

## SOCIAL MAKEUP AND SOLITARY REASON\*

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**F**RIENDSHIP IS A CURIOUS PHENOMENON, as everyone has a certain sense of it, but to define its exact meaning is not a simple task. As Wittgenstein quotes Augustine deliberating on the concept of time, we can say friendship is “[S]omething that we know when no one asks us, but no longer know when we are supposed to give an account of it”.<sup>1</sup> I do not mention Wittgenstein incidentally. He was sceptical of theoretical analysis, quite explicitly in certain cases. Wittgenstein calls attention to difficulties which arise when we think of language along the lines Socrates understood it in the *Theaetetus*, i.e. when we consider “speech” as if it was “the composition of names”. Distinguishing between composite and simple elements<sup>2</sup>, essential and inessential features of an object<sup>3</sup>, as well as the existence and non-existence of the object of a proposition<sup>4</sup> creates unsolvable anomalies. These anomalies can be eliminated only by adopting a basically different conception of language.<sup>5</sup>

Considering friendship, we find something similar in Plato’s *Lysis*. After the cumbersome deliberation of different aspects of friendship, he concludes: “O Menexenus and Lysis, how ridiculous that you two boys, and I, an old boy, who would fain be one of you, should imagine ourselves as friends – this is what the by-standers will go away and say – and as yet we have not been able to discover what is a friend!”

To mention Plato and Wittgenstein<sup>6</sup> in the first paragraph – two crucial figures at significant turning points in the history of philosophy – is to indicate that I would like to examine friendship not from the aspect of ethics

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<sup>1</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans.: G. E. M. Anscombe, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1963 §89

<sup>2</sup> L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, op. cit. § 47

<sup>3</sup> L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, op. cit. § 62

<sup>4</sup> L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, op. cit. § 79

<sup>5</sup> The same basic conviction of Wittgenstein is of course present in those remarks which deal with the function or limits of philosophy. See *Philosophical Investigations* §123, §124, and §125.

<sup>6</sup> Plato is obviously considered to be the philosopher at the time of the transition from primary orality to literacy. Wittgenstein’s philosophy was “directly influenced by phenomena of a post-literal type”. See about it J. C. Nyíri, “Post-Literacy as a Source of Twentieth-Century Philosophy”, *Synthese* 2002/2, pp. 185-199

– though the notion of friendship emerged mostly in the context of ethics – but from the perspective of communications technology, and its impact on the history of philosophy. Accordingly, I consider friendship to be a concept deeply embedded in the culture of literacy, although it does not fit organically into its epistemological, ontological, and metaphysical framework. This ambivalence is quite obvious since literacy is determined by the representational system of writing, which was excellently appropriate for creation of the intellectual and institutional framework of solitude, as opposed to representational skills – including the technology of writing – which are bound up with social intercourse. To prove my thesis, I will first roughly outline the concept of friendship, then sum up the main morals of the so-called ‘Toronto School’, and then draft Merlin Donald’s cognitive evolutionary survey. In conclusion, I will show, that the recently developing concept of friendship fits nicely into primordial human social makeup and tends to diffuse, as opposed to the unique and sublime concept of the last twenty-five centuries.

#### THE CONCEPT OF FRIENDSHIP IN THE AGE OF LITERACY

In the *Symposium* of Plato, “the wickedness of mankind” was the reason for dividing the primordial “one”, a whole human nature into two parts. This division ends in “the desire and pursuit of the whole” which is called love.<sup>7</sup> Friendship and love are very close to each other, viz. love inspires friendship.<sup>8</sup> According to the desire of the whole “when one of them meets with his other half, the actual half of himself, whether he be a lover of youth or a lover of another sort, the pair are lost in an amazement of love and friendship and intimacy, and would not be out of the other’s sight, as I may say, even for a moment: these are the people who pass their whole lives together; yet they could not explain why they desire of one another.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> “And the reason is that human nature was originally one and we were a whole, and the desire and pursuit of the whole is called love. There was a time, I say, when we were one, but now because of the wickedness of mankind God has dispersed us...” Plato, “Symposium”, in: *The Dialogues of Plato*, op. cit. p. 158.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. “for the interest of rulers require that their subjects should be poor in spirit and that there should be no *strong bond of friendship or society among them, which love, above all other motives, is likely to inspire*” (Italics are mine.) Plato, “Symposium”, in: *The Dialogues of Plato*, op. cit., p. 154

<sup>9</sup> Plato, “Symposium”, in: *The Dialogues of Plato*, op. cit., p. 158

Aristotle created quite an elaborate concept of friendship, however the core of it was something similar, viz. a friend can be someone whom we love, can be considered “another self”<sup>10</sup>, and “friendship depends on community”<sup>11</sup>

To cast a glance at the prominent thinkers of modern philosophy (i.e. Francis Bacon and Rene Descartes), we see that according to their main endeavours, ethics and friendship gained different importance.

