



Corvinus University of Budapest
Doctoral School of Sociology and
Communication Science

THESIS SUMMARY

to the Ph.D. dissertation of

Jácint Farkas

titled

**The possibilities of fulfilment, inherent in existential
disability**

An insight into the world of meaning of the concept

Supervisor:

Dr. András Karácsony

Professor

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Institute of Communication and Sociology

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1. INTRODUCTION AND SHORT JUSTIFICATION FOR THE CHOICE OF THE TOPIC

The research, or the philosophical investigation, as the well-known concept-pair of disability and accessibility are called in philosophical discourses, is woven into a multidimensional philosophical web, trying to extend and neutralize space, existence, and time. We consider all this important and useful for our society because, when it is used in scientific and everyday discourses, the methods of analysis related to the above-mentioned pair of concepts, in the vast majority of the cases, are given a negative connotation.

The philosophical embeddedness of the dissertation is multidirectional, which not only provides an insight into several eras in the history of philosophy, which may seem eclectic at first glance but also it primarily calls the teachings of the so-called Eastern- and Western philosophical traditions of life, perhaps less known - "disability-specific" as we call it - for help. We precisely do this in the knowledge that the philosophical interpretation and examination of disability from the middle of the twentieth century to the present days are almost exclusively confined to the fields of specialised-philosophy. Primarily, the society-, the law-, and the feminist philosophy has embraced the growing circle of thinkers exploring issues related to the social integration of the people affected.

The Doctoral School of Social Communication - which has merged with the Doctoral School of Sociology over time due to an organisational system-change, in the framework of which communication science "lives on" in an independent program - has a multidisciplinary spirit. Thus, we hope that this dissertation fits well within the world of thoughts of Özséb Horányi, the founder of the school, it aligns with the range of scientific work that builds and understands

the widest possible range of community-building and, in many cases, eroding communication “operations” that significantly define our daily lives.

2. ABOUT THE METHODOLOGY

The doctoral dissertation, as has been indicated, aims to examine the world of meaning of disability and accessibility in a philosophical, hermeneutical, and anthropological-philosophical context. The dissertation thus uses a wide range of philosophical interpretations: the spectrum of the study ranges from the prominent figure of the Buddhist philosophy, Nagarjuna, to the dominant Western thinkers of the twentieth century (e.g. Jaspers, Heidegger, Bergson, Kropotkin, K. Polányi).

The examination has a philosophic nature, which refers on the one hand to the use of the existing knowledge, its placement into new contexts, and the creation of new points of connection, and on the other hand to the thinking and closely related to this, the reinterpretation of concepts, the process-nature of creation and all these draws attention to its re- and rediscovery too.

To study the topic a specific research methodology is required, which - without claiming completeness - is mainly build on the rethought application of the philosophical-hermeneutic examination of Gadamer (2003), the existential analytics developed by Jaspers (1990), and the emptiness-philosophy dialogue which based on a “fusion” of philosophical exploratory analysis and developed by Nagarjuna - the 2nd-century-Indian-Buddhist philosopher, the former abbot of the University of Nalanda, the founder of the School of Philosophy of Emptiness. (Fehér 1997).

Briefly, this can be described as the exploration of the meaning of concepts and the development of new approaches and concepts form beyond the immersion in the relevant literature, the “organization” of acquired knowledge through a multitude of oral discourses and through the probing of practical experiences.

The mentioned original concepts are the following:

- symbiotic-adaptive-human
- existentially disabled and accessibility-creator human
- existential cleavage
- humane-oblivion
- source region
- philosophic examination
- intuitive-emptiness-like and new-creating thinking
- unifying contemplation, philosope, philosophic contemplation,
- metavidium
- explaining-discourse-centred hermeneutics
- hermeneutic orb
- existential-praxis-communication

Due to the philosophical nature of the research, it seeks mostly theoretical conclusions. However, it will not be, of course, without a specific empirical support, as will be shown below.

Tourism science has played and continues to play a key role in this, it has provided a kind of platform for examination too, for supporting new approaches and concepts, and for making them applicable in scientific discourses (Farkas 2019).

