

Transcendental ground of all values

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The essay explicates the essence and the limits of the life world of enlightenment in terms of its basic notion of primacy of the will and constructed values to be realized in and through instrumental reason. It shows that at the level of values, all events, including humans, are equivalent to the extent that they can be treated as means for the sake of better life, security, greed, production, technical progress, genetic manipulation, and even social functioning. This leveling leads to a question of criteria among the world of values: which values are “worth” having, and such a criterion cannot be one more value among others. Resultantly, the “background” awareness that led to enlightenment comes to the fore to raise the question of legitimation of the entire life world of values: the criterion is “self-worth” with its specific characteristics of action: honor, self-other respect, dignity, truthfulness. Can the life world of all values allow self-worth to be enacted?

Key words: value, self-worth, transcendental, construction, constitution, categorical, tautological, enlightenment, instrumental reason

INTRODUCTION

Democracy is in crisis, and crisis means a transition from one life world to another. This essay is devoted to fill a gap left by the founding of Political Enlightenment, its constitution of an open public domain, and the reduction of the enlightenment to multiple interests and power confrontations. One question that will have to be answered is whether the public domain, constituted by political enlightenment has led to such confrontations, and what is the ground of the latter. In addition, there is a need to explicate the clash between two major life worlds that the enlightenment founded and hence to reveal the contradiction in such founding. The contradiction here has two senses: formal and temporal. The latter, too, in the final analysis, faces its own contradiction which cannot be resolved on the grounds of enlightenment. Yet our contention is that all the contradictions will have to be resolved at another – transcendental – level by opening up a dimension of lived awareness that cannot be accessed by the categories of enlightenment, even when the latter has tacitly assumed and lived such awareness. This means that such awareness was and is available, but, as a transcendental intentionality, could not be fulfilled in the life world of the enlightenment. To understand this intentionality, it is necessary to make a phenomenological distinction between constitution and construction. Constitutive intentionality opens up or discloses an *eidōs* that either can or cannot be fulfilled in a given life world. The latter is a signitive interconnection of all events and objectivities, including the self-interpretation of a subject as being in this life world. It is given as self-evident and taken for granted that all events and objectivities in it are realities in their own right. For example, in the West and East it is granted that we live in an economic world where things, processes and people have an economic value. Whether we like it or not, we understand this world as our reality and cannot see any reason to doubt it, despite our complaints that this reality is unfair to some or even should be rearranged differently – and

still economically. Even our scientific and technical achievements have the same value. What is crucial is the recognition of “value” as an invariant in this type of the life world. What is at issue here is also the separation of value from fact. Facts, for modern ontology, have no value. Hence, values are constructed and imposed by us on facts. Such imposition takes on various forms, one of them being the globalization of “Western values” and above all of technocratic rulership by qualified experts. This globalization assumes that values can be exported; hence, “democratic values” can be packaged and sent abroad on aircraft carriers, rockets, tanks and with troops. It is deemed that anyone in the world would be more than pleased to welcome and “adopt” such values.

But values and valuations have to be evaluated not by their own self-proliferating construction, but by a discovery of constitutive awareness which is correlated to a tacitly lived *eidōs* offering the possibility of performing a suspension of commitment to a given life world. The transcendental requirement is to disclose this *eidōs* which would be an all-pervasive presence demanding a transformation of the given, and specifically of the life world of political enlightenment. Instead of constructed values, this *eidōs* can be called *worth*. As we shall see, the latter cannot be constructed, and it appears in the background of all values and valuations. It also provides a background on which every life world can be regarded in its essential morphology and questioned concerning its legitimacy. In this sense, the first task is to explicate the life world of enlightenment, inclusive of its two essential aspects, democracy and domination by experts, and to note their internal and inevitable connection and, in the final analyses, inadequacy. The latter lies in its constructive character and hence comprises a fundamental crisis of democracy. This is not to say that it is therefore invalidated. Rather, its limits are exhibited from a transcendental lived awareness that demands “more” and does so on the basis of discovery what this “more” is. The constitution of this “more” is an intentionality whose meant objectivity, its *eidōs* is *worth*, and is present as an absolute. We should not despair while using the term “absolute”; after all, in all awareness there are such terms comprising a pregiven *archē* whose denial is its unavoidable inclusion, i. e. to attempt to negate an *archē* is to include it in the very negation and hence to comprise its absolute affirmation. We shall call this the **principle of self-inclusion**.