Bacon’s main claim, to renew sciences on the basis of experience, made it possible for him to notice special characteristics of human intercourse. Let me quote him:

“For friendship maketh indeed a fair day in the affections, from storm and tempests; but it maketh daylight in the understanding, out of darkness, and confusion of thoughts. Neither is this to be understood only of faithful counsel, which a man receiveth from his friend; but before you come to that, certain it is, that whosoever hath his mind fraught with many thoughts, his wits and understanding do clarify and break up, in the communicating and discoursing with another; he tosseth his thoughts more easily; he marshalleth them more orderly, he seeth how they look when they are turned into words: finally, he waxeth wiser than himself; and that more by an hour’s discourse, than by a day’s meditation. It was well said by Themistocles, to the king of Persia, that speech was like cloth of Arras, opened and put abroad; whereby the imagery doth appear in figure; whereas in thoughts they lie but as in packs. Neither is this second fruit of friendship, in opening the understanding, restrained only to such friends as are able to give a man counsel; (they indeed are best;) but even without that, a man learneth of himself, and bringeth his own thoughts to light, and whetteth his wits as against a stone, which itself cuts not. In a word, a man were better relate himself to a statue, or picture, than to suffer his thoughts to pass in smother.”<sup>12</sup>

Descartes’ main aim was to re-establish human knowledge, i.e. to create its solid and unquestionable foundation and, as opposed to Bacon, the foundation of it has nothing to do with empirical data, but is provided by the intellectual effort of the individual mind. However, Descartes considered ethics a fruit of the tree whose root creates metaphysics. He did not find it

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<sup>10</sup> See “he is related to his friend as to himself (for his friend is another self)” *Nicomachean Ethics* Book 9/4 (Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, Translation by W. D. Ross, [http://people.bu.edu/wwildman/WeirdWildWeb/courses/wphil/readings/wphil\\_rdg09\\_nichomacheanethics\\_entire.htm](http://people.bu.edu/wwildman/WeirdWildWeb/courses/wphil/readings/wphil_rdg09_nichomacheanethics_entire.htm)) According to Sir D. Ross see 1161b 18, 1161b 28, 1166a 32, 1169b 6, 1170b 7. Sir David Ross, Aristotle, London: Routledge, 1995, 7<sup>th</sup> Chapter

<sup>11</sup> *Nicomachean Ethics*, op. cit. Book 8/9.

<sup>12</sup> *Essays of Francis Bacon*, The Essays or Counsels, Civil and Moral, of Francis Ld. Verulam Viscount St. Albans; <http://www.authorama.com/essays-of-francis-bacon-27.html>

necessary to create a systematic ethical theory. As he wrote: "It is true that normally I refuse to write down my thoughts concerning morality. I have two reasons for this. One is that there is no other subject in which malicious people can so readily find pretexts for vilifying me; and the other is that I believe only sovereigns, or those authorized by them, have the right to concern themselves with regulating the morals of other people"<sup>13</sup> However, his main interest, and the results he achieved do not require a theory which takes human intercourse into consideration. His so-called "provisional moral code" in *Discourse on the Method* is devoted to the avoidance of mistakes, and to the attainment of happiness, to some extent until certainty can be established. In his *Meditations*, it becomes clear that to know what is true and good makes us free and unable to make a mistake.<sup>14</sup> Actually, as Ernst Gellner in his posthumous book *Language and Solitude* noted "He [Descartes] thought it would be possible to judge the culture in which he had been reared from the vantage point of a solitary individual purified by doubt, who accepts nothing other than that which his own reason compels him to accept. Cosmic exile ... was, above all cultural exile. It expresses extreme distrust of culture, one's own and all others. Moreover, Descartes felt an acute contempt for culture, which he called 'custom and example' and considered to be the source of all error."<sup>15</sup>

