BOJAN ŽALEC:

Genocide, Totalitarianism and Multiculturalism: Perspectives in the Light of Solidary Personalism
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Genocide, Totalitarianism and Multiculturalism: Perspectives in the Light of Solidary Personalism is the second volume of the Lit's *Philosophy in Dialogue* series. In this book Bojan Žalec poses a question of how the concept of *solidary personalism* can enhance our understanding of the problems which increasingly challenge the development of the globalized world. In fact, we currently experience a lack of dialogue, solidarity, approaching other as other, which are an essential moment of personalist attitude, ethics, relationships and existence. The author states that 'solidary personalism can be maybe best understood when compared with nihilism and instrumentalism which form its antipodes' (p. 19). Nihilism presents a condition of an individual, a group, a society, culture, which entails leveling everything in experiential and intellectual horizons. As in practice nihilism is impossible, it usually transforms into some kind of instrumentalism. Instrumentalism can be regarded as an attitude that does not consider a particular person as a goal, but (at best) just as a means. Nihilism and instrumentalism are the fundamental problems which entail, among others, the widespread political violence and crimes

The book presents a collection of essays providing a detailed analysis of the concepts of genocide, totalitarianism and multiculturalism and an in-depth explanation on their meaning in today's framework. The author considers these rather delicate topics at several levels and, as a consequence, the book is divided into four parts.

First and foremost, it brings a detailed analysis of the concept of genocide regarded as an ethically laden concept. In this sense, the first essay is the most central, as it is dedicated to an analysis of the essential characteristics of genocide, which thus far have remained neglected by most scholars. Following the definition of genocide proposed by Claudia Card, the author claims that physical killing of the members of the target groups is not essential for genocide. Actually, genocide is characterized, first of all, by intentional causing of social death. The author argues that 'there are (more sophisticated) forms of genocide that do not physically kill the members of the target groups, but "only" destroy certain ties relationships and social structures which are of vital importance for the survival of target groups' (p. 27). In this context, the essay provides a comparative analysis of the phenomena, which are closely interconnected with genocide, such as crime against humanity, totalitarianism, terrorism and ethnical cleansing. The author also examines the genocidal effects of military mass rapes. He claims that the attempts to provide an adequate and appropriately tested definition of genocide should not be merely a subject of academic debates; we need such a definition also for the purpose of effective legislation that would permit to prevent genocide both at the national and international levels.

In this sense, the understanding of depth motivation for political violence can sharpen our minds for the recognition of political violence and crime. The second essay considerably contributes to answering the question of how the ideas proposed by Søren Kierkegaard could enhance our learning and understanding of these issues. To support the idea of Kierkegaard's usefulness, the author addresses Charles K. Bellinger's interpretation of Nazism and Stalinism

given in Kierkegaard's terms of anxiety and stadia of existence. In terms of such conceptual framework, Hitler and Nazism demonstrate an extreme pathological example of the aesthetic stadium and anxiety before the good; at the same time, Stalinism can be regarded as an extreme pathological example of the ethical stadium and anxiety. Yet, despite these differences, there are essential similarities between these forms of totalitarianism already in the value starting point. The author affirms that 'in both cases a group of people was stigmatized as incurably bad and was subjected to horrible, actually genocidal violence' (p. 45).

The third essay aims to answer the question of what can be learned from this, and how to avoid political violence and crime in the future. In this context, the EU's top representatives often put an emphasis on developing policies and practices of multiculturalism across Europe, but the problem is how such policies and practices are often understood and implemented. The author states that some forms of multiculturalism should be supported and some rejected. He warns against the utilitarian attitude towards multiculturalism. Such an attitude inevitably resulted in the point of view, according to which all cultures are intrinsically good. To describe such approach, which is in many respects close to cultural relativism, the author introduces the term '*leveling multiculturalism*', because, in fact, this approach entails leveling every culture. For instance, from the perspective of leveling multiculturalism, there is no need to cultivate the distinct European identity (the author supports Larry Siedentop's point of view, according to which the European identity is liberal and of Christian origin), because European culture is merely of equal value to other cultures. Such attitude inevitably produces Christophobia, which is based on the care for other, non-Christian cultures in Europe. In return, Christophobia entails the avoiding of recognition of truth about the genuine European identity and, at the same time, the truth about the others. On the other hand, as the author states, true Christianity (and liberalism as its secular child) can be a foundation for tolerance towards others and their respect.

