

# Abstract





STATE AND FREEDOM OF SPEECH IN SPINOZA'S  
*THEOLOGICAL-POLITICAL TREATISE*

In the *Theological-Political Treatise* Spinoza claims, in opposition to Hobbes, freedom of thought and speech, in the framework of a broader philosophical undertaking which consists mainly in elaborating a theoretical explanation of the genesis of “the most natural form of state”, namely, the democratic state, in order to better understand the real conditions of its perpetuation. This claim is founded on a double necessity: an ontological necessity in the first place, since freedom of thought and speech cannot be suppressed in the state without suppressing at the same time the individual *conatus* (and therefore the very existence of individuals); a political necessity in the second place, since the state, and in particular the democratic state, cannot exist without freedom of speech, as it stems not from the pact (more theoretical than real) that would be at the origin of its formation, but from a consideration of the state's true interest.

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THEODORE METOCHITES, SCEPTICISM AND PAIDEIA

The article examines the presence of skepticism in the Byzantine philosopher Theodore Metochites and especially in relation to the portraiture of Socrates and the critique of false encomiasts of *Paideia* in Metochites' work *Ἠθικός*. The article follows first the argument of B. Bydén who rejects the idea of a general revival of skepticism in 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> centuries Byzantium and speaks in the case of Metochites about a tactical skepticism related to Platonism and rhetorics. The present paper, on the basis of a comparison between Metochites' positions and the third skeptical mode, supports the idea of an instrumental skepticism in Metochites' *Ἠθικός* that is closely related to the idea of culture and takes the form of a theory of error inherently attached to the cognitive process. This epistemological-psychological theory of error concerns the subject of cognition and in no way the state

of things or ontology, and it reflects a rather refined appreciation of culture in late Byzantium.

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### ECOLOGICAL CONCEPTIONS AND PRINCIPLES IN GREEK PHILOSOPHY AS A GUIDE FOR CONTEMPORARY ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS AND POLITICS

In this paper I attempt to specify the main conceptions and fundamental principles concerning nature in the texts of Greek philosophy from the Pre-Socratics to the Neo-Platonists. By investigating the relevant texts we see that the Greek Philosophers have a more or less correct understanding of the natural world and its relation to us. Their views are very important and almost similar to the main conceptions of contemporary environmental and ecological philosophy. Since these thinkers are not in any way ideologically motivated and their opinions are expressed in clear and rational way, it seems that their views can be used as a guiding principle in forming a coherent attitude and stance of contemporary political society vis-à-vis nature.

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### NATURE AND ART IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF PLOTINUS

The aim of the present article is to review Plotinus' perspective on the relationship between nature and art, a perspective that is particularly interesting for two main reasons. First, because Plotinus treats them in a different way to previous philosophical discourse. And second, their study offers new perspectives for modern philosophy, especially in our own time, when aesthetics faces particular problems in formulating its relation with the sensate world, i.e., the natural environment and the created artificial one. Moreover, their connection

offers new perspectives on the environmental problem in general and mainly contributes to the redefinition of the meaning of nature, which in the modern era has become transformed into an imaginary idea, because the artificial environment is increasingly extending its reach. In the first part of the article the meanings of nature and beauty in ancient Greek philosophy are examined. In the next section we examine systematically the meaning of the nature and beauty of beings in Plotinus' philosophy. The last section focuses on the beauty of nature and the beautiful in nature and in art. In the concluding section, we note that the sensate world is justified by Plotinus. Specifically, despite the fact that nature is located on one of the highest levels of the ontological continuum, it involves the meaning of the beauty of the imaginable; a meaning which is revealed in the entire imaginary world, in the inanimate and in the living, in mankind and in his creations. As far as the relationship between nature and art is concerned, Plotinus accepts that it is not competitive but primarily complementary. As a result, through art the potentialities of nature are raised and its deficiencies are rectified. On the other hand, art cannot exist without the data of nature. It is mainly their common origin from the sensate world which determines and defines their relation. Accordingly, Plotinus is presented as opposing a mechanistic confrontation with nature, as well as modern approaches that tend to view nature and art as diametrically opposed. Art as knowledge does not oppose nature, but functions complementary to it, aiming at human felicity, which, of course, for Plotinus is no less than mankind's identification with the sensate world and the One.

Evangelia Giza

*Διδάκτωρ Φιλοσοφίας του Πανεπιστημίου Ιωαννίνων  
και ερευνήτρια*

## THE MASS MAN IN SENECA AND IN ORTEGA Y GASSET

For Ortega y Gasset, as well as for the Stoic Seneca, individuality is the hidden but also opposing element to the form of collectivity that can be identified with mass. The mass man is defined according to his relation with reason. The two philosophers argue differently on this point. While Ortega claims that understanding historical reality practically requires that man distances himself from the previous subordination of his life to right reason, Seneca upholds that the answer for authentic living lies in the teleological realization of man as a rational being. Despite the fact that they initiate their theses from this profound disagreement, both tend to evangelize the advent of the “perfect” man, i.e. the man who prioritizes the existential authenticity of his being against the turmoil generated by the crowd, the mass.

