

Thinking about Karl Popper and Open Society

This is the twentieth year of the commemoration of Karl Popper's death in 1994, the man who is the founder of the idea of open society. He devotes his lengthy book *The Open Society and Its Enemies* primary to the origins of totalitarianism and its critics. He started writing his book after the Anschluss, the occupation of his country in 1938, and he finished it in emigration on the other part of the world, in New Zealand, in 1944. The book was published by Routledge in 1945, and aroused the Western Intelligentsia's interest after the WW2, immediately the eve of the Cold War. The reason for this attention was, first of all, that Popper drew a parallel between Hitler's fascism and Stalin's bolshevism, and he pointed out a close connection between the political systems of the enemy and ally in the war. On the other part, he traced the origins of totalitarianism back up to Plato. In 1943, while the book was in making, Popper described *The Open Society* in a letter written to one of his friends, Frederick Hellin, in just these terms:

„The book is a very bold and challenging book, not so much in its style, but in its content. It attacks some of greatest authorities of all times; and not only a few of them, such as Plato, Aristotle, Hegel, etc., but in fact a great number which are not named in the table of contents. And it does so with a recklessness which is excusable only in view of the fact that I consider the destruction of the awe of the Great Names, the Great Intellectual Authorities, one of the necessary prerequisites of a recuperation of mankind. It is, of course, not an attempt to put anybody else, or myself, in the place of these Great Names. I rather insist that the whole bumptiousness and pretentiousness, with which the business of philosophy is glorified, must disappear.”¹

In his voyage of the history of philosophy in the book, Popper astonishingly presents that the endeavour to totally explain the world how inevitably leads to the aggressive wish of the total alteration of the world, which implies a cruel oppression.

I. Science and Politics

His first significant philosophical results Popper produced during great scientific and political changes, after the development of modern physics, the Great Depression from 1929 to 1933, and the fall of Weimar Republic. He worked in a unique milieu, in the capital of Austria, which even then started waking up on the ruins of Austro-Hungarian Empire defeated in the WW1. For his spiritual development was very much influenced by the debates with Vienna Circle, and the central topic of the debates was how to lay the foundations of scientific knowledge by which we can reply to the problem how to make a distinction between scientific and non-scientific theories. And whether how to check back the progress of scientific knowledge? In 1935 he published a book titled *Logik der Forschung* (*The Logic of Scientific Discovery*) in German, which instantly entitled him to be one of the founders of the theory of scientific method. In this book Popper thinks in a line that any theorem and any theory should be verified, but the statements verify them should be verified again. In this way, however, we run into either infinite regress or dogmatism in which the acceptance of unverified statements is a matter of belief or authority. That is why he rejects inductive logic, because “it does not provide a suitable distinguishing mark of the empirical, non-metaphysical character of a theoretical system; or in other words, that it does not provide a suitable ‘criterion of demarcation’.”² As an inner opponent of Vienna Circle he writes that “[...] positivists, in their

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¹ The Karl Popper Archives. Correspondence 1932-1987. Frederick Hellin, Folder 7, 1943.

² Karl Popper: *The Logic Of Scientific Discovery*. Routledge, London and New York, 2002, pp. 11.

anxiety to annihilate metaphysics, annihilate natural science along with it. For scientific laws, too, cannot be logically reduced to elementary statements of experience.”³ How can be verified then the fundamental statements considered traditionally as the foundations of science, as the building blocks of complex theories? Popper gave a revolutionary answer this question. He gave up the idea of the foundations of science, and he claimed that scientific knowledge was always hypothetic. However, each theory can be tested, and in this way, they can be refuted: “I shall not require of a scientific system that it shall be capable of being singled out, once and for all, in a positive sense; but I shall require that its logical form shall be such that it can be singled out, by means of empirical tests, in a negative sense: it must be possible for an empirical scientific system to be refuted by experience.”⁴ Thus theories cannot be *a priori* valid, and they cannot reach a validation by experience once and for all, but they are ready to be fallible, that is, one can point out if they are false.