According to Gellner, "The Crusoe tradition, which begins with Descartes, finds its supreme expression in Hume and Kant".<sup>16</sup> "What did Kant do?" – we could ask as Ian Hacking did: "One thing was to make something quite new out of ethics.", as Hacking starts his answer, "In ancient Greece, the topic of ethics had been the good life. Values were out there in the world, and the good life could be perceived and, with diligence, lived. After that, after divine ethics, after Human naturalized ethics, and after much else, Kant made ethics utterly internal, the private duty of reason."<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> *The Philosophical Writings Of Descartes*, 3 vols., transl.: John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch, Vol. 3 including Anthony Kenny, Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1988, Vol. 3, p. 326

<sup>14</sup> "if I always saw clearly what was true and good, I should never have to deliberate about the right judgement or choice; in that case, although I should be wholly free, it would be impossible for me ever to be in a state of indifference" (*The Philosophical Writings Of Descartes*, Vol. 2, p. 40). Being indifferent means that we have less than clear and distinct perceptions of true or good.

<sup>15</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Language and Solitude*. Wittgenstein, Malinowski and the Habsburg Dilemma, Cambridge: University Press, 1998, p. 43

<sup>16</sup> Gellner, op. cit. p. 182

<sup>17</sup> Ian Hacking, "Self-Improvement", in: Ian Hacking, *Historical Ontology*, Cambridge-London-Massachusetts: Harvard Univ. Press, 2002, p. 119

In his *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant deliberates friendship in terms of love, respect and a certain kind of union. As he put it: “Friendship (considered in its perfection) is the union of two persons through the equal mutual love and respect. It is easy to see that this is an ideal of each participating and sharing sympathetically in the other’s well-being through the morally good will that unites them...”<sup>18</sup>

According to his general theoretical conviction, he emphasizes that friendship “is never for a moment safe from interruptions if it is allowed to rest on feelings, and if this mutual sympathy and self-surrender are not subjected to principles or rules preventing excessive familiarity and limiting mutual love by requirements of respect.”<sup>19</sup>

Kant speaks about a “moral friendship” as opposed to a pragmatic one, whose excellence is rooted in a special freedom to be able to communicate one’s ideas, “to reveal himself” on the basis of confidence and shared views of things. The fruit of moral friendship is that “He is not completely alone with his thoughts, as in a prison, but enjoys a freedom he cannot have with the masses, among whom he must shut himself up in himself.”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, trans.: Mary Gregor, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1993, p. 261

<sup>19</sup> “Although it is sweet to feel in such possession of each other as approaches fusion into one person, friendship is something so delicate (*teneritas amicitiae*) that it is never for a moment safe from interruptions if it is allowed to rest on feelings, and if this mutual sympathy and self-surrender are not subjected to principles or rules preventing excessive familiarity and limiting mutual love by requirements of respect. Such interruptions are common among uncultivated people, although they do not always result in a split (for they rabble fight and make up). Such people cannot part with each other, and yet they cannot be at one with each other since they need quarrels in order to savor the sweetness of being united in reconciliation. But any case the love in friendship can not be an affect; for emotion is blind in its choice, and after a while it goes up in smoke.” Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, op. cit. p. 262

<sup>20</sup> “Man is being meant for society (though he is also unsociable one), and cultivating the social state he feels strongly the need to *reveal* himself to others (even with no ulterior purpose). But on the other hand, hemmed in and cautioned by fear of misuse others may make of his disclosing his thoughts, he finds himself constrained to *lock up* in himself a good part of his judgments (especially those about other people). He would like to discuss with someone what he thinks about his associates, the government, religion and so forth, but he cannot risk it: partly because the other person, while prudently keeping back his own judgments, might use this to harm him, and conceal his own, so that he would lose something of the other’s respect by presenting himself quite candidly to him.

If he finds someone intelligent – someone who, moreover, shares his general outlook on things – with whom he need not be anxious about this danger but reveal himself with complete confidence, he can then air his views. He is not

As we can see, the notion of friendship reflects upon human relationships and even intercourse. Epistemology, however, and the metaphysical framework of the individual – mainly after the Cartesian turn – do not contemplate any kind of social embeddedness.