THE LIFEWORLD OF ENLIGHTENMENT

The various major critiques of enlightenment, from Adorno through Heidegger, Habermas, Derrida, Levinas to Deleuze, fall within the parameters of one or another variant of enlightenment, be it rationalism, psychologism, sociology, economism, and even biologism. Valuations that are available, such as utilitarianism, deontology, and voluntarism are equally variants of enlightenment. Hence, the task is to extricate the life world of enlightenment from such variants at its very limit in order to reveal its *eidōs*. The **first** is the well known dualism of subject and object, the former is mind, the latter is matter. The subject is the unconditional source of all theories and values, while the material world is an irrational and valueless sum of homogeneous matter to be constructed in terms of the subject’s theories and values. **Second**, the subject is an unconditionally autonomous source of all laws in both the social and the material realms. Since there is no other criterion concerning the material and social worlds, then all subjects are equal concerning the way that the material and the social worlds are to be constructed. **Third**, construction is unconditional to the extent that no causes can be assigned to the structures and procedures by which the subject interprets and shapes itself, social relationships, and the material environment. Scientific enlightenment posits the subject

as a rational bearer of theoretical and methodological constructs by which to manage the material environment in terms of projected human “needs.” **Fourth**, invention of history and its progress toward a utopian society; the latter assumed various interpretations, yet common to all is the notion that humans can construct a material and psychological setting wherein all previous ills would be abolished. It is obvious that this utopian notion, as “the aim and end of history”, is a mixture of political and scientific enlightenments. **Fifth**, the reason that this mixture had to be posited as a future aim is that political and scientific enlightenments became incompatible; the scientific enlightenment and its promise to fulfil material and psychological wants had to abolish the interpretation of human life as autonomous, unconditional and self-creative. The first requirement and interpretation of human life became a material and a psychological sum of wants and their immediate gratification. As we know, the current reading of life and experience is regarded as a multiplicity of intensive pleasure nodes, each clamoring to be tickled, gratified, in order that new pleasure nodes could pop up for more gratification. **Sixth**, the notion of autonomy, the view of the subject as self-creative had to be postponed and forever deferred, and also regarded as scientifically irrelevant and contradictory. It is impossible to claim that once the material and psychological conditions are fully established, they will cause a human subject to be autonomous. **Seventh**, we are left with a democracy whose principle of human autonomy and the public domain wherein such autonomy is maintained and exercised is no longer available. It has been completely pervaded by instrumental rationality and the proliferation of needs and their fulfilment. Hence, members of a political and democratic community are reduced to material life, psychological titillations, and the chemical prolongation of boredom.

It is necessary to turn to the essence of the life world of enlightenment in which we find ourselves. **It is a process of valuation.** Everything in the universe assumes a value to the extent that it serves our interests. Contrary to claims that the world has no value, the current world, constructed by enlightenment, is full of values: values for sale, values produced and to be produced, values of stocks and bonds, values of education, family values, religious values, ideologically constructed values, the changing and the new values, the value of life and even calculated death. Indeed, the basic mode of awareness is valuative selectivity. It should be clear also that awareness and perception are no longer given in some pure empirical sense, but are selected on the grounds of valuation. What is perceived depends on its specific value. Indeed, there are social mechanisms that not only consist of values, but also of the evaluation of values which selects specific ones deemed currently relevant in terms of future value projects. The human is no exception and is **equivalent** among all other values. For example, genetic biochemistry will not treat the human as a special category, but will have to reduce all human functions to biochemistry.

