction of the Other to the Same,”²³ as stressed by Ricoeur. According to Siemek, Goethe's and Schiller's narratives invite readers to engage in a dialogue with and discover²⁴ the otherness incorporated in the two poets. Contrary to his later strictly linguistic-rationalist insight, Siemek emphasizes that the “reality we face in their (Schiller and Goethe's) correspondence is not purely reflective in its nature,”²⁵ which means that the reality still remains experiential,²⁶ dispersed in episodes, spontaneous, artistic, and “invalid.” Furthermore, it slips through scientific and philosophical categories. Instead, myth can be nourished on it. “There are myths we would never swap for reality,” he says. “They might be more interesting, beautiful, and, at least, more true [i.e. valid], like Schiller and Goethe's myth.”²⁷

Even after having unmasked and deconstructed the external scientific and interpretative schemes and tendencies to mythologize, Siemek shows that dialogue itself is not protected from these kinds of tendencies. It is Schiller that personifies the tendency to mythologize his dialogical relation with Goethe. To Siemek, the hermeneutical claim of fiction is an integral element of human cognition as a storyteller and partner in dialogue. Storytellers create and invent the “formula” and the meaning of their relations with others (in the case I analyze here) intentionally, together with, in parallel to, and along with those relations²⁸. In this context, Siemek does not omit the perspective of historians that are oriented toward the ultimate truth and “the acquisition of positive knowledge,”²⁹ if

commemorating past events, re-telling of memories, constituting narrative identity, etc. See Duffy, M. 2009. *Paul Ricoeur's Pedagogy of Pardon. A Narrative Theory of Memory and Forgetting*. New York: Continuum.

²¹ Siemek, M., 2000. “Two Models of Dialogue,” *Dialogue and Universalism*, 11, 38.

²² Siemek, M. 1974, op. cit., 379.

²³ Ricoeur, P. 2005, op. cit., 158.

²⁴ Ricoeur, P. 1991. “Narrative Identity.” *Philosophy Today*, 55 (1), 73.

²⁵ Siemek, M. 1974, op. cit., 379. The non-reflective dimension of Schiller's and Goethe's relation can also be regarded as “founded upon speech” as it is in Levinas; see Boothroyd, D. 1988. “Responding to Levinas.” In: *The Provocation of Levinas. Rethinking the Other*, Bernasconi, R., D. Wood (Eds.). New York: Routledge, 28. This very phenomenological aspect of Siemek's early concept of dialogue does not have a corresponding element in his recent concept.

²⁶ Other phenomenologists also emphasize “objective, physical contacts”; see Kamińska, M. 2010. *Dialogische Pädagogik und die Beziehung zum Anderen*, op. cit., 99, and “fundamental anthropology” as a perspective that complements the phenomenology of dialogue; see Ricoeur, P. 2005, op. cit., 146.

²⁷ Siemek, M. 1974, op. cit., 390.

²⁸ Ibid., 380.

²⁹ Ricoeur, P. 2005, op. cit., 29.

well-documented, collectively recognizable, and “just” narratives (in Ricoeur’s terms) are expected.

“Therefore, the value of those letters is relatively lower for a *sensu stricte* biographer or historian, as they are more a document of Schiller’s reflections, his self-knowledge and self-evaluation, than a testimony of historical reality. [...] Therefore, they belong to a different hermeneutic category than the correspondence with Körner or Humboldt.”³⁰

This is why historians tend to eliminate, or at least minimize, “fiction making the life story a fictive history, or, if you prefer, a historical fiction, comparable to those biographies of great men where both history and fiction are found blended together.”³¹ Biographers are concerned with preserving the temporal, linear continuity of their heroes’ lives and the mimetic relationship between a life and a story about that life: “Life can only be properly understood by *being re-told* mimetically through stories, in a triple process of pre-figuring, configuring, and re-figuring the narrative experience.”³² Poets create inspiring narratives for readers who may repeatedly re-create these narratives when dealing with polysemy. Goethe’s and Schiller’s autobiographical narratives documented in their private correspondence and re-figured by researchers seem to be a “halfway” case between all three variants mentioned above. It is a case of two “storied selves” confronted with “concrete historical events”³³ and, sometimes, with their own creativity and originality.³⁴ In this case, originality is understood in the context of the phenomenological categories of singularity, personal identity, and pluralism, for both Goethe and Schiller, seek the truth, each in his own, experiential, experimental, and narrative way.

However, Siemek offers the following reservation here: “Although both sides *speak*, their discourse is only symmetrical at the level of direct meanings.”³⁵ Is there asymmetry and hegemony of one speaker over the other in their discourse? There can be hegemony and there is asymmetry between the mythologizing (active, speaking) party and the mythologized (passive, spoken) party. Siemek describes their discursive relation as follows:

“If dialogue is to be, from the hermeneutical point of view, really fruitful and interesting, that is, if it is to succeed in fulfilling its ideogenic and mythogenic function,” then “one of the parties [...] must be the thing ‘with respect to

³⁰ Siemek, M. 1974, op. cit., 384.

³¹ Ricoeur, P. 2005, op. cit., 29.

³² Duffy, M. 2009, op. cit., 27.

³³ Siemek, M. 1974, op. cit., 379.

³⁴ Thus the conceptualization of the dialogical relations of the two poets belongs to the “phenomenology of origins”; see Moran, D. 2000. *Introduction in Phenomenology*. New York–London: Routledge, 401.

