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Two Conflicting Interpretations of Social Philosophy

Abstract *In this paper I present two philosophers, namely Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Jean-Paul Sartre, but from the perspective of social philosophy. I emphasize that social philosophy proves to be a rarity today, and this explains the necessity of articulation of the achievements of these philosophers. In particular, I analyze the relationship between the articulation of intersubjectivity and social philosophy and on the basis of these relations I present the differences and conflicts between the aforementioned philosophers. Merleau-Ponty's philosophy is explained from the perspective of unbroken intersubjectivity; the philosophy of Sartre is presented on the basis of the relation between transcendental subjectivity and intersubjectivity. The article follows the genealogical approach, that is, it highlights the dynamics of the thinking of these thinkers in order to show the displacements. Finally, I develop the thesis that the late Sartre, who remained within the frames of Marx's approach, actually reinterprets the early indications to be found in Merleau-Ponty concerning social philosophy. Consequently, late Sartre is still an important reference point in terms of the critical philosophy of society.*

Keywords: *Sociality, corporeal sociality, embededdness, social philosophy, intersubjectivity, transcendental subjectivity, being-for-others*

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Introduction

The necessity to analyze society from the aspect of philosophy is related to modernity. This is why Ernst Cassirer is right when he talks about the philosophy of a society only in the context of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (See Cassirer 1945): it was the French thinker who laid the foundation for the philosophy of society, of course with the reception of other modern thinkers. It was he who discovered strong tension in empirical existence and human evolution. He set historical-philosophical duality with clear critical intentions: a man is originally good but history forced him to exist in a society which is a predetermined formation. While his contemporaries hesitate about separating society and community (Cassirer 2009), Rousseau is unambiguous; the final questions in his opinion can be answered only based on ,,social *issues*". Only the analysis of society can unveil the secret of human existence, and dominant forms of egotism should be assigned to social existence (Lošonc 2009).

As for Rousseau, sociality (*das Soziale, the social*) becomes a special dimension which opens new perspectives and it should be remembered that

the question of society is a critical question in Rousseau's opinion. A neglect of critical aspect of his thinking would imply an unacceptable deformation of the philosophy of this French thinker. Karl Marx follows him, *mutatis mutandis*, in this, with his in-depth critical analysis of socialization (Lošonc 2012). It seems that his criticism regarding political economy, i.e. his project of criticism of political economy, could not be understood unless his attitude to the thematization of society is taken into consideration.

However, this tradition of social philosophy has often been criticized, and for the sake of our subject it should be particularly pointed out that those voices of criticism could be heard from the followers of phenomenology. We should mention here a monumental piece of work by Michel Henry who is an important representative of French phenomenology and who made some serious accusations against the philosophy of society. It is not a coincidence that Henry uses Marx to show fragility and inadequacy of philosophy which relies on society (Henry 1976: 188). From the viewpoint of his philosophy, which is based on self-affection, this French phenomenologist claims that Marx made a crucial breakthrough only when he rejected society as the main idea. Henry's subject of criticism is obvious, and it refers to certain moments that the young Marx described as: hypostasis of society, an assumption that society is a unique subject, emphasizing the society as a personality; on the contrary, the affective life of individuals, who are absolute assumptions of historical dynamics, is mobilized.

However, we will allow ourselves some freedom: the doubt about philosophy of society is cast not only by phenomenology but other philosophical orientations as well. Former vigorous criticism of the genesis of social issues made by Hannah Arendt is continued by Jacques Rancière: politics or communal sphere as a constituent are against sociality (Rancière 2009: 160 and Fischbach 2013: 7–20). Something is lost with the philosophy of society: philosophical orientation towards society decreases sensitivity to political action and introduces the fetishizing of economic relations. By emphasizing a society as a theoretical problem, the importance of economically mediated existence is accentuated and according instrumentalized relations are hypostatized. Society is an over-determined entity, and politics is a dissolution of society. Claude Lefort said something that should not be forgotten: it is politics which establishes a society. However, this is being forgotten with the establishment of social philosophy. Thus, it could be said that projects such as the philosophy of Cornelius Castoriadis (which develops autonomy, individuals and societies at the same time and sees the possibility of auto-constitution of society even in a heteronomous constellation (Castoriadis 1987: 160)), or

a more modern one of Frank Fischbach (with a manifesto for social philosophy – Fischbach 2009. On the achievements of the critical social philosophy, Haber 2012: 131–149) are just exceptions, rather than a rule.

So, the relationship between phenomenology and philosophy of society is not simple at all, and there is no evidence of possibility of critical understanding of society. Finally, based on everything said the following question is not merely a rhetorical one: can phenomenology be critical with respect to the dynamics of society? Can phenomenology discuss irreducibility of society with respect to an individual? Phenomenology would certainly be against understanding the society which is based on predetermined relations, and against coexistence of different elements which belong to closed sets; it would be contrary to the genuine goals of this philosophical movement. Pondering over indetermination is something that exists deeply in phenomenology. Phenomenology does not see the society as the one characterized by complex fixed forms of identity. Philosophy with deep sensitivity towards the modalities of different forms of genesis, and philosophy which is present at places where reflection is coming to existence, just like the philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, must consider society from the aspect of genesis as well. Society, *pace* Henry, is not a subject, but complex determinations that are more significant than the individuals should be considered. Society does not represent only a unity of varieties; it is the irreducible level of analysis, thus a surplus with respect to individuals who do not lose their productive capacities. Still, in spite of the fact that society does not represent a synthesis of predetermined relations, phenomenology must consider *new occurring determinations* which determine the dynamics of society. Critical opinion of society and its configuration cannot be created without it. It is obvious that both thinkers that we are mentioning here were in confrontation with the society in capitalism, that is, with social determinations in capitalism, and this confrontation was sometimes explicit (like in the case of Sartre during the fifties and sixties of the 20th century) and sometimes implicit, but it was always present.