The last essay provides a critical examination of some general ideas and concepts of the theory of citizenship with regard to the analysis of the specific situation in Slovenia. The author emphasizes the importance of three political virtues: civility, the capacity to object to the centres of power, and the virtue of public reason. At the same time, in the contemporary Slovenian society those three virtues are not sufficiently developed or cultivated. The current satiation is rooted back to the tragic history of Slovenia. During the Second World War and after it Slovenians were subjected to Fascism, Nazism and Communism (except the case of Greece, this situation can be regarded as unique in Europe). As the author states, civil war, genocide, totalitarianism, brutal violence, mass killings and other crimes against humanity produced uncured traumas. Such traumas have inevitably resulted in psychological profiles and characters of many Slovenes which are unsuitable for free and democratic society. The author claims that, as a consequence, the contemporary Slovenian society is characterized by refusal to accept a truthful interpretation of the past, seriously damaged morality, lack of adequate work and business ethics, of democratic political culture, the positions of power occupied by non-democratically directed people who were part of the elite of the previous Communist regime (and by their 'mentally' successors), and a strong cultural and political polarization.

This book came out at a time when such an edition was needed to examine the issues of skyrocketing rise of instability and insecurity throughout the world (and, as the current refugee crisis and the revival of Stalinism in Putin's Russia show, Europe is not apart from that). Being a philosophical book, it considerably contributes to checking, testing and controlling of the

concept and conceptual distinctions, as well as their (possible) application to the analysis of the contemporary situation. This broad focus means, however, that some readers will evidently be left wanting a more detailed and extended analysis of some of the themes.

The book thus would have benefited from a more accurate description of the similarities and distinctions between Nazism and Stalinism. As the author states, 'Stalinism and Nazism are <...> essentially different in their conservative and "creative" direction respectively' (p. 45). In reality, however, the 'creative' direction was an essential moment, first of all, of Leninism and Trotskyism, whereas the Stalinist ideology puts an emphasis on some elements of conservatism crucial for the maintenance of paternalistic attitudes within the Russian society. For instance, Stalin glorified the oppressive rule of the Russian Tsar Ivan Grozny who committed mass murders in the 16th century. Furthermore, Lenin's (and Trotsky's) internationalism was gradually replaced with xenophobia and anti-Semitism, which became the distinct features of Stalinism not only in Russia, but also in other Soviet bloc countries (for example, the Slanský trial in the early 1950s Czechoslovakia was accompanied by overtly anti-Semitic rhetoric). Of course, this was interlinked with the Marxist phraseology. Marxism was presented as an ideology which was a logical consequence of Russian national traditions, and, being separated from the 'corrupted' and 'declining' West, Russia was presented as the 'right' place to accomplish the mission in creating the Communist society and a 'new' man. At the same time, the attempt to create a 'new' man was also characteristic of Nazism. The Nazis not only glorified 'racially pure Aryan' who would get rid of the very idea of good; they instigated medical experiments, which presented the extreme form of the crimes against humanity, aimed to 'create' such a man. In this sense, it would be possible to say about the obvious distinctions between Nazism on the one hand and Leninism and Trotskyism on the other, whereas in the case of Stalinism such distinctions came to a minimum.

The book would also have profited from discussing the interconnectedness of the current situation in Slovenia with that in the EU in general. For example, the contemporary EU's development demonstrates that democratic politics, and, yet more, the trust in democracy as the best road to the solution of the most haunting social problems, are in crisis. This inevitably produces the need of rethinking the very essence of democracy. It would have been interesting to analyze how the concept of solidary personalism may help us in searching for the ways out of the current situation.

Overall, it is possible to conclude that the author's broad approach helps raising a lot of interesting questions about the past, present and future of Europe. It is certainly a book coming out just at the right time.

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