³⁵ Siemek, M. 1974, op. cit., 385.

which' the discourse of the other party is oriented, 'to which' the intention of the communication is directed. [...] Goethe is here 'the Other' to whom the original intention of the mythogenic discourse is directed. [...] If, then, it is sometimes said that each myth is created and formed in dialogue, then it should also be added that, seemingly paradoxically, every dialogue which is significant from the point of view of culture [...] is, in reality, a monologue, more or less styled as a dialogue."³⁶

To summarize, dialogue and monologue as well as myth and (according to the narrative theory) fiction are distinct but inseparable phenomena. It is the first argument showing Siemek's increasing awareness of dialogue as a powerful but fuzzy philosophical notion. It is time to discuss additional arguments that announce the further radical evolution of his principle of dialogue. Siemek refused some ambivalent aspects of asymmetry that upset a balance between two or more persons within the relation of proximity. To explain his critical argument concerning proximity, we have to revisit proximity as the core category of today's philosophy of dialogue. For some relevant reasons, such as, on the one hand, the degradation of norms and institutions by National Socialism³⁷ and, on the other hand, the self-centeredness of "Dasein," ipseity, the "ontology of being concerned with being,"³⁸ and the crisis of humanity caused by technology, Buber, Levinas, and their followers provided existential, anthropological, phenomenological, and even spiritual and sensualist claims as the novel foundations for the principle of dialogue. Such claims include a face-to-face meeting, infinite responsibility, unconditional love, charity and compassion, and, in particular, responsiveness and proximity, which bridge the "Urdistanz"³⁹ between

³⁶ Ibid., 386.

³⁷ See Ombrosi, O. 2001. *The Twilight of Reason*. Brighton: Academic Study Press; and Sara Hammerschlag's book review "Reason's Reminder: A Philosophy of Testimony after Auschwitz." *H-Net Reviews in the Humanities and Social Sciences* online, published on May, 2013, 1–3, accessed 20 December, 2016: "This means not only making a temporal link between the event and all that comes after, such that all thought must respond to Adorno's new Categorical Imperative—to think and to act so that the disaster is not repeated—but also requires that reason inaugurate a new relation to sensibility, rather than reducing sensibility to sense. This philosophy of testimony through its attention to singularity, to the suffering of the other, preserves suffering as the wound in reason" (p. 1); compare Levinas, E. 1998. *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 89–91; and Levinas, E. 2006. "Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism." Hand, S. (Trans.). In: *Difficult Justice. Commentaries on Levinas and Politics*. Horowitz, A., G. Horowitz (Eds.). Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 10–11. "Morality, without justice, produces injustice, hence immorality. Justice detached from morality produces tyranny, instead"; see Cohen, R. A. 1998. "Foreword" to E. Levinas' *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, op. cit., xvi.

³⁸ Levinas, E. 2006. "Prefatory Note to 'Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism'," op. cit., 3.

³⁹ To Levinas' and Buber's discussion on the "misapplied" absolute distance between Thou and I, see Bernasconi, R. 1988. "Failure of Communication' as a Surplus: Dialogue and Lack of Dialogue between Buber and Levinas." In: *The Provocation of Levinas. Rethinking the Other*. Bernasconi R., D. Wood (Eds.). London–New York: Routledge, 121.

individuals and help them become interconnected as humans beyond any rational and institutional, national, ethnic, and political borders. That kind of proximity is only possible as a "distant proximity", as Levinas puts it. Siemek's use of the post-Holocaust critical thinking (supported also by Theodor W. Adorno, Hans Jonas, Walter Benjamin, Hannah Arendt, Jacques Derrida, and many others) was quite selective. Thus, he skeptically addressed proximity, unconditional responsibility and love, and, especially, Levinas' accusation of "that famous subject of transcendental idealism which, before anything else, wishes to be free and thinks itself free."⁴⁰ However, he shared Levinas' and other phenomenologists' fear of all the ideologies referring to an "I," "Ego," or "Dasein" defined in a solipsistic way, outside of the communication that enables parties to share what constitutes them as selves.⁴¹ In some aspects, Siemek's understanding of proximity and asymmetry might be right, but in others it is wrong. First, proximity, intimacy, and asymmetry are not synonyms. According to Levinas,

"Proximity does not resolve into the consciousness a being would have of another being that it would judge to be near inasmuch as the other would be under one's eyes or within one's reach, and inasmuch as it would be possible for one to take hold of that being, hold on to it or converse with it, in the reciprocity of handshakes, caresses, struggle, collaboration, commerce, conversation. Consciousness, which is consciousness of a possible, power, freedom, would then have already lost proximity properly so called, now surveyed and thematized,"⁴²

reduced to abstract categories, ignored by impersonal institutions, replaced by virtual avatars, re-presented by biometrical parameters, etc.⁴³ Let us compare Siemek's understanding of the notion of proximity with its phenomenological explanation. For Siemek, proximity implies becoming at other people's disposal and, in particular, being exposed to other people's infinite demands, including persuasive, emotional, volitional, or even physical pressure, which may accompany the "summons," "demands," and commands described by Levinas and Ricoeur. What seems to be the most troubling for Siemek is the unconditional responsiveness. This is why in his later, transcendental concept of dialogue and reciprocal recognition he recommends distance, balance, and symmetry as a warranty of respect for other people who are defined, first of all, in the categories of "my" autonomy and external freedom, which manifest themselves empir-

⁴⁰ Levinas, E. 2006, op. cit., 3

⁴¹ Which provides free self-determination (in terms of transcendental philosophy), realization of freedom i.e., the "natality" as one of the global abilities incorporated by the human condition, see Champlin, J. 2013. "Born Again: Arendt's 'Natality' as Figure and Concept." *The German Review*, 88; and agency, see Korsgaard, Ch. M. 2009. *Self-Constitution, Identity, and Integrity*. Oxford–New York: Oxford University Press.

⁴² Levinas, E. 2006, op. cit., 83.