We are now in a position to extricate the fundamental intentionality that constitutes this life world. To have some sense of this intentionality, it is necessary to explicate the directly lived awareness that could not be posited as an object by the thinkers of enlightenment. It ought to be understood that such a lived awareness is transcendental and hence accessible only reflectively from the meant objects that such a lived awareness intends. What then are these objects? While the process of valuation of events in favour of human “needs” was briefly indicated, i. e. various reductionisms of the human to biochemistry, genetics, and mechanics, the lived awareness subtending this process intends an objectivity which is unique to enlightenment. It is the **temporal possibility**. The live awareness that intends such an objectivity is an empty will, prior to the question of its being free or determined. Enlightenment rejects

eternal possibilities and is left with temporal, although in the first lived intentionality, empty temporal possibilities. It should be noted that the term “temporal” does not suggest “being in time,” but an open horizon without any specific ontological locus. Hence, any temporal location would have to be established within such a horizon. If we attend to the language of enlightenment up to date, we shall note that subtending the question of “reality” there is a prior discourse concerning the “conditions for the possibility of reality”. Such discourses are premised on the first lived intentionality of empty temporal possibility. It opens a horizon of possible intentions and their fulfilment, requiring a second constitution of objectivities: possible valuations of what the will intends as valuable for us, but recalling that at this level all value possibilities are open as temporal. In principle, it is possible for us to be all that we will as valuable in time. This is enlightenment’s *alpha and omega*: empty temporal possibility and its temporal fulfilment by all that we value materially. Hence, the fulfilment requires a constructive intentionality that can establish possible conditions for a possible reality. Values, in this sense, are calculations of possible results realized solely as material. It must be understood that such reductionisms are not a given, but are intentional constructs that fulfil intentionally constructed needs, valuations, and desires.

The issue of temporal value possibilities is the driving force of enlightenment at this level. Temporality is a pressure that demands a prolongation of our temporal existence. There is no other option; being temporal, we want to live as long as possible, and hence the frantic rush for the latest technologies that promise to protract our lives. Such technologies have become equivalent to the value of life and death. All the changing technical inventions promote other inventions as values of life: we want to go on. **The transcendental rule of enlightenment at this level is *change as permanence enhancement***, i. e. a political shift to dramatic conservatism. The latter is a promise, by whatever means, to guarantee our security, safety, protection and continuity, as long as we surrender our freedoms to participate in the public domain and to engage in the public dialogue. We are closer to the Hobbesian world than to that of Locke and above all Kant. The intentionality of enlightenment has worked itself out to reveal its truth two centuries later. Indeed, we are living this intentionality as an awareness of our life world in such a way that while speaking of democracy, rights, equality and freedoms, we intend such a world as a struggle for temporal and technical continuity. Thus, all is valuable that enhances this continuity – and purely materially. This is not to be taken as a criticism, but as an opening up of the lived awareness of enlightenment and the life world to which this awareness correlates. This means that we are in a period of transition from democracy to not yet fully understood another life world. What the latter might be is a matter for discovering what lived awareness appears at the time of **crises** and what comprises the overlooked ground of political ethos.

THE CRISIS OF ENLIGHTENMENT’S LIFEWORLD

The awareness of crises constitutes a unique reflective moment which at the same time allows a suspension of one’s participation in a given life world. We are cognizant, by now, that while living in a particular life world we are not aware of its basic composition. We live in it as if it were self-evident and all-inclusive. There is nothing lacking in it to the extent that it would not offer relief and answers to all of our questions. If we claim to live in a democratic life world, we take it for granted that our elected officials tend to lie, that we can vote them out of office, that the injustices can be corrected by legal means, and that those who work harder deserve more. We also know that we would not tolerate dictators or anyone who would deny our right to make our own choices and mistakes. There must be a unique situation which allows us

