

# NATALITY AND COMMUNITY: OVERCOMING DEATHCENTEREDNESS OF THE CLASSICAL METAPHYSICAL THINKING

Tatiana Shchytsova\*

## Abstract

The paper is dedicated to the clarification of the very sense of the transition from the deathcentered thinking to the birthcentered one. The author argues that shifting from death and mortality to birth and natality as a fundamental motivation of philosophical reflection is the principal feature of the paradigmatic transition from the philosophy of the solipsistic subject to that of being-with-one-another. Historically the paper is based on two intellectual dispositions: Diotima-and-Socrates and Heidegger-and-Arendt. Analyzing them the author tries, first, to clarify contributions of Diotima and Arendt to the *natal turn* of the philosophical thinking and, second, to provide a conceptualization of birth which could prove the overturning potential of this phenomenon in regard to the classical metaphysical tradition.

**Keywords:** birth, death, mortality, natality, interpersonal community (being-with-one-another), subject, response, historical incarnation.

The European philosophy develops so to say in the shadow of death beginning from Platonian definition of philosophy as a «learning to die». In Christianity as well as in Platonian metaphysics, the relationship between man and the absolute is mediated by the man's relation to his own death. The *true* relation presupposes the transcendence over the worldly order. It is the way how man's participation in the *ordo aeternitatis* is certified. The metaphysical perspective of the finite human being is grounded, thus, on the experience of the radical individualization, which enables that the soul finds oneself isolated and, through such self-isolation reaches the clear relationship to the eternal truth. Thus, beginning from Plato's *Phaedon*, the intimate relation of the subject to death gets a fast fixation. It is the relation which determines the very profile of the European philosophy in so far as this relation provides the subject with a principle of autonomy.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century the essential relation of the subject to death has been once again conceptualized in a new manner by Martin Heidegger. According to his approach, the being of Dasein presupposes the ontological priority of self-isolation (Vereinzelung, Unbezüglichkeit)

---

\* Tatiana Shchytsova – Prof. of Philosophy at the European Humanities University (Vilnius); t\_shchytsova@mail.ru.

just as the Platonic dialogue of the soul with itself or the dialogue with God in the Christian prayer does it. Self-isolation achieved by the authentic relation to death – *Vorlaufen zum Tode* – is essentially connected with a disclosure of the ultimate truth of Da-sein. That is why the question of self-fulfillment of human existence is totally subordinated in Heidegger's fundamental ontology to this death-centered point of view which conditions the solipsistic (mono-logical) profile of the whole analytic of Dasein.

The title of the paper has certainly some evocative implication which means that, instead of the classical *memento mori*, concentration on birth must become a leading clue for the post-classical thinking. What I'll try to do in my paper in this concern is to explore the very sense of the transition from the death-centered to the birth-centered thinking. The question is: could birth (the very fact of having been born) become a «regulative fact» for philosophical thinking comparable with the regulative meaning mortality used to have for the classical metaphysical tradition? I argue that shifting from death and mortality to birth and natality as a fundamental motivation of philosophical reflection is the principal feature of the paradigmatic transition from the philosophy of the solipsistic subject to that of being-with-one-another. It is remarkable that in the European philosophic tradition – from Plato till Heidegger – there were two systematic attempts to introduce the birth-centered thinking and both of them belong to women.<sup>2</sup> I mean Socrates' counterpart Diotima and Heidegger's one Arendt. Analyzing these intellectual dispositions (Diotima and Socrates, Heidegger and Arendt), I try in the first two parts of this paper to clarify, correspondingly, contributions of Diotima and Arendt to the *natal turn* of the post-classical philosophy. The third part is an attempt to provide a philosophical conceptualization of birth which could prove that the question of birth stays at the very core of the overturning of the classical metaphysical tradition.

### Diotima and Socrates

It is worthy of our attention, that after the cosmologic-naturalistic thinking of the pre-Socratic period one can find at the very beginning of the next, Socratic-Platonic, period two *equally original* points of view in respect to metaphysical evaluation of birth and death in human life. Each of these two positions – namely one of Diotima and one of Socrates – presupposes its own distinctive *subordination* between birth and death that allows calling them, correspondingly, the philosophy of birth and the one of death. For the purposes of this paper it would be enough to concentrate in this concern on two Platonic dialogues: *Phaedon* and *Symposium* which let us realize the conceptual divergence between two approaches as well as re-actualize the question of relation between them. Because it was the approach of Socrates (Plato) that became dominating and determined the whole further development of the European philosophical tradition, we have to start with its short description as a *terminus a quo* in order the innovative and alternative character of Diotima's approach could show itself as clear as possible.