⁴³ Ricoeur, P. 1992. *Oneself as Another*. Blamey, K. (Trans.). Chicago–London: The University of Chicago Press, 317.

ically. That liberal approach to human beings is complemented by that part of the phenomenological approach that was proposed by Levinas in *Totality and Infinity* and by Ricoeur in *The Course of Recognition*. Essentially, this approach is more oriented toward other people's freedom. To insert some symmetry between my and others' freedom, i.e., to loosen the proximity, Siemek starts to advocate for the limitation of the demands and responses exchanged by all parties of interpersonal relations. In his counterargument concerning proximity, he refers to humans' abilities as a finite, poor being and the addressee of the infinite ethical imperatives formulated by phenomenology. In other words, he constructs an anthropological counterargument showing that infinite validity claims are not universal. However, for some objective, empirical reasons (such as individuals' unequal psycho-physical skills, which cannot be strengthened in the way proposed, for example, within the framework of developmental virtue theories), their character remains rather supererogatory and even heroic. Of course, the imperatives brought up by phenomenologists like Levinas and Jonas are expressed in terms of infinite/unconditional love and responsibility. Those imperatives challenge—and summon—finite agents to infinite obligations to deliver a counterbalance to the measureless harm done to the countless innocent victims by the Holocaust perpetrators. However, Siemek does not consider infinity in those categories. His reflections focus on civil liberties and republican-democratic institutions as subjects that are less central for other philosophers of dialogue (but who are, of course, too involved in their phenomenological approaches). According to Siemek,

“Incidentally, the contemporary ‘philosophies of dialogue’ are even less aware of this complexity (i.e., the complexity of dialogical principle) when they refer (not always justifiably) to the thinking of Rosenzweig, Buber or Lévinas and restrict *a priori* the normative meaning of the notion of ‘dialogicality’ in human speech, thinking and action to the most privileged, highly emphatic content which this notion *sometimes* assumes in the intimacy of *some* inter-human relations, namely ones based—as in the case of love and friendship in particular—on a direct personal bond between ‘I’ and ‘You.’ This ignores the fact that relations of this kind can at best be seen as exceptional, top accomplishments and fulfillment of the communicative dialogue rather than its daily routine. The ambitious and extremely demanding claims that an ‘I’–‘You’ relationship of this kind addresses to the *whole* personality and existence of man, expecting always *complete* self-denial from him and his subordination to the Other, could probably define the ultimate and desirable goal of human communication, but they do not constitute its essence or source. *Boundless love of the Other is certainly a beautiful and lofty value that enriches man and his world, but communicative dialogue must be possi-*

*ble—and indeed exists—between people who are not loved or altogether incapable of loving.”*⁴⁴

However, Siemek’s turn to the transcendental theory of reciprocal recognition, including the symmetrical exchange of summons and responses between free agents, does not imply questioning asymmetry in its specific existential meaning. This is explained by Levinas and Ricoeur, who warn against “a relation wherein I and the other would become interchangeable” and against a path leading “back from infinity to totality,”⁴⁵ that is, to the generalizing meta-narratives and categories unrelated to the authentic narratives that report phenomena experienced by particular people and subjects. Siemek stresses the relevance of asymmetry already in his early essay “Dialogue and Its Myth”:

“That clear difference between the authors’ styles, tones, and approaches is not, however, a purely stylistic matter, the less so a psychological one. One ought to see it [...] as, primarily, a reflection of principal differences between the actual situations of both parties of that dialogue [...], differences, the essence of which [...] is purely factual disparity and inequality.”⁴⁶

In phenomenology and hermeneutical philosophy, infinity and asymmetry remain synonyms of singularity, uniqueness, and indispensability. Their role is to promote difference and pluralism in social contexts and to protect individuals against the rhetoric of reciprocity, which may give rise to economical egoism, separation, arrogance, “social anonymity”⁴⁷ promoted by formal institutions. It may also lead to a neglect of socio-moral problems, such as deprivation, devaluation, abuse, nullification, annihilation, and stigmatization of people because of their singular characteristics.

But is the transcendental concept of reciprocal recognition still so powerful after having been revised and discussed within the framework of the phenomenological approach, an example of which is Siemek’s recent concept inspired by Fichte and Hegel? Let us consider another of Siemek’s critical views concerning proximity as an essential claim of phenomenology of dialogue:

“... the ideal of direct ‘face-to-face’ communication, which is evidently pursued by yesterday’s and today’s ‘philosophies of dialogue’ or ‘meeting,’ and which urges people to replace wholly the objectified ‘I–It’ relations in human relations with forms of authentic ‘I–You’ bonds, appears to be problematic also as the supreme goal or indeed a highly desirable value. After all, this ideal compels us to be on ‘first-name terms’ with everybody, which is

⁴⁴ Siemek, M. 2000, op. cit. (all quotations in original).

⁴⁵ Ricoeur, P. 2005, op. cit., 159.

⁴⁶ Siemek, M. 1974, op. cit., 382.

⁴⁷ Levinas, E. 1994. *Beyond the Subject. Talmudic Readings and Lectures*. Mole, G. D. (Trans.). Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 200.

something we cannot do. In fact we are against it. The distance implied by such forms of address as 'Mr., Mrs., Sir or Madam' is not an empty social gesture, but conveys a very important dimension of communicative dialogue: the preservation of clearances and distances between persons, which differentiate and articulate their space. [...] That space rather begins only with the 'I-He' relationship, or perhaps the even earlier 'We-They,' which certainly is at first the experience of a radical *strangeness* of the Other, but at the same time it becomes right from the start the dialogic process of overcoming it."⁴⁸

According to Siemek, distance is a preoriginal phenomena and, at the same time, it belongs to the rules of dialogue as well as to the social conventions. But language may offer the so-called "linguistic hospitality" beyond the conventions. Despite the privatisation of space articulated by individuals as an "unshareable"⁴⁹ *value*, as Siemek stresses it, individuals, still, can share certain (if not all) physical and observable realities with others. And what they not share in that natural way it is their internal worlds (thoughts, feelings, first person perspectives and experiences, etc). So sharing "the same language"⁵⁰ enables subjects to share what *is* originally unshareable with others. On the other hand, sharing the same language when being engaged in a dialogical relationship⁵¹ may arise doubts, as it is shown by Deleuze and Guattari. Finally, location, situatedness and the space "preserved" for each subject result from his or her relations with others and they are throughout shareable. Thus, for the contemporary philosophy of dialogue, an a priori distant I-He relationship considered by Siemek becomes discutable. With various consequences for participants. First, according to Merrell, "dialogue is not merely between the 'I,' the 'inner' other of the 'I,' and the others of the community, but also between the 'I' and the 'real' physical-world other, which is the most unrelenting opponent imaginable"⁵². Second, confronting unrelenting opponents revises the Kantian ideal of cosmopolitanism⁵³.