However, *Logik der Forschung* is not only a book containing important methodological novelties, but also covers a socio-political message. After giving up the request for the foundations of science, Popper recognized that all scientific processes could be specified as intersubjective processes. Tests set in the logic of falsification, but they are driven by consensus and convention, that is to say, any scientific results accepted or refuted by scientific community.⁵ However, for convention and consensus, publicity is needed. In this early book Popper does not deal with the institutions of science yet. When he speaks about observation, experiment and refutation, he does not make a distinction between odd researcher and the community of scientists; in Hillary Putnam’s words, Popper shares the „received view” similarly to the representatives of Vienna Circle.⁶ He concerns only the logic of science, and he thinks it gets on for both.

Popper’s methodological conservatism, however, involved something progressive, too: for him, science and politics are interlocking with each other. Not in an oppressive sense in which are we usually thinking about the relationship of science and politics, just the fear of abuse by state. In democratic, open society science and politics fit with each other. Popper believed that science is our best kind of knowledge in the same way and for the same reasons that he believed that democracy is our best form of government. Both science and democracy try to influence opinions through rational discussion and without violence. Both science and democracy try to learn from their competitors instead of silencing them. Neither science nor democracy has always succeeded in achieving these goals. But, by historical facts, science and democracy has each succeeded with greater frequency than other forms of knowledge and government. It is very easy to misunderstand it, and to think that there is something in the nature of democracy and science that guarantee that they will always be better than their competitors. However, in the sense of Popper’s critical thought, this is only an empirical fact that may change with the changing conditions in the world. We should keep our weather-eye open to perceive changes.

“[...] The transition from the closed to the open society can be described as one of the deepest revolutions through which mankind has passed.”⁷ – writes Popper in *The Open Society and its Enemies*. And the perception of the readiness to social change is in fact the crucial point. The alteration in science and politics, the demand of reform always begins with the recognition that something “does not work regularly.” According to Popper, Heraclitus was the first philosopher who discovered the idea of flux. The view of Ancient Greeks essentially builds on geometry, though there was other alternative in that time (the Pythagoreans). They considered chaos as a world without geometry. Since in the world around us there is rather order (*cosmos*) than *chaos*, the Greeks thought there must be the order of aims, and together with this, an ultimate objective (*telos*) expressed by the order of the world. This presupposes a metaphysical thinking, for the

³ Ibid. pp. 13.

⁴ Ibid. pp. 17.

⁵ Ibid. pp. 32-34.

⁶ Hillary Putnam: „What theories are not”. In: Hillary Putnam: Mathematics, Matter and Method. Philosophical Papers, Vol. 1, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2010, pp. 215-227.

⁷ Karl Popper: *The Open Society and Its Enemies*. Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1971, Vol. 1, pp. 1.

understanding of the setting of nature, gods and mankind, we should know the ultimate objective of matters. Contrary to his contemporaries who conceived the world as a huge building (the Universe as Cosmos) in which processes were considered to work in the building, and their nature is cyclic, Heraclitus regarded the world as a gigantic-sized process. He concerned events and changes even if his thinking remained teleological: the belief in the law of the eternal and rigorous destiny is complemented to overemphasizing changes in Heraclitus's philosophy.

In ancient times, contrary to Heraclitus, the metaphysical frame of Plato's theory of social change is the world of constant forms and ideas. They are unvaried, indestructible, perfect, true and good things whose reflection is inconstant things in space and time. And if the origin of something is perfect, then all social change is corruption or decay or degeneration. Popper accuses Plato of being disingenuous, who did not believe in change but believed that the law of historical destiny, the law of decay can be broken by the moral will of man, supported by the power of human reason. And there exists soul gifted with an exceptionally large share of virtue, which opposes degeneration. By a long jumping in history, Popper considers Hegel who brought back the concept of change into the modern philosophy, but he did it under the shadow of Plato and Aristotle, and thus it bore all marks of Plato's what Popper had refused in Plato himself. Hegel's philosophy presents a world of flux that goes along the trend of general development. "But unlike Plato, Hegel does not teach that the trend of the development of the world in flux is a descent, away from the Idea, towards decay. Like Aristotle, Hegel teaches that the general trend is rather towards the Idea; it is progress. [...] Hegel's world of flux is in a state of 'emergent' or 'creative evolution'; each of its stages contains the preceding ones, from which it originates; and each stage supersedes all previous stages, approaching nearer and nearer to perfection. The general law of development is thus one of progress; but [...] not of a simple and straightforward, but of a 'dialectic' progress."⁸ This idea was that seized the imagination of the young Marx, but made him pass upon Hegel's philosophy, because Hegel deformed the dialectic progress by typifying it as a performance of the self-development of idealistic 'Absolute Idea'. To sum up the gist of Marxism, Popper thinks that "it is a purely historical theory, a theory which aims at predicting the future course of economic and power-political developments and especially of revolutions."⁹ That is why Popper considers Marx as a false prophet. Popper's main concern about all these three philosophers quoted before is that they are historicists who try to discover patterns, laws or trends in flux, in the historic progress, and thus they err when they do not follow the method of experiment science but that of "astronomy."