In the Platonic dialogues, the notion of friendship is based on the myth of primordial unity of divided human beings on the one hand, and theoretical deliberations, i.e. in the conceptual framework of love and creation, more precisely: *poiesis*. Aristotle distinguishes different kinds of friendship.<sup>21</sup> The desirable, i.e. the “[P]erfect friendship is the friendship of men who are good, and alike in virtue; for these wish well alike to each other qua good, and they are good themselves. Now those who wish well to their friends for their sake are most truly friends; for *they do this by reason of own nature* and not incidentally.”<sup>22</sup> (Italics mine) That is reason gains crucial importance regarding

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completely alone with his thoughts, as in a prison, but enjoys a freedom he cannot have with the masses, among whom he must shut himself up in himself. [. . .] This (merely moral friendship) is not just an ideal but (like black swans) actually exists here and there in its perfection. But that (pragmatic) friendship, which burdens itself in with the ends of other men, although out of love, can have neither the purity nor the completeness requisite for a precisely determinant maxim; it is an ideal of one’s wishes, which knows no bounds in its rational concept but which must always be very limited in experience.” Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals* op. cit. p. 263

<sup>21</sup> Three kinds of friendship according to Aristotle: friendship which is based on utility, pleasure and perfect friendship. See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, op. cit. Book 8/2-3

<sup>22</sup> “Perfect friendship is the friendship of men who are good, and alike in virtue; for these wish well alike to each other qua good, and they are good themselves. Now those who wish well to their friends for their sake are most truly friends; for they do this by reason of own nature and not incidentally; therefore their friendship lasts as long as they are good-and goodness is an enduring thing. And each is good without qualification and to his friend, for the good are both good without qualification and useful to each other. So too they are pleasant; for the good are pleasant both without qualification and to each other, since to each his own activities and others like them are pleasurable, and the actions of the good are the same or like. And such a friendship is as might be expected permanent, since there meet in it all the qualities that friends should have. For all friendship is for the sake of good or of pleasure-good or pleasure either in the abstract or such as will be enjoyed by him who has the friendly feeling-and is based on a certain resemblance; and to a friendship of good men all the qualities we have named belong in virtue of the nature of the friends themselves; for in the case of this kind of friendship the other qualities also are alike in both friends, and that which is good without qualification is also without qualification pleasant, and these are the most lovable qualities. Love and friendship therefore are found most and in their best form between such men. But it is natural that such friendships should be infrequent; for such men are rare. Further, such friendship requires time and familiarity; as the proverb

friendship. According to Bacon's considerations friendship is useful in everyday activity as well as intellectual reasoning. Kant's notion of friendship is determined – just like his ethics – by the “private duty of reason”.

Friends, everyday intercourse and the social-, institutional- framework we meet in everyday practice provided the basis of the need to investigate these phenomena from a philosophical point of view. However, in the intellectual milieu of literacy, it was not easy to integrate the other individual into the general image of the Cartesian ego. That can be the reason for the unique and admirable role of the friend, as opposed to the role of the other fellow with whom we can have some relation for different practical purposes.

Summing up theoretical considerations regarding friendship, we can say that although practical moments are present, the claim for an abstract and rational foundation of it is dominant.<sup>23</sup> All practical aspects of friendship are considered shallow and secondary in comparison with the abstract and generally defined notion of friendship, which is noble, and in its perfection, represents higher principles. This kind of abstraction is in full harmony with other topics of philosophy in the age of literacy. However, being locked in the prison of our own thoughts as opposed to being able to reveal ourselves via communication with a friend, seems to be in contradiction with the notion of individual solitary reason. What good could a friend be in the framework of the Platonic ideas, or for the Cartesian ego, or even the Kantian “Transcendental Ego”<sup>24</sup>?

This ambivalence can be understood as the ambivalence of the socially embedded human mind in the age of literacy, i.e. social make up and solitary reason. Next, I'm going to outline the main characteristics of literacy in the framework of the cognitive evolution of the human mind.

## SOLITARY REASON

How could a pure, representational technology (in this case, alphabetical writing) impact upon cognitive customs and intellectual attitude? How could the purely technical means of writing establish rational reasoning? To answer

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says, men cannot know each other till they have 'eaten salt together'; nor can they admit each other to friendship or be friends till each has been found lovable and been trusted by each. Those who quickly show the marks of friendship to each other wish to be friends, but are not friends unless they both are lovable and know the fact; for a wish for friendship may arise quickly, but friendship does not.” Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, op. cit. Book 8/2-3

<sup>23</sup> The only exception seems to be Bacon. His methodological commitment to induction can explain his attitude towards the notion of friendship.