So, when we talk about the *cathedral-probe* later, we think primarily about the hermeneutical and dialogical analysis and interpretation of the experiences and impressions gained as a lecturer. The author, as an innately severely disabled person during his educational activity, is able to perceive students' attitudes towards disability and their attitude-changes from the first-hand. These observations and conclusions can also be verified empirically.

During the semesters, in the texts of the project-works, created individually (Mező 2019), or in teamwork by the students of the Budapest Business School University of Applied Sciences and the Corvinus University of Budapest, who chose the specialization in tourism – bachelor and master's level -, the positive changes in the mentioned approaches can be traced well.

We note that expertise from the lived-experience of disabilities has the same value in a research as other procedures recognized by the research community (Heiszer 2015).

3. ABOUT THE EXISTENTIAL HUMAN-IMAGE

In the field of sciences as well as in everyday life, we tend to refer to the thinker-nature of humans as a specific trait that distinguishes them from all life-forms on our planet. However, *homo sapiens* means not only a purely thinking being, as this well-known Latin name also defines a human as a being who is quasi tasting into the nature (Kamper – Wulf 1998).

We approach the concept of a human in the latter way, so we research the origin of an entity that, in addition to being able to think, and thus, for example, create tools with the help of its environment or the significant transformation of it, and even the exploitation of it in recent decades. The so-called “tasting” is to be understood almost literally in this case, meaning that humans are not independent beings above nature, do not plunder it, but asks for and also receive samples from the world of which they are an integral part. Their opinion perfectly describes the specific activity that is characteristic of us, formulated by both Heidegger and Jaspers, that is, how *homo sapiens* relates or may relate to existence. (Nyíri 2015: 9, 12)

So, whether humans drift- or contemplate the present moment with a perfectly stable consciousness, they are in such a relationship with existence that they are inevitably part of it, so the sampling takes place continuously.

From the point of view of our examination, it is important to state all this because, in our opinion, in line with the paradigm formulated by Gehlen (1976), humans create culture and society because they have disadvantages compared to other actors in the living world, and these disadvantages are mostly due to the peculiarities (weaknesses) of the physique. Polanyi's (2004) theory of reciprocity can also be fitted well with this, insofar as helping each other as a specifically

human activity is connected with the necessity of society. As Kropotkin (1908) also states, mutual help as an evolutionary driving force is a characteristic of our own kind. As a result of all this, humans, who are an inseparable part of existence, view, and shape, and nowadays radically rearrange their environment, which is increasingly interpreted as independent of them.

Shaping the living environment is an unavoidable ability of human beings and also a key to survival (Horváth 2019). The way how is this activity later turns from adaptation to “accessibility-creation”, we have to outline a human image that, in addition to the existential integrity mentioned several times above, has a self-reflexive image of its cognition that is nothing more than the recognition of the “timeliness” of its own mortality. Jaspers (1996) makes it extremely clear about human’s place in the world that, although humans are thoughtful and somewhat forward-looking, these abilities are only partially prominent in everyday life. In other words, as a result of the flow of everyday life, its tasks, etc., we live in some kind of automatic mode, only in the situations, he calls the borderline situation becomes clear to all of us, the exposure-, transience-, and despair of human life to the environment. (Jaspers 1996) One of the “components” of existence, then, is the human, who is an extremely complex being with extraordinary possibilities, but also with at least as many existential disabilities. Nietzsche’s ideal human, the superhuman can also be interpreted as a reflection of the extraordinary complexity and how can be resolved for us the seemingly opposing potentiality-actuality tension (Nietzsche 2000).

Here we come inevitably to assess humans, which requires extreme caution on our part. The main reason for caution is not primarily some kind of fear of possible misunderstandings, but rather the intention to make it clear to all readers and people who are interested, that we do not want to change the already formed human-image in either a negative or a positive sense. With the help of the above-

mentioned philosophic method, we try to enrich the worlds of the meaning of the humankind developed so far with a newly assembled colour-scale. We hope that this will open up new opportunities in both scholarly and ordinary discourses about looking into the conceptual dimensions of disability and accessibility.