In *The Open Society and its Enemies* Popper's methodological thinking has already shifted from the "received view" to the sociology of science, and emphasizes that social science has to deal with the planning of human institutions as a device of progressive reforms. In his own acknowledgement, when he was reading Plato's *Republic*, he woke up the truth that historicists were planning, indeed.¹⁰ Historicists propagate the principle of methodological holism, which closely relates to the fact that Plato longed for the lost unity of tribal life, and he thought that "only a stable whole, the permanent collective has reality, not the passing individuals. It is 'natural' for the individual to subserve the whole, which is no mere assembly of individuals, but a 'natural' unit of a higher order."¹¹ That is to say, historicists regard society as a unified entity by methodological considerations, which is accessible in its totality, and that is why they make an effort for totally altering society. And this leads to radicalism and irrationalism. Democrats admits that "in all matters, we can only learn by trial and error, by making mistakes and improvements; we can never rely on inspiration, although inspirations may be most valuable as long as they can be checked by experience. Accordingly, it is not reasonable to assume that a complete reconstruction of our social world would lead at once to a workable system. Rather we should expect that, owing to lack of experience, many mistakes would be made which could be eliminated only by a long and laborious

⁸ Karl Popper: *The Open Society and Its Enemies*. Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1971, Vol. 2, pp. 37.

⁹ Popper (1971), Vol. 2, pp. 82-83.

¹⁰ Popper (1971), Vol. 1, pp. 92.

¹¹ Ibid. pp. 80.

process of small adjustments.”¹² But holists do not like to admit their mistakes, they would rather put down their opponents in order critics do not endanger the implementation of their plan. It is in the vein that holism comes out with totalitarianism.

II. The Popperian Idea of Open Society

In searching an alternative criterion of moral and political rationality to defend moral persons and open society against the pursuits of totalitarianism, he found out the similarities of his scientific, moral and political ideas. Popper regarded open society as the best form of social life that we have. Not as a utopia that is inevitably better than competitors, but as a task that we must constantly work at if we want to avoid becoming one of its competitors. Popper’s open society primary pertains to open-mindedness to novelty, which is a benefit of the new ideas and solutions born again and again. In this course conflicts also occur and play roles: in open society social innovations come from conflict treatments. According to Popper, the twentieth century „civilization has not yet fully recovered from the shock of its birth – the transition from the tribal or ‘closed society’, with its submission to magical forces, to the ‘open society’ which sets free the critical powers of man.”¹³ People face personal choices in open society, whilst closed society is rather like an organism, similarly to a herd or a tribe, in which members are hold together by relational or symbiotic ties.

The social institutions of science (campuses, labs, journals, conferences) feed critical spirits, and Popper thought they served as a model for politics. In Popper’s eyes science means the same as the defence of open society. He developed his own critical rationalism against romantics, mysticism and irrationalism, which can be related to the fascist attack of democracy. The gist of this means public dispute and trust in reasoning. He strongly believed in that if political institutions and debates act in accordance with scientific patterns, open society is going to come off. Democracy creates effective mechanisms for dismissing leaders, solving conflicts, and persuading the opponents. The culture of critical reasoning is an indispensable component of democracy. However, Popper also warns us that the battle to preserve our freedom has always been fought with the weapons of truth and rational argument, and with the simple idea that a contradiction is objectively false regardless of who says or believes that it is true.

For Popper, open society primary means the preservation of freedom. He does not identify open society with democracy, *laissez faire* capitalism, and “political correct” ideal of free speech, as many liberals want to persuade others under these catchwords. Popper contrasted open society with closed society. But he did not identify it with any specific political or economic system.