The classical metaphysical evaluation of birth and death is realized *sub specie aeternitatis* and can be summarized in two following positions: (1) Death is a kind of an agent of eternity this side of the sphere of ideas as an ontological region of the Truth. The work of death consists in the definitive separation of immortal soul from mortal body. The ultimate *positive* metaphysical role of death lies just in this freeing separation. As long as man, during his finite life, practices such separation (i. e. *dying*) he proves his *participation* in the eternal truth. Philosophizing – as the learning to die – turns to be the most truthful (authentic) way of being of man. (2) In frame of the metaphysical dualism, birth is not only a fact that does not have any positive meaning for the human possibility to participate in the *ordo aeternitatis*, but appears from the very beginning as an ultimate antagonist of such participation. According to the theory of anamnesis, philosophizing must be understood first of all as neutralizing the negative consequences of birth. *Sub specie aeternitatis* consists in the work of birth (of having been born) in the *total* loss (forgetting) of the true knowledge. In this concern, anamnesis is carried out *contra-factual* in respect of birth.

Diotima, like Socrates, is interested in the experience of immortality, in the very access of finite human being to the dimension of eternity. But while as per Socrates it is death that receives a leading metaphysical meaning in this concern, Diotima develops the thought about the leading metaphysical meaning of birth. This reversal becomes possible thanks to the remarkable changing of the initial point of view of philosophical thinking. Without any direct refuting the Platonian ontological order which is built *sub specie aeternitatis*, Diotima nevertheless carries on her meditations so to say *sub specie temporis* and does it in some *positive* sense. This new position of philosophical reflection is worth of clarification. It is true that eternity (the eternal being of the world of ideas) remains a substantial premise for Diotima's new metaphysical project. But, in contrast to Socrates who thinks over the human, worldly, experience of immortality only in the *negative* way – as the learning-to-die – she seeks to show a *positive* finite experience of immortality. One could say: Diotima is not in hurry to finish her human life. Instead of the praising of death and dying she appears in the interests of finite human being while she is projecting a concrete metaphysical teleology for the worldly life.

As a substantiation of this new positive dimension of finite infinity (immortality) Diotima develops the unique teaching about *Eros*. Diotima's figure of *Eros* incarnates the mentioned dimension as such and is not subordinated to the dualistic logic of Platonism. According to Diotima, *Eros* is neither mortal nor immortal. He is a genius in that sense that he mediates and binds both ontological dimensions – the mortal and the immortal. The decisive question is by the way: *how this particular erotic activity realizes itself in the phenomenal world?* How does it show itself? According to Diotima, it is the act of the giving birth (to somebody or something) where the ambivalent bond of the mortal and immortal makes itself manifest. The bearing, she says, is that part of immortality and eternity which is allotted to the mortal being.<sup>3</sup>

In the methodical sense the innovative turning-point of Diotima consists in the remarkable turning away from the transcendental telos of pure eternity and in the concentration on the metaphysical experience which is commensurate with the structural and phenomenal conditions of the finite world, i. e. which is *world-loving*. Thus, an «erotic revolution», which establishes a new kind of subordination in the middle of the world, takes place. The leading metaphysical meaning is assigned to birth which constitutes this side of eternity, the highest metaphysical telos for the finite life. The learning-to-die as the pure negativistic (world-hostile) striving for death is subordinated to the new, natal, telos, i. e. to the striving for the giving birth. The philosophical way of being as the ultimate certification of the relation of human being to eternity is ruled by Eros. His world-friendly character is pointed out by Diotima, while she is stressing that love is not at all the striving for the beautiful (wisdom) but the striving for the *bearing* in the beautiful.<sup>4</sup> The giving birth is a *finite* mode, a form, of participation in the eternal. Human being as the metaphysical being (as philosopher) has to *bring into the world* something which takes part in the beautiful.

Philosophy appears as an engendering activity par excellence which is founded on the quasi-transcendental figure of Eros. The above mentioned turning-point in the intellectual orientation of Diotima leads to the principal revision of the metaphysical disparagement of the horizontal inter-personal relations. According to her reflections, a structural dimension of the erotic activity is essentially inter-subjective (dialogical). The being-with, or relatedness, which is characteristic for the finite (worldly) human being, conditions fruitfulness of Eros. The striving for the bearing can take place and be effective only in the space (or to use the German word *im Spielraum* – in the play-space) of a certain *dual* – dialogical or sexual – relationship (what is conceived very well in the English word *intercourse*). Eros would not be a genie at all if a constitutive plurality and diversity of finite beings would be a hindrance for him. On the contrary, the world as a realm of differences is that where Eros can display himself. It is his realm, his play-space in the genuine sense. According to this Diotima develops parallel with the classical Platonian interpretation of the dialogical relationship between a philosopher and a beautiful youth, her own interpretation which sounds to some extent heretical in frame of the “official” ontological paradigm.

