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Heritage ahead – Michael Landmann's anthropology and its critical potential for shaping democracy's challenges of virtualizing culture and fatalizing nature

Patrimônio à frente – a antropologia de Michael Landmann e sua possibilidade crítica de moldar os desafios democráticos de virtualizar a cultura e de fatalizar a natureza

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Abstract: Based on the reflections of Michael Landmann (1913-1984), this text attempts to show the connection between cultural heritage and democratic culture as a dialectical relationship. Landmann understands humans as living beings who develop their forms of life and interpretation in creative exchange with cultural traditions. Cultural heritage is understood as a factual stock that pre-shapes individuals and as the starting point for a creative transformation of this stock by the individual. Under this condition, awareness of one's (own) cultural character is the condition for developing political judgement as a person through mental detachment and in dialogue with other persons and cultural contexts, and for keeping one's mind open to irritation. Insofar as democratic culture is itself a cultural heritage whose existence remains linked to enabling conditions, the politically and ethically urgent

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question arises, how the current challenges of digitalization and sustainability can be democratically shaped. Based on Landmann's reflections on the mental ontogenesis of the individual and on the ecological responsibility of human beings, general points of reference are gained for this. With reference to digitalization, this raises the question of the conditions for the possibility of differentiating judgement and self-education in digital, tendentially unifying communication formats. With regard to sustainability, the challenge is to develop collective interpretations of the self and the world in which – as the flip side of fatalistic humility – the creative potential of human beings is taken into account and remains open. For both, a democratic culture of speaking and listening forms the framework in which dialogical encounter can occur and be shaped as a pluralogue with the inclusion of absent cultural actors and referents of non-human nature.

Keywords: Michael Landmann, cultural anthropology, cultural heritage, Jewish philosophy, cultural awareness, democratic culture, digitalization, sustainability, anthropodicy, dialogical/pluralogical philosophy, historical ethics, ecological responsibility, philosophy of *Bildung*, philosophy of cultural plurality

Resumo: Com base nas reflexões de Michael Landmann (1913-1984), este texto procura mostrar a conexão entre patrimônio cultural e cultura democrática como uma relação dialética. Landmann entende os seres humanos como viventes que desenvolvem suas formas de vida e de interpretação trocando criativamente com tradições culturais. Patrimônio cultural é entendido como ações factuais que pré-formam indivíduos e como ponto de partida para a transformação cultural dessas ações promovidas pelo indivíduo. Assim, a consciência de sua própria característica cultural é a condição do sujeito de desenvolver julgamentos políticos por meio do distanciamento mental e em diálogo com outras pessoas e contextos culturais, bem como de manter a mente aberta à irritação. Haja vista a cultura democrática é por si mesma um patrimônio cultural cuja existência permanece associada a condições favoráveis, uma indagação urgente política e eticamente surge: como os desafios atuais de digitalização e sustentabilidade podem ser democraticamente formados? Com base nas reflexões de Landmann sobre a ontogênese mental do indivíduo e sobre a responsabilidade ecológica dos seres humanos, pontos gerais de referência são apontados. Quanto à digitalização, o assunto levanta a questão das condições à possibilidade de diferenciar julgamentos e autodidatismo no digital, tendencialmente unindo formatos comunicacionais. Acerca da sustentabilidade, o desafio é desenvolver interpretações coletivas de si e do mundo no qual, como o lado negativo da visão fatalista, o potencial criativo do ser humano é levado em conta e permanece em aberto. Para ambos, a cultura democrática do falar e do escutar forma a estrutura em que o encontro dialógico pode acontecer e ser moldado como um *pluralogue*, com a inclusão de atores culturais faltantes e referentes de natureza não humana.

Palavras-chave: Michael Landmann, antropologia cultural, patrimônio cultural, filosofia judaica, consciência cultural, cultura democrática, digitalização, sustentabilidade, antropodiceia, filosofia dialógica/pluralógica, ética histórica, responsabilidade ecológica, filosofia de *Bildung*, filosofia da pluralidade cultural.