to extricate from our life world and to raise the question of its legitimacy. That such a question can arise means that we rise to lived awareness which no longer belongs to a life world in which we live. This must be made clear: our awareness is always world-oriented, and our orientations, or intentional directions find in their life world, if not a total, then at least a partial perceptual affirmation. This is an epistemic aspect which takes for granted the division of our life world into categories and the way they are concretized or given perceptual fulfilment. But the fulfilment of our taken-for-granted intentions and the categories to which they correlate, including the numerous value gradations (the epistemic understanding), leave out the legitimating question given in live awareness that something is not fulfilled, something that no value can account for: *intrinsic self-worth*. To reach the latter, the lived awareness must suspend the life world and explicate the access to the transcendental lived awareness that correlates to intrinsic self-worth and demands legitimation of the life world in which one has so far lived in full belief and affirmation. The lived awareness and its intention toward self-worth asks whether the life world offers any fulfilment and confirmation of this intention. At this level of awareness, the categorical and epistemic understanding fails, and an existential question of action becomes pre-eminent. Can I act as I have always acted and fulfil the intention of my intrinsic self worth? The latter embodies such requirements as honour, honesty, dignity, respect of oneself and of others, and justice. If honour, honesty, dignity and respect cannot be fulfilled in my activities, then the legitimacy of this life world is placed in the absolute question, revealing at the same time the awareness of the *absolute self-worth*. It is at this juncture that the transcendental lived awareness recognizes that the world of values, constructed by Enlightenment, requires evaluation as to its adequacy for human worth. Such a question is one of principle that required an essential delimitation of the construct of democracy and whether the latter could be adjusted, discarded or become open to the requirement of transcendental awareness of self-worth. We are in a position now to attempt our venture into lived awareness lead by an intention correlated to self-worth and thus a crisis in enlightenment.

While we may value and respect our laws as protection of our lives, respect for the law implies something more basic, some lived awareness that connects to the worth of a singular person beyond his / her value and demands a treatment of oneself and of others in an honorable, noble, truthful, elevating manner **for its own sake**. This also suggests a crisis of democracy insofar as it has been reduced to means for the sake of other purposes such as making money and getting rich. It seems that the loss of democracy for its own sake is premised on the reduction of the human to a purposive value and thus the exclusion of worth for its own sake. Yet both the democratic ethos and the final arbiter of all values cannot be a value; they are for their own sake and comprise a lived awareness that already recognizes the intrinsic self-worth as that which is coextensive with the democratic *ethos*. Self-worth and the democratic *ethos*, for their own sake, comprise the lived awareness of the missing aspect of the way that enlightenment's intentionality has unfolded. Here a person is exposed to treat the lived world and his her immersion in it as inadequate and thus to place such a world and oneself out of play, in brackets.

It is, then, the task to unfold the lived awareness that is compelled to bracket, to place out of action, the life world of enlightenment and to note the presence of this lived awareness across diverse phenomena. All the intentional orientations toward a life world in which he / she has been immersed appear to be groundless constructs; the life world of the public domain, which is no longer maintained, requires and recognizes a presence of intrinsic self-worth even in its denial. In the most degraded figures that our age has produced, there appears an intimation

of self-worth. Let us look at the logic of intrinsic worth. In the life world where everything is a trash bin of values, there emerge personal actions and expressions that demand honour, dignity, respect, truthfulness, not only of themselves but also of others. Indeed, their actions are equally an indication of their intrinsic self-worth. It would be impossible to be a racist and degrade others without recognizing the other as a possessor of intrinsic self-worth. We cannot degrade a creature who, in its life world, does not recognize a need to justify its deeds, to make a choice between two life worlds; in short, to call a dog a dog is neither a degradation nor a negation of the intrinsic worth. Only another person can be degraded on the basis of recognition of his / her intrinsic worth, i. e. degradation, reduction, insult are possible only when we recognize his / her and our own intrinsic worth, honour and dignity. This recognition is the ground of numerous events of our sophisticated age, such as racism, nationalism, ethnocentrism and even homophobia and religions. Degrading of others in an effort to elevate oneself is an indication of the worth of others, an indication of our anxiety in face of the other's intrinsic self-worth, his / her unavoidable height. Unable to withstand the other's self-worth, we condemn him / her to death and thus prove that we are unwilling to admit our own self-degradation, our own crisis, and cannot withstand the dignity of the intrinsic self-worth of another person. Such an awareness is demonstrated by Viktor Frankel's depictions of life in concentration camps. This is an extreme case where the officers who ran the camps would immediately condemn to death anyone who had shown respect to himself and to others, dignity and honour, thus revealing the lack of honour and dignity in the very officers – and all degraded to a mere value for the state. This logic calls to the others to recognize the crisis in their lives, to legitimate the life world in which they live and to ask whether such a life world fulfils their lived awareness of their intrinsic worth. This is to say that the very presence of the other who is aware of his own intrinsic worth performs a tacit phenomenological bracketing and hence challenges a blind inherence in this life world. One can then raise a question whether such a life world is worthy of one's intrinsic worth.