“Democracy [...] provides the institutional framework for the reform of political institutions. It makes possible the reform of institutions without using violence, and thereby the use of reason in the designing of new institutions and the adjusting of old ones. It cannot provide reason. The question of the intellectual and moral standard of its citizens is to a large degree a personal problem. [...] It is quite wrong to blame democracy for the political shortcomings of a democratic state. We should rather blame ourselves, that is to say, the citizens of the democratic state. In a non-democratic state, the only way to achieve reasonable reforms is by the violent overthrow of the government, and the introduction of a democratic framework. Those who criticize democracy on any “moral” grounds fail to distinguish between personal and institutional problems. It rests with us to improve matters. The democratic institutions cannot improve themselves. The problem of improving them is always a problem for persons rather than for institutions. [...] But if we want improvements, we must make clear which institutions we want to improve. [...] There is another distinction within the

¹² Ibid. pp. 167.

¹³ Ibid. pp. 1.

field of political problems corresponding to that between persons and institutions. It is the one between the problems of the day and the problems of the future.”¹⁴

The institution of democracy is an instrument that does not work if society that runs the system, each citizen does not evaluate properly freedom, tolerance, and in the long run, democracy. It is not enough to establish democratic institutions, for if there are no ones who use them as a democrat, there will remain the appearance of democracy or nothing of that. In Germany democracy arrived too late after WW1. What is more, it was established by the winners, and thus Germans did not consider it as owns, they did not regarded themselves as the active parts of political processes. Weimar democracy hence became only one of several political systems. And, whether or not a similar story occurs in the Third Republic of Hungary where Hungarians increasingly overcame the feeling that “democracy fabricated over their head” and the false illusion of the earlier, Goulash Communism? And when the citizens of Weimar Republic and the Third Republic of Hungary¹⁵ were pressed to back up basic rights and democratic institutions that guarantee them, they decline all this matters, saying that what for?

In his memoir, Werner Heisenberg, the great German physicist, reconstructs the general feeling of Weimar Republic in the terms quoted below, which (as I know from my experience) was also a general feeling of the Third Republic of Hungary:

“You cannot honestly believe that Germany could still be saved with minor reforms, things have been going from bad to worse, [...] and all who showed concern, all who had made efforts or sacrifices, were mocked and derided. [...] And in business life, corruption was rife as never before. [...] the rich grew richer, the poor poorer. [...] Justice has long since been turned into political justice, a means of perpetuating the rotten *status quo*, of protecting the ruling class and letting the rest to go to the hell. Just look at the mild sentences they used to give some of the worst swindlers. [...] And Reichstag deputies sought only to gain the maximum material advantages for their own party. Everyone called everyone else greedy, only to become greedier himself. Meanwhile the general good was conveniently forgotten by one and all. [...] [Young people] find this rigid, bourgeois life quite intolerable; detest a society in which material wealth and status matter above everything else. They want to replace this hollow sham with something richer, more vital. They want to render human relationships more human.”¹⁶

János Kis, a Hungarian political philosopher and a leading liberal politician at that time, gives an account of the Third Republic of Hungary, which (as I know from my historic knowledge) also describes the Weimar Republic:

“There is no a minute in the formation of the Third Republic of Hungary, with which each actor of politics today could identify without qualification. [...] Where the legitimacy of political system is controversial, political competition is not so much for more or less power, but for the nature of power. Political dissents could whenever turn into a final ideological conflict, and ideological conflicts could whenever lead to political struggles, and thus the territory of practical compromises is restricted. [...] The more offensive is the struggle, the more rapid is the moral deterioration of democratic order. [...] But ideological questions are not in focus because there could be political muddlers from philosophers, who want to continue their historic lessons in the Parliament. Ideological debates are generated by the uncertainty of legitimacy.”¹⁷

In both Republic intellectuals often argue that their own country is still not to be mature enough for democracy. But I would ask if when we should consider her to be mature, and whether

¹⁴ Popper (1971), Vol. 1, pp. 126-127.

¹⁵ I fix the term of Weimar Republic from 1919 to 1933 and the term of the Third Republic of Hungary from 1989 to 2011.

¹⁶ Werner Heisenberg: *Physics and Beyond*. Harper & Row, New York, pp. 143-44 and 167.