We have come so far that we
can no longer dream our own
dream with a clear conscience
(LANDMANN: 1951, 103).²

² I did the translations of all the quotations myself. For terms that are very difficult to translate, I have basically added the German word in square brackets.

In the current debates about the crisis of democracy in the face of populist, nationalist and authoritarian tendencies we hear the demand, that democracy has to reinvent itself, for instance shall open up more for the potentials of digitalization and focus on ecological challenges. In this context and especially in Germany, the historical reference steps out: Democracy is seen and thematized as a historical achievement, as a cultural heritage, that at least emerged from the horrors of the Nazi regime and two world wars and that is in a way again threatened by right-wing populist and right-wing radical views and acts. In these discussions it seems to be clear, what is meant by democracy and cultural heritage; a discussion about the conditions and implications of both interpretation patterns is often missing (what might play in the hands of anti-democratic tendencies).

With Michael Landmann (1913-1984) the following text brings a rather forgotten Jewish-swiss philosopher into the discussion and tries to illuminate the relationship between cultural heritage and democracy regarding two central challenges (digitalization and sustainability).³ To do this, I will first outline Landmann’s anthropological understanding of culture with focus on the dimension of cultural heritage. Afterwards I want to make plausible, that his considerations about individuality and historicity provide starting points for mastering the challenges of digitalization, for which the focus is on the democratic principle of liberty, with Landmann understood as creativity. Similarly, Landmann’s explanations about anthropological responsibility and his idea of historical ethics [*Geschichtsethik*] open a deeper understanding of ecological problems associated with climate change; crucial to this is the democratic principle of equality, with Landmann understood as plurality. In conclusion, I will hint at the dialogue-philosophical dimension of his anthropology to show, that the *pluralogue* with cultural heritage can be understood as a place for encounter in and realization of democratic culture.

1. CULTURAL HERITAGE AS CONDITION OF HUMAN EXISTENCE – CULTURAL AWARENESS AS PROBLEM AND DUTY OF INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY

Michael Landmann’s thinking revolves around the question of the essence of the human being. In consideration of the *plurality* of human ways of life and self-interpretations in synchronous and diachronic comparison *one* essence of *the* human being can neither be found nor determined. For Landmann, however, this does not eliminate the anthropological question, but rather changes its form. It is now directed to the formal conditions of the possibility of this plurality itself. How do we have to think of a living being, that *necessarily* creates *ever-changing* forms of life and interpretations of itself (and them)? How do we have to *reason* these forms and interpretations, that while – in comparison – appearing as different and *contingent*, can – each for itself – nevertheless only become an affective life form through the appearance of *naturalness*?

For Landmann’s attempt to answer these questions a concept of culture becomes decisive, which mediates the creative fullness of the ways of being human and the principle of human incompleteness as their formal condition. Accordingly, although the fundamental-anthropological term of culture builds “the fundament of the ethnological-historical, *it remains an idea*; what we can grasp is always only historically specified and varying culture.” (LANDMANN: 1961, 193, emphasis FS) When he defines man formulaically as “creator and creature of culture”, Landmann thus thinks of him as the indeterminate being, that creates his life and self-interpretation creatively into the future *and* as the predeterminate being, that was already born into and is living in a preformed cultural world, that shapes him right down to his most intimate areas. In this sense he on the one hand *defines* culture ‘objectively’ and with regard to the individual society respectively all humanity as a stock:

³ Cf. on Landmann’s philosophy HUPE 1991, BOHR/WUNSCH 2015 and SCHOLLMEYER 2020.

“By culture we understand the epitome of everything that mankind has not already received from nature as a disposition, but has brought forth through its own creative power, and not only the objectified works of *artes et inventa* [...], but also the social institutions and customs, all the forms of behavior and course in life – from technical practices to the ideological prefiguration of thought embedded in language and religion.” (ibid., 188-189)

On the other hand, Landmann *problematizes* every single traditional stock regarding the individuals living in it (and therefore ‘subjectively’): Because after all, the continuity of the cultural traditions depends factually and normatively on whether it can be understood by the individuals and appropriated with a personal sense for their own development and, not least, whether it can be varied willfully for the sake of their creative self-design.