Intrinsic self-worth, as a discovered given, appears not only through degradations and oppressions, but also through actions demanding mutual recognition of oneself and of others. And it appears irrespective of culture, historical period, or social standing. Gandhi angered colonial rulers by his bearing, his dignity, his dignifying of those who were at the lowest social rank, his demand that the colonial rulers have truthfulness and honour and thus made them recognize their own intrinsic worth and not merely their value for the empire. Gandhi reminded all that the life world of an empire is illegitimate because it does not allow the fulfilment of the lived awareness of intrinsic worth. Hence, he asked for legitimation of his own value in such a life world and whether he must rise to a transcendental level and reveal a crisis in his own life and that of the empire based on recognition of what is the ground of the final human self-awareness and of all values. While being an object of derision and quixotic depictions, he took the blows with dignity, demanding dignity from those who administered the blows. It should be noted that he did not claim an intrinsic self-worth as a value of a specific culture, but as an unconditional and absolute ground that raises the question of legitimation of any life world and demands the fulfilment of transcendental awareness that correlates to self-worth. Einstein once pondered the phenomenon of Gandhi by wondering that such a person could have walked among us. In the face of the intrinsic self-worth of this slight person, the British empire lost all of its moral, political, and military superiority.

We have reached a juncture at which Socrates, the founder of Western philosophy, can make his entrance. Although scholars locate Socrates as a relentless seeker of truth, i.e. cate-

gorical epistemologist, we must also recall that the first condition of the search for truth is the good and a life world where a person can live in accordance with the demands of the good as one expression of intrinsic worth. Only under these conditions Socrates can search for truth as another aspect of intrinsic worth. After all, the search for truth was, for Socrates, a practical-existential commitment and activity of a good and truthful life. Thus, Socrates, like many others, was an object of derision and caricatures. He accepted the Athenian verdict of death in order to show that his and others intrinsic worth demands a life world in which the search for truth cannot be forbidden. He placed his internal worth as the good above his personal life and could demand that such a good should be part of his life world. The decision by the jury to forbid Socrates his *daimon*, his *eros*, to “philosophize” was equivalent to a destruction of a life world in which his intrinsic worth once had a place. Socrates is compelled to face a crisis and reveal a crisis of his life world. He reaches and lives an awareness that places his entire life world into question and demands a decision: Is the life world offered by Athenians adequate to fulfil his intrinsic self worth? In turn, are the Athenians, by their own action, degraded to a level of social value where truth, dignity, honour will have no place? After all, such a degradation in social value is obvious from the trial when Socrates is offered a chance to surrender his troublesome quest and thus become a valuable citizen, and when Socrates offers, ironically, to accept a pension from the state for “whatever little services he might render”. Here appears a depiction of the first crisis of democracy, and Socrates reaches a lived awareness which demands a legitimation of the life world which is being offered to him. Can his lived awareness, correlated as it is to intrinsic self-worth, have any perceptual affirmation in such a life world? The latter, after all, demands self-degradation and thus the denial of self-worth. Socrates resolves the crisis by accepting the verdict of the Athenians with a warning: If you condemn me, my fame will spread far and wide; do not do this because it will be forever a black mark on Athens.

Even at the other end of Socratic tradition the lived awareness of intrinsic self-worth is apparent in the most dire pronouncements of Nihilism. The latter not only challenges the continuous life world of values, but attempts to devalue all values, to discard all meanings, aims and purposes, and to set human life adrift in a turbulent ocean in a ship without a rudder. What is left over is blind, irrational, clashing powers expressed by Nietzsche as will to power. Yet the same Nietzsche strives to find an answer to a question: given the meaningless, devalued, directionless and purposeless universe, how shall we live? As we all know by now, for Nietzsche, the will to power is no longer adequate to understand events and human life. The shift from ontology to cosmic awareness made his power thesis untenable and redundant. Not being able to revert to values, even new values, since new values have short legs, he opens the lived awareness that intends self-worth as self-creation. It is significant that such self-creation is precisely what is required of self-worth: its own purpose, having no value for anyone, and above all for social functioning, it creates itself for its own sake. The metaphor of life is no longer the will to power but self-creation as its own worth. Thus, his constant striving to find the great creators, those who dared become clay for self-molding, those who did not want to lead or be followed, those who answered a question with a question: this is my way, what is yours? In this sense, nihilism and the devaluation of all values do not abolish the philosophical quest for self-worth; on the contrary, it clears away all obfuscations and offers a higher opening to transcendental self-awareness. After all, it elevates awareness to encompass the cosmos as meaningless, and asks the ultimate question whether this cosmos is open for self-worth. And the answer, for Nietzsche, is absolutely yes, and precisely because the constructed and purposeful values have