After analysing the thoughts written about Heidegger's oblivion of existence and the forgetfulness of it, we came to the conclusion that in the present age the state of the so-called forgetfulness of humanity has developed. From the point of view of our human image, this means that, in our opinion, humans have developed a significant deficit in their ability to analyse and adapt which fundamentally distinguishes them from other beings. The individual approach, formed primarily to the effects of the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution, has somewhat disintegrated, and today seems to atomize the foundations that define the human existence and, in our opinion, make it possible at all, the binding of which is to be found in the self-evident nature of human cohesion (Han 2019). The unique traits and characteristics of humankind, like the unique traits and characteristics of all its companions in existence, including plants and animals, is seen by the individual as a kind of disability as a result of the above-mentioned artificial separation. The individual now seems to have forgotten itself in an attempt to meet the production- and consumption constraints of the technical civilization, which keeps the existentially disabled human in check by the never-ending stimulation of the possession of objects, tools, and last but not least, health-guaranteeing and enabling agents. (Fromm 2012).

In a physiological sense, humans cannot be non-human, but in our view, their existence can be simplified to such an extent that it is a dimension of the above-mentioned oblivion of existence in which humans already forget the Jaspersian ability too to recognize the borderline situation (Jaspers 1996, 2008). Using Buddhist terminology, one cannot perceive the unsatisfactory nature of life

(in Pali language: dukkha) even in broad outlines (Porosz 2012). That is why, with few exceptions, the individual sees the existence and the cleavage in-between - which in our own interpretation, according to Jaspers (2008) means a cleavage that is constantly created by the human - as a natural state (Ráhula 2014: 143–148).

We see, therefore, that the great family of human beings is constantly forgetting and letting go of the opportunity which, to the best of our present knowledge, characterizes them as the only one on earth, so the possibilities of recognizing and exploiting of otherness. They rock themselves into believing that they have become the master of nature and thus of existence over the past narrow two centuries. Nietzsche (2003) sees this as becoming a victim of a deicide committed by themselves. We interpret this as one loses the opportunity to use one's own spiritual abilities, so to improve oneself and thus one's own communities as a part of existence. Thus one is constantly moving away from the source region of the human spirit, even though it is not in the distant past or in the future that has not yet occurred, but in the present moments.

In our view, the Buddhist meditation (satipatthana) by the application of which Sakyamuni Buddha attained enlightenment is precisely the practice of mindfulness. So Buddha attained liberation by being able to remain in the here and now, and not to narrow down, not to be hindered by dissatisfaction, so that he could see unhindered the system of causes and conditions among phenomena, which described as the formation in mutual dependence (pratitja samutpada) and which identified as emptiness by Nagarjuna (Garfield 1994).

3.1. From the symbiotic human of the source region to the existentially disabled human who becomes a prisoner to their obstacles

We agree with Jaspers' (2000) idea that one, on the path of philosophy should not seek to formulate a categorical statement and truth, but rather research the ongoing questions that arise between existing and existence and in it formulates - oneself again and again - in a very limited way of the human language.

In the course of his work, Heidegger (1994, 2019) has repeatedly systematically formulated his position that the modern human has become increasingly distant from what he calls the genesis in recent millennia. This does not mean a geographical coordinate or any particular point in the universe, but the state accessible by the human spirit from which, for example, presocratic philosophers viewed existence as existing. So even then, humans created their description and explanatory concepts displaying this, about the world around them, starting from the nature of existence, of which oneself was a symbiotic part. In our view, Jaspers, Bergson, Kropotkin, Nietzsche, and Nagarjuna, like Heidegger, used this method in constructing their own system of philosophical concepts.

In our research and creative work, we have understood the significance and extraordinary power of the philosophy to explore this genesis in relation to the reinterpretation of disability and accessibility. So many stereotypes and layers of scientific determination have been and are constantly being deposited on the two concepts used in general, which, in our opinion, hinder the interpretation and intellectual examination even one by one, but especially as a whole.