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## DETERMINISM, MORAL RESPONSIBILITY AND SENTIMENTAL REACTIONS

In the first part of this paper I summarise the line of thought pursued by P. F. Strawson in his milestone article under the title ‘Freedom and Resentment’ supporting his view that total abandonment of the attribution of moral responsibility is practically inconceivable. In the second part I argue that Strawson’s conclusion can be disputed by raising doubts concerning the truth of his premise to the effect that it is practically inconceivable to abandon completely the attribution of moral responsibility without also adopting what he calls ‘objective attitudes’. (Objective attitudes are conceived in this context as attitudes a normal agent has towards other agents with whom he cannot enter in normal relationships, because of a temporary or permanent defect in their character which makes feelings, such as resentment and gratitude, inappropriate on the normal agent’s part.) Although I grant that the link between total abandonment of the attribution of moral

responsibility and objective attitudes exists in certain cases, I put forward the view that it does not follow from Strawson's arguments that it exists in all cases. For even if we take into account these arguments, we can still hold the position that in some cases of abandonment of the attribution of moral responsibility certain sentimental reactions based on moral characterisations of actions and/or persons, as well as certain other crucial elements of our relationships with normal agents, can survive.

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### IS THE EMPIRICIST STRUCTURALISM OF BAS VAN FRAASSEN STILLBORN?

Lately, Bas van Fraassen came forward with empiricist structuralism as a view of what scientific representation is. Apparently, the introduction of this new idea coincides with a remission of constructive empiricism. After Demopoulos' apt remark that van Fraassen's blending of constructive empiricism with the semantic view of theories ends in an unstable result that is vulnerable to the infiltration of metaphysics, the antirealist philosopher turns to empiricist structuralism to set things right and restore the cohesion of his system of thought. However, van Fraassen runs into a severe epistemic difficulty –the 'loss of reality' objection– which he tries to resolve by means of a pragmatic recourse, that is, the pragmatic tautology. And yet, if one is to take a more meticulous look to the standard procedure of constructing scientific representations, it becomes clear that van Fraassen has to address some challenging problems of empiricist air that surface prior to the aforesaid concern. Unless van Fraassen manages to successfully tackle these ominous issues, he might have to accept that his empiricist structuralism suffers the fate of being stillborn.

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## ETHICAL ISSUES IN RESEARCH ON MENTAL DISORDERS: PROVOCATIVE TESTS

The conduct of provocative tests is very important for the investigation of mental disorders and contributes to better medical knowledge and more effective treatment. On the other hand, provocative tests create a host of ethical issues related to the safety of participants, and despite careful design, risks cannot be eliminated completely. However, adequate and ethical application of scientific knowledge and proper observance of laws and codes of ethics can help to overcome these problems, so as to make the participation in any research genuinely voluntary act that will contribute to the development of treatments for mental disorders and thus to the wellbeing of society.

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## THE CONTRIBUTION OF BYZANTINE SCHOLARS TO RENAISSANCE ARISTOTELIANISM

It is widely known that the Byzantine scholars who fled to Italy during the fifteenth century contributed to Renaissance philosophy. They brought with them manuscripts and produced editions and translations of Greek philosophical texts. Despite the common view that their works were seminal for the development of Renaissance Platonism, a closer examination of the texts and their activity proves that they were mainly interested in Aristotelian philosophy. The vast majority of them did not take sides with Renaissance Platonists. On the contrary they defended both the Scholastic and Byzantine Aristotelianism. I argue that their stance was not the outcome of dogmatic motives— in other words, a projection of the heated debate between Hesychasm and Thomism in late Byzantium. Rather, they realized that the Latin world was in fact ignorant of the rich commentary tradition of late antiquity, which had reinterpreted the Aristotelian corpus. As a result they offered the Latin audience a different Aristotle, capable of

overcoming the predominant Scholastic approach, which was heavily attached to Averroism.

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### ΕΥΠΡΑΓΙΑ AS THE BLISS OF POLITICAL LIFE IN THE BYZANTINE THINKER THEODORE METOCHITES

The philosopher and statesman Theodore Metochites stresses the importance of a key characteristic, *ευπραγία* or “right action”, which must distinguish the life of the political-ruler and citizen. Metochites was influenced by Aristotelian views and he stressed the potential value of “right action”, which is equivalent to human bliss. His thought highlighted the responsibility of man in every action and much more importantly in the case of acts that concern a ruler. Metochites based his notion of “right action” on equality and freedom, two key principles of democracy, and these are the basic preconditions for every social and political activity of man. Metochites seems to have attempted an ideological innovation through his experience of political life in his days. He suggested the moral value of right action (*ευπραγία*) giving historical references to ancient Roman and Persian rulers. Right action ensures equality and the freedom in a democratic society.

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### SOPHISTICATION AND ELITE CLASSES IN GREEK CHRISTIAN COTERIES. TOWARDS A PHILOSOPHICAL ETHOLOGY OF A SOCIAL CORPS

In this study we examine the nature and development of Orthodox groups in Greece and in Hellenism generally. Although these bodies of religious people are in an ongoing state of progress, they do have

some basic distinctive attributes; man, therefore, is not the measure of all things, as should be the case, but is committed to demagogic speech and guidance. In this case, the masterminds behave as untrustworthy rhetoricians who apply innate dutiful reasoning to their own practical pursuits. Secondly, the said pious groups do not mean intimate friendship. On the contrary, their members rest literally on a superficial and unfamiliar relation. Each of them advocates his own social aspirations. The bond, however, that unites them all in their congregational gatherings is their formalized and established shared creed. Last but not least, the leaders of these gatherings do not encourage their followers to think critically and enhance their philosophical ideas, if any. The standpoint described above fosters bigotry among competing faiths here and abroad, and above all requires the disciplinarian and collective rather than the individual mentality of its adherents. We strongly support the view of eminent philosophers and research scientists such as William James, Charles Taylor, Frans de Waal and Francis Collins that today there is no indisputable fact of moral communal truth, but versions of moral relativism. Theological esprit does not lie in mass gatherings but in the worldview of each independent individual. This paper highlights some elements of the said societal malaise. The subject thus deserves wider study and more careful attention.

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