obfuscated the most fundamental human awareness: only the open cosmic awareness is adequate to human self-creation. The universe, for Nietzsche, is the life world.

Literatures, in this search for intrinsic worth, do not lag behind philosophy. They too reveal figures that are in crises and are demanded to extricate themselves from their life worlds in order to ask the legitimate question: is such a world adequate to intrinsic worth. Let us look at one of the Spanish works, *Don Quixote*. The main figure in this work is at a juncture of two worlds: one vanishing and the other emerging, one of knighthood, and the other of a new iron age. The iron age – the modern – is characterized by degradation, aggressiveness, crudeness, greed, cunning and calculation, where everyone acts with a purpose and is out to get all he can in riches at any price. Language is debased and splits up into numerous practical-technical jargons full of curses and complaints. Quejana already lives in this life world, yet he is engaged in reading literatures about knighthood, thus giving him an awareness of another life world. This awareness disclosed his position as swinging between, as being in crisis, and demands of Quejana to legitimate the life world in which he already resides. In this world, everything has a value to the extent that it serves all sorts of base demands, such as greed, selfishness, power, but fails to address, actually excludes, the actions that would be honourable, noble, the vision of others as having self-worth, truthfulness, and justice. These actions are those that belong to intrinsic worth, and they have no place in the iron age. Thus, Quejana reaches a living awareness, direct experience, although perceptually not fulfilled in the life world of the iron age, of another world, a contrasting life world containing self-worth. The latter calls for legitimation of the iron age life world in which Quejana happens to live. Can my self-worth be enacted and fulfilled in an iron age? Can others be regarded, and be asked to regard themselves, as having an intrinsic worth? And this is when Quejana takes on the name Don Quixote and sets out to demonstrate what the iron age is missing. What is significant is the way that the crude, the degraded, the dirty become transparent with a nobility, grandeur, and honour of self worth. Through a farm maid, Aldonsa Lorenzo, shines Dulcinea; his neighbour, Sanson Carrasco, is revealed as a noble knight worthy of a honorable battle. Having encountered a possibility of another life world, Quejana finds himself confronted with an option to release himself from his life world and at the same time compelled to raise a question of legitimation of such a life world, i. e. does his life world allow an enactment of his intrinsic self-worth. Once more it should be emphasized that this question does not have any relative boundaries. Quejana does not ask whether this life world is a worth for him since he, as an actor in this world, belongs to and is bound by it. Thus, he must ask whether this life world of the iron age is worth living in absolutely, leading then to his own existential question: if I have only one life, is such a life an authentic representation of intrinsic worth, if I were to live this life in the life world of the iron age?

ESSENTIAL AWARENESS

The point has been reached where the question of the awareness of self-worth can be answered. The first aspect of this worldly awareness is the possibility to extricate oneself from a specific life world. Second, the resultant disattachment, or bracketing, of this immersion is the awareness of self-worth demanding the possibility of world orientation that would answer the question of the absolute legitimation of fulfilling in practice and action what the awareness has always tacitly maintained as self-worth. Third, it is to be noted that such awareness transcends any specific life world, since any life world may offer a partial-perceptual or signitive fulfilment of the intrinsic self-worth. Under any other circumstance, intrinsic worth would be an intentionality of a given life world interpreted, for example, as a value equivalent to other

values, and hence a self-understood part of such a world whose refusal would go counter to what is categorically self-evident in such a world. At this level, a refusal to participate in such a world would be impossible. In other words, intrinsic worth is not perceptually given, but it arises “perspectively” to the extent that we can regard our lived world as a total from the perspective of intrinsic worth. This perspectivity is the price for our freedom to survey any life world and ask the question of legitimation. In this context, the persons that were mentioned – Socrates, Gandhi, or Don Quixote, become phenomena that disclose the intrinsic worth and demand of us to recognize our degraded state. As already stated, the recognition of other’s intrinsic worth is equivalent to the recognition of our own, and vice versa.