¹⁷ János Kis: *Az összetorlódott idő* (Politikai írások 1992-2013) [*Jam-Full Time (Political Writings 1992-2013)*]. Kalligram, Bratislava, 2013, pp. 239-248. (Revised quotation).

should not be done something for it? We can believe only limitedly in the spontaneous development of *civic virtue*, because there remains too much room for intolerant opinions and hawks. No one is getting to be democrat if one is taught to be naked to circumstances and his mind and actions are totally determined by ready-made conditions. In Popper's investigations this approach is represented by Hegel, who thought that we are going to be free if we recognize what to do or not to do ("*recognized Necessity*"). But that does not make someone be a democrat, either, if one thinks he can utilize these conditions for anything, wherefore Popper criticized Marx, who falsely thought the trend of the flux of economic and political power culminates in a revolution in the future ("*Proletarian Revolution*"). Someone can bear responsibility only if he knows that it is him that decides how to form reality under current conditions. He knows any system of conditions results in many outcomes, and he must decide which one to choose, which one is considered to be good, useful or appropriate. In democracy blame is not for some people, but for everybody.

The Open Society and its Enemies is not critics on factual political or economic systems, but rather the stressing of free and critical thinking, and hence an implacable destruction of autocratic and populist systems. And as we could read Popper's letter quoted at the beginning of this paper, neither philosophy nor rationality in general is exception. It is not possible anything such as a well-established scientific theory to which experts can turn confidently in making technological, economic or social decision. In Popper's sense, there no exists "final" expert decision. Professional knowledge is inherently based on conjectures, it is probability-like, and thus it is always temporary. So, while there could be people who are competent and have a conception to a problem, which works, but none of these people can be considered as an expert whose words were certainly true, and were authoritative in a question. To repeat once more: for Popper, the objective of open society is "to set free the critical powers of man," to stand up to "the submission to magical forces" made an attempt in closed society.

III. Politically Correct Ideal of Free Speech and Tolerance in an Open Society

All things considered, I think, this is the reason why open society has so little in common with politically correct ideal of free speech. People, under normal circumstances, should be able to say what they feel, and what they think is true without fear of being punished for it. Free speech, in an open society, should be an instrument for discovering error, and not a shield behind which to hide it. It is, however, an unfortunate fact of life that many people regard criticism of their ideas or an argument in which there is a word considered prejudicial as a personal offense. This latter case occurred at a special meeting about Dallas County traffic ticket in 2008, when a white commissioner said it seemed that central collections "has become a black hole" because paperwork reportedly has become lost in the office.¹⁸ And then two black commissioners interrupted him to demand an apology for his racially insensitive analogy. The white commissioner shot back that it was a figure of speech and a science term. We can certainly argue that this was really oversensitivity, but offense is a subjective matter anyway. And if a person thinks he was offended, then he was offended – regardless of whether or not he should be.

Politically correct ideal of free speech is a problem for open society. Whether it is enough to substitute words with negative connotations by words with neutral or positive connotations in public speech, supposing attitude is going to accommodate to them. In fact, by Popper's critical rationalism, here we meet an instant of inconsequence. The logical consequence schema by which we want to get at the attitude desired is essentially the same as a reversed fundamental syllogism called *modus ponens* (MP). Originally, the form of MP is like this: "if A, then B" and since "A" is true, therefore "B" is true (formally: $\{A \supset B; A\} \Rightarrow B$). But, in everyday communication, we often do not apply MP but the reversed form of MP: "if A, then B" and since "B" is true, therefore "A" is true (formally: $\{A \supset B; B\} \Rightarrow A$). But reversed MP is in fact false. To take an example, it is easy to

¹⁸ Internet access: <http://cityhallblog.dallasnews.com/2008/07/dallas-county-meeting-turns-ra.html/> (Downloaded: 19.11.2014.)

illustrate this fact. “*Honest person never sneaks about the house. Mr. X never sneaks, so he is honest.*” – this consequence seems to be acceptable. But if we alter it a little bit, “*Honest person never sneaks about the house. The hitman never sneaks, so he is honest.*”, we can see at once the reason why this consequence is not valid. Open society is not necessarily a polite society. And rudeness cannot be regarded as a crime. That what Popper says about open society, it is extremely true for politically correct ideal of free speech. It is impossible to verify theoretically what is “politically correct.” So, only practical knowledge remains we have, but our experience is mixed. And as arguments and critics in general, the same as for the question of “politically correct” that we should not contend behind the shield of public wrong. But then do not we leave too much space for intolerant opinions and performance?