⁴⁸ Siemek, M. 1974, op. cit., 54–55.

⁴⁹ Praetorius, N. 2010. "Intersubjectivity, Cognition, and Language". In Gallagher, S., Schmicking, D. (Eds.). *Handbook of Phenomenology and Cognitive Science*. Dordrecht–New York–Heidelberg–London, 301.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ "So, let us say that dialogue is dialect, that is, dialogue is a concept that is itself situated by contingent lines of provenance and also dependent on terroir, or the specificity of the positions that animate it", Bruce Janz says. He tries "to recover the similarity of origin, and re-infuse dialogue with the significance of dialect, that is, the forms of expression that both reflect and construct the place they are in", see Janz, B. B. 2015. "Philosophy-in-Place and the Provenance of Dialogue." *South African Journal of Philosophy*, 34 (4), 484.

⁵² Merrell, F. 1998. *Peirce, Signs, and Meaning*. Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press, 64; see also Crick, N., Bodie, G. D. 2016. "«I Says to Myself, Says I»: Charles Sanders Peirce on the Components of Dialogue." *Communication Theory*, International Communication Association (early view, retrieved on 13.05.2016), 1–17.

⁵³ Sørensen, A. 2016. "Cosmopolitanism – Not a 'Major Ideology' But Still an Ideology". *Philo-*

II. THE TRANSCENDENTALIST (RE)TURN. “COMBINING FICHTE AND HEGEL” AND BEYOND

Siemek's trust in reason and rational human conduct—which manifest themselves in interhuman recognition, respect, and dialogue (instead of physical violence and confrontation of monological claims)—increased over the quarter century since his early essay *Dialogue and Its Myth* appeared in 1974. His focus on ancient Greek topoi, such as *logos*, *agora*, and *politeia*, on the one hand, and the ideals of secular, liberal, and reasonable citizenship, justice, cosmopolitanism, and overall progress, on the other hand, empowered Siemek to re-approach the principle of dialogue very differently than how it had been approached in phenomenological conceptions that were still flourishing at the turn of the twentieth century. Siemek draws his ideals from the Reformation, Enlightenment, and particularly German idealism. His concept of dialogue as the only medium of interhuman recognition can be situated in the middle of the mainstream. The following quote expresses the quintessence of Siemek's transcendentalist turn:

“Outside of language there is no thinking or action for us altogether, to say nothing of rational thinking and action. And this is prelinguality of human cognitive and practical acts, expressed most concisely and symbolically by the oneness of ‘reason’ and ‘word’ in the Greek word *logos*.”⁵⁴

After that turn, core phenomenological categories like interiority, actuality, proximity, claims of unconditional/infinite responsiveness, etc., only play a secondary role in Siemek's understanding of dialogue. His hidden sympathy is with Goethe, who embodied the “quiet and reserved dignity”⁵⁵ essential for shaping respectful and formal relationships within a modern society. Siemek would be able to rethink the reciprocal recognition in existential and hermeneutical contexts, in the way suggested by Ricoeur: “within the structures of understanding, reflection takes the form of a *recognition of existence* within a world that presents itself to perception.”⁵⁶ However, his philosophical vocabulary becomes increasingly transcendentalist, and thus it is neither heart nor metaphys-

sophy and Social Criticism, 42(2), 200–224, doi: 10.1177/0191453714566483.

⁵⁴ Siemek, M. 2000, op. cit., 38; see also: idem, 1995. *Filozofia spełnionej nowoczesności – Hegel*. Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UMK, 67.

⁵⁵ Siemek, M. 1974, op. cit., 381. Concerning scientism, Siemek's early viewpoint corresponds with Nietzsche's: “All science, natural as well as *unnatural*—which is what I call the self-critique of knowledge—has at present the object of dissuading man from his former respect for himself, as if this had been nothing but a piece of bizarre conceit.” Nietzsche, F. 1968. *Genealogy of Morals. Basic Writings of Nietzsche*. Kaufmann, W. (Ed., Trans.). New York: Random House, 111.

⁵⁶ Hall, D. W. 2007. *Paul Ricoeur and the Poetic Imperative. The Creative Tension between Love and Justice*. New York: State University of New York Press, 45.

ics but reason that participates in the act of recognition and in the dialogical intercourse. He would never say, “but wait, if you need a sure mark (*sema*), your hearts will no doubt be able to recognize me.”⁵⁷

Siemek's mature concept of the reciprocal recognition is rooted in Fichte's and Hegel's philosophy. According to Fichte, human cognition includes the ability to detect, cognize, and recognize the pre-original, intelligible spontaneity shared by all humans (i.e., the universally innate potential whose realizations are to be universally developed⁵⁸) all free acts originate from, including the epistemic construction of “my” and the other's subjectivity and the interrelations between them. Various modalities and manifestations of that intelligible agility have been deductively worked out by Fichte. His entire philosophical system, titled *Wissenschaftslehre* (the Science of Knowledge), articulates the transcendental self-consciousness of an intelligible being as absolute agency. Simultaneously, Siemek explores Hegel's alternative path of intersubjective recognition. The path leads through the dynamic historical, social, cultural, and discursive (in short, phenomenal) situatedness of a free individual. That path originates from the radical asymmetry between one free individual and all others as “slaves” dominated by a “master,” including his physical advantage, overpowering monologue, and institutions (laws, property, etc.). According to Hegel's progressive logics, a master–slave relationship transforms itself and finally culminates in the reciprocal recognition among all subjects enabled to cognize their free, reasonable, and—for that reason—thoroughly human condition. To Siemek, recognition is neither a topic nor a result of dialogue; rather, recognition is a transcendental correlate of dialogue. No dialogue without recognition: exchanging recognition opens and reopens dialogue, i.e., it supports and facilitates an equal dialogue and the equivalence between participants of dialogue, beyond all differences, dissymmetries, and monological, or at least rhetorical, claims of domination⁵⁹ over the other party who is seen as an opponent or enemy in a dispute (Greek: *agon*) instead of a partner in dialogue. It is only by recognizing one another that individuals are able to engage in dialogical interactions and establish common institutions—in a particular, legal order—to promote, objectify, and protect a reasonable realization of freedom for everyone, in the plenitude of its phenomenal manifestations.⁶⁰ Rethinking that stage

⁵⁷ Ricoeur, P. 2005, op. cit., 74.