Awareness correlated to intrinsic self-worth is a transcendental background on which any life world, including the world of values, must be legitimated concerning its adequacy for fulfilling such awareness in activity. Thus, the transcendental background of intrinsic self-worth was and is equally present and provides a limit concerning unrestricted valuations. The founders of the enlightenment and its correlate – political democracy – were persons who extolled honour, dignity, respect, truthfulness and justice in their actions and demanded no less of their adversaries. This comprises the background on which the crises of democracy appear. At the founding, just like now, there appears a first transcendental rule of awareness: **maintainance of the permanence of self-worth or, currently, its reclaiming.** This rule then demands establishment of a first democratic institution – public domain – in which every person must fulfil his her self-worth **for his / her own sake.** This very fulfilment demands, in turn, the second rule of awareness: **permanent maintenance of the public domain for its own sake.** Such maintenance requires the bracketing, exclusion, of arbitrarily constructed valuations such as economic, power, religious, ethnic, racist, which would promote the abolition of the public domain and self-worth; indeed, such valuations do produce rhetorical means to obfuscate their degrading and disruptive tactics. Such oxymorons as “free enterprise”, “public leadership” and even “free expression” comprise some of the rhetorical means. It must be emphasized that self-worth and the public domain are not the objects of knowledge but are constituted in our active engagement. If we cease to act honorably, justly, nobly, respectfully, we shall not have self-worth or public domain wherein self-worth is enacted. It must be also noted that the **freedom of autonomy is a result of self-worth on whose basis we extricate ourselves from our own and all life worlds and demand legitimation of any life world as to its adequacy for enactment of self-worth. On this ground we select the life world that permits autonomy for its own sake.** But autonomy, at this level, is valid only if it is correlated and subject to self-worth. Without the latter, autonomy may become reduced to “free choice” among things and lose its legislative dignity.

It seems that the initial or founding intentionality of the enlightenment has permitted a partial fulfilment of self-worth in the awareness of autonomy, yet the interpretation of the latter became restricted to the understanding of its period which mixed scientific explanations with the freedom of research, rights to self invention and subject to no one. Scientific explanations were extolled as the sole avenue to truth and offered categorical divisions of all things, while humanities, wanting to be scientific, are engaged in an equal categorization of its own disciplines, from theologies and their classification to literatures. Categorization also subjected the human activity to become substantiated into categorizable characteristics: this and that is honorable, just, noble, while this and that is valuable, a business person, a teacher, etc., thus excluding the quest to return to activities that could be the sole understanding of what such categories mean. As we know, suddenly such categories defining a person could be

acquired by numerous means, including money. Self-worth as an enactment, a participatory engagement has vanished behind the epistemic terms. We are all citizens, with characteristics such as rights, freedoms, and even entitlements, but if a citizen is only the one who actively maintains the public domain as a space of self-worth, then how can one speak of inhabitants who refuse to participate in the public life world? This is the point of crisis requiring all inhabitants of a society to become citizens.

It is self-worth that discloses the partial fulfilment by enlightenment and hence demands more from the inhabitant, not as a Kantian duty in face of the law, but as a demand of self-respect and respect of others. Once the trust in a life world turns to a mistrust and is placed into doubt, then the already stated issue of legitimation comes to the fore and must be sought at the primary level of awareness of self-worth and not at the level of participatory interests. What is more important, the question of legitimation of a life world leads not only to activity, but also to the transcendental awareness of singular commitment, to a question of existence and not knowledge. The appearance of a partial life world incapable of supporting self-worth gives rise to a fragile resistance with the question of the individual's existence in such a world, a search to fulfil more in awareness than the world offers. The "more" is a striving to disclose whether I myself am more than this life world and whether I have a choice and worth to live otherwise. To understand this shift toward the requirements of an active existence, we need to specify more precisely the transformation from the epistemic understanding, which depends on the second and third grammatical persons, to the first person's self-understanding and the recognition that the latter is not a narrowing down of the epistemic categorical field but has a very different logic. For example, if the categorical language has truth in the perceptual fulfilment of a proposition, an existential proposition has truth as an honourable act of not lying. The categorical language is designed to open some general characteristics, while the existential one is singular and unique.