She does not negate directly the metaphysical priority of the vertical ascent from the sensual beauty to the ideal one. Yet she works out a positive metaphysical meaning of the horizontal interpersonal relations which presupposes irreducibility of those relations to the monologizing hierarchy. Diotima does not teach about the way to the monological participation in the eternal truth. On this way there appears the young Other as an unavoidable means. The way aims at the complete world transcendence and is followed in this sense under the badge of death. Diotima's teaching is developed, on the contrary, from the world perspective, or *sub specie temporis*. As it was said, she seeks to describe the positive finite experience of infinity (immortality). It encourages her to speak about the

infinite in termini of finitude. The intellectual givenness of the idea is not only interpreted as a birth, but considered further in the aspect of the becoming. The philosopher, says Diotima, brings up his child<sup>5</sup>. Here the matter concerns a *genesis* of the idea in the world. And it is this quasi-historical process of the idea-bearing and idea-upbringing which constitutes the positive finite experience of infinity and is the work of Eros. The whole process is considered for all this inter-subjective par excellence. Diotima stresses: the philosopher brings up his 'intelligible' child in cooperation with his friend<sup>6</sup>. She explains intimate relations between both men on the base of the mentioned quasi-historical experience. Indeed, she talks about the children connecting these two men.<sup>7</sup>

The irreducibility of the intersubjective dimension is grounded upon the paradigmatic meaning which the engendering intersexual relationship of man and woman has for the metaphysical experience described above. Pregnancy, maetics, bearing are, according to Diotima, processes which take place parallel both on the physical level and on the spiritual one. These levels are essentially analogical in respect to the basic intersubjective (dual) structure which is a structural condition for the (worldly) fruitfulness, i. e. for the finite experience of infinity. The general thesis of Diotima is that the genuine metaphysical experience is something which one has in his relation to the Other. The relation is understood neither in the negativistic manner – as the freeing himself from distraction in being-with-one-another – nor in the instrumentalistic one – as a provisional use of the Other on the individual way upward to the eternal truth. Contrary to this Diotima interprets the relation to the Other in the *generative* manner – as the co-participation in the birth of something New.

It is true, that when Diotima evaluates the spiritual child-bearing higher as the physical one<sup>8</sup> she falls into the contradiction with herself insofar namely as the latter plays a paradigmatic role for the former. This contradiction is caused by the Platonian dualistic ontology which remains a fettering frame of her thinking – first of all, in such a decisive aspect as a hypostizing of the substantial eternity beyond the world of finite beings. Any actualizing interpretation of Diotima's teaching should be, then, a radicalizing one in putting the task to revise her core question about the worldly experience of infinity on the ground of the finite human existence which does not have any substantial support (a guarantee of eternity) in the Beyond. There are undeniably solid preconditions for such revision. Development of secular historical consciousness, overcoming the monological paradigm of the classical philosophy, long process of demythologizing, critics of phallus-centrism of the European philosophical tradition – all these trends result in a new intellectual constellation for which Diotima's project of the philosophy of birth – just as the 'worldly' metaphysics of being-with-one-another – seems to be of a paradigmatic meaning.

### Heidegger and Arendt

Heidegger was, undoubtedly, not only one of the most consequent thinkers, who, like Diotima, tried to explain human being *sub specie tem-*

*poris*, but also one of the most radical ones who denied any metaphysical positing of the beyond-world and insisted that human life must be understood on its own ground.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, from the formal point of view, he repeats the classical (from Socrates till Hegel) deathcentered intellectual position while founding the subject's sovereignty (*his* metaphysical status) on the sovereignty of death. The concept of being-unto-death constitutes the very core of the analytic of Dasein which is determined by Heidegger as the metaphysics of finitude. That is why Arendt's famous words, that mortality was the fact which inflamed the West-European metaphysical philosophical thinking beginning from Plato<sup>10</sup>, introduce, actually, a new principle of systematization of history of philosophy according to which the last one is divided into the death-period (from Plato till Heidegger) and the birth-one programmatically declared in her book. What we are dealing here with is certainly not just a 'modernized' repetition of the intellectual disposition Socrates – Diotima described above. I shall show that if it would be hardly possible to imagine Heidegger telling the teaching of Arendt it is not because he could not accept her criticism against his deathcenteredness, but because she ignores his own interpretation of birth which contributes very much to the overturning of the classical metaphysical thinking, and first of all, of such its essential feature as the dualistic differentiation of the first, physical, birth and the second, spiritual, one.