The question of relationship between intersubjectivity and society is raised here and it will run through our entire argumentation. *Thus, our thesis is that the oscillations between intersubjectivity and complex relations constituting a society are actually the perspective that Jean-Paul Sartre's and Merleau-Ponty's philosophies can be analyzed from*. To be more precise, their differences can be thematized with respect to the philosophy of society. Their relation has already been analyzed in detail because it is very interesting and can be thematized from different aspects (Stewart

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1998): we are particularly interested in casting light on certain points of their relation, as for other points should be regarded as the background for our thinking.

Both thinkers, at some points of their lives, shared the opinion about Marxism and existentialism: the first one is related to critical, problematized, non-positive idea of society, and the second one is against alienating abstractions in the name of lost concrete experiences. If this was not taken into consideration it would be difficult to understand their intentions related to the philosophy of society. Both of them are faced with the problem of the Other and otherness: that question was framed by Edmund Husserl, the father of phenomenology, who questioned the presence of Other in phenomenology. Husserl gave an original answer to this question: the Other is never immediately accessible; it can be approached only indirectly. Or, as he said: there is accessibility only in inaccessibility (Husserl 1973: 627). This was the problem that Sartre and Merleau-Ponty must have been faced with.

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Merleau-Ponty and the Unbroken Intersubjectivity

We should start with Merleau-Ponty because an important work of this French thinker, *Phenomenology of Perception,* explicitly relates to the issue of sociality. Merleau-Ponty, a thinker of perception, body and world, speaks about „social world" at a crucial point – it should be noted that Merleau-Ponty relates „the world", i. e. his main category to society. Here it is: „We have discovered, with the natural and social worlds, the truly transcendental, which is not the totality of constituting operations whereby a transparent world, free from obscurity and impenetrable solidity, is spread out before an impartial spectator, but that ambiguous life in which the forms of transcendence have their Ursprung..." (Merleau-Ponty 2002: 425). It clearly says that: Merleau-Ponty assigns „truly transcendental" function to the society. Thus, society cannot exist as an *object*: society is ontologically-phenomenological, it is a „dimension" of our being. Also, society is a „constant field of our existence", and we can read about „existential modality of sociality".

Existentialism is also present when Merleau-Ponty analyzes *solipsism* in detail. There is irrefutable „truth" about solipsism, but caution prevails: solipsism is possible only in the context of society; solipsistic expression is possible only in discursive formations of society. Solipsism cannot be overcome, yet it is strongly related to the category of „social event". Isn't it a contradiction? Solipsism *yes*, says French thinker, but philosophy of

solipsism is *not*, because each expression of subjectivity represents entrance to the „intersubjective world". Sociality is always marked with „*already*" because its existence is always in connection with previousness: „Prior to the process of becoming aware, the social exists obscurely and as a summons. At the end of Notre Patrie Péguy finds once again a buried voice which had never ceased to speak, much as we realize on waking that objects have not, during the night, ceased to be, or that someone has been knocking for some time at our door" (Merleau-Ponty 2002: 422). We cannot dissuade from society: it is impossible to encounter a situation where sociality is objectivized because society is the existential dimension. Every relationship with things is an already socially mediated relationship with *social* things between already socialized individuals. This refers even to history: Merleau-Ponty was convinced that a historian cannot „embrace" history because he/she treats it as an object, just like Stendhal's Fabrizio del Dongo who is trying to see a battle as a scenery. We could say that society is a structure of eventness, something beyond subject-object relationship; society represents a kind of liminal moment which, according to Merleau-Ponty, cannot be put into any perspective. Finally, we will not forget the fact that Merleau-Ponty distinguishes himself from the rest of phenomenologists because he was highly appreciative of social sciences and he put some effort into giving sense to different endeavors made in the field of social sciences (for example, Merleau-Ponty 1960: 184–203).

Now, we should introduce the notion of *culture* so that the question of sociality and intersubjectivity could be resolved (See Visker 1999). Also, it should be noted that existence of culture throws light on the relationship between Me and You. Merleau-Ponty gives lots of examples for dyadic relationships. Still, the negative side should be mentioned as well, because it is quite clear that the constitution of the other does not solve the problem of society. Society cannot be encompassed by intersubjectivity between Me and You; it is not a sum of dyadic relations. Merleau-Ponty uses here the language of consciousness, the language of this emanating capacity, and he relates society to *undetermined* number of consciousnesses. Thus, there should always be a constitutive *surplus* in society with respect to intersubjectivity and dyadic relations: indeterminacy is the dimension that cannot be determined reflexively or calculated because there will always be someone who does not fit into this calculation. Let us put it differently: in culture Me turns to You, that is, culture is a system of face-to face relations and society represents the coexistence of an *undetermined* number (n+1) of subjects. Merleau-Ponty was not as explicit as Sartre: society should be *minimally* considered in the context of *ménage à trois* (Badiou 2008), in

triadic structures where the third one is always constitutive. But it is clear what this is about. There are no dyadic relations without a constitutive third one; to develop the previously expressed thought: without the constitutive part of „undetermined number of consciousnesses“. Here, the French philosopher gives a glimpse of thought about institutions which are superior in comparison to everything that seems natural to us. Actually, Merleau--Ponty was never clearer, nor did he ever separate sociality and interubjectivity so clearly; other attempts of his were marked with oscillations.