⁵⁸ Humboldt's notion of *Bildung* and Dewey's notion of *education* presuppose that “education aims to develop human potential” and this is what meets Fichte's and Siemek's interpretation of the “social drive”; see Hauskeller, M. 2013. *Better Humans. Understanding the Enhancement Project*. Stocksfield: Aamen, 18.

⁵⁹ See Section 3 in this paper.

⁶⁰ Siemek, M. 1974, op. cit., 381. Still, a metaphysical or an ideal dialogical situation has been established by transcendental philosophy and phenomenology. However, applying or sharing metaphysics/ideals may be accompanied by at least the following two problems: 1) within a dialogical situation, one party may be unable to respond to her/his partner. This has been discussed by Siemek in his polemic against proximity; 2) the second problem has been discussed by Bruce

of social relations and self-governance with Hegel and Fichte still has something in common with unmasking the “theoretical structures of mythologizing consciousness,”⁶¹ as achieving self-consciousness by means of a free subjectivity among other free subjects requires the development of an adequate social epistemology, i.e., a kind of “happy consciousness.” Such consciousness enables a self-reflecting subject to realize her or his freedom not just in relation to the world around her/him, but in relation to the world shared with others—or even in relation to others—as a co-reasonable and co-operative *Socius*. Consequently, a subject frees her/himself as a result of having changed her/his own mind in relation to and simultaneously with other subjects. Siemek examines a number of environmental, situational, and relational factors facilitating conflicts and deviations and preventing individuals from reciprocal recognition. However, his most valuable contribution to understanding the “struggle for recognition,” including a radical asymmetry between domination and servitude, is the exploration of the epistemologies of the struggling parties and their poor ability to undertake dialogical interrelations. This is why he prefers to focus on language and discourse rather than “having-to-be in the face of another”⁶² as a way of overcoming a conflict. The way leading from a violent conflict to the linguistic modus of responsiveness (speaking and hearing) seems to be more feasible than the way leading to the asymmetric (specifically moral) forms of responsiveness, such as unconditional responsibility or accountability, offered by phenomenology.⁶³ Siemek’s concept of recognition is decidedly “post-theistic”⁶⁴ and post-phenomenological in nature. Both parties (when a minimal dyadic relationship is under consideration) are equally addressed by rational, open, and moderate claims, rather than by infinite ones. What is meant here is keeping a distance from and making room for another person’s reasonable free-

B. Janz as a basic dissymmetry between two or more metaphysics (and epistemology [do you mean: epistemologies]) of dialogue. Thus, he questions the ideal of dialogics in a novel way, which would be highly instructive in the context of intercultural and interreligious dialogue, such as an (unsuccessful) dialogue between confessors of three radically different monotheisms: “What happens if there is a metaphysics of dialogue that is not shared, for instance, if some culture assumes that dialogue is possible only because a ‘spirit’ is transferred from one to another, or if one believes that no thought is ever transferred but merely awakened in the recipient (e.g. Augustine [and Socrates for his anamnesis method—E.N.]), or, as in a medieval nominalist theory of language, the spoken word lingers in the air as a ‘flatus vocis’ for a time, having a continued force and being available to be used, but eventually fading away? Can dialogue occur if the metaphysics of dialogue differs among those involved?” Janz’s question, which is pragmatic in nature, opens a new perspective for dialogue research. Janz, B. B. 2015, op. cit., 482.

⁶¹ Siemek, M. 1974, op. cit., 385.

⁶² Ibid., 193, footnote 35.

⁶³ As a core modality of responsiveness in phenomenology, for Ricoeur “the term ‘responsibility’ unites both *meanings*: ‘counting on’ and ‘being accountable for.’ It unites them, adding to them the idea of a *response* to the question ‘Where are you’ asked to another who needs me. This response is the following: ‘Here I am!’ a response that is a statement of self-constancy”; see Ricoeur, P. 1992, op. cit., 165.

⁶⁴ See Redhead, M. 2015. “Reasoning between Athens and Jerusalem.” *Polity*, 47(1), 84–113.

dom by restraining one's own urge of self-will or by engaging in a dialogue in which some reasonable agreements, conditions, or principles can be worked out. All the actions would allow *both of us* to achieve freedom in a harmless, deliberated, and interpersonally elaborated way. Justice begins not only "before the law,"⁶⁵ but already by entering a regulatory dialogue between potential lawgivers and citizens of the *res publica* of freedom. However, phenomenology also conceptualizes that kind of a "relation of the I with the Other," which, according to Levinas, "moves in the form of the We, aspires to a State, institutions, laws, which are the source of universality."⁶⁶

According to his own credo, Siemek adapted the "approach developed by combining Fichte's and Hegel's models."⁶⁷ One of his core claims is that dialogue "admittedly remains the only alternative to brute force, but there is always the possibility of peculiar violence of the word and through the word [...]."⁶⁸ More precisely, in its *modus*, described by Siemek, dialogue and conversation seem to be the only, the next, and the most powerful alternative to a violent conflict:

"A conversation, therefore, implies that the Other, while still being strange, ceases to be an enemy, a target of aggression, and begins to be a still unknown but already preliminarily accepted partner, i.e.—potentially at least—an equal subject. It is precisely this mutual recognition, even if only in the most rudimentary form, that enables and sets in train the whole process of dialogic exchange of «requests» and «replies». This recognition carries with it the principle of *reciprocity* as an irreplaceable, truly 'transcendental' foundation of not only all human interactions and relations, but also of the self-reciprocating 'myself to', which creates the identity of a single human being as a subject. The «subjectivity principle», which has dominated classical philosophy and European culture, now emerges ever more clearly as a socially and historically shaped product of this original communicative intersubjectivity."⁶⁹

Interestingly (and very differently than in phenomenological theory), dialogical relationship, despite its assets as an alternative to physical violence, also encompasses violence, albeit of a different kind: it is in the form of the immanent authority of voice and word that interrupts silence and draws the listener's attention, reorienting it toward the other as a speaker. Recognition here manifests itself in listening to the other, paying attention to the message and its au-

⁶⁵ Ibidem; see also Bernasconi, R. 1999. "The Third Party. Levinas on the Intersection of the Ethical and the Political." *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, 30(1), 80.