In Chapter 7 of *The Open Society*, Popper scrutinizes the well-known idea of Plato’s *Republic* that „the wise shall lead and rule, and the ignorant shall follow.”¹⁹ And his final conclusion is that Plato’s political programme eventually propagates the controlling over leadership by autocratic institutional instruments. He deals with three inner contradictions in the notes to this chapter: the paradoxes of democracy, freedom, and tolerance. To refer to the text 562b-565e of *The Republic*, he gives definitions as follows:

“The so-called *paradox of freedom* is the argument that freedom [...] must lead to very great restraint, since it makes the bully free to enslave the meek. [...] *the paradox of tolerance*: unlimited tolerance must lead to the disappearance of tolerance. If we extend unlimited tolerance even to those who are intolerant, if we are not prepared to defend a tolerant society against the onslaught of the intolerant, then the tolerant will be destroyed, and tolerance with them. [...] *the paradox of democracy*, or more precisely, of majority-rule; i.e. the possibility that the majority may decide that a tyrant should rule.”²⁰

These are three related questions from different angles, which can be described, in John Rawls’s words, as the problem that „the basic liberties can be restricted only for the sake of liberty.”²¹ But is it not problematic to put restrictions into open society? Does not imply Popper’s critical rationalism that we should tolerate those who do not agree with us even if this is about great issues such as freedom, democracy, and tolerance?

Before presenting Popper’s reply, take two famous, alternative conceptions to this challenge. The first is the repressive tolerance by Herbert Marcuse.²² According to him, regimes of power always tolerate all the ideas, attitudes and movements, which leave its foundations and legitimacy intact, and they do not argue them. It struggles, however, against those who argues its foundations of existence or urges the opportunity of changes. Thus, in democracy, a thesis can be proposed that there is no democracy for the enemies of democracy. For this reason, tolerance proves to be “the instrument of oppression” even in a liberal democracy. And whether liberals do not prove Marcuse’s repressive tolerance by demanding obedience not only from their followers but also their opponents? And they require that opponents’ critics accommodate to their own language and reasoning.

Rawls, perhaps in part reflecting to Marcuse’s critics, propagates to tolerate intolerance attitude in his book *The Theory of Justice*, but he assigns a duty to state in the spirit of justice.²³ He divides the original problem into three questions, and he presents them in the relation of tolerant and intolerant sects: 1) whether an intolerant sect has any title to complain, if it is not tolerated? 2) Under what conditions tolerant sects have a right not to tolerate those which are intolerant? 3) When they have the right not to tolerate them, and for what ends it should be exercised? It is already difficult to answer the first question because, according to Rawls, anybody has the title to complain,

¹⁹ Popper (1971), Vol. 1, pp. 120.

²⁰ Ibid. pp. 265.

²¹ John Rawls: *The Theory of Justice*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1999, pp. 266.

²² Herbert Marcuse: *Repressive Tolerance*. In: Robert P. Wolff–Barrington Moore, Jr.–Herbert Marcuse: *A Critique of Pure Tolerance*. Beacon Press, Boston, 1969, pp. 95-137.

²³ Rawls (1999), pp. 190-194.

and we cannot ignore even intolerants to do this. And in fact, if constitution is strong, we have no reason to refuse the freedom of intolerants. If state bans the sec of intolerants, it would be injustice, because it would violate equal rights. However, tolerates have rights to take actions against intolerance, “when they sincerely and with reason believe that intolerance is necessary for their own security. [...] Justice does not require that men must stand idly by while others destroy the basis of their existence.”²⁴ Rawls’s reply to this third question is very similar to that of Popper, but Rawls is more permissive than Popper as a result of the difference between their conceptions of tolerance.

In the spirit of justice, autocratic discrimination could be a very reason to take actions against intolerant sec. If a person, e.g. the notorious Nebraskan neo-Nazi, Gary Lauck, cannot bear a people of certain origin in his fellowship, we must tolerate it. If Lauck encourages the political leaders of Nebraska or the US to make a law against immigrants, we must again tolerate it, supposing the commissioner is not the notorious neo-Nazi himself. Here there are the borderlines of tolerance in Rawls’s conception. The same Lauck, who has a title to present his intolerant opinions by the right of free speech, has no title to register a business company that is willing to accomplish his views, or he has no title to accredit a college that is ready to educate his ideas. It is the state (Nebraska or the Federal State) that would commit an autocratic discrimination, which undermines the ideal of justice. But emphasize the fact that in the presented cases discrimination is committed by the state (either Nebraska or the Federal State) and not by Lauck. That is the reason why state must stand up to the initiatives of Lauck to stave off the offense of civic rights entitled to anyone.