Is Merleau-Ponty's criticism of society possible? The French philosopher was unambiguous so many times; we are familiar with his articles on different issues and his precise opinions (Merleau-Ponty 1960: 365–567): those opinions reveal a thinker who criticizes sociality in capitalism. We should not forget that this thinker was subtle in his talk about solidarity between philosophy and politics in the context of rejecting objects of philosophy as „pure objects“ (Merleau-Ponty 2000: 303); he did not accept „verbal liberalism“. When Olivier Todd reviewed his book and commented that philosophy was a „sovereign work" for this philosopher, Merleau-Ponty replied that he had never said that because „philosophy *was not* deeper than passion or politics“. (Merleau-Ponty 2000: 208 – this is not that strange in comparison to Merleau-Ponty for whom Sartre claimed that he was truly interested in politics). As numerous critics said, this happened in the period of Merleau-Ponty's life when he was staggered and drawn into liberalism because of the disappointment with Marxism and its historical results. However, it is not that simple (Losoncz 2010). In any case, Merleau-Ponty was not a type of thinker who could be described as a neutral observer; on the contrary, his philosophy of the world always shows the intention of the philosophical consideration of participation. Philosophy sets the conditions for intervention in the world: it is a pattern for established engagement. He was interested in participation in the world, engagement at the very source. It was not a coincidence that he did not describe consciousness as „consciousness *of* something“ but „how I can do it“, thus, as a form of power (*potentia*). That tells us a lot about his intentions.

It should be noted that he writes a lot about the existential ground in his entire work, about *Boden* (on this notion, Visker 1999), like a world substrate for the common. Ground is a horizon which provides possibility for something that he calls „indisputable coexistence“, and somewhere just a simple dialog based on „common ground“. We need philosophy which mulls things from below, and which is reflected to the collectiveness which base is *beneath* us. „Attachments“, constitutive „bonds“ and „webs“

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are mentioned, although they are not above, but always below us. Hence the concern for spatial aspects, for horizon and perspective; the aim is to consider a critical thought with regard to *Boden*. Merleau-Ponty uses every opportunity to say that we should not count on unilateral action of a subject: it is quite clear, even in his earlier works which refer to consciousness and intention, that he was interested in what preceded intersubjective relations. Thus, it is not a coincidence that the later work of Merleau-Ponty is characterized by strong decentralization of embodied subject; the statement „I am given to myself, but I am not the light of myself" becomes crucial (Butler 2004: 192). Still, the most important for us is to have *embededdness* of subjectivity and intersubjectivity as critical formula: numerous critical indications are given in this statement, namely that we lose this embeddedness in capitalism. It is a critical opinion based on imminent ambivalence because every engagement is ambivalent (On this paradigmatically, Merleau-Ponty 1996: 89), *simultaneously* representing freedom, affirmation and „constraint". The restriction of freedom is not an external obstacle for established engagement because restriction is transposed into freedom, that is the opposition between freedom and *restriction is imminent to freedom itself* (Chari 2010).

However, something should be clarified. Merleau-Ponty talks about dual anonymity which is, as he says, related to the „atmosphere of society": „...yet each other person does exist for me as an unchallengeable style or setting of co-existence, and my life has a social atmosphere just as it has a flavor of mortality" (Merleau-Ponty 2002: 425). „Social atmosphere" that refers to „society" occupies even our loneliest manifestations. When Merleau-Ponty explains the scope of historical materialism he even speaks about the „total and concrete notion of society"; then, he analyzes the „Unity of Social Event" which he even relates to the „social body", to the corpus that represents an unity of „law, economic structure, and morality" (Merleau-Ponty 2002: 403–429. There is a clear parallel between the body as the unity of gesture and the society as the unity of law, etc.).

It is crystal clear here that the society is treated from a corporeal aspect and that it represents unifactorial entity (Reuter 1999: 85). But we are facing some dilemmas here. It could be said that we are anonymous in terms of absolute individualism and absolute generalism. The convergence of these modalities of anonymity confirms the fact that solipsism, although impossible to overcome, from the aspect of interior and exterior, is still not a closing paradigm as we have already seen. If we wish to create a unity of coexistence of body and communication then the aim of philosophy is to