Heidegger's existential-phenomenological concept of *facticity*, which is rooted in the very fact of having been born and implies a constitutive rootedness of human being (Self) in a concrete social-historical context of the surrounding world, is an appropriate base for any attempt to reactualize the natal project of Diotima. In this respect, Heidegger's analytic of Dasein is an important preparation of a future 'natal revolution' even if it must be acknowledged that his transcendental-egological<sup>11</sup> approach excludes such a conceptual innovation. This ambivalency of Heidegger's position conditions, of course, a reducing character of his existential interpretation of birth. Because the very question of the essential connection between existentiality (projecting) and facticity (thrownness) is formulated and clarified under conditions of the methodical privilege of death, the concrete phenomenal content of what is called by Heidegger natality (*Gebürtigkeit*) is negativistic only. The pure formula in this concern is *Dasein exists in the natal way* (*gebürtig*). As applied to the authentic mode of being the formula means nothing else as an autonomous (*sebst-ständig*) repetition of my own facticity (social-historical conditionedness) in a new self-project (*Selbst-entwurf*). This repetition is, according to Heidegger, a basic phenomenon of the authentic historicity of human being and is interpreted by him as a retort (*Erwiderung*) in respect to those human beings (older generations) who had been 'there' (*da*) earlier. The retort is understood, thus, as a recall (*Widerruf*) of what is effective nowadays as the Past. Therefore the connection between existentiality and facticity can be determined as *contra-facticity*, where one can, certainly, catch a remote echo of the contra-factual, *contra-natal*, character of Platonian anamnesis.



Arendt's attempt to discredit deathcenteredness of Heidegger's thinking seems to be as resolute as futile. Resolute, when she, in some emphatic manner, proclaims that people have been born not in order to die, but in order to begin something new<sup>12</sup> or when she puts forward, *instead of* mortality, *natality* as a constitutive (in the German version: Kategorienbildendes) fact for the philosophy of being-with-one-another<sup>13</sup>. One can still catch here a clear echo of Diotima's pathos: as long as we are beings-in-the-world we cannot be possessed by the exercising dying but have to bring something new into the world. Futile, because it was not taken into consideration that Heidegger's existential-atheistic rethinking of the exercising dying breaks through any vulgar (positivistic) metaphysic of the Beyond and because, as I shall show further, the very way of replacement (of mortality by natality) turns to be a remarkable castling which let birth come forward *in the interest of death*.

In order to substantiate the last statement I would like to point out, first of all, that Arendt's conception of natality is in no way opposite – or alternative – to Heidegger's existential analytic. The authentic way of being means, according to him, that subject (Dasein) takes on himself his facticity in order to *renew* it in his new project (self-projecting). In other words, he grounds the factual renewal of history in the factual renewal (re-birth) of singularized self.<sup>14</sup> He explicates the constitutive ability of human being to create the historical world as such – in opposition to the natural world. It is exactly this thesis which has a programmatic character for Arendt. The only difference, which remains in this respect between Heidegger and Arendt, can be fully explained in termini of his teaching, namely as that between the ontological and ontical levels of analysis. While Heidegger clarifies the existential-ontological conditions of possibility of the renewal as a distinctive feature of the human/historical world, Arendt concentrates on concrete actions as *initiatives* in being-with-one-another. She does not ask about the way of constitution of the subject (person) as an ontological capability to initiate something<sup>15</sup> as well as about criterions of newness as such (does, in fact, every (political) action bring something new into the world?). One could probably even say: she does not need it because the answers to these questions can be found in Heidegger's interpretation of the authentic being-unto-death as the ultimate ground of the true existential-historical renewal and initiativeness. But we have to suspend for a time the assumption that Arendt's analysis is based on Heidegger's one just because she pretends to break through his deathcenteredness by focusing on the conception of natality. The question is: does indeed – and to what extent – this conception lead to a kind of natal revolution (the changing of paradigms<sup>16</sup>), i. e. to the establishing of a new kind of subordination between death and birth in our reflections on principles of being-with-one-another?

