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Book review on "Cafenele filosofice LUMEN", volume 1, edited by Antonio SANDU & Bogdan POPOVENIUC, LUMEN Publishing, 2023

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Abstract: The philosophical cafés were formally established for the first time by Marc Sautet as a technique for facilitating philosophical dialogue. The theoretical foundation of this model is based on the Habermasian theory of communicative action and the conviction that the literary and philosophical cafes, seen as spaces of public debate, form the genuine genesis of the public sphere. The founder of philosophical cafés as a practice of philosophizing opened the first philosophical cafe in Paris in 1992. The concept became soon internationally widespread. After having been initiated in France, it quickly developed in countries such as England, Germany, Belgium, Austria, Switzerland, America, Canada, Japan, Australia, and so on. Its basic ideas, consistent with those specific to practical philosophy, aim to return philosophy to the original practices of intellectual exercise intended for an elevated audience, but not necessarily an aristocratic or culturally fancy one. Practically, the philosophical cafe reinvents the idea of a literary cafe, taking from it the spirit of public debates. However, their triggers were ideas found in philosophical texts. The focus is not necessarily on the philosophical rigor of the discussions, but, above all, on sparking notions of tolerance and spiritual openness. This particular model of practical philosophy is constituted in a framework of general philosophical discussions. Their thematic concerns are most varied, without necessarily involving professional philosophizing. The participants of the philosophical cafés address a diversity of topics, which are just an excuse for the exercise of rational abilities, critical and creative thinking. They aimed for prospective approaches in a relaxed atmosphere, uniting people keen on free discussions, in a friendly and accessible public third space.

Keywords: *Book review; Cafenele filosofice LUMEN; Philosophical cafés, volume; Antonio SANDU; Bogdan POPOVENIUC; LUMEN Publishing.*

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The book includes the transcripts, with minor modifications for print, of a series of philosophical discussions that took place between 2021 and 2022 under the auspices of the Lumen Publishing House and the Circle of Philosophy and Applied Ethics "Ekpyrosis". The minutes of the meetings (which are available in video format online on Lumen Publishing House YouTube channel[1]) reproduced in this volume, "upgrade" the wisdom and deeply communicational model of the philosophical café, from the Third Space's philosophical agora of debate (Oldenburg, 1999), to the contemporary digital Forth Place's market of ideas (Hardegger, 2022).

The 4.0 onlife Space (Floridi, 2015) implies the virtualization of the social space with meaningful modification for the behavioral habitus and types of communicative interaction that are undergoing virtualizing effects leading to intrinsic changes of interactional specificity. Although, or better yet, even due to the fact that the virtual space is non-physical, the topological distance is replaced by the intersubjective intensity of communication. Through the virtualization of the social space, one should understand the (re)construction of online communication environments to accommodate, by means of transference, a substantial part of most social interactions.

The globalization of communication - especially digital technologies – enhances the core propriety of social interaction to the level of fleeing the physical space into a purely communicative (virtual) one. This space, being essentially transcultural, generates a continuous renegotiation of the interpretation(s) of reality and the construction of new interpretive models and, with them, new communication paradigms. The specificity of face-to-face communication is replaced by virtual proximity, a process generated by the interposition of the Internet network and communication equipment in the communication process.

However, at the same time, the same virtualization of communications denies a defining element of the human condition, precisely that of the face-to-face relationship, and thus becomes also a means to mitigate otherness. In a conference or philosophical café, we stand a chance to interact with colleagues hundreds of kilometers away, *as if* in their immediate presence. This suggests the premise of another ontological situation peculiar to human beings. The development of technology made possible the "erasure of physical boundaries". They merge the reality of speakers and the inner working of interaction within a purely communicative

[1] www.youtube.com/c/edituralumen

virtual space, where any place, and any person, from the real world can become part of this fourth space as well as of communication itself.

Consequently, readers can enjoy creative and spontaneous exchanges between the attendees of the philosophical cafés, who all boast top philosophical training and passion for practical philosophy. They bring about new perspectives and creative hermeneutics, in the realm of both purely intellectual analysis and practical solutions. This ensures a much more intense ideational and complex development of creative and spur-of-the-moment dialogues on the themes covered in this volume.

The Philosophy as Intelligent Specialization reveals the multilayered and multifaced nature of philosophical approaches, subtlety embedded in the foundations of any and all social practice, science and, even, technology.

For instance, the conversations on the *problem of trust in science* focuses on the necessity of broadening common knowledge philosophy in order to foster confidence in hard-fact truths as significant values for the people; this has deep ethical and practical implications for the progress of human society. As such, Philosophy can act as a meaningful and effective mediator for the popularization of science as a means to overcome the weird modern man mentality, which consist mostly in a paradoxical mixture of luddism and techno fetishism. Such insights are naturally developed further in the discussions that tackled specific concepts and theories such as: the role of philosophy as an agent for social progress *(Philosophy as A Practice for Social Change*), the integration of scientific culture and peer-review as communication tools in the domain of literary and general culture (*Changing Ideas, Changing People*), the challenges of scientific work dissemination (*Correctness and Incorrectness in the Editorial World*) and the commonalities between the scientific core perspective as opposed to other forms of understanding the world, i.e., the astonishing convergence between the epistemological perspective of oriental philosophy and the inevitable ontological presuppositions about the relationship between mind and world, as discovered by modern physics (*Oriental Philosophy and Modern Physics*).

The virtualization of sensuality touches upon the very sensitive subject of the ultimate emancipation of sexuality by virtualization in digital space. The onlife living entails deep transformations in all areas of life, formerly reserved to human biology and controlled by concrete social practices and institutions. The transition to posthuman conditions challenges in the highest degree the mental and affective adaptability of human beings. The peril of losing oneself, alongside one's moral compass due to the transformations that our self-identity is undergoing, calls for developing a prospective ethics paradigm, suitable for the coming transhuman condition

(*Imagined vs Created future. The Prospective Ethics of Transhumanism*). This should develop appropriate approaches for strengthening and preparing people to face the virtualization of their self-identity, in order to make them more resilient, flexible, while consistent with themselves (*Technologies of the Self, between Psychotherapy, Psychoanalysis and Philosophical Counseling*). The modern condition places a tremendous pressure on human values, understanding and identity. It follows that one and the same antique and modern critical thinking, which is the cornerstone of any philosophical endeavor, remains the best practice for addressing the challenges of the times to come (*I say what I think, but do I think what I say? Critical thinking and communication in the 21st century*).

This volume is the "living" proof that human spirituality and creativity can adapt to its own creation, the virtual word, while staying true to itself: this is plain to see in its dialectical progressiveness, always looking back on the space where its roots sprouted first in the collective virtual space, i.e., looking back on *the book*.

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