connect solipsism and openness towards others (Merleau-Ponty 2002: 399): we claim that there are problems related to the maintenance of balance between these moments. On the horizon of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy the problem of transcendental subjectivity will not be the focus of attention, but his opinion must be confronted with the fact that the above-mentioned „dual anonymity" questions the transcendental possibility of subjectivity which is not restricted by norms of intersubjectivity. Or, to make it clearer: there is a possibility to lower the „atmosphere" of common anonymity (Fischbach 2013), the atmosphere of strong promiscuity, on *solus ipse.* The real question is: is there something that is not included in intersubjectivity or subjectivity is already so integrated in intersubjectivity that distance cannot be kept? Is not subjectivity already „out of itself", evacuated for intersubjectivity? Are not all kinds of loneliness possible only as intersubjective data? In the philosophy of „interbodies" the problem is not in *alter ego* and the reflection of alterity but in *ego,* to be more precise, transcendental self-referentiality and autoaffection become questionable. The relation between the self and subjectivity becomes problematic in the context of „strong" intersubjectivity. Even though significant transformation of Merleau-Ponty's thought can be observed throughout his entire work, this moment seems to be constantly present. Thus, no wonder this orientation caused Merleau-Ponty to claim that the relationship between I and Other is simply not enough. He invites us into the world of European tension: „The I-other problem – a Western problem" (Merleau-Ponty 1968: 221). The West loses the mentioned „common ground", i.e. ontological embeddedness. What is interesting here is not an expedient to solve the „problem of the other". It is a *transformation* of the problem (Merleau-Ponty 1968: 322, 269). This is affirmed based on the thematization of *perfect* coexistence, a flux that circulates between the bodies. This is how unbroken intersubjectivity is created. Nothing less important is the fact that social coexistence implies that everyone should *experience* community. Intersubjectivity is the problem of *adults* only: the adults gain perception of Other, when they achieve undisturbed intersubjectivity they actually remember the childhood (Poster 1975).

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The problem of alterity loses its significance in these argumentations and it is attributed to the surplus of centralism in subjectivity. Thus, Husserl's problem concerning intersubjectivity is resolved. Let us pay attention to the next quote: „There is no problem of the alter ego because it is not I who sees, not he who sees, because an anonymous visibility inhabits both of us, a vision in general, in virtue of that primordial property that belongs to the flesh, being here and now, of radiating everywhere and forever, being an

individual, of being also a dimension and a universal" (Merleau-Ponty 1968: 322). Now we are facing the problem of *alter ego* from another perspective.

Undisturbed intersubjectivity of early Merleau-Ponty is undoubtedly created by *corporeal sociality*. He criticizes Sartre for sociality which is on slippery ground; there is no „in-between", his philosophy is open to plural subjectivities only („In Sartre there is a plurality of subjects but no intersubjectivity", Merleau-Ponty 1973: 205) which can be confronted, but not to real, body-based, carnal intersubjectivity: Sartre's ontological duality that prevents consideration of intersubjectivity is criticized (Merleau-Ponty 1996: 89). *However, the question is whether criticism of society is possible, critical philosophy of society, if reflection relies on symmetric intersubjectivity which transforms into unproblematized existence?*

Sartre, Transcendental Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity

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Sartre follows the footprints that might be Hegel's (Butler 1999: 101–175): here, we refer to the philosophy of desire and needs which invokes intersubjectivity, as well as the „normative idea of society" (for this dimension of normativity, see Fischbach 2013). Tension caused by intersubjectivity and expressed in *Being and Nothingness* can undoubtedly be related to Hegel. *Being and Nothingness* was criticized not only by Merleau-Ponty but some other well known thinkers as well. Here is an example: Sartre's philosophy is extremely nominalistic (Adorno). He tries to abstract from historical circumstances which makes him think about metaphysical concepts especially with respect to absolute freedom (Marcuse); even Alain Badiou, whose philosophy is influenced by Sartre's thinking, claims that freedom is rooted in individual consciousness and that every collective project is predetermined to be passive (Badiou 2008: 26). Still, if we accept those thoughts without any corrections then there is no other option but to exclude the mentioned Sartre's work from the register of critical philosophy of society. We do not argue that the given opinions might have valid perspective, but we wish to make some changes.

Let us turn to *Being and Nothingness* in order to confirm the divergences between Merleau-Ponty and Sartre. They are not hard to find. The beginning of one important chapter in the book starts with: „While I attempt to free myself from the hold of the Other, the Other is trying to free himself from mine; while I seek to enslave the Other, the Other seeks to enslave me. We are by no means dealing with unilateral relations with an object-in-itself, but with reciprocal and moving relations. The following descriptions of concrete behavior must therefore be envisaged

within the perspective of conflict. Conflict is the original meaning of being-for-others" (Sartre 1956: 364).

Interpretative frame leading Sartre can be noticed here. He obviously starts from a certain homological structure because he considers the fact that same descriptions apply both for us and the others, but he places it into a radical perspective of *conflict*. It is not true that intersubjectivity is missing here and that subjectivities are multiplied here, but it is true that we are witnessing the rising of a new philosophy of *a*symmetric intersubjectivity. The impossibility to avoid the objects can also be found in *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, and it is not just some youthful enthusiasm: „It is impossible to exist amongst men without their becoming objects both for me and for them through me, without my being an object for them, and without my subjectivity getting its objective reality through them as the interiorisation of my human objectivity" (Sartre 2004: 105). Through some philosophical effects of phenomenology, Sartre praised intentionality during the thirties of the 20th century, and not just as an orientation that relieves us from the burden of idealism, but as a philosophical moment that opens the door to understanding of subjectivity *amongst* subjectivities (Sartre 1947: 34–36). Sartre had a program for overcoming solipsism: he criticized Husserl who, although defined otherness as the absence he could only have knowledge as the bridge between my being and the other one (Sartre 2004: 235). He did not see existential loneliness as solipsism. The mentioned interpretative frame makes intelligibility of intersubjectivity obtain its form differently than in the case of Merleau-Ponty (here we do not account the similarity between the *Phenomenology of Perception* and the *Being and Nothingness*, but see Butler 1998). The vocabulary speaks for itself and sheds light on strong divergences between Merleau-Ponty's monism and Sartre's dualism. When the first one speaks about dispossessed individual from the aspect of ontological communality, the second one speaks about different forms of possession: „Wherever I go, whatever I do, I only succeed in changing the distances between me and the Other--as-object, only avail myself of paths toward the Other. To withdraw, to approach, to discover this particular Other-as-object is only to effect empirical variations on the fundamental theme of my being-for-others If we start with the first revelation of the Other as a look, we must recognize that we experience our inapprehensible being-for-others in the form of a possession. I am possessed by the Other; the Other's look fashions my body in its nakedness, causes it to be born, sculptures it, produces it as it is, sees it as I shall never see it. The Other holds a secret the secret of what I am" (Sartre 2004: 280). The Other watches us and takes „the secret of our