As for Popper, his approach of tolerance is somewhere between Marcuse and Rawls. From Popper’s perspective, rationality is an attitude that accepts critics. You cannot choose rationality in a rational manner, for accepting certain argues and evidence, we have a rationalist attitude beforehand. To choose rationality is therefore a moral choice, and the precondition of rationalist attitude is to admit that

“I may be wrong and you may be right, and by an effort, we may get nearer to the truth. It is an attitude which does not lightly give up hope that[...] even where people demands and their interest clash, it is often possible to argue about the various demands and proposals, and to reach – perhaps by arbitration – a compromise which, because of its equality, is acceptable to most, if not to all. In short, rationalist attitude, or, as I may perhaps label it, the ‘attitude of reasonableness’ is very similar to [...] the belief that in search for truth we need cooperation, and that, with help of argument, we can in time attain something like objectivity.”²⁵

Some decades later Rawls speaks about similar preconditions in *The Theory of Justice*, and he reaches a concept of social contract. Both Popper and Rawls strongly believe in rational attitude and in that to choose rationality means a moral choice, too; this is an ethics that enables the opportunity of critics and interpersonality. Historicists such as Plato, Hegel or Marx are all collectivists. “As opposed to this, the position presented here does not assume the existence of collectives [...] in speaking of a ‘social’ theory of reason (or of scientific method), I mean more precisely that the theory is an interpersonal one, and never that is a collectivist theory.”²⁶ This ethics requires tolerating other people and refusing violence. This ethics refuse autocratic attitude.

“The position here adopted is very different from the popular, originally Platonic, view of reason as a kind of ‘faculty’ [...] admittedly, intellectual gifts may be different, and they may contribute to reasonableness; but they need not. Clever men may be very unreasonable; they may cling to their prejudices and may not expect to hear anything worthwhile from others. [...] authoritarianism and rationalism in our sense cannot be reconciled, since argument, which includes criticism, and the art of listening to criticism is the basis of reasonableness.”²⁷

²⁴ Rawls (1999), pp. 191-192.

²⁵ Popper (1971), Vol. 2, pp. 225.

²⁶ Popper (1971), Vol. 2, pp. 226.

²⁷ Ibid. pp. 226.

Popper emphasizes the attitude of reasonableness. And the presumption of this behaviour is cooperation, that to practice and to endure critics. This is the gist of Popperian tolerance we should keep up against those who break the rules.

”You cannot have a rational discussion with a man who prefers shooting you to being convinced by you. In other words, there are limits to the attitude of reasonableness. It is the same with tolerance. You must not, without qualification, accept the principle of tolerating all those who are intolerant; if you do, you will destroy not only yourself, but also the attitude of tolerance.”²⁸

Rational attitude is always ready to cooperate, always ready to learn from errors and mistakes, but expects the other person to do the same. That is to say, rational people must resist hostile behaviour and unfairness. Popper never lets Lauck propagate his opinions, because it would undermine the ideal of rational attitude and open society.

IV. Concluding Remarks

Popper was a coherent philosopher, and there was a crystal-clear line of his intellectual development. Several fundamental ideas are from his mind, and we may consider him as one of the most influential thinkers in the twentieth century, both from the viewpoint of the Philosophy of Science and the viewpoint of Political Philosophy. Popper’s critical rationalism, the conception of rational attitude is based on two traditions. One of them is logic and scientific method, the other is a humanistic, moral tradition. In the spirits of Hobbes and Spinoza, Popper invites us to make a deal. It is the person that decides whether to choose a rational or another attitude. The instinctive and passionate person is tempting us, which is able to dominate our personality in the minutes of social crisis. And these moments of history can push society into totalitarianism. To hold in check ourselves and the society we live in, it is worth choosing our rational attitude, and keeping up an open society that bears all marks of humanism in choices and actions.

²⁸ Karl Popper: *Utopia and Violence*. In: *Conjectures and Refutations*. Routledge, London, 1962, 357.o.