<sup>24</sup> Regarding “transcendental Ego” see Gellner, *Solitude and Culture*, op. cit. p. 45

these questions, I would first like to delineate the main characteristics of verbal expression, and then compare the noetical world of the primary oral and literate culture.

Verbal expression, as a representational framework, automatically requires a certain degree of generality. This becomes quite clear if we compare it with image-like, or pictorial representation. The importance of similarities<sup>25</sup>, analyzing-reordering, and the linear structure of verbal expression have considerable effect on cognitive capacity and the thought process. Since alphabetical writing made it possible to detach verbal representation from its multi-dimensional and situational roots (i.e. live intercourse), the inclination towards abstract and general considerations significantly increased.

This change unfolds from the investigations of Harold I. Innis, Walter J. Ong, and Eric A. Havelock, just to mention some representatives of the Toronto School. The Ongian notions of orality and literacy are based on studies which analyzed early written records from the new perspective of communications technology. These investigations uncovered characteristic patterns of preservation, the interweaving of ideas, cognitive capacity, and even the very organisation of communities.

According to Ong's terminology, a primary oral culture is one which does not possess any knowledge of writing. Such a culture must be conservative and traditional. Since information could only be stored in people's minds, they developed a special language – a "storage language" as Havelock puts it – which was "devised orally for the purpose of survival."<sup>26</sup> This meant that it was only possible to preserve information by communicating it (i.e. through live intercourse among people). This restriction required a special technology to weave ideas together, and to transmit awareness of the new facts of life. With this special technology, the way of expression was additive and redundant, and the expressions and words used were very closely embedded in concrete situations. Intercourse was empathetic, participatory and agonistic.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> See "All that words can deal with, however, are similarities. The simple reason for all this is that words, with the exception of proper names, relation words, and syntactical devices, are mere conventional symbols for similarities. Although differences are just as perceptible as similarities," words are not able to cope with them. "But that these differences are not storable in words does not mean that they are ineffable, for they are clearly communicable in non-verbal ways." W. M. Jr. Ivins, *Prints and Visual Communication*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press 1953, p. 139

<sup>26</sup> E. A. Havelock *The Muse Learns to Write. Reflections on Orality and Literacy from Antiquity to the Present*, New Haven; London: Yale Univ. Press, 1986, p. 59

<sup>27</sup> See Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*, London: Methuen, 1982, pp. 36-46ff.



After the invention of alphabetical writing several modifications took place.<sup>28</sup> While, the transmission of ideas was liberated from certain restrictions, written contexts then had to be created for texts to be meaningful. With the help of writing, ideas became remarkably easier to handle and to elaborate. Part of the energy used earlier, simply for remembering, could be mobilised for other purposes. Alphabetical writing gave rise to the technical-practical potential of creating concepts free of emotions, distantiated from the human life-world,<sup>29</sup> and to the potential for systematic analysis of ideas, the ability to regard events as linearly structured in time,<sup>30</sup> and thereby to recognize the eternally human.<sup>31</sup> Knowledge could be transmitted in a new way, through written records. However, to replace the live situation with mute words required considerable intellectual effort, and caused plenty of difficulties. These difficulties can be clearly demonstrated through the history of philosophy.

Havelock, regarding Heraclitus' recorded heritage, called attention to the fact that "Out of a total of some one hundred and thirty sayings, no less than forty-four, or thirty-four per cent, are preoccupied with the necessity to *find a new and better language*, or a new and more correct mode of experience, or are obsessed with the rejection of current methods of communication and current experience."<sup>32</sup> (Italics mine.) However, as time went on, difficulties

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<sup>28</sup> Alphabetical writing was the instrument of the most accurate and the most abstract recording of the acoustic phenomenon of speech. Havelock underlined the fact, that – in respect to social control and governance –alphabetical writing was the only one to create a flexibility comparable to oral communication, because it did not ritualise and simplify the contents of it. See E. A. Havelock *The Muse Learns to Write*, op. cit. p. 59, Ong *Orality and Literacy*, op. cit. p. 28, and about the different types of writing see also *Ibid.* pp. 85f.