What was given in the enlightenment as the background awareness is now in the foreground of the life world of the enlightenment and the unfolding of the constructive-valuative intentionality that has become prevalent. Being in the foreground, or "positional" and thematized, this awareness points to the problem of legitimation and to the illegitimate ways in which the basic awareness became obfuscated, degraded, perverted, and empty. It questions the claim of this life world to be the only legitimate reality. This claim to a sole reality appears only when the self-worth becomes a foreground enacted by a singular being in quest for an authentic fulfilment of self-worth in a life world that at one stroke is made inactive, placed out of play. With placing out of play, the life world without human worth is exposed to temporality: it becomes **chronoscopic**, i. e. an inadequate temporal perspective on the reality of the essence of man. Such temporalization suggests that there is an **atemporal, non-positional** awareness which inevitably can appear only chronoscopically. It is equally important to note that **since the disclosure of self-worth revealed it to be solely as activity and not accessible through categorical intuition, then honour, dignity, nobility, truthfulness and justice appear only as enacted phenomena and hence have validity to the extent of their enactment. In addition, the striving to enact intrinsic worth is also a chronoscopic awareness, since no single activity, be it honourable, noble or truthful, can fulfil the entirety of the search for self-worth.** As an activity for its own sake, self-worth also demands, as already suggested, the public domain wherein such activity can be performed, resulting in the notion that such a domain is to be maintained for its own sake. Both self-worth and the public domain are phenomena that mutually require one another and hence are to be maintained as purposes in themselves.

POSTSCRIPT

The figures mentioned in this essay, from Socrates, through Don Kichote, to Gandhi are almost pure embodiments of intrinsic worth. But we also know that such figures are targets of attack at every turn in their lives. In the daily life of commerce with commodities, religions, family values, political cunning, and rhetorical obfuscations, such figures are *quixotic*. Imagine a business person in a position to make a solid profit in a shady – although legal– way would refuse to do so in order to act in an honorable manner? He would be an object of jokes, indeed a Quixotic figure. But this also means that he has not yet reached a reflective awareness at which his intrinsic self-worth is disclosed. At the same time, such a person has no ground for **political ethos**, and resultantly cannot be an autonomous being in a free public domain. We must recall, nonetheless, that the ethos was constantly in the background of the continuous founding of democracy through self-worth. Those who understood that democracy is not an entity but a constant founding activity also regarded their honor to be sacred.

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ALGIS MICKŪNAS

Transcendentalūs vertybių pamatai

Santrauka

Straipsnyje parodoma Apšvietos gyvenamojo pasaulio esmė ir ribos atsižvelgiant į jos pamatines sąvokas, kaip antai valios pirmenybė ir sukonstruotos vertybės, įgyvendinamos instrumentiniu protu. Teigiama, kad vertybių lygmenyje visi įvykiai (ir net žmonės) traktuotini kaip priemonės pasiekti geresnį gyvenimą, saugumą, produktyvumą, techninį progresą, patenkinti godumą, manipuliuoti genetika ir net užtikrinti socialinį funkcionalumą. Tai veda prie vertybių pasaulio kriterijaus klausimo: kurios vertybės turinčios „vertę“, ar šis kriterijus nėra dar viena vertybė šalia kitų vertybių? Taigi Apšvietos supratimo „fone“ iškyla viso vertybių gyvenamojo pasaulio legitimacijos klausimas: „savaiminės vertės“ kriterijus su jo specifinėmis veiksmo charakteristikomis, kaip antai garbė, savigarba ir pagarba kitam, kilnumas, teisingumas. Ar gali visų vertybių gyvenamasis pasaulis suponuoti įgyvendintą savaiminę vertę?

Raktažodžiai: vertybė, savaiminė vertė, transcendentalumas, konstrukcija, konstitucija, kategorika, tautogorika, Apšvieta, instrumentinis protas