Let me try to clarify this question by giving a short commentary upon the following quotations from *Vita activa*.

«Since every person, because of her natality, is an initiium, a beginning and newcomer in the world, people can take an initiative, become initiators and promote something new».<sup>17</sup>

«Man is born and together with him a new beginning which he can, in acting, realize by virtue of his natality».<sup>18</sup>

«The new beginning, which comes into the world with every birth, can only make itself meaningful in the world because the new-born has to realize his ability self-dependent to initiate something, i. e. to act».<sup>19</sup>

The notion of natality has, first of all, a purpose to connect the pure fact of having been born with the human ability to initiate ('to give birth' to) something *beyond* the natural order of things. Natality is, thus, a new concept of *transcendence* which is aimed at articulation of specificity of human being as being-in-the-world. Through such conceptualization, birth, as a natural occurrence, gets an additional ('meta') dimension which opens a possibility to comprehend birth as a strictly *human* phenomenon, inasmuch, namely, as person's ability for an initiating action is based on birth. All this is summarized by Arendt in the definition of natality as the ontological precondition of the very possibility of action (i.e. of the taking an initiative). The whole Arendt's attempt of a philosophical rehabilitation of birth seems to be, on my opinion, problematic so far as the only referent of this «precondition of possibility» is a person as a *subject* – an ultimate *origin* – of an initiative. A certain humanistic pathos, which is implied in the consideration of every *born* person as an *a priori* source of creative renewal in the world, turns to be connected with the methodological individualism of her interpretation and, finally, with the atomistic vision of community. Following Arendt's reflections on natality, we cannot avoid the question of a form of the political life which is supposed to be based on the co-existence of independent subjects of initiatives. Indeed, according to Arendt, it is natality in the light of which the person appears as a totality, namely the *natal totality*, whose uniqueness is considered just given with (from) the fact of birth.<sup>20</sup> Based on such natal totalities, community of singular beings reveals itself as the atomistic one. Philosophical implications of this vision are well known. One has either to apply for some «third», higher, harmonizing force or to work out mechanisms of 'building bridges' (achieving concurrence) between different origins of initiativeness. Combination is also possible.

It follows that birth fulfills in Arendt's theory actually the same function as death does in Heidegger's. Birth coincides with death in that decisive regard that person gets a status of the autonomous subject of initiatives through the intimate, *monopolistic*, attitude to her own birth. That is birth, as death by Heidegger, is considered by Arendt *unrelated* (unbezüglich) and, owing to such consideration, becomes an ultimate principle of individualization. She proposes such a treatment of birth which deprives it of any hint of facticity, conditionedness, relatedness. Natality receives its categorical (ontological) meaning at the cost of what constitutes the essential difference of birth from death, i. e. at the cost of the relational character of birth. As far as the philosophical interpretation of



birth has to clarify the meaning and implications of this relatedness both for individual existence and for being-with-one-another. Heidegger's conceptualization of birth is a very important step in this concern because he shows that thrownness entails a *not-being self-grounding*, whereas Arendt's conception of natality is, rather, a step behind because she abstracts the fact of birth from its constitutive relatedness. Doing so, Arendt, indeed, simply replaces death by birth for the sake of the same conceptual function. As it were birth is a representative of death. In other words, the authentic being-into-death described by Heidegger remains the hidden ground of her conception of natality which is, thus, still subordinated to the methodological privilege of death. The philosophy of the subject, whose autonomy (*Selbst-ständigkeit*) is supported by the isolation provided by the relation of the individual to his own death, remains a fettering frame of her thinking.

### The birth constellation

Differences between the philosophical thematisation of birth in Diotima and Arendt as well as corresponding limitedness of their interpretations demand to clarify what kind of conceptualization of birth could, indeed, prove its methodological privilege for the post-classical thought concerned, in various aspects, with constitutive principles of being-with and being-together. What we need for this purpose is a sort of basic birth constellation, i.e. explication, in some systematic manner, the initial disposition which is constituted by birth and bearing in the human world. Diotima and Arendt broach and work out various aspects of such a natal constellation which can be, thus, to a considerable extent reconstructed on the base of their interpretations. *Person is born and, in being with the other(s), can give birth to somebody/something else.* This is the first, very formal and certainly not full description of the birth constellation as it can be explicated from joint meditations of Diotima and Arendt who tried to put the European thought on the *contra-mortal* way of thinking, i.e. on the way where authenticity of human being (its 'metaphysical happiness') should not be any more the question of the *solitary* (ergo world-hostile, others-hostile) relation of the individual to some ultimate trans-worldly truth, but should be that of the relation to the Other(s), of a *participation* in a concrete being-with-one-another *as* being-in-the-world.