⁶⁶ Levinas, 1979, op. cit., 300.

⁶⁷ See: Siemek, M. 1998. *Hegel i filozofia*. Terminus: Warszawa; and: idem. 1995, op. cit.

⁶⁸ Siemek, M. 2000, op. cit., 53–54.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 38.

thor who invests the speech with authority, understanding what is being said, and interpreting it in a way that reflects the author's intention as closely as possible. These reflections are also reminiscent of the "meeting halfway" between Schiller and Goethe and the asymmetry of dialogue described by Siemek in his early essay from 1974. Furthermore, a speaker's autonomous voice as well as the said—the "word"—contain a call for respect.⁷⁰ If they would "cancel" otherness and difference or either establish connections across differences, remains a disputable issue:

"the spoken word must be listened to and heard, admitted, confirmed, and somehow 'repaid.' The 'other' shall become someone wholly 'for us'—and our discourse makes him 'for us' because it cancels his 'otherness'; at the same time, our intention can be only satisfied if he [...] recognizes us, our discourse, and his place within this discourse."⁷¹

In his works addressing dialogue, Siemek often refers to Aristotle's *zoon lo-gon echon*, which is one of Siemek's constant philosophical *topoi*. Furthermore, his own concept of a human being implicitly intersects with Ricoeur's concept of the "able being." For example, Siemek adapted the term *drive* from Fichte. According to Fichte, it is a social drive in humans that "strives to discover *free, rational* beings outside of ourselves and to enter into community with them. It does not strive for the *subordination* characteristic of the physical world, but rather for *coordination*."⁷²

Both social drive and its result, i.e., the coordination of free activities within the world shared with other humans, distinguish human conduct from the "directly instinctive" behavior of animals. Both the "reflective and symbolically mediated"⁷³ conduct and linguistic and discursive skills are related to the characteristic of "social drive." Strengthening these skills in individuals is one of the core tasks of ethical, dialogical, and democratic education (*Bildung*), especially when seemingly democratic institutions and citizens helplessly face refugees as radical others; however, they face them neither face to face nor as speakers and listeners, i.e., as parties of a dialogue. Instead, they face a huge, depersonalized influx and abstract crowd, swarming with secret enemies and terrorists. In that situation, teaching dialogical skills (even as basic as speaking and listening to other people having different views) to the newcomers by means of real dialogue seems to be the best alternative to any other way of dealing with them:

"[...] the primordial violence gets replaced by the reciprocity of communication and dialogue. Instead of two struggling opponents that become domi-

⁷⁰ Ibid., 37–55.

⁷¹ Siemek, M. 1974, op. cit., 388 [underlined by E.N.].

⁷² Siemek, M. 2000, op. cit., 40.

⁷³ Ibid., 38.

nant or dependent, two partners start performing conversation. They are participants of a speaking and listening community, they exchange appeals and responses, and reciprocally respecting one another just as they are [...]. Primordial violence of the struggle is excluded and replaced by intersubjective logic and ethics of the common social game.”⁷⁴

Undoubtedly, people will always follow their selfish instincts and interests, and their confrontation will take “dramatic form in egoisms struggling with one another,”⁷⁵ as Levinas puts it. But the “salvatory”⁷⁶ power of communicating with others and understanding them; of developing autonomous moral convictions without external pressure and indoctrination but with respect for others; of conducting a meaningful existence (that is, a cultivated and educated one⁷⁷); and of shaping dialogical relations with others should not be ignored.

“According to Fichte, the emergence of a dialogical community of ‘free, rational beings’ is not conditioned by good will, although the acquired effect—despite instances of ‘ill will,’ e.g. allowing self-love to be a driving force in the process—leads one to conclude that rational beings have no adverse motivation at all and are therefore able to create a rational *compulsion to mutuality*. This model allows the a priori reclassification of the social *logos* into a communicative *dialogos*.”⁷⁸

Seeking connections between Fichte's and Levinas' concepts of dialogue, some authors indicate the following controversy: Fichtean *Aufforderung*⁷⁹ (summons) is seemed as a “hetero-affection,”⁸⁰ an alien impulse which “befalls subjectivity” and restricts its genuine (transcendental) agility. According to

⁷⁴ Siemek, M. 1995, op. cit., 53. Ricoeur also advocates logic as one of the basic preconditions of interpersonal recognition. “In this sense, the ‘logical’ use of the operations of distinguishing and identifying will never be surpassed but will remain presupposed and included in the existential [*existentiell*] use that will be definitely enriched by this, whether we are talking about distinction or identification, as applied to persons, relative to themselves or to others, or considered in regard to their mutual relations.” Ricoeur, P. 1992, op. cit., 25.

⁷⁵ Levinas, E. 1998. *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*. Lingis, A. (Trans.). Pittsburgh, Penn.: Duquesne University Press, 4.

⁷⁶ According to Wittgenstein, if “your concept is wrong” or may imply wrongful consequences, “I cannot illumine the matter by fighting against your words, but only by trying to turn your attention away from certain expressions, illustrations, images, and *towards* the *employment* of the words.” Wittgenstein, L. 1967. *Zettel*. Oxford: Blackwell's, 82e.