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being". We cannot watch without being watched at the same time. It is not questionable that we are forced to ecstasies and to be out of ourselves, to put ourselves in the frame of intersubjectivity because we cannot reach ourselves and our identification without the Other. But Sartre uses the words which mean „assimilation of the Other", „absorbing of the Other": instead of unity a separation between Me and Other occurs, alienating gaze of the Other: „Me" is the object of the gaze of the other (see the critique concerning the relationship between the gaze and eye, Lacan 1973: 84 and Jay 1993.), I am „always under the gaze of the other", this is Sartre's famous statement which made grounds for establishment of ocularocentric philosophy of intersubjectivity. When Merleau-Ponty talks about communal attachments, Sartre will find discrepancies that lead him to conclusion that there is no possibility of unity of Me and the Other – the main separation point which generates far reaching consequences is the one between the In-itself and the For-itself. This is why we cannot analyze Sartre if the transformed problem of intersubjectivity is used to solve the problem of alterity: there is no unity between Me and the Other, thus, not only that I find myself through someone else but I am also testing the alterity which does not solve the problem of my being. It has already been shown that Sartre's dialectics of intersubjectivity increases discrepancies and emphasizes the ambivalence of freedom and common realization of freedom (Cabestan 2005: 19–41). (Genuine examples of asymmetric intersubjectivity are related to sexual sphere, i.e. for sadism and masochism; this represents the drama of intersubjectivity).

Obvious examples of divergence with respect to the author of *Phenomenology of Perception* are the parts where Sartre talks about consciousness that represents „exile from the world", or when he treats consciousness from the aspect of „negativity": this is too far from Merleau-Ponty. Of course, man is a being who is the being-in-the world but he has to pay for this inherent determination. His freedom is paradoxical. Unlike Merleau--Ponty, Sartre's subjectivity is not dis-embodied and it is not his philosophy that is cut off from sociality. In spite of the fact that Sartre rarely speaks in *Being...* about society (although he did mention „social event" once), Michael Theunissen treats him within the frames of „*social* ontology", i.e. he analyzes his social philosophy from the ontological aspect (Theunissen 1960: 230–240). His philosophy offers possibilities for different analysis: frequently mentioned interpretation of „bad faith" as a possibility for „self--deception", self-negation of the consciousness, has generated numerous social analyses (Dupuy 1995: 53–69. On the analysis of the waiter in a café, Bernasconi 2006: 35. Hacking 2002: 109. This analysis could lead to the

social interpretation of the „overidentification of the rule" and „theatrical gestures" as the form of social habitualization). For us, this is a fantastic introduction in the theory of ideology. We agree that in *Being and Nothingness* we witness a *trans*historical phenomenological analysis (Langer 1998: 93–121). In spite of the efforts made by Sartre to include a lonely individual in the being-in-the society, a critical thought emerges here, based on „reflexivity as institution" (O'*Neill 1972: 231*) or „multidimensional critique" (Waldenfels) - for us it is „situated critical reflexivity".

We think that Sartre is in the space between freedom and restriction: we have already said that it is important for the perspective to be inner with respect to freedom; we have pointed out the problem of the *perspective of self-referentiality* of freedom. Considering his intention to emphasize the key importance of self-choice, Sartre could be analyzed from the aspect of philosophical paradox „to choose one*'s* predestination". This does not imply an underestimation of contextual determinations, but it includes something we have determined as self-referentiality of freedom (Dupuy 1995: 63). Naturally, our intention here was to show that Sartre solves the same problem in a different way: situatedness of freedom is analyzed here (contingency of freedom in the world in Sartre's work) by moving across divergent paths. We cannot say anything about the thinker who connects situation and freedom: one can be free only in a „situation". We believe that Sartre is confronted with dialectics of attachment and detachment in relation to the world; he contemplates about constitutive moments of detachment where Merleau-Ponty thinks about primordial attachment.

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Tensions in the intersubjectivity;
Merleau-Ponty *versus* Sartre

It should be noted that although Sartre's philosophy suffered big changes on its way from *Being and Nothingness* to *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, there are still some clear signs of continuity (This is emphasized by Jameson 1971: 206–306. He characterizes the *Critique*...as the supplement to the *Being*... It is very indicative that Sartre several times recalls in *Critique*...the *Being*...). It is not true at all that later social engagement has no previous foundation and that it is not based on earlier starting points. Could it be any different with a philosopher who pathetically claims that freedom has the same meaning as the possibility of transformation, or who implies responsibility for the world – moreover, the latter indication keeps continuity in the later part? It can be noted that Sartre (once again, in spite of the ambivalences) creates conditions for occurrence of „dialectical voluntarism" (Hallward

2010: 129–157 and Badiou 2008): his philosophy of will creates *possibilities* for consideration of collective self-emancipation. We are talking about possibilities *only* and nothing else: even Sartre had some difficulties with the comprehension of collective will in a systematic way, as well as with the articulation of that everlasting will. However, none of the critical social philosophies that take into account genesis of different collectivities renounce the merits of philosophy of will that can be found in Sartre's work.