“Culture lives just as outside us also in us, even more, it fulfills its virtuality and gains its body [*Leib*] only by living in us, by permeating us and becoming ours from within. In the same way, however, also the human being finds his fulfillment only through this, so that he owns a third structuring factor in culture as well as in his body and his soul.” (LANDMANN: 1965, 439)

Based on this tension, in which the human being as a creative and traditional being finds and develops itself, ‘cultural heritage’ [*Erbe*] can be understood as a problem genuinely given with *being* human and ‘cultural transmission’ [*Überlieferung*] can be understood as a central process dimension of *becoming* human. These two aspects are by no means as banal or self-evident as it seems. On the contrary, they are elements of a “cultural consciousness” (LANDMANN: 1961, 168), that must assert itself against two robust fallacies of everyday life: First of all, the life forms appear usually as natural and give hardly any demonstration about the fact that they were once thought and created – and thus could also get lost again. Secondly, with regard to man’s future, everything that does not immediately serve his own life tends to appear obsolete and dispensable. “We seem to be allowed to call only either the knowledge of meaning [*Sinnwissen*] or the tradition our own, but not both at the same time.” (ibid., 184) In order to loosen up this strict alternative, we must – according to Landmann – “make our knowledge of cultural *history* more fruitful for our cultural *life*”; as a means to achieve this goal the cultural history must become a formative force of our contemporary consciousness” (ibid., 177, emphasis FS).

In this context, an intellectual and a practical function for the cultural-historical sharpening of consciousness can be distinguished. The *first* means the mental activity of “returning in mind from the final state of tradition to the pretraditional initial state, and from there to refresh and bring over into the present the pale consciousness and ethos that at that time was associated with the traditional.” (ibid., 184) The heightened awareness of the history, meaning and ethos of cultural traditions can make plausible “why it is worthwhile to let them continue to exist” (ibid.) or why not – and in this respect it is also practically committed to them or their critique. *Secondly*, raising cultural awareness is itself a factor in the process of appropriating and reshaping the traditions through the individuals. In this process, the individual is dependent on support, since continuity and change of culture is not naturally assured, even from the subjective side (which means as a mediation to the life process of the individuals). Rather, this mediation even forms “itself a domain of culture – and one that is a priori necessitated by the fact of culture as such.” (ibid., 96)

These considerations give us a general framework for answering two only seemingly trivial questions: Why *do* we preserve the cultural heritage and why do we *believe*, that it’s good, even imperative to campaign for its transmission? In other words: What enables us at all to speak meaningfully of a ‘cultural heritage’, so that means: of a tradition that concerns

us and whose existence is significant for us? A *first* answer is based on a basic assumption of the philosophy of culture resp. history: Human beings are de facto inherits, not only biologically, but also socially-culturally: regardless of our individual disposition, we all are historically “descendants of an infinitely superior stream of tradition, that we can only partially actualize, to which we can add just a few.” (LANDMANN: 1984, 10)⁴ And just the quantitative domination of all the things, that we have neither brought out ourselves nor are ever able to fully appropriate, inclines us to want to discard the traditions *as such* and thus to reject our inheritance. In doing so, we too easily fade out the dialectical chance of the mediation of the objective *back* to the subjects resp. individuals. “As the objective spirit originates from the subjective one, it also wants to get to and through it again and to be received back by it.” (LANDMANN: 1961, 43) Insofar as cultural traditions, for all their self-sufficiency, have and prove their function and meaning in the life of man himself, a scope of re-composition and new creation, of reform and revolution opens up for him:

“It can come to such a point that institutions and ideas no longer correspond to each other, that one has long since thought and felt differently than convention still forces one to behave. From this tension ignites the lightning of the revolution. However, the agony of this tension would be reduced, if our creative energy from the beginning were directed more toward keeping the external forms of the course of existence [*Daseinsverlauf*] in step with our faith and will.” (ibid., 132)