However, as we have seen, their attempts turned to be just contradictory heresies in the frame of the corresponding predominant systems of thinking – the hierarchic (dualistic) ontology, on the one hand and the philosophy of the independent Subject, on the other. It is this subordination that caused, in each case, not only fragmentariness in the elucidation of the birth constellation but also a particular distortion in its conceptualization. It is to emphasize in this concern that two general points of view in the thematisation of birth presented correspondingly by Diotima and Arendt – that of *the bearing the Other* and that of *my own birth* – must supplement each other. In the similar way, while a decisive distortion in Diotima's interpretation – depreciation of the physical bearing in the light

of the eternal truth postulated beyond the world of finite beings – can be unmasked just on the base of the *secular* position shared (with Heidegger) by Arendt, a crucial distortion in Arendt's treatment of birth – its deprivation of the relational character – can be exposed in the light of the consequent *intersubjective* approach of Diotima. Mutual supplementation and mutual correction of their two approaches, two attempts to build the philosophy of being-with-one-another proceeding from the fact of birth, must help us to explicate an *overturning* potential of birth so far as the overcoming of deathcenteredness of the classical metaphysical thinking proves to be the overturning of the metaphysical tradition as such.

The overturning potential of birth is rooted undoubtedly in its irreducible relatedness. Birth, taken as my own birth, is such an occurrence which *decenters* me as a subject (even as a transcendental subject, as Heidegger showed it in the conception of thrownness). In the historical (diachronistic) perspective I am related by the fact of birth to the concrete social-cultural preconditions of my individual life. In the interpersonal (synchronistic) one – to the couple whose intercourse resulted in my birth and, first of all, to the woman who born me. This double relatedness, which implies fundamental involvement in being-with-the-others and constitutive dependence on such involvement, is fixated grammatically in the passive form *he was born* – in contrast to the active one *he is dying, he died*. It is true that death – even in the case of suicide – happens *to* me. It is the absolute transcendence which *takes* my life and puts thereby an end to

my self-projecting activity (Levinas). In the face of the coming death an individual is totally passive, no less than in the face of the fact of having been born. If, nevertheless, philosophical reflection made the relation to death to the principal ground of the individual's autonomy, it is because there is not any 'objective' mediation between me and the occurrence of 'my' death. It is death itself which takes my life, whereas my birth is given to me through/by the other(s). So far as the concept of the Subject is associated first of all with an autonomous activity (ontological, epistemological, moral), such activity proceeds from the «point of sovereignty» which is revealed through the intimate – unmediated – relation to death and has a *power potential* whose 'omni-potency' is just a reverse side of the absolute powerlessness in the face of the death.

So, *he is dying/he died* is nothing else as grammatical fixation of the ontology of the Subject who is active due his intimate relation to death. What is fixated there, is not, thus, «the order of things», but just a certain *interpretation* representing the interests of the concrete intellectual position. It is not difficult to see that the essential feature of this position should be the striving for some *ahistorical a priori*.

Is not it, on the contrary, the principal feature of the so called post-metaphysical thinking (marked by a number of constitutive "turns": such as linguistic turn, hermeneutic turn, communicative turn) to locate the question of truth in the context of concrete, historically conditioned, 'horizontal' interconnections, interactions, interrelationships? Does not the regulative principle of contemporary philosophy – that of the «incarnation of the transcendental Subject» – correspond to the methodological posi-

tion of the 'natal thinking' which (already in Diotima) combines secularism (the world-loving) and the intersubjective approach and deals as such with embodiment and relatedness, i.e. with what is constitutive and meaningful *in concreto* for persons who are involved in the open process of their being-with-one-another? Does not, indeed, the word «incarnation» in the mentioned motto imply that philosophy turns to the *objective* truths which are historically (social-cultural) conditioned, i. e. related to the concrete participation of the embodied subjects in a certain interpersonal community (its interactions, communications etc.)? If so, it would mean actually that post-metaphysical philosophical reflection is carried out *in the light of the fact of birth* so far namely as it is the very fact of having been born that conditions facticity – *the factual apriori* – of the individual life. In some sense, contemporary thinking just lets the transcendental Subject to be born. It becomes curious about the *historical apriori* and the way of subject's participation in its *historical* changing – i. e. about all that comes into force by virtue of the fact of birth and presupposes, on account of the same fact, the decentration of the Subject as a self-grounding monarch in the reign of the eternal (ahistorical) truth. I have shown, to what extent such dethronement implies the overturning of deathcenteredness of the classical intellectual position. The decentration of subject is, thus, the decisive expression of the natal turn of the post-classical thought.