It is important to confirm those elements of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy which are relevant to us and which affirm the intensification of *strong* intersubjectivity; it is called intersubjectivity without residual. The world is a bunch of different bonds, a medium of originary attachment, and the existing ground for every process of phenomenalization. Of essential importance are those indications that shed light on the relationship between the world and man and which refer to the „power" of the world. Let us turn to the explanations regarding the birth and which point to the engagement – with respect to the world: „To be born is both to be born of the world and to be born into the world...We choose our world and the world chooses us. What is certain, in any case, is that we can at no time set aside within ourselves a redoubt to which being does not find its way through, without seeing this freedom, immediately and by the very fact of being a living experience, figure as being and become a motive and a buttress" (Merleau-Ponty, 2002: 404). This impossibility of finding „shelter" against the world leads us to the dynamic meaning of intersubjectivity and interworld. Nothing less specific is the fact that body which is united with the world appears as the „power of the world". Living in a collective world, primordial attachment is the ground for intersubjectivity. What are the characteristics of intersubjectivity? „Activity: passivity" (Merleau-Ponty 1968: 264) – we read later, which testifies the modality of existence of subjectivity. To conclude, intersubjectivity is always *interpassivity*, a form which emerges to surface in the structures of interworld.

Merleau-Ponty's philosophy became marked with an orientation which overpowered centralized efforts based on the consciousness, just like it overpowered the postulate about „natural Ego", whereat the mentioned natural entity is only a preform of consciousness. Different transformations of his philosophy (language, aesthetics) emphasized the importance of decentralization with respect to subjectivity (Zaner 1964: 237). We recognized intersubjectivity in *Phenomenology of Perception*. but it was related to *cogito.* Now, *radical* destruction of a subject's proprietary position is observed; it is now in the possession of „Seeing and Thinking",

and not vice versa (Merleau-Ponty 2003: 19). Cohesion embedded in the world goes beyond transitory dissonances; the Other is not a rival but part of ontological circulation which characterizes the being-in the world: the fact that without vision of others we could not see, is symptomatic and *contra* Sartre. The outlines of intramundanity become clearer with a subject, we can discuss the ontological continuity between body and the world, which is much deeper than any opposition between the world and body and much deeper than the wounds given to the man by the world. In any case, these efforts are part of the endeavor to construct an idea of subjectivity which is, *at the same time,* embedded in the structures of dependence and has the capacity to start, i.e. inaugurate. His philosophy aims at depicting the logic of exchange between *constitutive and constituted* moments in the structure of subjectivity: but we are emphasizing the fact that ontological concordance, different forms of synergy inside the world, and structures of transitivity are present here. Merleau-Ponty performs a subtle analysis of „aesthetic logos of the world" and while doing this he discovers numerous, as he says „incompossibilities" in the world. However, „forms of unity" always prevail, an ontological *synergy*. We might even read that the positions of Me and the Other are *only* „mysterious" forms of dissociation. We could even assume that Merleau-Ponty is close to that corporeal philosophy which appreciates certain mystical elements of „unique body" and „intercorporality" with respect to the world (On the meanings of corpus mysticum in the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty, Visker 1999: 212. It is very interesting to evoke such statements that lead to us to an other type of destination: there is violence as the inevitable aspect of human relationship, the perception is already the form of violent act in the context of the world. We could argue that it is difficult to reconcile this type of reflection on the primordiality of violence with the primordial attachments and ontological concordia. Staudigl 2007: 250.). In other words, he develops a strong philosophy of the whole with respect to the segments, which attracts some religious connotations.

We have discovered similar tendencies before, namely when we thematized „Unity of social event" where parts of „social body" are mutually implied. Then, we determined that „social atmosphere" somehow overdetermines the modality of mutual implications. Still, Merleau-Ponty did not make such references to sociality in his later work. The concept of „eventness", which had the crucial role in Heidegger's work and in French philosophy (Badiou, for example), did not become clearer. We remember some great critical intentions of Merleau-Ponty which suggested an insight into the existing critical situation: we particularly refer to his reflections on the

ground and possible negative consequences of losing that ground. Can we say that dissociations and specificity become predominant even if we do not have insight into the „common ground"? Can we make it possible for divergences to affirm when we lose the ground under our feet?

As for the philosophy of society, a possible point of breakthrough could be Merleau-Ponty's understanding of „nature". This could not be understood as deflection from his thinking or some occasional stop; on the contrary, we can see from his earliest attempts that his intellectual engagement regarding the above mentioned subject was constant. Accordingly, the importance of his reflections regarding nature is beyond any doubt; they show tendencies of his thinking. No wonder the analysts interested in the explication of the natural world found him (for example, Dufrenne 1970: 201–212 and Langer 1990: 115–129): his contemplation on necessary opacity of the natural world shows his critical attitude towards ambivalent achievements of modernity. It is evident that his consideration of the natural world includes political issues as well (Merleau-Ponty 2003: 95). Nothing less important is that humanism, which is the subject of criticism here, is represented by Sartre, i.e. the „natural world" gives possibilities for further confrontation. Immersing into natural ontology, de-subjectivation of perception, leads a phenomenologist to the zones with symbiotic relations between human and inhuman spheres. This is actually in accordance with the basic intentions of inclusive ontology.

