

Locality of Reason. Social, Cultural and Anthropological Contexts of Rationality

In contemporary social philosophy the tendency to marginalize or to fully abandon the notion of reason is very strong. The fundamental critique of the concept of reason, in its different forms, creates an intellectual environment that may be considered at least skeptical, if not hostile to any attempt of reviving such a concept. This is why today we face the situation in which, on one hand, the notion of rationality plays the crucial role in such domains as choice theory (and, more generally, economy), analytical theory of action or cybernetics, but on the other hand it seems to be marginalized or fully abandoned in the critical reflection upon the society and its processes. We could dramatize this situation a bit by saying that we face an *alternative of rationality* (of the mentioned domains) *in its instrumental form* (rationality in the basic sense of choosing and implementing the best means to achieve given ends) *and acclaimed irrationality of social theory*. Such a situation seems to pose a great *threat to the very function of social philosophy* which seems to consist in *understanding the sense* of social interactions, practices and institutions. If social philosophy will not be able to fulfil this task then it could eventually be fully replaced by concepts which understand society as a conglomerate of instances and powers which have to be organized and managed in the most efficient way. Still, as John Rawls famously remarks in his *Theory of justice*, there is a great and fundamental difference between understanding society as system that has to be managed in the most efficient way (which also means: in which the social capital – human capacities, talents and achievements – have to be allocated in a most profitable manner) and understanding society as a system of cooperation which has to be ruled by the principles accepted by the subjects themselves and considered by them to be just.

The authors of the project 'Locality of Reason' (further called LOR) consider it to be one of the main tasks of philosophy to analyze and interpret the notion of reason. The authors believe that the notion of reason, with its intrinsic value of universality, plays crucial role in guaranteeing a solid ground for human communication, for interaction and for mutual understanding between different cultures and traditions, as well as for formulating general rules and values which include human beings in practices and institutions of the modern world. Still, the exponents of LOR understand the defense of the notion of reason not as a simple revival of the classical concept of reason with implicit decline of diverse forms of criticisms formulated against it. They see it rather as a set of different strategies aimed at *re-construction* of reason, which is itself considered by them to be its own *construction*. This concept of the 'construction of reason' (O. O'Neill) is marked by the notion of its 'locality'. Our main *research hypothesis* is that the self-construction of reason does not take place in some theoretical vacuum, but is always rooted in social, cultural, historical, anthropological and ethnological contexts. The LOR *tries to reconcile the universalistic notion of reason with its local background*. It is important to notice that we understand the 'locality' of reason not only as its rootedness in different geographical contexts, but also as its anchorage in psychological, economic, social, historical, anthropological and cultural dimensions of human activity.

In order to answer our hypothesis, the LOR-team shall explore four aspects of the concept of reason: 1) the genealogy of the concept of reason; 2) the process of construction of the concept of reason; 3) the forms and functions of the concept of reason; 4) the impact of the concept of reason on social, cultural and political arrangements of the XXI century.

Our original contribution consists in proposing a *constructivist and pluralist view of there being many forms of reason which are also always rooted in various historical, geographical and cultural contexts* but which always, in the very process of their construction, *transcend the limits of a given form of life* in search for general principles. The concept of the locality of reason, or, more precisely, the locality of different forms of reason, is not simply a way to give reason a kind of 'backstage entrance' to the scene of contemporary public debate. We rather concern our enterprise to be a *theory of historical development of reason which seems to us to be a necessary ground for reflection about the society*, its interaction forms, practices and institutions.