<sup>29</sup> See Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, op. cit. especially pp. 31-57ff. and 103-112ff; E. A. Havelock, *The Greek Concept of Justice. From its Shadow in Homer to Its Substance in Plato*, Cambridge; Massachusetts and London: Harvard Univ. Press, 1978 and E. A. Havelock, *The Muse Learns to Write*.

<sup>30</sup> See Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, op. cit. 143; P. Gendolla, "Punktzeit. Zur Erfahrung in der Informationsgesellschaft" In: *Im Netz der Zeit*, ed.: R. Wendorf, Stuttgart: S. Hirzel, 1989.

<sup>31</sup> See I. Hajnal, "Európai kultúrtörténet - Írástörténet" In: *Technika, művelődés. Tanulmányok*, ed.: F. Glatz, Budapest, 1993, p. 18.

<sup>32</sup> "Heraclitus, no less than his audience, is compelled to have daily acquaintance with Hesiod's world. Yet it is precisely this acquaintance that he would wish to disrupt. He does not want to live in this world. No wonder, then, that he is obsessed by the difficulty of making statements which shall be from his point of view correct: and once a statement has been correctly worded, it appears no less difficult for an audience to take in what has been said or to communicate it to others. Out of a total of some one hundred and thirty sayings, no less than forty-four, or thirty-four percent, are preoccupied with the necessity to find a

arising from changing requirements of the changing representational framework emerged in the form of different theoretical considerations, puzzles, and in terminology: reflection upon these changes became more and more implicit.

Plato tried to define abstract notions of intelligence, courage, temperance, justice, and friendship, etc.<sup>33</sup>. Aristotle's syllogism was intended to improve and control our thought-process.

In a primary oral culture, knowledge of various facts, norms and rules was available only through live intercourse. As knowledge became attainable through written records as well as via communication with others, the question of reality, and accessibility of knowledge about reality became central issues. And accordingly, the question of true knowledge and its foundation gained importance.

The main questions of medieval metaphysics were also related to quite general issues. Medieval thought about universals and the question of transcendency and immanency with regard to the foundation of being gave rise to the central questions of metaphysics. Considerations connected to these questions had an abstract and complicated conceptual background. The concepts used to grasp reality created a specific hierarchical world far from everyday experience.

Metaphysics in the Modern Age turned to the question of the reliability of knowledge – of knowledge that originates from the past, or from the senses. This specific distrust can be connected to the perception of a change in the technology for disseminating ideas – the technology of the printing press. Due to the limitations of this technology, the unreliability of manuscripts (and of diagrams, illustrations and pictorial statements as well) became conspicuous with regard to verbalised ideas. The most important task for metaphysics then, was to find a so-called correct manner of cognition, which meant to simultaneously create a firm basis for the sciences. The connection between modern

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new and better language, or a new and more correct mode of experience, or are obsessed with the rejection of current methods of communication and current experience. This statistic is striking in a man who in later tradition was represented as a philosopher of materialism and fiery flux. Fire, in fact, is mentioned in only five of this sayings and has been inserted in the text of three more by scholars who perhaps have been a little overzealous to justify the traditional estimate of him. Clearly, if we take his ipsissima verba seriously, his preoccupation with problems of vocabulary, and the psychological response to vocabulary, must be regarded as central." Eric A. Havelock, *The Literate Revolution in Greece and Its Cultural Consequences* (Princeton University Press, 1982, pp. 220-260) [http://nyitottegyetem.phil-inst.hu/kmfil/kmkt/hav\\_pre3.htm](http://nyitottegyetem.phil-inst.hu/kmfil/kmkt/hav_pre3.htm)

<sup>33</sup> Cf. "Plato is aware that he is engaged in a process of 'naming names', fixing them, we might say, as new names, new insofar as they are to become symbols of conceptual identities." Eric A. Havelock, *The Greek Concept of Justice*, op. cit. p. 327

science and the technology of the printing press is quite obvious.<sup>34</sup> And let me add that the technology of printing texts in thousands of identical copies gave rise to the important and novel concepts of originality and authorship.