However, the unfinished work of Merleau-Ponty left dilemmas. Is critical philosophy of society possible based on such inclusive ontology, or do we have to accept that all the roads to social criticism end here? Is it possible to, maybe, to include Merleau-Ponty in the consideration of phenomena such as *Weltentfremdung* (Hannah Arendt), or loss of the world, processes of „demondialization" (*Entweltlichung*) that take us to some robust implications regarding today's epoch? (Fischbach 2011: 12) We do not wish to assert that ontological philosophy of the world makes critical philosophy of society impossible, on the contrary: we have only emphasized our question regarding the problematic relationship of *unfractured* and unbroken intersubjectivity and critical philosophy of society.

Sartre's philosophy developed in a different way than Merleau-Ponty's philosophy: we analyze the genesis of his thought from the perspective of *Critique of Dilaectical Reason* which gives a retrospective. His thinking ranges from being-in the world to being-in the society. Mikel Dufrenne (Dufrenne 1998: 279–289) clarifies the relationship between Merleau-Ponty and Sartre in such a way that the writer of *Visible and invisible* is oriented

towards the natural world and the author of *Critique of Dialectical Reason* is oriented towards the „social world". The first author shows „abandonment of social" in order to grasp the primordial aesthetic experience and the „ontological feelings", and the second one analyzes „intelligibility within the social". Dufrene obviously thinks that later philosophical work of Merleau-Ponty is closed for the social world. Still, we would like to alter that statement a bit. Namely, natural and social worlds are undoubtedly confronted and we have just demonstrated the importance of Merleau-Ponty's orientation towards natural world. Also, it is obvious that Sartre shows tendencies towards the social world and that he takes an anthropological viewpoint. He uses concepts which have elements like totalization and detotalization, practico-inertness, praxis, project or contra-finality and which are deeply situated in the social world; they could not be understood without it. Still, let us not forget that Sartre, although from the aspect of anthropology, draws the line between social and natural world by using the idea of scarcity. Scarcity, carefully analyzed in *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, is definitely one of the key ideas here: it is *reflected difference* between social and natural world. In other words: Sartre gives differentiation between social and natural world. Some issues have remained unclear in Sartre's work: does he consider scarcity as transhistorical phenomenon, or does he place it in the *capitalism*? It could be argued that scarcity, as a *qualitative, socially produced category* is a historically conditioned phenomenon, and only then can it be understood (that is the main point of our endeavour on the problem of scarcity, Lošonc 2012: 35–60). A thinker who relates sociality to the phenomenon of history could think this way because there is a wide network of social mediation which explains the modalities of scarcity. Scarcity is not a transhistorical phenomenon; it is rooted in determinations created throughout the history. It is not a coincidence that Sartre uses the context of „institutions" to "deal with economic sphere and consumption, *without which consideration of society would not exist*" (Sartre 2004: 106) – he does not do that but we can talk freely about social institution of scarcity. Anyway, Sartre's philosophy has socio-economical frame for the „intelligibility of social" and this is how he accepts certain subjects related to Hegel-Marx line of thinking (on the problems of the embeddedness of Sartre on this Hegel-Marx line of thinking, Chiodi 1976: 39–58), i.e. he articulates man as the locus of the need, as the being who is lacking ontology. Scarcity offers a historical landscape of socialized people who communicate via socialized things: a complex picture with subtle analyses of subjectivities and objectivities occurs, as well as the already familiar conflicts regarding things, that is, conflicts that are deeply set in commonly used things. Trauma of meeting another man,

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being an object of other person's look, which led the thoughts in *Being and Nothingness* is present here as well, but with some social features. The importance of this analysis is that scarcity represents a kind of short circuit between subjectivity and objectivity, and we see it as a form of socio-economic dialectic tension. Subjectivity has on its side constitutive structures of reciprocity, traces of conflictual socio-economic intersubjectivity, and processes of totalization which give structure to the already used idea of project. Objectivity and matter have not only „inertia" as adversity, but „power of reality" as well which is maliciously directed against people, like in the case of „contrafinality" (capital understood as „contrafinality"). Thus, we arrive at one not simple analysis of relationship between objects and people: we can even talk about the subjectivization of matter and objects.

As it is well known, Heidegger criticized Sartre and claimed that his argumentation is just a new edition of metaphysics. This cast doubt on the scope of Sartre's subjectivity. Wasn't it all just overemphasizing of metaphysical subjectivity? (Renaut 1993: 39) Some points should be analyzed here: Sartre does try to relate anthropology and praxis. He seeks for normative determinations of a man, and expects generation of emancipation from anthropology and radical humanism (this is another divergence from Merleau-Ponty (on the differences between Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, Badiou 2005: 178)). At the same time, he always reminds us that subjectivity is separated from substantiality („existence precedes the essence") and that it can never be naturalized. This non-substantiality of subjective engagement rejects metaphysical definitions: *Critique of Dialectical Reason* is the unfinished work but it is still a monumental piece of work because of subjective engagement, i.e. subjectivity as freedom. Here, scarcity and socio-economic analysis play the key role because they add realistic historical social substrate to this engagement.

