

Nicolai Hartmann on Aspects of the Social or the Catastrophe of Social Cooperation

Thomas Kessel

Aside from the main topics of Nicolai Hartmann's works, such as ontology, ethic, aesthetic, the theory of knowledge, etc., one can find such kind of subtopics as, for example, the question of Hartmann's thought on religion, psychology, politics, culture, and social issues, which are not less interesting, although they have until now rarely been investigated.

So I will venture a step into the wide field of Hartmann's remarks on social, cultural, and political issues, which can possibly be seen as a result of his own personal experiences of russification, during his time in Riga, his abidance and academic studies in Saint Petersburg at the beginning of the 20th century, as well as his experiences during the First World War, and last but not least of the political situation and civil disturbance during the Weimar Republic — a supposition that is supported by Hartmann's interview with his former student Herrmann Wein.

Hartmann's treatment of social and cultural issues are especially concentrated in *Zur Grundlegung der Ontologie* from 1935 and *Das Problem des geistigen Seins* published in 1933. The last one could not be republished during the Third Reich, despite the fact that Heinrich Springmeyer, a former student of Hartmann and later on professor of philosophy in Berlin had certified to the Office of the NSDAP Hartmann's political innocuousness in respect of his person, character, political position and writing, in the early 30s (Report about N. Hartmann, Berlin, 18th of August 1937, by Heinrich Springmeyer, in file: Nationalsozialistische – Dozentenbund (Ns-Doz.) I, 108, Nicolai Hartmann, Archive of the HU Berlin).

Based on his ontology of nature, man and *Umwelt*, Nicolai Hartmann in respect to the newer achievements of the natural sciences, especially by biologists like Hans Driesch and Jakob von Uexküll, builds his concept of the sphere of spiritual being, which is subdivided in its forms of personal, objective and objectivized mind, which are taken as units of different and multiple relations — relations that may easily be seen as secondary from the point of view of a philosophy of the “ego” (*Ich*), i.e., a monadology. But from the ontological point of view, which is meant as a philosophy of the “we,” were “we” is meant ontologically, men not only have to struggle against the forces of nature, which are beyond his control, but — and even worse — against his second, men-made nature: the human culture.

The investigation of this conception forms the main part of my lecture, where I look at the sociocritical issues and the critic of culture, which are concentrated in the particular relation between personal, objective and objectivized mind, and their unifier: education. After numbering the facts, I investigate the validity of Hartmann's critic. And I would like to show that his critic of cultural and social aspects is in no way conservative, like perhaps Habermas would like to criticize, and that it contains notions that we can make use of especially in respect of the actual political and social situation.

At least, Hartmann makes use of scientific results in his philosophical considerations — results, which not only allow to overstep the field of investigation and self-consciousness of phenomenology, but also modifies Hegel's concept of mind in a way that does not lead to a reconciliation, but to a catastrophe of social cohesion, which seems to be based on a discrepancy between the structure of the mind and concepts of education — a discrepancy that allows us to form new antinomies with respect of the concepts of man and person, which Hartmann himself has not considered in his publications.