A *second* answer to the question, why human beings preserve the cultural heritage factually and normatively, argues with a view to the ontogenesis of the individual: Human beings become, what they can and should be only through the “internalization [*Insichnahme*] and representation of the tradition”, that is “our spiritual mother, through whom we are only finally born.” (ibid., 156) Not only man as a generic being, but also every single individual must conceive and create her form of life; she is indeed creatively and expressively active in it: By setting forms out of her inner life, these become a counterpart for her, in which now in turn she gains herself as an object, so that means: she becomes subject. Subjectivity in this sense is the ability to look at and recognize oneself and one’s own inner life. Only in this “process of objectivation our experience becomes structured and clarified; only then it releases its last unconscious depths, which would remain eternally inaccessible to mere introspection.” (LANDMANN: 1963, 111)

But even these depths are not ours alone; they are always also the depths of the stream of tradition in which we remain involved even in our most spontaneous expression and intimate creativity. Even if we *feel* ourselves psychologically and bodily as autonomous and separated, we are however “like half-reliefs that, for all their emerging contouring, nevertheless remain held from behind and merge into an inter-individual underground.” (LANDMANN: 1961, 20) In cultural consciousness, the individual thus paradoxically gains an *insight* into the extent to which she is shaped by culture and – because this insight conveys to her the contingency (resp. variability) of being human as such – the *prospect* of her personal liberty (as an encouragement and a mandate to be creative).

⁴ “Here we want to add a consideration by N. Hartmann on generational relationship. With reference to the intergenerational conflict “about new comprehension, new coping, new goals”, he writes: Only outwardly it [this conflict, note FS] is about the autonomy of youth, in truth it is always about the whole. But the inner right of this silent permanent revolution is based on the fact that the youth, measured historically, is older and wiser than the old. The people themselves – or if you like, the objective spirit – has each time become one step older and more experienced in the young generation than it was at the same stage of development in the old one.” (HARTMANN: 1955, 274)

2. PROBLEM HORIZONS OF DEMOCRATIC CULTURE

How can this anthropological definition of man (as a creative and traditional being) be made fruitful for dealing with the challenges of digitalization and sustainability, which appeal equally to his powers of creation and preservation? Following this question, we consider a dialectic relationship between cultural heritage and democratic culture: the institutions, procedures, interpretative patterns and prescriptions assigned to 'democracy' are understood as cultural-historical heritage and 'heritage' itself is made comprehensible as a central dimension of democratic culture, that emerges and proves itself concretely in dialogical encounter.

2.1 Creativity and virtuality: digitalization as a democratic challenge to human historical power

As in his concept of culture, Landmann's understanding of history also conveys the idea of a creative, future-oriented self-determination of man with his position in a pre-formed historical continuity. Both aspects are analytically separated, but they intertwine in the reality and conduct of people's life: "In every expression of life, a recognizable and a surprising moment are intermixed." (LANDMANN: 1963, 164-165) In this understanding of history, according to Landmann, modern societies have a double heritage; two millennia-old lines of thinking history converge productively in it:

"Insofar as today we no longer believe in the one line of world history but accept the plurality of historical bodies as a last, we are based on the Greek conception. But insofar as we no longer and different from the Greeks see repetitions in these many historical worlds, but rather incommensurable uniqueness, we are based on the biblical conception." (LANDMANN: 1966, 240)

With regard to the opportunities and risks of human historical power by means of digitalization, it should first be noted, that digitalization is factually a powerful catalyst and the embracing medium of the virtualization and unification of man's ways of living and reflecting this living. Even more, *digitality* itself must already be understood as a dominant horizon of life and interpretation, that appears and functions as if natural given. The internet unites, represents and transforms a wide variety of cultural contents and references in new structures, which themselves condense into forms of *communication* (e.g. blogging, reblogging, tweeting), presentation (e.g. posting) and identification (e.g. liking) as well as into ways of *perception* such as digitality, being online, being connected through social media. In this respect, digitalization on the one hand confirms Landmann's thesis of the culturality of human creativity and opens up specific opportunities for the latter. On the other hand, Landmann's understanding of creativity provokes the critical question, how far the standardizing requirements of digitalization reinforce existing (e.g. economic) inequalities or bring out new ones, so that social-cultural participation as a whole is (additionally) restricted. With a narrower focus on the individual, we further ask, whether the effects of digitalization do not rather *limit* the individual's options for expression and communication and thus personal liberty. In my view, Landmann's following consideration of the ecological challenges in general can also be correlated to digitalization: "Every new technical development must be judged according to whether it represents a contribution to the development of the human being into a truly free and creative person." (LANDMANN: 1981, 159)