By the 18<sup>th</sup> century, literacy had reached its zenith. “Thinking in alphabetical characters” – using the formula of the Hungarian scholar István Hajnal – was the obvious intellectual milieu of the time, and the printing press had a deep effect on scientific development. The reliance on science, and the importance of the scientific method were stronger than ever before. Kant’s Copernican Turn is thus seen to be built upon two postulates: the insufficiency of logic, and the necessity of synthetic *a priori* statements, which then created possibilities for mathematics and sciences.<sup>35</sup> These postulates mirror the ambivalence of the state of literacy: both disappointment and trust in the results of literacy at the same time.

Despite this ambivalence, to reach beyond the individual mind (i.e. to discover its social-cultural and physical embeddedness) was a hopeless enterprise for quite a long time. Regarding the inability to reach beyond the “immanence of mind”, important changes took place in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. By this time, communication became equipped with the technology of photography, film, and the “electrical speech machine,” i.e. telephone. If we have a look at the metaphysics of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we see that the glory of logic and the scientific method was no longer apparent. As new communication equipment directly mediates numerous moments of everyday life, metaphysics discovered everyday practice and tried to integrate it into its framework. Heidegger took a decisive step when he left the immanence of the mind, and tried to focus on everyday life. He emphasized our “thrown-ness” into the world as opposed to the traditional dualism of object and subject. The world, earlier considered an object to be known, separated from the human intellect, emerged as a unity of references helping our orientation. Similarly, Wittgenstein focused his attention on embeddedness in everyday practice, in opposition to the theoretical analyzing attitude of earlier metaphysicians. As emphasized in his *Philosophical Investigations*, the authentic approach to language is given through its use, not through an abstract logical method. Likewise, Heidegger’s attempt to reveal the primordial meaning of logos – a renewal of the ancient concept of language as a kind of creation – was aimed at setting limits on the validity of modern logic.

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<sup>34</sup> See e.g. Elisabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformation in Early-Modern Europe I-II*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979

<sup>35</sup> For more detail see Zs. Kondor, „The Iconic Turn in Metaphysics”, In: K. Nyíri ed., *A Sense of Places. The Global and the Local in Mobile Communication*, Vienna: Passagen Verlag, 2005, pp. 400

## SOCIAL MAKEUP

Due to the technology of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, philosophy was able to re-discover the importance of our social makeup in a two-fold sense. As I mentioned, due to the means of communications technologies, particularities could be transmitted with the same ease as similarities and generalities. Thus, everyday practice emerged on the horizon of theoretical considerations. The results of recent scientific research on cognition are very useful, even inevitable, in re-thinking some main issues.

Merlin Donald, in his book *Origins of the Modern Mind*, outlined the history of cognitive evolution. According to his theory, the development of representational skills were in close relation to social intelligence.<sup>36</sup> Considering social intelligence, Donald emphasizes that “it is clear that language was the final step, and that presymbolic forms of social intelligence must have been its foundation”.<sup>37</sup> Donald distinguishes three main transitions in human cognitive evolution: a shift from episodic to mimetic, then to mythical, and finally to theoretical culture. Each of these changes means the emergence of a new kind of representation, as well as an increased load on biological memory.<sup>38</sup> Episodic memory, now complete with mimetic representation, could create community, with special habits and organization, which provided a certain kind of identity. Verbal representation, attached to the mimetic one, was the first stage, when mythical constructions as orienting world-views and orders could come into existence. The transition from mythical to theoretical culture presupposes the existence of an effective external storing system. “[t]he first two evolutionary transitions would have greatly increased the load on biological memory. However, the final step in this tremendous cognitive expansion might have reduced the load on some aspects of biological memory, by gradually shifting many storage tasks onto the newly

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<sup>36</sup> Regarding social intelligence, Donald relies on the investigations of Robin I. M. Dunbar. Merlin Donald, *Origins of the Modern Mind. Three Stages in the Evolution of Culture and Cognition*, Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, (1991) 1993, p. 10 and *Ibid.* pp. 137.