⁷⁷ For Ricoeur, the “bridge that leads from meaningful existence to practical experience” is to be called “‘public life,’ the life of communal and political action within institutions that govern society.” Hall, D. W. 2007, op. cit., 82.

⁷⁸ Siemek, M. 2000, op. cit., 37.

⁷⁹ Watson, S. H. 2001. *Tradition(s) II. Hermeneutics, Ethics and the Dispensation of the Good*. Bloomington Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 194.

⁸⁰ Lotz, Ch. 2008. “Sensation, Alterity and Self-Consciousness: On Fichte and Levinas.” *Klesis — Revue Philosophique: Mélanges Phenomenologiques*, 81, 81–89.

Lotz, “both Fichte and Levinas claim that self-affection is—logically put—a combination of identity and difference, the middle term of which is *limitation*.”⁸¹ There is not enough room here to analyze the phenomenological interplay between interiority and exteriority; furthermore, Siemek was not interested in that topic. Rather, he interpreted the transcendental “I” as liminal, i.e., infinite and finite, that is, self-limited when facing another free being. According to Siemek, recognition (and dialogue) is connected with self-limitation, while in the Cartesian tradition, in Ricoeur’s words, it was connected with “procedures of identification. The self took the place of the thing in general.”⁸² Ricoeur also claims that recognition encompasses an experiential and comprehensive relation to a subject in its otherness.⁸³ In Siemek’s approach, a very different level of recognition is meant: “reciprocity” has nothing in common with the phenomenological experience of otherness. It is considered beyond mutuality, which is “best encountered as an interaction between two or more people in which the lives of all participants are irretrievably altered.”⁸⁴ Categories such as symmetry and reciprocity belong together; on the other hand, asymmetry (dissymmetry) and mutuality belong together.

Seeking ethical interconnections between subjects in terms of good and goodness was not Siemek’s ambition, except with regards to the principle of autonomy involved in the doctrine of participatory democracy and democratic lawgiving. For that reason, his approach to dialogue remains more rationalist and formal. He grants that “the dialogic community of ‘free rational beings’ in Fichte’s model is not even meant to be the ethical ‘kingdom of ends’ in the Kantian sense.”⁸⁵ To some essential extent, Siemek and Honneth’s conceptions of reciprocal recognition belong together. Siemek would fully agree with Honneth’s opinion expressed in his *Structure of Recognition* and discussed by Ricoeur as “two dimensions of juridical recognition”:⁸⁶ “We can only come to

⁸¹ Ibid., 84.

⁸² He focuses on “a subject of experience just as I am, a subject capable of perceiving me as belonging to the world of his experience,” see Ricoeur, P. 2005, op. cit., 151.

⁸³ Ibid., 154.

⁸⁴ Watkin, Ch. 2009. *Phenomenology or Deconstruction? The Question of Ontology in Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Paul Ricœur and Jean-Luc Nancy*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 64–65.

⁸⁵ Siemek, M. 2000, op. cit., 52.

⁸⁶ “[...] as regards the person, recognition means identifying each person as free and equal to every other person. Thus juridical recognition adds to self-recognition in terms of capacities (in the sense considered in my earlier chapter) new capacities stemming from the conjunction between the universal validity of the norm and the singularity of persons. These two dimensions of juridical recognition thus consist in the connection between the enlarging of the sphere of rights recognized as belonging to persons and the enriching of the capacities that these subjects recognize in themselves. This enlarging and enriching are the product of struggles that mark the inscription in history of these two associated processes.” Ricoeur, *The Course of Recognition*, op. cit., 197. Siemek’s concept of law has been presented in Nowak, E. 2013. “Profesora Marka Jana Siemka imperium filozofii prawa” [Professor Marek Jan Siemek’s Imperium of Legal Philosophy]. *Filozofia Publiczna i Edukacja Demokratyczna*, 2, 222–244; to compare it with Levinas’

understand ourselves as the bearers of rights when we know, in turn, what various normative obligations we must keep vis-a-vis others.”⁸⁷ Unlike Honneth, Ricoeur, Taylor, Darwall, Fraser, and others, Siemek did no longer explore the posthegelian approaches to recognition (such as social esteem, misrecognition, temporary recognition, postconventional recognition, “multivalent recognition,”⁸⁸ etc.) and their dialogical contexts.

CONCLUSION

In a dialogue (unlike in other kinds of discourse), something is being exchanged and an exchange implies that one thing is being exchanged for something of equivalent significance, even when the nature of the equivalent differs from that of the genuine subject offered. According to Siemek, equivalents should always be of the nearest value/significance to one another, i.e., they must belong to the same rank of values. For example, dialog and violence represent extremely different, even opposite ranks called values and anti-values. Therefore, there is neither equivalence nor symmetry between them: anti-values seem to ignore or refute values. Nonetheless, human nature is not only driven by binary oppositions. Some victims of violence, even genocide survivors, are able to conduct an initial dialogical gesture when facing the former executor, beyond the principle of justice as a reciprocal, strictly symmetrical exchange. This is the core point of certain contemporary philosophers of dialogue that combine symmetry with asymmetry⁸⁹ and legitimize the present dialogue attempts consisting in and remembering the meaning and the authority of victims' suffering even though the perpetrators cannot repay the victims for their crimes (e.g., the crimes are immeasurable or the perpetrators are dead and their communities enter into a dialogue with the victims). Thus, the issue of reciprocity and responsiveness is a crucial one in this paper. It may be further structured as several specific questions. For example, Bruce Janz asks the following:

stance, see: Nowak, E. 2016 (in press), “Ewolucja i osobliwość: pojęcie prawa według Emmanuela Levinasa” [Evolution and Singularity. Approaching Emmanuel Levinas' Concept of Law]. *Principia*, special issue, Bekrycht, T., J. Rabus, M. Zirk-Sadowski (Eds.).

⁸⁷ Honneth, A. 1995. *The Struggle for Recognition*. Anderson, J. (Trans.). Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 108.