With Landmann, we understand creativity as the ability of human beings to express themselves individually and of a society to keep open and create plural forms of life. Creative processes are characterized by the reference to a future that is envisaged as contingent

and thus capable of being shaped. In such processes, subjective dimensions (abilities such as expression, imagination, projection, innovation) and objective dimensions (‘qualities’ such as concreteness, complexity and resistance of the object) are mediated. At first view, digitalization seems to *potentially* promote people’s creativity through the increase in material (information) and incentives (combinations resp. constellations). But precisely this assessment could be far more a symptom of an already changed idea of creativity: this idea would then be a core element of a culture of possibility, in which individuals satisfy their need for self-expression and autonomy in the consumption of mere options for the moment. Wolfgang Ullrich’s critique of the “creativity dispositive”⁵ in ‘digitalized’ societies points in this direction. This term summarizes and bundles processes, in which a rather ‘classical’ understanding of creativity, which tends to focus on the ideas of a single originator and a completed work, is replaced by prioritization of spherical openness (ULLRICH: 2016, 63 and 89), spontaneous-inspirational variation (*ibid.*, 102) and social diffusivity (*ibid.*, 63-64 and 84). Ullrich unmistakably draws attention to the system-building and -stabilizing effect of a mentality, for which creativity has become a cipher of permanent opening and variation, forced suggestion and dissolution of boundaries:

“For a society under the influence of the creativity dispositive, there can hardly be anything more fitting than as many varieties of semi-activity as possible. Because this is how they best allow the coveted experience of being creative intensively, that means, the experience to feel like you are in a big, protected space full of options without any risk of dry spells and tests of patience. Even better than someone who shifts his ideals into a past and only keeps in touch with them through individual things, the semi-active player and relogger can dwell in a state of innocence and largely avoid the danger of disillusionment.” (*ibid.*, 82)

These effects are not specific to contemporary cultural forms such as the internet. Something similar was described by Martin Buber as early as 1935 with reference to the problem of worldviews. Critically, he attributes and attests to his own time a “power of the fictitious mind” and identifies this as “the lack of education [*Ungebildetheit*] of human beings of this age.” (BUBER: 1995, 62) He contrasts this with “an education, that is true and fair to time [*zeitwahre, zeitgerechte Bildung*], that leads man to a lived connection with his world and from there allows him to rise to loyalty, to testing, to probation [*Bewährung*], to responsibility, to decision, to realization” (*ibid.*). In this context, Buber speaks of a “worldview conscience” [*Weltanschauungsgewissen*] and an “existential responsibility of the person for having a worldview” (*ibid.*, 61). Both can be understood as elements of an attitude, that constitute the process of *Bildung* and the occurrence of encounter.

In formats of digital communication and presentation, the effects of a culture of possibility and fiction now emerge even more intensified. For here the ‘ideological’ aspects of their functional logic (data collection and -processing, steering expectations and behavior through logarithms and incentive systems) tend to remain concealed under the guise of personal values such as liberty, individuality, availability and reach, which makes these formats all the more effective. The offer of information and incentives is objectively (quantitatively) increased to such an extent, that a subjective reduction and channeling

⁵ “The term “creativity dispositive” goes back to the sociologist Andreas Reckwitz, who follows Michel Foucault’s idea of dispositive analysis and tries to grasp the central characteristic of late modern societies. In this context, Reckwitz’s analysis is quite normative when he notes, in relation to the ideas of liberty and individuality, “that the transformation of these old, indeed emancipatory hopes into an imperative of creativity has brought with it new kinds of constraints of an activism of permanent aesthetic innovations and a compulsive dispersion of subjective attention in the never-ending, never-satisfying cycle of creative acts”. (RECKWITZ: 2012, 18)

to certain contents is just as necessary as it appears unproblematic. Because theoretically (fictitiously or virtually) there is always and everywhere access to everything, that could be activated resp. used. The increased suggestive power of the internet is probably above all based on the fact, that it is omnipresent as a form, that is to say as a reality *sui generis* ('second nature'), whose contents at the same time and to an increased degree appear to be contingent, even arbitrary.