Bergson's intuitive philosophical methodology (Deleuze 2010) is, in our view, not only a less widely used method of examination, even in scholarly circles, because intuition has (can have) at least as many misunderstandings as Jas-

persian transcendence (Jaspers 2005) or the disability we examine, but also because, according to our interpretation, immersion in life means getting into the state of the genesis of Heidegger, which cannot be verified and examined neither empirically, nor theoretically.

Unfortunately, the scope of the dissertation does not allow for a more detailed explanation of our efforts to solve the indicated investigability difficulty, such as a more detailed discussion of our method of acquiring and expanding knowledge, called the hermeneutic orb and the *philosophic* examination. As a teaser, we can indicate here that, in our opinion, one of the basic conditions for the applicability of the philosophic examination and the fragment-free hermeneutic orb approach is the temporary abandonment of the researcher-individual “for” dissolving into the metavidium state. Thus, in our opinion, the conditions for getting to and into the source region can still be brought to life today.

Knowing the ideas of Jaspers (1992, 1998), we concluded that the situations he called a borderline situation - a serious illness, the death of a relative or despair arising from our own mortality, etc. - can also be considered as contact with genesis and more importantly, can be lived as a contact with genesis. Jaspers’ (2008) another own important original concept that is relevant in our topic – and closely related to the former mentioned ones - is the axes-age. It covers a historical period in which, for example, Socrates in Europe and the Buddha in India entered the intellectual stage of humanity and from there gave their still valid oral teachings. We see the end of Jaspers’ axis-age as the beginning of the path to the above-mentioned forgetfulness of humanity and the closely related existential disability - that characterizes all of us today.

3.2. The cathedra as a Bergsonian and Jaspersian test of our conceptual extensions and a place of communication, proving the viability of theses

To support our claims formed above, in addition to the publications that have been published, that disability and accessibility-aspirations are a fundamental existential feature of all people, it is essential to talk about our practical educational experiences gained through our research. Most of which come from undergraduate and graduate professional trainings in the world of travel. As already mentioned in the introduction, we referred to travel-science as a medium to accommodate our specific philosophical “point of view” and research. Thus, we have or have had the opportunity to participate in the education of students majoring in tourism at the Budapest Business School University of Applied Sciences and the Corvinus University of Budapest.

In connection with this, we start from, as we call it classic approaches to functional disability, namely in the way people think about the concept of accessibility is primarily associated with the transformation of the physical living environment.

The social embeddedness of the concept of accessibility - and the monopoly of the classic approach - is well characterized by the fact that nearly 100 percent of people identify the activity with the transformation, and the necessity of transformation, of our physical living environment (Farkas, Petykó 2019). What is even more interesting for us is that in most cases it is identified by society as a way of removing obstacles to mobility and transport, so removing obstacles to movement. It's no different in the world of travel either, though we have not done any empirical research on this during our nearly three years of teaching practice. At the same time, based on our experience in various higher education institutions, we have seen and continue to see the findings of Szauer et al. (2010) that

the interpretation of disability is intertwined with the practice and principles of creating accessibility. The above-mentioned student papers, project materials, and the dissertation prepared by Mező (2019), of which the author of this thesis was the co-supervisor, already speak for itself: *The central importance of access to information in accessible tourism* - and the related empirical research clearly supports the factuality of the “automatic” combined interpretation of the term-pair.

Overall, it can be said that the audience is more open to the issue of disability if it manifestly appears to them – so for instance, when they come into contact with a functionally disabled instructor - and furthermore if we can outline a much broader picture of the issue.

In our research, we also had the opportunity to “test” the new concepts we created and the related change-of-mind content too. Go around them, looking at them from the outside and then descending into them (Bergson 2012).

We can state for sure, that, for example, during the implementation of project planning tasks, students were extremely flexible and open in the handling of conceptual spectrum expansions and the resulting research methods. As is clearly supported by the completed project documentation and the presentations that are part of the reports.

We see that the initial steps of our work to develop the concept of disability and accessibility have been successfully completed by writing the dissertation and traversing the research path leading to it, but just as a philosophical activity, the human is not a finished element in the seemingly separated but existentially unified nature of being and existence.

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