⁸⁸ See Lauer, Ch. 2012. “Multivalent Recognition: The Place of Hegel in the Fraser–Honneth Debate.” *Contemporary Political Theory*, 11, 23–40, doi: 10.1057/cpt.2010.44; Fraser, N., A. Honneth. 2003. *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange*. London: Verso.

⁸⁹ E.g. Reyes Mate, see Gan-Krzywoszyńska, K., P. Leśniewski. 2014. “The Culture of Memory: An Approach of Reyes Mate.” *Ethics in Progress*, 2(5), 246–256, doi: 10.14746/eip.2014.2.16.

“what is the ‘dia’ of dialogue? If dialogue is an exchange, what is exchanged in dialogue? Is it ideas? Concepts? Beliefs? Words? Perspectives on a problem? Opinions? Texts? Does the name for the exchange change depend on what is exchanged? Does dialogue imply that something more important is exchanged than in, say, a conversation or a chat? Again, the answer to this question might systematically differ between participants in the dialogue.”⁹⁰

Neither ideas and beliefs nor other literal content of dialogue have been considered in this paper. The content might be asymmetrical at the level of the meaning revealed by the addressees and of the intentions of the message or it might be objectified within a dialogue and finally shared by a subject or even by an entire society, as Ricoeur describes.⁹¹ And the metaphysics might (or even must) too remain asymmetrical. All the options can be discovered in the correspondence between Goethe and Schiller. The salvatory power of speech, which raises people above naked violence, as well as the therapeutic and ethical power of responsiveness, described by phenomenologists, remain dissymmetrical; the same is true for exceptional and exemplary acts which occur beyond reciprocity and mutuality as the most typical modes of responsiveness. Derrida seems to discover forgiveness as a pre-responsive, purely spontaneous and infinite act:

“each time forgiveness is at the service of a finality (be it noble and spiritual redemption, reconciliation, salvation), each time that it aims to re-establish a normality (social, national, political, psycho-logical) by a work of mourning, by some therapy or ecology of memory, then the ‘forgiveness’ is not pure—nor is its concept. Forgiveness is not, it should not be, normal, normative, normalising. It should remain exceptional and extraordinary, in the face of the impossible: as if it interrupted the ordinary course of historical temporality.”⁹²

As already shown in Sections 1 and 2, unconditionality, infinity, the economy of the gift and the *acte gratuit* and other dissymmetries seem to transcend Siemek’s research focus, i.e. the reciprocity.⁹³ In his early essay *Dialogue and*

⁹⁰ Janz, B. B. 2015, op. cit., 482.

⁹¹ See Duffy, M. 2009, op. cit.

⁹² Derrida, J. 2001. *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*. Dooley, M., M. Hughes. London–New York: Routledge, 32, 27–67.

⁹³ In fact, reciprocity requires equivalence and justice which provides objective instruments of equalization (the rules of justice). Using the example of prince Myshkin, Ricoeur shows that “people who act out of agape, to whom the sociology of action assigns a type and certain kinds of behavior, find themselves lost in this world of calculations and equivalences, where they are incapable of providing some kind of justification. Being, as they are, unaware of the obligation to give in return, they do not go beyond their initial gesture, because they expect nothing in return”, Ricoeur, P. 2005, op. cit., 224.

Its Myth, Siemek explores the asymmetry of beliefs, perspectives, and opinions, and their polysemy within the two poets' relationship. At the same time, he stresses the equivalence of the writers' views at the level of reciprocal recognition between two unique personalities, artists, and citizens of the world who have unique but strong voices and endeavor to create monological narratives about one another. The parties in a dialogue are entitled to have and keep their autonomous opinions. Not everything is shared and exchanged in a dialogue. Additional, unexpected outcomes may appear between the two (or more) parties. I have tried to show the affinities between Siemek's early writings and phenomenology and hermeneutics in order to better integrate Siemek's reflections in the philosophy of dialogue, for his works have mostly been published as Polish and German editions and deserve a broader audience.

In his recent approach to dialogue, Siemek focuses on the most relevant (in Janz's terms) framework of the dialogical relation: the dialogical, highly exchangeable frame because of its formal, minimalist, and therefore most inclusive nature. That framework is intelligible. It is created by a human being's unconditional and blind, "centrifugal tendency" (in Fichte's terms), the impact of which on the twin tendency that flows from another human being is "compulsory," as Siemek puts it. It is freedom that meets another freedom when human beings begin to act. But the tendency has "sight" as soon as the subject starts to reflect (which is another kind of freedom) and to create the notions of a goal and of all human beings' freedom (or, more exactly, the principle of freedom and the corresponding rights and duties). Reflection and reason enable a subject to be guided by goals and moral principles, to manage his innate "urge to act,"⁹⁴ as Fichte puts it, and to advance his self-realization as a reasonable agent⁹⁵ among his fellows (in interrelations and interactions with them). Those abilities are vivid evidence of the fact that we deal with an independent individual, an inviolable subject, instead of a thing that can be disposed of and manipulated at will. In its very foundations, Siemek's concept of dialogue remains deeply rooted in Fichte's transcendental theory of reciprocity; at the same time, in its phenomenal manifestations, the real communication mirrors differences and dissymmetries between individuals and this is why it "contains the ever-present possibility of grinding to a halt in the next monologue."⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Fichte, J. G. 2005. *The System of Ethics* (1798). Brazeale, D., G. Zöller (Eds.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; for Siemek's explanation of Fichte's early thinking see Siemek, M. J. 1997. *Wissen und Tun. Zur Handlungsweise der transzendentalen Subjektivität in der ersten Wissenschaftslehre Fichtes*. In: *Die Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre 1794/95 und der transzendental Standpunkt*, Schrader, W. H. (Eds.). *Fichte-Studien*, Bd. 10, Amsterdam–Atlanta.

⁹⁵ See Zöller, G. 1998. *Fichte's Transcendental Philosophy. The Original Duplicity of Intelligence and Will*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 58.

⁹⁶ Siemek, M. 2000, op. cit., 55.

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