From here, with regard to the formation of political opinion and judgement, which is a core element of democracy, the pedagogical question of criteria for the design of learning processes in digital environments arises. According to Ullrich, a central goal of such learning processes is the development of "criteria for assessing *constellations*" (ULLRICH: 2016, 90, emphasis FS). With focus on the learning subject, we understand the formation of opinion and judgement as mental processes that take place and fulfill *creatively* insofar as there is an interaction between object and subject, through which the image of the object also changes the image of the self. Thus, the following question can then be formulated: Under what circumstances do digital environments enable imagination and expression (not only consumption of possibilities, circular repetition and calculation); *alteration and horizon widening* (not only situational satisfaction and purely virtual projection); *transformation and difference* (not just appropriation and mere doubling); *individuality and plurality* (not only identity and duality)? It is precisely a more comprehensive understanding of human creativity, that opens up a constructive way of coping with what Landmann calls the "computeristic" humiliation of human pride: "our thinking is not a human privilege, our psyche as a whole is not subjective, not something removed from nature; it can be caught up with and surpassed by machines." (LANDMANN: 1979, 56) With regard to the unifying and controlling effects of digitalization, the question is: Are we already or do we want to go on a path "that leads from the self-responsible subject to the programmed behavioral system. In the light of what we can do with the human being today, we need to rethink our image of the human being." (LANDMANN: 1981, 177)

2.2 Plurality and anthropodicy: sustainability as a democratic challenge to biospheric continuity

We have thus identified general points of reflection, that arise from Landmann's understanding of human creativity and historicity for dealing with challenges posed by digitalization. The philosophical-normative background is the problem of man's historical power, that arises here in the critical question of conditions for designing forms of communication, self-education and judgement, that promote plurality and difference – namely in the context of digitality as a tendentially unifying form of culture. Likewise, the ecological crises of our time pose serious problems and comprehensive challenges to the historical power of man. In terms of digitalization, man's power creates a new digital 'naturalness' and thus technological dependencies, while in ecological terms his world-shaping creativity turns into a world-deforming destructiveness towards non-human nature. Even more, human historical power reaches an extent by which he risks and destroys the natural essentials of the biosphere and of himself as *such*. Not only the reproduction of a certain humanity, but the preservation or granting of conditions for the existence of (human) life on earth in general is to some extent already at stake in Landmann's time.

"Our own philosophical world hour could now be characterized by the fact, that today the long-held trust in the absolute power of man to dispose of things is fading away. Man, who celebrated himself as a self-shaper, today curses himself as a self-endanger." (ibid., 173-174)

For Landmann, the results of the *Club of Rome* on the limits to growth from 1972 represent an anthropological-ecological lesson for humanity; they require an ethical-moral *deepening* of the previous self-images and worldviews. “In order to guide our ability to guide *on her part*, we need a new ethics, no longer just the ethics of the individual or social ethics, but historical ethics.” (LANDMANN: 1975, 194, emphasis FS) Historical ethics is an indispensable mental equivalent for the practice of limiting man’s opportunities and curbing his inventive spirit (cf. LANDMANN: 1981, 165). Furthermore, it opens up the chance for new patterns of interpretation and positive values to emerge (cf. *ibid.*, 178). The task of ecological ethics is equally to “determine the goals and limits of world-making” (*ibid.*, 168). In this high claim, the correction to the pride of ‘classical anthropology’ is *mediated* with a re-formulation of this pride, which is now directed towards the ability to re-integrate humans into the biosphere: “On a *post-anthropological* level, however, man’s awareness and feeling of dependence on nature can be re-established in the sense of a partnership rather than an utilitarian relationship.” (*ibid.*, 169, emphasis FS)