The antisubjectivistic approach, cultivated in the scope of the natal turn, had to clarify a new principle of individualization which, contrary to being-unto-death, should have at the same time a positive constitutive meaning for being-with-one-another. Clarification of such principle is possible only from the perspective of the irreducible involvement of person into the concrete life of the interpersonal community. According to this point of view, which has been, in very different ways, worked out by such influential contemporary thinkers as, for example, Bakhtin, Merleau-Ponty, Levinas, Waldenfels, Habermas and many others, it is not enough to say that the person participates in a plural community. It is important to take into consideration that person's participation (acting, in Arendt's terminology) has «always already» the character of *responding* related to the other(s) and to the whole situation all of them are involved in. What is meant here is a fundamental affectedness, or passivity, of human being. Passivity, which is engraved in the subject by the fact of birth and has a strict ethical sense rigorously expressed by Bakhtin in the apt formulation that the person does not have an *alibi* in his/her being. *Person has to respond*. It is his/her genuine definition which underlies every action and points out the *antisubjectivistic ground of any initiativeness*. The principle of responsiveness grasps the way how the person gets self-identity and self-realization, proves his/her irreplaceability and participates in community. It is constitutive both for the process of individualization and for realization of community itself.

Comprehension of the human being as the *being-in-responding (to)* opens a new perspective for conceptualization of birth because this definition binds the initial fact of person's birth with his/her participation in the historical life of interpersonal community. The physical fact of human

birth (of having been born) gets thereby a meta-physical meaning in the light of that historical *incarnation* which self undergoes in responding to the others. Such incarnation can never be accomplished because self always encounters the task of a new determination in a new situation. It allows, thus, defining birth as a *historically meaningful incarnation which has a beginning and continuation in the historical realization of concrete interpersonal community and takes place in the form of a response*. To exist in the natal way would mean then to exist as a responding being. Appearance of a new-born child has in this sense a paradigmatic meaning. Indeed, one says about a pregnant women – she is *expecting* a child. The last one appears in response, or as an answer, to her expecting. The response is a genuine way of being of every birth as an entry of the New into history<sup>21</sup>. The differentiation between the first (physical) birth and the second (spiritual) one is no more relevant for the post-metaphysical investigations of the being of self and being-with-one-another. Historical incarnation (realization), conceived as a practical task, demands from person to concentrate herself on the *memento nasci* and to interpret this new motto as the *having-to-respond* in the interpersonal community. Exploring the fact of birth as the leading clue for the decentration of the Subject, one could, thus, discredit the individualistic self-conceit of the Subject regarding uniqueness of his human birth. I mean that acting as carrying out an initiative is not grounded (how Arendt supposed it) on natality as the principle of subject's unrelated ability to be a new beginning, but just the reverse. Birth receives the paradigmatic meaning of the new beginning in the light of person's responding participation in being-with-one-another. What is the ontological precondition of the «initiative of act» is not the fact of man's birth as such<sup>22</sup>, but the fact of having to respond in being-with-one-another.

It must be emphasized here that the response-principle binds both thematic lines in the birth constellation: that, which concerns my own birth, and that, which concerns the giving birth to the child (though it were in the natural sense or in the metaphorical one). Birth as the continuous historically meaningful incarnation happens to me through my responding (incl. responsible) activity in being-with-the-others. Deeds, words, different projects and initiatives are decisive expressions of such my 'incarnation-to-be-continued', or better to say its worldly dimensions. They are just fruits of my involvement in being-with-one-another. That is why, strictly speaking, they proceed not from me as an independent source of fruitfulness but from togetherness, from *being-with* (That is why Bakhtin, who was strongly interested in the nature of the «initiative of act»<sup>23</sup>, stresses that every word – word as an act – has essentially more than one author<sup>24</sup>). In conclusion I would like to remind that Diotima keeps this co-operative, intersubjective, structure of worldly creativity insofar as she takes the natural creativity of the intersexual relationship as a paradigm. Undoubtedly, the birth constellation remains formal until the intersexual relationship becomes its integral constitutive part. At the same time, it was underlined that the contemporary actualization of the Diotima's philosophy of birth should revise the theoretical grounds which demanded