Merleau-Ponty used to say that contradictions in Sartre's work were impossible to correct (Merleau-Ponty 1996: 86), thus suggesting the hypostatized pessimism. We can really see that Sartre does have phenomenology of different failures and defaults that are ascribed with ontological importance, and it was like this from the very beginning of philosophical career. Different analysis presented in *Critique of Dialectical Reason* also take us to the mentioned failure zone. Traumatic forms of intersubjectivity, confrontation with forms of objectivations and self-objectivations leave deep traces: human interdependence systematically creates forms of alienations and reifications. Objects and people have relationships based on exchange as well as substitutions. There is also Sartre's fascination with the „Number": let's look at the beginning of the introduction

that he wrote for Frantz Fanon's work where he thematizes (and not for the first time) *ontological* importance of possibility of living people to outnumber the dead, or phenomenona such as „the horror of multiplicity" and „too many people" (Sartre 1963: 7. See, Jameson 1997: 363 and Chari 2004: 110–122). He always expresses astonishment, from philosophical point of view, about the existence of another man, which is opposite to Merleau-Ponty. However, it is important that subjective engagement is not *ex nihilo* here and that it is not omnipotent to the reality. It could be said that Sartre generates certain type of *pessimistic* engagement or pessimistic *activity,* probably like Gramsci; besides he explores the possibilities of development of subjectivity in society which is defined in accordance with impersonal determinations.

The Later Work of Sartre with the Early Merleau-Ponty

Our thesis is that later work of Sartre shows certain indications of the early Merleau-Ponty. Philosophy of society in Sartre's work can be read from the perspective of different implications given by Merleau-Ponty. We have seen the difference between intersubjectivity and society: Sartre adopts it and adds a mark of concreteness. First, he systematically proves the insufficiency of intersubjective-dyadic relationships for understanding of society. Constitutiveness of the „third" party gives way to numerous analysis: we no longer observe only interpersonal relationships or simple relation between a man and an object, but the entire context of *structured* social world. Then, when the author of *Phenomenology of Perception.* recognizes the necessity of existence of „undefined number of consciousnesses" Sartre performs a concrete analysis of *layered collectiveness* in modern society. He talks about triadic structure:

a) seriality – represents a community established for external reasons and within which „passive unity" and possibility of mutual substitution and indifference exist; it seems that Sartre's descriptions evoke Rousseau's critical analysis: seriality represents the dominance of the Others and „powerless of people" (Badiou);

b) group – takes seriality apart and provides conditions for community created for internal reasons and which has jointly established values;

c) organization – the key moments are initiation and infrastructure with according rules.

Sartre does not deny that seriality is embedded deeply in the structure of modern society: that is part of his critical endeavors. This triad makes

possible the consideration of dynamics of collectiveness in modern society: it offers a perspective from which analysis could be performed within the frame of critical philosophy of society. That is a possibility that still has not been used up.

We chose the perspective of critical philosophy of society. Divergent paths of thought can be observed if the philosophies of Merleau-Ponty and Sartre are considered. We studied these paths paying special attention to the dynamics of intersubjectivity of these philosophers. Merleau-Ponty shows traces of unbroken intersubjectivity, and in Sartre's work intersubjectivity is anchored in asymmetric relations. In his early days, Merleau--Ponty had some indications regarding the comprehension of society, but his analysis is based on the mentioned idea of intersubjectivity. Although we did not analyze his philosophy in detail we could still conclude that it developed towards *syncretic philosophy of the world* with addition of opinions on the problems of the whole and parts. Sartre reaches the edge of critical philosophy of society articulating the categories such as scarcity and layerness of a collective being. Both paths are quite representative and exhibit paradigmatic possibilities, but with respect to *critical philosophy of society* Sartre's is the one we should rely on.

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Alpar Lošonc

Dve sukobljavajuće interpretacije filozofije društva

Apstrakt

U ovom radu predstavljam dva filozofa, Morisa-Merlo Pontija i Žan-Pol Sartra, ali iz perspektive filozofije društva. Naglašavam da filozofija društva predstavlja na izvestan način retkost, danas i ova činjenica objašnjava zašto je potrebno propitivati odgovarajuće naznake ovih filozofa. Posebno se analizira u radu artikulacija intersubjektivnosti u filozofiji društva i na osnovu ovog izabranog momenta se tretiraju argumentacije pomenutih filozofa u smislu njihove konfrontacije. Filozofija Merlo-Pontija se analizira iz vidokruga nelomljene intersubjektivnosti, a filozofija Sartra se tumači iz perspektive relacije između transcendentalne subjektivnosti i intersubjektivnosti. Rad prati genealoški pristup, i analizira dinamiku pomenutih filozofa u cilju toga da se prezentuju pomeranja i relevantni otkloni. Na kraju rada razvija se teza da je kasni Sartr, koji ostaje u okvirima Marksovog mišljenja, u stvari realizuje reinterpretaciju onih elemenata koji se inače mogu naći u filozofiji ranog Merlo--Pontija. Shodno tome se tvrdi da je filozofija društva kasnog Sartra vredna za promišljanje u cilju stvaranja kritičke filozofije društva.

Ključne reči: Društvenost, korporealna društvenost, ukorenjenost, socijalna filozofija, intersubjektivnost, transcendentalna subjektivnost, biće-za-drugog