This positive-sceptical anchoring of an ecological-anthropological self-understanding of man is today in tension and competition with radical doubts about man’s right to exist on earth. The anthropological question *What is the human being?* is linked with the question of whether and under what circumstances human beings are still allowed to inhabit the earth with a clear conscience, and thus with an *anthropodicy*. Philosophically, the challenge is to design collective patterns of interpretation in which people can understand themselves not only negatively as guilt-ridden criminals *against* nature, but at the same time as capable learners and responsible creators of life *in* their environment. Unlike radical antinatalist concepts, which reduce the human ability to shape life to the voluntary and controlled decimation, even extinction of human life and thus sacrifice it⁶, Landmann takes precisely man’s insight into his *endangerment* of himself and the world as the occasion for an ethics of human care and partnership with nature. For Landmann, man’s self-questioning in the world, prominently provoked by the “four humiliations by Copernicus, historicism, Darwin and Freud” (Landmann 1975, p. 225), does not lead to a negation of being human, but to a reformulation of its claim, with reference to human existence and recognition.

For both, the spiritual heritage of Judaism can be made fruitful with Landmann: The Hebrew concept *Teshuvah* (to be translated as ‘inner repentance’) not only has the ethical sense that “a moral debt can be redeemed by [...] inner repentance, by regret” and thus man can become free from his sin and “begin a new life” (LANDMANN: 1982, 85). Furthermore, *Teshuvah* contains the prospect of man’s progressive life design and thus an expressive-practical equivalent to the “renewing oneself by retreat into oneself, by repentance and penance” (LANDMANN: 1966, 296).

Whether ‘overcoming’ the ecological crises without reference to transcendence can succeed at all must be left open at this point (and perhaps also in principle). But there is no doubt, that the nature and the (future) humanity are powerful points of reference for ethical and anthropological self-assurance (cf. LANDMANN: 1981, 168). The fact, that present generations not only provide the material foundations of life for future ones, but also pass on their views of themselves and the world to them, opens up the chance to strengthen more constructive attitudes such as humility, concern, partnership alongside

⁶ The fact that advocacy of human life is no longer a matter of course is shown, for example, by the Voluntary Human Extinction Movement (VHEMT). It is based on deep ecology [*Tiefenökologie*] and is moderate compared to more extreme antinatalist movements. In any case, the ‘ecologization’ of the problem of human existence is, in my opinion, also a ‘reductionism’ of *anthropodicy itself*, since the latter not only critically asks about the human being as a problem, but also positively emphasizes the specific meaning and value of the human in the world.

moods such as shame, panic, opposition (cf. *ibid.*, 164). In such more integrative attitudes, the factual co-dependence of human and (non-human) nature also becomes positively accessible as a covenant of both:

“Plants and animals also assert a genuine moral claim on us. It has always existed, but since they have been given more than ever into our power, it is intensified and we become more aware of it. Plants and animals have their own dignity, their own value, their own right, for the sake of which we must care for them. We can only do this if we overcome the anthropocentrism of our previous ethics.” (*ibid.*, 170)

At this point, Landmann’s plea for a *typological* approach is central, enabling people to avoid extremes of (too proud) exaltation of difference and (too humble) extinction of difference. Typology starts positively with the human ability to recognize and determine oneself also through distinction – and puts this ability in its right. This idea can be productively connected with the Hebrew concepts *Emet* and *Emuna*, which contain an idea of truth that is peculiar to the Greek. They are to be translated as “to stand firm, to be constant, to bear, to support” (LANDMANN: 1966, 219) and do *not* understand truth as “something, that one recognizes, but rather that, which is reliable, on which one relies” (LANDMANN: 1982, 172). Truth therefore “belongs neither to man nor to things: it stands between the two, in it he fixes what those have shown him” (LANDMANN: 1966, 217). *Between* subject and object, truth spans an “intermediary realm of mediation” (*ibid.*) and thus designates a “dialogical quality”. This realm, this quality is accessible to a person, who turns to it, who “approaches the thing with a certain expectation, who wants to rely on it in a certain claim, and *emet* is present, where the thing justifies this expectation and satisfies this claim” (*ibid.*, 219). In a decidedly practical and socio-ethical sense, truth here refers to “a behavior in active cooperation of community members who aim at each other and are in agreement with each other, and who will keep the commitments they have mutually entered into” (*ibid.*, 220).