from her the depreciation of the physical, heterosexual, giving birth to the child in comparison to the meta-physical, homosexual (homological), giving birth to the idea or virtue. In this regard, it is remarkable enough that Arendt, with her differentiation between the social sphere and the political one, does not overcome actually the classical hierarchy between the natural giving birth to the child and the supra-natural initiating of something new. While assuming that appearance of new generations of people is the ultimate condition for the public life, she disengages herself totally from the question of the political meaning (dimension) of the intersexual relationship. These short remarks, I hope, allow comprehending to what extent the so called gender decentration of the subject is a part of the natal turn of the postmetaphysical thinking (marked systematically by the incarnation of the transcendental subject and by the seeking for the historical apriori). It looks as if the intersexual relationship would be the most difficult 'junction' in the birth constellation. There is, obviously, nothing surprising in this situation so far as deathcenteredness of the classical philosophy was systematically connected with its androcenteredness. That is why the very logic of the natal turn demands the fundamental rethinking of that fruitfulness in the historical realization of community which is possible on the base of such a constitutive feature of the *conditio humana* as the sexual difference. Trying in this regard to contribute to the natal turn of the post-metaphysical thinking, one should take into consideration that according to basic intuitions both Diotima's and Arendt's birthcenteredness does not imply at all any kind of gynacenteredness. The strategic formula of their natal aspirations is rather *creativity-in-plurality* which expresses the very sense of the world-loving attitude of both thinkers. It must be very helpful for the understanding of Arendt's work to know that the initial title for the book *Vita activa* (in English *The Human Condition*) was «*Amor mundi*». <sup>25</sup>

## References

- 1 The article was accomplished during a period of research as Fellow of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation at the Research Center of Eugen Fink (Freiburg), hosted by Prof. Dr. Hans Rainer Sepp.
- 2 Hans Saner mentions also Jakob Böhme, but points out: «Aber ihr Denken versinkt bis zur Unverständlichkeit in einer phantastischen, oft schon verwilderten Metaphorik»; see: Saner, H. *Memento nasci. Vorbemerkungen zu einer Philosophie der Geburt*. In: G.-K. Kaltenbrunner (Hrs.) *Überleben und Ethik*. Freiburg–Basel–Wien, 1976. S. 145.
- 3 Platon, *Symposium*, 206e.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Ibid, 209e.
- 6 Ibid, 209c.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Ibid, 209e.
- 9 See, f. ex., the early (1922) work of Heidegger M. *Phänomenologische Interpretation zu Aristoteles (Anzeige der hermeneutischen Situation)*. In: *Dilthey Jahrbuch* 6, 1989. S. 235–269.
- 10 Арендт, Х. *Vita activa, или О деятельной жизни*. СПб., 2000. С. 15.

- <sup>11</sup> To the conception of *Egoität* (of Dasein) see: Heidegger, M. *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Logik*. GA, Bd. 26. Frankfurt am Main, 1978. S. 241.
- <sup>12</sup> Арендт, Х. *Vita activa, или о деятельной жизни*. СПб. 2000. С. 242.
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid. С. 15.
- <sup>14</sup> Comp.: Landgrebe, L. *Faktizität und Individuation. Studien zu den Grundlagen der Phänomenologie*. Hamburg, 1982. S. 116.
- <sup>15</sup> Her reflections in this concern are limited by theological references, i. e. by the pure ascertaining that person was *so* created.
- <sup>16</sup> Lüthkehaus, L. *Natalität. Philosophie der Geburt*. Baden-Baden, 2006, S. 27.
- <sup>17</sup> Арендт, цит. соч., с. 231.
- <sup>18</sup> Ibid, с. 243.
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid, с. 14–15.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid, с. 232f.
- <sup>21</sup> History is understood here dynamically, as historical realization of interpersonal community.
- <sup>22</sup> «Philosophisch gesprochen ist Handeln die Antwort des Menschen auf das Geborenwerden als seine der Grundbedingungen seiner Existenz: da wir alle durch Geburt als Neuankömmlinge und als Neu-Anfänger auf die Welt kommen, sind wir fähig, etwas neues zu beginnen» (Arendt, H. *Macht und Gewalt*. München–Zürich, 1994. S. 81.
- <sup>23</sup> See his basic philosophical work in this concern *To the Philosophy of Act*.
- <sup>24</sup> Бахтин, М.М. *Эстетика словесного творчества*. М., 1986. С. 317.
- <sup>25</sup> Young-Bruehl, E. *Hannah Arendt. Leben Werk und Zeit*. Frankfurt/Main, 1991. S. 447.