<sup>37</sup> Merlin Donald, *Origins of the Modern Mind*, *op. cit.* p. 137

<sup>38</sup> “Human memory had, from its inception, expanded the range of primate memory. The earliest form of hominid culture, mimetic culture, depended on an expansion in the self-representational systems of the brain and created the initial base for semantic memory storage, which consisted initially of representational action scenarios reflected in mime, gesture, craft, and skill. With the evolution of speech and narrative ability, there were even greater increases in the load on biological memory, adding not only the storage networks for phonological rules and the lexicon in its entirety but also a very large store of narrative conceptual knowledge.” *Ibid.* p. 319

developed E[xternal]S[ymbolic]S[toring system]. At the very least, the existence of the ESS must have forced a great change in priorities and memory organization.”<sup>39</sup>

This apparently technological invention established considerable alterations in cognitive habits. Let me quote: “theoretic culture broke with the metaphoric style of meaning in oral-mythic culture. Where narrative and myth attribute *significances*, theory is not concerned with significance in the same sense at all. Rather than modeling events by infusing them with meaning and linking them by analogy, theory dissects, analyzes, states laws and formulas, establishes principles and taxonomies, and determines procedures for the verification and analysis of information. It depends for its advanced development on specialized memory devices, languages, and grammars.”<sup>40</sup>

Donald’s reconstruction of cognitive evolution, and the argumentation for it clearly reveal “that the evolution of cognitive structure *at the modular level* might have continued well beyond the point at which physical evolution had stopped. Cultures restructure the mind, not only in terms of its specific contents, which are obviously culture-bound, but also in terms of its fundamental neurological organization. Whether the organization is vested in a parallel set of specific brain adaptations or not (and obviously, at times, it is not), the brain sets fewer constraints than formerly thought on the process of cognitive evolution. Culture can literally reconfigure the use patterns of the brain; and it is probably a safe inference from our current knowledge of cerebral plasticity, that those patterns of use determine much about how the exceptionally plastic human central nervous system is ultimately organized, in terms of cognitive structure.”<sup>41</sup> The morals of his theory suggest that our representational skills are determined by what I call ‘social makeup’ (i.e. our sociability) and inventions related to communication have a decisive impact on intellectual and social institutions.

#### FRIENDSHIP RE-VISITED

Considering friendship from pedestrian point of view, intimacy and trust seem to be two decisive/crucial elements of it. These two qualities can be considered necessary and sufficient conditions of friendship even in the framework of perfect or moral friendship. However, these two attributes have importance, to variable degrees, in everyday intercourse as well. Clear-cut alphabetical reason honoured ideal friendship for its integrity regarding meta-

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid. p. 320

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. pp. 274

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. p. 14

physical presuppositions, even though some discrepancies arose considering the practical, experience-like deliberations and the speculative construction.

Friendship did not appear in the philosophy of Wittgenstein or even Heidegger. However, they are two crucial representatives of the attempt to leave speculative-analytical attitude for the sake of the integrity of everyday experience and the theoretical-philosophical processing of it.

Considering recent notions of friendship, we see that the honoured and unique image of it has started to diffuse, i.e. everyone with whom we have a live/active relationship, including trust and intimacy, with more intensity than average, we consider to be a friend. According to my hypothesis, this change is quite obvious from the perspective of communications technology. That is, since we have the opportunity to communicate easily at any time, and nearly everywhere, the space for solitary reasoning decreases. Since the institutional framework of communication has radically changed, we must re-structure our everyday activities, scheduling, and the ideals of human relationships accordingly.

Let me quote from an article in *The Guardian*: “There are powerful reasons why we should create these bonds, even if we only start when we are older. The phenomenon of later births means families take up a smaller percentage of our lives. We wait years to have children, and we could be 70 before we become grandparents for the first time. We have more time available, and fewer familial responsibilities, than the generations before us. We all want to feel needed and valued by others. It is possible for friends to fill that need, but only if we work at it.

It isn't easy, because friendship is a subtle dance, and no one wants to be explicitly pursued when it's unwelcome, or explicitly dropped when they are not wanted. Nor does it come with any guarantees. People are unpredictable. But we need to play the game of friendship. Evidence shows that people with close friends live longer and are happier than those without. And friendship defines what it means to be human.”<sup>42</sup>

During the centuries when institutions of social intercourse were determined by solitary reason, friendship was the residual of our primordial social makeup. Recently, technological means made possible a return to, or at least, a similarity to communicational patterns which were dominant before the age of literacy (i.e. when social intercourse was considered the most effective way to maintain knowledge as well to solve difficulties). Due to new technological tools for keeping in touch in a more natural (i.e. multimedial) manner, communication re-gained special importance. Thus we communicate more, and with increased intensity. We can alter intensive connections in time for content or purpose. Accordingly, we gain and lose friends without losing our integrity.

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<sup>42</sup> “What are friends for?” in: *The Guardian*, January 24, 2005