3. THE PLURALOGUE AS AN OCCURRENCE MODE FOR A DEMOCRATIC RECOGNITION OF DIFFERENCE

With the dialogical dimension of human cognition and ethics, I have reached my final considerations. Based on Landmann’s anthropological foundation of cultural heritage, the dialogue can be understood as a medium or ‘occurrence mode’ [*Ereignismodus*] of democratic culture. With regard to digital environments, the focus is on the question of under what conditions dialogical encounters and processes of *Bildung* are likely to occur here in addition to the exchange of information. The ability of reciprocity or empathy that is fundamental for this is, if we follow Landmann, closely tied to the respective self-relationship of the subjects. Subjects gain their self-relationship through the expression of their inner life, which thus becomes a counterpart for them. And just as the self-relationship co-constitutes the social relationship, understanding is conversely already in the self-relation of the individual an understanding of others [*Fremdverstehen*]. As such, understanding includes the reference to the past (man has already become a human) and the future (man still becomes a human); from both, the framework for a hermeneutics of the cultural-political present spreads out. This hermeneutics is conveyed to the subject mentally as enlightenment about the conditions and limits of its own existence as an individual *of* and *in* this present.

In the dialogical process, understanding others is revealed as an intellectual mutual achievement: the dialogue partners do not reduce themselves to their own prominent resp. emerging point of view, but try to understand this as the provisional end point of a creative interpretation of the world and the self and as a potential starting point for a re-creative re-interpretation. With Landmann, we understand the mutual recognition of their liberty as the recognition of their respective cultural-historical imprint, from which they (can) shape their image of themselves, of others and of the world. To put it pointedly: Dialogical encounter and democratic culture is possible, when two individuals mutually recognize each other as creative and re-creative beings; they occur, when the dialogue partners encounter each other as such – respectively acquire a cultural good as a creative achievement. The difference between the partners – and that the difference remains – is a necessary precondition for their dialogue, but is for its part retained by the mutual acceptance of negative and positive liberty, that is: the assertion [*Zuspruch*] of a cultural origin and the claim [*Anspruch*] to the creative potential. With regard to this triadic structure, the dialogue is a *pluralogue*, in which the ancestors and descendants, but also otherwise ‘absent’ ones, are silently present or get a voice. Giving them a voice and thus making them heard is itself a challenge and duty for the dialogue partners; especially in digital spaces, where time and space differences condense into simultaneity and globality, so that everyone seems to be present all the time and everywhere.

The challenges of climate change in particular show, that the question *How do we want to speak and listen?* and the question *Whom do we want to let speak and listen?* cannot be separated. Just as the *option* of free speech and communication on the internet does not already ensure the reality of a democratic pluralogue, the *rhetorical* inclusion of the coming generation and nature as a whole does not necessarily express a spiritual-sentimental attachment to both. To morally compensate for the lack of ecological attention by degrading people to perpetrators towards nature, which is then separated from them, or denying any difference to non-human living beings at all – these are not very fruitful options in any case if we follow Landmann. Not naively, but sceptically and realistically, human ecological responsibility is also to be understood as a creative potential. Just as we ourselves, the following generations will be heirs to an implicit anthropology that we leave to them and that is precisely “not merely uncommitted theory, which could also be lacking, but on the contrary the most responsible intervention in reality. Because for the way he [man, note FS] assesses and sees himself, that is how he will then become factually” (LANDMANN: 1961, 98). In order to let “the external forms of the course of existence keep pace with our faith and will” (ibid., p. 132), it is not least a matter of doing the dialectical inverse: to *bring forth* this ‘believing and wanting’ even in heritage-conscious debates as an occurrence mode of democratic culture.

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